

Basic Sourdough Bread

A simple, forgiving sourdough loaf with a lovely rise - and plenty of room to make it your own.

Ingredients

- **300g strong bread flour** (ideally 14g+ protein)
- **200g spelt flour** - or use 500g strong bread flour in total for a white loaf
- **400g water**
- **100g active sourdough starter**
- **10g salt**

1. Autolyse

Combine the flour and water until there are no obvious dry patches. Cover and leave to rest for **at least 1 hour**. This is called an *autolyse* and will make the dough much easier to handle later.

2. Add the starter & salt

Add your sourdough starter and salt. Work them into the dough by doing several **stretch and folds** until everything is nicely incorporated.

3. Stretch & fold

After about **15 minutes**, give the dough another round of stretch and folds. Repeat every 15 minutes, up to around **8 times - if you remember!** Don't worry if you don't manage all eight. Sourdough is more forgiving than people sometimes make it sound.

4. Let it rise

Cover the dough and leave it to rise until it has **roughly doubled in size**. If you're using a see-through container, you'll start seeing loads of lovely little air pockets throughout the dough. That's exactly what you want!

5. Prepare for shaping

Lightly flour your work surface and gently tip the dough onto it. If you're making one large loaf, carefully stretch the dough out without tearing it, getting it as thin as you comfortably can.

6. Shape your loaf

For an oval loaf: Take one side of the dough and fold it into the middle. Take the opposite side and fold it over the middle. Roll the dough tightly so it forms a log. Gently drag the loaf towards you across the work surface a few times to create tension and tighten the seam. You can also pinch the seam closed if needed.

For a round loaf: Fold the edges of the dough towards the centre until you have a roughly round loaf. Flip it over so the seam is underneath, then gently turn and pull the dough against the work surface to create tension. If needed, flip it back over and pinch any loose seams closed.

7. Into the fridge

Prepare your proofing basket. I tend to use a **moist kitchen towel inside a normal basket** - you don't need anything fancy! Place the dough into the basket **upside down, with the seam facing upwards**. Pinch the seams together again if needed, then fold the edges of the towel over the dough to cover it. Place it into the fridge **overnight or for up to 48 hours**. The longer it rests, the more the flavour develops.

8. Time to bake!

Dutch Oven Method

Preheat your oven to its maximum temperature and place your Dutch oven inside to preheat with it. My oven goes up to **250°C fan**.

- Carefully place your loaf into the hot Dutch oven.
- Score the top.
- Put the lid on and place it into the oven.
- Reduce the temperature to **220°C fan**.
- Bake with the lid on for **30 minutes**.
- Remove the lid and bake for another **20-30 minutes**, until beautifully browned.

Give the bottom of the loaf a little knock. If it sounds hollow - great!

My Tupperware Loaf Container Method

I also often let my dough rise and bake in my Tupperware loaf container. When I use this method, **I don't preheat the oven**. Prepare the dough in the container, put the lid on and place it into the cold oven. Set the oven to **220°C fan** and let the oven heat with the bread inside. Bake for around **40 minutes with the lid on**, then remove the lid and bake for another **20-30 minutes**. Again, give it the knock test. If it sounds hollow, you're good to go!

9. The hardest part - waiting!

Once the bread is baked, remove it from the baking dish. I like to put mine back into the **switched-off oven with the door slightly cracked open** and leave it there to cool for at least **1 hour**. As tempting as it is to cut into warm sourdough immediately, giving it time to cool allows the inside of the loaf to finish setting.

10. Enjoy

Slice it, spread generously with butter and add a tiny sprinkle of salt. I only use unsalted butter, so I love that little extra sprinkle. If you're using salted butter, you can skip the extra salt.

Homemade sourdough doesn't have to be complicated.

Enjoy!

Brambles & Bread