

Sourdough bread

Ingredients for one loaf (artisan style loaf that fits 12" Dutch oven):

- 325 g + 25 g filtered, unchlorinated water at room temp (11.5 oz + 1 oz)
- 100 g mature levain (this is fed, active starter) (3.5 oz)
- 450 g all-purpose unbleached flour (16 oz)
- 50 g whole-wheat flour (2 oz)

(Ratio of flours can be adjusted and/or substituted as desired, as long as total weight is kept constant)

- 10 g salt (0.4 oz)

In non-metal (stainless steel is OK) bowl, using non-metal (stainless steel is OK) utensils or bare hands, mix 325 g water and starter. Add flours and mix well. Autolyze (see <http://bakerpedia.com/processes/autolyse/> or <https://www.bakerybits.co.uk/resources/autolyse-what-why-how/> for explanatory details) for 30-45 minutes. Mix 25 g water and salt; add to autolyzed dough, mix well by hand. Cover and let rest for 30-45 minutes.

Knead by stretching a corner and folding it over, rotating the dough ¼ turn and repeating the process. Use wet, not floured hands. Repeat every 30-45 minutes for 3-4 hours. Shape into a ball by stretching and folding as before on unfloured counter. Lightly flour top of dough. Cover and let rest 20-30 minutes.

Use dough scraper to lift dough off counter. Shape into loaf – draw loaf toward you, rotate ¼ turn, draw forward again; repeat until top of loaf is taut and smooth. Place **on floured cloth in proofing basket, cover and let rise at room temperature for several hours, or overnight in refrigerator, until about doubled in bulk.

Roll carefully out of proofing basket onto wood paddle, place carefully into **Dutch oven, score loaf with razor, cover and bake for 30 minutes at 450-500° F. Lower oven temperature to 375-400° F, uncover loaf, and bake 20 minutes more, until internal temperature is 190-200° F and crust is browned. Remove from Dutch oven and let cool on raised rack to prevent sweating and condensation on the bottom crust. Bread will continue to bake internally as it cools.

**It might be useful to use the Dutch oven upside-down, to make it easier to place the unbaked loaf on the lid and remove it when done. It reduces the risk of burns when handling the loaf, but be careful handling the upside-down Dutch oven. Alternatively, bake uncovered and put a pan of water in hot oven to create steam. I now, after several experiments with both proofing baskets and hot Dutch ovens, usually let the formed loaf proof in the unheated Dutch oven, then place the covered Dutch oven in the pre-heated oven to bake. I also place a square of foil under the Dutch oven; it prevents over-browning of the bottom of the loaf.

Keep starter alive! Discard or use all but about ½ cup starter. Add equal parts flour and water by weight (approx. ½ cup flour and 3/8 cup filtered, un-chlorinated, room temperature water – I use 100 grams each) and mix thoroughly, until all flour lumps are gone and water is completely absorbed. Cover with breathable cover (coffee filter or paper towel both work well) secured with rubber band around Mason jar threads, and place in refrigerator for up to a week. Feed it again, at least every week if it is kept in the refrigerator. Or, if planning to use starter soon, put jar in warm place (top of refrigerator works well) away from drafts, and feed as directed above every 12-24 hours for a couple of days. Starter should double in bulk and be full of bubbles. Starter is ready to use when a spoonful floats when dropped in water.

