



Sourdough & Wild Yeast Introduction

*A baker's companion - starter to crumb, plus
discard treats for the days between bakes.*

PRESENTED BY **STEVEN TROTTER**

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A Few Words on Sourdough

THE OLDEST BREAD THERE IS

People were baking bread long before they were farming. The oldest bread we have found so far is a 14,400-year-old crumb pulled from a fireplace in the Black Desert of northeastern Jordan, baked by hunter-gatherers some 4,000 years before anyone planted a field. That early bread was flat and unleavened, but it tells you how far back this goes. Bread is not a modern convenience. It is one of the first things we learned to make.

Leavened bread, the kind that rises, came later. The best evidence puts it in ancient Egypt four to five thousand years ago, almost certainly by accident: a bowl of flour and water left out a little too long, wild yeast drifting in from the air, and the next morning a batter that had come alive. That is sourdough. No packet, no factory, just flour, water, and whatever yeast was already in the room. For most of human history it was the only way to raise a loaf. Commercial baker's yeast is a recent invention, sold for the first time in the 1860s and 70s. Everything before that, every risen loaf for thousands of years, was sourdough.

It traveled with us. Prospectors in the Klondike and Alaska gold rushes kept starters tucked inside their coats so the cold would not kill them, and the men themselves came to be called "sourdoughs." San Francisco built a whole identity around its tang. Nearly every culture has its own version of a wild-yeast bread, because nearly every culture, given flour and time, arrived at the same quiet miracle.

BREAD IS WOVEN INTO US

It is hard to overstate how central bread has been. The word “companion” comes from the Latin for “with bread,” *com* and *panis*. A companion was, first of all, someone you shared bread with. The English words “lord” and “lady” trace back to bread too: “lord” from the Old English *hlafweard*, the loaf-keeper of a household, and “lady” from *hlaefdige*, the one who kneaded it. We built our words for friendship and family around a loaf. That tells you what it meant to make bread, and to give it away.

I think that is the part worth holding onto. Baking sourdough is slow and a little stubborn, and it asks you to pay attention. But what comes out is meant to be shared. Hand a warm loaf to a neighbor, send a jar of starter home with a friend, set bread on a table where people are sitting down together. A starter can live for decades, passed from one kitchen to the next, so the culture rising your bread this week may well outlive you and keep feeding people you will never meet. There is something steadying in that.

It is a sustainable way to bake, too. A loaf made at home is flour, water, and salt, with none of the preservatives, dough conditioners, or added sugars in much commercial bread. The starter renews itself indefinitely on nothing but flour and water, no yeast packets to buy and throw away. Even the scrapings earn their keep, which is the whole idea behind the discard bakes in this book.

HOW IT WORKS

Your starter is a living culture of wild yeast and friendly bacteria that you keep alive by feeding it flour and water. The

yeast makes the bread rise; the bacteria give it that gentle tang. When a starter is bubbly and doubles a few hours after feeding, it is active and ready to raise a loaf. The portion you pour off before feeding is called discard, and you should not toss it. It carries beautiful flavor into muffins, rolls, and quick treats, which is why this little book mixes proper loaves with discard bakes for the in-between days.

That long, slow fermentation does real work. The wild bacteria pre-digest some of the starches, which tends to give sourdough a lower glycemic index than standard bread. The same fermentation breaks down much of the FODMAPs and some of the gluten that can make conventional wheat bread hard to digest, so many people with non-celiac gluten or wheat sensitivity find sourdough sits easier on the stomach. It still contains gluten, though, so it is not safe for those with celiac disease or a wheat allergy.

A gentle bit of advice before you start: read each recipe all the way through, weigh your ingredients in grams when you can, and let time do the heavy lifting. Bread rewards the unhurried.

HOW THIS BOOK IS LAID OUT

The book is built so the skills stack. It opens with a short chapter on the craft itself, the vocabulary and the handful of moves every recipe leans on, so that terms like autolyse, folding, bulk fermentation, and proofing already mean something the first time you meet them in a recipe. Next comes waking a starter from dried flakes, since that living culture is the engine behind everything else, with an optional detour into a cacao-fed chocolate starter for the chocolate bakes further on. With the vocabulary and a bubbling starter

both in hand, the master loaf is where it all comes together; it is the keystone of the book, walking you through the full arc of a bake from mixing and folding through shaping and the bake itself. Learn that one loaf and you have learned the moves that every other recipe here reuses.

From there the loaves branch out: a forgiving focaccia, a fifty-percent whole wheat, a double chocolate espresso loaf, airy ciabatta rolls, and a batch of proper baguettes. Then come the enriched and laminated bakes, where butter and a little sweetness join the dough, the croissant dinner rolls and cinnamon rolls and a sourdough kouign amann. A short savory turn follows, with mini pizzas, soft pretzel bites, and crisp discard crackers. After that are the discard bakes, the muffins and scones and cookies and quick breads that ask for no long ferment and forgive almost anything, perfect for the in-between days when you have starter to use and not much time, and the book even slips in a sourdough chocolate cake for good measure. It closes with a short troubleshooting chapter for when a bake does not go to plan, because it happens to all of us. You can absolutely skip ahead to whatever you are in the mood to bake, but if you read it in order, each chapter hands you something the next one builds on.

A note on the history above: the 14,400-year-old bread comes from the [Shubayqa 1 excavation in Jordan \(UCL summary\)](#); the early Egyptian leavening and the spread of sourdough are drawn from the [history of bread](#); commercial yeast dates to [Fleischmann's first compressed yeast in the 1860s-70s](#); and the

word origins come from Merriam-Webster on “companion” and the Old English roots of “lord” and “lady.”

The Craft Behind the Loaf

Every recipe in this book leans on the same small handful of moves. Once you understand what each one is actually doing, you stop following steps by rote and start reading your dough, which is where the real fun begins. This chapter is the one to return to when a recipe says “do three sets of folds” or “shape into a boule” and you want to know why. None of it is hard. It is mostly a matter of knowing what you are looking for.

A quick note before the techniques: temperature and time trade off against each other the whole way through. A warm kitchen speeds everything up; a cool one slows it down. The clock times in the recipes are starting points, not promises. Watch the dough, not the timer.

MIXING AND THE AUTOLYSE

A true autolyse is just flour and water, mixed and left to rest before anything else goes in. No salt, no starter. In that rest, the flour fully hydrates and the proteins glutenin and gliadin begin linking into gluten on their own, with no kneading from you. Enzymes get to work too: proteases loosen the dough so it stretches more easily, and amylases turn some starch into sugars the yeast will later eat. You come back to a smoother, more cooperative dough that is easier to fold, easier to shape, and better at holding its rise. Twenty minutes to an hour is plenty; whole-grain doughs benefit from the longer end, because the rest softens the sharp bits of bran that otherwise cut through the gluten.

You will notice the master loaf in this book does something slightly different: the salt and starter go in before the rest.

Bakers call that a fermentolyse, and it is a small, practical shortcut. You lose a little of the pure autolyse's extensibility, but you save a step and the dough still rests and relaxes before the folds begin. Either approach works. I lean on the simpler one for an everyday loaf and save the strict autolyse for when I am chasing a very open crumb.

BUILDING STRENGTH: THE FOLDS

Kneading is one way to develop gluten. For wet sourdoughs, a gentler way works better: a series of folds spread across the first rise. Each fold stretches the gluten strands and stacks them, building strength and structure a little at a time without knocking out the gas the dough is working so hard to make. You will usually do three or four sets, spaced twenty to thirty minutes apart, early in the bulk rise. The dough tells you when it has had enough: it goes from slack and shaggy to smooth, springy, and able to hold a dome. There are a few kinds, and they suit different moments.

