

Apple Honey Round Challah

-Recipe from Tory Avey

Servings: 16; Prep Time: 3hours 20 minutes; Cook Time 50 minutes

Dough Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups lukewarm water, divided
- 1/4 oz active dry yeast (1 packet)
- 1 tsp sugar (Baker's Sugar, preferably)
- 1 large egg
- 3 large egg yolks
- 3/4 cup honey
- 2 tbsp canola oil
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 2 tsp salt
- 5-7 cups flour
- 3 medium granny smith apples
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tbsp turbinado sugar (optional)

Egg Wash Ingredients

- 1 large egg
- 1 tbsp cold water
- 1/2 tsp salt

1. Pour 1/4 cup of the lukewarm water (about 110 degrees) into a large mixing bowl. Add 1 packet of Active Dry Yeast and 1 tsp of sugar to the bowl, whisk to dissolve. Wait 10 minutes. The yeast should have activated, meaning it will look expanded and foamy. If it doesn't, your yeast may have expired, which means your bread won't rise—go buy some fresh yeast!
2. Once your yeast has activated, add remaining 1 1/4 cup lukewarm water to the bowl along with the egg, egg yolks, honey, canola oil, vanilla, and salt. Use a whisk to thoroughly blend the ingredients together.
3. Begin adding the flour to the bowl by half-cupfuls, stirring with a large spoon each time flour is added. When mixture becomes too thick to stir, use your hands to knead.
4. Continue to add flour and knead the dough until it's smooth, elastic, and not sticky. The amount of flour you will need to achieve this texture varies—only add flour until the dough feels pliable and "right." Turn the dough out onto a smooth surface and knead a few more times.
5. Place a saucepan full of water on the stove to boil.
6. Wash out the mixing bowl that you used to mix the challah dough. Grease the bowl with canola oil. Push the dough back into the bottom of the bowl, then flip it over so that both sides are slightly moistened by the oil.

7. Cover the bowl with a clean, damp kitchen towel. Place the bowl of dough on the middle rack of your oven. Take the saucepan full of boiling water and place it below the rack where your dough sits. Close the oven, but do not turn it on. The pan of hot water will create a warm, moist environment for your dough to rise. Let the dough rise for 1 hour.
8. Take the dough bowl out and punch it down several times to remove air pockets. Place it back inside the oven and let it rise for 1 hour longer.
9. During this final rise, fill a mixing bowl with cold water and dissolve $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of salt in it. Peel the apples and dice them into very small pieces, about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch large. Place the diced apples into the bowl of lightly salted water. Reserve. When you are ready to begin braiding the dough, drain the apple pieces and pat them dry with paper towels. Toss the apple pieces with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar. If you'd like, you can add $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of cinnamon to the sugar to give the apples an apple-cinnamon flavor.
10. Take the dough out of the oven; it should have doubled in size during this final rise. If it has not fully risen, return it to the oven till it's had a chance to properly rise. When the dough is ready, flour a smooth surface like a cutting board. Punch the dough down into the bowl a few times, then turn the dough out onto the floured surface. Knead the dough a bit, adding flour as needed to keep it from feeling sticky. You will have enough dough for two medium-sized challot (challahs).
11. Divide the dough into two equal halves. Put one half of the dough on a smooth, lightly floured surface. Leave the other half of the dough in the bowl covered by a moist towel. Cut the dough on the floured surface into four equal portions.
12. Take one of the four portions and stretch it with your fingers into a rough rectangle, about 1 foot long and 3-4 inches wide. Use a rolling pin to smooth the dough, if it helps. The rectangle doesn't need to look perfect, and it shouldn't be too thin-- the dough needs to be thick enough to handle an apple filling.
13. Sprinkle some of the sugared apple pieces across the center of the rectangle. You should use about $\frac{1}{8}$ of the apple pieces in each rectangle. Liquid will collect in the apple bowl as you progress—do not transfer the liquid to the dough, or it will weaken and become mushy. Do your best to shake off excess liquid before placing the apples on the dough. Leave at least $\frac{1}{2}$ inch border along the outer edge of the dough clean, with no apples.
14. Gently roll the upper edge of the rectangle down to the lower edge and pinch to seal, creating a snake-like roll of dough stuffed with apples. This is the beginning of your strand.
15. Gently and carefully roll the stuffed strand till it becomes smooth, using gentle pressure with your hands on the center of the strand, pulling outward as you roll. If any apples begin to poke through the dough, repair the hole with your fingers before you continue. Re-flour the surface as needed to keep your dough from sticking.
16. Taper the ends of the strand by clasping between both palms and rolling. At the end of the rolling process, your strand should be about 16 to 18 inches long with tapered ends.
17. Once your apple strand has been rolled, repeat the process with the remaining 3 pieces of dough, making sure that they are even in length with the first strand. In the end, you'll have 4 apple-stuffed strands.

