THE STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO PERFECT SOURDOUGH

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BAKING WITH SOURDOUGH & WILD YEAST
White French Sourdough Boule - overnight fermentation

There are many ways to make Sourdough bread. No one particular method is better than another, they just produce different results. What is fundamental to successful sourdough bread making is understanding how your wild yeast behaves and how the way that you treat your wild yeast changes how your bread turns out.

There are two things you need to understand BEFORE you start baking

1. If you build up your yeasts in your starter you get a better result because when you mix your dough with your leaven there is an army of lively yeasts ready to make the CO2, and it is that liveliness that produces the gases you need to make the bubbles which gives you a lighter crumb.

2. The temperature of your water determines the speed at which the yeasts process the flour. It is by lowering the temperature that you slow them down and raising the temperature speeds them up.

1º difference represents 1 hour of fermentation time. So if you find your bread has over proved LOWER the temperature of your water by a couple of degrees.

These instructions are a step-by-step guide with time guidance to make a traditional French boule using a long slow overnight fermentation. The timings for this loaf will result in a loaf that is ready to bake on a Saturday morning, but you will still have to use your judgment, because what I can’t predict is the ambient temperature in your kitchen.

Most of the people I teach aspire to a French style open crumb sourdough loaf. It’s light and fluffy with a caramelised, unmistakable, crunchy crust and sour tang that is classic.

To get an open crumb means working with a higher hydration dough, which can be tricky at first, but after a couple of times you will get used to it. It’s really worth learning how to work with a softer dough because the results are spectacular, delicious and have that real wow factor that no other bread can touch, but be patient and start with this basic formula in this guide. Once you have mastered this method then you can add more water to get a more open crumb. I have chosen 77% hydration because it is a fantastic crumb, which will give you a lovely mid point crumb, because if you are new to baking bread then it is easier to handle than a dough with a higher hydration. My advice is that when you are new to sourdough if you first get used to handling dough around 77% and then up the hydration a bit at a time, and you will soon be baking bread with larger holes.

Sourdough for me is the emperor of bread. Personally I love sourdough, most, the day after it has been baked. It has time to improve if it is left overnight, so, once my bread is cooled I wrap it in a clean cotton tea towel and pop it in the bread bin. It will last 7 days, but a loaf rarely makes it beyond a day in our house, so I make two. It’s easier to make a 1kg mix up and it does freeze beautifully.
**PERFECT SOURDOUGH RECIPE**

**ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT**
- A large bowl
- A dough scraper
- A Lame
- 2 x 1kg bannetons
- A La Cloche Baking Dome OR a Dutch oven

**TIME GUIDE**
Step 1 Refresh your starter Thursday evening
Step 2 Make your Leaven Friday morning
Step 3 Mix to Step 6 Friday evening (5-8pm)
Step 7 Shape Friday evening 9pm
Step 8 Prove overnight
Step 9 Bake - Saturday Morning

**INGREDIENTS**
Makes 2 loaves (you can make 1 large loaf, but you will need a 2kg banneton)
- 200g leaven
- 650ml water exactly 28º
- 900g strong white organic stoneground flour,
- 100g strong wholemeal organic flour,
- 50ml cold water
- 20g sea salt

**STEP BY STEP**

1. **REFRESH YOUR STARTER**

   **Step 1.1**
   Thursday night. Time to refresh your starter. Remove the mother from the fridge. She will smell sour but not unpleasant.

   **Step 1.2**
   Put 75g of your starter into a new, sterile jar.

   **Step 1.3**
   Add to this 200g of cold-water stir well and then stir in 100g of stoneground organic wholemeal flour and 100g of stoneground white flour.

   Organic flour is made with grain that has not been treated with anti fungicides, which can harm your wild yeast. A combination of both white and wholemeal will make your starter both active and healthy, and the introduction of new yeasts found in the organic flour will provide your starter with some new yeast, which keep your starter healthy by introducing some new breeding material.

   **Step 1.4**
   Leave the jar in a cool but not cold area overnight. This way the yeast and bacteria colonise the mixture and it will be ready to make a leaven tomorrow. Your starter has done her job and now needs to go back into the fridge until the next time. You don't need to refresh her again until next week. You can use her to make more loaves throughout the week – but please remember not to use every last bit, as you need some to build a new starter back up. Your old starter is now redundant – but you can use it in lots of other baking, so do check out the recipes on The Sourdough Club pages.

2. **MAKING YOUR LEAVEN**

   **Step 2.1**
   Put 60g from your starter into a large clean bowl.

   **Step 2.2**
   Stir in 70g of cold water at exactly 20 (Degrees) stir and then add 70g of strong white flour.

   **Step 2.3**
   Leave the leaven covered on the side until about 6pm. The slightly colder water that you used was for convenience as it slows down the activity rate of your leaven, so that your leaven will be ready to use in 10 hours time, and it will be at its most active and ready to use late afternoon / early evening.

   **Step 2.4**
   Your leaven should now be ready to use. It will be bubbly and smell similar to live yoghurt.

3. **MIX**

   **Step 3.1**
   Add water. You can adjust % here, however, it is important that the water is the correct temperature. 22º (Summer) 28º (Winter) Celsius

   **Step 3.2**
   Mix well to get rid of any lumps and incorporate air.

   **Step 3.3**
   Add 1000g flour. At this stage you can play about with types of flour.

   **Step 3.4**
   Mix well ensuring all flour is incorporated. Do not over mix.

4. **AUTOLYSE**

   **Step 4.1**
   Autolyse. Leave for 30 minutes. This refers to a period of rest after the initial mixing of flour and water and it gives the flour a chance to absorb water without the inhibiting presence of salt. This gives the gluten and starches the chance to form, which leads to better dough development and better flavor as well. Breads made with autolysed dough are easier to shape and have more volume and improved structure.

