



## Sourdough Starter Instructions

### Feeding and Caring for Sourdough without having to discard any Starter

Sourdough starter is simply flour and water left to ferment. But, when you look closer, it's a medium teeming with wild yeasts, enzymes, and lactobacilli. This culture leavens, conditions, flavors, and partially breaks down complex substances in the dough. It is one of the oldest forms of grain fermentation.

Sourdough fermentation has a powerful effect on health. The fermentation process breaks down the phytic acid naturally occurring in whole grains, which frees up minerals such as magnesium, iron, zinc, and calcium. The process of sourdough fermentation also breaks down the gluten proteins, making bread baked with sourdough easier to digest than other forms of bread. Michael Pollan reminds us, "what sourdough starter is, is the traditional way that bread was made until only about 100 years ago."



Your sourdough starter will be hyper-local because it will pick up wild yeast unique to your home. No other sourdough starter will be exactly like yours. It takes some effort to keep sourdough starter because it needs to be fed. You'll find that you begin to develop a relationship during these daily feedings. Some people name their starters. A friend in London named her sourdough starter after me, I guess that's almost like having a child named after you. I'm flattered. I named my starter Theo, which is short for *Theotokos*. In Greek, *Theotokos* is translated as "the God-bearer," Mary, and what a life-bearer sourdough is!

## NO-DISCARD METHOD FOR REVIVING SOURDOUGH

*Note: read these instructions all the way through because the process takes two days and assumes you already have sourdough starter and Honoré flour. If you don't have flour or starter, contact us at [honoremill.org](http://honoremill.org).*

What I like about this method is that you don't have to discard any of the starter after each feeding. This technique comes from master baker and phenomenal instructor, Dave Miller, for whom I have deep respect.

### Supply list:

1. A small clear glass dish
2. A larger bowl, like a cereal bowl
3. A wooden spoon is preferable, although any spoon will do
4. Dried or wet sourdough starter
5. A pint glass measuring cup or large clear glass that can hold up to two cups
6. Water
7. A digital scale
8. A small sieve
9. Honoré flour, Sonora or Red Fife or a combination of the two

Beginning with the end in mind, we're aiming for 150 grams of starter after three feedings of flour (I use a blend of Honoré 50% Sonora + 50% Red Fife) and water spaced 8-12 hours apart. This will produce enough to make one loaf of bread according to the Honoré recipe, with a small amount left over for the next time you bake. The weights do not need to be exact. One can feed more flour and water but the result will be more starter than you need.

There are two methods outlined below for reviving starter: one for reviving dried starter and one for reviving wet starter.

### Reviving dried sourdough starter

- Begin with two bowls: one small glass bowl and one slightly wider bowl
- Place a small sieve over the wider bowl.
- Remove 5 grams of dried sourdough starter from the refrigerator and pour into the bowl.
- Gently tap the side of the sieve, which will release most of the loose flour.
- What remains in the sieve are the sourdough bits.
- Transfer the sourdough bits into your glass bowl and place on the scale. Tare the weight.
- Add enough warm water, about 8-10 grams (80-85 degrees) to the bowl full of sourdough bits to make a mush. Gently mix with your finger or a spoon.

- Let sit and soften for 30 to 60 minutes.
- Add back the flour that was sifted off to the hydrated sourdough bits. Gently mix.
- That's your first feeding!
- Let rest 12 hours.
- Pick up at the second feeding in the instructions below for wet sourdough starter.

### Reviving wet sourdough starter

#### *First Feeding*

- Your wet sourdough starter should be stored in the refrigerator unless you are baking with it more than once per week.
- Place a small glass bowl on your digital scale then tare, or zero out, the weight.
- Take your sourdough out of the refrigerator. Using a small wooden spoon, preferably not metal, transfer about 2 grams of starter into the bowl.
- To the starter, add approximately 10 grams of water and mix well.
- Next, add between 6-8 grams of Honoré 100% whole wheat flour. Mix well. It should have the consistency of thick pancake batter.
- Store covered with cheesecloth in a place where you won't forget about it. (I store mine with my tea mugs since I enjoy tea every morning and I certainly don't forget that!)
- Let the starter rest for 10-12 hours.