Stretch and fold

The workhorse, and the easiest to learn. With a wet hand, reach under one side of the dough, lift it up until it stretches, and fold it over the top. Turn the bowl a quarter and repeat, four times around. It aligns and stacks the gluten quickly, which makes it the right choice early in the rise when the dough still needs real strength. It is the one I reach for first in almost every recipe here.

Slap and fold

Also called the French fold. You lift the dough off the counter, slap it down, and fold it back onto itself, over and over. It is the most aggressive of the bunch and develops gluten fast,

which is handy with slack, sticky doughs that need a strong start. A little goes a long way; once the dough comes together and feels strong, you can switch to gentler folds to finish.

Coil fold

Gentler than a stretch and fold, and lovely later in the rise. You lift the dough from the middle, let the ends release from the bowl, and tuck it under itself so it coils up. Because it does not press down on the dough, it preserves the gas pockets that are already forming, which helps the crumb open up. It shines with higher-hydration doughs that have grown too delicate to stretch and fold without tearing.

Lamination

A one-time, all-at-once move rather than a repeated set. You stretch the whole dough out thin on a damp counter, almost translucent, then fold it back up. It builds a great deal of structure in a single pass and is the ideal moment to add inclusions like seeds, herbs, or cheese, because they spread evenly across the sheet. It is more advanced and not strictly necessary for the recipes here, but it is worth knowing once you start experimenting.

A common rhythm that works well: start with a set or two of stretch and folds (or a short bout of slap and folds) to build strength early, then finish with gentle coil folds to keep that strength without deflating the dough.

BULK FERMENTATION

This is the main rise, the stretch between mixing and shaping while the dough is still one large mass. It is also the single most important stage for both flavor and rise, and the one most worth slowing down to get right. The yeast is producing

carbon dioxide, which inflates the dough, while the bacteria produce the acids that give sourdough its tang. You are done when the dough has grown noticeably, somewhere around 50 percent larger for most of these recipes, and feels alive: domed, jiggly, airy, with a bubble or two showing at the edges. Under-ferment and you get a dense, tight loaf; over-ferment and the structure breaks down into something slack and gummy that bakes flat.

Temperature is the dial here. Warmer dough ferments faster, cooler dough slower, which is why every recipe gives a range rather than a single time. If your kitchen runs cold, find a warmer spot or simply give it longer. The look and feel of the dough always beat the clock.

SHAPING

Shaping is where you give the dough surface tension, the taut outer skin that lets it hold a tall round instead of spreading into a puddle, and that gives you a good oven spring. The whole trick is tightening that outer layer, and the one rule that matters most is to keep the surface you are dragging against lightly floured or bare, never heavily floured, so the dough can grip and tighten rather than slide.

Preshape and bench rest

Preshaping is a loose, gentle round to organize the dough and build a first bit of tension. Turn the dough out, fold the edges to the center or drag it into a rough ball, then walk away. The bench rest that follows, usually ten to thirty minutes, lets the gluten relax so the final shape goes smoothly without fighting you or tearing. A cooler, slower dough wants the full half hour; a warm, lively one needs less.

Boule

The round loaf. After the bench rest, flip the dough so the smooth side is down, fold the edges up into the center to build a parcel, then turn it seam-side down and cup your hands around it, dragging it toward you across the bare counter in quarter turns. The friction pulls the skin tight. Settle it seam-up into a floured banneton to proof.

Batard

The oval. Flip the rested dough smooth-side down and gently coax it into a rough rectangle. Fold the top third down and press to seal, fold the bottom third up and over with a little stretch, then roll it toward you into a taut log and seal the seam. It is the shape I use when I want longer slices, and it fits an oval banneton or a loaf-shaped proofer.

THE FINAL PROOF, AND WHETHER TO CHILL IT

After shaping comes the final proof, when the shaped loaf relaxes and rises again before it bakes. You have a choice here that genuinely changes the bread.

The warmer, faster route is to proof on the counter for a couple of hours and bake the same day. To judge it, use the poke test: flour a fingertip and press gently into the dough. If the dent springs back slowly and only part way, it is ready. If it springs back fast, give it more time; if it does not spring back at all and feels slack, it has gone too far. One caveat worth remembering: the poke test only reads true on room-temperature dough.

The other route, and the one I usually take, is the cold proof, also called retarding. You put the shaped loaf in the fridge for anywhere from ten to sixteen hours, often overnight. Three

things happen. The long, cold ferment deepens flavor and adds a little more sourness. The firm, chilled dough is far easier to score cleanly and to handle. And, not least, it splits the work across two days so you are not tied to the kitchen for one long stretch. The tradeoffs are honest ones: it takes fridge space and planning, and a very long cold proof trades some rise for that extra tang. A cold proof will not rescue a dough that was under-fermented in bulk, so do not lean on it to fix an earlier shortcut. For most of these recipes the overnight chill is the easier, tastier path, and it is what I would start with.

THE TOOLS, STEP BY STEP

You do not need a cabinet of equipment. Most of this is a kitchen scale and a few things you may already own.

For mixing and measuring, a digital kitchen scale is the one tool I would not bake without; weighing in grams is far more reliable than cups, and it is why these recipes lead with gram weights. A large bowl and a flexible bowl scraper round it out.

For the starter, a clear glass jar lets you watch it rise and bubble, and a rubber band or marker to note its starting level tells you at a glance when it has doubled. Filtered water matters here, since chlorine sets the culture back.

For the folds and bulk rise, wet hands and the bowl scraper are really all you need. A lidded container or a bowl with a cover keeps the dough from drying out, and a sense of the room's temperature helps you read the timing.

For shaping and proofing, a bench knife (a flat metal scraper) makes dividing and dragging the dough easy and keeps your hands cleaner. A banneton, the cloth-lined proofing basket,

supports the loaf and leaves its handsome spiral; a bowl lined with a floured tea towel stands in perfectly well. White rice flour dusted into the basket is the best insurance against sticking, since it does not absorb moisture the way wheat flour does.

For baking, a Dutch oven is the home baker's secret. It traps the loaf's own steam for the first part of the bake, which is what gives a crackly, well-risen crust without a special oven. A lame (a handled razor) scores the top so the loaf can expand where you choose rather than bursting at a weak seam; a clean razor or a sharp knife will do in a pinch. Parchment paper makes the transfer into a screaming-hot pot painless. An instant-read thermometer takes the guesswork out of doneness: most of these loaves are baked through at an internal 200 to 210 degrees. And the hardest tool to use is a wire rack and your own patience, because cutting a loaf before it has cooled lets the steam out and leaves the crumb gummy.

Sources for this chapter: autolyse and fermentolyse from [*The Perfect Loaf*](#), [*King Arthur Baking*](#), and [*Amy Bakes Bread*](#); the folds from [*The Perfect Loaf*](#) and [*The Pantry Mama*](#); bulk fermentation and proofing from [*The Perfect Loaf's bulk fermentation and proofing guides*](#); the poke test from [*The Perfect Loaf*](#); cold retarding from [*The Sourdough Journey*](#); and shaping from [*The Perfect Loaf*](#) and [*Matthew James Duffy*](#).

Rehydrating Your Starter

From dried flakes to a bubbling, bakeable starter in 5 days.



A pouch of dehydrated starter, the beginning of the whole process.

