

Sourdough Bread - as made by Hugh and Béatrice Hunt in Cambridge UK

We use a bread machine to do the messy kneading in Step 2, but all rising is done in the bowl and baking is done in the oven. It takes about 18 hours from start to finish, and we generally start at around 10pm and bake late afternoon. Great timing for a dinner party!

Ingredients:	
Step 1 - 180g of starter - 540g strong white bread flour - 540g cold (tap) water	Step 2 - 150g strong white bread flour - 70g rye flour (optional, substitute more white flour if you prefer) - 1½ tsp salt (optional)

Step 1: Evening, ~10pm (this takes about 5 minutes)

- Put the flour into a fairly large mixing bowl.
- Take the starter from the fridge and put it in with the flour.
- Now add the water, using some of it to rinse out the jar.
- Mix well with a spoon - the starter needs to be well distributed.
- Cover with clingfilm and leave overnight in a cool place, pref 10°C-15°C, best no warmer than 20°C.

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Step 2: Morning, ~8am (this takes about 15 minutes)

The mixture should be well bubbly, verging on frothy. Stir it well.

Don't forget this next step

- Remove 180g of the mixture and put it in a jar in the fridge as your starter for next time
- Measure the rye flour into the "pan" of the bread machine.
- Scrape in all the gooey mixture. It should weigh ~1070g - a good check that you've not omitted to remove the starter.
- Measure in the white flour, and add the salt.
- Mix for 10 minutes on a programme that does not do any heating.

The mixture should form into a nice firm and elastic ball.

For ease of tipping out the mixture, lift the "pan" out while the strirer is still stirring. This way the ball will not be too stuck to the sides.

- Tip the mix back into the bowl, scraping out as much as you can. We use a little plastic scraper that came with our freezer as a defrosting tool.
- Cover with clingfilm and leave in a cool place for about 4 hours so that it at least doubles in size. The timing seems not to be critical. We have made great loaves leaving it for 2 hours, or 8 hours.

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Step 3: Early afternoon (this takes about 5 minutes)

- Prepare the banneton (a cheese-cloth-lined basket, about 25cm diameter which will form the shape of the loaf) by dusting it generously with flour. There might be enough flour left over from its last use.
- Tip the mixture onto a floured worktop. Use the plastic scraper and attempt not to disturb the tiny bubbles that have formed. The mixture will be sticky but elastic and airy.
- Carefully stretch it out to be about the size of a large square pizza. Fold it in three one way and then the other (as if you're folding on the lines of a noughts-and-crosses game – tic-tac-toe if you're reading from the USA).
- Now dump it into the banneton, then bring up all the edges as if you're making a mushroom-shaped pasty, or a swag to put on the end of a hobo's pole. This process stretches the part that will be the top. Seal it all up with a firm squeeze of the fingers.
- Sprinkle generously with flour to prevent the cling film from sticking. Cover and leave in your cool place for another hour or two so that it grows another 50%. Again, not critical. There are so many factors that affect the loaf and this is just another one of them.

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Step 4: Mid afternoon (this takes 5 minutes, + preheating the oven time, + 50 minutes baking)

- Preheat the oven as hot as you can. Our oven (fan forced) gets up to 250°C. Put a metal dish in the bottom of the oven and when all is hot pour half a cup of boiling water into it. This helps to develop a nice crust.
- Tip the dough from the banneton onto a flat tray (we use a pizza tray). Now work quickly. With as sharp a knife as you have (we use a stanley knife with fresh blades) cut four deep cuts "noughts-and-crosses" fashion. These split open nicely as the bread rises and make the nice crusty top surface.
- Put it into the hot oven and leave it on hot for 10 minutes or so. Then turn it down to 180°C for the rest of the bake. This detail is optional - you can just go down to 200°C and keep it there for the whole 50 mins if you prefer.

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- Remove the loaf and put it on a cooling rack. Don't cut it for an hour - there is still cooking going on.

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Happy eating - you won't be able to buy a loaf as fresh and tasty as the bread you make this way.