

Debbie Fishman's Amazing Water Challah

2 tablespoons dry yeast
1/2-3/4 (100-150 grams) cups sugar
2 1/2-2 3/4 (591 ml - 650 ml) cups water, lukewarm
8 cups (1 kilo) flour
1 tablespoon salt
8 tablespoons oil /1/2 cup (118 ml) oil
1 egg for egg wash

OR

Non egg/non dairy topping:
2 tablespoons maple syrup or honey
1 tablespoon soy or oat milk
sesame seeds to sprinkle on top

Directions:

In a bread maker or mixer's bowl place the sugar and the dry yeast and add about a cup of the lukewarm water (from the total). Stir to combine, cover and let proof (get bubbly), about 5 minutes. Next add the flour and salt and the oil and the rest of the water. Start with the smaller amount of water, in bread maker on dough cycle, in mixer stir just till combined with the paddle and then switch to a dough hook. If the dough looks a bit dry, add the rest of the water. Knead till the dough is smooth and satiny looking, about 5-10 minutes in mixer (bread maker does its own thing on the dough cycle). Let dough in mixer rest about 10 minutes and then knead again about 5-10 minutes. Cover and let rise till doubled in bulk. Lightly oiling top of dough in mixer. In bread maker just make sure the cover is down. Once dough has risen, remove to an oiled mat (or parchment paper, oil that too) and for 5 small challahs, divide in five sections, for medium challahs divide in three. Now divide each piece in three and braid the dough and place each challah into an oiled pan. Brush the top of the loaves with the beaten egg OR mix the maple syrup/honey with the soy/oat milk and brush tops with that mixture. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Let rise again till dough reaches the top of the pan and preheat your oven to 350 F/180 C. When oven is hot, bake challahs for 28-30 minutes or till nicely browned and cooked through. Cool on wire racks. These freeze beautifully, just cool and wrap in plastic wrap or ziploc bags.