

Maintaining a Sourdough Starter

Maintaining a bubbly and active sourdough starter is an easy process that requires a simple **feeding routine**. There are many different methods to feed sourdough starter. Here I'll share the method that has given me the best success.

NOTE: This guide is intended for mature starters. Make sure your starter is well established before dropping down to 1 feeding a day OR storing in the fridge.

Guidelines:

- I recommend feeding the starter at a 1:1:1 ratio. This means equal parts flour, water and starter.
- I usually leave my starter out on the counter for a few days to accomplish my baking early in the week. If I don't plan to make anything else that week, I place it in the fridge with a lid on.
- I **highly** recommend using a scale for precise measurements. Flour and water have different weights and it's important to be consistent.

Feeding:

1. **Begin by placing a clean bowl on your scale and zeroing the scale.**
2. **Next, pour all your starter into the bowl to measure how much you have.**
3. **Next, decide how much starter you want to keep and how much you want to discard.**
4. **You will be feeding the starter equal parts water and flour. (For example, if you have 200 grams of starter, I'd recommend keeping 100 grams and discarding 100 grams. You really do not need a massive amount of starter. I recommend reserving about 50-100 grams.)**
5. **Next, place your starter jar back on the scale (be sure to zero) and pour back in the amount of starter you plan to keep. Set aside the rest for a discard recipe.**
6. **Zero the scale and add equal parts flour.**
7. **Zero the scale and add equal parts water.**
8. **Stir vigorously with a wooden spoon & cover jar with a tea towel.**
9. **Leave on the counter at room temperature. Within 4-8 hours starter will appear bubbly and doubled in size**

Feeding Schedule:

On the Counter:

- If kept on the counter, feed the starter **every 12-24 hours**, depending on your baking frequency. More frequent feeding is necessary in warmer environments. If you miss a feeding once in awhile, it will probably not upset your starter. Just continue with your regular feeding schedule.

In the Fridge:

- Storing your sourdough starter in the fridge requires feeding it **once a week**. It can be stored for up to two months in the fridge without feeding but for the best results try to feed once a week even if you aren't planning to use it.

TIP: Feed your starter based on how often you use it. For daily use, keep it on the counter and feed it every 12-24 hours. For sporadic use, store it in the fridge and feed it every time you plan to use it.

Common Starter Issues + Solutions:

- **“It’s too runny”.**

Commonly caused by imprecise measurements, such as adding $\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour + $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water. Water and flour have different weights and the starter becomes too runny. Add a little extra flour at the next feed and continue weighing with a scale.

- **“Does starter need to be fed before storing in the refrigerator?”**

Starters are resilient and likely will be fine if you use some and place back in the fridge but the best practice is to feed them before returning them to storage.

- **“It’s not bubbling or doubling in size!”**

This can be caused by numerous factors. I recommend treating the starter like a brand-new one. Try leaving it out on the counter and feeding it every 12 hours for several days. Be sure to discard each time you feed. If your house is cool, store it in the microwave or oven. You can also try feeding with rye flour. (For more tips on how to revive a starter visit thesourdoughartisan.com).

- **“Discarding seems wasteful. Do I have to discard with each feed?”**

Once you have a mature starter it is not necessary to discard every single feed. However, if you don't discard you will have way too much starter eventually and not be able to use it all. I never truly throw away starter discard. When I plan to make bread or rolls I take my starter out of the fridge, feed it, set aside the discard and the next day I make crackers, banana bread, granola bars or one of our other favorite discard recipes. Discard is the best!

This guide covers the essentials of maintaining a thriving sourdough starter. As you become familiar with your starter, you'll develop a routine that suits your baking preferences and lifestyle. Enjoy the journey of creating and nurturing your own sourdough culture!

Author: Cassia Egerdahl, www.thesourdoughartisan.com