HONEY TAHINI CHALLAH
Makes 2 medium challahs

I love to bake challah but hardly ever made it the same way twice. I always added extra-virgin olive oil and honey for flavor, but constantly changed everything else, trying to find the formula that would produce a flavorful loaf with a bready but light crumb and super shiny crust. In pursuit of this goal, one day I added tahini to the dough on a whim. It imparted a subtle sesame flavor—a natural fit for challah since I like to load the top with sesame seeds—but also such silky richness that I decided I’d only ever make challah with it again. For anyone looking to get more comfortable baking with yeast, this recipe is a good place to start. There’s no mixer required, and the only necessary skill is forming a three-strand braid (if you don’t know how, look it up on YouTube!).

**Dissolve the yeast**: In a small saucepan, gently warm ¼ cup water (2 oz / 57g) over low heat, swirling the pan, just until it’s lukewarm but not hot (if you have an instant-read thermometer, it should register about 105°F). You can warm the water in the microwave, too, but beware of overheating. Pour the water into a medium bowl and whisk in the yeast to dissolve. Set aside until the mixture is cloudy and slightly puffed, about 5 minutes.

**Make the dough**: To the bowl with the yeast mixture, add the honey, tahini, egg yolks, olive oil, 2 of the whole eggs, and ¼ cup room temperature water (4 oz / 113g) and whisk to combine. In a large bowl, whisk ⅛ cups of the flour (22.2 oz / 630g) and salt just to combine. Make a well in the center of the flour and pour in the egg mixture. Mix with a wooden spoon, starting in the center and working outward to incorporate the flour, until you have a shaggy dough. Knead the mixture inside the bowl several times until you have a cohesive dough with a few floury spots. Turn the dough out onto a generously floured work surface and knead, adding more as necessary to prevent sticking, until the dough is very soft, smooth, supple, and just a little bit tacky, 5 to 10 minutes (when you poke a finger into the ball of dough and remove it, the dough should cling to it gently and then release). *

**Let the dough rise one time**: Form the dough into a tight ball. Lightly coat the inside of a large bowl with olive oil and place the dough inside. Cover the bowl with a damp towel and let the dough rise in a warm place until it is about doubled in size, 1½ to 3 hours. When you poke it with a finger, the dough should feel very airy and spring back, holding a (continues)
You could divide the dough in thirds and make one giant loaf instead of two smaller ones. Keep in mind it will take longer on the second rise and longer in the oven. Use the same size and color indicators to guide you on doneness.