

— *workshop handout* —

How To Maintain a Sourdough Starter

FIRST: WHAT YOU'RE MAINTAINING:

A sourdough starter is a living culture of wild yeast and bacteria.

To keep it active, you must:

- Feed it regularly
- Keep it at a stable temperature
- Avoid letting it starve

Maintenance is not complicated — it's rhythm.

A Look at the Old Way:

Before refrigeration, scales, and jars, families maintained sourdough differently.

One traditional European method involved:

- Saving a small piece of fermented dough
- Rubbing it with salt
- Storing it in a cool place

The salt slowed fermentation and preserved the culture.

When it was time to bake again, the salted dough was:

- Washed
- Rehydrated
- Mixed into new dough

I've also seen an old recipe book that directed to add raw MILK instead of the water to the flour. Just know there's a million ways to do it so don't overcomplicate it.

To keep it simple, I'm going to tell you two ways to maintain your starter, the first being room temperature and second being fridge.

MEET YOUR TEACHER



Hi, I'm Lorina!

I'm a wife, mom of two, and your educator on the benefits of freshly milled flour. Milling our own flour changed my family's health, and I'm passionate about sharing this knowledge with others.

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Option 1: Room Temperature:

This is best if you're baking multiple times a week.

For this option, feed your starter daily.

Simple Feeding Ratio:

- 1 part starter
- 1 part flour
- 1 part water

Example:

- 50g starter
- 50g flour
- 50g water

Your starter should:

- Rise within 4–6 hours
- Smell mildly tangy
- Show bubbles throughout

If it rises and falls predictably, it's healthy.

Option 2: Refrigerator:

If you only bake once a week or less. Storing it in the fridge slows down the fermentation. Same concept goes if you need your dough to slow down.

If you bake once a week or less:

- Feed your starter
- Let it sit at room temperature 1–2 hours
- Store in refrigerator

Feed once per week to maintain strength.

When ready to bake:

- Remove from fridge
- Feed
- Wait until doubled before mixing dough

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Before Baking:

Always bake when your starter is:

- At peak rise
- Active and bubbly
- Passed the float test (optional, not required)

Weak starter = dense bread.

Strong starter = reliable rise.

How To Know If Your Starter Has Gone Bad:

Most starters don't "go bad" easily. They usually just get hungry.

HEALTHY STARTER:

- Doubles within 4–8 hours after feeding
- Smells tangy or mildly sour
- Bubbles throughout
- Light, airy texture inside
- May develop gray liquid (just hungry — feed it)

SIGNS YOUR STARTER WENT BAD:

- Fuzzy mold (green, black, pink, orange)
- Bright pink or orange streaks
- Rotten or putrid smell (not just sour)
- Visible mold on sides of jar (Sour is normal. Mold or rotten is not.)

Tips To Keep It Healthy:

- Wipe starter down from the edges of the jar after feeding
- Transfer to a clean jar about once per week
- Always use a clean spatula
- Keep the lid loosely covered (not airtight)
- Feed consistently — don't let it sit unfed for long periods

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