Rehydrating Your Sourdough Starter

Supplies

- Dehydrated sourdough starter
- Clean jar with cover
- Unbleached all-purpose flour or bread flour
- Filtered water
- Measuring cups and spoons or digital scale

Daily Rehydration Process:

Day 1

- Place 1 tablespoon (10g) of dehydrated starter in a clean jar.
- Add 2 tablespoons (30g) of filtered water, stir until the starter is covered and absorb the water.
- Let sit for 30 min - 1 hour (It should be mostly dissolved).
- Add 1 tablespoons (16g) of flour, stir until fully incorporated. If needed add a little water to make sure it's not to thick.
- Cover the jar with a breathable material (fabric, paper towel, or coffee filter) secured with a rubber band. Note: For the first few days, using a smaller container to prevent the starter from drying out.

Day 2 & 3

- Feed the starter once a day with 2 tablespoons (30g) of filtered water and 2 1/2 tablespoons (30g) of flour.
- Mix thoroughly and cover.
- A mature starter should double in size within 4-8 hours of feeding, have a pleasant tangy smell, and show a bubbly texture.

Day 4-7

- Begin the discard process: Reserve 1/4 cup (60g) of starter for feeding, discarding the rest.
- To the reserved starter, add 1/4 cup (60g) of filtered water and 1/2 cup (60g) of flour. (Do not pack the flour. It should be a light and fluffy 1/2 cup of flour.)
- Mix well and cover.
- Repeat this process daily until the starter matures.
- A mature starter typically doubles in size within 4-8 hours post-feeding. I recommend using a rubber band on the jar to mark the initial level for easy tracking.

Starter Discard: Consider keeping discarded starter in a separate refrigerated container for use in non-leavened recipes.
Maturation Timeline: Most starters mature around Day 4, but ambient temperature can affect this timeline. (this can range from 4-7 days.)
Maintenance: Daily feeding is crucial for starter health.

The inclusion of gram measurements allows for more precise feeding, which can be particularly beneficial as the starter matures. Remember, sourdough cultivation is both a science and an art, requiring patience and observation for optimal results.

Your Sourdough Success Guide:
Tips, Tricks, and FAQs

Tips for Success

- **Use Filtered or Spring Water**: Chlorine in tap water can hinder fermentation.
- Ideal Temperature: Keep your starter in a warm spot (70–75°F / 21–24°C). In cooler climates, place it near a warm appliance or wrap it in a kitchen towel.
- **Flour Choice**: All-purpose or bread flour are recommended for regular feedings and work perfectly for rehydrating your starter. However, if you'd like to give your starter an extra boost in the early days, you can use whole wheat or rye flour for added nutrients. Always use unbleached varieties for the best results.
- **Consistency Matters**: Aim for a thick pancake batter texture at every feeding.
- **Pink or Orange Color**: If you notice a pink, orange, or red discoloration on top of your starter, this is a sign of harmful mold or bacteria. Unfortunately, this means the starter is no longer safe to use and should be discarded. To prevent this, ensure you're using clean containers, utensils, and feeding your starter regularly.

General Questions

"How do I know when my starter is ready?"

- A mature starter doubles in size within 4–8 hours of feeding, smells pleasantly tangy, and is bubbly.

"What if I miss a feeding?"

- Feed as soon as possible and drain off any hooch. Missing one feeding usually isn't catastrophic.

"Can I switch flours during the process?"

- Yes, but make changes gradually. For example, mix half of the new flour with half of the original flour during feedings for a few days to allow the starter to adapt.

"How do I store my starter once it's mature?"

- Once your starter is active and mature, you can store it in the refrigerator if you don't plan to use it daily. Feed it once a week to keep it healthy.

"Why does my starter smell like alcohol?"

- This smell, caused by "hooch," indicates your starter is hungry. Stir the hooch back in or pour it off, then feed your starter.

"What if my starter rises and falls too quickly?"

- This often happens in warmer environments. Feed it more frequently (every 8–12 hours) to keep it active.

Troubleshooting

“My starter smells like acetone or nail polish remover.”

- This indicates the starter is overly acidic and starving. Feed it more frequently to rebalance its microbial activity.

“Why is my starter separating into layers?”

- Separation happens when the starter hasn’t been fed recently. Simply stir it together and feed it to bring it back to life.

“What if my starter isn’t doubling after a week?”

- Switch to whole wheat or rye flour for a few feedings to provide extra nutrients. Ensure it’s kept warm and fed regularly.

Advanced Tips

Using a Starter for Baking:

- Before baking, feed your starter a few times at room temperature to ensure it’s strong and active. Look for doubling in size and plenty of bubbles before using it in recipes.

Dealing with Temperature Fluctuations:

- If it’s too cold, try placing the jar near a warm appliance or wrapping it in a towel. If it’s too hot, place the jar in a cooler spot or near an insulated area.

Tracking Starter Activity:

- Use a marker or rubber band to track the starter's rise and fall. This helps you determine how active it is and when it needs feeding.

Starter Myths:

- “You can’t use tap water.” While filtered water is ideal, tap water often works if it doesn’t have high chlorine content.

- “You can’t save a neglected starter.” Starters are surprisingly resilient and can often be revived with a little care.

FAQs About Using Discard:

- “Can I bake bread with discard?” Not for leavened bread, but discard is perfect for pancakes, crackers, or flatbreads.