

Make Your Own “Wild Yeast 49’er”, Sour Dough Starter, & Sour Dough French Bread

Making Your Own Wild Yeast “1849” Style:

Step 1: **Capture the Wild Yeast**

This method is dependent on how much wild yeast is circulating in the air in your kitchen at any given time. Baking frequently adds yeast to the air, so trying to capture the yeast soon after baking bread will help ensure success.



1. Combine in a bowl:
 - 2 cups of warm water
 - 1 tablespoon of sugar
 - 2 cups of flour
2. Cover the bowl with cheesecloth and place in a warm area in your kitchen.
3. Stir the mixture once a day.
4. It will begin to bubble when you have captured yeast.
5. Allow the mixture to continue to sit for 3-4 days after you first notice the bubbles.

Step 2: **Dry the Yeast**

1. Spread the liquid mixture out on plastic wrap or waxed paper to dry.
2. Break the dried yeast into chunks.
3. Grind it into small particles in the food processor.
4. Freeze the yeast in an airtight container for long term storage.

Step 3: **Use the Yeast**

This yeast is not as concentrated as commercial yeast.
Plan on substituting; one cup of homemade yeast for one ounce of commercial yeast.

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1. Dissolve one cup of homemade yeast in one cup of whatever liquid your recipe calls for.
2. Make the dough, decreasing the flour used by one cup.
3. Knead and allow rising as usual and being aware that the dough may take longer to double in size than if you'd used commercial yeast.

<http://www.mahalo.com/how-to-make-yeast>



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Making Sourdough “Forty-Niner” Starter “1849”:

Day 1: mix...

2 Tablespoons whole grain flour
2 Tablespoons water

Cover and let sit at room temperature for 24 hours.

Day 2: add...

2 Tablespoons whole grain flour
2 Tablespoons water

Stir well, cover and let sit at room temperature 24 hours. At day 2 you may (or may not) start to see some small bubbles.

Day 3: add...

2 Tablespoons whole grain flour
2 Tablespoons water

Stir well, cover and let sit at room temperature 24 hours.

Day 4:

Stir down, measure out 1/4 cup and store the rest.

To the 1/4 cup add...

1/4 cup flour
1/4 cup water



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Repeat Day 4:

Once daily until the mixture starts to expand and smell yeasty.

It is not unusual for the mixture to get very bubbly around Day 3 or 4 and then go completely flat and appear dead.

If the mixture does not start to grow again by Day 6, add 1/4 tsp. apple cider vinegar with the daily feeding.

This will lower the pH level a bit more and it should wake up the yeast.

Once your wild yeast is growing, the character and flavor will improve if you continue to give it daily feedings and keep it at room temperature for a couple of weeks longer.

After that time, it should be kept in the refrigerator between uses/feedings.

Do not be impatient with it.

The other factor I can't stress enough is, make sure your whole grain flour is REALLY fresh for the best results.

It might look very perky by day two, and then go dormant for almost a week before the yeasts will get going well, but it will really develop.

When you start baking just remember to be patient. Sourdough takes longer to rise, too.

Sourdough breads take advantage of the flavors produced by “wild” yeast and bacteria. Once you've made a sourdough starter, you can put it into action with the following bread recipe.



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Ye Old “1849” Sour Dough French Bread:



Ye Old Forty-Niner



The same "Mother Dough" (sourdough starter) has been used by the old Forty-Niners of Gold Rush, since 1849.

For the Starter:

- 1 piece of starter the size of a tangerine (kept out at room temperature for 6 to 8 hours or in the refrigerator for a few days)
- 2 cups warm water
- 2 cups organic, unbleached white, all-purpose flour, or home ground wheat is best.

For the Dough:

- 2 1/2 cups organic, unbleached white, all-purpose flour, or home ground wheat
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 3/4 cup starter from the previous step
- 3/4 cup cool water
- Cooking oil (to grease the bowl)
- a mixing bowl
- a food processor (optional)
- a large spoon
- a baguette tray or parchment-lined baking tray
- a razor blade or sharp knife
- a spray bottle

What Do I Do?

1. Break up the starter, dilute it in the water, and mix in the flour. Cover this mixture loosely and set it aside in a warm spot for 18–24 hours or until it is quite bubbly.

