

Lemon Poppy Seed Pull-Apart Sourdough Mini Loaves

Sweet Stiff Starter:

- 40 g active starter (3 *tbsp*)
- 40 g filtered water (3 *tbsp*)
- 80 g all-purpose flour ($\frac{2}{3}$ *cup*)
- 10 g white sugar (2 *tsp*)

Tangzhong:

- 120 g buttermilk (or milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ *cup*)
- 25 g all-purpose flour (3 *tbsp*)

Buttermilk Mixture:

- 240 g buttermilk (or milk, 1 *cup*)
- 80 g white sugar ($\frac{1}{3}$ *cup*)
- 5 *tbsp* butter, cubed (70 g)

Main Dough:

- 180 g all-purpose flour (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ *cups*)
- 180 g bread flour (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ *cups*)
- 7 g salt (1 *tsp*)
- All of the buttermilk mixture
- All of the tangzhong (*cooled*)
- All of the sweet stiff starter

Filling:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ *cup* sugar (120 g)
- Zest of two lemons
- 2 *tsp* poppy seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ *cup* softened butter (1 *stick*; 113 g)

Frosting:

- 3 oz softened cream cheese (85 g)
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ *tbsp* softened or melted butter (21 g)
- 2 *tbsp* lemon juice (1 *lemon*, about 30 g)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ *cup* powdered sugar (105 g)
- Poppy seeds, for sprinkling

Directions:

- 1) **Make the sweet stiff starter.** Mix together all ingredients for the sweet stiff starter 8-12 hours before beginning this recipe. Cover and rest at room temperature.
- 2) **Make the tangzhong.** Combine all ingredients for the tangzhong in a small saucepan. Heat over medium-low heat, whisking continuously, until the mixture thickens. Cover tightly with plastic wrap (to prevent a skin from forming) and cool completely before incorporating into the dough. This can be done 8-12 hours beforehand with the sweet stiff starter and placed in the fridge, or before mixing the dough and cooled in the freezer.
- 3) **Warm the buttermilk mixture.** In a separate, small saucepan, combine the buttermilk, sugar, and butter. Stir almost continuously (to prevent the buttermilk from curdling), until the butter is partially melted, the sugar is dissolved, and the mixture is warm (not hot) to the touch, 90-100 F. *NOTE:* Buttermilk curdles easily when warmed, so be careful not to overheat this one.
- 4) **Begin the main dough.** Whisk together the flours and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer. Add the buttermilk mixture, tangzhong, and sweet stiff starter. Give it a rough stir.
- 5) **Knead the dough.**
 - **KitchenAid:** Transfer to a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook attachment and knead on a medium speed (*speed 4-6*) 10-15 minutes, until the dough pulls away from (*and “slaps”*) the sides of the bowl and forms a ball around the dough hook. I knead on speed 6 for eight minutes, then slow to speed 4 for five more minutes.
 - **Ankarsrum:** Using the dough hook and scraper attachment, knead on a medium speed (*speed 4-5*) 15-18 minutes, until the dough becomes strong enough to push the scraper away from the side of the bowl. Due to the smaller quantity of dough for this recipe, it may not climb up the dough hook as a sign of readiness, but will pass a windowpane test.
- 6) **Bulk ferment.** Transfer the dough to a proofing container and let the dough rise until it has at least doubled in size. This will take 8-12 hours, so I love to do this as an overnight dough. Mine rose in about 10 hours at 70 F.
- 7) *NOTE:* Now is a good time to take out the butter (for the filling) and cream cheese (for the frosting) to soften.
- 8) After the dough has risen, grease four mini loaf pans and set aside.
- 9) **Make the filling.** Rub the lemon zest into the sugar until it resembles wet sand. This will bring out the oils in the zest, which will enhance the flavor of the lemon. Add the poppy seeds and softened butter, then knead until everything is well combined.

- 10) **Shape the dough.** Flour your working surface. Roll out dough into a 16 inch X 16 inch rectangle. Top with the softened butter and sugar mixture, being sure to go all the way out to the edges of the dough. Cut the dough into 64 squares (2 inch X 2 inch).
- 11) Place one of the greased loaf pans vertically next to your working surface. Stack 16 squares into the loaf pan, stretching each square, if necessary, before stacking. It is okay if the squares are not perfectly even, as this will add character to the final loaf. Be sure the squares do not press into each other; it is important to keep everything as loose as possible so that the dough has plenty of room to expand.
- 12) Turn the loaf pan back to its normal, horizontal position and give it a little shake, if needed. This will ensure the squares are spaced evenly and loosely in the pan. Repeat with the remaining squares and loaves, for a total of four loaves.
- 13) **Final proof.** Cover the loaves and let them rise again until very puffy, 2-4 more hours.
- 14) Preheat your oven to 350 F.
- 15) **Bake** the mini-loaves for 25-30 minutes, until the internal temperature reaches 185 F. It may help to place a half-size sheet pan on the rack underneath the loaves, to catch any butter that may drip over the top of the pan.
- 16) Cool the mini loaves for five minutes in the pan, then remove and place on a wire rack.
- 17) **Make the frosting.** Combine the cream cheese, butter, lemon juice, and powdered sugar in a food processor and process 30-60 seconds, until smooth.
- 18) While the loaves are still warm, spread the frosting all over the top. Sprinkle with poppy seeds.
- 19) **Enjoy!**
- 20) **How to store:** I like to store these in a covered dish on the counter for three to five days.

To reheat: No need to reheat (unless you want to); enjoy straight from the container on the counter.

Notes:

- This recipe can be made without tangzhong, if desired. Skip the tangzhong, use 320 g (1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups) of buttermilk (or milk) in the buttermilk mixture, and use 200 g (1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups) of both all-purpose flour and bread flour in the main dough.
- I like to use a split between all-purpose flour and bread flour in recipes like this, but you can use all of one or the other. If using 100% all-purpose flour, your dough may be a little wetter and may not come together as quickly during kneading. It may be necessary to add a touch more flour. If using 100% bread flour, your dough will be stronger and will come together quicker during kneading.

If you desire to make this recipe without tangzhong, use these ingredient proportions instead:

Sweet Stiff Starter:

- 40 g active starter (3 *tblsp*)
- 40 g filtered water (3 *tblsp*)
- 80 g all-purpose flour ($\frac{2}{3}$ *cup*)
- 10 g white sugar (2 *tsp*)

Buttermilk Mixture:

- 320 g buttermilk (or milk, 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups)**
- 80 g white sugar ($\frac{1}{3}$ *cup*)
- 5 *tblsp* butter, cubed (70 g)

Main Dough:

- 200 g all-purpose flour (1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups)**
- 200 g bread flour (1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups)**
- 7 g salt (1 *tsp*)
- All of the buttermilk mixture
- All of the sweet stiff starter

Filling:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ *cup* sugar (120 g)
- Zest of two lemons
- 2 *tsp* poppy seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ *cup* softened butter (1 *stick*; 113 g)

Frosting:

- 3 oz softened cream cheese (85 g)
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