TRADITIONAL Cooking School By GNOWFGLINS

sourdough





Recipes from A to Z!

sample chapter of...

SOURDOUGH A to Z

a companion eBook to the online
Sourdough eCourse at
Traditional Cooking School by GNOWFGLINS

by Wardeh Harmon and Erin Vander Lugt,
with Katie Kimball, Sara Kay Michalski, and Christina Dickson

Not just for bread.
Make healthy cakes, cookies, crackers, pizza and more!

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Our Story

Our Story

[Wardee] This morning, I woke up to a slice of heaven. The scent of warm sourdough bread hangs in the air from last night's baking. The children chatter to themselves while they get ready for the day. Silently I snuck into the kitchen and this is what I saw: a large butter knife, a half-eaten loaf of bread, and crumbs scattered across the table.

I smiled to myself. This is a win.

I had succeeded in getting the children to eat life-giving food without any fuss or whining. Just happy children helping themselves to a healthy breakfast without any intervention from me… pure bliss.

It wasn't always this easy. When I first became a mom, I fell into the trap of buying food for the sake of convenience. Pre-packaged foods that could be popped into the microwave seemed like the perfect solution for my busy days of changing diapers, nursing, and keeping house.

But then my children got sick.

Ear infections, upset tummies, allergies, and headaches became my life. Plus, I just couldn't lose the "baby" weight.

I couldn't face my daughter's sad eyes anymore or listen to her cry herself to sleep from yet another earache. I dreaded seeing her tug on her ear… another ear infection was on its way.

Something had to change, but what… and how?

Could Traditional Cooking Heal My Family?

I started thinking back to my childhood. With my grandma, Tata Wardeh, in charge of the kitchen, our family gathered together for weekly baking days.

that's me (the baby) with my mom, Tata, and cousin

It was a special time of bonding, laughing and playing while baking enough fresh bread to last all week. My favorite treat was a flat bread pizza topped with olive oil and a savory spice blend called za'atar.

When I thought about those special family meals and compared them to the cardboard flavored Pizza Bites from the grocery store, I wondered, “Was it possible to create healthy, life-giving meals for my family that were healing, delicious, quick and convenient?”

I knew there had to be a better way.

God’s Plan for Healthy Eating

We’re a Christian family, so my first instinct was to turn to the Bible. I set aside all my pre-conceived notions about cooking, and asked myself, “What exactly does the Bible say about healthy eating?”

What I saw amazed me.

God had a plan for healthy eating that didn’t involve refrigeration, preservatives or artificial ingredients.

Instead, the foods of the Bible — like leavened bread, beans, cheese, yogurt, butter, wild or shepherded meats, fish, olive oil, honey, and wine — seemed more versatile and flavorful, beautifully rich…

In that refrigerator-less, non-industrialized promised land flowing with milk and honey, excess milk would have spontaneously soured and preserved itself. Since God put those beneficial organisms in the milk in the first place, that must have been His plan.

. . . and His perfect eating plan included bread… sourdough bread.

The secret had been hiding in plain sight!

I Challenged the Myth that “All Bread is Bad”

Armed with this amazing insight and inspiration, I started experimenting.

I began with mainstream recipes but quickly learned that they were based on unhealthy ingredients, like white flour and commercial yeast. (I also realized that this quick-yeasted bread method was the reason for the digestive discomfort my daughter experienced, and very well could have caused her gluten sensitivity.)

(Modern hybridized wheat is engineered for high gluten content to create pretty loaves of bread. But at what cost?)

And the commercial yeast was even worse.

Breads made from commercial dry yeast required me to follow strict time rules for rising and resting, were easy to kill by overheating the other ingredients, and spoiled quickly. Plus, the gluten in the flour gave my children extreme tummy aches and diarrhea.

Then I Discovered God’s Natural Leavening Agent: Wild Yeast

After searching all over the Internet, I started hearing about wild yeast. Wild yeast (and it’s best friend, lactobacilli) is a hardy, happy little organism that breaks down gluten and neutralizes anti-nutrients. This allows you to easily digest gluten and absorb minerals that would otherwise be unavailable to you.

I learned that I could create my own sourdough starter, nurture the wild yeast, and bake it into healthy, life-giving breads… using ingredients I already had in my kitchen and with no extra work!

That was it. I was a woman on a mission.

Some of those early recipes were disasters. I've turned out plenty of hockey-puck loaves and burned pancakes. But I learned, I grew and I had a blast! (Plus, we turned plenty of those rock- hard loaves into croutons for soups and salads so nothing went to waste.)

Once I discovered the secrets of easy, healthy sourdough baking, I started turning out consistently beautiful loaves of bread and other delicacies. They rivaled anything that I could find at the best bakeries.

