

Sourdough Bread – Artisan Style

STARTER:

Place ½ c white flour or *gluten free flour* and ½ c distilled water in glass vessel with loose fitting lid. *If making gluten free, add 1 tsp active dry yeast as there is no wild yeast present in gf flours.* Feed it ¼ c of the flour and ¼ c water every day until it is nearly full and very frothy/foamy. At that point, place in the refrigerator. To end up with a great artisan sourdough, you begin with a healthy starter. Remember to feed yours weekly if you haven't made bread with it that week. Keep it in a covered, but **not sealed**, container in the refrigerator and feed it ½ and ½ mix once a week, after pouring off any hooch. If your container gets too full and you are not planning a big bread baking session, pour out half before feeding it. If you wish to adapt flavor, every once in a great while, feed it half of a different grain flour, such as rye or barley. Even add a bit of sugar occasionally but be sure to have 4 to 6 feedings without it before deciding to add sugar (or molasses, or agave). Note that unbleached all-purpose or bread flour need to be the primary feed in order to keep a stable nice flavored starter. **DO NOT USE** chlorinated tap water, or water that has been softened in the starter or dough.

After taking starter out to make bread, feed the rest you are putting back in the refrigerator with the ½ c. ½ c. mix.

SPONGE aka Levain:

Sponge is the next step. Think of the starter as the mother and the sponge as the daughter. The sponge proofs the yeast in the starter and builds the colony so there is enough living culture to stay alive through the process and still be there to raise your bread in baking.

After assembly Sponge is left on the counter, loosely covered, over night or all day in a cold house, but in a very warm space (75 – 95 degrees) the sponge could grow quite quickly. **Gluten Free version will not have hooch, usually.** Depending on the strength of your culture and the temperature in your home it will need between 4 and 10 hours. It can be slowed to take around 12 – 18 hours in a 55-65-degree space. Just remember two things:

1. Sponge is intended to build the colony and if you let it sit too long, it will consume its “food” and begin dying off; which is contrary to your intent for it.
2. The longer sponge sits, the stronger the flavor characteristic of sourdough will develop. Some like it mild and others like it strong.

DOUGH:

Art of Cookery uses a method of bread baking that is considered artisan and is fairly hands off but requires patience and planning. Once assembled and risen until doubled (usually around 6 – 8 hours wheat flour, **1-3 gluten free**), it is refrigerated and used as needed. It will last for 7 days before affecting the amount of the culture and decreasing the leavening too much. Earlier is better. You can always bake up that last loaf and freeze it. The recipe can be halved or doubled, just remember to do the same math with the sponge and consider the size of your container.

ADAPTATIONS and Other USES:

Change the flavor of your bread to suit your tastes and needs. Rye is a great match for sourdough, but other grains work too. Try to keep at least 2 cups of white bread or all-purpose flour or it will get to be a very dense bread. Of course, this may be to your liking. For example, you can use all white, roll it out flat, brush with melted butter and sprinkle sugar/cinnamon (and raisins or whatever you wish) and roll in up to form a loaf and bake in a buttered bread pan. This is very versatile bread. Knead in herbs and spices. Make it pumpernickel with dark rye, caraway, and cocoa. Play with your food! Patience and a healthy starter are the two required constants.

Artisan Sourdough Bread

Prepare. You need:

- 24 hours prior to needing the bread, less if GF
- Healthy sourdough starter
- Non-aluminum stirring spoon and rubber scraper
- Measuring spoons AND cups
- 4-quart glass or plastic container with a loose lid

Sponge aka Levain (made first):

- 1 cup of healthy starter
- 1/2 cup bread flour, gf flour, or unbleached all-purpose flour (65 g/2.25 oz)
- 1/2 cup water, lukewarm (use distilled water if possible) (118 ml or g/4 oz)

In a 4 qt. container stir together the starter, flour(s), and water. Cover loosely and if using regular flour, let sit until frothy, about 6-8 hours average. (Could be sooner in a warm place or longer in a cold one) If using GF flour let sit until risen to double, about 2-3 hours.

