Easy Tiger Country Sourdough Bread

Makes 2 round loaves
Total Time: 14-16 hours

Here is a great recipe for baking a flavorful, nutritious sourdough bread. It is based on our *pain au levain*, a classic French style sourdough country bread. You need an active, mature sourdough starter to make this bread. If you are in the Austin area, you can get one from our Bake Shop.

Happy Kneading!

About Our Head Doughpuncher: David Norman

David is the 'Head Doughpuncher' at Easy Tiger Bake Shop and Beer Garden in Austin, Texas. Over his esteemed 30-year career, he has worked in some of the country's best bakeries, from Seattle (Grand Central Bakery) to New York City (Bouley Bakery), and has taught professional bread courses at the French Culinary Institute and the San Francisco Baking Institute, in addition to classes for home bakers at Easy Tiger's Bakery Classroom. David was recently nominated for a 2020 James Beard Foundation award in the 'Outstanding Baker' category.
## Equipment List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Offered Alternatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scale</strong></td>
<td>For properly measuring ingredients</td>
<td>Measuring Cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plastic Dough Scraper</strong> <em>(Not required)</em></td>
<td>To move dough around the counter with ease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Large Bowl</strong></td>
<td>To mix dough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proofing Basket</strong></td>
<td>Your loaf of bread will take the shape of the vessel that you rest your dough in</td>
<td>Medium Bowl lined with a tea towel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tea Towels</strong></td>
<td>To cover dough during resting periods to prevent the exterior from drying out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pizza Stone</strong></td>
<td>To help simulate a bread oven and store more heat on the cooking surface.</td>
<td>You can also bake your bread in a Dutch Oven. No need to add steam as the pot captures moisture from the loaf. Just remove the lid after 20 minutes for a better crust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cast iron skillet with bolts/chains/lava rocks</strong></td>
<td>Pour water into this skillet after preheating to make steam throughout the oven.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Automotive funnel with extended spout</strong> <em>(Not required)</em></td>
<td>Used to pour water into the cast iron skillet and create steam in the oven.</td>
<td>Use a pitcher instead. The funnel helps with keeping the oven closed and the heat inside the oven as much as possible!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bread Peel</strong></td>
<td>Flat surface to transfer loaf from the proofing basket to the baking stone in the oven.</td>
<td>Can also use a flipped over baking sheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extra flour</strong></td>
<td>For dusting the counter when handling sticky dough.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scoring Knife</strong></td>
<td>To make slashes in the surface of the bread to allow for expansion in the oven.</td>
<td>A sharp serrated knife</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 1: Wake Up Your Sourdough Starter

If you have purchased an Easy Tiger Sourdough Starter from our bakery, follow the instructions below to ‘wake up’ your starter. Allow to sit at room temperature 8-12 hours before you want to make bread.

“Wake Up” Feed

This step is to activate the starter and bulk it up so you have enough to bake with and still have some to save for the next bake.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starter</td>
<td>200 grams</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Purpose Flour</td>
<td>200 grams</td>
<td>1 ½ cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>120 grams</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Place starter in a clean bowl and mix in the flour and water by hand until well incorporated and a shaggy dough forms. Cover with a towel and allow to ferment at room temperature for 8-10 hours. The ideal temperature for the starter to ferment is between 76°F and 78°F. Because the starter will still be cold from the refrigerator, use water that’s about 90°F to get to that ideal temperature.

Final Starter Feeding

About 3 hours before you want to make your bread dough, measure 165 grams of the starter and feed it according to the chart that follows. Return the remaining starter to your storage container and refrigerate.

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starter</td>
<td>165 grams</td>
<td>3/4 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Purpose Flour</td>
<td>165 grams</td>
<td>1 ¾ cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>100 grams</td>
<td>¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Place the starter in a clean bowl and mix in the flour and water by hand until well incorporated. Cover and let ferment at room temperature for 3 hours. Your starter is now ready to use to mix the dough.
Step 2: Form The Dough

Don’t have rye flour? Simply substitute for 34 grams extra all purpose flour.

