

Chef Laura's Basic Challah

- 1 cup bread flour
- 2 ½ teaspoons yeast
- 1 cup warm water (not hot)

Mix the ingredients together and cover for at least 30-40 minutes and as long as 2 hours to create a sponge.

- 2 whole eggs
- 3 egg yolks at room temperature
- 2 1/2 teaspoons kosher or sea salt
- 1/3 cup of honey
- ½ cup evoo
- 4-5 cups bread flour

Egg wash

- 1 whole egg, whisked 2
- teaspoons water

Toppings: poppy seeds, sesame seeds, oats, pumpkin seeds,

1. Whisk egg and water together
2. Add the eggs, yolks, salt, sugar or honey and oil to the sponge.
3. Slowly mix in the flour. You may not need all the flour depending upon the humidity and water content of the flour.
4. When the dough starts to pull together and off the floor of the mixer, stop adding flour. The dough should be tacky but not stick to your fingers (flour needs to rehydrate and that doesn't happen all at once, so keep dough a bit "damp".)

5. Allow the dough to rise at least 1 hour at room temperature, until doubled in volume or cover with plastic and refrigerate overnight. If refrigerate dough, allow it to come to room temp and rise before braiding.
6. Braid or pan the dough, cover with a clean towel and allow it to rise 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 350F.

7. Egg wash and allow the wash to dry for 10 minutes and then brush the challah again. If you are using any toppings, sprinkle toppings on challah and bake for 15 minutes. Rotate the pan and continue baking for another 12-15 minutes or until medium brown.

From CHALLAH TO BABKA

Chocolate- Cinnamon Babka

¾ cup butter or extra virgin olive oil

1 ½ cups chopped bittersweet chocolate + ½ cup chopped chocolate for sprinkling

1 cup powdered sugar

¼ cup cocoa powder

2 tablespoons cinnamon

Pinch of sea or kosher salt

1. Melt butter or heat evoo with 1 ½ cups chocolate over a double boiler until chocolate is melted.
2. Add powdered sugar, cocoa powder, cinnamon and salt. Stir together. The mixture should form a spreadable paste. Fold in remaining chopped chocolate.

Simple Syrup

2/3 cup sugar

2/3 cup water

1. Bring sugar and water to a simmer. Turn off and allow to cool.

Grease 2 8X4 inch loaf pans.

Allow dough to come to room temperature.

Divide dough into 2 equal pieces.

Roll 1 piece into a 16x12 rectangle. Smear $\frac{1}{2}$ of chocolate filling over dough, leaving a 1-inch border. Brush border with water and roll dough, jelly roll style into a log.

Cut the log, using the shorter side so you end up with two 12-inch pieces. Pinch the top pieces together and twist allowing the cut sides to be face up so you can see the chocolatey goodness.

Repeat with remaining dough.

Pile up any chocolate filling bits that may have fallen, on top of the dough. Cover and allow to rise for 1-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

Preheat oven to 350F.

Bake babkas for 15 minutes. Brush with syrup and continue baking for another 15-25 minutes, brushing one more time with simple syrup, or until thermometer inserted, registers 175F. The babkas will continue to rise in temperature once they have come out of the oven. Allow to cool completely before cutting.