

# Challah

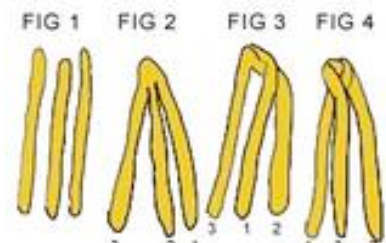
Challah or Kitke is the most traditional of Jewish breads usually made on a Friday to be eaten at the 3 Sabbath meals. It is sweetened with sugar or honey and enriched with eggs and vegetable fat or oil. It is often baked as platted, coiled or spiralled free standing bread which is glazed with whole egg and dusted with poppy or sesame seeds. Rolls made from this dough are called Bulkele, and in my family have raisins or cinnamon added. Makes 2 large Challah or 8 Pletzels or 16 Rugelach or Hammantashen

- 1kg strong white flour
- 450ml warm water, about 25’c
- 2 medium eggs, room temperature
- 15g of fresh yeast or 10g instant yeast
- 15g salt
- 50g sugar or honey ( if using honey, reduce the H2O by 25ml)
- 25g non hydrogenated margarine or sunflower oil
- 2 tbsps sesame or poppy seeds
- 1 egg, mixed with a dash of water and a pinch of sugar for the glaze

**Stage 1: Pre ferment** - Mix the yeast, sugar or honey, all of the water and ½ of the flour. Ferment for up to 2 hours.

**Stage 2: Dough and ferment** - Beat two eggs and add to the sponge together with the fat, salt and remaining flour. Mix well to form dough, knead until it smooth and place in an oiled bowl. Cover and ferment for 2 - 3 hours in a warm place, longer in the cool. Knock back the dough gently and form into the shape you require.

**Stage 3: Forming Challah** – makes 2 breads, divide the dough into 6 pieces and roll these into balls, allow them to rest for a few minutes and then roll each ball into a strand about 30cm long inches the 3 strand braid pictured. Transfer the breads to oiled baking trays and cover lightly with a cloth. Prove in a warm place for 45 - 60 minutes and then brush well with egg wash and sprinkle with poppy seeds. Preheat the oven to 175c or 350f. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes then transfer to a rack to cool thoroughly before slicing and serving. If you would like a giant challah with a more elaborate plait, you can try braiding six strands. Roll out all six balls into 30 cm strands and place in a row, parallel to one another. Pinch the tops of the strands together. Number them 1 - 6 from left to right then follow this sequence:



**6 over 4      2 over 6      1 over 3      5 over 1      Repeat**

The numbering stays the same regardless of which actual strand you are working with so whichever strand is furthest to the left at any point in the sequence is number 1.

**Stage 4: Proving and baking** - Transfer the breads to oiled baking trays and cover lightly with a cloth. Prove in a warm place for 30 - 60 minutes and then brush well with the egg wash and sprinkle with seeds. Preheat the oven to 200c. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes for large loaves or 25 to 30 minutes for smaller loaves, then transfer to a rack to cool thoroughly before slicing and serving.