

Favorite Sourdough Recipes

Pioneer Dad confesses to a life-long love affair with sourdough cooking and baking. This most likely began in the kitchen with my grandmothers. During an Alaskan adventure, Grandmother Joyce and Great Grandmother Nana discovered the book *ALASKA SOURDOUGH: The Real Stuff* by Ruth Allman. This became the go-to kitchen cookbook for their sourdough baking. Many of the following recipes originated in that book. I've added several family favorites from my grandmothers' recipe boxes and three of Pioneer Dad's own favorites developed over the years in the kitchen. I hope you'll enjoy them.

How long will the starter take? Sourdough fans say longer is better.

3 Day Starter: can be used after 72 hours, providing the enzymes have started working. But it is better to wait for a few more days. Add extra fuel for the sourdough to work with: a spoonful of sugar along with a several spoonfuls of flour. Add water if the batter is too thick. Mix well and cover. Place the starter in a warm draft-free spot to keep it working.

1 Week Starter: The starter is now effervescing with a million bubbles. Looks like sour cream, smells like sour cream, but is a rich and luscious batter.

2 Week Starter: Disciples of sourdough claim that waiting this extra time provides extra flavor, which is not to be compared with any other batter.

3 Week Starter: The sourdough pot is now bubbling like the proverbial witch's caldron.

1 Month Starter: Sourdough has turned into a rich creamy batter that is honey-combed with bubbles.

1 Year Starter: Traditionalists claim you must wait a year before the sourdough matures and offers a distinctive taste appeal nothing else can imitate.

Begin with a Sourdough Starter

Packaged starters are available in most grocery stores. To create your own sourdough starter from scratch, read the instructions on page 8.

For all starters, whip the batter with a wooden spoon. There is nothing worse than finding lumps of flour in your sourdough. Always use a wooden spoon, metal spoons will cause the little enzymes to react with the metal. If the batter seems stiff and heavy, add more

water. Add just enough water to make a rich thick creamy sponge. It will be better to have the starter thicker; it will thin down while working overnight. If the starter is very thin, throw in additional flour to make a smooth creamy batter. Cover the starter and let it "work" in a warm place, free from drafts. Never keep sourdough starter in a tightly sealed container.

Do not let the Sourdough freeze! Remember, sourdough starter is a wild yeast composed of busy little enzymes that are ambitious and steady workers. But, they give up mighty fast when the temperature gets down to freezing.

Making Sourdough Batter (Proofing)

Sourdough batter is a basic ingredient in all sourdough recipes. It must be made at least 8-12 hours before use.

To prepare this batter, do the following; if the starter has been refrigerated, remove it and allow it to reach room temperature.

In a 2 quart bowl, measure out a cup of sourdough starter, add the additional flour and warm water (85 degrees) needed for the recipe and mix well. Add only enough water to make the batter the consistency of a light pancake batter. Cover the bowl lightly to prevent drying and let the sourdough batter proof for 8-12 hours at 85-90 degrees.

When the batter is properly proofed, its surface will appear bubbly and it will exhibit a strong pungent, sour odor.

After proofing, measure out the amount called for in the recipe and return the remaining batter to the starter pot. Stir and refrigerate if you need to store the starter.



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STARTER RECIPES

Basic Sourdough Starter

Place the following ingredients into sourdough:

- 2 cups thickened potato water
- 2 tbs. sugar
- 2 cups flour (more or less)
- ½ tsp. yeast (optional)

Boil potatoes with jackets on until they fall to pieces. Lift the skins out, mash potatoes making a puree. Let cool, adding more water to make sufficient liquid, if needed. The richer the potato water, the richer the starter. Put all ingredients into the pot. Beat until it is a smooth, creamy batter.

Cover and set aside in a warm place to start the fermentation. Use yeast only to speed the action.

