## Salt and Serenity

 Challah Babka (Babkala)

Makes 2 loaves

**Dough:**

4 grams (1 teaspoon) sugar

1 cup warm water (115 –120° F)

8 grams (1 tablespoon) traditional yeast (active dry yeast)

360 grams (3 cups) all-purpose flour

120 grams (1 cup) whole wheat flour

113 grams (1/3 cup) honey

6 grams (1 teaspoon) kosher salt

1 large egg, lightly beaten

49 grams (¼ cup) vegetable oil

**Cinnamon Filling:**

112 grams (1/2 cup) unsalted butter, melted

160 grams (3/4 cup) light brown sugar

49 grams (1/4 cup) white sugar

5 grams (2 teaspoons) ground cinnamon

Pinch kosher salt

1 cup golden raisins

**Streusel Topping:**

28 grams (2 tablespoons) cold unsalted butter, cut into ¼ inch pieces

40 grams (1/3 cup) all-purpose flour

25 grams (1/8 cup) white sugar

Pinch of kosher salt

1 large egg, lightly beaten

1. In a 2-cup liquid measuring cup, dissolve 1 teaspoon sugar in 1 cup warm water. Sprinkle yeast on top and let stand for about 5 minutes, until yeast gets all bubbly.
2. Make the dough in a stand mixer: Place all-purpose flour, sugar and salt in the stand mixer bowl, fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix briefly to combine. Pour dissolved yeast mixture into machine and mix for about 1 minute. Add egg and oil and mix again for about 30 seconds. Add whole wheat flour and mix on medium-low speed for about 1minute. Remove paddle attachment and switch to the dough hook. Mix on lowest speed for 10 minutes, until dough is smooth and satiny.
3. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead for a minute and then form the dough into a ball and transfer it to a large oiled mixing bowl. Turn dough until all sides are coated. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and set aside. Let it rise at room temperature for about 2 hours, or until doubled in bulk. A good test to see if the dough has risen enough is to insert your finger to a depth of 1 inch and wait to see if the impression remains. If the impression fills in, wait another 15 to 20 minutes to let rising continue.
4. Make cinnamon filling: Mix together melted butter, brown and white sugar, cinnamon and salt. Set aside.
5. Make streusel topping: Place cold butter, flour, sugar and salt in a medium sized bowl. Use your fingers or a fork, cut in the butter until fine crumbs form. Set aside.
6. Spray two 8½ x 4½ inch loaf pans with cooking spray. Line pans with parchment paper. If you are unsure of the best way to do this, check out this video:
7. <http://www.saltandserenity.com/tag/how-to-line-a-pan-with-parchment-paper/>
8. After the dough has risen, gently punch it down to deflate it. Divide it into 2equal pieces and roll each piece into a 9x14 inch rectangle. Position the dough so that the short sides are closest to you. Spread half the cinnamon mixture onto the one piece of dough. Sprinkle half the raisins over the dough. Press them gently into the dough. Starting at the short end, use both hands to roll up the rectangle like a roulade, starting from the short side that is closest to you. Press to seal the dampened end of the roll. Use both hands to even out the roll into a perfect thick cigar. Rest the cigar on its seam on a parchment lined baking sheet and freeze for 15 minutes.
9. Use a sharp serrated knife to gently cut the roll into half lengthwise, starting at the top and finishing at the seam. You are essentially dividing the log into two long even halves, with the layers of dough and filling visible along the length of both halves. With the cut sides facing up, gently press together one end of each half, and then lift the right half over the left half. Repeat this process, but this time, lift the left half over the right, to create a simple, two strand braid. Continue until you have finished braiding.
10. Gently squeeze the other end together so that you are left with the two halves, intertwined, showing the filling on top. Carefully lift the babka into the lined loaf pan. Repeat with the second roll of dough. Cover the pans with a tea towel and leave them to rise in a warm place for 60-90 minutes.
11. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Remove the tea towels, place the cakes on the middle rack of the oven, and bake for about 35-40 minutes, until a skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. (Or check with an instant read thermometer. The dough should register 200°F in the thickest part of the babka.)
12. Let cool in the pans for about 10 minutes and then tip the loaves out of the pans and let cool completely on a wire rack.