

Loaded Sourdough Bialy

For the dough:

- 250 g water
- 75 g active starter
- 360 g bread flour (*I use King Arthur Bread Flour*)
- 7 g salt

For the filling:

- 4 oz softened cream cheese
- 6-8 slices bacon, cooked crispy and diced
- 2 tsp ranch seasoning
- ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- Chives to taste

Other ingredients:

- Cornmeal, for dusting
- Cheddar cheese, for topping the bialy

Directions:

- 1) **Mix** and knead all ingredients for the dough (water, starter, flour, and salt) for 5 minutes. The flour should be completely incorporated and gluten development should be initiated. Cover the dough and rest for 30 minutes.
- 2) **Strengthen** the dough.
 - **Knead the dough for 3-5 minutes.** Set a timer and stop kneading when the timer is up. It is not essential to develop the dough completely, as this recipe uses a hybrid method (kneading/folds) to develop the dough, meaning we will finish developing the dough through folds. You can use any method of kneading here that you feel comfortable with - bowl folds, bench kneading, slap-and-folds, or Rubaud mixing. Cover and let the dough rest for 30 minutes before beginning stretch-and-folds. The dough should have formed a windowpane after this rest period, before stretch-and-folds begin.
 - **Stretch-and-fold the dough (3-4 sets).** Using two hands, stretch the dough up as far as it will go without tearing, then fold it all the way over to the other side. Repeat at least once in each cardinal direction, or until the dough will not stretch anymore (4-8 folds). Cover and let the dough rest for 30 minutes before doing another set of stretch and folds. Perform three to four sets of folds in total, until the dough does not stretch anymore.

- 3) **Bulk ferment** the dough. Let the dough rest until it has doubled in size, 10-11 hours at 70 F.
- 4) Heavily dust a half-size sheet pan with cornmeal.
- 5) **Shape** the dough. Divide the dough into eight pieces, 80-85g each. Shape each piece into a round. To do this, pull the dough toward you, using your pinkies to tuck the dough under itself and tighten the surface. Repeat until a nice, tight round is formed.
- 6) Transfer each round onto the cornmeal-laden sheet pan, coating the entire outside (top, bottom, and sides) of the dough with cornmeal.
- 7) **Final proof.** Let the dough proof again until noticeably puffy and almost doubled once more, 2-4 hours at 70 F.
- 8) Preheat an oven to 500 F for at least one hour before baking the bialy.
- 9) **Make the filling.** Combine all ingredients for the topping in a small bowl until well incorporated.
- 10) **Final shape.** When the oven is finished preheating, the bialy are finished proofing, and the filling has been made, prepare the bialy for the oven. Take each round and, working from the middle, rotate and stretch the dough to expand the round, allowing gravity to pull the dough downward. We want the outer edges to be like a bagel, but we want to keep a thin sheet of dough in the center (no hole). Transfer to parchment paper (to be transferred to a baking stone, or a baking sheet lined with parchment paper if you do not have a baking stone). Use your fingers to make an indentation defining the center of the bialy, then firmly press down in the center to remove any extra air. If the center is not thin enough, it will pop up in the hot oven (like pita bread) and will spill the filling everywhere.
- 11) Fill the center of each bialy with 1 tbsp of the filling.
- 12) Optionally, spray the tops of the bialy with water (this helps them expand properly in my gas oven).
- 13) **Bake** at 500 F for 10 minutes, with steam (so the dough can expand properly). You can use any preferred method of steam that works for your home oven (boiling water, ice, lava rocks, etc.).
- 14) After 10 minutes, remove the steam and top with cheddar cheese. Bake 5-8 minutes more, until the cheese is bubbly and the bialy are dark brown.
- 15) Cool for 15-20 minutes, then enjoy fresh.