<table>
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<th>Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Purpose Flour</td>
<td>830 grams, plus more for dusting</td>
<td>7 ½ cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Rye Flour</td>
<td>34 grams</td>
<td>5 tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>28 grams</td>
<td>1 tablespoon + 2 teaspoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sourdough Starter</td>
<td>420 grams</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>690 grams</td>
<td>3 cups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mixing and Kneading**

Mix all-purpose flour, rye flour and salt in a large bowl. Divide the starter into four pieces and scatter on top of the flour. Make a well in the center of the flour and add the water, **holding back a small amount until you see if the flour needs it all**.

Make sure you have a plastic bowl scraper at hand, start to blend the water and starter into the flour with your fingers. As the flour starts to absorb the water and the mixture starts to thicken, plunge both hands in and squeeze the dough. Work from the side of the bowl closest to you across to the other side, squeezing with both hands. Rotate the bowl a quarter turn and squeeze your way through the dough again.

You will feel the dough starting to come together as a more cohesive mass, and the water and starter will become more fully incorporated. Use your bowl scraper from time to time to scrape the sticky dough from the sides of the bowl into the center. Keep rotating the bowl and squeezing the dough until everything is fully incorporated, 1 to 2 minutes. It will remain a shaggy and sticky mass.
The dough should be medium-soft, having definite give but also some resistance. Add the reserved water if the dough is not soft enough. You may even have to add more water to get the right consistency if it still feels too stiff. It is better to have a dough that is a little wet than one that is too dry.

Turn the dough out onto an *un-floured* work surface, using the scraper to get it all out of the bowl and scraping as much off your hands as you can. Resist the urge to add flour to the work surface or the dough at this stage.

Starting with the edge closest to you, grab the dough with both hands, palms down, and pull it gently toward you. Stretch it up and flip it over the top of the dough mass by 2 or 3 inches and press it into the surface. Grab the new edge closest to you again and stretch it gently up and flip it over the top. Keep repeating this stretching and flipping of the dough four or five times, working your way to the far side of the mass. The stretches should be gentle enough not to tear the dough apart. As you continue this process, the dough will hold together better and be easier to stretch.

Scrape up the dough with a dough scraper, rotate it a quarter turn, and repeat the stretching and flipping through the dough mass again four or five times. Keep rotating, stretching, and flipping the dough for 3 to 5 minutes. With each stretch and flip of the dough, you will feel it developing, becoming more cohesive and less sticky. When most of the dough holds together and pulls off the work surface when you stretch it, slide the dough scraper under it and gather it into a ball. The dough will not be fully developed yet and will still be a little sticky.

Cup your hands around the bottom of the far side of the ball and pull it gently toward you,
allowing the dough to grip the work surface, then move your hands to the left
rotating the dough. Return your hands behind the
dough and pull and rotate again one or two times.
This will tighten the surface and help shape the
dough into a smooth ball. Return the ball back to
the bowl with the smooth side up and let it rest
for 15 minutes.

Dust the work surface lightly with all-purpose
flour and turn out the dough out so that the
smooth side is down. Gently press out the dough
to flatten it into a round that’s about 2 inches
thick. Grab the edge closest to you and stretch it
up and over the top of the dough, about
two-thirds of the way to the opposite side, and
press into the surface. Grab the edge opposite you
and stretch and fold it toward you over the first
fold, about two-thirds of the way to the closest
edge, and press into the surface. Rotate the
dough a quarter turn and repeat two more folds,
one away from you and one toward you.

Turn the dough over so the seam side is down.
Form a ball by cupping your hands around the
bottom of the far side of the dough and pulling it
toward you, rotating the dough counterclockwise.
Repeat one or two times to form a ball. You will
notice that the dough is more developed and will
stretch tighter than before. Be careful not to
stretch it too tight; if the surface starts to tear then
stop tightening. Return the ball to the bowl,
smooth side up, and let rest for 15 minutes more.

Repeat this stretching and folding three more
times at 15-minute intervals for a total of four folds
over an hour. This will develop into a smooth,
elastic dough with a good gluten network.
Fermentation

After the final fold, return the ball to the bowl smooth side up, cover with a tea towel or plastic wrap, and let sit in warm, draft-free place for an hour.

After an hour, the dough should double in volume and feel airy when gently touched. Turn out the dough on a lightly floured surface, smooth side down. Press it gently to flatten a bit. It is okay to press out some of the gases, but do it gently and not too thoroughly.