Most people meet sourdough through a pouch of dried starter, passed along by a friend or sent in the mail, and waking it back up is the first thing you will do. Over about five days of small daily feedings it comes back from dry flakes to a bubbling, active culture ready to raise a loaf. It is mostly a matter of showing up once a day.

A few things to know before you start. Use filtered water only, since the chlorine in tap water kills the bacteria that make sourdough alive; distilled, well, or spring water all work. Watch the smell: if it turns sharply acidic, like old beer, she is too hungry and dying back, so feed her more flour to a thick pancake batter or thicker, and a little dark rye gives a boost of nutrients. And fridge naps are fine, but only when she is freshly fed and not acidic. If she smells like good bread, she is healthy enough for cold sleep.

DAY 1 • INITIAL HYDRATION

1. Empty the dehydrated starter into a clean jar.
2. Add 3 Tbsp (45 g) room-temperature water and stir well.
3. Rest 1 hour, then add 2 Tbsp (15 g) flour.
4. Stir out all the lumps. Cover loosely and rest at 70-75°F for 24 hrs.

DAY 2 • FIRST FEEDING

1. Check for bubbles or slight expansion; activity may be minimal.
2. Add 2 Tbsp (15 g) flour and 1-1½ Tbsp (15-22 g) water, to a thick pancake-batter consistency.
3. Stir, cover loosely, and rest at room temperature 24 hrs.

DAY 3 • FEEDING AND GROWTH

1. Repeat the Day 2 feeding, 2 Tbsp flour and 1-1½ Tbsp water.
2. You should see bubbles forming; she is waking up.

3. Cover loosely and rest another 24 hrs.

DAY 4 · BIGGER FEEDING

1. More signs of life should be showing.
2. Feed $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (60 g) flour and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 g) water. If it is too thick, drizzle in water 1 tsp at a time to a pancake-batter consistency.
3. Stir, cover loosely, and rest 24 hrs.

DAY 5 · READY TO BAKE

1. If she doubles within 4-6 hrs of feeding, she is ready for baking.

To keep her going, feed with whatever ratio you like; a 1:4:4 works well for me, say 30 g starter to 120 g flour to 120 g water. Feed once a day, loosely covered at room temperature, and when she doubles within 4 to 6 hours she is strong enough to bake with.

A Chocolate Starter, If You Want One

An optional cacao-fed starter that deepens the chocolate bakes later in the book.

This one is a detour, and a fun one to take once your regular starter is well established. By feeding a portion of your culture with raw cacao instead of plain flour, you build a starter whose own bacteria carry a darker, more complex flavor into anything chocolate. It is based on the method in Vanessa Kimbell's Sourdough School, and it shines in the chocolate loaves, the chocolate muffins, and the chocolate cake further along.

A word before you start: this asks for a mature starter, at least two months old, one that reliably peaks within four to six hours of a feeding. A young starter has enough to do already. Keep a separate backup of your regular starter going the whole time, in case you want to come back to plain flour.

INGREDIENTS (INITIAL BATCH)

- 50 g sourdough starter (discard or fed, after it has peaked)
- 100 g water
- 80 g white flour (all-purpose or bread flour)
- 20 g raw cacao powder, not roasted cocoa powder
- 10 g cane sugar (granulated, caster, or raw organic)

METHOD

1. Set aside only a portion of your regular starter for this, and keep the rest as a backup.

2. In a clean jar, stir the starter into the water until it fully dissolves.
3. Add the cacao, flour, and sugar and mix as you would a normal feeding, until smooth. If the cacao is lumpy, sift it in first.
4. Cover with a lid and leave at room temperature. Mark the starting level with a rubber band so you can watch it climb.
5. Let it rise and peak before you use or feed it again, usually four to six hours depending on how warm your kitchen is.

To keep it going, feed at a 1:2:2 ratio, one part starter to two parts water to two parts of a flour-and-cacao mix that is 80 percent white bread flour and 20 percent raw cacao. Feed it once a day at room temperature, or store it in the fridge and feed once a week. It will bake straight from the fridge once it has been fed and peaked, and it keeps for up to five days after feeding.

A few things worth knowing. It has to be raw cacao, not roasted cocoa, because roasting kills off the very bacteria that give this starter its character. The cacao drinks more water than flour, so expect this starter to look noticeably thicker than your usual one. The sugar is there to help the right yeast thrive, so use real cane sugar rather than a sugar substitute. And you do not need rye or whole wheat here, white flour does the job.

Anywhere a recipe calls for starter or discard, this one can stand in, and it is happiest in bakes that already lean on chocolate, coffee, or whole grains. If you make the chocolate espresso loaf, the chocolate muffins, or the chocolate cake, this is a lovely thing to have on hand.

Adapted from the chocolate starter method at [Milk and Pop](#), after Vanessa Kimbell's Sourdough School.

Steven's Basic Sourdough Loaf

The master loaf - one boule, a two-day, mostly hands-off bake.



A finished boule, deeply scored and baked dark.

This is the loaf the rest of the book leans on, and the one to learn first. It is a plain, honest boule, crackly outside and open and tangy within, and most of what it asks for is patience rather than effort, since the dough does its work while you go do something else. Bake it a few times until the rhythm feels like second nature, because every other bread in here is built from these same moves.

INGREDIENTS

- 120 g active sourdough starter
- 310 g warm filtered water (105-110°F)

- 500 g bread flour
- 12 g fine pink salt (2 tsp)

METHOD

1. Add the warm water to your bowl and stir in the salt until it dissolves.
2. Add the active starter and mix it in thoroughly.
3. Let it rest, covered with a lid or a warm towel, for 1 hour. This is the autolyse.
4. Do a round of aggressive slap and folds, then rest 30 minutes under a warm rag, and repeat until you have done four sets in all.
5. Bulk ferment until grown and lively, about 4 hours at 74-80°F, or 6 hours at 68-73°F.
6. Shape on a lightly floured surface and settle it seam-up into a floured banneton.
7. Cover and cold proof in the fridge 10-16 hours.
8. Heat the oven to 475°F for 30 minutes with the Dutch oven inside, lid on.
9. Take the dough straight from the fridge and keep it cold, since it scores and handles far better that way.
10. Dust with white rice flour and score with a lame however you like.
11. Lift it in on the parchment.
12. Bake 25 minutes covered, then 15 minutes uncovered, to an internal 200-210°F.
13. Cool at least 2 hours before cutting, so you do not let the steam out and gum up the crumb.

Treat this as a base recipe, a blank canvas for dozens of loaves. Fold inclusions in during the last set of folds, like olives and rosemary, sharp cheddar and jalapeño, cinnamon and raisin, or roasted garlic, or work seasonings right into the dough. Keep add-ins to about 15 to 20 percent of the flour weight so the crumb still rises well.

Sourdough Focaccia

The easiest way into sourdough - no shaping, one pan, a dimpled golden slab.

If the master loaf feels like a lot the first time, start here. Focaccia is the most forgiving bread in this book. There is no shaping to learn and no banneton to buy, just a wet dough, a few folds, and a generous pour of olive oil in the pan. It rewards a heavy hand with the oil and a light one with everything else. Make it once and you will understand why it is the bread I bring to other people's houses.