And even more importantly, because of the important work of the wild yeasts (to make the grains more nutritious and digestible), my whole family started to feel better. The ear infections, upset tummies, allergies, and headaches disappeared.

That's when I decided that I had to share the secrets of creating artisan sourdough breads, cakes, and muffins with other families.

And that's how this eBook (and the corresponding online class) began...

Getting Started

Welcome!

[Wardee] Speaking for all who will be teaching, I would like to welcome you to our awesome sourdough adventure!

How this Works

What you're reading right now is a sample chapter from our Sourdough eBook. **Click here** for more information or to purchase the full version.

Also, this eBook is the companion to the online, multi-media Sourdough eCourse. Our **private member website** contains video demonstrations for all the recipes and topics in this book. This includes a private forum, where members can ask questions about the Sourdough eCourse lessons.

Click here for more information about membership, or **click here** to purchase the rest of this eBook.

The Teachers

Wardeh ('Wardee') Harmon from **Traditional Cooking School by GNOWFGLINS**. Wardee lives in Oregon with her husband, Jeff, and their three children, Haniya, Naomi and Mikah, where they garden and raise animals. She is passionate about traditional cooking, and she writes books and teach online classes on topics in traditional cooking, from the fundamentals to sourdough to cultured dairy to lacto-fermentation to dehydrating, and allergy-free cooking. She is the lead teacher and owner of Traditional Cooking School by GNOWFGLINS, and author of **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Fermenting Foods**.

Erin from GNOWFGLINS. Erin writes from Anchorage, Alaska where she and her family are busy loving mountains, reading books, growing seeds, baking with sourdough and loving Jesus! Desiring always to slow down and savor the simple moments, they enjoy hiking, making from scratch, gardening, traveling, learning, and simply thanking God for His daily gifts and grace.

Katie from Kitchen Stewardship. Katie Kimball is a Catholic wife and mother of two (going on three) who wants the best of nutrition and living for her family. She believes that God calls us to be good stewards of all His gifts as we work to feed our families: **time**, **finances**, the good green **earth**, and of course, our **healthy bodies**. Her writing at Kitchen Stewardship seeks to share with others ways to balance all four and be **prayerful** in the call to vocation in the kitchen.

Sara Kay from Why I Sing. Sara lives in Colorado with her husband and three little girls. When she's not experimenting with something in the kitchen, she's homeschooling, reading, leading worship with her husband for their church, dabbling in business ventures, or gardening.

Christina, Wardee's local friend. Christina Dickson resides in Sutherlin, Oregon with her charming, daredevil husband, an army of boys and one small, but sturdy princess. The Dicksons have tried their hand at nearly every aspect of sustainable living; from organic farming to off-the-grid homesteading. As a homeschool mom, goat shepherdess, and avid cook, Christina knows every practical use for a spatula and can make cheese out of almost nothing.

In this book you'll see the author's name next to the title of the lesson, like this: **[Erin]**. This will tell you whose voice you're reading.

Fluffy Skillet Pancakes

In this sample chapter, we include one of our very favorite sourdough recipes: **Oh-so-fluffy Skillet Pancakes**. You'll find that recipe near the end. If you already have a sourdough starter ready and waiting, go ahead and skip to the end of this document to try them out right away. Have fun!

The Starter

The first pages in the Sourdough eBook will guide you through making your own starter. If you already have an active sourdough starter, feel free to skip this part. Or, if you don't have a starter and also don't desire to make your own, there is no shame in acquiring a mature starter from a family member, friend, or neighbor. You may also purchase a dehydrated starter culture from **Cultures for Health**. We recommend the **New England sourdough starter**. It is easy to get going, tasty, quick-rising, and effective.

Ingredients and Equipment

Please plan on having these ingredients available for our recipes (available in the full version of the Sourdough A to Z eBook): sourdough starter, flour*, water, and salt. You will often need oil (butter, coconut oil, olive oil, lard, tallow, palm shortening, etc.) and occasionally you'll need a natural, unrefined sweetener such as honey, maple syrup, rapadura, or sucanat.

Infrequent ingredients depend on what is in season and what you have available. They will be the add-ins for muffins or crackers, or ingredients for a frosting, or the vegetables, beans and/or meat to include the pot pie.

*Breads will do best with hard *red or white* whole wheat flour, while whole wheat pastry or spelt flour will produce more delicate pastries. Hard red whole wheat flour makes wonderful pastas, crackers, and foods that benefit from heartier, denser flavors and texture. You'll need whole spelt flour to complete the spelt bread lesson, but you can also substitute whole wheat (red or white) for that lesson.

Lesson 1a.
Starting a Starter

The Science of Sourdough

[Wardee] The topic of sourdough anything starts way back at the microscopic level with wild yeasts and bacteria. They are the workers; they rise the sourdough bread food and prepare it optimally for our digestion. I'm going to tell you the story of what's happening with all sourdough foods.

