

Fluffy Tangzhong Sourdough Challah

It's not really Challah because it has dairy, but butter is better than oil so...

We went to Chicago when COVID was ending to get out and go somewhere new. Turns out tickets to Chicago in January are quite inexpensive! Brrr. We happened into a Whole Foods market to pick up some provisions and as we walked through the bakery, Duke pointed at some Challah and told me I should try making sourdough Challah.

The first time I made sourdough Challah, I followed a recipe, but it came out like a solid log. I think I didn't let it proof long enough... Anyway, it was delicious so I made it again a couple weeks later and forgot it was rising. I remembered the next morning and it was an obscene poof of dough. Like fat and flabby, voluptuous... It was different. I baked it anyway, and while it was pretty strong in the sourness, the texture was awesome.

Then later, I read about the Tangzhong method of pre-cooking some of the flour and how it results in a super soft end product with a longer shelf life. Turns out you can Tangzhong pretty much any bread recipe, but you need to monkey with the hydration to make sure it's over 75% or so in the end. I read that [here at least](#). So I took my regular Challah recipe and put it in Google sheets to convert it to a Tangzhong long-fermented sourdough challah. Here you go:

For the Tangzhong roux

- All purpose white flour 46g
- water 226g

Rest of the dough

- All purpose white flour 644g
- 4 large eggs ~260g (2 whole eggs, 2 yolks)
- Water 97g
- Butter 180g
- Sugar 120g
- Salt 15g
- Active sourdough starter 125g

Day 1 - 30 mins

1. For the Tangzhong roux, add the flour and water to a sauce pan and cook over medium heat while stirring. After about 4-5 mins it will start to thicken. Once it's thick, remove from heat and let cool to lukewarm

2. In a mixing bowl add water, eggs (2 whole eggs, 2 egg yolks), sugar, salt, starter and Tangzhong roux. Mix this up until pretty evenly distributed. Reserve the two egg whites for the egg wash at the end.
3. Add flour and mix until shaggy
4. Add butter and knead until smooth
5. Put in proofing container for 3-4 hours, should grow ~30%
6. Cover and put in fridge until the next day

Day 2 - end of day - 15 mins

1. Line 9×13 glass baking dish with parchment paper
2. Pull dough out of the proofing container and cut in half
3. Cut each half into thirds, about 230g each
4. Stretch the thirds into 14" long tubes, about an inch thick. I tried rolling them but they are too sticky. Just stretching and shaping works pretty well.
5. Braid the 3 sections together
6. Place in 9×13 glass baking dish and cover
7. Put in the oven overnight, no heat. If it's winter, turn the oven light on.

Day 3 - morning - 45 mins

1. Take glass baking dish out of the oven
2. Loaves should have grown, very soft, might be touch each other, that's ok
3. Set oven to 350 F, convection if you have it
4. Brush egg onto loaves.
5. Sprinkle with topping if desired. We usually do one with sesame seeds, one with everything bagel topping
6. Put in oven at 350 for 35 mins, until golden brown on top
7. Remove and let sit for 45 mins
8. Separate and slice up