INGREDIENTS

- 100 g active sourdough starter
- 400 g warm filtered water
- 500 g bread flour
- 12 g fine salt
- 40 g olive oil, plus more for the pan and the top
- Flaky salt, for finishing
- A few sprigs of rosemary, or whatever you like on top

METHOD

1. Mix the starter into the warm water, then add the flour and salt and stir to a shaggy dough with no dry patches. Cover and rest 30 minutes.
2. Wet one hand and do a set of stretch and folds: lift one side of the dough, stretch it up, and fold it over the top, turning the bowl a quarter each time, four folds around. Cover and rest 30 minutes, then repeat three more times, so four sets in all.

3. Cover and let it bulk ferment at room temperature until it has grown about 50 percent and looks alive and bubbly, roughly 4 to 6 hours in a warm kitchen. For more flavor and an easier schedule, let it start at room temperature for an hour, then move it to the fridge overnight.
4. Pour a good two tablespoons of olive oil into a 9 by 13 inch pan and spread it across the bottom and up the sides. Tip the dough in, turn it once to coat it in the oil, and gently stretch it toward the corners. If it pulls back, leave it 15 minutes and try again.
5. Let it proof in the pan, uncovered, until puffy and jiggly, 1 to 2 hours at room temperature, or longer straight from a cold fridge.
6. Heat the oven to 450 degrees. Oil your fingertips and press straight down all over the dough to dimple it, going right to the bottom of the pan. Drizzle with more olive oil, scatter on flaky salt and rosemary.
7. Bake 20 to 25 minutes, until deep golden across the top and crisp at the edges. Lift it out of the pan onto a rack so the bottom stays crisp.

The oil is doing real work here, frying the bottom crisp and the top golden, so do not be shy with it. The toppings are wide open: halved cherry tomatoes pressed into the dimples, thin slices of onion, olives, or just salt and good oil.

50% Whole Wheat Sourdough

Half whole wheat, half white, laminated together for a deep flavor and an open crumb - a two-day bake.



A pair of whole wheat boules, scored and ready for the oven.

This is the loaf I make when I want more flavor than the master loaf gives, without going all the way to a dense whole-grain brick. The trick here is to build two separate doughs, one all whole wheat and one all bread flour, and then laminate them together partway through the rise. Keeping them apart at the start lets each hydrate at its own pace, since whole wheat drinks far more water than white flour, and folding them together later gives you a beautifully open crumb with the wheat flavor running all the way through. It is a little more fiddly than a single dough, but none of the moves are hard.

INGREDIENTS

Dough 1 - whole wheat

- 150 g whole wheat flour (or half hard whole wheat and half Red Fife, if you have it)
- 150 g water
- 30 g active starter
- 3.5 g salt
- A spoonful of black sesame seeds (optional, to soak up a little excess moisture)

Dough 2 - bread flour

- 150 g bread flour
- 129 g water
- 30 g active starter
- 3.5 g salt

Between them that comes to about 300 g flour at an even split, around 280 g water, 60 g starter, and 7 g salt.

METHOD

1. Mix the Dough 1 ingredients in one bowl until there are no dry patches. Whole wheat can over-hydrate easily, so if it feels slack and soupy, hold back 10 to 20 g of the water next time.
2. Mix the Dough 2 ingredients in a second bowl. This one will feel wetter and looser, which is what you want.
3. Let both rest, then begin the folds. Over the course of the bulk rise, give the doughs five coil folds in total: lift each

from the middle, let the ends release, and tuck it under itself so it coils up.

4. During one of those fold sessions, laminate the two doughs together. Stretch each one out thin on a damp counter, lay one over the other, and fold them up as one. From here on you have a single dough.
5. Carry on with the bulk ferment until the dough shows real strength and has grown noticeably, domed and airy.
6. Shape into a boule or batard as you would the master loaf, settle it seam-up into a floured banneton, and cold proof in the fridge 10 to 16 hours.
7. Bake exactly as you would the master loaf: a 475 degree Dutch oven, 25 minutes covered, then 15 minutes uncovered, to an internal 205 to 210 degrees. Cool at least two hours before cutting.

Whole wheat flours vary a lot in how thirsty they are, so trust the feel of the dough over the gram weights here. The first time I made this the whole wheat dough was far too wet and I nearly gave up on it, and it still came out the most flavorful loaf I had ever baked.

Method after [@ciaobellabreads](<https://www.instagram.com/ciaobellabreads/>).

Double Chocolate Espresso Sourdough Loaf

A dark, barely sweet loaf with cocoa, coffee, and pockets of melted chocolate.

This is a proper sourdough loaf that happens to taste like the good part of a mocha. The cocoa and espresso go right into the dough, the brown sugar takes the edge off without making it a dessert, and the chocolate chunks fold in near the end so they stay in molten pockets rather than dissolving. It is wonderful toasted with butter, and better than it has any right to be alongside a bowl of chili. If you keep a chocolate starter, this is the loaf to use it in.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 tablespoons fresh-brewed espresso
- 50 g active, bubbly starter
- 325 g warm water
- 50 g brown sugar
- 470 g bread flour
- 11 g salt
- 30 g cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 180 g chocolate chunks

METHOD

1. Mix the espresso, starter, warm water, and brown sugar together, then add the bread flour, salt, cocoa, and

cinnamon and stir until a dough forms with no dry patches.

2. Work the dough as you would the master loaf: a rest, then three or four sets of stretch and folds spaced about half an hour apart, until it is smooth and springy.
3. Fold in the chocolate chunks during the last set of folds, or work them in at shaping if that is easier, spreading them through the dough.
4. Let it bulk ferment until grown by about half and lively, then shape and settle it into a floured banneton. Proof on the counter for a couple of hours, or cold proof overnight in the fridge.
5. Heat the oven and a Dutch oven to 450 degrees.
6. Score the loaf, lift it in on parchment, and bake 40 minutes with the lid on.
7. Take the lid off and bake another 15 minutes, until the crust is set and firm. Cocoa makes it hard to judge color, so go by feel and time rather than waiting for it to brown.
8. Let it cool completely before slicing, longer than you think, since the chocolate needs to set or it will smear.

Cocoa lowers the dough's rise a little, so do not worry if this loaf is a touch denser than your plain master loaf. The cinnamon is subtle and can come out if you would rather let the coffee and chocolate stand alone.

Ciabatta Sourdough Rolls

Airy, open-crumbed rolls made start to finish in a day - the sandwich roll I make most.

Ciabatta looks intimidating and is anything but. The dough is wet and you barely shape it, which is the whole point, since the loose handling is what leaves those big irregular holes inside. These come together in a single day, no overnight wait, and they make the best sandwich rolls in the book, crisp outside and soft and full of holes within. The one rule is a gentle hand at the end, so keep the gas in the dough rather than pressing it out.

INGREDIENTS

- 385 g warm water
- 120 g active sourdough starter, just peaked and bubbly
- 500 g bread flour
- 10 g fine sea salt
- Rice flour, for dusting

METHOD

1. Mix the water and starter, then add the bread flour and salt and stir to a wet, shaggy dough. It will feel slacker and stickier than the master loaf, which is correct.
2. Over the next couple of hours, give it three or four sets of stretch and folds with a wet hand, spaced about half an hour apart, until the dough firms up and holds together.
3. Let it bulk ferment until puffy and grown by about half, lively with a bubble or two at the edges.

4. Tip the dough out onto a surface well dusted with rice flour and, without deflating it, cut it into rolls and lift them onto baking sheets dusted with more rice flour. Handle them like something fragile.
5. Let the rolls rest 45 to 75 minutes, until puffy and relaxed.
6. Heat the oven to 475 degrees with a steam pan on the bottom. When you load the rolls, pour hot water into the steam pan and bake 10 minutes with the steam.
7. Take the steam pan out, drop the oven to 450 degrees, and bake another 10 to 12 minutes, until golden.
8. Cool at least 20 to 30 minutes before slicing, so the crumb sets.