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Tip:

1. Covering the dough as it rises helps to avoid moisture loss and contamination.
2. Mix the flour and salt together in a food processor fitted with the plastic dough blade or into a bowl and wooden spoon. Pour the starter in and pulse the machine several times to mix the ingredients. Then, with the machine running, slowly add the water and continue mixing for a few minutes (If you don't have a food processor, simply mix the dough in a bowl for about 5 minutes, until it forms a ball.)
3. Remove the mixture from the bowl and place it on a well-floured work table and round it into a ball.
4. Let the dough rise in a well-oiled bowl, covered, in the refrigerator for 12–15 hours. Remove from the refrigerator and allow it to warm up at room temperature for 2 hours.
5. Divide the dough into 2 pieces, and stretch them into tight baguette shapes. Place each one on a baguette tray or a parchment-lined baking tray.
6. Cover the baguettes and let them rise for 6–7 hours, until they have doubled in size.
7. Preheat the oven to 450° F.
8. Use a sharp razor blade or knife, slash the tops of the loaves diagonally 3 or 4 times (this will allow them to expand more easily while baking) and spray them with a fine mist of water from a spray bottle.
9. Place the loaves in the oven and immediately spray them, and along with the walls and floor of the oven, with water. Repeat this step after about 5 minutes of baking.
10. Bake the loaves 25–30 minutes, until they are entirely golden and the crust is crisp and blistered.

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What’s Going On?

What’s the purpose of spraying the dough and oven with water just before and 5 minutes into baking? The crust that begins to form on dough as it bakes can make it harder for the loaf to rise. Spraying the oven with water creates steam. This keeps the outer skin of the loaf moist and flexible, and helps it rise to its maximum volume with a good shape. Steam also encourages starch granules on the surface of the loaf to fully gelatinize, which gives the crust its crispy texture.

What Else Can I Try?

Sourdough comes in a variety of flavors, depending on what species of yeast and bacteria are present in the starter. You can also adjust the taste by letting the starter ferment for a longer or shorter period of time, which allows yeast and bacteria to add more or less of their flavors to the dough. After you’ve made one loaf, experiment by letting your starter ferment for a few days longer before mixing your dough.

Out of yeast? Don’t worry: It’s not hard to find.

The feisty critters that make bread rise actually live all around us. In fact, the use of yeast in bread-making probably got its start accidentally, when “wild” yeast caused dough’s, meant for unleavened flatbreads to ferment.

To this day, many bakers still use “wild” yeast to make bread, especially in San Francisco, a city famous for its sourdough’s. To make sourdough, bakers use a “starter,” a piece of dough in which yeast is continually reproducing with the help of regular doses of flour from the baker. The yeast that gets the starter “started” usually comes from the air in the kitchen or bakery where the bread is made, but some starter recipes also use store-bought yeast.

Working with starters takes practice. Many variables—for example, the amount of yeast in the air and the temperature of the room—will affect the fermentation process. It might take a few tries before you get the flavor you like.

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Recipe Conversions:

Did You Know?

San Francisco sourdough’s got its start during the Gold Rush days. Without access to commercial yeast, miners had to rely on the yeast present in left-over pieces of dough.

What Do I Need?

- 1 small handful (1/4 to 1/3 cup) white flour or home ground wheat
- 1 or 2 Tablespoons of water
- a small bowl
- a towel, napkin, or other piece of cloth
- a large spoon



What Do I Do?

1. In a mound of flour, make a small well and add the water.
2. Slowly mix the flour and the water, bringing more flour into the center of the well. The mixture will gradually transform from a paste into a small piece of dough.
3. Knead this small piece of dough with your fingers for about 5–8 minutes, until it becomes springy.
4. Place the dough in a small bowl, cover it with a damp towel, and let it sit in a warm spot for 2 or 3 days.
5. When it’s ready, the dough will be moist, wrinkled, and crusty. If you pull off a piece of the crust, you’ll find tiny bubbles and smell a sweet aroma.
6. Throw away any hardened crust. “Refresh” the remaining piece by mixing it with twice the original amount of flour and enough water to make firm dough. Set aside as before.

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7. After 1 or 2 days the starter will have a new, fresh look. Remove any dried dough and mix with about 1 cup of flour.
8. Once again, cover the bowl with a damp cloth and leave it in a warm place for another 8–12 hours.
9. When the starter is ready, it will appear fully risen, and a small indentation made with a finger won't spring back.

Now the starter is ready to be used in virtually any sourdough recipe. You can try it out on Berkeley sourdough. Remember to save a small piece of the starter: You can put it in the refrigerator for several days, then refresh it again as above and use it to make another loaf. A good starter will serve you for years to come!

What's Going On?

In addition to flour, water, and yeast, your starter also contains bacteria. When these bacteria feed on the sugars in flour, they produce acidic by-products. This is what gives sourdough its sour taste.

