STORMY THE CAT TEACHES YOU TO MAKE CHALLAH
WHY BAKE CHALLAH?

Traditionally, Challah is eaten every week on Shabbat.

Two loaves are prepared to represent the double portion of manna that the Israelites received on the Sabbath day, while wandering in the wilderness.

Challah is also eaten on Rosh Hashanah, Jewish New Year.

These loaves are round to represent the cyclical nature of the seasons.
WHO IS STORMY?

STORMY IS A FORMERLY FERAL HOUSECAT, WHO LIKES TO EAT CHALLAH ALMOST AS MUCH AS TUNA.

DURING A HEAVY RAIN STORM IN 2015, HE APPEARED AT THE BACK DOOR OF A HOUSE IN SAN JOSE, CA. HE WAS VERY UNDERWEIGHT AND HAD SEVERE NERVE DAMAGE IN HIS BACK LEGS.

WITH TIME AND CARE, HE SLOWLY LEARNED TO TRUST PEOPLE, AND FOUND THAT HE LOVES BEING DOTTED ON (AND HAS QUITE A BOSSY STREAK!)

IN 2017 HE MADE A BIG MOVE TO HIS FOREVER HOME IN SEATTLE, WHERE HE LIVES A LIFE OF LUXURY WITH ALL THE CHALLAH AND TUNA HE CAN (SAFELY) EAT.
TOOLS YOU'LL NEED

KITCHEN SCALE
LARGE (2.5 QUART 2.4 LITER) BOWL
MEDIUM BOWL (1 QUART 1.2 LITER)
3 SMALL (1 CUP 200 ML) BOWLS
500 ML (2 CUPS) MEASURING CUP
BIG WHISK
VERY STURDY FORK
DOUGH SCRAPER
CUTTING BOARD OR PASTRY MAT
LARGE BAKING SHEET
PARCHMENT PAPER
PLASTIC WRAP
WARM PLACE FOR PROVING
REGULAR FORK
PASTRY BRUSH
MEAT THERMOMETER
OVEN
FOOD YOU’LL NEED

11 GRAMS ACTIVE DRY YEAST
(3 3/4 TEASPOONS)
13 GRAMS WHITE SUGAR
(1 TABLESPOON)
415 ML LUKEWARM WATER
(1 3/4 CUPS)
118 ML VEGETABLE OIL
(1/2 CUP)
5 LARGE EGGS
100 GRAMS WHITE SUGAR
(1/2 CUP)
14 GRAMS TABLE SALT
(1 TABLESPOON)
1000 GRAMS AP FLOUR
(8 CUPS)
POPPY SEEDS - OPTIONAL
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SETTING UP

Prep your kneading space by laying out either a large cutting board over a damp towel (for grip) or a silicone pastry mat on a flat surface at a comfortable height.

If the room is under 70F/20C, make a proving box by placing a pan of boiling water on the bottom rack of a cold oven.

Collect your tools and ingredients.
Mis en Place

Measure out your ingredients into bowls before you start to form the dough.

While it does make a few extra dishes, I promise it's worth the effort.

It takes time to measure as you go, and yeast waits for no one!

Weight measurements of dry ingredients are more accurate than volumes; weigh your flour for a consistent bake.
ACTIVATE THE YEAST

IN THE LARGE BOWL, GENTLY DISSOLVE 13 GRAMS OF SUGAR AND 14 GRAMS OF ACTIVE DRY YEAST IN 415 ML LUKEWARM WATER

LET THE MIXTURE SIT IN A WARM PLACE FOR 5-10 MINUTES OR UNTIL IT FOAMS (THINK CAPPUCINO)

AT THIS POINT YOU’LL START TO SEE STORMY SPYING ON YOU, BECAUSE THE SCENT OF BREAD IS IN THE AIR

DO NOT SHARE THE “YEAST CAPPUCINO” WITH YOUR CAT
FORM THE DOUGH

Whisk the 118 mL oil into the yeast, then beat in:
- 4 eggs (one at a time)
- 100 grams sugar
- 14 grams table salt

Gradually whisk in flour until the dough is too sticky to whisk.

Switch to the sturdy fork, and continue to add flour until the dough holds a very shaggy ball shape.

This should be sort of a "floam"-like consistency, soft but not liquid.
Kneading

Spread some flour over your work surface, and scrape the dough out onto it.

Immediately fill the bowl with hot water to soak off any remaining bits of dough.

Knead the dough for 10-15 minutes, adding flour as you go along until the dough's texture feels smooth.

The dough is ready to prove when it no longer sticks to the work surface, and a small piece can be stretched thin enough to see light through without breaking the dough (the windowpane test).
PROVING

CHALLAH PROVES THREE TIMES!

RINSE OUT AND DRY THE LARGE BOWL, AND COAT THE INSIDE WITH VEGETABLE OIL

PULL YOUR DOUGH INTO A NEAT BALL, AND PLACE IT IN THE BOWL

COVER WITH PLASTIC WRAP, AND LET RISE IN A WARM PLACE FOR 60 MINUTES

ONCE IT'S AT LEAST DOUBLED, PUNCH THE DOUGH DOWN AND LET IT RISE FOR 30 MORE MINUTES

(THE THIRD PROOF COMES LATER)
BRAIDING

TURN THE DOUGH OUT ONTO YOUR WORK SURFACE

CUT THE DOUGH INTO 8 PIECES, WEIGHING THEM TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE EQUAL

ROLL 4 PIECES INTO FAT LITTLE LOGS, LET THEM REST SEAM-SIDE-DOWN FOR 2-5 MINUTES, THEN ROLL THEM INTO LONG TAPERED ROPEs

BRAID THE ROPEs INTO A LOAF. THE DIAGRAMS ARE OPTIONAL: ALL BRAIDS ARE GOOD BRAIDS

TUCK THE ENDS OF THE BRAID UNDER TO PREVENT BURNING

REPEAT BRAIDING WITH THE REMAINING 4 PIECES OF DOUGH TO MAKE THE SECOND LOAF
BRAIDING

CONNECT ROPEs AT ONE END

SWAP 1 & 4

PUT 4 BETWEEN 2 & 3

MOVE 3 TO FAR LEFT

PUT 1 BETWEEN 2 & 4

MOVE 2 TO FAR RIGHT

REPEAT: PUT 3 BETWEEN 1 & 4, PUT 2 BETWEEN 3 & 4, MOVE 4 TO FAR RIGHT, AND SO ON

ROSH HASHANAH ROUND LOAVES

MAKE A LATTICE

TWIST EACH CORNER PAIR

CONTINUE TwISTING ADJACENT PAIRS
FINAL PROOF

BEAT THE REMAINING WHOLE EGG IN A SMALL BOWL

LINE THE LARGE BAKING SHEET WITH PARCHMENT AND ARRANGE BRAIDED LOAVES WITH ROOM FOR THEM TO RISE

BRUSH BOTH LOAVES GENEROUSLY WITH EGG WASH

ALLOW LOAVES TO PROVE IN A WARM PLACE FOR 60 MINUTES

DURING THIS PROOF, PREHEAT THE OVEN TO 375°F/190°C
BAKING

Just before putting the loaves in to bake, brush on a second egg wash and sprinkle the loaves with poppy seeds.

Bake for 25-40 minutes, until golden brown and a thermometer poked into the center of each loaf comes out clean (and reads 190°F/88°C).

Your challah should have a shiny hard crust and soft fluffy crumb.

Let the loaves cool at least until you can touch them without oven mitts before cutting or tearing.
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