Commercial Bread versus Traditional Sourdough

Let's contrast modern, commercial bread baking practices with traditional sourdough bread. In commercial bread baking, people purchase a laboratory produced, selected strain of yeast — we call it "Baker's Yeast" or "Active Dry Yeast." This yeast isn't so great.

First, it must be purchased again and again, because it gets used up in the recipes. It has to work quickly or it gets overtaken by wild organisms. Bread made with commercial yeast stales easily. Also, it is pretty picky about its environment in order to work well. Namely, the temperature must be just right and also it can't abide acidity, so you won't ever find this yeast in the presence of *lactobacilli*. Consequently, bread made with baker's yeast won't offer the neutralization of phytic acid or enzyme inhibitors, because that job is performed by the *lactobacilli*.

> **What's so bad about phytic acid? What are enzyme inhibitors?** Phytic acid is an anti-nutrient that binds to minerals in your gut, preventing mineral absorption and leading to mineral deficiencies. Enzyme inhibitors suppress the proper functioning of your digestive enzymes, leading to poor digestion and digestive discomfort.

On other other hand, consider the wild yeasts (and accompanying bacteria) that produce sourdough bread. They are naturally occurring, and when cultivated, make a home in a sourdough starter. We (the cooks) keep the starter alive through use and constant feedings. A sourdough starter can last for hundreds of years! It is an ecosystem of wild yeasts and beneficial bacteria that work together to add B-vitamins to grains, to break down gluten for better digestion, and to neutralize phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors. The sourdough starter's organisms are much more versatile with regard to temperature or other conditions, and the bread doesn't stale as quickly.

The bottom line? Sourdough bread methods are much to be preferred over modern bread making methods. Let's talk about the wild organisms that are sourdough at the microscopic level — then you'll really understand what's going on in any sourdough food, from bread to the cinnamon rolls, cakes, pizza, muffins and more which we'll make in this eBook and the accompanying online class.

Wild Yeast

The **wild yeasts** are single-celled fungi that feed on simple sugars in flour. The flour contains some simple sugars ready to go. But most are bound up in complex starch molecules. The yeasts and bacteria release enzymes to break those down into hundreds or thousands of simple sugar molecules.

The wild yeasts need oxygen. If oxygen is not given to the yeasts, other organisms which don't need oxygen are encouraged to proliferate instead, such as the yeasts that make beer and wine. As the yeasts eat the sugars, they give off a small amount of ethanol (an alcohol), acetic acid (vinegar), and lots of carbon dioxide.

The carbon dioxide produces the bubbles you see in a sourdough starter, and it also puffs up a rising bread dough. The ethanol and acetic acid lend a sour smell and flavor to dough and bread. Acetic acid also helps keep the bread fresh longer.

Bacteria: Lactobacilli

The beneficial bacteria in sourdough are called *lactobacilli*. They eat simple sugars, too, but unlike the yeasts, they don't need oxygen. They neutralize phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors. Their by-products are ethanol, lactic acid and carbon dioxide.

The carbon dioxide helps rise the dough. The ethanol and lactic acid give a distinct sour taste to sourdough bread (the lactic acid more so than the ethanol). And the lactic acts as a natural antibiotic, preventing any bad organisms from getting a foothold.

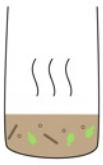
The Sourdough Starter

All sourdough bread foods begin with a sourdough starter — an active colony of wild yeasts and *lactobacilli* suspended in a batter of flour and water.

The wild yeasts and *lactobacilli* are everywhere — in the air, in unprocessed whole grain flours, on your fruits and veggies, and on your skin. Unbleached, unprocessed flours in particular have loads of wild yeasts and *lactobacilli* that are perfectly suited for baking, so that's the best place to capture them and nurture them into a mother culture. Here's how that's done (which we will cover more in-depth in lesson 1).

To make a sourdough starter, or mother culture, take 1/4 cup water and 3/8 cup whole wheat flour, mix vigorously in a glass jar, cover loosely and put it in a warm place, between 65 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

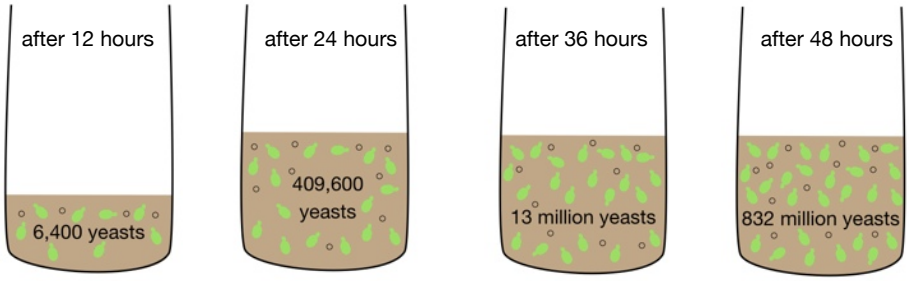
After 12 hours, we would hope to see a few bubbles in the flour/water mixture, showing that some of the organisms fed on the simple sugars, giving off carbon dioxide as a result. The mixture might also begin to smell sour from the ethanol and acids produced. The yeasts and bacteria multiplied as well. Initially, the yeasts will multiply more than the *lactobacilli*.



