

NO-KNEAD CRUSTY SOURDOUGH LOAF

Modified from theprairiehomestead.com by Allison Alexander // Yields 2 loaves

INGREDIENTS:

2 ½ cups water	6 cups flour
1 cup active sourdough starter	3 tsp. salt

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Mix starter and water thoroughly in large bowl. Add flour and salt and mix well until a shaggy, sticky dough forms.
2. Cover bowl and let dough rest for 15-30 minutes.
3. Stretch and fold the dough a few times (see notes). It should become less sticky and develop some resistance.
4. Cover bowl with towel or plastic and let dough rise on the counter overnight, or about 8-12 hours. Dough should double in size.
5. Transfer dough to a floured countertop and divide into two pieces. Let rest for 15-30 minutes, then shape each half into a ball with several more stretch and folds. Place each boule in a banneton or a bowl well-dusted with flour.
6. Cover and let rise for 2-4 hours, or until doubled in size.
7. During last 30 minutes or so, preheat oven to 425 and insert two Dutch oven pans to heat.
8. Gently turn boules out onto sheets of parchment paper and score top with sharp knife if desired. Place each boule carefully in hot Dutch ovens.
9. Bake for 45-48 minutes, or until internal temperature is 205-210 degrees. (See notes.)
10. Let cool completely before you slice and enjoy! Bread is best when eaten fresh, but you can store in a Ziploc at room temperature for 1-3 days, or freeze loaves and thaw/reheat later.

SAMPLE TIMELINE:

Rising times will vary depending on the temperature of your home.

2-3pm: Feed starter.

9pm: Mix up dough. Stretch & fold. Let rise.

8am: Stretch & fold. Shape into loaves. Let rise.

12pm: Score & bake loaves.

NOTES & TIPS:

- ❖ **Starter Safety:** When feeding your starter, make sure to cover it only loosely with a lid rather than screwing it on. You don't want your container to explode or overflow and make a mess.
- ❖ **Feeding Your Starter:** Feed your starter in a 1:1:1 ratio to maintain the right consistency. Weigh it on a kitchen scale and add the same amount each of flour and water.
- ❖ **Active Starter:** Your starter is active and ready to use when it has doubled in size and is full of bubbles. You can also try the "float test," though it's not completely accurate. Drop some starter into a bowl of water – if it floats, it's active enough to be used.
- ❖ **How to Use "Discard":** Once it is no longer bubbly, the starter is called "discard." But you don't have to throw it away! I make more recipes using inactive starter than active. Check out FarmhouseOnBoone.com and LittleSpoonFarm.com for tons of great sourdough recipes. My favorites are tortillas, crepes, crackers, and pancakes.
- ❖ **Storing Your Starter:** You can keep your starter in the fridge for up to a month (or more) when you're not using it. It may form a gray liquid on top, which is just fine – it's not mold! Simply pour or scrape the liquid off and feed your starter as normal. Very inactive starters may need to be fed multiple times before they're strong enough to use.
- ❖ **Stretch & Folds:** There are many different techniques, but the main idea is to move the dough to develop gluten structure. I like to pull one side of the dough up and over itself, then press it down in the middle. I usually do this in a circle all around the ball of dough.
- ❖ **Flour Types:** All-purpose unbleached flour works just fine for sourdough; no fancy ingredients needed. Some people use ancient grains or whole wheat flour in their loaves. I like to add a bit of fresh-milled flour to my loaves for added flavor and nutrition. Try swapping out just 1 or 2 cups of flour at first; too much whole wheat will make a dense, dry loaf.
- ❖ **Rising Times:** Sourdough is very sensitive to temperature. A hot kitchen (or barely warm oven) will make starters and dough rise far more quickly than a cool winter kitchen. You can use this to your advantage to fit bread baking into your schedule. Refrigerating the dough will drastically slow down or nearly pause the rising process.
- ❖ **Scoring:** If you don't score your bread, it will still release steam by cracking open on top. Scoring creates better "oven spring," or rise. I use a sharp chef's knife to cut an "X" on the top of the loaf.
- ❖ **Baking Tips:** Preheating your pans along with your oven preheats creates better crust texture. Covering with a lid traps steam and creates better oven spring. I like to put my Dutch oven lid on for the first 25-30 minutes and leave it off for the remainder to brown the crust. You can also check for an internal temperature of 205-210°F with a meat thermometer to confirm doneness.
- ❖ **Dutch Oven Alternatives:** Dutch ovens are the best choice for baking sourdough as they hold heat and steam well to create a crusty exterior. I've also used a stoneware baking pan or cast iron skillet topped with an oven-safe bowl for a lid. You can experiment with a regular bread pan too.
- ❖ **Sourdough Tools:** If you're ready to dive deeper into sourdough, consider buying bannetons: breathable wooden baskets lined with fabric. They're easier to work with than bowls and floured tea towels. (I still flour the banneton fabric though.) I love to use cheap disposable shower caps to cover bannetons or bowls while the dough is rising. You can also buy specific blades or "lames" for scoring loaves in pretty patterns, as well as bench scrapers for dividing dough.