

SOURDOUGH

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• Container: "It doesn't really matter, as long as it keeps the starter from drying out," he said. "Glass, plastic, Mason jars, deli containers. It's nice to have a clear, straight-sided container, so you can see when it's doubling and tripling."

• "Feeding" vs. "refreshing" the starter: "Think about pets," he said. "You put food in a bowl, and they eat it. That's feeding. But here, you're moving your culture through fresh food and water each time. Rather than continually adding water and flour to the same container, it's the idea of taking a portion of the old culture and using it to inoculate a fresh container — you want the acids that they produce to be relatively dilute — so they can propagate in that new environment."

• The schedule: "Those first two to three days are to get it alive," he said. "After that, you start refreshing it daily. After about seven days, it should be going enough so that you can do it twice a day. That's the typical schedule of a starter at a bakery: once in the morning and once in the evening. By that point, it should grow two to three times in volume every 12 hours or so."

• Preserving leftovers: During the build-a-starter period, Janjigian advises against discarding the extra culture. "Save it," he said, reserving it for a day (in the refrigerator) as backup insurance; once you've refreshed the following day, and the need for backup has passed, the backup can be scraped into a collective "discard" jar in the refrigerator. "There's a whole world of cooking using sourdough discard," he said. "You can't use it to leaven bread, but you can use it for pancakes, waffles, quick breads, pasta dough, all kinds of things. I'm going to try some

Korean-style pancakes."

• Storage: Once it has hit its bread-making stride, the starter can be stored in the refrigerator, untouched, for a few months. "But remember, the longer it goes without being refreshed, the longer it takes to get back to its full vigor," he said. "Bring it to room temperature and refresh it a few times before using it."

Bakeability and storeability are the two goals, so don't put it in the refrigerator until it's healthy. A three-week starter isn't as vigorous as a six-month starter. Just keep refreshing it on this small scale to keep it getting healthier and healthier. If you get to the point where you're using it once or twice every one to two weeks, and you refresh it before you put it back in the refrigerator, it will keep going forever."

THE BASIC FORMULA

Creating this sourdough starter is a simple process: In a small container, stir about 1 heaping tablespoon flour with 2 to 3 teaspoons lukewarm water (for exact measurements, it's 10 grams flour and 10 to 15 grams water). Tightly cover, set aside in a warmish spot and wait three days.

After that, it's "refresh" mode. Follow the same formula — mix together 1 heaping tablespoon flour with 2 to 3 teaspoons lukewarm water — but add another step: Stir in 1 teaspoon (5 grams) of the ever-developing starter (and don't discard the rest; see story for other uses). Cover, and then repeat, daily, for about a week.

After that, double down on your efforts and follow the procedure twice a day, in the morning and the evening. By the end of another week or so, you'll have a starter strong enough to bake bread.

Simple No-Knead #quarantinystarter Sourdough Bread

Makes 1 loaf.

Note: This dough must be prepared in advance. If your starter is already on a large enough scale to yield 30 grams — plus extra for refreshing, don't forget that! — then you can skip the levain hydration step and mix it into the dough directly. If your kitchen is very cold, you can increase the amount of your levain to 50 grams. In the heat of summer, you can get away with as little as 5 grams."

For 100% hydration levain (see Note):
40 g (1/3 c.) bread flour or high-protein all-purpose flour (see Note)
40 g (3 tbsp.) lukewarm (75 degrees) water
20 g (4 tsp.) sourdough starter (see the formula below)

For dough:
360 g (1 2/3 c.) lukewarm water (75 degrees), divided
30 g (1 tbsp.) levain (from above)
500 g (3 3/4 c.) bread flour or high-protein all-purpose flour (see Note), plus extra for shaping dough
10 g (2 tsp.) salt

To prepare levain: In a small container, combine bread flour, lukewarm water and sourdough starter. Stir until uniform, then cover tightly and let proof at room temperature until between double and triple in volume, about 6 to 12 hours.

To prepare dough, step 1: Place 10 grams (2 teaspoons) water in a small bowl and set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together remaining 350 grams water (1 2/3 cup water minus 2 teaspoons) with levain until levain is mostly broken up. Add flour and stir with your hands or a wooden spoon until no dry flour remains. Cover bowl

and let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Step 2: Sprinkle salt over top of dough, then sprinkle remaining 10 grams (2 teaspoons) water over dough. Working in the bowl, knead dough gently by hand until salt is fully incorporated and dough is uniform in texture (it will remain shaggy). Cover bowl and let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Step 3: Using wet hands, reach under dough, pull it up and fold it over itself, turning a quarter-turn after each fold and folding 8 times, until dough is tight and uniform.

Step 4: Cover bowl tightly and let dough sit at a cool room temperature (68 to 75 degrees) until dough is puffy, jiggy and bubbly, about 12 to 16 hours. (You can generally move to Step 5 anytime within this window, as long as the dough looks right and as long as ambient temperatures aren't much higher than 75 degrees.)