This is all happening at the microscopic level, and there are so many yeasts we couldn't possibly count them! But let's pick an easy number to understand this better. Let's say there were 100 wild yeasts at the very beginning. They will multiply at the rate of once every 2 hours (in good conditions). So, by the end of this first 12 hours, there will be 6,400 wild yeasts in our starter culture.

Even though this is good progress, it is not nearly enough for a strong starter culture. So we must feed our starter a second time to keep the yeasts multiplying. We add 1/4 cup water. Mix it in well. Then add 3/8 cup whole wheat flour and mix vigorously. Loosely cover the mixture and put it in a warm place for another 12 hours. The yeasts eat, respirate and multiply. At the end this second 12 hours there will be 409,600 of them.

Still, we need a higher concentration of yeasts. We must feed the starter again. After discarding some to the compost (to keep the starter from overtaking the house — which would be more wasteful in the end), we feed it. After another12 hour period, we have over 13 million organisms in our starter. After the fourth feeding, we have 832 million organisms...



Do you see? **Making a starter is a process of feeding the naturally present organisms to encourage them to multiply over and over until the jar is full of millions of them.**

By the way, even though this example focused on yeasts, the process of growth is similar for the *lactobacilli*. However, a good starter will have more yeasts than *lactobacilli*, which is necessary to get a good rise.

Sourdough Terms

[Wardee] Sooner or later, you're bound to run into it: a recipe outside this class that calls for your starter to have a hydration of 60%, or some other such phrase or term you don't understand.

We'd like to help you understand the simplest of those terms. This is not going to be an exhaustive list, or a specialized list. This is the list to explain every day sourdough terms, the ones you're likely to run into in this eBook and on the web.

For more specialized sourdough terms (such as used by professional bakers), check out these websites:

- **Sourdough Definitions** at The Bread Baker's Forum
- **Sourdough Glossary** at The Fresh Loaf

Elasticity

The ability of the dough to spring back and have tension. During the rising of a dough, elasticity as well as overall strength allows the dough to stretch to a larger size yet be strong enough to hold the gases produced by the wild yeasts and *lactobacilli*.

Feed or Refresh

Adding nutrients (flour and water) to re-activate a starter to a (ideally) peak level of activity. Usually, feed equal parts flour and water at a feeding, judging the amounts by the quantity of starter required. When feeding with spelt flour, use 3/4 to 7/8 cup water for each cup of spelt flour, otherwise the starter is too runny.

Fermentation

As the wild yeasts and *lactobacilli* feed on the simple sugars in a dough, they release carbon dioxide, alcohol and other by-products, all of which flavor the bread and cause it to rise. Also known as leavening or rising.

Fully Active Starter

A starter when the *lactobacilli* and wild yeasts are at peak activity. Signs are bubbles, slight doming, and sour smell in a starter/sponge. There may be frothy liquid at the very top, and with thick enough batters, the overall volume may have doubled or more. Some recipes don't require a fully active starter. For example, pancakes don't require a starter at its peak. On the other hand, for best results, a sandwich bread turns out best when the starter is at its peak activity.

Hooch

The liquid that separates out and rises to the top of the starter. May be stirred back in or poured off. Pouring off may lessen the sourness of the baked good(s).

Hydration

Hydration is a way of quantifying how thick or thin an active starter should be. It expresses the water as a percentage of the flour added, by weight. (One baker named Ed Wood uses hydration differently). Take 60% hydration as an example. The liquid added should 60% of the flour amount added. So, let's say you add 2 pounds of flour. The water added should be 60% of that — or 1.2 pounds. This works for all weight measurements. Volume measurements don't work so well (a cup weighs different depending on what flour is being measured).

But don't worry about any of this. With experience, you'll learn to adjust the hydration based on how your dough feels.

Lactobacilli

"Friendly" lactic acid-producing bacteria. They assist the process of fermentation (rising) in bread, adding sour flavor and leavening. They are the chief bacteria at work in lacto-fermentation of vegetables or cultured dairy foods, too, as well as other fermented foods.

