

SOURDOUGH BREAD RECIPE

Yield 2 loaves –

Total time: prep time 15-30 minutes, proof time 1: 3 hours, proof time 2: 3h30 at room temperature to overnight in the refrigerator, baking time 30-35 minutes

Ingredients

850 grams bread flour*

11 grams non-iodized salt

340 grams starter

490 grams water

** It is easier if you are just starting to make bread, it's easier to use bread flour. If you don't have any, you can make your own. For every cup of flour, remove 1 ½ teaspoons of flour and replace it by 1 ½ teaspoons of vital wheat gluten (available in most supermarkets in the baking aisle). You can also use different types of flour like a mix of white flour and whole-wheat flour. It depends on your preferences. I like to mix half and half.*

Directions

1. Measure your ingredients on a food scale and add to a large mixing bowl. If you are using an electric stand mixer, set it with the hook attachment.

Manual directions

2. With a plastic scraper or wooden spoon, mix the dough until a ball form.
3. Dust flour over work surface for kneading.
4. Knead the dough, taking care of not adding any additional flour. Your fingers will be sticky, but as you go on, it should become easier to handle. Knead until the dough become souple and smooth, about 15 to 20 minutes, depending on your technique and strength. It took me 20 minutes and I was going slowly.
5. Use the stretch test to check if dough is ready (take a small portion and stretch the dough between fingers). Split the dough in two and stretch out a piece, if the dough holds, is elastic, and doesn't break easily means your dough is ready. If it tears apart easily, you need to continue your kneading.

6. Make a ball with all the dough and let it rest, seam side up in a bowl. Dust top with flour. Cover with either a plastic wrap or a clean kitchen towel. Let rise for 3 hours.
7. After 3 hours, turn the dough over onto the working surface that has been lightly floured. Cut the dough into two even pieces.
8. Form the dough into the bread shape you want. The ball shape works best. To do it, bring over a side of the dough ball to the center of the ball, give it a slight turn and fold again. Repeat until you get a perfect dough boule.
9. Turn the ball of dough over so the seam is now touching the working surface. Place the ball of dough away from you and gently pull it toward you. Turn it 90 degrees and push it to the starting point. Repeat a few times until the bottom looks smooth.
10. If you have a proofing basket, dust it generously with flour, and gently place the ball of dough, seam-side up. Cover with a clean kitchen towel. You can also, cover a bowl with a clean kitchen towel, letting the extra material hanging on the sides, dust generously with flour and place the boule, seam-side up and bring over the kitchen towel excess to cover the boule completely. Repeat with the second dough piece. Let proof for 3 hours and 30 minutes. You can also decide to place it in the refrigerator and let it proof overnight, for about 12 hours.

Using an electric stand mixer

Follow the same steps except that instead of manually kneading your dough, let the mixer do the work. On low speed and the hook attachment, let the mixer knead the dough for about 10 minutes or until the dough becomes smooth and elastic. Do the stretch test with a piece of dough to see if it's ready. Form the dough into a large ball. For the first proof, you can let it rise in your mixer bowl. Cover with plastic wrap or a clean kitchen towel. Continue with the instructions above.

Cooking with a Dutch oven

11. You have several choices when cooking your bread. The Dutch oven method works best for me. Cut out a parchment paper that will fit the bottom of the Dutch oven and set aside.
12. When you are ready to bake your bread, pre-heat the oven to 450°F (230°C) and add the Dutch oven in which you will cook the bread at the same time so it gets heated. Warm the Dutch oven for 15 minutes or so, until it's very hot.
13. In the meantime, turn the dough over onto the cut parchment paper. Cup the sides to redefine the shape if needed. Score the bread with a bread scorer, a sharp knife, or kitchen scissors. Make several indents (I made a giant H or X) as this will make it easier for the bread to expand and rise.
14. Place the bread in the hot Dutch oven by holding the parchment paper and lowering gently in the Dutch oven without touching it. Cover with the lid.

15. Place back in the oven and bake for 20 minutes. Remove the lid and continue baking for 10-15 minutes, or until the bread is golden brown and cooked through.

Cooking the bread with Pyrex casserole

16. You can also use a Pyrex baking pan with a lid. It will not need to be heated first as for a Dutch oven. Butter the bottom of the pan and place the bread, seam down. Cover with lid in place in the preheated oven.
17. Score the bread with a bread scorer, a sharp knife or some kitchen scissors
18. Cover and bake for 20 minutes and remove the lid, continue baking for another 20-25 minutes or until bread is golden brown and cooked through.

Cooking the bread on a baking sheet

19. You can also cook it on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or a silicone mat. You will need to create humidity in your oven with this method but adding boiling water to a medium-sized saucepan that you will place in the back of the oven at the same time as your baking sheet. Bake the bread for 30 to 35 minutes, or until the bread is golden brown and cooked through.

Note: for best results, resist cutting your bread open when it's just out of the oven. Let it cool for 15-20 minutes before slicing.