#### *Second Feeding*

- There should be tiny bubbles forming around the sides of your bowl showing that the fermentation process is active. As the starter develops, the smell will change from smelling like flour and water to a pleasantly fermented, sweet, and boozy aroma.
- Place your bowl of starter on the scale. Add approximately 25 grams of water and mix well.
- Add 15-18 grams of flour and mix.
- Rest 8-12 hours.

### *Third Feeding*

Up until this point we've been calling our culture a sourdough starter. During this last feeding, bakers change the name to levain. Levain is the French word for the final starter before mixing your bread. In essence you're making one substance of approximately 150 grams with two uses. Most of it will be used as the "levain" which is the part that is mixed into dough. A much smaller part will be retained for your future starter that's kept until the next bake.

- Your starter should be very active now with visible bubbles all over the surface and sides of the bowl.
- Place a pint-sized glass measuring cup or large glass on your scale and tare the weight.
- Transfer the starter from the bowl into the measuring cup. It should weigh approximately 45-55 grams.
- Add about 60 grams of water to the starter and mix well.
- Next add approximately 45 grams of flour and mix.
- Ideally, there will be 150 grams of levain.
- After the third feeding, the levain rests for 8-12 hours and will then be ready to mix into dough. At this point, test the levain for readiness by using the float test.

### *Float Test*

- To test the starter's readiness, drop a small spoonful into a glass of room temperature water. If it sinks, it's not ready and needs more time to ripen. When it floats on the surface or close to it, it's ready to use to make the dough. If the starter floats on the surface and then quickly sinks and dissolves, it is too mature, and you'll need to repeat the feeding process by returning to the 2nd feeding. Remove 50 grams of your levain and repeat the second feeding. Use the remaining levain to make sourdough pancakes or waffles. After this feeding, repeat the float test again in 8 hours.

If your levain floats, it's ripe and ready to be mixed into dough. Pick up with STEP 2 in the [Honoré Whole Wheat Sourdough Bread Recipe](#).

Store the last little bit of levain for the next time you bake using the following instructions.

### Storing sourdough starter

#### *Dry Method*

- Place a shallow bowl on your scale and tare the weight.
- Spoon out approximately 5 grams of levain into the bowl
- Mix in 3 times its weight in whole wheat flour. This would be 15 grams of flour.

- Once mixed this would be 20 grams.
- It just takes a few minutes of working it in with your hands until you have something that looks like breadcrumbs.
- Place the dried sourdough into a jar with a tight-fitting lid, label it, and store in the refrigerator until next use.

*Wet Method*

- Get a small jar with a tight-fitting lid. Add 10 grams of levain, then 5 grams of flour and 5 grams of water.
- Mix together until it becomes a thick, smooth paste.
- Wipe down the sides, seal it with a labeled lid and store in the refrigerator.
- **Make sure to label it so it doesn't get thrown out!**
- The beautiful thing about starter is that you can store it in the refrigerator for a long, long time. Most professional bakers take their starter out of the fridge once a week and feed it, giving it more flour and water and then returning it to the fridge. However, starter can be left in the refrigerator for longer periods of time.

NOTE: when storing starter in the refrigerator for a long time, a brown liquid layer on top of your starter, called *hooch*, can form. This simply indicates that the starter is hungry. When you're ready to bake, remove the starter from the refrigerator, pour or scrape off any hooch, and feed the starter as soon as possible.

SECOND NOTE: I keep a "back-up" starter in my refrigerator in a mason jar labeled in case something happens to the active one. Even at the famous Tartine Bakery in San Francisco, Chad Robertson tells a story that his age-old starter was once accidentally thrown away.

