

ROBERTA'S REVISED AND REORGANIZED [SHORT-FORM\* ANNOTATED]  
HALF-RECIPE for BABA'S CHALLAH

1. In a measuring cup, put  
1/4 c. warm water  
1 pkg (2 1/4 tsps) dry yeast  
1 tsp sugar.

Baba said: "Let stand **10 minutes**." I say "until yeast froth reaches 1 cup."  
N.B.: The entire process takes at least **6 hrs**. I average 8-10 hrs or more.

2. Into a very large bowl, sift  
2 sifters flour

This is ~8 c. or about 2 lbs, 5 oz. or slightly less than half of a 5 lb. bag; the rest of the half is used for flouring the board. For WHOLE WHEAT CHALLAH use 6 c white flour (sifted) and 2 c whole wheat flour (not sifted).

1/4 c. sugar  
1 T. salt

Make a hollow in the center. Add  
yeast mixture

1 1/4 c.\* lukewarm water (and any remaining yeast in the cup)

\*Total water in steps 2 and 3 is 2 cups. Baba used equal amounts in each step. I think using more water earlier works better. If dough after adding all water is too dry and not loose enough, add more water (see below). If it is too wet, add a little flour, or a little flax seed. A little means add by 1 or .5 T until you're happy. Dough SHOULD be somewhat sticky.

Mix with wooden spoon or small square plastic scraper (my preference) to incorporate all loose flour: the dough will be in shreds. THIS TAKES MUSCLES AND MINUTES (7+). Let sit **1/2 hr**.

3. Remove your rings and assemble:

bread board

scoop + small bowl with flour for dusting the board

1 large bowl, with ~ 2 T oil in the bottom

1 tea towels (cotton or linen), , dampened, to cover bowl

wooden spoon, little plastic scraper or plastic spatula (or all 3)

4. Make hollow in center of dough and add

3 eggs

1/3 c. vegetable oil

Mix with wooden spoon, scraper, spatula or hands, drawing up all the dry bits at the bottom of the bowl. Again, this takes TIME - maybe 10-15 minutes. Let your mind wander as you mix. Then add gradually:

3/4 c (or more) additional lukewarm water.

(Do NOT try to save time by adding the water with the eggs and oil. You won't. Adding eggs and oil first makes incorporating the water faster and easier.) I often rub 1/8 c water into a dry part of the dough, making a creamy area, then bring up dry dough from the interior and rub in more water until all the water is incorporated. Play with the dough until there's no excess water. If you use bread flour, dough will be VERY sticky and loose. Knead for ~5 minutes on a floured board, incorporating more flour (especially if you're not used to working with sticky dough), or just play/knead right in the bowl. As you work it, the dough will hang together better and get more velvety. If it is too wet for fold-and-turn kneading, you can do that after the first rise. Don't worry about lumps, either. They'll disappear in the rise. The texture, by the time you have to braid it, will be, as Baba says in her official recipe, "velvety and smooth."

Gather the dough and put it in the oiled bowl. Turn over, or top with more oil (~1 tsp) if it's too loose to turn, and cover with a damp tea towel.

Step 4 can take an HOUR. If I use a board, I sometimes wash out the bowl while the dough rests. Resting makes the dough easier to work with.

5. Let rise till double **2 hours**. Punch down, fold/pinch edges together and turn over (I usually knead for 20-30 turns) and let rise/double again >~ **1 hour**. Divide into loaf amounts and braid. Per Baba, this recipe makes 2 normal (5-strand braid) loaves or 1 double (two 5-strand braids, one on top of the other) and 10 rolls. Instead of rolls, I often make a 3-braid in a mini-loaf pan.

Place in greased bread pans. Let rise in pan **45 minutes**, while oven preheats to 350 degrees.

6. When the loaves have risen, brush tops with 1 beaten egg and sprinkle with seeds (poppy or sesame) if you like seeds. Bake at 350 degrees for **45 minutes** (rolls or miniloaf take ~20 minutes). Remove from pan as soon as you can to cool on rack. Freezes well. Thaw (or not) and reheat at 300 for 15-20 min.

\* OMITTED: 1990-2007 comments on my struggle with Baba's terse recipe.

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Short form: 8/21/09/3/1/10 Short-half: 6/3/11, 6/21/12