

Light Whole Wheat Round Challah

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| 1 pkg. active dry yeast | 1 tsp. salt |
| 1 cup warm water | 1 cup raisins |
| 2 Tbsp. sugar | 1/2 cup Stone-Buhr whole wheat flour |
| 2 Tbsp. oil | 3 cups Stone-Buhr unbleached white bread flour, plus extra for kneading and shaping |
| 1 egg | |
| Topping: | 1 egg yolk mixed with 1 Tbsp. water 2 Tbsp. sesame seeds |

In a large bowl, dissolve yeast in the water. Add the sugar and let proof until it starts to foam, about 5 minutes. Stir in the oil, egg, whole wheat flour and salt with a wooden spoon. Add the white flour gradually. When it gets too hard to mix, scrape it onto a lightly-floured board and knead 8 to 10 minutes, adding more white flour as needed to get a smooth, elastic dough.

Let the dough rest on a lightly-floured board, covered with plastic, for 20 minutes, until it relaxes and starts to rise. Add the raisins and knead briefly until the raisins are incorporated. Transfer to a lightly-oiled bowl and turn to coat. Cover with plastic and let sit at room temperature until doubled, about 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

Turn dough out onto a lightly-floured board and divide into 3 equal pieces. Cover and let rest for 10 minutes. Roll out each piece into a 30-inch rope, making it thicker on one end, and tapering the other end to a point. If the dough starts to resist, let it rest and continue rolling the other pieces. Line up the 3 ropes and, starting with the thicker end, braid the dough, pinching the ends to seal. Again, starting with the thicker end for the center, wind the braid around into a closed circle, slipping the pointed end under the coil and pinching it in place. Gently lift the circle onto a lightly oiled baking sheet that has been sprinkled with cornmeal. The circle of dough will be 7 to 7 1/2 inches across. Cover, and let rise at room temperature until doubled, about 30 to 45 minutes. Brush on the yolk-water mixture, and sprinkle with the sesame seeds.

Bake at about 350°F for 30 to 35 minutes or until it is deeply golden brown and sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom. Cool on a rack. Leftovers make terrific french toast.

Christmas Wreath

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| 1 pkg. active dry yeast | 3 cups Stone-Buhr unbleached white bread flour, plus extra for kneading and shaping |
| 1/2 cup warm milk | 1/2 cup Stone-Buhr whole wheat flour |
| 3 Tbsp. sugar | |
| 3/4 cup orange juice | 1 1/2 cups any combination of your choice of raisins, dry cranberries, dry cherries, or any dry fruit chopped to the size of a raisin |
| 2 Tbsp. butter, softened | |
| 1 tsp. vanilla | |
| Grated rind of 1 orange | |
| 1 tsp. salt | |

Topping: 1 Tbsp. sugar dissolved in 2 Tbsp. warm milk

In a large bowl, dissolve the yeast in the milk. Add the sugar and proof for 5 minutes until foamy. Stir in the orange juice, butter, vanilla, orange rind, salt, whole wheat flour, and 1 1/2 cups of the white flour, and beat well with a wooden spoon. Gradually beat in the rest of the flour. When it gets too hard to mix, turn it onto a floured board and knead until smooth and elastic, about 8 to 10 minutes, adding more flour as needed.

Place dough onto a lightly floured board and cover to rest for 20 minutes, until it relaxes and starts to rise. Add the dry fruit and knead briefly until incorporated onto the dough. Transfer to a lightly-oiled bowl and turn to coat. Cover with plastic and let sit at room temperature to double, about 1 to 1 1/2 hour.

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured board and divide into 3 equal pieces. Cover and rest for 10 minutes. Roll each into a 22-inch rope. If one resists, let it rest and go on to the next one. Do not taper the ends. Braid the ropes together and then shape it into a circle. Join the ends together, pinching to seal, and keeping the braid looking smooth and continuous. Place on a lightly oiled baking sheet that has been sprinkled with cornmeal. Cover and rise to double, about 45 minutes. Brush with milk-sugar mixture.

Bake at 350°F for 25 to 35 minutes until golden and hollow sounding when tapped on the bottom. Cool on a wire rack. Leftovers taste terrific sliced thin, with cream cheese or peanut butter.