Sponge

A wet, rather than firm, mixture of liquid, flour, and starter that is allowed to ferment for a few minutes to a day, or more. Using a sponge helps improve flavor and build up the strength of the natural yeasts for leavening. Begins as a starter, and often is called a starter.

Starter

A batter-like or dough-like mixture of flour and water containing an active colony of wild yeasts and *lactobacilli*. Used as leavening in doughs. A small amount is reserved from each baking session to perpetuate the colony indefinitely.

Your Notes

Please use this space for your notes, or to jot down your questions. If you're a GNOWFGLINS member, you can **go online** to watch the corresponding video(s) or ask questions on our support forums.

You Can Do It!: Starting Your Own Starter

[Erin] The *Little Engine That Could* comes to mind when I think of my first experience trying to catch Wild Yeast. My three year old's encouragement and enthusiasm was invaluable to me as we tried several different methods and practiced perseverance to the very end.

I am so glad we did. Our starter has become, in a way, another member of the family. We feed it, watch it grow, and receive much enjoyment from it. This living, thriving, bubbling pot of goodness brings us so much delight. In fact, I am here to show you how to create your own sourdough starter. So, let's put on the attitude of the Little Blue Engine, shout out a stream of "I think I cans!" and begin.

Equipment, Materials, and Environment

Begin by gathering your materials. For your coming sourdough adventure, you will need:

Water. To begin a starter, I encourage you to use mineral rich, chlorine-free water. You might very well be able to start a starter with your tap water, but let's begin by giving your starter the very best environment in which to grow; a chemical-free home.

I know of at least two methods that work to remove chlorine from water. First, let your water sit out on the counter uncovered for 24+ hours before using. Second, boil your water for 10 minutes and allow to cool before using. If your water is treated with chloramine, you might want to consider buying a big jug of water for this project. Chloramine cannot be removed using these methods. I leave my water out on the counter during this process so that it will be at room temperature.

Flour. I do not grind my own flour, so I will share a few store brands that I feel good purchasing. You could probably add to the list.

- King Arthur 100% Whole Wheat
- Arrowhead Mills 100% Whole Wheat
- Bob's Red Mill 100% Whole Wheat

Organic is always good, but not necessary. These brands are non-GMO, and I like that. Some people have great success using rye flour. Go for it, if that is your preference. The freshest flour is always the best choice. I also think it is best to keep your flour at room temperature for this project. Warmth is always helpful when working with sourdough.

Container. When starting a sourdough starter, I prefer using a widemouth, 2-cup ball jar or similarly sized glass jar. Initially, we will be working with small amounts of flour and water. Using a smaller glass container allows for easier stirring and provides the perfect window for bubble watching! New life! I use a piece of plastic wrap to cover the container. A cloth napkin or a small saucer would also work nicely. Air is important in the sourdough starting process, so please do not screw on a lid.

Utensils. The first time I started a starter, I used a wooden spoon for stirring. Feel free. The past couple times around, I've used silverware from my drawer. It's less bulky and makes the task of stirring vigorously much easier. Whether you choose a wooden spoon or your everyday silverware, I do recommend that you stay away from reactive metals such as copper, brass, aluminum, iron, and lead.

Temperature. My kitchen ranged in temperature between 65 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit. If your kitchen stays much colder than that and you are not seeing activity, you might want to try leaving your starter in the oven with

the light on. On the other hand, if your kitchen is in the 90 degree and above range, you might want to seek out a cooler place for your starter, use cold water for its feedings, or maybe even use a cool water bath.

Discarding Starter. While building a starter, if we just keep adding more flour and water, we will outgrow our jar. Within a week it would fill up the house! That would be much more wasteful than removing a small amount before each feeding. I suggest you compost what you remove.

Starting a Starter: Simple Steps

The Beginning. Put 1/4 cup water and 3/8 cup flour (1/4 cup + 1/8 cup) in a 2 cup ball jar. Stir vigorously. Scrape sides. Cover. Allow to sit for 12 hours.

Feeding One. 12 hours later, if you don't see life, stir again. Scrape sides. Cover and allow to sit for 12 more hours.

If you do see life (a few bubbles), add 1/4 cup water to the jar. Stir well. Add 3/8 cup flour. Stir vigorously. Scrape and Cover. Set aside for 12 hours.

Feeding Two. 12 hours later, if you still don't see signs of life, dump out this mixture and start again.

If you do see life (a few more bubbles), remove 1/2 of the starter, add 1/4 cup water, and stir. Add 3/8 cup flour and stir. Scrape and cover. Allow to sit for 12 or so hours.

Feeding Three. Remove 1/2 of the starter. Add 1/4 cup water and stir. Add 3/8 cup flour and stir. Scrape and cover. Allow to sit for 12 or so hours.