Step 5: Flour the top of the dough and a clean work surface liberally and evenly. Reach under the dough from the bottom and transfer it to the prepared counter. Pat the dough gently to form a 7-inch disc. Fold the dough's edges over the center, turning the dough a quarter-turn at a time, to form a round ball. Leave dough on the counter and cover with an upside-down bowl or loosely with plastic wrap and let the dough sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Step 6: Line a proofing basket or a colander with a large linen or cotton dish towel and dust liberally with flour. Flour the top of dough ball and the working surface around it. Using a bench knife, carefully unstick the dough from the work surface. Repeat patting and folding as in Step 5 to form the dough into a tight round. Pinch the seam tightly to seal and transfer the dough to the floured towel, seam-side up. Flour the top surface of the dough and fold the towel's

edges over the dough to cover. Place colander in a large plastic bag and cover loosely but completely.

Step 7: Let dough sit at room temperature for 1 hour, then transfer to refrigerator for 8 to 24 hours, depending upon what is more convenient with your schedule. (Or proof at room temperature until the dough has about doubled in size and does not readily spring back when poked with your finger, about 2 to 4 hours. But note that retarding the dough in the refrigerator for 8 to 24 hours will result in better oven spring, easier and better scoring and less worry about when it's ready to be baked.)

Step 8: 30 minutes before baking, place a large covered cast-iron Dutch oven on the middle rack of the oven and preheat oven to 500 degrees.

Step 9: Fold back edges of towel and dust top of loaf liberally with flour. Lay a 12- by 12-inch piece of parchment paper on a clean work surface. Gently invert loaf onto the center of the parchment paper and remove the towel. Using a sharp knife or a razor blade, make a single 1/4-inch deep slash from edge to edge across the center of the dough.

Step 10: Carefully remove the Dutch oven from the oven and remove the lid. Holding the edges of the parchment paper in both hands, carefully and gently place the dough in the Dutch oven. Cover the Dutch oven, return it to the oven and reduce the oven temperature to 450 degrees.

Step 11: Bake for 20 minutes. Carefully remove the lid and continue to bake until loaf is golden brown, 15 to 20 additional minutes. Carefully remove Dutch oven from the oven. Carefully remove the loaf from the Dutch oven. Return the loaf to the bare oven rack and continue to bake until deep golden brown, 5 to 10 additional minutes. Remove loaf from oven, transfer to a wire rack and allow to cool for at least 2 hours before serving.

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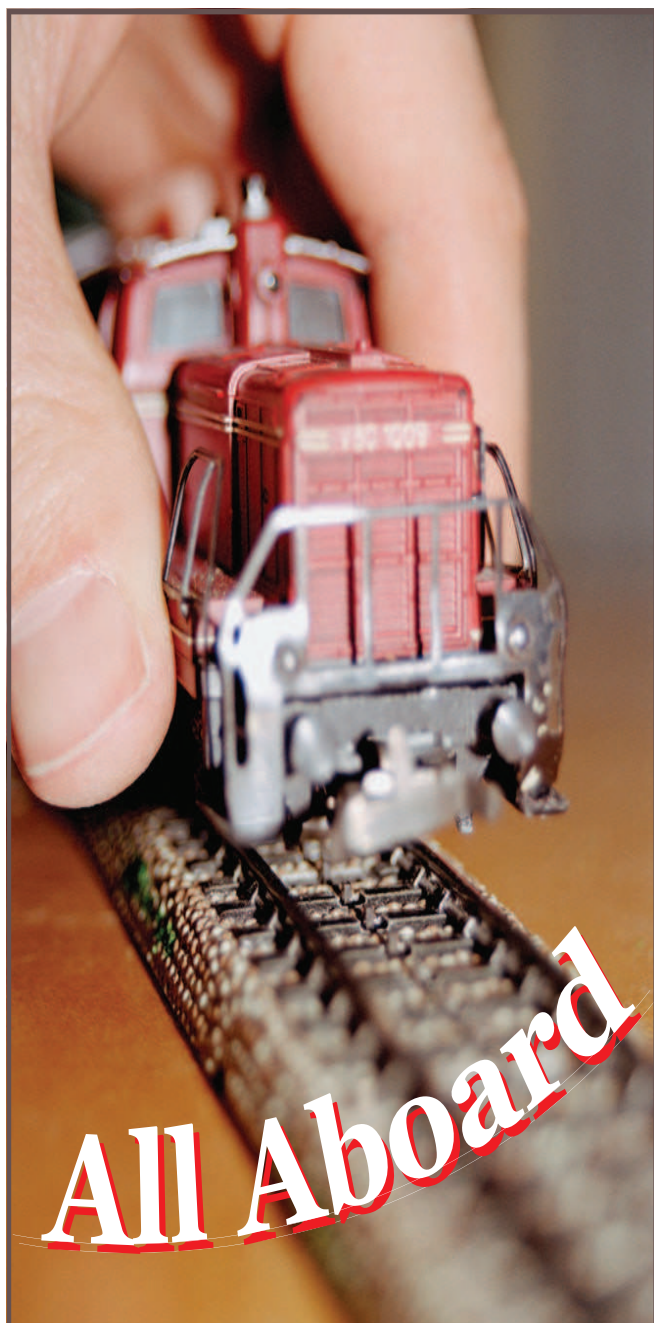
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