Rice flour is the secret to handling such a wet dough, since it does not soak in the way wheat flour does and keeps everything from sticking. The wetter you can leave the dough while still moving it, the more open the crumb.

Method adapted from a recipe shared on [TikTok](#).

Sourdough Baguettes

Crisp, light baguettes with a crackly crust - works with fed starter or discard.



A pair of sourdough baguettes, crackled and golden.

A good baguette is mostly about a slack dough and a hot, steamy oven. This recipe leans on a little packaged yeast alongside your starter, which keeps the timing friendly and the crumb light while the sourdough does the flavor. It works with either fed starter or discard, and a touch of vital wheat gluten gives the long thin loaves the strength to hold their shape. Makes six thin baguettes, or three thicker Italian-style loaves.

INGREDIENTS

- 283 g lukewarm water

- 481 g sourdough starter, fed or discard
- 540 to 600 g all-purpose flour, divided
- 15 g table salt
- 8 g granulated sugar
- 3 to 6 g instant yeast, depending on how lively your starter is
- 13 g vital wheat gluten

METHOD

1. In a large bowl, mix the water, starter, and 360 g of the flour until smooth.
2. Stir in the salt, sugar, yeast, and vital wheat gluten, then add the remaining 180 to 240 g of flour. Stir until the dough pulls away from the sides, adding only as much flour as you need. A slack, sticky dough makes a lighter loaf, so resist the urge to tighten it up.
3. Knead about 7 minutes in a stand mixer, or 8 to 10 by hand on a lightly greased surface.
4. Place the dough in an oiled bowl, cover, and let it rise until doubled, about 1 1/2 hours.
5. Gently deflate the dough and divide it into 6 pieces for thin baguettes, or 3 for thicker loaves.
6. Shape each piece into a 16-inch log and set them at least 4 inches apart on parchment-lined baking sheets, or in greased baguette pans.
7. Cover loosely and let rise 1 1/2 to 2 hours, until puffy. Toward the end, heat the oven to 450 degrees.

8. For the classic look, slash three diagonal cuts about a quarter inch deep in each loaf. For taller, rounder baguettes, leave them unslashed.
9. Bake about 25 minutes, until deeply golden. For extra crackle, add steam, see the note below.
10. Turn the oven off and crack the door open a few inches. If you used baguette pans, unmold the loaves and set them back on the rack. Let them cool in the cooling oven, which keeps the crust crisp.
11. Cool completely on a rack before slicing.

A few notes worth keeping in mind. Use the smaller amount of yeast if your starter is vigorous and the larger amount if it is slow or you are baking with discard, and for the deepest sourdough flavor you can cut the yeast out entirely, though the rises will run much longer. For extra-crusty loaves, heat an empty cast iron pan on the rack below, and once the baguettes are in, pour about a cup of boiling water into it and close the door fast to trap the steam. Store baguettes in a paper bag for up to a day, since paper keeps the crust better than plastic, and freeze them for longer.

Adapted from PJ Hamel's sourdough baguettes at [King Arthur Baking](#).

Croissant Sourdough Dinner Rolls

Buttery and laminated - makes 12 rolls, baked in a muffin tin.



Croissant sourdough dinner rolls, baked golden in the muffin tin.

These are the rolls I make for holidays, and the ones people always ask about. They borrow the lamination idea from croissants, butter worked into the dough in layers, and bake in a muffin tin so each roll pulls apart in soft, buttery sheets. The dough is enriched and a little particular about temperature, so the whole game here is keeping everything cool.

INGREDIENTS

- 330 g warm water (100-105°F)

- 120 g active sourdough starter
- 500 g organic bread flour
- 20 g salt
- 1 stick salted butter

METHOD

1. Keep everything cool from the start. Do not let the dough warm up, so no hot hands and no cozy spot to rest, and keep the butter from melting.
2. Mix the water and starter thoroughly, then add the flour and salt and mix to a shaggy dough. Rest 1 hour.
3. Shred half the butter and gently work it into the first stretch and fold. Rest 1 hour.
4. Work the rest of the butter into a second fold the same way. Rest 1 hour.
5. Give it 2 to 3 more folds every 30 minutes, as many as it needs to build strength.
6. Rest, covered, on the counter 4 to 6 hours.
7. Divide into 80 to 85 g portions and shape into 12 rolls.
8. Set them in a greased or buttered muffin pan.
9. Cover and cold proof in the fridge 8 to 10 hours.
10. Cross-score the tops and mist with water.
11. Nest a second muffin tin on top to form a little cavity over each roll.
12. Bake 20 minutes at 450°F, then 15 minutes at 400°F uncovered.

The second tin on top is what gives these their domed, pull-apart shape, so do not skip it. They are best warm from the oven, though a short reheat brings them most of the way back.

Sourdough Cinnamon Rolls

Soft and sweet - yields 9 large rolls, tangzhong method.



Sourdough cinnamon rolls under a blanket of cream cheese icing.

These take an overnight rise and a little tangzhong trick, a quick cooked flour paste that keeps the crumb soft for days, and they are worth the wait. You build the dough one evening and fill and shape it the next morning, ending up with nine big, pillowy rolls under a slab of cream cheese icing. The roux is the secret, so do not skip it.

DOUGH

- Tangzhong roux: 3 Tbsp bread flour + ½ cup filtered water
- ¾ cup room-temp water
- 475 g bread flour
- 1½ tsp salt

- 1 Tbsp white sugar
- ¼ cup grapeseed oil
- 2 Tbsp starter

CINNAMON FILLING

- 4 Tbsp salted butter, softened 15 sec in microwave
- ⅓ cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp cinnamon

CREAM CHEESE ICING

- 4 Tbsp salted butter
- 4 oz cream cheese
- 1 cup powdered sugar, to taste
- 2 tsp vanilla paste or extract

MAKE THE ROUX

1. Mix the roux ingredients in a saucepan.
2. Cook to a thick paste, only a few minutes.
3. Off the heat, let it cool, then add it to the rest of the dough ingredients.

METHOD

1. To the cooled roux add the room-temp water, starter, sugar, and grapeseed oil and stir to combine. Add the bread flour and salt and mix to a shaggy dough. Cover and rest 30 to 60 minutes.
2. Strengthen the dough with 3 to 4 sets of stretch and folds about 30 minutes apart, until it is smooth and elastic.

3. Bulk ferment, covered, at room temperature until puffy and roughly 50 to 75 percent larger, about 8 to 12 hours. Overnight works well.
4. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and roll it into a rectangle about 12 by 18 inches.
5. Spread the softened butter over the dough, leaving a small border. Stir the brown sugar and cinnamon together and sprinkle it evenly, pressing gently so it sticks.
6. From a long edge, roll the dough up snugly into a log and pinch the seam closed. Cut into 9 even rolls; a length of floss or a serrated knife works best.
7. Arrange the rolls in a greased pan, cover, and proof until puffy and touching, 2 to 4 hours at room temperature, or overnight in the fridge, then bring them back to room temperature before baking.

Brush the rolls with 2 to 3 Tbsp melted butter right before baking, then bake at 325°F for 35 to 40 minutes, until the tops are lightly browned. Beat the icing butter, cream cheese, powdered sugar, and vanilla together until smooth and spread it over the rolls while they are still warm.

