

# Challah

To make 1 very large plait or 2 medium plaits:

480g bread flour  
2 level teasp salt  
3 level teasp caster sugar  
2 tbsp oil  
15g fresh yeast or 2 level teasp dried yeast  
1 large egg plus 1 yolk or 2 standard eggs  
200ml warm water

Heat the water until it feels as warm as a baby's bath. Put into the mixer bowl. Add one third of the flour, all the sugar and the yeast. Mix until smooth, cover with a tea towel and leave for 20 mins until it looks frothy.

Now add all the remaining flour, the salt, oil and egg (saving the yolk or half of one standard egg for glazing the bread). Mix with the dough hook at minimum speed until a dough forms then knead with the hook at low speed for 3 mins.

*\*I have done this by hand, it just takes longer!*

Tip the dough onto a floured board, and knead with the hands for 30 secs to shape into a smooth ball.

Put the ball into a greased polythene bag large enough for the dough to double in size. Fasten the bag loosely.

*To rise:*

Put the dough at the bottom of the refrigerator for 12-14 hours.

*To shape:* Take the risen dough from the fridge and leave in the kitchen for about half an hour or until it loses its chill.

*To make one large plait:* Divide the dough into 3 or 6 pieces. Knead each piece into a round then roll into a sausage about 30cm long. Press the strands firmly together at one end, then plait tightly (the six strand plait makes the best shape). Check out the how to plait on YouTube. Put the plait on a greased tray.

*To make two medium plaits:* Divide the dough in two and work on each half in exactly the same way.

*The next step:* Put the loaves into a greased bag and leave until they regain their lightness, springing back when touched – about 30 mins. Brush over with the reserved egg, diluted with 1 teasp of water and 1 teasp of salt. Scatter with poppy seeds.

*To bake:* Put in a hot oven (Gas no7/ 220c) for 15 mins, then turn down to Gas no 5/190c for a further 30 mins for the small loaves and a further 45 mins for the large loaves.

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\*I have a fan-assisted oven and after trial and error, I found that I needed to reduce the oven to 190c and 160c. It depends upon how your oven works.

*To test:* When the loaves are cooked, they will be rich brown and sound hollow when the base is tapped.

