

Tear and Share Pesto Sunflower Challah Bread

Ingredients

For the Challah dough:

- 1 kilos of plain flour (approx.)
- 350 ml of lukewarm water
- 1 portion of fresh yeast (approx. 40g, otherwise 1 tablespoon of active dried yeast)
- 4 tablespoons of caster sugar (plus one more teaspoon to mix in with the yeast)
- 2 eggs (plus one more egg yolk for the egg wash)

- 12g of salt
- 55 ml of sunflower oil

For the pesto:

- 1 large bunch fresh basil
- 30ml extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Sunflower seeds



Method

1. Pour the lukewarm water into a mixing bowl, add the extra teaspoon of caster sugar and then carefully dissolve the fresh yeast into the water.
2. Once bubbles start to appear on the surface of the water, pour in about a third of the flour, followed by the two eggs, the rest of the caster sugar, the salt and the oil. Get your hands into the dough and combine the mixture, adding flour little by little as you go, until you get a big ball of dough.
3. You will know when the dough is ready to knead because it shouldn't stick to your hands any more. You may not need all the flour to get to this point so just use what your own dough mixture needs.
4. Sprinkle a clean work surface with flour, tip your dough out onto it and knead for 5-10 minutes, adding a bit of flour if it gets too sticky again.
5. Drizzle a little bit of leftover sunflower oil around the big mixing bowl, place the ball of kneaded dough back inside and cover with cling film. Leave the dough to rise for about an hour and a half or until it has doubled in size.
6. Once the dough has risen, give it a little punch to knock the air back out of it. Place it back on the floured work surface and knead it a little bit, with a bit of flour if needed, so that it's ready to shape.
7. Divide the dough into three roughly equal portions of dough and roll each piece out thin, flat and round like a pizza base with a rolling pin.
8. Blitz up the basil, olive oil and seasoning in a food processor and spread half the pesto generously over one of the flat circles of dough.
9. Place a second circle of dough on top of the first circle of dough and spread the second half of the pesto over that circle of dough too.
10. Finally, place the third circle of dough on top of the other two circles of dough but leave it plain. Place an upturned glass in the centre of the top circle of dough and, cutting outwards from the edge of the glass, divide the dough into 16 sections leaving the dough joined in the middle underneath the glass.

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11. Twist each section of dough round on itself a couple of times to make the tear and share sunflower petals. Once you are happy with the shape, cover it with a clean tea towel or cling film and let it rise again for half an hour to one hour.
12. Towards the end of this time, pre-heat your oven to 180°C and prepare the egg wash. Spread the egg wash generously over the challah with a pastry brush and decorate the centre of the sunflower with sunflower seeds.
13. Bake the challah bread for 30 minutes at the bottom of the oven. You may need to cover the challah in foil at around 20 minutes if you feel it is getting a bit too brown and crispy!

Notes

Challah Bread is a Jewish Bread which is enjoyed during the sabbath. It is made from enriched dough which gives it a lovely colour and is plaited.