

OUR STORY

Challah Back Girls started in early May at the peak of the COVID outbreak. After three of the four sisters were abruptly forced home from school closures and work changes, they began baking more regularly. When we were all finally home in Teaneck, which was the initial epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in New Jersey, we observed the chaos erupting as cases were skyrocketing. Several friends and community members were involved in the response. Whether working in the ICU, volunteering in the local ambulance corps, or boarding up with other doctors to keep away from potentially spreading the virus to their family, people were knee deep in the COVID-19 battle. As the days passed and the amount of challah coming out of the oven increased, our mother (and #1 fan) asked one week if we would be able to make some extra challah for the ER doctors where she worked. The following week, community members were organizing a potluck for local Volunteer Ambulance Corps members who were working over the weekends, and we baked challah for them as our contribution. Soon, everyone in the community wanted challah. We weren't sure what to do as we didn't feel comfortable selling it for profit. And then there was a wake up call.

As the storm of the virus raged around us, a different pandemic that has been ravaging our country for centuries peaked in a moment that woke up the massive slumber of so many folks to fatal injustices. A series of anti-black racial violences had occurred and called us to bridge the gap between our challah, our local communities and showing up for strangers and loved ones. On February 23rd, Ahmaud Arbery was killed on a jog. On March 13th, Breonna Taylor was murdered in her Louisiana home. On May 25th, George Floyd was murdered by police in broad daylight. On that same day, Amy Cooper, a white woman walking her dog in New York's Central Park, called the police on a Black man, Christian Cooper, after he kindly asked her to put her dog on a leash, as per park rules. In return, Amy Cooper warned that she would call the police and tell them an African American man was threatening her life. She then did. These acts of anti-black racial violence were not new, but they opened a doorway for renewed reckoning.

In that moment, the path forward with our challah felt obvious. We sought to connect this ancient culinary tradition, with our desire to support building a more compassionate, just and equitable world. Our platform quickly transformed into a fundraiser and social media amplifier for various organizations that have been hard at work addressing the many faces of racism and anti-blackness in America. Today, we bake and sell challah weekly to raise money and awareness for organizations that build joy, connection, intentionality and equity for people of color. As Jews, we want to pave a way for Jewish traditions, values and communities to exist in solidarity and love with the movement to uplift, empower and liberate people of color.

We Challah Back Girls bake our bread as an act of love -- love for our black and brown family, love for our Jewish family, and love for a world that is filled with joy and relationships that uplift one another. Each loaf of challah is traditionally woven from three braids of dough. This process of braiding never feels technical, it is an intentional act which calls us into community obligation to our greater family in this country and across the world. We hope that those, from every identity across this country, who choose to partake in eating this bread with us, can feel its weaving powers and challah at us to bake the world a more just place.