Sourdough Kouign Amann

The Breton butter cake - laminated, caramelized, and worth the afternoon.

This is the showpiece, and the most advanced bake in the book, so save it for a cool day when you have the kitchen to yourself. Kouign amann is laminated dough, the same butter-and-folding idea as the croissant rolls, but rolled in sugar at every turn so that as it bakes the sugar melts into the butter and caramelizes the outside to a crackling shell. The sourdough version is a little chewier and more complex than the yeasted one. Keep everything cold and do not rush the folds, and you will be amazed at what comes out of the tin.

INGREDIENTS

Dough

- 100 g active sourdough starter at 100 percent hydration
- 250 g bread flour
- 125 g water
- 25 g granulated sugar
- 5 g fine sea salt
- 25 g unsalted butter, softened

Butter block

- 150 g unsalted butter, cold
- 150 g granulated sugar, for dusting and folding

For the pans

- More granulated sugar, for coating the tins

METHOD

1. Make the dough. Mix the starter, water, sugar, salt, and softened butter until mostly combined, then add the flour and mix to a rough dough. Rest 20 minutes, then knead until smooth, about 5 to 8 minutes. Cover and let it bulk ferment at room temperature until slightly puffy, 3 to 4 hours, then refrigerate overnight, at least 8 hours, to relax the gluten and build flavor.
2. Prepare the butter block. Set the cold butter between two sheets of parchment and roll or pound it into a thin rectangle about 5 by 7 inches. Chill it until firm but still pliable.
3. Lamine. Roll the chilled dough into a rectangle about twice the size of the butter block. Lay the butter in the center and fold the dough over it like an envelope. Roll the parcel into a long rectangle, sprinkle a light layer of sugar over the surface, and fold it into thirds like a letter. Wrap and chill 30 minutes. Do this twice more, adding sugar each time, then chill a final hour after the last fold.
4. Shape. Coat muffin tins or a small cake pan with a thick layer of sugar. Roll the laminated dough into a square about 12 by 12 inches and cut it into 12 squares. Fold the corners of each square into the center and set them seam-side down in the sugared tin.
5. Proof at warm room temperature until slightly puffy, 1 to 2 hours.
6. Heat the oven to 400 degrees and bake 25 to 30 minutes, until deeply caramelized and crisp at the edges. Cool 5 minutes, then lift them out while still warm, before the caramel hardens and glues them in.

Keep the dough cold the whole way through lamination, or the butter breaks through the layers and you lose them. Set a lined tray under the tins to catch the sugar that bubbles over, since it will, and it burns onto a bare oven floor.

Sourdough Mini Pizzas

A dozen personal pizzas from one batch of dough - the easiest crowd dinner I make.

This is the recipe my house turns to when people are over and everyone wants something different. One batch of dough makes about a dozen small rounds, and you set out bowls of sauce and toppings and let everyone build their own. The sourdough crust bakes up with a little chew and a lot of flavor, and any rounds you do not use freeze well once shaped. Makes about 12 mini pizzas.

INGREDIENTS

Dough

- 440 g all-purpose flour
- 100 g active sourdough starter
- 250 g water
- 10 g sugar
- 10 g salt
- 20 ml olive oil

Sauce and toppings

- Tomato sauce, loosened with a little olive oil and seasoned with oregano, salt, and pepper
- Whatever you like on top: ham, mushrooms, onion, bell peppers, mozzarella, mini pepperoni

METHOD

1. Mix all the dough ingredients together until there are no dry patches.

2. Let the dough rest, then give it a few stretch and folds to build strength.
3. Cover and let it rise until doubled.
4. Divide the dough into about 12 pieces and shape each into a small round, stretching it out on a lightly oiled or floured surface.
5. Spread on a little sauce, leaving a border, and add your toppings.
6. Bake at 200 degrees Celsius, about 392 degrees Fahrenheit, until the crust is golden and the cheese is bubbling.

If you are feeding a group, stretch and top the rounds ahead of time and bake them in batches as people are ready. Unbaked, shaped rounds also freeze well with parchment between them, so a future weeknight pizza is only a short bake away.

Sourdough Discard Pretzel Bites

Soft, chewy, deeply browned pretzel bites - a great way to use a jar of discard.



Sourdough discard pretzel bites, glossy and salted.

These are a snack-night favorite and a fine use for discard that has been piling up in the fridge. A short rise with a little yeast keeps them quick, the discard brings the flavor, and a quick dip in baking soda water before baking gives them that dark, glossy pretzel skin and the chewy bite. Serve them warm with good mustard. There is a cinnamon-sugar version at the end for when you want them sweet.

INGREDIENTS

Dough

- 250 g warm water
- 12 g brown sugar, light or dark
- 4 g active dry yeast
- 200 g sourdough discard, unfed and at room temperature
- 480 g all-purpose flour
- 10 g kosher salt
- 57 g unsalted butter, melted

For boiling

- 2.4 L water
- 150 g baking soda

For topping

- 1 egg yolk beaten with 15 g water, for the egg wash
- Flaky sea salt
- Everything bagel seasoning

METHOD

1. Combine the warm water and brown sugar in a mixing bowl and sprinkle the yeast on top. Let it sit 5 minutes until it foams. If nothing happens, the yeast is dead and worth replacing.
2. Add the discard, flour, and salt and mix to combine, then pour in the melted butter with the mixer on low until it comes together. Knead on medium, or by hand for 4 to 5 minutes, until smooth and no longer sticky, adjusting with a spoonful of flour or water at a time if you need to.

3. Shape the dough into a ball, set it in a lightly oiled bowl, cover, and let it rise about an hour, until doubled.
4. Line two baking sheets with parchment. Turn the dough out onto a dry surface, no flour this time since you want a little friction, and divide it into 8 pieces. Roll each into a rope about 12 to 14 inches long, then cut into pieces about 1 1/2 inches each, roughly 10 per rope. Roll each piece into a ball.
5. Heat the oven to 450 degrees. Bring the water to a boil in a large pot, adding the baking soda before it boils so it does not foam over.
6. Boil the bites in batches for 30 seconds. They should float, and if they do not, give those a few more minutes of rest and try again. Lift them out with a slotted spoon, shake off the water, and set them on the trays. They get tacky as they dry, so move fairly quickly.
7. Brush with the egg wash and sprinkle with flaky salt or everything seasoning.
8. Bake 13 to 15 minutes, turning the sheets halfway, until deep golden brown all over, or about 200 to 205 degrees in the center. Cool briefly and serve warm with mustard or your favorite dip.

For a cinnamon-sugar version, skip the egg wash and toppings, bake as written, then cool completely, brush with 42 g melted butter, and toss in a mix of 100 g granulated sugar and 10 g cinnamon.

Sourdough Discard Crackers

Thin, snappy crackers from a half cup of discard - ready in well under an hour.

If you only ever make one discard recipe, it might be this one. Crackers turn a jar of discard into something genuinely good with almost no effort and no waiting around, since there is no leavening to wait on. You stir together a quick dough, roll it as thin as you dare, and bake it crisp. They are excellent with cheese, and they keep for a week in a tin, which they rarely need to.

INGREDIENTS

- 120 g sourdough discard
- 120 g all-purpose flour
- 30 g olive oil, plus a little for brushing
- 4 g salt, plus flaky salt for the top
- Dried herbs, cracked pepper, or seeds, as you like

METHOD

1. Stir the discard, flour, olive oil, and salt together with any herbs or seeds until it comes together into a stiff dough. If it is too dry to hold, add water a teaspoon at a time; if it is sticky, add a little flour.
2. Wrap it and let it rest 30 minutes at room temperature, or chill it for up to a day.
3. Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Roll the dough out directly on a sheet of parchment, as thin as you can manage, ideally about as thick as a coin. The thinner you go, the crisper they bake.

