

SHABBAT: HOW TO PREPARE

INTRODUCTION TO SHABBAT: HOW TO PREPARE

Introduction to Shabbat: How To Prepare

Taking care of many of our physical needs before Shabbat begins allows us to enhance our physical rest and emphasize our spiritual nature on Shabbat.

To prepare, we make or buy the food we will need for Shabbat, clean the house, and put it in order. The custom is to shower or bath especially for Shabbat.

Before sunset on Friday, we turn on whatever lights we will need during Shabbat so that our homes are well lit. We leave the lights on until Shabbat is over (or we set timers to regulate when the lights go on and off since we cannot be involved with controlling them).

SHABBAT: LEAVING THE WORLD OF WORK

Distracting Work on Friday Afternoon

You may not do any work or get involved in any project that might distract you from preparing for Shabbat, beginning at twice the duration of plag ha'mincha. So allow 2 1/2 *halachic* hours (sha'ot zmaniyot) before sunset to prepare for Shabbat.

PREPARING SHABBAT FOOD

INTRODUCTION TO PREPARING SHABBAT FOOD

Introduction to Preparing Shabbat Food

Before Shabbat, we make or buy the food that we will need for Shabbat. Although cooking is forbidden on Shabbat, some food preparation is allowed after Shabbat begins. See Shabbat: Cooking.

Special Shabbat foods include two loaves of bread for each of the first two meals and, preferably, for the third meal, too.

CHALLA

WHAT TO USE FOR CHALLA

What Is Challa

Challa refers to the two loaves of bread (or matza) over which we say the ha'motzi blessing at Shabbat and Jewish festival meals.

The loaves must be:

- Whole, without significant parts missing.
- Made out of one or more of the Five Grains.

MAKING CHALLA

Six-Braid Challa for Shabbat

It is a non-binding custom to braid challa as a reminder of the 12 showbreads (lechem ha'panim) in the Temple that were changed each Shabbat. Proper practice is to braid each challa from six pieces of dough, as there were two columns of six loaves each.

NOTE Since these showbreads were not changed on Rosh Hashana and Jewish festivals, we may use round

challot for those holidays (unless they fall on Shabbat or the holiday is Passover!).

NOTE Sectional challa should be made from six pieces but counted as one loaf: you may not separate the rolls of a “pull-apart” challa and count them as multiple loaves.

Breaking Apart Challot Baked Together

If you bake several units of dough in one pan and they expand into each other, you may not break them apart after baking and use them as separate challot. If they only slightly touch each other, you may separate them and use them as individual challot.

SEPARATING CHALLA (HAFRASHAT CHALLA)

INTRODUCTION TO SEPARATING CHALLA

Introduction to Separating Challa

Although challa refers to the two loaves of bread (or matza) over which we say the ha'motzi blessing at Shabbat and Jewish festival meals, challa also means the portion of dough or bread that we are obligated to give to the cohen/priests during Temple times. Today, we burn a token portion (“challa”) of dough.

NOTE Burning the challa is not considered to violate bal tashchit (needless destruction), since the challa is separated and destroyed to fulfill a mitzva.

SEPARATING THE CHALLA PORTION

Separating the Challa Portion

Separating Challa from more than 5 lbs. of Dough

After you knead more than 5 lbs. (2.3 kg) of flour at one time:

- Hold part of the dough (at least 1 fl. oz.) while it is still part of the main mass of dough;
- Say the blessing lehafrish challa min ha'isa;
- Separate a small amount (1 fl. oz. is sufficient) of the dough as challa; and
- Say harei zu challa.

Separating Challa from between 2.5 and 5 lbs. of Dough

SITUATION You prepare dough, in a single batch, from more than 2.5 lbs. (1 kg), but less than 5 lbs. (2.3 kg), of flour.

WHAT TO DO Separate a small amount (1 fl. oz. is sufficient) of the dough as “challa.” Don't say the blessing; just say harei zu challa.

NOTE If you mix at least 2.5 lbs. (1 kg) of dough, you must separate challa (without a blessing) even if you will not be baking some of the dough until another time.

Separating Challa from less than 2.5 lbs. of Dough

Don't separate challa if the dough was prepared from less than 2.5 lbs. (1 kg) of flour.

Separating Challa from Dough Mixed by Non-Jew

Don't separate challa if you acquire dough that had been owned by a non-Jew at the time it was mixed.

Separating Challa after Baking

You may separate challa after baking (on weekdays only) if you forgot to separate challa before baking.

SITUATION You forgot to separate challa from dough made of at least 2.5 lbs. (1 kg) of flour, it is now Shabbat or a Jewish festival. You want to eat the bread.

WHAT TO DO

- If you are outside Eretz Yisrael: You may leave part of the challa until after Shabbat or Jewish festivals. After havdala, separate the challa from the part that you had set aside.
- If you are in Eretz Yisrael: You may not use bread from which challa was not separated. Once Shabbat or the Jewish festival ends, you may separate challa and then eat the bread.

BURNING THE CHALLA PORTION

Which Piece of Challa To Burn

Once you intend a particular piece of dough to be the challa portion, you must burn that piece and not put it back into the main dough.

When To Burn the Challa Portion

There is no time limit for burning “challa.” You may save several pieces for burning together, but you may not keep them in a place where they might get used.

How To Burn the Challa Portion

You may burn the challa portion any way you wish. You must burn it completely.

CHOLENT

Cholent

At least one hot food should be eaten at the midday meal on Shabbat/Saturday.

GEFILTE FISH

Gefilte Fish

Eating gefilte fish, made of fish in which bones have been removed, avoids the necessity of doing the melacha of selecting (boreir) the bones from the fish. This allows a fish course to be eaten at a Shabbat meal (which, in addition to the meat, makes the Shabbat meal special because both fish and meat would not have been commonly served in poor areas during the week).

SHABBAT: SETTING THE TABLE

Setting the Shabbat Table

Set the Shabbat table with nice tableware and tablecloth. The custom is to have the table set and have bread on the table before Shabbat starts.

The tablecloth should cover the table during Shabbat meals, but you may remove and switch tablecloths. Even if you have a beautiful and valuable table, you should still cover it for Shabbat (and Jewish festival) meals.

How To Cover the Challot

On Shabbat (and Jewish festivals), you should place a white cover above the challot and another below (unless you have a white tablecloth).

REASON To recall the layers of dew above and below the mun that the Israelites ate for 40 years in the desert.

NOTE If you have a fancy or beautiful cover for your challa that is not white underneath, you may put a white cloth or paper towel between the cover and the challa in order to have a white cover above the challa.

SHABBAT: EATING BEFORE

Appetite for Shabbat Dinner

Do not eat a full meal (any bread or a lot of mezonot) after halachic midday on Friday.

REASON In order to have a special appetite for Shabbat dinner.

NOTE You may eat other food after *halachic* midday on Friday.

Eating before Hearing Shabbat Evening Kiddush

See Eating from Start of Shabbat until Kiddush.