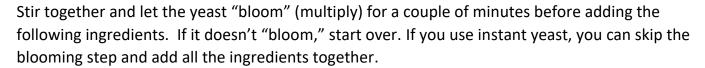# Nita's Challah

Put the ingredients in the bread maker in this order. If you don't have a bread machine you can mix the ingredients by hand and knead for 20 minutes.

- 1 ½ cup warm water (109°F)
- 4 teaspoons active dry yeast or Saf-Instant yeast
- ½ cup sugar, heaped

Stir together and let the yeast "bloom" (multiply) for a couple of minutes before adding the following ingredients. If it doesn't "bloom," start over. If you use instant yeast, you can skip the blooming step and add all the ingredients together.

- 1 lightly beaten egg
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 5 level cups bread flour
- 5 tablespoons milk powder or whole milk yogurt powder

Run the bread maker on the dough cycle. (Optional: Put the dough in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Chill until 2 hours before serving then continue.)

Push down the dough on a baking sheet with baking paper. Wait 10 minutes.

Two make 2 loaves, using a pizza cutter, divide the dough into 2 equal parts. Shape each part into a long oval. Using the pizza cutter, cut into 6 strips, but leave the dough connected on one end. Braid (plait) the 6 strands into a loaf. Starting from the far-right strip, go over 2 pieces, under 1, and over 2. Keep braiding from the far-right strip, going over 2 pieces, under 1, and over 2. When you can't braid anymore, squeeze the ends together. (To make 4 loaves, divide the dough into 4 equal parts and create 3 strands for each rather than 6.)

Cover with baking paper and a clean cloth and put in a warm place to rise for about 60 minutes or until doubled in size. You can put in an oven at **less than** 120° F to speed up the rising process.

If loaves are in the oven, remove the loaves after 45 minutes and keep covered.

Heat the oven to 340° F.

Beat an egg with ½ teaspoon water. Paint the top of the loaf. Sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Set a piece of foil on top of the dough. Bake one loaf at a time for about 20-22 minutes. Remove foil and bake until lightly golden brown, about 5-15 minutes or until the internal temperature is around 200° F. If you tap the bottom of the loaf, it should sound hollow. If you tap the loaf every 5 minutes towards the end of the baking, you'll hear how the sound changes.

Remove from oven and place on a rack or clean cloth.