



Sourdough Bread Recipe with Homemade Starter

Sourdough Starter

The process of making a sourdough bread begins on the night before you want to make your bread (or more precisely, at least 8–10 hours before you start mixing the dough).



1 week old starter

Take a large jar or bowl.
Add 1 Cup of plain flour
1 cup of filtered water

Mix well using a fork, then leave it on the bench in a warm and airy place, covered with a cloth or paper (with fork holes in it) leave overnight.

THIS IS A FRESH SOURDOUGH STARTER.

It is best to leave the starter for two or three days to develop a sour flavour...
The longer it is left then fed, over time it will develop better flavour.

After two days, feed the starter with ½ cup of plain flour and ½ a cup of filtered water. This will feed the sourdough and make it active and bubbly.

This process is dependent on the atmosphere and weather. For example, in winter the sourdough can take a day or two to activate but in summer it will need a lot less time.

I feed the starter every few days (if you would like to bake more often, then feed it daily to keep it active).

When the starter is active it should be used within a 24-hour period to make bread. This will give the dough its best start and chance for the yeasts to grow.

Sourdough Bread

Makes: 2 loaves.

900g plain flour
100g Rye flour or wholemeal flour
600ml water (approximately)
275g/1 cup sourdough starter
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
20g salt/4 teaspoons

1. MAKE THE DOUGH

Mix all ingredients except salt in a large bowl or the bowl of a kitchen mixer. Make a well in the centre then pour in the sourdough plus most of the water. Mix until it starts to form a dough. Add olive oil and mix well to incorporate, adding enough water to make a firm dough.

Cover the bowl with a damp linen cloth or an oiled piece of plastic wrap and leave it aside at room temperature for 30 minutes.

After 30 minutes, add the salt and fold it into the dough until it feels fully incorporated.

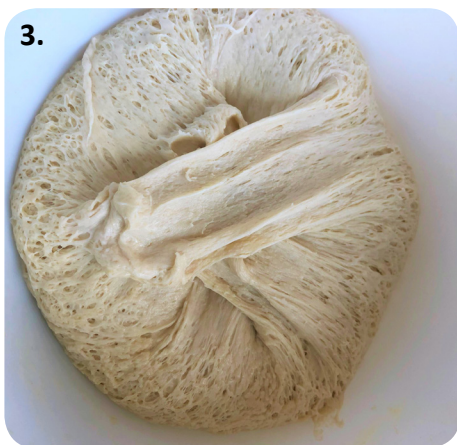
2. STRENGTHEN THE DOUGH

To knead sourdough is a gentler process,

Here's how you do it:

- Without taking the dough out, grab one corner of the dough, and stretch that corner over the dough.
- Do this lightly at first, and then, as the dough gets gassy after a couple of hours, start handling the dough in a gentler manner.
- Leave covered with a damp tea towel or oiled plastic wrap for about 8 hours in a warm place. (Strengthen the dough from time to time.)

3.



3. SLOW RISE AND FERMENT

After this time, it can be left overnight in a cool place or in the fridge, where it will stay stable.

Next day after the slow rise the dough should look like this. Fold it to strengthen. Always bring it back to room temperature and leave for a few hours before shaping the loaves.

4. SHAPE THE BREADS

Once you decide your dough is ready to be shaped, divide the dough into two and then transfer the dough into well-oiled, lightly floured baking vessels. (Round or rectangular loaf size). For a better rise, bake the loaf directly inside a metal or earthenware casserole (lidded) baking dish. This term is called a 'Dutch Oven'.

5.



5. THE FINAL RISE

Let the shaped breads prove, if left in a cool environment the loaves can take up to 7 hours to prove. If left in a warm environment, then leave for 3–4 hours.

6. BAKE THE BREADS

And now, finally, you get to bake the bread (at 230°C / 446°F)!

Bake one loaf at a time in a domestic oven, this will enable the oven to perform better and cook the loaf properly.

For best results, use a 'Dutch oven' or otherwise cover the bread with foil for the first 35 minutes to capture the steam escaping from the bread dough. This prevents the crust from forming too early and gives the bread a chance for a big final rise.

Remove the loaf from the oven briefly, removing the cover then take a short-serrated knife and slash the top of each loaf into a cross, toss a little flour across the surface. With the lid off return to the hot oven for another 10 to 15 minutes to give the bread a deep, golden brown slightly dark crust.

TIP: You may need to turn the oven up to 240–250°C to get a more golden crust for the final 10 minutes.

6.



NOTES: Sourdough is a slow bread, because the yeast is natural it takes longer to activate which can be easy to work with (as the rise can take from 24 to 36 hours) which is great because it can be started and left overnight before baking at a time that suits your routine best.

Sourdough bread is made by the fermentation of dough (flour and water) using naturally occurring lactobacilli and yeast. Natural yeast exists organically in the flours we use and the air around us. This process has been used for thousands of years in baking and the production of alcoholic beverages. Sourdough has been used for hundreds of years in many countries and cultures around the world in these various varieties of daily bread. (Originally the following countries used a sourdough culture to make their bread using a variety of different flour types.) Danish, *rugbrød* rye bread; German, *pumpernickel*; American, *Sanfranciscan Sourdough*; Ethiopia, *Injera*, flat bread; Somalia and Yemem, *lahoh*; India, *idly* and *dosa*.

The exact duration of the fermentation depends on many things, including how active your starter is and the temperature in your kitchen. As a natural yeast is very helpful not least for 'home baking' but also for health reasons. Sourdough is often easier to digest and with digestive problems on the rise, those with compromised guts are finding breads made with a longer fermentation (rise periods) to be more easily digested. I find that the longer the dough is left then the lighter the loaves will be, plus have a better flavour and texture.