Dough:

- Frothed sponge
- 2 TBSP molasses or agave (1.11 oz/31.5g) or granulated sugar (.65oz/18.75g)
- 1/3 cup water or milk, lukewarm (118 ml or g/4 oz) **if GF use 1/3 plus 2 eggs & 1 t apple cider vinegar**
- 2 TBSP oil (or melted butter cooled a bit) (1 oz/28g/ml)
- 3 cups bread flour (or unbleached all-purpose, or GF Flour)
- 1 ½ tsp coarse salt (.25oz/7.2g)
- **If making gluten free, add 2 t xanthan gum, 2 t baking powder and ½ t baking soda**

Wheat flour directions:

Add the above ingredients to the frothed sponge created in the 4 qt. container. Liquid first, stir, then dry, stir. The dough should be sticky and moist, but not pourable. If too dry add water, 1 TBSP at a time. Put lid back on and let rise until double and flat topped. This will take another 4 to 8 hours, possibly less in a warm space. It is ok to let set overnight if in a space that is not overly warm. Once raised, it is ready to go into the refrigerator. You can make bread right away, but it will be stickier and harder to work with than when it is chilled. It will fall some in the 'fridge. After a few hours (or days) in the refrigerator, make bread. OPTIONS: ¼ tsp ginger and/or substitute 1 small egg for some of the water to make the ½ cup liquid, use other flours (or all-purpose) for the rye, add caraway seeds or other seeds of choice. This yeast also likes to dine on ascorbic acid and adding 1/8 tsp to the final knead before rising and baking can be beneficial, but not necessary.

Gluten Free flour directions:

Add the above ingredients to the frothed sponge created in the 4 qt. container. Liquid first, stir, then dry, stir. The dough should be sticky and moist, but not pourable. If too dry add water, 1 TBSP at a time.

Place in a greased loaf pan, or in a GF flour coated botform. If in a loaf pan, oil top of loaf and cover with plastic wrap. If in a botform, oil exposed loaf and cover with parchment paper. Place in a warm location for example preheat oven to 170 (no more than 200), place bread in and turn off oven and turn oven light on. Let rise until

double, one to 3 hours. If a stronger sourdough flavor is preferred, let rise slowly in the refrigerator overnight. Let sit out in room temperature for 30 minutes before baking. Note: There is no second rise with GF sourdough.

When doubled, place a pan beneath the baking rack and preheat oven to 350. Remove plastic wrap. Invert bread onto baking stone with parchment now underneath bread on stone (or baking sheet). Or, simply place filled loaf pan in oven. Pour 1 cup of water into the pan beneath the bread. Bake but don't be tempted to open the oven, you are steaming the bread. The bread is done when it has a browned top and the bottom thumps hollowly when tapped. A ½ lb. loaf will bake about 40 minutes, while a 1 lb. loaf will be closer to 60 minutes. The loaf should look nicely browned and the interior at 215 F. Use foil to cover if it looks like the top will get too brown before done.

Remove from oven and cool on rack for 2 minutes. Turn out onto rack and cool completely.

Baking the Wheat Bread:

Dust your hands and the surface of the dough lightly with flour. Remove desired amount of dough. 1 lb. (455g) is about a grapefruit size and bakes up nicely. Stretch and fold over itself a few times and then very briefly knead in flour (and ascorbic acid if using) to feed the growing colony (about 2 TBSP/17g for every 1 lb. dough). NOTE: After stretching and folding, you can skip the kneading and place right onto cornmeal surface to rise. Shape into a ball. **If it doesn't stand tall and slouches, knead a bit more flour into it.** You might need to add up to ¼ c. Brush with butter or oil and let sit in a warm place on cornmeal for 1 - 2 hours (45 minutes in a bread proofing oven set to rapid rise). Place your bread stone or a thick baking sheet in the oven and toss with cornmeal. Place another pan beneath it on the lowest rack. Preheat to 450° F. While oven is preheating, slash the tops of the bread about a ¼ inch deep.

Place bread on stone (or sheet). Pour 1 cup of water into the pan beneath the bread. Bake but don't be tempted to open the oven, you are steaming the bread. The bread is done when it has a browned top and the bottom thumps hollowly when tapped. A ½ lb. loaf will bake about 25-30 minutes, while a 1 lb. loaf will be closer to 50 minutes. The loaf should look nicely browned and the interior 210 degrees F (200 if using all white flour).

To use up extra starter, use it in any recipe that calls for flour and water. It makes fantastic pancakes, chocolate cakes, tortillas, scones... Just use this ratio: 1 cup starter = ½ c flour and ½ c water.