

BANANA CHOCOLATE CHIP CHALLAH

INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 cup warm water
- 1 pkg active dry yeast (2 1/4 teaspoons)
- 1 tablespoon honey (the better the quality, the happier the challah)
- 2 eggs plus 1 egg yolk, divided
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 tsp kosher salt (iodized is stronger—use less)
- 3–4 cups flour (my cup of flour weighs 130 grams/4.5 oz)
- 2 1/2 defrosted bananas—the ones hidden in the back of your freezer you always said you would use for something
- 1 teaspoon (or a little more) of vanilla
- 1–2 cups chocolate chips (again, the better the quality the happier the challah)
- 1 egg for glaze
- Raw or coarse sugar, cinnamon, and chocolate chips for top of challah, to taste

DIRECTIONS:

1. Add the warm water, yeast, and 1 tablespoon honey to a large mixing bowl (Kitchen Aid or other electric mixer). Stir briefly until yeast is dissolved. Wait 10 minutes until the mixture has a foamy layer on top.
2. Add the egg and egg yolk, defrosted bananas, vegetable oil, salt, and 1 cup of flour. Mix well with beater.
3. Add another cup of flour
4. Switch to the dough hook if you're using an electric mixer and add third cup of flour (If mixing by hand, when the dough is too dense to mix with a spatula, use your hands.)
5. After the flour is mixed in, knead the dough for 5 minutes. If it's still really wet, add the last cup of flour. If you are using a mixer, knead on high for at least 5 minutes. Keep kneading as you need and don't overflour. Have patience—it will come together on the hook. The dough is done kneading when it is a) shiny, b) comes together in a ball, c) while sticky, would rather stick to itself, and d) when you pull a piece, it doesn't rip but becomes thin/see-through.
6. Place in a greased bowl and cover with a towel. Place in a warm area in your kitchen. Let rise for 1–2 hours or until doubled in size.
7. After the dough has doubled in size, knock it down with your hands to release the air bubbles. Knead in the chocolate chips...as many as you desire.
8. *Preheat oven to Convection Bake 350F.** On floured parchment with floured fingers, divide into 3 or 6 balls (one large or two small). Make into ropes and braid challah. Braid from center out. Dough is very sticky, so it's tricky.
9. Mix remaining egg with a teaspoon or so of water. Brush challah with egg and sprinkle with coarse sugar, cinnamon, or chocolate chips or leave plain. Rest 15–30 minutes, then bake for 20–35 minutes on middle oven rack, or until top is golden to your liking. If you are using a thermometer, the challah is ready when the inside hits 180°F.

**Overnight Option: Once the challah is all formed/braided, I place it in fridge on a baking sheet with loosely wrapped plastic wrap. You need space for it to rise. It is supposed to last up to 24 hours in fridge, but I find that if you do it more than 20 hours, the structure can collapse when you glaze with egg or even just set on counter. One hour or so before you need it, preheat oven to 350 F and take challah out of fridge. Let the oven preheat at least 30 minutes, then glaze the challah with egg and place in the oven to bake.*

***I bake my challah in convection bake and it gives that nice crust. However, you need to adjust temp and keep an eye. Every oven is different (and how big the challah you are baking etc.) so between bake or convection I bake somewhere between 325F/375F.*