

Sourdough Starter Quick-Start Guide



Supplies You Will Need:

- ☐ glass jar that is 1 quart - 1/2 gallon in size (you should be able to easily stir to the bottom!)
- ☐ 1/8 cup (2 T) coffee scoop OR a 1/4 cup measuring cup (if you choose the second option, you will be estimating)
- ☐ small liquid measuring cup that measures 1/4 cup
- ☐ silicone spatula (or something to stir your starter that won't harbor bacteria)
- ☐ something to cover your jar that is not airtight
- ☐ *organic* flour of your choice that is unbleached
- ☐ pure, unchlorinated water (I am using my tested well-water, but if you live in the city where chlorine is added, you can just leave your water sitting out overnight on the counter and the chlorine will evaporate. Another option is to purchase purified water from the store.)

Instructions for making a sourdough starter:

Day 1:

- On the first morning add $\frac{3}{8}$ cup flour, using the coffee scoop, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water, using a liquid measuring cup.
- Stir thoroughly with a spatula or spoon until no lumps remain. The consistency should be like a thick pancake batter and will thin out a bit with time. If it is thick like sticky dough, add a few drop more of water and stir. Do this until you reach a *thick* pancake batter consistency.
- Place something on top of your jar that will allow for airflow, but won't let bugs in. I have used everything from cheesecloth with a rubber band to a napkin tied with twine, to a specially made jar cover.
- Place your starter in a warm place on your counter where you will remember to feed it. The temperature should be at least 70 degrees F in this location, but not over 80. If your kitchen is colder than this, then on top of a fridge or freezer, or in a room with a wood stove might be a better location. If your kitchen is hotter than 80 degrees F, then you may have to feed your starter more often than twice per day when you are getting it started. Don't worry, it will only need this daily attention for the first month!
- In the evening, or about 12 hours after starting your starter, feed it in the exact same way: $\frac{3}{8}$ cup of flour and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water. Stir well and cover.

Days 2 - 28:

- Continue feeding it each morning and evening for 14-28 more days in the exact same way.
- You may start noticing bubbles on day 3-5. It may also take 7-10 days to really see bubbles. Both are normal!
- You do not need to remove anything from the jar at this point until your jar is over half full. Once your starter builds up to past the halfway point on your jar, remove some and use it in any "sourdough discard" recipe, or simply in a recipe that calls for flour and water, such as pancakes or muffins.

Quick note:

What is discard? "Discard" is simply the starter you are going to remove from the starter container, and either use, or give to your well-fed chickens. Discarding IS necessary unless you want to end up with a 5-gallon bucket of starter and spend a small fortune in flour. This is because when feeding your starter, the ratios of starter, to flour, to water need to remain around the same. However, unlike other methods, my recipe does not require you to do this every day and you should NEVER have to throw it away.

If you need ideas on how to use your starter before it is bubbly enough to make bread, simply google "sourdough discard" recipe

Between days 14-28 (this varies due to differences in water and flour):

- At some point during this time, your starter will become active enough to both bake bread, and begin its life in the fridge (if you choose)
- You will know when it is ready for bread making when it starts to consistently double in height after a feeding. At this point, you will do the EXACT same process, just using the discarded starter in your bread recipe instead of a "discard" recipe.
- If you would like to start keeping it in the fridge, simply feed it a normal feeding, and then store it in the refrigerator. Remove and feed about 1 day before you plan to bake. It is best to allow for 2 feedings (spaced 12 hours apart) before using, but I have seen beautiful loaves of bread made from starter straight from the fridge as well, so this will depend on what your recipe calls for. If your recipe calls for "active starter" this means that you fed it and it is at the point where it has just doubled (usually 2-4 hours after a feeding). You can keep your starter in the fridge for 3 weeks (4 max, but it will take longer to get it going again) without without feeding it, although a weekly feeding would be best.
- If you plan to be gone for more than 4 weeks you should plan on dehydrating it for long-term storage.

Sourdough Starter FAQs

I am on day 10 and my starter is not bubbling. Help!

If you have not seen bubbles by day 10 it is likely that you are facing one of two problems:

1. There is something in your flour or your water that is killing the yeast bacteria. Is your flour organic? Does your water have chlorine or contamination?
2. Your starter's location is not warm enough. It needs to be at least 70 F most of the time (my house dips into the 60s at night and that hasn't been an issue).

If you don't have any reason to believe that there is something wrong with your flour or water, try this:

1. Get a clean glass jar. Remove 1/4 cup of your original starter and place it in your clean jar. Feed it 3/8 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water (a normal feeding). Stir well and cover lightly. Then, place it in your oven with the light on for 12 hours. This should do the trick!

I forgot to feed my starter and it....

1. Is no longer bubbly.

- a. Don't worry, just go back to your regular feeding schedule and it will start bubbling again.

2. Has a grey liquid on top.

- a. This is called "hooch" and it is simply a sign that your starter is hungry. Pour off the hooch, give it a feeding, stir, and it will be just fine!

3. It has mold.

- a. Scrape it off. Remove a clean 1/4 cup of your starter and move it to a clean new jar. Continue feeding like normal.

Some important things to know...

- Keep in mind that it may take as much as a month to get a robust enough starter to be able to rise bread. Don't give up too early!
- The test to see if it is active enough to rise bread is to watch it after a feeding. If your starter is bubbly and doubling in size within 6 hours of feeding, it is ready to go!
- Your starter should smell sweet and yeasty after a few weeks. However, it should not smell rotten or unpleasant. If it smells like vinegar, it's begging to be fed.
- A dark liquid that forms on top is naturally-occurring alcohol known as hooch. It is completely normal, but it can be an indication that you are not feeding your starter often enough. You should pour off the hooch and discard it before stirring your starter. You can then feed like normal.
- **Need more stater for your recipe?** You just need to "bulk it up" by adding flour and water in the same proportions that you feed it. The easiest way to do this is just to transfer some starter to a bowl (make sure to always leave some in your starter jar!) and give it multiple feedings of 3/8 cup flour and 1/4 cup water until you have enough starter for your recipe. Any easier measurement to keep in mind when bulking up your flour is 1 cup of flour to 1 1/2 cups of water.



Happy baking!