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Sourdough Starter Care (200% Hydration)

By Julie Laing

Here you'll find tools and instructions to help you care for sourdough starter. To maintain a 200% hydration starter, feed the culture with equal parts water and flour by volume. You can find sourdough recipes designed for a 200% hydration culture in the sourdough guide at Almanac.com.

Although volume measurements may seem easy, but keep these points in mind if you find inconsistency in your feeding and baking:

- Flour varies widely when measured by volume, especially if multiple bakers use the starter.
- Starter can fill different cup sizes, depending on temperature and how well it was stirred.
- Immediately clean every tool used to measure and mix sourdough so that it doesn't harden.

If you prefer to feed your starter with equal parts water and flour by weight, follow the instructions in the Sourdough Starter Care (100% Hydration) guide instead.

There are many ways to store and maintain a 200% hydration starter. The two approaches presented here are based on how often you bake.

Recommended Ingredients & Tools

- **All-purpose or high-protein white flour:** Feeding with a chemical-free all-purpose flour or one with a relatively high protein content (perhaps up to 13%) will help keep a starter active. You can fully convert a sourdough starter to another flour (such as whole wheat or rye), but it will affect the fermentation rate.
- **Unchlorinated, untreated water:** Avoid water with chlorine, chloramines, or fluoride; if you're uncertain about what's coming out your tap, use distilled water instead.
- **Quart jar with a screw-on ring:** Quart-size glass jars easily store plenty of sourdough starter, but you can use any nonreactive container for which you can create a breathable lid. If you don't have a screw-on canning ring, a rubber band may do the trick.
- **Coffee filter or paper towel:** Unbleached coffee filters are thin and fuss-free, but you can use any breathable material that can be secured to the storage container.
- **Measuring cups:** Ones that are narrower than the mouth of your storage jar or have a pour spout will be the easiest to use when feeding sourdough starter.

Remember that a sourdough starter is a living culture. The person who gifted you starter is your best resource if you have questions or issues, and they may have different suggestions for maintaining their starter. You can also find resources and recipes at TwiceAsTasty.com.

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Occasional Baker Maintenance

These instructions assume you keep a large volume of starter—between 1 and 1-1/2 cups—that starts to bubble at room temperature. Follow these steps every time you take starter from the jar.

1. Bring the jar of refrigerated starter to room temperature.
2. Stir the starter down with a fork. Pour out the amount needed for the recipe.
3. In a medium measuring cup, use a fork to stir together equal volumes of all-purpose flour (or your chosen starter flour) and unchlorinated water to match the volume of starter removed from the jar. For example, if you removed 1 cup of starter, you'll likely need to stir together 3/4 cup of flour and 3/4 cup of water.
4. "Feed" the remaining starter by stirring the flour and water mixture into it. Loosely cover the jar with a paper coffee filter or paper towel. Let the starter sit for at least 2 hours at room temperature. If you'll be using the starter straightaway, let it expand to close to double.
5. When you're ready to store the starter, screw on a canning ring over the paper cover and jar and return the jar to the fridge.

Tips & Tricks

- A large starter volume gives wild yeast plenty to "chew on" in the fridge. If it sits untouched for more than a couple of weeks, repeat steps 2–4 once or twice to bring it back to full strength.
- After several weeks, "hooch" may form on the starter's surface. This dark, vinegary liquid protects against undesirable bacteria. Stir it in or pour it off when you return to baking.

Weekly Baker Maintenance

These instructions assume you keep a small volume of starter in the jar—about 1/2 cup. If you're baking daily, you can simply feed and use the starter in an endless cycle. But if you're refrigerating only a small amount of starter, you'll need to build it up before each baking session.

1. If refrigerated, bring the jar of starter to room temperature. Stir the starter down with a fork. Pour 1/4 to 1/2 cup into a clean jar.
2. "Feed" the transferred starter by using a fork to stir in 1/2 cup of all-purpose flour (or your chosen starter flour) and 1/2 cup of unchlorinated water. Loosely cover the jar with a paper coffee filter or paper towel. Let the starter sit for 12 hours at room temperature.
3. Feed the starter again by stirring in another 1/2 cup of flour and 1/2 cup of water (make the feeding larger if you need more than 1-1/2 cups of starter for a recipe). Loosely cover the jar for another 12 hours at room temperature.
4. Pour out the amount needed for the recipe. Feed the remaining starter with 1/2 cup of flour and 1/2 cup of water. Loosely cover the jar and leave at room temperature for at least 2 hours.
5. Screw on a canning ring over the paper cover and jar and return the jar to the fridge.

Tips & Tricks

- Building up a small volume of starter (or waking up a larger volume that has become dormant) generates some "discard," but you don't have to it throw away. Use this excess starter in the Sourdough Pancake Recipe or the Applesauce Walnut Bread Recipe in the sourdough guide at Almanac.com.