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Sourdough Starter

Information shared by Christina Cann, owner of Gulf Coast Sourdough

Sourdough Starter Feeding & Care Instructions:

- The starter is kept at a 50/50 ratio of flour to water (by weight). It should resemble thick pancake batter.
- Since the starter is a living organism, it needs to be fed. When you take it out of the fridge, feed it 50g of flour and 50g of water (roughly ½ cup flour, ¼ cup water). Wait until the starter is nice and bubbly before using it.
- When out of the fridge, the starter can be doubled (by weight) every 8-12 hours.
- Before putting back in the fridge, give it one more feeding of 50g flour and 50g water
- Never have the container more than half full when in the fridge -- it will expand and overflow out of or shatter the container. The lid should be kept on, but loose.
- Starter can be kept in the fridge for about 3-4 weeks without feeding. You'll likely notice a dark liquid form on the top of the starter after a few weeks -- that is perfectly normal. Before the first feeding, stir the liquid back into the starter. Or, take a swig, it's hooch :)



BTW, if you don't have a food scale, I highly recommend picking one up. Volume measurements are very inaccurate, and mixing by weight will give you much more reproducible results.

Basic 1-2-3 Recipe

This is a basic sourdough recipe which uses the amount of starter you have available as a foundation. The following ratio is by weight:

- 1 part starter
- 2 parts water
- 3 parts flour
- 1% of the total dough weight salt

So, for example, if you have 100g of starter, mix it with 200g of water and 300g of flour. The total dough weight will then be 600g, so add 6g of salt.

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Mixing & Baking instructions:

- Mix the starter with the water and stir until combined.
- Add the flour and salt all at once, and stir until you can't stir with a spoon anymore.
- Knead for a few minutes to ensure all the ingredients are uniformly mixed. We use the knead-in-bowl method, which is less messy and requires less flour. Here's a youtube video of someone doing that method: https://youtu.be/rotDB_FXokU
- Let sit for 20-40 minutes. This is called an autolyse, and allows the water to fully saturate the flour. This step can be omitted if there's a time crunch
- Knead for a couple more minutes until the dough is well-formed (you'll get a feel for this over time).
- Cover with a towel or plastic wrap and let rise for 6-12 hours. One of the nice things about sourdough is that it is very flexible with rising times. It is helpful to knead the dough a few times every hour or so to further develop the dough, but it's not required.
- Alternately, at this step you could also cover and place in the refrigerator for up to a 48 hours. This method pulls flavors out of the flour and makes for a richer tasting bread. Let dough come to room temperature before shaping.
- Shape the dough however you want (there are tons of videos out there for different shaping styles: <http://bit.ly/1IUR7XG>).
- Proof (let it rise after it's shaped) the dough for about an hour.
- While the dough is proofing, get the oven pre-heated to 475. If you're baking in a dutch oven or cloche (highly recommended), also preheat it.
- Bake for 25-30 minutes for a 600-750 gram loaf. If using a dutch oven, taking the lid off after the first 10 minutes will make a dark, thick crust. To make sure it's done, take the loaf out of the oven, flip it over, and use a meat/instant thermometer to make sure it's at 180 degrees in the middle.
- Let cool for at least 20 minutes before eating. Actual sourness will depend on the rise time, heat/humidity of the day, and the potency of the starter. Sourness also develops after the bread is baked -- a loaf will taste more sour a day after baking than it does immediately after.

Other resources:

Excellent bread books:

Bread Baker's Apprentice: <http://www.amazon.com/Bread-Bakers-Apprentice-Mastering-Extraordinary/dp/1580082688/>

Tartine Bread: <http://www.amazon.com/Tartine-Bread-Chad-Robertson/dp/0811870413/>

Baker's Forum: <http://www.thefreshloaf.com/forum>