

Evie's Challah Recipe

5 cups flour (an extra half cup or more during kneading/braiding)

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar

1 tsp. salt

2 pkgs. dry yeast (I like fast-rising)

2 oz. (half stick) margarine or pareve marg.

2 eggs

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sink-warm water

about a cup or more of raisins

2 eggs (for brushing at the end)

poppy and or sesame seeds.

2 oval challah pans or round cake pans

Heat oven to about 170 degrees.

Mix dry ingredients (first 4) in large non-metal bowl. Set aside.

Have ready: cooking spray, plastic wrap, clean kitchen towel

Lightly beat the eggs and set aside.

Melt the margarine and set aside.

Run warm sink water, measure 1.5 cups, and add melted margarine and eggs.

Mix all of wet slowly into dry, mixing as you go with large spoon.

When it's somewhat mixed, let your hands take over. Mix in the bowl a minute until the dough comes together, then turn out on floured surface.

Knead for 10 minutes, or slow dough hook in the Kitchen Aid for about 5 mins. Scrape as you go and add a bit of flour if it's sticky. Or use Kitchen Aid with dough hook.

Then spray the big bowl it all came out of with cooking spray and turn dough over in it so it gets coated with the spray. Now spray a piece of plastic wrap and cover the bowl completely. Now cover with kitchen towel and put in oven. You can turn oven off at this point.

Let it rise for 1.5 hour (long enough for an excellent hike). The first rising can go much longer if you need it to.

Turn it back onto floured surface, pound it down and knead a bit. Mix in raisins. Divide into 2 even portions for 2 loaves.

Turn oven back on to 170 for a few minutes or not.

Prepare your pans or baking sheet with spray.

Make into braids, circles or whatever you like. For example, divide each loaf into 3 equal parts and 1 smaller part. Shape 3 parts into snakes, braid, then make entire braid into a "snail" shape. Divide 4th piece into 3, braid it and carefully put on top of big snail. The idea is to build volume into the loaves. You can also make 8 balls, put 5 in a round cake pan, then 3 on top. What you had at wedding was just a braid with a small braid on top (divide the whole thing in 4 sections; make a braid out of the 3, then divide the last section into 3 and make a small braid to put on top.)

Put braided loaves into sprayed pans or onto baking sheet and cover just with the kitchen towel. Turn off oven. Let rise about an hour or a little less. Keep an eye on it. You don't want it to get too pouffy or it will lose its shape when it bakes.

Take it out carefully 10 minutes before you're ready to bake it. Turn oven to 350. Meanwhile, mix 2 egg yolks with a couple drops of water and carefully paint it on loaves with a brush. Then shake seeds on top and place in oven. Bake in center of oven for 30 minutes! Let it cool 10 minutes or so then remove from pans onto racks. Goal: the making is as much fun as the eating.