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Challah Bread

- 1½ Cup Warm Water, 110-120 degrees
- 1 Tbsp Sugar
- 2 Pkg Yeast or 1 1/2 Tbsp
- ½ Cup Honey
- 1 Tbsp Oil
- 4 Eggs, room temp
- 1½ Tsp Salt
- 5 Cup Bread Flour, plus more
- Egg Wash/topping
- 1 Egg
- 1 Tbsp Cream or Milk
- Coarse Sea Salt, sesame seeds or poppy seeds, optional

Combine warm water, sugar and yeast in large mixing bowl. Let stand 5-10 min. until foamy. Then add honey, oil, eggs, salt and 5 cups of flour. Using dough hook, turn mixer on low to medium low and mix well. Once all mixed together add 1/2 cup of additional flour at a time with mixer running on low-medium until dough is smooth and pulls away from sides of bowl, then knead with mixer for 4-5 min. (In total I added 1 1/2 cups additional flour; this will vary depending on the humidity levels in your area.) Once done kneading, turn into a sprayed or oiled bowl, flip dough over so as to coat both sides, cover with plastic wrap, then a towel and place in warm area to rise. It should rise for at least 45 min or until doubled in size.

Remove wrap and towel, dump onto a lightly floured surface and cut dough into 6 pieces to make 2 braids or into 2 pieces, if you just want to make basic loaves. For loaves, spray or grease two large loaf pans and place dough halves into them, cover with plastic wrap then a towel and let rise 30-45 min. or until nearly doubled in size.

For braids, take 3 pieces of dough; roll, stretch and pull into 3 rope shapes. Pinch three ends together and tuck under loaf, braid and pinch together the ends and tuck under, place onto parchment-lined, or sprayed or greased large sheet pan. Repeat with rest of dough and place onto same sheet pan. Cover and let rise in warm place for 30-45 minutes or until nearly doubled in size. Preheat oven to 350.

For Egg Wash, in a small bowl, beat 1 egg with 1 Tb milk or cream and brush over loaves; sprinkle coarse sea salt or sesame seeds or poppy seeds over top, if desired. (You can just do only the egg wash and call it good as well!) And when oven is preheated, place loaves in oven; bake 30-40 minutes, until a beautiful brown color and internal temp is 160-175...remove from oven. Cool on wire racks.

