

How to Make Easy Braided Bread

While challah is a traditional bread baked for the Jewish Sabbath, it has become popular with everyone, everywhere. It's attractive and has a firm, egg-rich texture that works for dinner, sandwiches, or French toast. It is typically braided with three, four, or six strands of dough. (The braided strands are symbolic of love.)



Challah is really very easy to make, especially from a mix. There is a sense of satisfaction in working the dough by hand and crafting such an attractive bread and it certainly will impress guests.

For this bread, we used one of our traditional bread mixes though you can braid nearly any bread—including your favorite recipe. The package directions called for two cups of water. To make the dough egg-rich, we cracked two large eggs into a measuring cup and added warm water--enough to total two cups. Whisk the water and eggs together with a fork then heat it in the microwave until warm (110 degrees).

Mix the bread according to package instructions using the egg and water mixture. Place the bread dough in a greased bowl, cover, and let rise until doubled—about 1 1/2 hours.

Prepare a large baking sheet by greasing and sprinkling with cornmeal. Use a lighter colored sheet to help keep the bottom from burning.



Once raised, use a knife to divide the dough into three equal pieces (or four if you choose to make a four-braid bread). Roll the pieces under the palms of your hands into three long ropes as shown. You may need to let each rest for five to ten minutes to allow the dough to relax to get the proper shape. Using this mix, you should have three ropes nearly 24-inches long. If you want the loaf to be larger in the center and less rectangular shaped, make the ropes thicker in the middle and tapered toward the ends.

Braid the three ropes as shown in a common three strand braid just as if you were braiding pigtails. (Some people find it easier to create a symmetrical shape if they start braiding from the center.) When you get to the ends, wet them, pinch them together, and tuck them under. You should have a neat, symmetrical loaf when you are through. You can shape the loaf somewhat with your hands. If you don't like how the loaf looks, simply pull the braids apart and start again.

Place the finished loaf on the prepared sheet. (The formed loaf will be about 12-inches long but after rising and baking, you will have a finished loaf of about 24-inches so be sure to allow room on your sheet for expansion.) Cover the loaf and let rise until doubled, about one hour.



Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Prepare a glaze by whisking one egg with one-half tablespoon of water. Just before baking and when the loaf has fully doubled, remove the plastic wrap and gently brush glaze over the entire surface of the loaf. Sprinkle the top with poppy seeds or sesame seeds as desired. (Tip the loaf so that you can sprinkle seeds on the sides as well.)

Bake the bread for 20 minutes then cover the bread with a large sheet of aluminum foil to protect the top. Continue baking for another 20 to 30 minutes or until the bread crust is a deep golden brown. The interior of the loaf should register 190 degrees with an insta-read thermometer.

Use an egg turner to loosen the bread from the pan and transfer the loaf to a wire rack to cool.

Note: If you choose to bake two loaves, reduce the baking time by five to ten minutes.

Sweet Chocolate Braided Bread

While challah is a traditional bread baked for the Jewish Sabbath, it has become popular with everyone, everywhere. It's attractive and has a firm, egg-rich texture that works for dinner, sandwiches, or French toast. It is typically braided with three, four, or six strands of dough. (The braided strands are symbolic of love.)

Challah is really very easy to make. There is a sense of satisfaction in working the dough by hand and crafting such an attractive bread and it certainly will impress your guests.

In this version, we added chocolate for the dough and a chocolate cream cheese filling and then we drizzled the bread with a chocolate cream cheese glaze. It may not be real challah but it is absolutely scrumptious—maybe our best chocolate bread ever.



Sweet Chocolate Braided Bread Recipe

Braiding bread is not complicated; it just looks impressive. To see illustrations for braiding bread, check out this [Easy Challah Recipe](#).

This recipe can be doubled.

Ingredients

3 to 3 1/2 cups bread flour
1 packet instant active dry yeast
3/4 cup water, heated to 110 degrees
1/3 cup brown sugar
1/3 cup cocoa
4 tablespoons butter
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 large egg at room temperature

For the filling

5 ounces cream cheese
1 ounce semi-sweet baking chocolate, melted
3 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 egg yolk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

Chocolate glaze directions follows.

