



Getting started with

Sourdough bread making

There's a misconception that sourdough is difficult to bake, especially for beginners. While it's fussy and time-consuming, with a good recipe and starter, you'll be making your own bread in no time!

Important to know

- 1. Making sourdough bread takes up a lot of time each baking session.**
You won't be actively working the whole time, but it can take around seven hours from assembling the ingredients to actually having it ready to eat.
- 2. You need to maintain a regular schedule to keep your starter alive.**
Once you have some starter handy, you'll need to feed it whole wheat flour and water each week or regularly.
- 3. Sourdough starter can get out of hand if you don't discard some each time.**
The starter will get out of control if you keep feeding it but not using it to bake. Thankfully, you can use the discard to make other things, like [this delicious pizza](#).

How to make sourdough bread

Step 1. Get sourdough starter

You can make your own starter yourself, but it can take lots of time and the process can be difficult. A quick way is to get some starter from someone else, aka Ariel from Student Communications (ariel.lee@ubc.ca).

If you'd like to challenge yourself in making your own starter, [watch this video](#) from Full Proof Baking.

Step 2. Assemble your supplies

(Don't forget to have a kitchen scale and oven!)



Sourdough starter



Whole wheat flour



All-purpose flour



Room temp water



Salt



Non-metal mixing bowl or container



Large spoon and small knife



Non-metal colander and cheesecloth

Step 3. Find and follow a recipe

There are so many sourdough bread recipes on the Internet, all with different approaches and ingredient ratios. Checking out this [naturally leavened sourdough bread recipe](#), and when you've got a grasp on that beginner loaf, try this [high-hydration recipe](#).

Step 4. Try out different things!

- Add toppings such as crushed cranberries, nuts, chia seeds, green olives, etc.
- Have fun scoring the bread. See [@mad.about.bread](#) on Instagram for ideas

Some things to know

What starters hate

- **Hot water or freezing cold water**, which stops the enzymes from working.
- **Contact with metal things** for a long time, which prevents the enzymes from reacting properly. Metal spoons are fine for feeding your starter and mixing dough, but **never** prep your dough in a metal vessel.
- **Direct sunlight**, which can also interfere with the enzyme activation.
- **Not enough oxygen**. When activating your starter (setting out on the countertop for bake day), always leave a small hole for oxygen to enter the jar. Beware of fruit flies in the spring/summer!
- **Cold temperatures**. If you want to slow down the starter activation (e.g., when you're not baking on a daily basis), you can store it in the fridge. Don't store it in the freezer!

When storing your starter, **never screw the lid on tightly**. It will explode from the fermentation!

Prepping the starter before bake day

If your starter has been in the fridge, you need to “wake it up” from its hibernation, 6 - 8 hours before bake time. If you're making sourdough bread first thing in the morning, you should feed it the night before at bedtime to activate the starter.

You can also prep starter [3 days in advance](#), but note that you may end up with significantly more starter than you need.

A few tips

- Bake your sourdough bread in a [Dutch oven](#) if you want it to be beautifully crisp on the outside, soft on the inside. You'll need to remove the lid after around 20 min of bake time.
- You can also increase the steam inside the oven [with this method](#) to get a crispy crust.
- Cover your dough when you're not folding it, so it doesn't dry out.
- Use a serrated knife to score your dough rather than a paring knife.
- When activating your starter for baking, store it in the microwave (but don't microwave it!). The sealed door helps to create a warm environment.