Grabbing the edge opposite you, stretch the dough and fold it over the top, about halfway toward you. Gently press the dough down and then stretch the edge closest to you and fold it over the first fold. Press it in gently. Rotate the dough a quarter turn and repeat two more folds, one away from you and one toward you. It is okay to press some of the air out of the dough as you fold it.

Turn the dough over. Cup your hands behind the dough and gently pull it toward you to stretch the surface. At the same time, move your hands to the left, rotating the dough counterclockwise about a quarter turn, rounding it. Repeat one or two times to form a ball. Return the ball to the bowl for 30 minutes to 1 hour, until it doubles in volume again.

Shaping

Dust the work surface lightly with all-purpose flour and turn out the dough. Divide the dough piece in half. Gently press the first piece of dough flat and grab the edge opposite you and stretch it up and over the top of the dough, about two-thirds of the way toward you. Gently press into the surface with the heel of your hand. Rotate the dough a quarter turn and grab the edge opposite you again, stretching and folding it over the first fold, about two-thirds of the way toward you, pressing it gently. Repeat two or three more times until you have a loose ball.
shape, then turn the ball over so the seam side is down.

Cup your hands behind the ball with your pinkie fingers and the side of your hands on the table, then gently pull your hands toward you. At the same time as you are gently pulling, move your hands to the left, causing the ball to rotate counterclockwise about a quarter turn. The dough should grip the table and the surface will tighten. Move your hands behind the ball again, pulling gently and rotating the ball. Set aside and cover with a tea towel, repeating with the second piece of dough. Let the dough rest for 15 to 20 minutes so the gluten relaxes a bit.

Turn the first ball over so the smooth side is down and gently press the ball a bit. Stretch and fold the opposite edge about two-thirds of the way toward you and press into the dough with the heel of your hand. Rotate the and stretch and fold another flap about two-thirds of the way toward you over the first flap and press it in. Repeat three more times and then turn the ball over so the seam side is down. Cup both hands behind the ball so that your pinkie fingers and the sides of your hands are touching the table and pull the dough ball toward you. At the same time, move your hands to the left so that the ball rotates counterclockwise about a quarter turn.

Move your hands back behind the ball and repeat pulling and rotating the ball, stretching and tightening the surface of the dough. Keep rounding until you have a smooth, tight surface and a nice round shape, taking care not to pull so hard that the surface starts to tear.

Let the first ball rest with the seam side down and repeat with the second ball. Invert the balls into the baskets so that the seam side is up. Cover the loaves with a tea towel and let rise for 1 to 2 hours.
Proofing

While your loaf is proofing in a warm, draft free place, preheat the oven to 500˚F. Arrange oven racks to the bottom and middle positions. Place your baking/pizza stone on the middle rack and the steam pan (fitted with lava rocks/nuts/bolts) on the bottom rack. If your oven has a third rack, remove it for now.

Check the loaves after 45 minutes to 1 hour, and again every 15 to 20 minutes if they are not ready. They should feel lighter and full of air. The indent from your finger should spring back slowly. Too quickly means it is not ready, not at all means it is over proofed, but keep in mind that the wetness of the dough and tightness of the shaping can also affect this measure.

Baking

Dust the bread peel (or flipped over baking sheet) lightly with flour. Turn out one of the proofed loaves onto the peel with the seam down. Set aside.

Using a funnel, create steam in the oven by pouring 1/4 cup water into the steam pan. Allow steam settle for 30 seconds or so while you score the loaf.

Score the loaf with a razor blade. There are many different ways to score a boule like this—a box cut like the **pain de campagne** (see page xx) or a diamond pattern across the top are two common scores. Experiment or just score evenly across the loaf with cuts about an 1/8 inch deep so the loaf will rise evenly.

Open the oven and use the peel to carefully slide the loaf onto the baking stone, leaving room for the second loaf if the stone is large enough, centering the loaf if it is not. Close the oven door immediately. If your stone can fit two loaves at once, then quickly score the second loaf and slide it onto the baking stone.

Add 1 cup more water to the steam pan. Close the oven door tightly as soon as the water hits the pan. Lower the oven to 450°F. Place
the second loaf in the refrigerator if it does not fit.

After about 35 minutes, check your loaf. You want the crust to be a deep brown color and sound hollow when it is tapped on the bottom. If it still gives a heavy thud, return it to the oven for 5 to 10 minutes more.

Cool the bread on a wire cooling rack until completely cool.