

Sourdough for Beginners - Intro

Some say that sourdough is easy. Some say that it is difficult. I'd say that it is actually a little of both. Just like baking is different than cooking, sourdough is also different. You are dealing with a living organism.

There are SO many variables that affect sourdough baking. What works for one may not work for another. From starter creation to baking, sourdough can react differently to different circumstances. And the wild yeast in one area can be different from the wild yeast in other areas. This is why you might see one person have an easy time, and other not so much.

The key for me, has been to **learn sourdough basics** and then learn my dough. Your dough also changes and responds differently with the temperature inside your home, with the weather outside, humidity, gluten development, type of flour, other ingredients, etc., etc..

So the best hack I can offer is to find a recipe you enjoy following and excel at it, before making changes or doing inclusions. After baking weekly for 1 1/2 years, I personally have never done an inclusion. I do experiment with enriched breads (sandwich).

I am a perfectionist so I wanted to excel at the basics first. I also bake sourdough to use and replace store bought bread so I don't really need/want inclusions. I've seen others rush to inclusions before they fully mastered or understand a basic plain dough. Which is fine for them, not for me. You decide what works for you.

YOU.CAN.DO.THIS!

Basic Tips:

- The Sourdough Journey website has a wealth of information on sourdough. Most things are PDFd for quick flyers. Before you start, checkout this starter guide; <https://thesourdoughjourney.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/TSJ-Complete-Guide-How-to-Create-a-Sourdough-Starter.pdf>
- Mix WELL....very well...no dry bits at all.
- Best to NOT use a cloth cover. LOVE the weck jars because they come with a glass lid that leaves enough room for gasses to release. If using a mason jar, put hte lid on top but do not tighten.
- Start with part whole wheat for extra nutrients and then mostly AP flour. I use about 5% whole wheat and AP in my starter, and bake with bread flour or combination of AP/ Bread flours.

Mom's Life Tips

More Tips & Hacks:

1. **Name your starter(s):** This is a fun part! Giving starters names (like my Angelene; Gertie, Doughlene, and Angus) makes the process more fun and helps you bond with your baking
2. **Be patient:** A brand new starter takes time. It may do nothing at first, it may double for days in a row but still not have the maturity to raise bread well. Don't get discouraged.
3. **Success** honestly depends on so many things including the type of bacteria in your area. And there are some areas that are lacking.
 1. **Advise** will come your way via friends, bakers, social media. Know that aside from the science behind some aspects, there is no ONE way to do things. READ the Sourdough Journey's starter guide noted above to learn what your starter should be doing when. Don't just listen to social media videos. Do not plan on baking before 30 days from your starters birth.
4. **Start small:** I see thousands of videos of people starting with a cup of flour. This is such a big starter. it can be daunting to start and keep a new starter going, as it is, why not start small? Especially in the beginning when you should not be saving or using any discard.
5. **Clean the rims:** After every feeding, wipe the rims of both your starter and discard jars. Use half a wet paper towel followed by half a dry one. Grab the rim of the jar with the wet paper towel and wipe both inside and out at the top of jar.
 1. *Why:* Good starter bacteria will control mold inside the jar, but not on bits stuck to the rim. Keeping the edges clean prevents crusts and contamination.
6. **Create a backup(once you are baking):** You never know what might happen. I have seen countless stories of years old starters being dropped or shattering OR out of the blue start growing MOLD.
 1. I am thankful, that I always have some discard in the fridge (which can be used to create a new starter).
 2. Take some starter and schmear on some parchment; cover and let dry. Keep this dried starter in a jar or baggie.
7. **Routine:** Find a routine/schedule that works for you. If its a pain or not enjoyable in anyway, you won't keep it up. Some people prefer to keep their fed starters in the fridge and not have a daily routine and that's great. For me, though I prefer that Angelene not be out of sight/out of mind (which happens to me alot).
8. **Once starter is established:** When I come down in the morning of a bake day, I sharpie where my starter is, then tap the jar gently a couple of times. The starter will deflate, sharpie this level as well. Your starter should come back (stronger). This is when I start mixing.
9. **Multiple jars:** I have multiple jars so that I will typical change jars maybe once a week.