Grated Potato Starter

- 2 raw potatoes grated in the bottom of the sourdough pot.
- 1 yeast package mixed in 2 cups of warm water
- 2 tbs. sugar

Add enough flour to make a smooth, creamy batter. Beat well to remove all the lumps at this time so it is not necessary to remove any flour lumps later when you are preparing to use the starter.

Cover and place the sourdough pot on the shelf in a warm spot free from drafts. This starter will take longer to start working, but in a week it will be bubbling.

BREAKFAST RECIPES

Basic Sourdough Hotcakes

- 2 cups sourdough starter
- 2 tbs. sugar
- 4 tbs. olive oil
- 1 egg
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 scant tsp. baking soda

Into the sourdough batter, dump sugar, egg and oil. Mix well. Add soda as the last moment, when ready for the batter to hit the griddle. Dilute the soda in 1 tbs. of warm water. Fold gently into the sourdough batter. Do not beat the batter! Cook on a hot griddle and serve on hot plates.

Nana's Sourdough Pancakes

This recipe comes from the kitchen of my Great Grandmother Nana. It was one of her favorite recipes for pancakes. This recipe is modified from Charles Wilford's *Adventures in San Francisco Sourdough Cooking & Baking*.

- 1 cup sourdough starter
- 1½ cups white flour
- 1 cup warm water

Remove one cup of sourdough starter and place it in a warm bowl. Add the flour and warm water and mix well. Return one cup of the batter to the starter container to feed the starter. Let the balance of the 1½ cups of batter proof in a large bowl for 12 hours. Cover with plastic wrap and let stand in a warm place. It will expand during the proofing so be certain to use a large bowl. The final quantity will be around 4 cups.

Add the following:

- 1 egg
- 2 tbs. melted butter
- ¼ cup instant dry milk
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 tbs. sugar

Let all ingredients rise to room temperature. Beat the egg until light and frothy and stir into the batter. Stir in the 2 tbs. of melted butter and the ¼ cup of instant dry milk. Sift the salt and sugar over the mixture and fold it in. Let the batter rest 15-20 minutes. Spoon or ladle the batter onto a preheated 400 degree griddle in small amounts. When the tops of the pancakes are full of bubbles and the bottoms are browned (about 3-4 minutes) turn the pancakes and cook on the other side for 1½-2 minutes.

For lighter pancakes, add ¼ tsp. of baking soda dissolved in 1 tsp. of water to the batter. Yield: about 40 small pancakes.

Buttermilk Sourdough Pancakes

- 1 cup sourdough starter
- 1½ cups white flour
- 1 cup warm water

Remove one cup of your sourdough starter and place in a warm bowl. Add the flour and warm water and mix well. Return one cup of the batter to the starter container to feed the starter. Let the balance of the 1½ cups of batter proof in a large bowl for 12 hours. Cover with plastic wrap and let stand in a warm place. It will expand during the proofing so be certain to use a large bowl.

Add the following:

- 2 eggs
- 2 tbs. melted butter
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 additional cup of flour
- 1½ tsp. salt
- 2 tbs. sugar

Let all ingredients come to room temperature. Beat the eggs lightly and stir it into the batter. Stir in the melted butter, salt, sugar and buttermilk. Stir in the cup of flour. Let the batter rest in a warm place for 20 minutes. Spoon the batter onto a preheated 400 degree griddle in small amounts. When the tops of the pancakes are full of bubbles and the bottoms are browned (about 3-4 minutes) flip and cook on the other side for 1½-2 minutes. For lighter pancakes, fold ¼ tsp. of baking soda dissolved in 1 tsp. of water into the batter. Yield: about 40 small pancakes.

Favorite Sourdough Recipes

Sour Cream Sourdough Pancakes

- 1 cup sourdough starter
- 1½ cups white flour
- 1 cup warm water

Remove one cup of sourdough starter and place it in a warm bowl. Add the flour and warm water and mix well. Return one cup of the batter to the starter container to feed the starter. Let the balance of the 1½ cups of batter proof in a large bowl for 12 hours. Cover it with plastic wrap and let stand in a warm place. It will expand during the proofing so be certain to use a large bowl. The final quantity will be around 4 cups.

