

Our Daily Bread: Whole Grain, No-Knead Sourdough

<http://nourishedkitchen.com/whole-grain-no-knead-sourdough/>



I bake bread just about everyday, an no-knead sourdough bread is doubtlessly our favorite. Not only for its simplicity, but also for its beautiful soft crumb and crispy, crackling crust. Soups and stews are ever present in my home, and homemade bread served with plenty of butter, salt or olive oil typically accompanies those soups and stews.

So I've written about No-Knead Sourdough before, but a number of you long-time readers struggled with the recipe. So I've made adjustments, tweaks and tested it every week (or a few times a week – it's our favorite), and wanted to share it with you again in case you have a hankering for an easy artisan-style bread that's flavorful, chewy, airy and with a crisp, thin crust.

Why Sourdough Bread?

I lean upon sourdough baking in my home, avoiding quick-rise breads any most breads raised by baker's yeast in favor of sour leavening. There's a beautiful tradition to sourdough baking, which was the dominant form of raising breads until early in the 20th century when baker's yeast began to replace sourdough starter as a leavening ingredient.

Sourdough Bread is Rich in B Vitamins, and Bioavailable Minerals

Sourdough offers a complex, pleasantly sour flour owing to the presence of lactobacillus bacteria that gobble up the flour's carbohydrates and produce B vitamins, most notably folate, and lactic acid as a result. Wild yeasts, captured in the bubbling starter culture which is nothing more than a slurry of water and flour, give the bread its rise.

The process of sour leavening also activates food enzymes in the flour, and those food enzymes

breakdown antinutrients like food phytate which can bind up trace minerals. As a result, sourdough bread is richer in bioavailable minerals than quick-rise breads or those that are leavened through bakers yeast for a shorter period of time.

As a result of the work of wild bacteria and yeasts that give sourdough its characteristic flavor, sourdough breads are lower on the glycemic index, higher in bioavailable minerals, and higher in B vitamins than quick-rise breads. And they taste better, too.

No-Knead Sourdough Baking Tips

So there's a few tricks to baking in sourdough, and I go into them extensively in my cookbook – The Nourished Kitchen – which includes some of my favorite sourdough recipes and techniques. The real trick to making your sourdough turn out the way you like is to handle the dough lightly, and to keep your starter in the fridge unless you're baking that day.

Keep Your Starter in the Fridge

I used to keep my sourdough starter on my countertop, as I baked almost daily. Yet, after a while, I had trouble getting the rise I wanted from the bread, and missed the super airy soft crumb I love in artisan sourdoughs. That was when a baker I know suggested leaving the sourdough in the fridge, unless I plan to bake within six hours. And that simple act of storing it in the cold made for much better results.

Handle the Dough as Little as Possible

While I find that my no-knead sourdough bread benefits from a light working of the dough and forming of the boule, I take care not to overwork the dough which can make bread flat and gummy. This video will give you a good idea on how to handle and shape your dough.

No-Knead Sourdough Tools

When baking no-knead sourdough breads, there's a few tools that are very helpful to have on hand. You're likely to already have them, too.

A Stand Mixer Equipped with a Dough Hook

For mixing the dough initially, I find that using a standmixer equipped with a dough hook works best. You can certainly mix the dough by hand, and I have, but I find that I have better results when using a standmixer (click here to see the standmixer I use.)

A 4-Quart Glass Mixing Bowl with an Airtight Lid

The dough for no-knead sourdough is typically very slack, and so you need to allow it a big bowl for rising. If the dough isn't kept moist, and preferably in an airtight container, while it rises, it will develop a crust which will limit how much it can rise and change the structure of the bread.

I like to use this pyrex mixing bowl set not only because they're inexpensive, but also because they come with lids that keep an airtight environment. I also use these for soaking beans, lentils, grains, nuts and seeds.

An Enameled Cast Iron Dutch Oven

Lastly, in order for your no-knead sourdough bread to develop its characteristic airy crumb and crackly crust, it needs to bake in a hot, moist environment. Since most homes aren't equipped with steam-injection ovens, a sturdy cast iron Dutch oven will do the trick. This keeps the bread hot, and because the steam from baking has little opportunity to escape it remains in the Dutch oven, creating a beautiful crisp and crackly crust.

You can use a cast iron Dutch oven, but I found that an enameled cast iron Dutch oven is easier to clean and won't darken the bread. (Click here for the Dutch oven I use to bake my bread.)

Whole Grain, No-Knead Sourdough Bread

Prep Time: 6 hours, 5 minutes

Cook Time: 45 minutes

Total Time: 6 hours, 50 minutes

Yield: 1 loaf

Ingredients:

- 2 cups high-extraction einkorn flour (see sources)
- 1 1/2 cups whole-grain einkorn flour, preferably freshly ground
- 1/4 cup proofed and bubbly sourdough starter (learn how to make sourdough starter here)
- 1 1/2 cups room temperature water
- 2 teaspoons finely ground unrefined sea salt (click here for my recommendation)
- olive oil, for oiling the bowl

Instructions:

1. Dump the flours, sourdough starter, water and salt into the basin of a standmixer equipped with a dough hook (click here for the model I use). Mix the ingredients together on medium-low speed until they form a uniform ball of dough that cleans the sides of the mixing bowl, about three minutes.
2. Oil a 4-quart glass mixing bowl (I use these because they come with airtight lids.), and dump the ball of dough into the mixing bowl. Cover tightly, and let it rise in a warm spot in your kitchen for six to eight hours, or until doubled in bulk.
3. Place a 6-quart cast iron or enameled cast iron Dutch oven (this is the Dutch oven I use.) in a cold oven, and then heat the oven to 450 F.
4. Flour your working surface, and dump the dough onto the floured surface, gently forming it into a boule. Cover it with the empty glass mixing bowl, and allow it to rise for 30 minutes.
5. Remove the bowl, and if the dough has spread, reform it. Working quickly, open the oven and remove the lid from the preheated Dutch oven. Dump the dough into the Dutch oven, cover once more, and bake, covered, for 30 minutes. Remove the lid to the Dutch oven, and continue baking a further 15 minutes until the bread is fragrant and a light amber brown.
6. Remove the bread from the oven and allow it to cool on a wire rack before slicing and serving.

Notes:

You can substitute bread flour or all-purpose flour for high-extraction flour. If you do not have einkorn flour, substitute spelt or wheat.

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**Einkorn Flour and High-extraction Flour.** I favor einkorn, a nonhybridized heirloom wheat, for my baking as it's richer in phytonutrients, minerals and protein than many hybridized grains and it is well-tolerated by those who may be otherwise sensitive to modern wheat. I recommend Jovial Foods high-extraction flour for general baking for general baking, as well as sourdoughs and breads.

**Einkorn Wheat Berries.** Einkorn is the first wheat, an ancient, nonhybridized variety that is high in fiber, protein, minerals, beta carotene and B vitamins. I purchase Jovial Foods einkorn wheat berries for making porridges, pilafs and for grinding fresh for sourdough bread.

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