Feeding Four. Remove 1/2 of the starter. Add 1/4 cup water and stir. Add 3/8 cup flour and stir. Scrape and cover. Allow to sit for 12 or so hours.

Feeding Five, Six, Seven... Continue with this routine until your starter consistently shows signs of life, grows double in size between each feeding, and is at least one week old.

> If, after day three or more, your starter does not show much activity 12 hours after its discard/feeding, try giving it a good stir without discarding and feeding. Sometimes this pause gives the organisms a chance to catch up and the starter an opportunity to take off.

Your sourdough starter is now ready to use! Enjoy the journey!

Your Notes

Please use this space for your notes, or to jot down your questions. If you're a Traditional Cooking School by GNOWFGLINS member, you can **go online** to watch the corresponding video(s) or ask questions on our support forums.

Starting a Starter: A Journal

[Erin] The following is a series of journal entries I made and photos I took when starting a starter recently. There's a video slideshow **online** that accompanies these notes; however, you'll find more detail right here.

Day 1 (PM). First picture of a sourdough starter in the making. Add 1/4 cup water and 3/8 cup whole wheat flour to a 2 cup ball jar. Stir well. Scrape down sides. Cover with plastic wrap. Leave to rest on counter for 12 hours.

Day 2 (AM). Did see some life (bubbles). Decided to move forward with the first feeding. Add 1/4 cup water. Stir very well. Add 3/8 cup whole wheat flour. Stir well. Scrape down sides. Cover with plastic wrap. Leave to rest on counter for 12 hours.

Day 2 (AM). Picture of the starter after the morning feeding.

Day 2 (PM). Some life. Move on with second feeding. Remove half of the starter. No need to stir it down first; just scoop it right out with a spoon. Add 1/4 cup water. Stir very well. Add 3/8 cup whole wheat flour. Stir well. Scrape down sides. Cover with plastic wrap. Leave to rest on counter for 12 hours.

Day 2 (PM). Picture of the starter after the evening feeding (described above).

Day 3 (AM). Aaaah! Beautiful bubbles! Life in the making!

Day 3 (AM). Close up of the bubbles.

Day 3 (AM). Photo of the starter after its morning feeding: Remove half of the starter. Add 1/4 cup water. Stir very well. Add 3/8 cup whole wheat flour. Stir well. Scrape down sides. Cover with plastic wrap. Leave to rest on counter, or in this case, in the sink of our VW bus. A camping we will go...

Day 3 (PM). I was not too pleased with the level of sourdough activity during the day. You'd think it would show a little more excitement being out of the house camping and all! Holding no grudge, I feed it anyway.

Remove half of the starter. Add 1/4 cup water. Stir very well. Add 3/8 cup whole wheat flour. Stir well. Scrape down the sides. Cover with plastic wrap. Leave to rest on counter.

Day 3 (PM). A photo of the sourdough starter after its nighttime feeding.

Day 4 (AM). As I was hoping to wake up to more bubbles, the sun brought a smile, but not my sourdough starter. I did try to keep the starter warm during the night with a sourdough sock sleeping bag, but the temperature (and possibly a case of homesickness) might have affected the bubble action. I also forgot its breakfast. The starter must wait until we get home to eat.

Day 4 (late afternoon). *No photo.* Upon arriving home, first things first, feed the baby. I mean, the sourdough starter. Leave husband to unpack the bus and children to fend for themselves. Remove half of the starter. Add 1/4 cup water. Stir very well. Add 3/8 cup whole wheat flour. Stir well. Cover with plastic wrap. Leave to rest on counter. Say a prayer.

Day 4 (late evening). *No photo.* I admit that at this point I do not feel very hopeful. Not much activity since afternoon feeding. What to do? Try something new! Instead of doing the usual remove half/feed water/feed flour, I give my starter a really good stir, scrape down the sides, cover it with plastic wrap, say a prayer, and have my three year old shout out "Wake up, yeast!". Should do the trick. We'll see.

Day 5 (AM). Now this is what I like to see! Finally some good activity through the night!

Day 5 (AM). Close up of the bubbles. Life!

Day 5 (AM). Good morning, yeast!

Day 5 (9:30 AM). After the morning feeding.

Day 5 (1 PM). Alive and well! Thank you, Lord!

Now What?

[Erin] I have a living sourdough starter! What do I do with it? I encourage you to leave your starter out of the refrigerator for at least a few weeks. This will help your starter grow strong. Carry on with the remove half, feed water, feed flour rhythm until you are ready to increase your starter and use it in a recipe. Aim to feed the starter about every 12 hours, or twice a day.

Once you are ready to put your starter to the test, choose a recipe that looks good to you and begin building up your sourdough. The following is an example of using the starter for my fluffy skillet sourdough pancakes (next page).

