



— Jewish Life and Practice

Sabbath Bread (Hallah)



<i>An Old Sephardic Recipe*</i>
2 cups water (tepid)
1 package yeast (rapid rise)
2 tablespoons sugar
1 pound semolina flour
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
3 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 cup sesame seeds
1 cup of white flour
1 egg yolk

Preparation:

Heat water until warm. In a small bowl, dilute yeast and 1/2 teaspoon sugar in 4 tablespoons of warm water; cover and let rise for 10-15 minutes.

In the meantime, combine the semolina flour, salt, remaining sugar, olive oil, and half of the sesame seeds in a large bowl. Add the yeast and the rest of the warm water when it starts forming bubbles. (The quantity of water added is crucial; it is preferable that the dough be slightly on the wet side.)

Let dough stand for 10-15 minutes, so that the semolina may absorb the water. Then knead the dough vigorously while gradually adding small quantities of white flour until the dough is smooth and does not stick to the surface.

Form two loaves (plus two small balls for the braid) and set on a baking sheet in a warm and humid place to rise. (Allow 1-2 hours for the rising process, depending on the temperature and humidity of the place.) When the dough has doubled in volume, preheat the oven to 350° F. Take the two small balls of dough, knead them again rapidly, and separate each ball into 3 parts so as to roll each ball into 3 strings and from them form 2 braids. Place each braid over the center of each loaf, apply the egg yolk with a brush, and sprinkle the top with the remaining sesame seeds.

Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes on the middle rack of the oven. Allow bread to cool on a rack for 1/2 hour.

* This recipe for Sabbath *hallah* bread was used by editor Jacques Doukhan's mother and has been passed down through their family for generations



An Ashkenazic Recipe

1 cup warm water
2 packages of yeast
1/4 cup oil
1 egg lightly beaten
3 egg yolks
1/4 cup sugar
4 cups flour
salt
1 egg yolk beaten

Preparation:

In a bowl, pour the yeast into the warm water and mix. Add the lightly beaten egg and the 3 egg yolks, oil, sugar, flour, and salt to taste. Mix until the dough separates from the sides of the bowl. Knead the dough, adding more flour as needed if the dough is sticky or soft. The dough should become firm. Knead until the dough becomes elastic (10 to 15 minutes). Put the dough in an oily bowl, and cover until the dough has grown at least three times its volume. Shape to your taste: braid, round, or plain bread. Brush with the remaining egg yolk; when dry, brush again with the egg yolk to obtain a shiny effect.

Bake in the middle of a preheated 350° F oven.

Enjoy your homemade *hallah!* *Shabbat shalom!*

The Ideal Sabbath Meal

Nobel Prize in Literature recipient S. Y. Agnon describes the Sabbath meal of a saintly old Jewish couple in these terms: “He received the Sabbath with sweet song and chanted the hallowing tunefully over raisin wine; while it was still day and the sun came to gaze in the glass. . . . The table was well spread with all manner of fruit, beans, green stuffs and good pies, plum water tasting like wine, but of flesh and fish there was never a sign. . . . In truth it is in no way obligatory to eat flesh and fish. . . . The old man and his wife had never tasted flesh since growing in maturity. . . . That old man was one of the Thirty-six Hidden Saints upon whom the whole world rests, and can therefore be presumed to have known what is acceptable to Him (God), may He be blessed” (*The Bridal Canopy* [New York: Schocken Books, 1976], 222-223).