

Basic Sourdough Bread (aka San Francisco Sourdough)

Makes two 1½-pound (680g) loaves

Note: The amount of water in this starter will depend on how firm or wet you keep your barm mother starter. Adjust the water, as needed, according to the instructions.

MEASURE	OUNCES	GRAMS	INGREDIENTS	%
FIRM STARTER (DAY 1)				
⅔ cup	4	113	barm (mother starter), page 241	88.3
1 cup	4.5	128	unbleached bread flour	100
2 to 4 tablespoons	1 to 2	28 to 57	water	22 to 44
TOTAL				210.3 to 232.3
FINAL DOUGH (DAY 2)				
4½ cups	20.25	574	unbleached bread flour or other flour combination (see page 246)	100
2 teaspoons	0.5	14	salt	2.44
Use all	9.5 ounces (approx.)	269 (approx.)	firm starter	47
1¾ cups	14	397	water, lukewarm (90°F to 100°F/32°C to 38°C)	69
All-purpose or bread flour, semolina, or cornmeal for dusting				
TOTAL				218.4
TOTAL DOUGH FORMULA AND %				
	OUNCES	GRAMS	INGREDIENTS	%
	25	709	bread flour	100
	0.44	12.5	salt	1.9
			(instant yeast, see Grace Note, page 246)	
	18.75	532	water	68.25
TOTAL				170.15

BREAD PROFILE

Lean, standard dough; indirect method; wild yeast

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DAYS TO MAKE: 2 OR 3

DAY 1: 5 hours firm starter

DAY 2: 1 hour to de-chill firm starter; 15 to 17 minutes mixing; 5 to 8 hours stretch and fold, fermentation, shaping, and proofing; 25 to 35 minutes baking (day 2 or 3)

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COMMENTARY

This dough is made with a three-build method: barm to firm starter (also called, in some bakeries, the *levain* or *chef*) to final dough. As noted earlier, this process could go on to four, five, or six builds, but by using cold fermentation (retarding), we develop maximum flavor without all the intermediate builds.

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Feel free to veer from this method and modify either the technique or the ingredients as you see fit. Consult the Grace Note for a number of options, but only your imagination limits the full range of possibilities.

- 1 Day 1: To make the firm starter, remove the barm from the refrigerator 1 hour before you plan to make the firm starter and measure the barm. To measure it, dip a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup measuring cup into a bowl of water, then scoop the cup into the barm, filling it (the wet cup will ensure the barm slides out easily). Or weigh the barm in a bowl on a scale. Transfer the measured barm to a small bowl, cover with a towel or plastic wrap, and allow it to warm up for 1 hour.
- 2 Add the flour to the bowl and mix the barm and the flour together, adding only enough additional water to allow you to knead the mixture into a small ball that has about the same texture as French bread dough (the amount of water will depend on whether you keep a wet or firm barm). You do not need to work this very long, just until all the flour is hydrated and the barm is evenly distributed. Lightly oil a small bowl or mist the inside of a plastic bag with spray oil, and place the starter in the bowl or bag, turning to coat it with oil. Cover the bowl or seal the bag.

GRACE NOTE

VARIATIONS OF SOUR-DOUGH INGREDIENTS AND METHODS

Some bakers prefer to work exclusively with firm starters, keeping even the mother starter in a firm state. Professional bakers like this because they can throw the firm piece easily into a mixer for either refreshing or elaborating. It is less messy than working with big batches of wet sponge. One of my baking friends, Keith Giusto of Central Milling in Petaluma, keeps his mother starter as a very dry, firm dough, like bagel dough. This makes it not only easy to transport and handle (assuming you have a mixer capable of handling such stiff dough) but also ensures a more sour bread, for those who like it extra sour. Acetic

bacteria prefer the denser, less-aerated environment of the firm starter; lactic bacteria prefer the wetter sponge of the barm method. Home bakers, I find, prefer keeping a wet sponge (barm), as it is easy to refresh and keep track of it in small batches. However, if you prefer to use the firm starter system, simply reduce the water weight to 50 to 60 percent of the flour weight when you refresh your mother starter and then make your elaborations.

It is also perfectly acceptable to make your final dough directly from the barm (as long as it has been refreshed within the past 3 days). You will have to diminish the water in the final dough to compensate for the wetness of the barm, but otherwise you can proceed with an equal amount of barm for firm starter.

To spike the dough with commercial yeast, which guarantees a 1½- to 2-hour first fermentation and a 1- to 1½-hour final proofing (and a less sour flavor), add up to 1½ teaspoons instant yeast (0.17 ounce/5g) to the final dough.

You can substitute other types of flour, including whole wheat flour, for some or all of the high-gluten or bread flour. A classic French *pain au levain* includes about 10 percent whole wheat or whole rye flour (or a combination of each—about ½ cup/2.5 ounces/64g total).

You can make a *meteil* rye bread (less than 50 percent rye flour), or a *seigle* rye bread (more than 50 percent rye flour), by substituting the desired amount of rye flour, either white rye or a blend of white and whole rye or pumpernickel

- 3 Ferment at room temperature for 4 to 6 hours, or until the starter has at least doubled in size. If necessary, give it additional time, checking every hour or so. Then, put it into the refrigerator overnight.
- 4 Day 2: To make the final dough, remove the firm starter from the refrigerator 1 hour before making the dough. Cut it into about 10 small pieces with a bread wrapper or serrated knife. Mist with spray oil, cover with a towel or plastic wrap, and let rest for 1 hour to take off the chill.
- 5 Stir together the flour and salt in a 4-quart mixing bowl (or in the bowl of an electric mixer). Add the starter pieces and water. Stir with a large metal spoon (or mix on low speed with the dough hook) to bring everything together into a ball.

grind. This can be done either in the final dough or in the firm starter (or you can use a rye barm; see the formula for 100% Sourdough Rye Bread on page 253).

