

Tips and Tricks for working with Sourdough

For a More/Less Sour Sourdough

For a More Sour Sourdough you need to increase the acetic acid forming bacteria.

- 1) Keep your starter less hydrated, more like a dough than a slop.
- 2) Use wholegrain flours
- 3) Keep the hooch. The liquid that can accumulate at the top of your starter, known as the hooch, can aid in producing a more acidic sourdough.
- 4) Draw out the rising phase – pop it into the fridge for 12-36 hours to develop its sourness before bringing to warm room temperature to rise.

For a Less Sour Sourdough you can manipulate your starter in your favour.

- 1) Feed your starter more often – if once a day is too sour for you, try twice a day feeds.
- 2) Give the dough a shorter rising time at a cooler temperature – for this to work you will have to use twice as much starter in your recipe.
- 3) Add a teaspoon of baking soda to your dough before proofing.

How to Adapt Any Recipe to Become a Sourdough Recipe

The thing to consider in the recipe you wish to adapt is the amount of yeast. The rising power of one packet of yeast is about equivalent to one cup of sourdough starter. If your starter is 100% hydration it is 50/50 water and flour by weight (or 1/3 water 2/3 flour by volume)

Knowing these two factors you can approximate a substitution of one cup of sourdough starter for one packet of commercial yeast. You would then lower the flour and water in the recipe according to your hydration levels, being sure to measure it again by weight.

So, for instance, if your recipe calls for 1 cup of liquid, 3 cups of flour, and 1 packet of yeast, you can substitute 1 cup of sourdough starter for the yeast, then use only 2/3 cup of liquid and 2 1/3 cups of flour.

Then you need to account for the longer rise time needed for sourdough. You simply allow for a 4-hour (or more) rise time instead of the instant yeast rise time that is usually around 2 hours.

5 Tips for Working with Traditional Sourdough

- 1) To check if the loaf is cooked, turn it over and flick it with your finger, it should sound hollow. Alternatively use a thermometer, it should read 88-98C (190-210F). I usually use the sniff test – if the room smells like cooked bread, give it 10 more minutes and you are done – it usually works.
- 2) If you want a more ciabatta style loaf with big open holes, you need a more wet dough – leave it quite sticky and soft.
- 3) To rise a wet dough, or any free form bread line a basket with a cloth SMOTHERED in flour, then tip it out to bake it.
- 4) Slashing the top allows the extra oven spring (rising in the oven) to happen without cracking or ruining the shape of your loaf. And it looks cool.
- 5) If your starter isn't bubbling well or rising your loaf well try using non chlorinated water and or organic flour and see if there is a change. Different local yeasts are sensitive to different things. Some need a slightly warmer temperature to rise too.

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