Before you flip to the recipe, read through these notes of how the feeding and care of your new starter lends itself perfectly to making no-wait fluffy skillet pancakes...

Making Skillet Pancakes

One morning, instead of removing half, feeding 1/4 cup water, and feeding 3/8 flour, pour your starter into a larger holding container. Keep in mind that you need to give your starter space that is more than double its volume to grow. After changing containers, stir in 1 cup of water. Make it a soupy mixture just like you did while creating your starter. Add in 1-1/3 cups of flour. Stir vigorously. Scrape down the sides. Cover and set aside to rest, grow, bubble, and dome. This process should feel very familiar to you by now. And take note, you are looking to create a thicker sourdough starter. For sourdough pancakes, thicker starters work better.

Before you go to bed that night, feed your starter one more time. Add 1 cup of water, and combine well. Add 1-1/3 cups of flour, and stir vigorously. If your starter is still thin, add a bit more flour. If you feel it is too thick, just add a bit more water. But remember, for pancakes, thicker is better. Scrape down the sides. Cover and leave on the counter until morning. Now, you go to bed and dream of homemade sourdough pancakes!

In the morning, find a bowl, and fill it with your pancake ingredients (see recipe, next page). Add 2 cups of starter to the bowl's contents and combine well. Drizzle in the baking soda/water combination and quickly whisk. If your batter is on the thinner side, omit the water and sprinkle the baking soda directly onto the batter. Pour batter onto your hot and ready skillet or griddle top. Walla! You did it! You just made your first batch of delicious, nutritious, sourdough pancakes!

After you enjoy your breakfast, feed your starter *its* breakfast. The amount of flour and water you feed your starter depends on how you plan to use it next. Be aware of recipes to come, and practice building up your starter to meet those recipes' needs.

Keep in mind that your starter should have a chance to bubble, grow and dome before you use it in a recipe. When the starter reaches the dome phase, it is at its peak. The peak phase is perfect for sourdough breads or equally challenging recipes. If you stick with recipes like tortillas, pancakes, waffles, and pizza crust, it's all right to go past that point. And remember, always leave some starter in the pot for your future sourdough adventures.

Oh-So-Fluffy Skillet Pancakes

[Erin] Our boys enjoy sourdough pancakes pretty much every morning of the week; our favorite breakfast at the moment. This particular recipe and method is quick, easy, delicious, and nutritious, and it makes fluffy-beyond-your-wildest-dreams pancakes. I also love how I get all of my batter cooking at one time. Sitting *with* my family to eat breakfast is always fun!

You may need to try this recipe a couple of times to perfect it (level of heat/cooking time…), but believe me when I say your efforts will be rewarded with smiles and empty plates. So good!

This recipe is adapted from “Simply Sourdough: The Alaska Way."

Recipe Notes

Yield. This recipe makes me two large 10" skillet pancakes. It will also work for griddle cakes, but your rise will not be near as high. Still delicious!

Starter. This recipe works with any kind of starter. Be it rye, white wheat, red wheat, or spelt, fantastically fluffy pancakes are on your horizon!

I recommend you give your starter more flour than water for the feeding before you make pancakes. Look for a thick but pourable consistency.

There is no need to use a starter in its active, domed state, but it is helpful if it has been fed within the previous 12 to 15 hours. If it's been longer, take heart, this recipe is very forgiving. Give your pancakes a try anyway. I think you will find success!

Be sure you have enough starter in your crock the night before you want to make pancakes. The recipe calls for 2 cups. Remember, you want enough left to feed and use for your next delicious sourdough adventure!

Souring Time. There is no additional souring time needed when making these pancakes. Add your starter to a few other ingredients and voila! you have a breakfast of Oh-So-Fluffy Sourdough Pancakes!

Oil. I use unsalted butter in this recipe. Feel free to use unrefined coconut oil, olive oil, ghee, or palm shortening. Each of these oils will lend a different flavor to the pancakes. Keep that in mind. And make sure your oil is not too hot when you add it to the bowl!

Sugar. Dry and wet sweeteners work for this recipe. Use unrefined sweeteners like maple syrup, honey, Rapadura, Sucanat, or coconut/palm sugar. The recipe does work (and is delicious) without the addition of a sweetener, but the pancakes will be missing their classic golden brown color.

Salt. If you are using salted butter or a refined salt, consider using less salt in your recipe.

Water and baking soda. If your pancake batter is on the thin side, feel free to omit the water all together and sprinkle your baking soda directly onto your batter. Be sure to give it a good stir!