Add the following:

- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 tbs. melted butter
- 1½ tsp. salt
- 2 tbs. sugar
- ½ additional cup flour
- 2 eggs

Let all ingredients come to room temperature. Stir in the sour cream and melted butter. Beat the 2 eggs and stir them into the batter. Sift the salt and sugar over the mixture and fold it in. Let the batter rest 15-20 minutes. Spoon or ladle the batter onto a preheated 400 degree griddle in small amounts. When the tops of the pancakes are full of bubbles and the bottoms are browned (about 3-4 minutes) turn the pancakes and cook on the other side for 1½-2 minutes.

Note: For lighter pancakes, fold ¼ tsp. of baking soda dissolved in 1 tsp. of water into the batter with the salt and sugar. Yield: about 40 small pancakes.

Sourdough Bannocks (Oatcakes)

- 1 cup sourdough starter
- 1½ cups white flour
- 1 cup warm water

Remove one cup of sourdough starter and place it in a warm bowl. Add the flour and warm water and mix well. Return one cup of the batter to the starter container to feed your starter. Let the balance of the 1½ cups of batter proof in a large bowl for 12 hours. Cover it with plastic wrap and let stand in a warm place. It will expand during the proofing so be certain to use a large bowl. The final quantity will be around 4 cups.

Add the following:

- 2 eggs
- 2 tbs. melted butter
- 1½ tsp. salt
- 2 tbs. sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup rolled oats

Let all ingredients come to room temperature. Stir in the milk,

melted butter. Beat the 2 eggs and stir them into the batter. Stir in the rolled oats. Sift the salt and sugar over the mixture and fold it in. Let the batter rest 15-20 minutes. Spoon or ladle the batter onto a preheated 400 degree griddle in small amounts. When the tops of the pancakes are full of bubbles and the bottoms are browned (about 3-4 minutes) turn the pancakes and cook on the other side for 1½-2 minutes.

Note: For lighter pancakes, fold ¼ tsp. of baking soda dissolved in 1 tsp. of water into the batter just after adding the cup of rolled oats. Yield: about 30 small pancakes.

Juneau (Johnny) Sourdough Cakes

- 1 cup sourdough starter
- 1½ cups white flour
- 1 cup warm water

Remove one cup of sourdough starter and place it in a warm bowl. Add the flour and warm water and mix well. Return one cup of the batter to your starter container to feed the starter. Let the balance of the 1½ cups of batter proof in a large bowl for 12 hours. Cover it with plastic wrap and let stand in a warm place. It will expand during the proofing so be certain to use a large bowl. The final quantity will be around 4 cups.

Add the following:

- 2 eggs
- 2 tbs. melted butter
- 1½ tsp. salt
- 2 tbs. sugar
- ½ cup milk
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal

Let all ingredients come to room temperature. Stir in the milk, melted butter. Beat the 2 eggs and stir them into the batter. Stir in the cornmeal. Sift the salt and sugar over the mixture and fold it in. Let the batter rest 15-20 minutes. Spoon or ladle the batter onto a preheated 400 degree griddle in small amounts. When the tops of the pancakes are full of bubbles and the bottoms are browned (about 3-4 minutes) turn the pancakes and cook on the other side for 1½-2 minutes.

Note: For lighter Johnnycakes, fold ¼ tsp. of baking soda dissolved in 1 tsp. of water into the batter just after adding the cup of cornmeal. Yield: about 30 small pancakes.

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Favorite Sourdough Recipes

Simple Sourdough Pancakes or Waffles

- 2 cups proofed sourdough batter
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tbs. sugar
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- 1 tbs. baking powder
- 1 cup milk
- 3 eggs
- ¼ cup melted butter

Prepare the sourdough batter the evening before (see proofing instructions on page 2). After 12 hours, sift together dry ingredients. Beat the milk and eggs together. Mix the ingredients together, let rest for about 10 minutes, then grill.

