

The Meaning Behind the Ingredients



Each ingredient has tremendous significance. By understanding the significance, you can focus on the essence and blessing of each ingredient while adding it to the mixture. As you pour each ingredient, have in mind that this is for the merit of Shabbat.

THE BOWL represents your home. Each ingredient added to your bowl should bring its unique blessing.

FLOUR represents sustenance, not only our livelihood, but also our relationships with others. We pray that G-d should bless us with a livelihood that we should use for the right reasons, and that He helps us sustain the relationships that might need some assistance, and thank Him for the relationships we have that sustain us.

SUGAR represents the sweetness and good in our lives. Sugar also represents emunah (faith). When we have proper faith, then everything becomes sweet. Even the challenges in our lives we realise are all from G-d and all for the best. Always add a little extra!

SALT represents discipline or rebuke. It is important to have this, but in smaller measure. We hide the salt among the flour to remind ourselves not to be overly critical. Salt also represents purification. We pray that anything toxic in our lives, minds, souls and bodies be removed.

YEAST is what enables our dough to rise. It represents growth and expansion. So as we add the yeast, we can think of each one of our family members and friends and pray that they rise and grow to their fullest potential. Yeast, in Hebrew, is shmarim, which comes from the root shomer, which means protection. As we add the yeast, we pray for protection over ourselves and our families, the Jewish People, the IDF, Israel and of our world.

WATER represents Torah and life. Just as we cannot live without water, we also cannot live without Torah. Water brings life and nourishment to all things, so it represents the attribute of chessed (kindness). As we add the water, we can think of something in our lives that we want G-d to bless us with in abundant kindness. It should flow down into our lives, just as water flows.

OIL represents abundance and blessing. Oil represents our essence – the more we are challenged, the more pure we become. Oil was used for anointing kings. When pouring the oil, “anoint” each member of your family using their full names and praying for their specific needs. Surprisingly, the first member to pray for is you! You are the heart of your home.

EGGS represent fertility and the renewal of the life cycle and the potential of what is about to “hatch”. While making the

dough, we pray for life, children, and anything going on in our lives that we want G-d to reveal to us.

The last step in making the dough is to take all of these essential ingredients that bring their own important blessings, and unify them. We think about the oneness of G-d and the oneness of the Jewish People; and as we knead the dough, this is a special time to pray for anything you need, as well as the needs of your family, friends, and the world.

SEPARATE THE CHALLAH

Conditions that allow you to perform the separation of the challah:

GRAINS: Flour from wheat, rye, oats, spelt and barley.

Amount of flour:

- 0-7½ cups (less than 2 lbs/12 oz): Do not separate challah
- 7½-13 cups (approx 2 lbs): Challah is taken without a bracha, but both prayers can be recited
- 14 cups or more: Challah is separated with a bracha

Separating the challah is one of the three mitzvot that are given especially to women, and brings bracha (blessing) and shmira (protection) into the home. It is a special opportunity for tefillah (prayer) and a time to pray for ourselves and our loved ones.

PRAYER AFTER SEPARATING CHALLAH

May it be Your Will, Eternal, our G-d, that the commandment of separating challah be considered as if I had performed it with all its details and ramifications. May my elevation of the challah be comparable to the sacrifice that was offered on the altar, which was acceptable and pleasing. Just as giving the challah to the Kohein in former times served to atone for sins, so may it atone for mine, and make me like a person reborn without sins. May it enable me to observe the holy Sabbath (or Festival of...) with my husband (and our children) and to become imbued with its holiness. May the spiritual influence of the mitzvah of challah enable our children to be constantly sustained by the hands of the Holy One, blessed is He, with His abundant mercy, loving-kindness, and love. Consider the mitzvah of challah as if I have given the tithe. And just as I am fulfilling this mitzvah with all my heart, so may Your compassion be aroused to keep me from sorrow and pain, always.

Amen.