

Challah

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Adapted from Paul Hollywood's "How to Bake"

- 500 g bread flour (preferably King Arthur brand)
- 10 g salt

- 25 g granulated sugar
- 10 g instant SAF yeast
- 30 g unsalted butter (softened)
- 2 large eggs (beaten)
- 1 large egg (for glazing)
- 50 ml whole milk (warm)
- 180 ml water (cool)

1. Put the flour into a large mixing bowl and add the salt and sugar to one side of the bowl and the yeast to the other. Add the butter, the two beaten eggs and the milk. Add half the water. Mix with your hands. Continue to add the water, a little bit at a time until the dough releases from the sides of the bowl. You may not need all of the water. The dough should be soft but not soggy.
2. Knead the dough on a lightly floured surface for about 5-10 minutes or until the surface of the dough is smooth and soft.
3. Put the dough into a lightly oiled bowl or container and cover lightly with a tea towel. Leave to rise until doubled in size – at least one hour.
4. Line a baking sheet with parchment or silicone mat.
5. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and punch it down (this does not mean you actually punch it but fold in inwards repeatedly to release all the gases that have formed during fermentation). Divide it into 3 equal pieces (you should use a scale and each piece will weigh roughly 280g depending on how much water you used). Roll each piece to about 10 inches. This is where I strayed from Paul's instructions. His instructions state to roll out to about 9 inches but this produces a short fat loaf whereas the loaf should really end up about 16 inches long so you want to begin with longer

strands.

6. Join the three strands together at the top by basically squeezing them together. Then braid like you would hair:

Strand 3 over 2, 1 over 2, 3 over 2, 1 over 2 and so on. See video.

Tuck the ends underneath and transfer to baking sheet.

7. Brush with remaining beaten egg. Put the tray inside a clean plastic bag (I use extra large storage bags with 2 mugs alongside the loaf to keep the bag from sticking to the dough). Preheat oven to to 400°F. Prove for one hour or until doubled in size.
8. Bake for 20-25 minutes or deep golden brown. Cool on a wire rack.
9. Save leftovers for French toast!

How to Plait a challah loaf

Christmas Cake

I love fruitcake when it's done right. But I personally can't stand buying nor consuming those scary looking glaze cherries and other neon-colored candied fruits soaking in corn syrup that you get in supermarkets. I used dried fruits in this fruitcake with the only "candied" exceptions being the orange

peel and the crystallized ginger. Do not skip the crystallized ginger– it transforms this cake from an ordinary fruitcake to a transcendent experience. Merry Christmas! There are two presents in this post – the recipe and my nutso husband impersonating Paul Hollywood.

Feeding the fruitcake

Christmas Fruitcake



- 300 g dried dates (chopped)
- 450 g sultanas (golden raisins)
- 225 g dried apricots (chopped)
- 142 g dried cherries (chopped)
- 114 g candied orange peel (chopped)
- 100 g crystallized ginger (chopped, I used Beech's)
- 115 g sliced almonds (toasted and chopped)
- 1 medium orange (zest and juice)
- 70 ml brandy (plus more for feeding)
- 225 g unsalted butter (softened)
- 200 g brown sugar

- 5 large eggs
- 280 g all purpose flour

Glaze

- 2 tbsp apricot jam

Marzipan

- 90 g granulated sugar
- 140 g confectioner's sugar
- 220 g almond flour
- 1/2 tsp almond extract
- 1 large egg (beaten)

Royal icing

- 3 large egg whites (90 g)
- 750 g confectioner's sugar
- 2 tsp glycerine
- 1 tbsp lemon juice

1. Combine all the dried fruit and almonds in a large bowl. Add orange zest, juice, and brandy. Cover and leave at room temperature for several hours or overnight.
2. Preheat oven to 300°F. Line the base and sides of an 8"x3" cake pan with 2 layers of parchment paper.
3. In a very large mixing bowl, beat the butter and sugar together for several minutes until pale and fluffy. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, with a little flour each time. Stir in the fruit mixture. Sift in the remaining flour over the mixture and fold in with a large spoon. Pour the mixture into the cake pan and level the surface.
4. Bake in the middle of the oven for 3 hours then check with a long skewer to make sure it comes out clean. Let

it cool before removing from the pan. Then let it cool completely, even overnight, before wrapping in parchment paper and then foil.

5. Feed it with brandy for at least two days or up to three months: use a skewer to poke several holes in the cake. Pour 1-2 tbsp over the top of the cake. Do this once a day if you only have a couple of days before serving the cake or every few days if you have longer. Wrap it back up in the parchment and foil afterward.
6. Heat the jam with one tbsp of water until liquid and brush the entire cake with it.
7. Dust your counter with a small amount of confectioner's sugar. Roll out 300 g of the marzipan into a large circle and use the cake pan to cut out an 8" circle. Lay this on top of the cake. Roll out the rest of the marzipan into two 3"x 13" strips and use these to cover the sides of the cake, trimming to fit. Press the edges of the marzipan pieces together to seal.
8. Frost the cake with the royal icing and decorate as desired. Leave to set until icing is firm.

Marzipan

1. Combine the sugars and almond flour in a large bowl and mix well. Stir in the almond extract and egg with a fork until evenly combined.
2. Turn out onto a surface dusted with confectioner's sugar and knead until smooth. Cover in saran wrap and chill for 3 hours or overnight before using.

Royal icing

1. Beat the egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer until

frothy. Add the icing sugar gradually. When all the icing sugar has been added, add the glycerine and lemon juice and continue beating until the icing is thick and holds peaks. You might need to add water, 1 tbsp at a time, to thin it out just enough to easily spread on the cake but the icing should still hold stiff peaks.