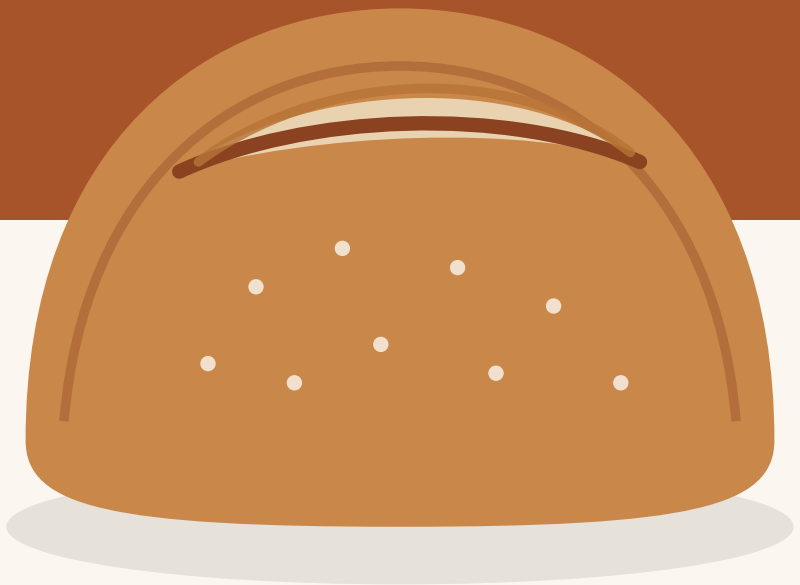
SCORE & RISE



Sourdough, *Simply*

From your first starter to everyday loaves:
a beginner's guide with 14 recipes

STARTER · SCHEDULE · SHAPING · TROUBLESHOOTING

BY SCORE & RISE

What a starter is

Flour naturally carries wild yeasts and lactic acid bacteria. When you mix it with water and keep feeding it, those microbes multiply, and the mixture becomes a stable culture. The yeast produces the gas that raises your bread; the bacteria produce the acids that give sourdough its flavor and help it keep. A healthy starter smells pleasantly tangy, a little like yogurt, apples or beer, and rises predictably after each feeding.

All recipes in this book use a **100% hydration** starter: equal weights of flour and water at every feeding. It is the easiest ratio to remember and to calculate with.

> **Feeding, in one sentence.** Keep a small amount of starter, add fresh flour and water, stir, and leave it to rise. Written as a ratio, 1:2:2 means 1 part starter, 2 parts flour and 2 parts water by weight, for example 25 g starter + 50 g flour + 50 g water.

Making a starter, day by day

Use a clean glass jar of about 1 liter (1 quart). Use whole wheat or whole rye flour for the first days: whole grains carry more of the microbes and nutrients that get a culture going. Use water at about 27 °C / 80 °F, and keep the jar somewhere around 24 to 27 °C / 75 to 80 °F. If your tap water is heavily chlorinated, leave a jug out overnight or use filtered water. Cover the jar loosely so gas can escape.

Day	What to do	What you may see
1	Stir 50 g whole wheat or rye flour with 50 g water until no dry flour remains. Scrape down the sides, cover loosely, and mark the level.	Nothing yet. A thick paste.
2	Discard all but 50 g. Add 50 g flour (half whole wheat, half bread or all-purpose) and 50 g water. Stir, scrape down, mark.	Possibly a few bubbles, or nothing at all. Both are normal.
3 to 4	Same feeding once a day, every 24 hours.	Often a sudden burst of bubbles and an odd smell (cheesy, sweaty, sharp), then a quiet, flat day. This early surge is from bacteria that do not last. Keep going.
5 to 7	Switch to twice a day, about 12 hours apart: keep 25 g, add 50 g flour (mostly bread or all-purpose, a little whole grain) and 50 g water.	Activity returns and becomes regular. The smell turns milder and more pleasantly sour.
8 to 14	Keep up twice-daily 1:2:2 feedings.	Rises more each day, then reliably doubles within 4 to 8 hours. The surface domes and looks webby when you stir it.

Some starters are ready in a week; others take two or a little longer, especially in cool kitchens. Time is the only ingredient you cannot shortcut.

A sample baking schedule

This schedule fits the Country Loaf around a Saturday with a Sunday-morning bake, in a kitchen around 24 °C / 75 °F. A blank version is in Chapter 8.

When	Step	Time it takes
Sat 8:00 am	Feed the starter: 25 g starter + 50 g flour + 50 g water	2 minutes
Sat 12:00 pm	Mix flour and 340 g water; rest (autolyse)	5 min + 1 hour rest
Sat 1:00 pm	Add 100 g active starter; bulk fermentation begins	5 minutes
Sat 1:30 pm	Add salt and the held-back 20 g water	5 minutes
Sat 2:00 to 3:30 pm	Four sets of stretch-and-folds, every 30 minutes	2 minutes each
Sat 3:30 to 6:00 pm	Leave the dough alone; check its rise from 5:00 pm	Hands off
Sat about 6:00 pm	Pre-shape; rest 20 to 30 minutes	5 minutes
Sat about 6:30 pm	Shape, place in banneton, refrigerate	10 minutes
Sun 8:00 am	Preheat oven and Dutch oven to 250 °C / 480 °F	45 to 60 minutes
Sun 9:00 am	Score and bake: 20 min covered, 20 to 25 min uncovered at 230 °C / 450 °F	About 45 minutes
Sun 10:00 am	Cool on a rack, then slice	1 to 2 hours

The dough spends about 13½ hours in the fridge here. Anywhere from 8 to 16 hours works, so you can bake earlier or later on Sunday.