

Nita's Challah

Put the ingredients in a bread maker or large bowl in this order.

- 360 ml **cold** water
- 4 teaspoons **fast-action yeast** (preferred!) or active dry yeast on one side of the bowl
- 100 g **sugar**
- 1 **egg** and 1 **egg yolk**, lightly beaten together
- 80 ml **olive oil**
- 2 teaspoons **fine sea salt** (Place in a corner away from yeast to avoid early interaction.)
- 30 g **unsweetened whole milk Greek or natural yogurt**
- 625 g **bread (strong) flour** (Add in 1 cup at a time if mixing by hand. **Blend with your hands.**)



Bread Machine (Option 1):

1. **Run on dough cycle** (typically 1.5–2 hours).
2. **Rest.** Once finished, immediately **transfer dough** onto baking parchment. **Avoid punching down!** Let the dough **rest uncovered for 10 minutes before shaping**. If you make the dough a day ahead, skip the 10-minute rest and refrigerate overnight (8-12 hours). Overnight dough is easier to handle. Bring to room temperature for 2 hours before shaping and baking.

Hand Knead (Option 2):

1. **Knead** on a **lightly oiled surface** for **10–15 minutes** using: Push forward with heel of hand → fold → quarter-turn → repeat rhythmically
2. After ~10 minutes, stretch a piece of dough—if it forms a thin translucent “**window**” without tearing, it’s ready.
3. **Rest.** Place dough in an **oiled bowl**, **cover tightly** with plastic wrap or a damp cloth. **Cold-proof** overnight (8-12 hours) in the fridge for deeper flavor or let rise at room temp ~1.5–2 hours until doubled and airy.

Shape:

1. **Divide dough:** Cut into 2 equal parts for two loaves.
2. **Shape** each into a long oval.
3. **Slice** each into **6 strands** with a pizza cutter, sharp knife, or dough scraper, leaving one end connected.
4. **Braid** using pattern: From the far-right strand, go → over 2, under 1, over 2 Repeat using the new far-right strand until finished.
5. **Pinch** ends together to seal.

Final Rise (Proofing):

1. **Cover** loaves with parchment and a clean towel.
2. **Proof/let rise** in a warm spot (~29°C) for 60 minutes or until doubled. It should jiggle gently when tapped. Overnight dough rise more quickly.
3. A slow rise is better, but to speed up rising, preheat oven to lowest temperature briefly then turn off. Confirm oven <49°C. Or use a “proof” setting if your oven has one.

Bake:

1. **Preheat** oven to 170°C. Place hot water in a pan on lower rack.
2. **Egg wash:**
 - Beat 1 egg + ½ tsp water + a pinch of salt to create a glaze.
 - Brush generously and sprinkle sesame seeds on top.
3. Loosely **cover loaf with aluminum foil** for gentle baking.
4. **Bake** one loaf at a time for best airflow and consistency. If baking multiple, rotate half-way through.
 - **20–22 min with foil**
 - **Remove foil** and bake additional 5–15 min until golden.
 - **Check internal temperature** in the center → ~93°C.
 - **Tap bottom** of loaf every 5 minutes toward the end — The sound should go from dull to hollow.



Ingredients

Add in this order:

- 1½ cups **cold water**
- 4 tsp **instant yeast** (*preferred*) or active dry yeast (*placed on one side of the bowl*)
- ½ cup **heaped sugar**
- 1 **egg** + 1 **egg yolk**, lightly beaten together
- ⅓ cup **olive oil**
- 2 tsp **salt** (*place in opposite corner from yeast*)
- 5 tbsp **milk powder** or **unsweetened whole milk yogurt**
- 5 cups **bread flour** (*if mixing by hand, stir in 1 cup at a time*)



Bread Machine Method (Optional)

1. **Run on dough cycle** (*typically 1.5–2 hours*)
2. **Handle gently**—avoid punching down
3. **Rest for 10 minutes** on parchment if shaping immediately
 - OR refrigerate overnight (8–12 hours) for better flavor and structure
 - If chilled, bring to room temp **2 hours before shaping**



Hand-Kneading Method (Optional)

1. Knead on a **lightly oiled surface** for **10–15 minutes** using:
 - Push forward with heel of hand → fold → quarter-turn → repeat rhythmically
2. Perform the **windowpane test**:
 - Stretch a piece of dough—if it forms a thin translucent “window” without tearing, it’s ready
3. **Dough rest** (*before shaping*):
 - Place in oiled bowl and cover with plastic wrap or damp towel
 - **Cold-proof overnight** for deeper flavor
 - OR let rise at room temp for **1.5–2 hours** until doubled and airy



Braiding & Shaping

1. **Divide dough** into 2 equal portions
2. Shape each into a **long oval**
3. Cut into **6 connected strips** with a pizza cutter
4. Braid using pattern: → From far-right strand → over 2, under 1, over 2 → Repeat from new far-right strand
5. Pinch ends to **seal**



Final Rise (Proofing)

1. Cover loaves with **parchment and towel**
2. Let rise in a warm spot (~85°F) for **60 minutes**, or until gently jiggly
 - Overnight dough may rise more quickly
3. For an oven proof box:
 - Briefly preheat oven to 170°F, turn off
 - Confirm oven is below **120°F** before placing dough inside
 - Optional: place a **pan of hot water** at bottom for humidity



Baking

1. Preheat oven to **340°F**

2. Place **pan of hot water** on lower rack for steam
3. **Egg wash:**
 - Beat 1 egg + ½ tsp water + pinch of salt
 - Brush generously and sprinkle with sesame seeds
4. **Foil tent** loaves for gentle baking
5. Bake one loaf at a time:
 - **20–22 min** with foil
 - **Remove foil**, then bake **5–15 min** more until deep golden
 - Check for doneness:
 - Internal temp ~200°F
 - Bottom sounds **hollow** when tapped
 - Tap every 5 min near the end to hear change in resonance