For Waffles: prepare as for pancakes except; separate eggs, beat yolks with milk and butter and whip the whites until soft peaks form. Then, add to dry mixture with sourdough batter. Let rest and then fold in the beaten egg whites. Bake in a hot waffle iron.

North Beach Gingerbread Waffles

- 1 cup sourdough starter
- 1½ cups white flour
- 1 cup warm water

Remove one cup of your sourdough starter and place it in a warm bowl. Add the flour and warm water and mix well. Return one cup of the batter to your starter container to feed the starter. Let the balance of the 1½ cups of batter proof in a large bowl for 12 hours. Cover it with plastic wrap and let stand in a warm place. It will expand during the proofing so be certain to use a large bowl. The final quantity will be around 4 cups.

Add the following:

- 2 eggs separated
- ½ cup white flour
- 2 tbs. brown sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ginger
- ¼ tsp. allspice
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 tbs. molasses
- ¼ cup melted butter
- ½ cup milk

Allow all ingredients come to room temperature. Separate the egg yolks and beat lightly and stir it into the batter. Stir in the milk and all dry ingredients. Melt the butter and stir into the batter. Beat the egg whites until they form soft peaks. Gently fold them in. Spoon or ladle the batter onto a preheated waffle iron. When the tops of the waffles are golden browned (about 7 minutes) they are done. Serve them topped with vanilla ice cream or fruit preserves. Yield: about 8 6-inch waffles.

Waffle Variations

Waffles are just as easily adapted to variations of flavor and texture as are pancakes. There is a seemingly endless number of these variations. Be creative and experiment with these variations in your waffle baking.

Syrups and Garnishes

Pancakes and waffles are ideally suited to a topping which will complement their taste and bring an additional flavor into play. The most traditional topping is maple syrup and butter. This is so traditional that many times we just do not think to try something different. There are also a great number of syrups and toppings which can be made from local fresh fruit, canned or frozen fruit and the many spices and extracts available today. The following are some of the recipes well suited for both pancakes and waffles.

Orange Syrup

- 1 cup maple syrup
- 1 tsp. frozen orange juice concentrate
- 2 tbs. butter

Heat the ingredients in a small saucepan until all are soft and can be stirred together. Serve hot with pancakes or waffles.

Spicy Orange Syrup

- 1 cup maple syrup
- 1 tsp. frozen orange juice concentrate
- 1 tsp. prepared mustard
- 1/8 tsp. ground cloves
- 2 tbs. butter

Heat ingredients over a low flame until soft. Stir them together and serve hot on pancakes or waffles.

Honey Topping I

- 1 cup honey
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. allspice

Stir the spices into the honey and warm slightly.

Honey Topping II

- 1 cup honey
- 1½ tsp. frozen juice concentrate
- 2 tsp. grated orange rind

Stir the frozen juice concentrate and the grated orange rind into the honey.

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Favorite Sourdough Recipes

Honey-Plum Topping

- 1 cup pureed plums
- ½ cup honey
- ¼ tsp. allspice
- ½ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg

Stir together all ingredients over a low flame. When thoroughly mixed, serve as a topping for waffles.

Brown Sugar

- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup butter

Melt the butter over a low flame and stir in the brown sugar in small amounts. When all the brown sugar has melted and has been stirred thoroughly into the butter the syrup is ready to be poured over the top of your pancakes and waffles.

Boiled Cider

- 2 cups cider
- 1 cup sugar

Stir the sugar into the cider and place over a flame. Boil the liquid down until it has thickened to a syrup. Stir it while it is thickening to prevent burning.

Peach Butter

- ½ cup butter
- ½ cup peach preserves
- 1/8 tsp. nutmeg

Beat the ingredients together and serve.