Ingredients

- 2 cups sourdough starter
- 4 tablespoons butter, coconut oil, or olive oil

- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons sweetener (honey, maple syrup, Sucanat, etc.)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla or vanilla/almond combo
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon water
- spices to add-in (optional)
- fresh or frozen fruit (optional)
- yogurt and maple syrup for serving (optional)

Method

Begin by heating your cast iron skillet. I turn my electric burner to level 3 (of 11). I want my pan hot, but not too hot or the bottom of the pancake will burn. If you don't get a perfect golden brown the first time you try this method, take note of what you did and make a change the next time. A golden fluffy-beyond-your-wildest-dreams pancake is worth every effort!

While the skillet is heating, take a medium size bowl and whisk together melted butter, egg, salt, honey, vanilla (optional), and cinnamon (optional). Pour in two cups of sourdough starter. Stir well with whisk. Set aside.

In a small cup combine 1 tablespoon of water with 1 teaspoon of baking soda. Set aside. Take a bit of butter or coconut oil and grease the bottom and sides of your hot cast iron skillet.

Pour the water/soda mixture into your waiting pancake batter. Quickly stir to incorporate.

Pour the batter into your waiting skillet. How much? Oh, I don't know for sure. Maybe an inch thick… maybe a touch more? Out of my batter, I make one large and one small cast iron pancake and two griddle pancakes.

If you only have one cast iron skillet, here are two options for you. Make one skillet pancake and use the rest of your batter for griddle cakes. Or, before adding baking soda and water to your batter, divide the batter into two bowls. Add 1/2 teaspoon and 1/2 tablespoon water to one bowl. Stir well. Make one pancake. Once the first pancake is complete, add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda and 1/2 tablespoon water to the other bowl. Stir well. Make your second pancake. I believe you will get more rise out of your second pancake if you don't let the baking soda batter sit while the first skillet pancake is cooking. However, if the left over batter is waiting for you patiently, I am confident the second pancake will be just as tasty as the first!

Now, watch for bubbles. I let mine cook for 4 to 5 minutes on the stovetop.

If you choose, now is the time to add fresh or frozen fruit. Give the fruit a little push to sink them down into the batter.

Toward the end of this initial cook time, I turn on the broiler. Finish your pancake off by placing it in the oven. Do not use the very top shelf; the second or third shelf works best.

Remember, your pancake bottom will continue to cook while the top cooks and browns.

Remove from oven once tops are golden, and flip out onto a cooling rack. If you've filled your pancake with fruit, flip onto a plate to prevent a mess! They are ready to dress, serve, and enjoy!

More Possibilities

- Add cocoa powder to your batter for a chocolate pancake. Top with fresh raspberry sauce and whipped cream for a special treat!
- Add diced apples and cinnamon for a cinnamon apple pancake.
- Use molasses instead of honey, and add a dash of cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves for a gingerbread style pancake.
- Try a savory pancake. Omit the sugar. Add cayenne, pepper, ground mustard, herbs (fresh or dried), spices (your favorite), garlic (powder or fresh) and fillers of your choice. Grated cheese, chopped and sautéed (or not) mushrooms and onions, olives, sundried tomatoes, bacon crumbles... The possibilities are endless and delicious. Imagine a savory pancake with soups, stews, creamy sautéed vegetables, or fried eggs. Pancakes make a quick, easy, different, and delicious substitute for bread any time of the day!

A Couple Of Notes

- I like to serve my pancakes topped with homemade yogurt and maple syrup or fresh fruit. I feel we use less sweetener that way.
- We use a pizza cutter to slice the leftover pancakes into wedges. Perfect morning snack or take along treat in the car/stroller.
- My husband and boys enjoy the leftovers plain, straight from the fridge or toasted warm.
- They make an excellent base for nut butter and jam or honey.
- The cast iron pancakes are literally 4 times fluffier (at least) than my griddle pancakes. I just shake my head when I think about it. Delicious!

eCourse Member Tips & Variations

- **Dutch baby (from Angelia).** Today I put a half stick of butter in a 12” cast iron pan instead of in the batter and put the pan in the oven at 350 degrees Fahrenheit to heat up to very hot. Then I poured the batter in all at once after the butter was completely melted. I baked it for about 20 minutes in the oven and it turned out great!
- **Preventing burned buttoms (from Natira).** I had to make an adjustment to the way I cook the pancakes. I have a gas stove and every time I made them the bottom would burn right in the middle where the flame was, no matter how low I turned it. Then my brilliant husband asked me why I don't just put them in the oven. That was the greatest idea ever. I heated the cast iron on the stove, buttered it, poured the batter into the hot frying pan, and popped it straight into my 350 degree Fahrenheit oven. Then, I broiled it for a minute or so to brown the top. This worked wonderfully, puffed beautifully, cooked thoroughly, and best of all, they weren't burnt!

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May God bless your family. I hope to see you again soon!

Wardeh

— Wardeh ('Wardee') Harmon