4. Brush the top lightly with olive oil and scatter on flaky salt, pressing it in gently. Score the sheet into squares or rectangles with a knife or pizza cutter, and prick each one with a fork so it does not puff.
5. Slide the parchment onto a baking sheet and bake 20 to 25 minutes, until golden and crisp. The edges brown first, so if the center is still pale, pull the done edges off and give the middle a few more minutes.
6. Cool completely, then snap along the scored lines. Store in an airtight tin for up to a week.

Watch them closely toward the end, since thin crackers go from golden to burnt quickly. Anything you would put on a cracker can go in the dough: everything-bagel seasoning, rosemary and flaky salt, grated parmesan, or a spoonful of seeds.

Blueberry Crumb Muffins

A discard bake with a buttery crumb - makes 12 muffins.



Sourdough discard blueberry crumb muffins, fresh from the tin.

These are a discard muffin with a proper bakery crumb on top, bright with lemon and full of blueberries. They come together quickly, and the buttery streusel is the part everyone fights over. A little lemon zest in the batter keeps them from tasting flat.

MUFFINS

- 240 g (2 cups) all-purpose flour
- 150 g (¾ cup) granulated sugar
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt

- 1 Tbsp cornstarch
- 113 g (1 stick) butter, melted
- 30 g (2 Tbsp) milk
- 2 large eggs
- 120 g (½ cup) sourdough discard
- 45 g (3 Tbsp) Greek yogurt
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract
- 2 tsp lemon juice + zest of 1 lemon
- 150 g (1 cup) blueberries

CRUMB TOPPING

- 42 g (3 Tbsp) butter, melted
- 100 g (½ cup) granulated sugar
- 65 g (½ cup) all-purpose flour

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 350°F and line or grease a 12-cup muffin tin.
2. For the crumb, mix the melted butter, sugar, and flour to a crumbly mixture and set it aside.
3. Whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cornstarch, and lemon zest, then toss in the blueberries to coat them.
4. In another bowl, whisk the melted butter, milk, eggs, discard, yogurt, vanilla, and lemon juice until smooth.
5. Fold the wet into the dry gently, just until combined. Do not overmix.
6. Divide among the cups and sprinkle crumb over each.

7. Bake 28 to 32 minutes, until golden and a toothpick comes out clean.
8. Cool in the pan 10 minutes, then finish on a wire rack.

Tossing the blueberries in the dry mix before they go in keeps them suspended instead of sinking to the bottom. Frozen berries work just as well, straight from the freezer, with a minute or two added to the bake.

Banana Bread Muffins

Brown butter and discard - makes 12 muffins.

These are what I make when the bananas on the counter have gone past the point of eating. Brown butter gives them a nutty depth, the discard adds a quiet tang, and they bake up moist and rich. Add walnuts or chocolate chips if you like, or leave them plain.

INGREDIENTS

- 190 g very ripe banana (~2 mashed)
- 100 g sourdough discard (100% hydration, unfed)
- 100 g brown sugar (½ cup packed)
- 85 g unsalted butter (6 Tbsp), browned
- 60 g milk (¼ cup)
- 1 large egg (~50 g)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 125 g all-purpose flour (1 cup)
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt

OPTIONAL ADD-INS

- 60 g chopped walnuts or pecans (½ cup)
- 90 g chocolate chips (½ cup)

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 350°F and line or grease a 12-cup muffin tin.

2. Mash the bananas and whisk them into the cooled brown butter along with the discard, brown sugar, milk, egg, and vanilla.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt.
4. Fold the dry into the wet just until combined, then fold in the add-ins if you are using them. Do not overmix.
5. Divide into the tin, about $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
6. Bake 18 to 22 minutes, until golden and a toothpick shows a few moist crumbs.
7. Cool in the pan 5 minutes, then finish on a wire rack.

The riper the bananas the better, brown and freckled is ideal. A handful of chocolate chips pushes these toward dessert, while toasted walnuts keep them firmly on the breakfast side.

Nana's Pumpkin Bread Muffins

Spiced and jumbo - makes 6 jumbo muffins.

This one comes from my Nana, scaled up into jumbo muffins with big domed tops. They are everything you want in the fall, warm with spice and kept moist by the pumpkin and a little starter. The batter could not be simpler, just wet stirred into dry.

WET

- 2 large eggs
- 120 g (½ cup) light brown sugar
- 170 g (¾ cup) granulated sugar
- 2 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 225 g (1 cup) canned pumpkin puree
- 100 g (½ cup) vegetable oil
- 75 g (⅓ cup) sourdough starter (active or discard)

DRY

- 215 g (1¾ cups) all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp fine sea salt
- 2¼ tsp pumpkin pie spice

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 350°F and line or grease a jumbo muffin pan with 6 wells.

2. Beat the eggs, both sugars, and vanilla until smooth, then mix in the pumpkin, oil, and starter.
3. In another bowl, whisk or sift together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, and spice.
4. Slowly add the dry to the wet, mixing just until incorporated. Do not overmix.
5. Divide evenly among the cups, about $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
6. Bake 28 to 34 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean.
7. Cool in the pan 5 to 10 minutes, then finish on a wire rack.

The jumbo wells give you those tall, domed tops, but the batter makes a dozen standard muffins just as happily; start checking them 5 to 8 minutes earlier. A handful of chocolate chips or chopped pecans folded in is never a bad idea.

Chocolate Sourdough Muffins

Rich double-chocolate muffins from one bowl - the batter comes together in 10 minutes.



Double chocolate muffins with melted chunks on top.

These are the discard muffins to make when you want something that tastes like dessert. Hot milk poured over the cocoa blooms it for a deeper chocolate flavor, the discard keeps them moist for days, and everything goes into one bowl straight from the fridge. A high blast of heat at the start gives them tall, bakery-style domes. Makes 12.

INGREDIENTS

- 60 g cocoa powder, sifted if lumpy
- 185 g whole milk, hot
- 30 g espresso or strong brewed coffee, or more milk

- 120 g neutral oil, such as vegetable or avocado
- 200 g brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 5 g vanilla extract
- 135 g Greek yogurt, or sour cream
- 120 g sourdough discard, or active starter; chocolate discard works too
- 200 g all-purpose flour
- 6 g baking soda
- 1.5 g fine sea salt
- 300 g chocolate chips, divided

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 425 degrees with a rack in the middle. Line a 12-cup muffin tin with paper liners.
2. Put the cocoa in a large bowl, pour the hot milk over it, and whisk until smooth.
3. Add the espresso, yogurt, oil, brown sugar, vanilla, egg, and discard, and whisk until fully combined.
4. In another bowl, stir together the flour, baking soda, and salt. Add to the wet ingredients and whisk just until no dry flour remains.
5. Stir in 225 g of the chocolate chips, holding back the rest for the tops.
6. Fill each cup about three-quarters full and scatter the reserved chips over the top.
7. Bake at 425 degrees for 5 minutes, then, without opening the door, drop the heat to 375 degrees and bake another 15 minutes, until a toothpick comes out with crumbs but no

wet batter. Do not mistake a smear of melted chocolate for raw batter.