Blueberry Syrup

- 2 cups blueberries
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup water
- 1 slice of lemon

Simmer all ingredients together, stir frequently to make a syrup.

Maple-Rum Syrup

- 1 cup maple syrup
- ½ cup butter
- 1 oz. rum

Melt the butter and stir the maple syrup and rum into it. Serve hot.

Hot Spiced Applesauce Topping

- 1 17-ounce can applesauce
- ½ tsp. cinnamon
- ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar

Stir all ingredients together and heat and serve. Makes a delicious topping for apple pancakes.

Praline Sauce

- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ½ cup corn syrup
- ¼ cup water
- ½ cup chopped pecans
- 2 tbs. butter

Heat the first three ingredients together in a small sauce pan and reduce to a syrup, stir in the chopped pecans and butter.

Hot Spiced Honey Butter

- ½ cup butter
- ½ tsp. cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. nutmeg
- ½ cup honey

Melt the butter over moderate heat. Stir in the remaining ingredients and serve while warm.

Other Toppings

Try sour cream as a tasty topping or, your favorite variety of jam or jelly. Grate some semi-sweet chocolate on top of whipped cream. Butterscotch syrup is quite tasty on pancakes and waffles. Many people like the taste of molasses and corn syrup in the toppings they heap upon their pancakes. Cottage cheese is another favorite. The possibilities are endless!

BREAD & BISCUIT RECIPES

Quick Sourdough Biscuits

- 2 cups proofed sourdough batter
- 2½ cups all purpose-flour
- 1 tbs. sugar
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- 1 tbs. baking powder
- ½ cup milk
- ¼ cup melted butter

The evening before; prepare the sourdough batter (refer to the proofing instructions on page 1). After 12 hours, sift together dry ingredients in a mixing bowl. Stir in the milk and sourdough batter. Mix well and form into a ball. Knead gently on a floured surface about 30 seconds. Roll out dough to about ½ ". Cut into circles with a cutter. Place apart on an un-greased baking sheet. Cover lightly and let rest for 30 minutes. Brush tops lightly with melted butter and bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes or until biscuits have puffed and have turned golden brown.

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Favorite Sourdough Recipes

San Francisco Sourdough Bread

- 4 cups of sourdough batter
- 1 cup of warm potato water
- ½ cup of sugar
- 6 tbs. olive oil
- 1 tsp. of salt
- 10 cups of flour

Start by making a soft sponge: mix the sourdough starter, sugar, water and olive oil. Add half the flour and knead well. Set in a warm place to double in bulk. Add the remainder of flour to make a dough that is easy to handle, smooth and elastic. Place in a greased bowl, cover and let rise in a warm place until double in bulk. Knead down. Let rise to double bulk. Form into loaves and place on a cookie sheet. Slash top and bake at 500 degrees in a oven for 10 minutes, then 400 degrees for 45 minutes. This will make two large loaves of bread.

Quick and Easy Sourdough Bread

- 1 cup of sourdough batter
- 1 yeast package, or 1 tbs. if using bulk yeast
- 1½ cups of warm water
- ½ tsp. of salt
- 6 tbs. olive oil
- ½ tsp. of soda
- 2 tbs. sugar
- 6 cups of flour

Add yeast to warm water and let fizz. Mix in the sourdough starter and 5 cups of flour, sugar and salt. Beat well. Put in greased bowl and let rise until doubled in bulk. Mix soda in remaining cup of flour and add to original dough. Knead until satiny and springy to the touch.

Cut the dough in half and make 2 loaves. Bake in 400 degree oven for 45 minutes.

Sourdough Dill Bread

- 1 cup sourdough starter
- 2½ cups white flour
- 2 cups warm water

Remove one cup of your sourdough starter and place it in a warm bowl. Add the flour and warm water and mix well. Return one cup of the batter to your starter container to feed your starter. Let the balance of the 1½ cups of batter proof in a large bowl for 12 hours. Cover with plastic wrap and let stand in a warm place. It will expand during the proofing so be certain to use a large bowl. The final quantity will be around 4 cups.

