

# Sourdough Starter

More Than Just for Bread

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Sourdough is probably the oldest known leavened bread. Starters were kept in small wooden buckets or casks, but many lived for years in lard pails, crocks, and kettles. Some starters have been known to live for years, passed from generation to generation.

Sourdough is made from flour and water and allowed to ferment with yeast. Yeast is used as a leavening agent, where it converts the food/fermentable sugars present in dough into the gas, carbon dioxide. This causes the dough to expand or rise as gas forms pockets or bubbles. When the dough is baked, the yeast dies and the air pockets “set,” giving the baked product a soft and spongy texture. The use of potato flakes, eggs, or sugar in bread dough accelerates the growth of yeasts.

The sourdough starter is a precise mixture of flour, water & yeast that is fed and kept alive to use over and over again in breads, biscuits, pancakes, waffles, & cakes. The yeast, a living organism, feeds off of the flour and gives off carbon dioxide gas which forms bubbles in the dough and eventually causes the baked product to rise again.

For best results with your sourdough, use glass or pottery containers to mix and store starter. Never use a metal container or metal spoon in the starter. The fermentation process can cause the metal to discolor.

There are tips to successful bread making. First off, remember that if you are using your starter daily, it can stay on the counter; if not using daily, refrigerate it. If poorly handled, your starter will die, meaning your bread will not rise. Most importantly, like all homemade breads, sourdough has no preservatives. So, if the loaf won't be eaten within a day, wrap and put it in the freezer, not the refrigerator, as the refrigerator dries out the product.

There are numerous uses for sourdough other than just bread. The sweet mixture can be used for muffins, cinnamon rolls, and the best sourdough pancakes that you have ever tasted.

## Sourdough Bread Starter



### Starter Ingredients:

2 cups warm water  
1 package yeast  
¼ cup potato flakes  
¾ cup sugar

### Next Morning Ingredients:

¾ cups sugar 1 cup warm water

3 tbsp. instant potatoes

### Evening Ingredients:

1 ½ cup warm water 1 tsp. salt

½ cup oil ½ cup sugar

6 cups bread flour (may need more)

Continued

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## Sourdough Bread Starter *continued*

### Let's Get Started

Mix together all starter ingredients. Let it set out all day; refrigerate overnight.

Remove *starter* from refrigerator next morning. Add *morning* ingredients; mix well. Cover, leaving one corner of the top open. Let stand out of the refrigerator all day. (This step is called "feeding the starter.") Repeat this step at least every 3 to 5 days. If left longer than 5 days, the starter will go bad (die).

Remove one cup from the starter and place in a large bowl. (If not making bread after each "feeding," throw or give one cup away.) Close tightly and put in refrigerator.

Add all the *evening* ingredients to the starter in the large bowl. Make into a stiff batter (add more flour, if necessary). Spray large bowl with cooking spray and place in large greased pan or bowl. Cover lightly with plastic wrap. Let rise overnight.

### Next Morning:

Punch down starter with fist, removing all air bubbles. Divide into 2 parts (will make 2 large 9x5-inch loaves). Put the 2 parts into well-oiled pans. Brush with oil. Cover lightly with plastic wrap. Let rise 6 to 12 hours (should be doubled in size).

### Afternoon or Evening

Bake on bottom rack at 350°F for 20 minutes or until brown. Remove from pans and brush with butter. Let cool and store at room temperature in airtight bags, or freeze for longer storage.

This may seem complicated, but once you get started, it is really a very simple and easy bread to bake.

Your starter should resemble a foamy, thick pancake batter; the aroma should be yeasty and slightly sour. Starters will sometimes separate into a clear liquid and a dense layer of flour. This is fine; just stir it together before using. If the mixture smells bad, is any color other than creamy white or slightly yellow, or has a furry mold colony, throw it out. Also, if there are no bubbles after 3 to 5 days when shaken or stirred, discard and begin again.

## More than Just Bread Recipes

### Pancakes

1 cup sourdough starter	2 tbsp. sugar
2 cups lukewarm water	½ cup heavy cream*
2 ½ cups all-purpose flour	2 tbsp. cooking oil
2 large eggs, well beaten	1 tsp. baking soda

Mix starter, water and flour in bowl; keep overnight on counter. Stir in remaining ingredients next morning. Let mixture bubble for 10 minutes. Bake on griddle, using ¼ cup batter for each cake. Makes 2 dozen 5-inch pancakes.

\*Can substitute milk for heavy cream.

## Banana Nut Loaf

- ½ cup shortening
- 1 cup mashed bananas
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup sourdough starter
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 cup chopped nuts

Cream shortening, bananas and sugar; add starter and eggs. Mix well. Sift together dry ingredients, and add to creamed mixture. Add nuts. Pour into 2 greased and floured loaf pans. Bake at 350°F for 40 minutes.

Date Nut Variation: Use 1 cup applesauce for bananas in above recipe. Add 1 cup chopped dates with the nuts.

## Quick Drop Biscuits

- 1 cup sourdough starter
- ⅓ cup cooking oil
- ¾ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 cup flour

Mix starter and oil. Sift together dry ingredients; add to starter and oil. Mix. Drop by tablespoons on ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 350°F for 10 to 15 minutes.



