

## **Five Strand Challah with String of Pearls**

Makes two 12-inch challahs. A scale is extremely helpful for making this challah.

4 grams (1 teaspoon) sugar  
1 cup warm water (115 –120° F)  
8 grams (1 tablespoon) traditional yeast (active dry yeast)  
420 grams (3½ cups) all-purpose flour  
113 grams (⅔ cup) honey  
1 large egg, lightly beaten  
49 grams (¼ cup) vegetable oil  
120 grams (1 cup) whole wheat flour  
6 grams (1 teaspoon) kosher salt  
1 egg, mixed with 1 Tablespoon water for brushing challah

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 and honey 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 salt and mix on medium-low speed for about 1 minute. 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 60-90 minutes. It won't necessarily double in size, but it will become noticeably puffy. After one hour, perform this test: insert your finger, 1-inch deep, into the dough, and wait to see if the impression remains. If the indentation springs back slowly, but not completely, then it is ready to shape. If the impression fills in immediately, wait another 15 to 20 minutes to let rising continue.
4. Once dough has risen, remove from bowl and weigh the dough. Divide that weight by 12 and proceed to divide dough into 12 equal pieces. Shape each piece into a rough log, about 3-4 inches in length. Cover the logs with plastic wrap and let them rest for 10 minutes.

5. Shape each log into a rope, about 10-11 inches long. When rolling, taper the ends of the rope so that the middle is a bit thicker. If the dough starts to spring back when rolling, cover it with plastic wrap and let it rest for about 10 minutes. The gluten needs time to relax! (just like people!)
6. Shape into a 5-strand braid: Take 5 strands and lay them on counter. Keep remaining 7 strands covered so they do not dry out. Arrange the strands so that are 3 on one side and 2 on the other.
7. I like to start my braiding in the middle of the strand, so that the loaf is more even. You can also start at the top, if you prefer. There is a video on my blog showing the braiding process. (It's way easier to understand if you watch)
8. Move the outside of the 3 ropes to the inside of the 2 ropes. Starting from the side that now has 3 ropes, move the outside rope to the middle, next to the 2 ropes. Continue to the end of your dough. Pinch the ends together and give them a little roll.
9. Flip half braided dough over and repeat with other end. Remove a 6<sup>th</sup> strand from the covered pile of reserve ropes, and, using the side of your hand, roll, every ½ inch, along the strand, using firm pressure so that you end up with a string of pearls. Don't stress if the strand breaks. You can reattach by gently pressing.
10. Using a thin rolling pin or handle of a wooden spoon, make a slight indentation down the center of the entire length of the loaf. Brush indentation with egg wash and glue the string of pearls onto the center of the braid. Repeat with second loaf.
11. Gently lift loaves and lay on a large parchment lined baking sheet, or 2 smaller lined baking sheets. Add a second baking sheet under the first one, as the bottom of this bread gets dark very quickly. A double baking sheet helps insulate the bread.
12. Cover with a lightly greased plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature, until it is very puffy, 90 minutes to 2 hours. After 1 hour, preheat oven to 375°F. Test the dough, by gently poking your finger into the side of the braid. If the indentation fills in quickly, it needs more rising time. If it slowly fills in, but not completely, it is ready for glazing.
13. Brush loaves with egg wash. Bake in the center of the preheated oven for 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, check the challahs. If they are deep golden brown on top, tent them loosely with foil wrap to prevent over-browning. Bake for an additional 5-10 minutes until the interior temperature measures 190°F on an instant read digital thermometer.
14. Remove from oven and let cool on a rack.

Do ahead notes: Prepare the loaves up to the end of step 11. Cover with lightly greased plastic wrap and place in fridge overnight. The next morning, remove dough from fridge, (keep it covered), and let warm and rise at room temperature for one hour. Brush with egg wash and bake as directed.