



Challah Egg Bread

Golden Braided Challah Egg Bread is among the most attractive and delicious of breads, made for celebrations both religious and secular. Jewish people choose Challah bread for their Friday evening dinner, and to be acceptable as both kosher and pareve it should be prepared without any dairy products.

This recipe includes olive oil, egg yolk and a small amount of vitamin C crystals. All of these ingredients bring out a light velvety texture from naturally golden whole grain durum or soft golden (white) wheat. Although this recipe can be made with spelt and with hard red wheat whole grain flours, the texture and color will not be the same. Really this is a recipe especially for durum and soft golden wheat whole grain flours.

The four-strand braid is painted with egg yolk just before baking and can be left plain or sprinkled with poppy or sesame seeds. Although Challah can be sliced, the braiding has the effect of dividing the loaf into little buns that can be ritualistically broken from the loaf. Alternatively Challah dough can be made up into buns, breadsticks or other loaf shapes.

Notes:

1: *Durum–Iraq, and Blue Beard durum are examples of durum wheat, and Sonora wheat is an example of soft golden white wheat, which can be used for this recipe.*

2. *The sourdough for Challah Egg Bread should be prepared as described under “Simple Sourdough”. See recipe posted at www.wholegrainconnection.org.*

There are many variations on sourdough recipes and it is essential for success, to pair an author’s bread recipe with their corresponding sourdough recipe.

3. *The final dough should be stiff enough to form the strands for the braid without breaking or excessively stretching.*

Amounts for one loaf made with 500 grams or 16 ounces whole durum or whole soft white wheat flour

Ingredients	Bakers per Cent	Grams	Ounces	Cups & spoons
Stone ground whole wheat flour	100	500	16.00	3 cups
Enzyme active wheat malt (optional)	1	5	0.16	1 teaspoon
Extra virgin Olive oil	4	20	0.64	2 tablespoons
Egg yolk	4-8	20-40	0.7-1.4	1-2 yolks
Salt	1.5	7.5	0.24	1½ teaspoons
Vitamin C (optional)	0.008	0.04	0.001	Tip of teaspoon
Water	65	325	10.40	One and a quarter cups
Mature simple sourdough*	10	50	1.60	2 tablespoons
Egg yolk for decoration				1 yolk
Sesame seeds (optional)				
Poppy seeds (optional)				

*See recipe for Simple Sourdough Starter

- [] Measure whole wheat flour and enzyme active malt into mixing bowl. Mix to evenly distribute the malt.
- [] Measure olive oil, and add to flour in mixing bowl. Rub the olive oil into the flour using the back of a fork against the side of the bowl until evenly distributed. *Or use a food processor fitted with a metal blade.*
- [] Separate the egg yolks and add to flour and oil mixture (without mixing).
- [] Measure salt and vitamin C in a jug or bowl. Measure water into the jug. Stir to dissolve the salt.
- [] Measure the sourdough into the jug containing salt, vitamin C and water. Mix well and add to the ingredients already in mixing bowl.
- [] Mix until flour is completely and uniformly incorporated. *Extensive mixing is not required at this stage.* Fist dough down in a bowl, cover it, and leave to rise until doubled in volume. This will take 6 - 12 hours according to the ambient temperature. *Waiting longer than the time for the dough to double will result in a tangy sourdough flavor.*
- [] Fist dough to collapse it down. If dough is too stiff, add more water, perhaps 5-10% more. Knead until smooth and tight by continuously folding the dough from the edge to the center, and fisting it down. *Or knead with a paddle or dough hook in an electric stand mixer.*
- [] Divide the dough into four equal-weight parts. Briefly hand-knead and round each dough piece. Allow to rest under a cloth for 15 minutes

[] With lightly oiled hands: gently squeeze and stretch each dough ball into an 18-20 inch long strand, approximately 1 inch in diameter. Lay the strand lengthwise on parchment paper. Repeat for the remaining 3 dough pieces. Initially, arrange the strands parallel to each other, with a half-inch gap between them. Rest the dough for 15 minutes under a cloth.

[] Again using lightly oiled hands:

1. Pinch the strands together at the far end. Arrange the strands three approximately parallel on the right, and the fourth on other side of a wide upside down V.
2. Lift the first right hand strand over the second, and under the third strand and lay it parallel with the fourth strand.
3. Lift the first left hand strand and pass it under the second, and lay it parallel with the third.
4. Repeat 2 and 3 until the strands are too short to weave. Pinch the ends together at the other end of the loaf and tuck under. Similarly re-pinch and tidy the starting end of the braid.

[] Allow the cloth-covered loaf to rise until nearly doubled in volume, 90 -120 minutes before baking.

[] At least one hour ahead of bake time, preheat and equilibrate oven at 475°F, with baking tiles or large pizza stone in place.

[] Just before baking, separate an egg yolk and paint the braid with egg yolk. Sprinkle sesame seed or poppy seed if desired.

[] Use an oven peel to gently position the loaf on the parchment paper, onto the oven tiles.

[] Reset oven to 400°F. Bake the loaf for 30 - 40 minutes. *Use an oven peel to support the loaf as it is taken from the oven; initially it is fragile and could break under its own weight.*

[] Allow loaf to cool to room temperature before serving. Store in a covered container at ambient temperature.