

## Challah

3 to 3 ¼ cups (15 to 16 ¼ oz) unbleached all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting the work surface

1 envelope (about 2 ¼ teaspoons) instant yeast

¼ cup (1 ¾ oz) sugar

1 ¼ teaspoons salt

2 large eggs plus 1 egg yolk (reserve the white for egg wash)

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted

½ cup water at room temperature

1 teaspoons poppy or sesame seeds (optional)

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together 3 cups of the flour, the yeast, sugar, and salt. Set aside. In bowl of a standing mixer, mix together the 2 eggs, egg yolk, melted butter, and ½ cup water. Add the flour mixture; using the dough hook knead at low speed until a ball of dough forms, about 5 minutes, adding the remaining flour, ¼ cup at a time, if necessary. (This can all be done in a bowl by hand and kneaded on a floured surface until smooth.) In a small bowl whisk the egg white together with the remaining 1 tablespoon of water. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate the egg wash until ready to use.
2. Place the dough in a lightly oiled large bowl, turning the dough to coat with the oil. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until double in size, 1 ½ to 2 hours. Gently press the dough to deflate it, cover with plastic wrap, and let rise until doubled again, 40 to 60 minutes. (When short on time, you can omit this second rise and go directly to shaping the loaf. I usually do.)
3. Transfer the dough to a floured surface. Divide it into 3 equal pieces and shape them into 16 inch long ropes about 1 inch in diameter. Braid the ropes into a single loaf and pinch the ends to seal. Place on a greased baking sheet and brush with the reserved egg white wash. Cover lightly with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place for 30 to 45 minutes, until it is puffy and increases in size by a third (it will increase much more during baking).
4. Adjust an oven rack to the lower middle position and heat the oven to 375. Brush the loaf with the remaining egg wash and sprinkle with seeds, if using. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes until it sounds hollow when tapped or reads 190 on an instant read thermometer. Cool completely on a wire rack before slicing or serving at your Shabbat dinner.