8. Cool in the pan 5 minutes, then move to a rack for at least 10 minutes before serving.

These ask for all-purpose flour rather than bread or whole wheat, which would make them dense. For an overnight option, mix the batter without the baking soda, chill it covered, and stir the baking soda in just before baking. They keep in an airtight container for up to four days.

Adapted from [Milk and Pop](#).

Earl Grey Discard Scones

Tender scones with a floral Earl Grey lift and a bright citrus glaze - a discard bake worth the overnight step.



Earl Grey discard scones, fresh from the oven.

These are my favorite thing to make for a slow weekend morning. The cream steeps overnight with Earl Grey so the tea runs all the way through, the discard adds a quiet tang that plays off the bergamot, and a sharp citrus glaze ties it together. The one bit of planning is infusing the cream the night before; everything else comes together quickly. Makes 8.

INGREDIENTS

Scones

- 120 g heavy cream, divided; 60 g for the overnight infusion and about 60 g for the dough
- 4 Earl Grey tea bags, 2 for the cream and 2 for the dry ingredients
- 240 g all-purpose flour
- 100 g granulated sugar
- 12 g baking powder
- 1.5 g sea salt
- 113 g unsalted butter, cold, grated or cubed small
- 120 g sourdough discard, unfed and at room temperature
- 1 large egg
- 5 g Earl Grey extract, or vanilla extract

Citrus glaze

- 120 g icing sugar, sifted
- 15 to 22 g lemon juice
- 5 g Earl Grey extract, or vanilla extract

METHOD

The night before, combine 60 g of the cream and 2 tea bags in a lidded jar and refrigerate to infuse.

On bake day:

1. Heat the oven to 400 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment.

2. Lift the tea bags out of the infused cream, pressing them against the spoon to wring out the flavor.
3. In a large bowl, whisk the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Open the 2 remaining tea bags and stir the loose tea straight into the dry ingredients.
4. Add the cold butter and work it in with your fingers or a pastry cutter until the mixture looks like pea-sized crumbs. Do not overwork it.
5. Whisk the egg and extract together and combine into the flour and butter with your hands.
6. Add the discard and the infused cream and mix with your hands until the dough just comes together. If it feels dry, add a splash more cream; if it feels very wet, which usually means a loose discard, chill it 15 to 20 minutes rather than adding flour.
7. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and shape it into a disk about 1 to 1 1/2 inches thick. Cut it into 8 triangles.
8. Set them on the sheet and bake 15 to 18 minutes, until just golden on top. Do not go past 18 minutes.
9. Cool 30 minutes before glazing.

For the glaze, stir the sifted icing sugar with the lemon juice and extract until smooth, and drizzle it over the cooled scones. Make it just before using, since it sets fast.

The discard is here for flavor and moisture, not lift, so keep the full amount of baking powder. Store the scones at room temperature in an airtight container for up to three days; the fridge dries them out. You can fold in 125 g frozen raspberries, or 75 g white chocolate chips, after the egg for a different turn.

Adapted from [Milk and Pop](#).

Sourdough Discard Snickerdoodles

Brown-butter snickerdoodles with a cinnamon-sugar crust and a soft, chewy middle.

Snickerdoodles were the first cookie I learned to love, and discard makes them better, adding a little tang that balances all that sugar and a bit of structure that keeps them chewy. Brown butter takes them somewhere nutty and grown-up, and cream of tartar gives the classic tang and crackle. The dough chills overnight, so start them the day before. Makes about 18 large cookies, around 70 g each.

INGREDIENTS

Cookies

- 315 g white sugar
- 170 g brown butter
- 3 g salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk
- 150 g sourdough starter
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 9 g cream of tartar
- 355 g flour

Cinnamon-sugar coating

- 100 g white sugar
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon

METHOD

1. Brown the butter and let it cool until it is no longer hot.
2. Add the white sugar to the cooled brown butter in a large bowl and mix until combined. Stir in the vanilla, egg, and egg yolk, then mix in the sourdough starter until smooth.
3. In another bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, baking soda, and cream of tartar.
4. Add the dry ingredients to the wet, stirring just until combined. Cover and chill the dough overnight.
5. Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Roll the dough into 70 g balls and coat each one in the cinnamon-sugar mixture.
6. Set them on a parchment-lined sheet about 3 inches apart and bake 10 to 12 minutes, until the edges are golden and the centers are just set. They firm up as they cool, so pull them while the middles still look soft.

The overnight chill is not optional here; it firms the brown butter back up so the cookies hold their shape and deepens the flavor. If you forget, an hour in the freezer will get you most of the way.

Sourdough Chocolate Cake

A moist, deeply chocolate sheet cake with a fudgy buttercream - the celebration bake.

The book started with the oldest, plainest thing you can do with flour and water, so it feels right to end somewhere indulgent. This is a one-bowl chocolate cake that puts a little discard to work for moisture and a faint tang you will not quite place. Hot coffee in the batter is the old trick that makes chocolate taste more like itself. Bake it as a single sheet, or cut and stack it for something taller.

INGREDIENTS

Dry

- 190 g all-purpose flour
- 350 g granulated sugar
- 65 g cocoa powder
- 10 g baking soda
- 4 g baking powder
- 6 g salt

Wet

- 110 g neutral oil, such as avocado or vegetable
- 2 large eggs, about 100 g without shells
- 10 g vanilla extract
- 60 g sourdough discard, regular or chocolate
- 60 g sour cream
- 180 g buttermilk
- 240 g hot coffee

Chocolate buttercream

- 285 g unsalted butter, softened
- 360 g powdered sugar
- 65 g cocoa powder
- 120 g heavy cream
- 5 g vanilla extract
- 1 g salt

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a half sheet pan with parchment and give it a light spray.
2. In a small bowl, whisk all the dry ingredients together until even.
3. In a large bowl, mix all the wet ingredients except the hot coffee until smooth.
4. Add the dry ingredients to the wet and whisk just until combined.
5. Pour in the hot coffee slowly, whisking gently, until the batter is smooth and pourable. It will be thin, which is what you want.
6. Pour into the pan and bake 12 to 18 minutes, until the cake springs back when lightly touched or a toothpick comes out clean.
7. While it bakes and cools, beat all the buttercream ingredients together until light and fluffy.
8. Once the cake is fully cool, spread the buttercream over the top.

A thin sheet cake bakes fast, so start checking at 12 minutes. It works with either regular or chocolate discard, and if you keep a chocolate starter going, this is one of the best places to spend it.

Baker's Tips

When things don't go to plan.

Every baker has off days, and sourdough has a few failure modes that come up again and again. Here are the ones I run into most, and the quick fixes that usually sort them out.

A sluggish starter usually just wants more food and warmth. Feed it twice a day and keep it somewhere warm, around 75-80°F, and a spoonful of whole wheat or rye at feedings adds nutrients that tend to perk it up within a day or two.

A dense or gummy crumb is almost always under-fermentation or a weak starter. Let the bulk rise run longer, until the dough is jiggy and about 50 percent larger. A gummy interior often just means the loaf was sliced too soon, so cool it at least 2 hours.

A flat loaf is usually over-proofed or loosely shaped. Tighten your shaping for more surface tension, and shorten the bulk a little next time.

Sourness comes down to temperature and time. For less tang, use a shorter, cooler ferment and feed more often; for more, give the loaf a longer cold proof in the fridge.

To save your discard, keep it in a jar in the fridge for up to a week or two, adding to it as you go, then put it to work in any of the discard bakes in this book.

Happy baking, and may your crust crackle and your crumb be open.

Questions? *You're always welcome to reach out -*
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