Actually, all dough's contain at least some bacteria. So why all breads isn't sour? In dough's made with bakers' yeast (the kind you buy in the store), the yeast outnumber the bacteria. Since both compete for the same sugars, the yeast win out, and the bacteria don't have a chance to produce their acidic by-products. In sourdough, yeast and bacteria are more closely balanced, so the bacteria have a chance to add their flavors to the bread.

Sourdoughs and other raised breads also differ from one another because of the eating habits of the yeasts that make them rise. The predominant yeast in sourdough, *Saccharomyces exiguus*, cannot metabolize maltose, one of the sugars present in flour. Baker's yeast, on the other hand, has no trouble feeding on this sugar. Since the bacteria that give sourdough its taste need maltose to live, they do much better in the company of sourdough's yeast because they don't have to compete for this sugar.

Did You Know?

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The several strains of bacteria that give sourdough its sourness are collectively known as Lactobacillus sanfrancisco.

What Else Can I Try?

Yeast has many homes. In fact, some strains even thrive on the surface of fruit. The following Grape sourdough starter, or biga, uses the wild yeast naturally present in grapes. The fruit also provides the sugar on which the yeast feeds.

<http://www.exploratorium.edu/cooking/bread/recipe-grapeyeast.html>

"Sourdough" has also been called Chuck wagon bread, Cellar biscuits Yeast dough, Spook bread, Saurteig in Germany and in Africa they use the wild yeast and call it "Most".

A Few Hints for Your Starter:

1. If it separates, (water forming on top) stir well and add flour to make a smooth batter again.
2. Leave a cup of starter to renew.
3. Add equal amounts of flour and water the night before to replenish your starter.
4. Sugar is used to boost the enzymes, not to sweeten. Too much sugar will make it rubbery. Use Soda to sweeten.
5. Cover sourdough pot lightly...do not seal
6. Sour dough can be kept in the fridge when not needed. It takes at least a day at room temperature though, to start working again.
7. Sourdough reacts best at 68-77 degrees F°
8. Do not use metal pots or spoons with sourdough. Wood or crockery is recommended as best.

Sourdough Turns Carbohydrates into Proteins?

By Chef Cookie Soles

<http://www.kitchenproject.com/history/sourdough.htm>

I would like to share a bit of research I came across recently concerning "Sourdough". What originally caught my eye was an analysis of laboratory tests. They say that Sourdough contains the greatest amount of protein for its weight and size of any comparable food. "Hmm" I thought "just how does that come about when its ingredients are all carbohydrates?" Apparently a wild yeast forms in the fermentation process of the starter. At that stage, a starch food is turned into a protein dynamo food.

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Ancient Egypt:

We have been told for years that whole wheat bread is healthier than white bread. Whole wheat bread has many nutritious values. However, there is a healthy white flour alternative. Sourdough bread is a healthy choice. Sourdough bread has a mild effect on blood sugar. Meaning that eating sourdough bread will not increase your blood sugar. Sourdough bread is the oldest form of leavened bread, dating back to ancient Egypt around 1500 B.C., maybe to Adam & Eve. It became a popular during the Gold Rush in San Francisco, as the miners would rush to the bakeries in the morning to buy fresh sourdough.

The distinct taste of sourdough bread is the result of lactic acid produced by bacteria fermenting in the dough. The sourdough starter is made from the yeast with bacteria growing from a mix of flour and water. Yeast, Warm water, and sugar is allowed to stand and froth. This lactic acid keeps blood sugars from increasing. **Diabetics** can safely eat sourdough bread without the fear of blood sugar hikes. So roll up your sleeves and start baking. Enjoy sourdough bread in your diet!

It's often thought to be a flavoring, or perhaps a baking technique, something pioneered in Gold Rush-era San Francisco. In fact, sourdough is simply bread in which the rise comes not from a package of shop-bought yeast, but from wild yeast that is in the air everywhere.

As the original leavened bread – all bread was "sourdough" until Louis Pasteur's germ theory led to packaged yeast – sourdough has a long and storied past.

Once the "starter", as this pancake batter-like concoction is known, is up and running, its flavor can be refined over a week or more of regular "feedings" – just more flour and water. There are endless variations, but that's the gist (the Old English and modern Dutch term for yeast) of it. When you're ready to bake, there's nothing special about sourdough bread recipes except that the starter is used instead of shop-bought yeast to force the dough to rise. Meanwhile, the remaining starter will live and grow for as long as it is regularly fed.



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