## Waffles

Make the same as pancakes except make the batter a little thicker, or:

2 cups sourdough starter	¼ cup cooking oil
1 tsp. salt	2 egg yolks
2 Tbsps. Sugar	2 beaten egg whites
	1 tsp. baking soda

Stir the salt, sugar, cooking oil, and egg yolks smoothly into the batter. Fold in the beaten egg whites and the baking soda. Bake on a hot, greased waffle iron until brown.

**Baking Tip:** Bake the bread on a baking stone if possible. Preheat the stone up to an hour.

## Chocolate Cupcakes

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- ½ cup cocoa
- ½ cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ cup milk
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ cup sourdough starter

Measure out all ingredients and put together in a large mixing bowl. Do not mix until everything is in the bowl. Mix or beat vigorously; pour into greased or paper-lined muffin pans. Bake at 400°F for 18 to 20 minutes. Cool and frost with favorite frosting.

## Cinnamon Rolls

These light, tender pinwheel cinnamon rolls are best served hot from the oven but they are also good if you allow them to cool and glaze them with a powdered sugar icing.

½ cup starter	<b>For Center</b>
1 cup undiluted evaporated milk	1½ tsp. butter, melted
2 cups un-sifted flour	¼ cup soft butter
1½ tsp. butter, melted	1½ tsp. cinnamon
3 tbsp. sugar	¼ cup raisins (optional)
1 egg	
1½ cups un-sifted flour (or more)	
½ tsp. baking soda	
1 tsp. <i>each</i> : baking powder and salt	
2 tbsp. butter, melted	
¼ cup brown sugar	

Combine starter, evaporated milk and 2 cups flour in large bowl; cover and leave at room temperature overnight.

Next Morning: beat together butter, sugar, and egg; blend into sourdough mixture. Combine the 1½ cups flour, soda, baking powder and salt; mix with other mixture. Turn onto a floured board and knead until the surface is satiny and doesn't stick to the board (add flour if necessary).

Place ball of dough in center of board and roll out to a rectangle 8x16-inches. Brush surface with melted butter and sprinkle with a mixture of brown sugar and cinnamon (and raisins, if you wish). Roll up dough, starting on one of the long sides; cut roll at 1 ¾-inch intervals with a string or sharp knife. (You should have 9 rolls.) Dip top and bottom of each roll in melted butter; place in a square 9-inch pan, cover loosely, and let rise in a warm place for about 1 hour or until doubled. Bake in a moderately hot oven (375°F) for 30 to 35 minutes until crust is dark golden.

## Cornbread

- 1 cup starter
- ⅓ cup oil or butter
- 1 egg
- ½ cup flour
- ¾ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup cornmeal

Mix starter, egg and oil. Sift together dry ingredients; add to sourdough mixture. Mix until well blended. Pour into a sprayed 8-inch square pan. Bake at 350°F for 25-30 minutes.

## Holiday Bread

¾ cup warm water  
½ cup starter  
2 cups un-sifted flour  
½ cup butter or margarine  
½ cup sugar  
2 egg yolks  
1 cup un-sifted flour  
1 tsp. salt  
½ tsp. *each*: baking soda, cinnamon, and grated lemon peel  
½ cup *each*: sliced almonds, raisins, and coarsely chopped candied cherries  
1 ¼ cups un-sifted flour (or more)  
Egg white

Mix water, starter and 2 cups flour in mixing bowl; cover and leave overnight at room temperature.

Next morning: Cream butter, sugar, and egg yolks together with electric mixer. Combine 1-cup flour, salt, soda, cinnamon and lemon peel; blend into creamed mixture. Blend in the almonds, raisins and cherries. Mix this with sourdough mixture; turn out on a mound of the 1 ¼ cups flour; knead until surface is satiny and not sticky (add more flour if necessary).

Divide dough into thirds and roll each third on the board with your hands to form a strand about 18-inches long. Place strands on a greased cookie sheet and braid together to form a straight braid. Let rise in a warm place for about 2 hours. Paint with egg white. Bake in a moderate (350°F) for 50 to 55 minutes or until medium-brown. Makes 1 loaf.

## Cherry Cobbler

¾ cup all-purpose flour  
½ cup brown sugar  
½ cup sugar  
½ tsp. cinnamon  
¼ cup butter  
½ cup chopped pecans  
¼ cup sourdough starter  
1 (1 lb. 5 oz.) can cherry pie filling  
½ cup seedless raisins

Combine flour, sugars and cinnamon; cut in butter. Stir in pecans and starter. Combine pie filling and raisins in an 8-inch round baking dish. Spoon first mixture over the top. Bake in 425°F oven for 25 minutes or until hot and brown.

## Muffins

6 to 8 hours before using, take 2-cups sourdough starter and add a cup of flour and a cup of water. Let it stand at room temperature.

1½ cup whole-wheat flour  
½ cup sugar  
1 tsp. salt  
¼ cup non-fat dry milk  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1 cup raisins  
½ cup cooking oil  
1 or 2 eggs

Stir dry ingredients into a glass bowl. Make a well in the center. Mix eggs and oil thoroughly with the sourdough mixture. Add to the well in the flour. Stir only enough to moisten the flour. Fill greased muffin tins ¾ full. Bake in 375°F oven for 30-35 minutes. Yields 20 small or 12 large muffins.

Sincerely,



Carla Due, County Extension Agent-Staff Chair

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