You can add roasted garlic; lightly toasted walnuts, sunflower seeds, pecans, or other nuts and seeds of your choice; raisins and other dried fruits; or cheese. The standard amount is about 40 percent of the final flour weight. It is best to add these ingredients during the final 2 minutes of mixing to protect against breaking them up too small. My all-time favorite is a blue cheese and walnut bread with 25 percent toasted walnuts and 15 to 20 percent crumbled blue cheese (firm, not creamy), adding the walnuts during the last 2 minutes of kneading and carefully folding in the blue cheese by hand at the end of kneading during the stretch and fold process. You can do this by flattening the dough and sprinkling

one-third of the cheese over the top, then rolling it up and repeating this two more times until all the cheese is incorporated. If you are using salty cheese, such as blue, feta, or Parmesan, reduce the salt in the formula by 25 percent (to 1½ teaspoons). Incidentally, the oil from the walnuts will turn the dough a burgundy color and the delicious flavor of the walnuts will permeate the entire loaf.

Cooked potatoes can be used to tenderize and flavor the dough. Use a ratio of 25 percent potatoes to flour in the final build.

Fresh herbs can be used to taste. Hand roll them into the dough as you would blue cheese. Dried herbs and spices, such as *herbes de Provence*, cumin, and oregano, can also be used, but with a gentle touch, as these flavors can easily dominate.

It is just as valid to make rustic, wet-dough breads with wild-yeast starters as it is to use commercial yeast and yeast pre-ferments, or to use the mixed, or spiked, method. Substitute an equal amount of barm (this is a perfect time to build the dough directly from barm) for the *polish*. You can add commercial yeast (or not) during the final dough stage, bearing in mind that spiking it with yeast will allow you to make the bread on the same schedule as already written in the instructions.

If you make pure wild-yeast rustic bread (no commercial yeast at all), you will have to give the dough a 3- to 4-hour bulk fermentation and a 1½-hour final proofing. You can make any of the rustic variations, from ciabatta to pugliese to focaccia, with this dough.

- 6 Sprinkle the counter with flour (or use the oil slick method, as described on page 59), transfer the dough to the counter, and knead by hand for 8 to 10 minutes (or mix with the dough hook on medium-low speed for 4 minutes, allow the dough to rest for 5 to 10 minutes, and then mix for 2 to 4 additional minutes). Adjust the water or flour as needed. The dough should be firm but supple and tacky, like French bread dough. It should pass the window pane test (page 61) and register 77°F to 81°F (25°C to 27°C). Lightly oil a large bowl and transfer the dough to the bowl, rolling it around to coat it with oil. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap. After 20 minutes, stretch and fold the dough (see page 59) and return it to the covered bowl. Repeat two more times at 20-minute intervals, each time returning the dough to the covered bowl.
- 7 Ferment at room temperature for 3 to 4 hours, or until the dough has nearly doubled in size.
- 8 Gently remove the dough from the bowl and divide it into 2 equal pieces (about 22 ounces/624g each), being careful to degas the dough as little as possible. Gently shape the dough into *boules*, *bâtards*, or baguettes, as shown on pages 76 to 91.
- 9 Proof the dough in *bannetons* or proofing bowls, on *couches*, or on parchment-lined sheet pans that have been dusted with semolina or cornmeal (see pages 32 to 35). Regardless of the method, mist the exposed part of the dough with spray oil and loosely cover the dough with a towel or plastic wrap, or slip the pans into a food-grade plastic bag. At this point you can either proof the loaves for 2 to 4 hours, or until they have risen to about 1½ times in size or retard overnight in the refrigerator. If retarding them, remove them from the refrigerator approximately 4 hours before you plan to bake them to allow them to proof.
- 10 Prepare the oven for hearth baking as described on page 97, making sure to have a steam pan in place. Preheat the oven to 500°F (260°C). Carefully remove the towel or plastic wrap from the dough, or slip the pan from the bag, 10 minutes before baking.
- 11 Generously dust a peel or the back of a sheet pan with flour, semolina, or cornmeal and gently transfer the dough to the peel or pan, carefully removing the cloth liner from the top of the dough for dough proofed in a bowl. (If the dough was proofed on a sheet pan, it can be baked directly on that pan.) Score the dough as shown on page 96. Slide the dough onto the baking stone (or bake directly on the sheet pan). Pour 1 cup hot water into the steam pan and close the door. After 30 seconds, spray the oven walls with water and close the door. Repeat twice more at 30-second intervals. After the final spray, lower the oven setting to 450°F (232°C) and bake for 13 minutes. Rotate the loaves 180 degrees, if necessary, for even baking and continue baking for another 12 to 22 minutes, or until the loaves are done. They should register 205°F (96°C) in the center, be a rich golden brown all over, and sound hollow when thumped on the bottom.
- 12 Transfer the finished loaves to a rack and let cool for at least 45 minutes before slicing or serving.