Challah Bread

Yields 2 loaves | 4 hours

INGREDIENTS

4 cups (500g) AP flour
4 to 4 ½ cups bread flour (520 to 585g)
1 tbs (12g) active dry yeast
1 1/2 (12 oz.) cups warm water
1/3 cup (67g) granulated sugar
3 tbs (63g) honey
½ cup (120g) vegetable oil
5 large eggs
1 tbs salt
Poppy or sesame seeds for sprinkling (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer, dissolve the yeast and 1 tbs sugar in the lukewarm water. Allow the yeast to wake up & get bubbly.
2. Whisk oil into the yeast, then beat in 4 eggs, one at a time, Add the remaining sugar and salt.
3. Place the bowl onto the stand mixer fitted with a dough attachment and gradually add the flour. Once combined, knead the dough until smooth.
4. Grease a large bowl, place the dough into the bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Allow dough to rise until doubled in size in a warm spot, about 1.5-2 hours or place in the refrigerator overnight. (1st rise)
5. Punch down the dough, cover and allow it to rise again for another 30 minutes (2nd rise).
6. To braid, take half the dough and form into as many equal size balls as you need depending on the type of braid. Roll each ball into strands about 15 inches long. Place all strands parallel to each other and pinch them together at the top. Braid according to the pattern you'd like. Pinch the ends and tuck it under on both ends. Place the braided loaf on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet.
7. Beat remaining egg and brush it on the loaves. Either freeze or let rise another hour.
8. Preheat oven to 375 degrees and brush loaves again with egg wash. If adding poppy &/or sesame seeds sprinkle them on and bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until golden brown.

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