

Challah

by Heather Gibson

5t active dry yeast
1 c warm water (110° to 115°)
½ c olive oil
⅓ c + 1 T raw sugar
1 T salt
4 large eggs, room temperature
6 c all-purpose flour

Topping:

1 large egg
1 t cold water
1 T sesame or poppy seeds, optional



Prepare a large glass bowl for rising by coating the bottom and sides with olive oil. Set it aside. Cover a baking sheet with parchment paper and set it aside.

In a four-cup glass measuring cup or similar sized bowl, add the sugar and sprinkle the yeast across the top. Pour in the warm water and allow to sit for ten minutes. An inch of foam should appear across the surface of the water indicating the yeast is active.

Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, measure 4 cups of flour. Add 1 T salt.

Break the eggs into a small mixing bowl and add olive oil. Whisk thoroughly to combine.

Once the yeast has blossomed, add the mixture to the flour. Add the egg/oil mixture. Use a stiff yet flexible spatula to cut the ingredients together, taking care to stir up from the bottom, until a soft dough forms.

Sprinkle another cup of flour on a work surface and turn out the dough. Knead to incorporate the additional flour. Repeat the process with the sixth and last cup of flour until the dough is smooth and elastic, at least 6 – 8 minutes of kneading.

Place the dough in the greased bowl, turning once to grease top. Cover with a woven cotton towel that has been dampened with hot water and wrung out. Let rise in a warm place until doubled, 1 – 2 hours.

Punch dough down. Divide in half. Divide each half into thirds. Roll each piece into a 15-inch strand. Pinch three of the lengths together at one end and braid. Tuck each end

under, shape it nicely, and place on the parchment-covered baking sheet. Repeat with remaining strands. Let rise until doubled, 1 - 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 350° F. Beat egg and cold water together, brush over braids. Sprinkle with sesame or poppy seeds, if desired. Bake until golden brown, 30 - 35 minutes. Remove to wire racks to cool.