

## Sourdough Country Bread

### Ingredients:

- 350 g filtered water (*1 ½ cups*)
- 100 g active starter (*½ cup*)
- 465 g bread flour (*3 ¾ cups*) \* **[see note]**
- 10 g salt (*1 ½ tsp*)

### Directions:

- 1) **Mix** all ingredients together to form a shaggy dough.
- 2) Allow the dough to rest for 30 minutes before beginning the strengthening process.
- 3) **Strengthen the dough:** Complete four to six sets of folds within the first two hours of fermentation. I prefer to perform six sets: the first three 15 minutes apart as stretch-and-folds, and the second three 30 min apart as coil folds. But, you can do all stretch-and-folds or all coil folds if you prefer.
  - *To stretch and fold the dough:* Pull the dough up as far as it will go without tearing and then fold it completely over to the other side. Perform one fold in each cardinal direction before covering the dough and allowing it to rest once more.
  - *To coil fold the dough:* Pull the dough up from the middle, stretching up as far as it will go. Then, fold the dough under itself in each cardinal direction before covering the dough and allowing it to rest once more.
- 4) **Bulk rise:** Let the dough rest until it increases in size by at least 75%, or up to (*but not over!*) double (*about six hours*).
- 5) **Pre-shape:** Use wet hands to remove the dough from the bowl and turn out onto a clean counter (*you can flour it if you feel more comfortable, but it should not be necessary if the dough was properly strengthened*). Then, using a bench scraper and your hands, tuck and tighten to form a round. Rest, uncovered, on the counter for 20-30 minutes.
- 6) **Shape:** Lightly flour a banneton (*or a towel/cheesecloth inserted into a 1.5 qt mixing bowl*) with rice flour to prevent sticking, or regular flour if you don't have this option (*though, some sticking may occur as the flour is absorbed into the dough during the resting period*). Scoop up the pre-shaped dough and flip it over, so the smooth side is on the counter. Fold the left and right sides of the dough into the middle, then repeat with the top of the dough. Last, take the bottom end of the dough and fold it all the way over, so that the seam you have just created is now touching the counter. Using your hands (*wet, if needed*), tuck and tighten the dough into a smooth ball.

- 7) Transfer to banneton: Using your bench scraper, scoop the dough off the counter and place it, seam side up, into the banneton. Pinch together any holes or open seams, or stitch if needed. Cover with a plastic bag.
- 8) Transfer your dough to the refrigerator until the next day (*8-16 hours*).
- 9) The next day, preheat your oven to 450 F. Insert a Dutch oven onto the top rack, and a pizza stone or baking sheet on the bottom rack\* **[see note]**. Preheat your Dutch oven for at least one hour before baking.
- 10) Remove your boule from the fridge. Turn it out onto a silicone baking mat or a piece of parchment paper.
- 11) **Score:** Using a razor blade or bread lame, make one score 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep, making sure the razor is angled parallel with the counter for the most prominent ear. (*I used one expansion score for simplicity, but you are welcome to score any design you like at this point, as long as you still have at least one, deep expansion score.*)
- 12) Place your scored boule into the preheated dutch oven and replace the lid.
- 13) **Bake** for 25 minutes with the lid on.
- 14) *Optionally*, five minutes in, score the loaf a second time along the seam where it is expanding. Make sure to keep your razor parallel with the counter. The only purpose of this is to increase expansion and assure a prominent ear on your loaf.
- 15) After 25 minutes, remove the lid of the Dutch oven and bake 20 minutes more.
- 16) The bread is finished when it temps about 200 F.
- 17) **Cool:** Allow your bread to cool for at least 30 minutes before slicing (*to allow the gluten to settle*).
- 18) **Enjoy!**
- 19) **How to store:** Store in a Ziploc bag on the counter for three to five days, or slice and store in the freezer.  
  
**To reheat:** From room temperature, toast 2-3 minutes. From frozen, toast 4-5 minutes. I do this in my air fryer at 400 F.

Notes:

**Bread flour:** THIS IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL! Though all-purpose flour does make bread, it does NOT yield fabulous results. If you want to use all-purpose flour, make sure it is a high quality brand, like King Arthur. In addition, you must be careful not to over-proof and may need to add even more flour to help the dough come together. I HIGHLY recommend bread flour, as it has a higher protein content that will help the gluten bind and create a strong dough.

**Pizza Stone/Baking Sheet:** This is not necessary, but the addition of an object underneath the Dutch oven helps create indirect heat, preventing the bottom of the loaf from burning. You could also use aluminum foil, or sprinkle cornmeal under the parchment paper/silicone bread sling.