

Holly's Challah Bread Recipe

author: Alexandra Stafford total time: 3 hours 30 minutes yield: 1 loaf

I learned this recipe from my friend, Holly, who calls it Jennifer's Challah.

The recipe doubles well. Bread keeps well in a ziplock bag on the counter for several days, and it freezes well, too.

A few notes:

You can use at least one cup of whole wheat flour or white whole wheat flour. (Holly always does.)

To create lukewarm water: use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup boiling water and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cold water, which will give you perfect lukewarm water.

To create a warm place for your bread to rise: **Heat your oven for 1 minute, then shut it off.** It doesn't matter what temperature you set it to when you heat it; the key is to only allow it to heat for 1 minute. This brief blast of heat will create a cozy, draft-free spot for your bread to rise.

A double egg wash creates a beautifully golden and shiny finish to the challah.

Baking on two sheet pans prevents the bottom of the challah from burning.

As for shaping, there are lots of resources on youtube. I included one video below for making the entire challah, and a quick gif at the very start of the post, which shows how to shape the round challah.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 to 5 cups (510 g to 620 g) all-purpose or bread flour
- 1 package or $2\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons (8 g) instant yeast
- 1 cup (236 g) lukewarm water (made by mixing $\frac{1}{4}$ cup boiling water and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cold water)
- 1 tablespoon (10 g) kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (84 g) honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (112 g) safflower oil or other neutral oil (canola, grapeseed, etc.)
- 2 eggs

EGG WASH:

- 1 egg beaten with 1 teaspoon water
- poppy seeds, optional



INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Make the sponge:** Whisk one cup (128 g) of the flour with the yeast and stir in the lukewarm water until the sponge is smooth. Cover with plastic wrap or a dish towel and let rise about 45 minutes or until puffy and bubbly.
2. Directly into the bowl, add the salt, honey, oil and eggs. Stir with a spatula or spoon until well mixed, then add the remaining three cups (384 g) of flour. Stir with a spoon until dough forms a sticky mass. Add a bit more flour, and use your hands to knead briefly in the bowl; then turn dough onto lightly floured work surface and knead for a minute or two, until the dough becomes smooth. Transfer to a lightly oiled bowl, cover it with dish towel or plastic wrap and let it rise in a warm spot until doubled in bulk, one to two hours or longer depending on the temperature of your kitchen. (Note: you can make the dough to this point, punch it down, and stash it in the refrigerator overnight).
3. **Punch down** and divide into three or four parts, depending on what shape you want to make. Roll each portion into a ball. Let rest 10-15 minutes. Roll each ball into long ropes (at least 12 inches in length for the 4-braided challah) and braid into desired shape (see notes above or check youtube). Brush with egg wash.
4. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Let the loaf rise on a greased or parchment-lined baking sheet, about 30 minutes. Place another baking sheet underneath it – this will help insulate the bottom and keep it from burning.
5. Brush one more time with egg wash and sprinkle with poppy seeds if you like. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes, checking after 40 minutes. Cool completely before slicing.

Find it online:

<https://alexandracooks.com/2014/12/16/hollys-challah/>