

Challah Bread *Using a Bread Machine*

By Pari Johnson



Prep time: 10mins + time in bread machine
+ time to make loaves

Rise time: 2 hours after bread is formed

Bake: 325°, 18-20min

Yield: 2 med loaves or 4, 2 person loaves
(freeze extra loaves)

1/4 cup honey

1/2 cup cottage cheese

1/2 water

2 eggs

1/4 cup butter

1/2 Tablespoon salt

4 cups flour (I use 3 cups unbleached white, & 1 cup spelt flour)

1 pkg Quick Rise yeast

Layer the ingredients in your bread machine according to manufacture's directions. Set machine for 'Dough' cycle and process.

When done, put dough on a floured surface. Form into one even 'hunk'. Cut with a sharp knife into the pieces you need. If you're making 4 smaller loaves, then you will cut the hunk into 12 pieces, and use 3 for each loaf.

Grease a cookie sheet. Make ropes about 10-12" long by rolling between your hands. Put on the cookie sheet. Braid 3 together. Put more than one loaf on the cookie sheet.

Cover, let rise in a warm place (on top of the refrigerator is a good place) 2 hours or until doubled. Brush with a beaten egg. Sprinkle sesame seeds or poppy seeds over the top. Bake. Watch carefully as they bake quickly. Remove & cool on a wire rack. Freeze extra loaves. They freeze nicely.

Why Challah Bread?

Around the 15th Century, Ashkenazic Jews (in eastern Europe) developed the *challah* (Hebrew: חלה) that we have today. *Challah* (hallah) is a special braided bread eaten by Jews on the Sabbath and holidays.

It is thought that the braiding or twisting was a pun on twisting off the little piece of first dough as a reminder of the Temple sacrifices. The term *challah* also refers to a small piece of dough that is traditionally separated from the rest of the dough before braiding and then baked until burned. In biblical times, this portion of dough was set aside as a tithe for the Jewish priesthood, or *kohanim* (Numbers 15:17-21). In Hebrew, the ritual is called “*hafrashat challah*.”

Traditional *challah* recipes use eggs, white flour and sugar. Sometimes honey or molasses is substituted as a sweetener. The dough is rolled into rope-shaped pieces which are braided and brushed with an egg wash before baking to add a golden sheen. Sometimes raisins are added.

This braided shape is believed not to be of purely Jewish origin, but modelled after twisted white breads that were found through central Europe and the Slavic countries.

You can find out more about *challah* bread on the internet, as well as some very beautiful *challah* covers and boards.