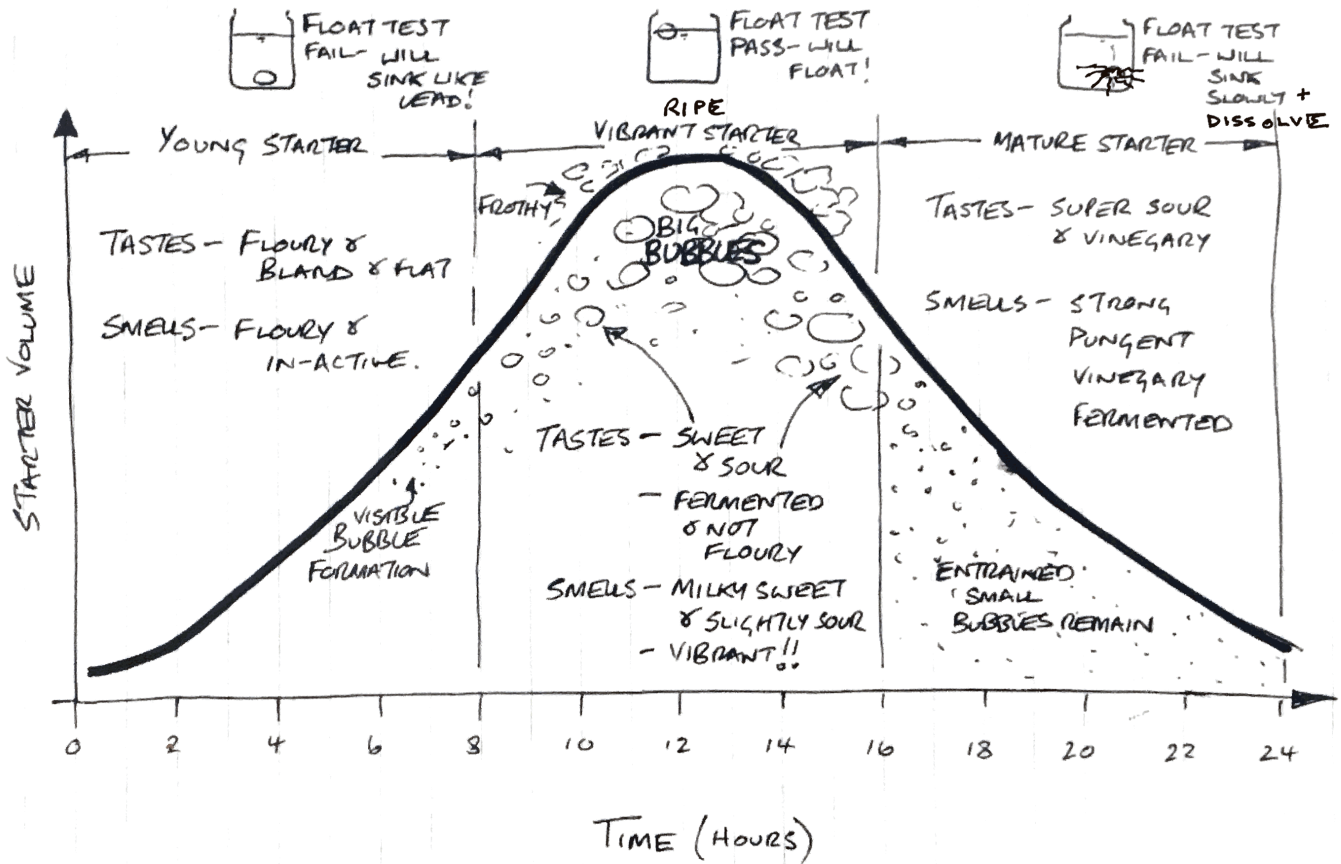
*Thanks to Dave Miller of Miller Bake House and Chad Robertson's Tartine Book No 3.*

Feeding schedule in approximate weights

	<u>1<sup>st</sup> feeding</u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> feeding</u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> feeding</u>
Dry Starter	6 grams	20 grams	55 grams
Water	11 grams	20 grams	58 grams
Flour	3 grams	15 grams	37 grams
Total weight	20 grams	55 grams	150 grams
Time	Rest 12 hrs.	10-12 hrs.	8 hrs.

	1 <sup>st</sup> feeding	2 <sup>nd</sup> feeding	3 <sup>rd</sup> feeding
Wet Starter	2 grams	20 grams	55 grams
Water	12 grams	20 grams	58 grams
Flour	6 grams	15 grams	37 grams
Total weight	20 grams	55 grams	150 grams
Time	Rest 12 hrs.	10-12 hrs.	8 hrs.

### Sourdough Maturation Process



Thanks to Adam Veitch from Doughies Bakery in Fort William, Scotland for this graphic. Go visit when you head to Scotland next.

Link to website: <https://doughies.blog/>