

BETTER SOURDOUGH

INGREDIENTS

Leaven
 30g Sourdough Starter
 40g Strong White Bread Flour
 20g Rye Flour
 60g Water

Dough
 350g Strong White Bread Flour
 50g Wholemeal Flour
 80g Leaven (Maintain the remaining amount as your starter for next time)
 9g Salt
 280g Water (73% Hydration)

Flour/Rice Flour for dusting

METHOD

Leaven Build

1. In a glass jar mix together your starter, flours and water. Use a silicone spatula to clean down the sides of the jar so you can see the level of the mixture inside and cover with a loose fitting lid.
2. Leave this at room temperature to double in size (4-6 hours).
3. If the leaven hasn't at least doubled in size or preferably tripled, **don't continue with the recipe!** Give the starter another feed that evening and try repeating the leaven build the next day. I have come to realise how important a really active starter is; a sluggish starter = a dense gummy loaf.

Bread

1. In a large bowl use a hard spatula or wooden spoon to mix your flours and the water together. You don't need to be overly vigorous with the mixing, but you do need to be thorough. Work the mixture until all the flour is incorporated and there are no clumps of dry flour remaining. Let this mixture rest for 2 hours (autolyse).
2. Add 80g of leaven to the 'dough' and then using a wet hand to stop it sticking, spread it out on top.
3. Sprinkle the 9g of salt over the leaven and dough, and again using a wet hand, incorporate it into the dough by performing 10 to 20 stretch and folds. Working around the bowl, pull the dough from the edges into the middle. Use the heel of your palm to push the folded dough in the middle to seal it in place. As soon as you start to feel the dough sticking to your hand, that is the time to stop.
4. Cover the bowl with a tea towel and a plate to stop the dough drying out and leave at room temperature for 30 minutes.

5. Complete the mixing by performing a further 10 to 20 folds. Once again, wet your hand to stop the dough from sticking to you. As soon as you start to feel it sticking to your hand, stop working it.
6. I'd recommend transferring the dough to a flat-bottomed heavy dish. This will make performing the coil folds easier and also makes gauging the growth of the dough clearer. Either way, re-cover the dough and leave at room temperature for a further 30 minutes.
7. It's now time for your first set of coil folds. I suggest referencing the video at the bottom of the page to see how to do this. Once you have completed a full set of coils, continue to bulk proof at room temperature for a further 30 minutes.
8. Now it's time for your final set of coil folds. Once you have completed them, cover the bowl and leave the dough to bulk ferment undisturbed for the final 4 to 5 hours.
9. By the end of this bulk fermentation you should notice the dough has grown significantly (almost doubled), has a domed surface with a few bubbles appearing on it and is still holding a little of its shape from the last set of coil folds. If the dough hasn't grown much or has spread out flat onto the bottom of the dish, perform an extra set of folds and then leave it for a further 1 to 2 hours.
10. You now need to shape your loaf. As we are only making one loaf, I don't find it necessary to do a pre-shape and bench rest, so jump straight to the final shaping. As always though, you want to be careful not to degas the dough too much, whilst still building up enough tension to ensure your final loaf has a good shape and springs well in the oven. Dust your work surface with a little flour, and gently ease the dough out of the bowl onto it. Holding the bottom of the dough (the side closest to you) gently pull it towards you and then fold it back over itself by two thirds, leaving one third uncovered at the top. Now hold the dough by its sides and gently stretch it outwards, fold one side up and over onto itself, followed by the other side so they overlap each other in the middle. Next take the bottom of the dough again and gently roll it all the way up to the top like a Swiss roll. You should end up with a cylindrical shape that is smooth and taut across the top. You can crimp the end to neaten them up if you like, but I find they smooth themselves out during the long final proof. Place your loaf seam side up in a banneton dusted with flour and then place the whole thing into a plastic bag. Try to catch some air in the bag so it's not sitting on the dough or it may well stick.
11. Place the covered banneton into your fridge and leave for up to 12 hours. This long cold proof will allow the dough to generate more complex flavours, becoming sourer and tangier the longer you leave it. As long as your fridge is cold enough (below 4c) your loaf shouldn't over proof, so you can experiment with how long you hold the dough in the fridge. I tend to find after 12 hours I start to lose some volume and spring in the final loaf, but it is up to you how far you dare to push it! Note: as the yeast will go dormant in these cold temperatures, you will not see any significant growth to your dough. If the dough isn't looking plump and puffy after shaping it, leave it out at room temperature for 30 mins to an hour before placing it in the fridge.
12. Pre-heat your oven to 250c with a Dutch Oven or stock pot in it. When you are ready to bake, remove the pot from the oven and transfer your proofed loaf into it,

being very careful not to burn yourself! I like to sit the dough on a piece of baking parchment to ensure it doesn't stick. Slash the top of the loaf, put the lid on and return to the oven and bake for 22 minutes. After this time, remove the lid and turn the oven down to 200c, then continue to cook for a further 22 minutes.

13. Once cooked, transfer the loaf to a wire rack to cool before slicing.