

## Donna Kormilo's Kolach Recipe

Kolach comes from the Ukrainian word kolo meaning a circle. It is a braided ring-shaped bread that is an old symbol of eternity and general welfare. The three braided entwined rolls also have religious meaning as they represent the Holy Trinity. With a candle in the middle, it is the center piece of the Christmas Eve dinner table. Tradition says that this loaf is not eaten during that meal. A kolach with a salt container or block on top, carried in on an embroidered cloth-covered tray, is used as a traditional welcoming or greeting (e.g. visiting dignitary)

Yield: 3 round loaves, 1 rectangular loaf, 9x9 cinnamon buns.

1 litre whole milk – heat to very hot (old recipes say scald)

Dissolve in the hot milk: 1 cup sugar, salt (1 tsp to 1 tbsp depending on preference)

Let cool to luke warm. (Most recipes use hot water and not milk)

2 packages dry granular yeast (1 tbsp)

½ cup warm water 2 tsp sugar

Mix and let this work/bubble for about 10 min. Yeast should actively bubble. If it doesn't, start again with fresher yeast.

In huge bowl or stock pot:

Put the milk mixture in to cool; it will cool off faster this way.

When cool, add 1 cup (canola or Crisco) oil, 5 well beaten eggs, the yeast mixture, and then start adding white flour, 1-2 cups at a time.

Stir the flour in with a large wooden spoon, then when you can't stir it any more, turn the dough onto a well-floured counter and begin to knead in more flour (gradually). Total flour should be 10-12 cups.

Knead 400 times.

For the first part of the kneading your hands will be sticky and you will be adding in a fair amount of flour, and replenishing what is on the board. When the dough is slightly less tacky (probably in the 150 range), rub your hands together to remove the dough from them, and keep kneading. You will be adding only a bit of flour.

The key is 400 kneads. You want dough that is smooth and elastic, still shiny. Usually around 370, if the dough is getting too tacky again and really sticking to the table, then I usually don't add as much flour but may choose to stop kneading and quickly put the dough in the well greased pot to rise. Adding more flour at this point will make the bread drier and heavier.

Get a huge pot or container with lid for rising. Allow at least triple space for growth.

Grease rising pot and lid well with shortening. If you use oil it will make it harder to roll after.

For rising, I turn the oven light on and rise my dough in there with the light on, if it's in a huge bowl, cover with saran wrap. If the stock pot won't fit, remove a rack, or put it in a sunny window covered up with towels or blanket. Rise until doubled in bulk, about 1 hr

Grease the pans well with shortening. Use high sided round pans, at least the same height as a typical loaf pan.

Punch dough down.

One braided kolach uses 6 uniform “snakes” or ropes of dough, about the width of your index finger. Roll into lengths of about 30”. Aim for a smooth uniform roll. Leave the ends loose; don’t pinch them together.

Put 2 lengths side by side, and starting from the center, lift the ends and entwine dough thus forming a rope-like twist. Repeat with the other ends of the strands forming a uniform rope-like twist. Carefully place one twist inside the bottom edge of a well-greased round pan. Do not stretch the twist. Cut and join ends neatly.

Inner ring of dough: make 4 uniform ropes of dough 24-30”

Twist 1 & 2 together as above. Twist 3 & 4 together as above.

Then entwine these two double twists together in a similar way, starting in the middle and lifting the ends repeatedly to the ends. Entwine the two twists in the opposite directions making a double twist.

Place this double twist as a ring inside/within and slightly on the single ring that is already in the pan. Cut and join the ends neatly. Gently press down on the outer and inner rings together a bit to help blend. There should be a small, empty, circular space in the middle of the pan.

Cover the pan with a tea towel and put in a warm place to rise until double in bulk. If after about 20 min or so the dough starts bulging over the edge of the pan, gently shape it back into the pan (i.e. press down). But not too hard or else it will deflate.

Pan should be 3” or taller. Fill to just under half the height of the pan.

If using a rectangular loaf pan, just place a “pancake” of dough into the pan, about 1/3 up the side.

### **Egg wash for kolach:**

In a small bowl, beat well one egg with a bit of water. Just before baking gently brush the egg wash on to the top of the bread so as not to deflate it. Don’t dribble too much wash down the side of the loaf or it will stick to the side of the pan.

Bake 350 degrees. 45-60 min. Before heating the oven, check the height of the racks and loaves. Loaves that are too close to the top element will have burnt tops.

Glass pans cook faster. Could lower temp to 325.

Loaves are done when they have a nice brown colour and sound hollow when tapped on top.

If you can, use a kitchen cutlery knife to loosen the bread edges from the pan before inverting, tipping the bread out, and letting it cool right side up on racks.

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### **Liann's Challah (makes 2)**

1/2 cup water (almost hot)  
1 tsp sugar  
2 Tbsp yeast  
6 cups flour  
3 Tbsp sugar  
1 Tbsp salt  
½ cup oil  
3 eggs

Dissolve 1 tsp sugar in almost hot water and add yeast, let stand until it bubbles up (should double in size). Mix dry ingredients, then add yeast mixture and mix well. Add eggs to oil and mix. Then add oil mixture to flour mixture and mix well. Add 1 – 2 cups of warm water to mixture and mix really well (use the amount of water required to get mixture to stick together). Roll out onto floured work space and knead (5-10 minutes). Add flour as needed so that dough does not stick to work surface. Put dough in a large oiled bowl, and let rise. Dough should double in size. Punch down, and cut into 2 equal pieces. Roll with hands into snake-like shapes. Make a braid out of three rolls, pinch ends together. Let braids stand for 15-20 minutes. Egg wash before it goes in the oven. Bake at 350 for 35 minutes or until bread sounds hollow and is golden brown.