

Pastor's Corner – 8-17-2019 – Sourdough

Several weeks ago I held a small sourdough bread class. Since then I have had several people ask me if I could provide them with the recipe and steps to make the bread. So here it is. I hope you enjoy!

What is sourdough? When you make standard bread you usually add in a bit of commercial yeast to make the bread rise. Not so with sourdough. Instead of commercial bread yeast, sourdough relies on a starter made from native yeast and bacteria. Those native yeast and bacteria are what give sourdough its traditional sour taste. So, the first step to great sourdough is to start with a great starter and fortunately, the starter is pretty easy to...start.

Starting the Starter

Day 1 – Take a wide mouth mason jar and add 100 grams of flour to 100 grams of warm water. Any flour will work here but I prefer an organic bread flour. You will also want to invest in a small food scale. It's much more accurate to measure in grams than to use measuring cups. Once you've added the flour and water, go ahead and mix it up good and then cover it with a paper towel.

Day 2 – Stir your starter

Day 3 – Stir your starter

Day 4 – By now you should start to see signs of life. On the day when you see bubbles start to form stir the starter and remove 70 grams. Add that starter blob to a new mason jar, combine it with 100 grams of water and 100 grams of flour. Mix it all together and cover with a paper towel. The remaining starter from the first jar should be discarded.

Day 5 – 10ish – Keep doing what you did in step 4. After about 10 days you should have a nice bubbly and active starter. This is what you will use to make your bread.

Preserving your Starter

If it took 10 days to make starter every time I wanted to bake this whole sourdough thing would be far too much work for me. Fortunately, the starter can be stored in your fridge. But this thing is literally alive, so it needs to be fed. Once a week you will need to follow the feeding protocol.

Step 1 – Take the starter out of the fridge.

Step 2 – Remove 70 grams of starter from your jar and put it in a new jar.

Step 3 – Add 100 grams of flour and 100 grams of warm water to the new jar with the 70 grams of starter.

Step 4 – Stir it up good.

Step 5 – Put it in the fridge.

At this point you will have quite a bit of starter left from the first jar. You can either bake bread with it or toss it out if you aren't in a bread-baking mood.

Baking your Bread

Now we get to the fun part.

Step 1 – First, we need to prepare our leaven. Measure out 70 grams of starter, add 100 grams of warm water and 100 grams of flour. Mix this together in a mason jar. Cover with a paper towel and let it sit out overnight.

Step 2 – Once the starter is good and frothy it is ready to be used and is now called leaven. If you want to be sure it's ready, drop a small tablespoon of leaven into a glass of water. It will float if it's ready to go.

Step 3 – Put your leaven into a large mixing bowl, add in 550 grams of flour, 300 grams of warm water and, 10 grams of salt. Depending on what kind of flour you use you can add or subtract about 50 grams of flour. Use slightly less flour if you've added whole wheat and slightly more if you are using all white. I usually do 50 grams of whole wheat flour and the rest is all purpose or bread flour.

Step 4 – Mix then kneed the dough. If you have a kitchen-aid, you can use the dough hook. I use a medium setting for 10-14 minutes. But really I prefer to hand kneed. The goal with kneeding is to stretch the dough. This stretching will strengthen the gluten in the bread which allows it to hold its shape and create air pockets. If you don't kneed enough you'll end up with a brick instead of bread.

Step 5 – Once your bread is smooth and elastic it's time to let it rest. Put it in a large bowl, cover it, and let it sit in a warm place for an hour or two. Once it has risen to about double in size it's time to form the loaf.

Step 6 – Gently pull out the dough ball and form it into the shape you want for your bread. Be careful and try not to pop all the bubbles in the dough. Put the shaped dough into a proofing basket for about an hour. The proofing basket can also be a bowl, and really, it's just something to hold the dough for another rise. This is also the point where you will decide how big you want your loaf to be. I will weight out my dough and use 650-750 grams of dough per loaf. The remainder can be made into dinner rolls, breadsticks, baguettes, or my favorite – pizza dough. Once the dough has proofed it's time to bake.

Step 7 – Bake. I start my loaves in a dutch oven. The dutch oven traps in moisture which helps give the crust a nice crisp to it. Pre-heat your oven (and dutch oven) at 450. Bake for 25 minutes at 450 then remove the lid to the dutch oven and continue for another 10-12 minutes.

Step 8 – Take the bread out of the oven and let it cool.

Step 9 – Enjoy!

So that's the basic sourdough approach. I hope it works for your as well as it has worked for me. Let me know if you have any questions!

Pastor Tyler