

Jersey-baked challah headed to record book

● The challah delivered to Manhattan's Congregation Rodeph Shalom last week was decidedly bigger than a bread box.

In fact, the 35-foot-long, 200-pound loaf was bigger than any available kosher oven in New York City; after being braided in Borough Park, it was shlepped under the Hudson River to a commercial kosher kitchen in Fairfield.

And if all goes to plan, it soon will be certified by Guinness World Records as the world's longest challah.

The gargantuan loaf was made in collaboration with the Jewish Federations of North America and the Orthodox Union with the aim of besting the current record-holder: a challah baked in Australia in 2019 that was just over 32 feet long.

The cross-Hudson contender was made in honor of Shabbat of Love, a JFNA initiative that took place across North America on January 19. JFNA,



OneTable, the Orthodox Union, and 250 other partner organizations helped Jews organize and host thousands of Shabbat dinners.

Sarah Eisenman, the chief officer of community and Jewish life at JFNA, led both the Shabbat of Love initiative and the challah-baking effort. "I was thinking about what could we do that was a record-breaking, feel-good, prideful thing," Ms. Eisenman said. She had thought about

trying to break a record for the world's largest Shabbat dinner but realized that the challah would be less complicated and easier to measure.

Ms. Eisenman said she reached out to the Orthodox Union for help with logistics, and they immediately jumped on board. "They said, 'Let's do it,'" she said. "Without the OU, we wouldn't have been able to do it because they knew who to call right away."

That call was to Strauss Bakery, a kosher bakery

in Brooklyn's Borough Park, which pitched in by creating the dough. The unbaked challah was loaded onto an 18-wheeler and driven across state lines to a commercial kosher kitchen in New Jersey operated by David's Cookies, which has a 40-foot-long tunnel oven. It's one of the only places in the tristate area that can fit a challah of that size, according to Ms. Eisenman.

Once the challah was baked on Thursday night, it was loaded back on the truck and driven to Congregation Rodeph Sholom, where Ms. Eisenman's children go to school. A crowd of dozens of volunteers showed up to help unload the oversized challah, which was revealed — and eaten — the next day at an all-school Shabbat assembly for Rodeph Sholom Day School students and their families.

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