Directions

1. Mix about one cup of the flour, the yeast, and the heated water until smooth. This will hydrate the instant yeast. If you are using other than instant yeast, hydrate the yeast separately.
2. Add the brown sugar, cocoa, butter, salt, and egg and mix. Add enough of the remaining bread flour to make a soft but not tacky dough. Knead until the gluten is developed, about four minutes with a stand-type mixer at medium speed. Set the dough in a greased bowl, cover, and let it stand until doubled, about one hour.
3. To make the filling, beat the cream cheese until soft and smooth. Add the melted chocolate while it is still hot and mix until smooth. Add the sugar, flour, egg yolk, vanilla, and nutmeg and mix until smooth.
4. Once the dough has risen, use a knife to divide the dough into three equal pieces. Roll the dough pieces with a rolling pin to rectangles 15 inches by 5 inches. Spread one-third of the filling down the center of each leaving a one-inch border with no filling. Roll the rectangle into fifteen-inch long ropes with the filling inside. Pinch any seams together and roll the ropes with your hands on the counter until smooth.
5. Braid the three ropes as if you were braiding pigtails. (Some people find it easier to create a symmetrical shape if they start braiding from the center.) When you get to the ends, wet them, pinch them together, and tuck them under. You should have a neat, symmetrical loaf when you are through. You can shape the loaf somewhat with your hands. If you don't like how the loaf

looks, simply pull the braids apart and start again. Prepare a large baking sheet by greasing it and sprinkling it with cornmeal. Place the loaf on the pan, cover the loaf, and let it rise until doubled, about one hour.

6. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake the bread for 20 minutes then cover the bread with a large sheet of aluminum foil and bake for another ten to fifteen minutes to until done. The bread should “thump” when tapped on the bottom and the interior of the loaf should register 190 degrees with an insta-read thermometer. Let the bread cool on a wire rack.

7. While the bread is cooling, make the glaze. With a hand-held mixer, beat one ounce cream cheese with one teaspoon vanilla. Add 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar and 2 tablespoons cocoa with enough warm water to make a glaze of drizzling consistency. Drizzle the chocolate glaze generously over the bread.

Baker’s notes: To quickly bring an egg to room temperature, place it in a cup of warm water.

New York Bagel Bread

You can make wonderful bagel bread following these directions. While this assumes a bread machine mix, you can use a recipe of your own. Select a lean bread recipe, that is, a recipe that calls for no eggs and a minimum amount of oil or butter. The bread should not be sweet so choose a recipe with minimal sugar.

Directions:

Mix the dough according to recipe directions but use only two tablespoons of oil--either olive or vegetable oil. If the dough is too wet to handle, add another tablespoon or two of flour. Grease a large bowl. Remove the dough to the bowl and turn once to coat both sides. Cover and let rise until doubled, usually over an hour.

Prepare a large cookie or baking sheet by greasing and sprinkling with cornmeal. The sheet should be at least 20 inches long.

Turn the risen dough out onto a countertop. Divide the dough with a sharp knife into two parts, one piece twice as large as the other. Divide both the larger and smaller piece into three equal pieces so that you have six pieces of dough. Roll the pieces on the counter under your palms to form ropes about an inch in diameter. The larger ropes should be 18 to 20 inches long; the smaller ropes about 16 inches.

Braid the longer ropes together and the smaller ropes together in three strand braids as shown. Pinch the ends together to keep the braids from unraveling as the dough rises. Place the larger braid on the sheet and center the smaller braid on top of the larger. Cover with plastic and let rise until well doubled and very puffy, about another hour.

Place two tablespoons water and two tablespoons of oil in a bowl. Chop one medium onion and add it to the oil and water mixture. Add 2 1/2 tablespoons poppy seeds and 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder to the mixture. Stir and let sit while the dough rises.

In a cup, create an egg wash by mixing one egg yolk with one tablespoon water and stirring with a fork or whisk until well mixed.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Once the dough has risen, brush the loaf with the egg wash to coat. Spoon the topping on the loaf as shown. Sprinkle the loaf with coarse salt and place the bread in the oven.

Bake the loaf for 30 minutes at 375 degrees. Turn the temperature down to 350 degrees and loosely cover the top of the loaf with aluminum foil to keep from burning the topping. Bake for another 15 minutes. Remove the loaf from the oven and check for doneness. If you have a thermometer, the center of the loaf should test 200 degrees. Turn the oven off and place the loaf back in the oven for five minutes without the aluminum foil cover. The last five minutes in the oven will develop a thicker crust. Cool on a wire rack before slicing.