Add the following ingredients:

- 1 cup warm milk
- 2 tbs. melted butter
- 1 cup small curd creamed cottage cheese
- 2 tsp. salt

- 2 tbs. sugar
- 6½ additional cups flour
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- 2 tbs. instant minced onion
- 3 tsp. dill seed

Let all ingredients come to room temperature. In a warm 4 quart bowl place your batter, mix in the melted butter. Stir until well blended. Set aside. Sift the salt and sugar over the mixture and fold it in. Add the cottage cheese to a cup of milk and stir over low heat until lukewarm and add to batter. Add 4 cups of flour ½ cup at a time. Beat vigorously until all the flour is blended in. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Place the last 2 cups of flour on the bread board and turn the dough out onto it. Knead in enough flour (about 1-1½ cups) to make the dough smooth and satiny. Form dough into a round ball and place in a well-greased bowl. Cover the dough with a cloth and place it in a warm (85 degree) place for proofing. In about 2 hours the dough will have doubled in bulk. Test by seeing if the impression of two fingers remains. When doubled in bulk, punch down and knead slightly in the bowl.

Divide the dough in half and shape into two loaves. Put the loaves into two well-greased loaf pans and cover. Place the pans in a warm (85 degree) place and let rise again for about 2 hours. Bake in a preheated 375 degree oven for 45 minutes. The bread is done when the loaves shrink away from the sides of the pans and a thumping produces a hollow sound. When done, remove the pans from the oven and the loaves from the pans. Set them on a wire rack to cool.

Sourdough Caraway Bread

Substitute 3 tbs. caraway seed for the dill seed and omit the onion entirely.

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Favorite Sourdough Recipes

BATTER BREAD RECIPES

No-knead Sourdough Bread

- 1 cup sourdough starter
- 1½ cups white flour
- 1 cup warm water

Remove one cup of your sourdough starter and place it in a warm bowl. Add the flour and warm water and mix well. Return one cup of the batter to your starter container to feed your starter. Let the balance of the 1½ cups of batter proof in a large bowl for 12 hours. Cover it with plastic wrap and let stand in a warm place. It will expand during the proofing so be certain to use a large bowl. The final quantity will be around 4 cups.

Add the following ingredients:

- ½ cup warm milk
- 2 tbs. melted butter
- 1½ tsp. salt
- 2 tbs. sugar
- 2½ additional cups flour
- 1 egg

Let all ingredients come to room temperature. In a warm 4 quart bowl mix the dry ingredients and the melted butter. Beat the egg well and stir into the batter. Sift the salt and sugar over the mixture and fold it in. Add the flour ½ cup at a time. Beat vigorously until all the flour is blended in. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Cover the bowl and let stand in a warm 85 degree place for about 2 hours for proofing. When the dough has doubled in bulk, stir it down thoroughly. Pour dough into a well greased loaf pan and spread it out evenly. Pat the top smooth with floured hands. Cover with a cloth and let rise in a warm 85 degree place until it reaches about 1 inch from the top of the pan. About 1 hour 45 minutes.

Bake in a preheated 375 degree oven for 45 minutes. When the bread starts to shrink away from the sides of the pan it is done. When done, remove the bread from the oven and brush the top with melted butter. Place on a wire rack to cool immediately.

Sourdough Baking Tips

1. Sourdough can not be spoiled. It is a wild yeast; a ferment. But it does demand attention to be kept alive. If the starter separates, with water forming on the top, stir it well and add more fuel (flour) to get the batter smooth again.
2. Transfer the sourdough starter into a bowl to make a batter for cooking. Do not mix the batter in the sourdough starter pot. You must keep a starter to build a new sourdough supply. Always leave about 1 cup of sourdough starter in the pot. If by accident all the sourdough is used: don't panic. Just add flour, water and scrape down the sides of the sourdough pot. There will be

enough enzymes to start the sourdough batter to bubble again.

