

SILVER OAK

5-Day Sourdough Bread Starter

What makes homemade sourdough so unique is the natural occurring yeast and bacteria found in your kitchen. This particular bread starter begins with a mixture of flour, water and yeast. Once you combine these ingredients the starter takes on the properties of its environment. The more yeast in the starter, the more leavening power the starter will have. The more bacteria in the starter, the more pronounced the sour flavor will be.

You can also think of the yeast and bacteria as two types of runners: yeast is a sprinter, and bacteria is a marathoner. When you feed the starter, by mixing in flour and water, the yeast is going to jump ahead, vigorously reproducing and dominating the mixture in the first 8 hours. At this point, the starter has strong leavening power. After 12 to 24 hours, the bacteria will catch up and surpass the yeast, becoming more dominant in the mixture, which means less leavening strength and a more pronounced sour flavor.



Total Time: 5 days

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Ingredients

1 cup of water

1 ½ cups of all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon of dry active yeast

Day 1

1. Mix the water, flour and yeast in a bowl. The mixture should be the consistency of pancake batter.
2. Transfer the mixture to a container that is at least four times the volume of the mixed starter to allow room for the starter to expand. Cover the container with a cloth napkin and rubber band.
3. Place in a warm location for five days (ideally at 70°F to 75°F)

Days 2-4

The Waiting Game

1. Check the mixture every 24 hours during this period. You will notice bubbles starting to form.
2. Smell the starter. It should have a yeasty-fermented aroma.

Day 5 and Beyond

Activate the Starter

You're almost ready to start baking. First, you need to activate your starter. Follow the recipe below.

Ingredients

½ cup of sourdough bread starter

1 ½ cup of all-purpose flour

1 cup of warm (80°F) water

1. Take a half cup of the starter that you have been watching for the last four days and mix with flour and water in a bowl until the mixture forms a thick paste.

Note: You will only use ½ cup of the original sourdough bread starter. You can discard the remaining amount of original starter or see the *What to Do With Leftover Starter* section below.

2. Transfer the mixture to a container that is at least four times the volume of this starter, to allow room for the starter to expand. Cover the container with a loose-fitting lid, so that the gas can escape.
3. Let stand at room temperature for 8 to 10 hours—or until the mixture doubles in size. Now the starter is ready to be used or refrigerated until the next feeding. The next feeding should be within 10 days.
4. For all future feedings you will only need a half cup of the original starter.

Maintaining Your Starter Longterm

The method for activating and feeding the starter is the same. To maintain your starter longterm, you need to feed it on a regular basis. In commercial bakeries, the starter is left at room temperature and fed multiple times a day. That's not convenient for most home bakers. Instead, the starter can be refrigerated and fed every 7 to 10 days. Follow the recipe above to feed and maintain your starter over a long period.

What to Do With Leftover Starter

There's still a lot of sour flavor in your leftover starter. Use it in any flour-based recipe like pancakes, bread, pizza dough, muffins, cake and crackers to enhance the sour flavor. You must adjust the amount of flour and water in your chosen recipe to account for the starter.

For every cup of leftover starter, remove ½ cup of liquid and ½ cup of flour from your chosen recipe. For example, if your chosen recipe calls for 2 cups of liquid and 2 cups of flour, adjust to 1 ½ cups of liquid, 1 ½ cups of flour and 1 cup of leftover starter. It may take some experimenting, but that's part of the fun!