

Maintaining a Sourdough Starter

Poetry & Pies

total time: 5 minutes once a day

Ingredients & Equipment

- 20g starter
- 40g flour (can use half all-purpose, half rye or whole wheat)
- 40g water, filtered and roughly 80F/27C
- [kitchen scale](#)
- [food thermometer](#)
- clean, clear jar*



Instructions

1. For this recipe, you need an already active starter. You can purchase one, obtain some from a friend, or [create your own](#).
 - If you created your own, you'll transition to this maintenance mode once it's bubbly and active, passing the float test and doubling in volume within 12 hours of feeding.
 - If you purchased it, follow directions for activating it before moving onto maintenance mode.
 - If you obtained some from a friend, find out how much they typically feed it and continue with those same amounts.

Day 1

2. Remove all but 20g of the starter*. You can throw the discard away or save it for a discard recipe.
 - If you know the exact weight of your starter, you can just remove the correct amount from the jar. For example, if you created your own using [my recipe](#), you'll have 120g each day in the beginning stages. Once it's very bubbly and active, you can transition to maintenance feeding and remove 100g to leave you with 20g.
 - If you're unsure how much is in there to start, pour 20g into a clean jar.

3. Zero out your scale (or the “tare” button) and add 40g warm filtered water, about 80F/27C. Stir with a [small rubber spatula](#) or spoon until mixed well**.
4. Zero out the scale again and add 40g flour. I suggest anywhere from 50% to 100% all-purpose flour. I do roughly 85% or 35g all-purpose. The remainder can be rye, whole wheat, or spelt. While these whole grains are not necessary, they can help create a deeper or more sour flavor.
5. Mix well, ensuring there is no dry, unmixed flour and no visible lumps of flour.
6. Set the lid loosely on top of the jar.
7. Store in a spot with moderate temperature (roughly 70F/21C). The ideal spot is your counter, so you’ll see the starter and remember to feed it each day, but if for some reason this spot is especially warm or cold, you can place it somewhere else.

*Current weight: 100g**

Day 2 (and daily after that)

8. Repeat this process each day, now removing 80g starter* each day. Alternatively, you can pour 20g starter into a new jar.
9. Mix in 40g warm water and 40g flour.
10. Store with the lid set on but not tightened, in a place you won’t forget about with moderate temperature (roughly 70F/21C).
11. Feed at roughly the same time each day.
12. See notes [here](#) for how to know when it needs more food.

Notes:

1. **When preparing to make bread:** Early on, it’s best to feed a starter every 12 hours for a day or two before you make your levain (a separate, big batch of starter that goes into bread dough). As your starter matures and you gain more experience, you can get away with no extra feeds as long as your starter has been fed no more than 12 hours before you make the levain.

2. **The Float test:** to know if a starter is “active” and ready to use, do the float test. When the starter has doubled in volume and the bubbles begin to break the surface, take a small spoonful and place in a cup of room temperature water. If it floats, it’s active and ready for baking or building a levain (or, if testing a levain, it’s now ready to go into the bread dough).
3. ***Switch to a clean jar at least once a month**, ideally every week or two. First, this ensures a clean environment. Second, removing 80g starter actually leaves you with slightly less than 20g (due to evaporation, some drying to the sides of the jar, or getting stuck to the spoon/spatula when mixing). This will not hurt your starter in the short term but could leave you with nothing over time. So, at least once a month (or more) pour exactly 20g into a clean jar and feed as normal.
4. ****I prefer to mix the starter and water before adding flour.** You are welcome to add and mix in any order you prefer, as long as it’s mixed thoroughly.