5. **ADD SALT**

   **Step 5.1**
   30 minutes INTO your autolysed weigh salt. 20g (allowing 10g per loaf)

   **Step 5.2**
   Mix salt well with 50g water. It is important to dissolve the salt.

   **Step 5.3**
   Add your saline solution to the dough. Mix well. This is now ready for the first fermentation. (You can add extras such as dried fruit or nuts or seeds in now.)
6. FERMENTATION – STRETCH AND FOLD

Step 6.1
You will now leave your bread to ferment during which time you will need to stretch and fold – this helps give your bread structure.

Over the next 2 hours fold the dough in the bowl. Rotate container one-quarter turn, and repeat. Do this 2 or 3 times for each fold.
Instead of traditional kneading, I use a stretch and fold technique. This technique allows the gluten in the dough to develop through a series of "folds," in the bowl during this first fermentation. To do a fold, you can dip 1 hand in water to prevent sticking or use a really light olive oil on your hand. Grab the underside of the dough, stretch it out, and fold it back over itself. Rotate the bowl a quarter turn. Repeat. Do this 2 or 3 times for each fold. You are looking for a 20 to 30% increase in volume. If not, don’t panic; just continue the fermentation for another hour or so until the dough is softer and aerated.

Step 6.2
Do four rounds of folds in total every 20 minutes for 1 hour. Grab the underside of the dough, stretch it out, and fold it back over itself.

Step 6.3
The dough should feel soft and aerated. There should be a 20 to 30 percent increase in volume. If you cut it open you can see bubbles. If not, continue fermentation for 30 minutes to 1hr more.

7. SHAPING YOUR BOULE

Step 7.1
Oil your hands with a drop of olive oil. Turn your dough onto a work surface that it lightly oiled. Divide into half using your scraper to cut, and stretch the dough out very gently to the size of a small dinner plate.

Step 7.2
Place your left finger in the centre and working your way around the dough fold in the corners, to form a tight boule shape. Work your way around clockwise.

Be gentle but firm with your dough when you are shaping. The best way to work each piece into a round is by using a scraper and your hand. Tension builds as the dough slightly sticks to the surface as you rotate and drag it. By the end of your shaping the dough should have a taut outer membrane that will give you a superb classic sourdough crust.

Step 7.3
Once you have your boule slide you scraper underneath, and flip your dough boule over.

This way all the joins are on the bottom. The joins MUST stay on the bottom, or the bread will split open when it is in the oven.

Step 7.4
Dust a seasoned banneton well with flour. Ideally a blend of 50:50 organic white and rice flour which will stop your dough from sticking to your banneton.

8. PROVE

Step 8.1
Dust with flour then cover and place in the fridge overnight.

9. BAKE

Step 9.1
About 20 minutes before your bread is ready to bake preheat your oven to 220° and place your dome in the oven.

Many people just use a baking stone to bake their bread in, but you get the very best result from using a Dutch oven or a La Cloche baking dome. It is the way in which the steam circulates around the bread, whilst it is baking that gives your bread a fantastic crust, even bake and better oven spring. It really does make all the difference.

Step 9.2
One your oven has reached 220° remove your cloche / Dutch oven from the oven carefully making sure not to burn yourself and dust generously with polenta.

Step 9.3
Turn one of the dough’s out onto the baking surface taking care not to burn yourself. Score your dough with a sharp knife or razor. You can score with just one slash.

Step 9.4
If you don’t score your sourdough then it will split anyway. Professional bakers have their own signature slash, but start simple, and use a Grignette to score lightly across the top. Do not go deep with the blade or it will drag the dough and deflate your loaf.

By scoring it you decide where the bread expands and can better control the shape of your bed.

Step 9.5
Put the lid on your dome or Dutch oven and place in the oven. If you are not using one then add a tray of hot water in the oven.

Lower temperature to 180° and bake for 30 minutes.

Remove the lid carefully. Bake until the crust is deep golden brown - 20 to 25 minutes.

Step 9.6
Transfer your loaf to a wire rack. It will feel light and sound hollow when tapped. If you only have one cloche then repeat from step 9.1 with your 2nd loaf (it is advisable to keep your 2nd loaf in the fridge whilst you are waiting to bake it or it may over prove).

Cool your sourdough on a rack.

Sourdough is best stored wrapped in linen or cotton. The sourness improves with age. Eat within 1 week.
What is The Sourdough Club?

Now that you have attended one of Vanessa Kimbell’s sourdough courses you are a member of The Sourdough Club.

The club is a way of keeping you inspired so you keep in baking as the monthly challenge gives you something new to learn through baking with sourdough each month.

As well as exclusive sourdough recipes, information, events, give-aways and offers.

- Each month there is sourdough baking challenge event.
- Once a year members may attend The Bread Exchange (an event held in early summer to celebrate sourdough and swapping loaves with other members)
- Members also have access to instructional videos, charts, and step by step instructions.

Membership also means that you can access the course notes, tips, techniques and how to videos, but more importantly it means you can keep on learning through the monthly recipe challenge and regular updates.

Your password is ____________________________

* Your membership number is for your personal use only. Please do not share it.
For full terms and conditions see www.sourdough.co.uk/terms

Sharing your photos on social media means I can keep on giving you feedback...

Please share your bakes on
The Sourdough Club Membership page: https://www.facebook.com/TheSourdoughClub

Please tweet using #TheSourdoughClub.
The Twitter handle is @SourdoughClub

It’s also a great way for me to share your baking with other students.