

A Recipe for Tangy Sourdough Bread

A sourdough starter is a living ecosystem of microscopic bacteria and yeast. Like all living things they need to be fed, watered, and exercised from time to time. If kept in the refrigerator they will slumber, meaning they can go long periods (a week, a month) without needing much in the way of nourishment. The longer you wait, however, between bakings, the more sluggish your microbes will be when you want to put them to work. Exercise them frequently, i.e., bake all the time, and your starter will respond with strength and speed.

Waking a starter is not an exact science. Depending on the temperature of your house, the type and quality of flour that you use, your level of experience, and the last time you used your starter, the amount of time required for each step can vary, as can the outcomes.

1 cup sourdough starter
1 3/4 cup water, divided
5 cup white flour (use some wholewheat flour for heartier bread)
2 1/2 tsp salt

Instructions

1. **Morning Day 1.** Remove your jar of sourdough starter from the fridge. I usually keep about 1 cup of starter in my jar. If you have more than that, place 1 cup of your starter to a bowl and add 3/4 cup of water. Stir (or shake your covered jar) vigorously. Add 1 cup of flour. Mix thoroughly. Leave your microbes to multiply during the day at room temperature.
2. **Evening Day 1:** Dump your jar of fed starter into a large bowl. Combine the starter, 1 cup of water, and 2 cups of the flour. Stir vigorously for 1 minute.
3. **Morning Day 2. REMOVE** approximately 1 cup of starter to a new jar, cover loosely with a lid, and place this reserve in the refrigerator for later use. Use the starter remaining in the bowl for step 4.
4. Add the remaining ingredients to the bowl: 2 cups of flour and salt. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead to form a smooth dough. About 20 minutes. In about ten minutes the dough will become less sticky and more cohesive. Add small amounts of flour as you need to, but do so sparingly.
5. Allow the dough to rise in a covered bowl until it's relaxed, smoothed out, and risen. Depending on the vigor of your starter, it may become REALLY puffy; or it may just rise a bit. This can take anywhere from 1 to 4 hours.
6. Preheat a cast-iron Dutch Oven in your oven at 475° F for thirty minutes.
7. Gently turn the full loaf out of the covered bowl and into the preheated Dutch Oven, cover, and return to the oven. Bake for 30 minutes with the lid on and 20 minutes with the lid off.

8. Remove the loaf from the Dutch Oven and allow it to cool on a cooling rack for at least 30 minutes before slicing.