18. Now your stuffed strands are ready to braid. There are a few different ways to braid 4 strands into a challah. This recipe will guide you through one method for braiding a round four strand challah.

19. Place two strands in the center of a smooth surface, running parallel top to bottom. Place the third strand across the two strands, going under the left strand and over the right. Place the fourth strand directly below the third strand, going over the left strand and under the right. You will have something similar to a tic-tac-toe board pattern, with the center of the board being a very small square and 8 “legs” sticking out from that center. Keep the center as tight as possible... you’ll be braiding from the center. I have numbered the strand ends in the following diagram to make the braiding process easier.

20. Take strand 1 and cross it over strand 2.

21. Take strand 3 and cross it over strand 4.

22. Take strand 5 and cross it over strand 6.

23. Take strand 7 and cross it over strand 8.

24. Take strand 2 and cross it back the opposite way, over strand 7.

25. Take strand 8 and cross it over strand 5.

26. Take strand 6 and cross it over strand 3.

27. Take strand 4 and cross it over strand 1.

28. Take strand 7 and twist it with strand 4.

29. Tuck the twisted ends under the challah.

30. Repeat this process with the remaining loose ends—twist and tuck 1 with 6, then 3 and 8, then 5 and 2.

31. When the loose ends are twisted under, gently plump the challah into a nice, even round shape.

32. After the round has been braided, place it on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Let the braid rise 30 to 45 minutes longer. You’ll know the dough is ready to bake when you press your finger into the dough and the indentation stays, rather than bouncing back. While this challah rises, you can braid the other half of the dough in the same way, or you might choose a different braid for your second challah. No matter which way you braid, you can conceal the apple pieces inside the strands using the same method described above. Your second challah will rise as the first one bakes.

33. Prepare your egg wash by beating the egg, salt, and water till smooth. Use a pastry brush to brush a thin layer of the mixture onto the visible surface of your challah. Reserve the leftover egg wash. Sprinkle the top of the challah with 1 tbsp turbinado sugar, if you wish.

34. Each challah needs to bake for about 45 minutes total, but to get the best result the baking should be done in stages. First, set your timer to 20 minutes and put your challah in the oven.

35. After 20 minutes, take the challah out of the oven and coat the grooves of the braid with another thin layer of egg wash. These areas tend to expand during baking, exposing dough that will turn white unless they are coated with egg wash. Turn the challah around, so the opposite side faces front, and put it back into the oven. Turning it will help your challah brown evenly—the back of the oven is usually hotter than the front.

36. The challah will need to bake for about 20 minutes longer. For this last part of the baking process, keep an eye on your challah—it may be browning faster than it's baking. Once the challah is browned to your liking, take it out and tent it with foil, then place it back in the oven. Remove the foil for the last 2 minutes of baking time.

37. Take the challah out of the oven. At this point your house should smell delicious. Test the bread for doneness by turning it over and tapping on the bottom of the loaf—if it makes a hollow sound, and it's golden brown all the way across, it's done. Because of the apples in this challah, it may take a bit longer to bake than your regular challah recipe. Err on the side of letting it cook longer to make sure it's baked all the way through. You can also stick an instant read thermometer in the thickest part of the challah-- when it reads 190, it is baked all the way through. Let challah cool completely on a wire cooling rack before serving. Bake the second challah in the same way.

Nutrition Facts

Apple Honey Challah

Amount Per Serving

Calories 247

Calories from Fat 27

% Daily Value*

Fat 3g	5%
---------------	-----------

Cholesterol 57mg	19%
-------------------------	------------

Sodium 376mg	16%
---------------------	------------

Potassium 66mg	2%
-----------------------	-----------

Carbohydrates 48g	16%
--------------------------	------------

Fiber 1g	4%
----------	----

Sugar 18g	20%
-----------	-----

Protein 5g	10%
-------------------	------------

Vitamin A 80IU	2%
-----------------------	-----------

Vitamin C 0.1mg	0%
------------------------	-----------

Calcium 15mg	2%
---------------------	-----------

Iron 2.1mg	12%
-------------------	------------

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2000 calorie diet.