3. Never add flour directly to a starter, when mixing batter ready to bake. Sourdough batter needs to proof for 8-12 hours. Otherwise it will create a doughy-textured end result. Add flour and water the night before to build up the quantity of starter needed. Add approximately equal amounts of flour and water. This allows the sourdough enzymes to work 10 hours and removes most of the starch leaving a protein-rich batter.

4. Sugar is used as a booster to force the enzymes to work faster. It is not used to sweeten the sourdough. Sugar can be used to brown baked products. Too much sugar will make sourdough recipes rubbery.

5. Soda is used to sweeten. It reacts against the acid in the sourdough. Be aware that soda is also a leavening agent. Add the soda at the very last minute before baking. Air is needed in the batter for fluffy, light sourdoughs. Lightly cover the sourdough pot. Never seal the pot with a tight lid; sourdough needs to breathe. A piece of tin foil makes an excellent cover for the sourdough pot.

6. Sourdough should be kept in the refrigerator or cooler when not in weekly use. When refrigerated, it becomes dormant. Remove the starter at least a day before using it to encourage the sourdough enzymes to work again. Add flour and water. Keep it warm.

(Recipe for sourdough starter on the next page)

Favorite Sourdough Recipes

Creating a sourdough starter from scratch.

Combine 4 ounces (1 cup) whole wheat flour with 4 ounces (1/2 cup) non-chlorinated cool water in a non-reactive container: glass, crockery, stainless steel, or food-grade plastic work best.

Whole grain flour is used at the beginning of the sourdough starter process. Whole grains contain more nutrients and sourdough-friendly microorganisms than all-purpose white flour.

It's important to always feed the sourdough starter with non-chlorinated cool water.

Stir ingredients together well. Make certain there is no dry flour within the starter. Cover the container loosely and let the mixture sit at warm room temperature (about 70°F.) for 24 hours.

The colder the environment, the more slowly the sourdough starter will grow. If the normal temperature in your home is below 68°F, find a warmer spot to develop the starter.

Consider, setting the starter on top of a water heater, refrigerator, or another appliance that generates ambient heat. Or, set it near a heat source such as a baseboard heater.

There may be no activity in the first 24 hours. Or, there may be a bit of growth and bubbling.

Discard 4 ounces or half the starter, and add to the remainder a scant 1 cup of unbleached all-purpose flour, and 4 ounces (1/2 cup) non-chlorinated cool water if the kitchen is warm. Use non-chlorinated or filtered lukewarm water if the kitchen is cold.

Mix well, cover, and let the starter rest at room temperature for the next 24 hours.



Save the discarded starter to bake bread or for a sourdough pizza crust.

By the third day there will be some bubbling; a fresh aroma and some expansion. It's now time to begin two feedings daily, as evenly spaced as your schedule allows.

After 12 hours, the starter will have risen with lots of bubbles. Look for small bubbles on the surface.

The starter should have a tangy aroma – pleasingly acidic, but not overpowering.

For each feeding, weigh out 4 ounces starter; this will be a generous 1/2 cup, once it's thoroughly stirred down. Discard the remaining starter.

Add 4 ounces (a scant 1 cup) unbleached all-purpose flour, and 4 ounces (1/2 cup) water to the 4 ounces starter.

Mix the starter, flour, and water, cover, and let the mixture rest at room temperature for approximately 12 hours before repeating.

Repeat two-a-day feeding on days 4, 5, and as many days as it takes for the starter to become very active.

After a week of consistent feeding, the starter should be ready to use in a sourdough bread recipe.

About PioneerDad

Pioneer Dad, aka Bill Washburn, is an expert gardener who grows his own culinary herbs, organic heirloom vegetables and a variety of fruit. He writes frequently about his garden experiences, cooking, brewing and home improvement on several websites.