

Sourdough Pan de Cristal

Ingredients:

- 500 strong bread flour
- 525 g water
- 100 g active starter
- 10 g salt

Directions:

- 1) **Mix** together all ingredients (*any order you choose*).
- 2) Let the dough rest for 45 minutes, then begin the strengthening process.
- 3) **Strengthen the dough:** Perform four sets of coil folds, 45 minutes apart. Lift the dough up from the middle, and allow it to fall over itself. Repeat until the dough is able to hold itself together decently, about 4-8 folds/set.
- 4) **Bulk ferment:** Let the dough rise until it has doubled in size * (**see note**).
- 5) Shape and bake the dough right away, or refrigerate 8-16 hours.
- 6) Preheat your oven to 475 F (*Optionally, preheat a baking stone. I do not use one in this recipe.*) Set your oven racks so that one is on top and another is on the bottom.
- 7) **Shape** the dough: dump the dough out onto a floured counter and divide into four equal sections. Transfer the dough to parchment paper * (**see note**).
- 8) Boil some water in a tea kettle or on the stovetop.
- 9) Transfer the boiling water to a water-safe loaf pan, and place on the top rack of your preheated oven.
- 10) Transfer your loaves to the back side of a 9X13 baking sheet and place on the bottom oven rack. Or, transfer the loaves onto your preheated baking stone.
- 11) **Bake** at 475 for 10 minutes.
- 12) After 10 minutes, remove the steam and baking sheet * (**see notes**). Transfer the loaves to the top oven rack.
- 13) **Reduce the oven temperature** to 400 F and bake 20 more minutes, until golden and the internal temperature registers at least 190 F. Add 5-10 more minutes if you want a darker crust.
- 14) **Cool** on a cooling rack 20-30 minutes before slicing.
- 15) **Enjoy!**

Notes:

Bulk ferment: It takes my dough about 6 hours to double on the counter at room temperature. You can also use a heating aid here (ex - proofer or dough mat). If you do warm your dough AND plan to refrigerate, do not let it get to double. This is because it will continue to rise in the fridge until it cools, and we do not want it to over-proof.

Shaping: This dough is typically heavily floured, due to its high hydration. I do not find this necessary. I simply wet my hands and bench scraper. You can do as you like for this step.

Baking: You can bake all four loaves at once, if your oven will allow it. I was able to fit two 9X13 baking sheets in the oven, one on the bottom rack and the other on the top rack beside my loaf pan of boiling water. You will need to add at least 5 minutes to the initial baking time (at 475 F, until the loaves are fully puffed up and the outside is partially cooked), then remove the steam (and both baking sheets) and transfer all the loaves to the top rack. Reduce the oven temperature to 400 F and bake the remaining 20 minutes, or until the internal temperature is 190 F and the loaves are browned to your liking.

Baking: Removing the stone or baking sheet is absolutely necessary, as I have found the bottom of the loaves will not brown properly if it is not removed. This is because the baking stone or sheet redistributes the heat (similar to what would happen if you placed one under a Dutch oven while making a country loaf of sourdough, which I do to prevent burning) and actually prevents the bottom from browning. I even struggled with even browning when using a preheated baking stone or sheet in the middle of my oven the entire time. I truly prefer this baking method best for this bread.