

Building a Sourdough from Scratch (3-4 day Levain Build)

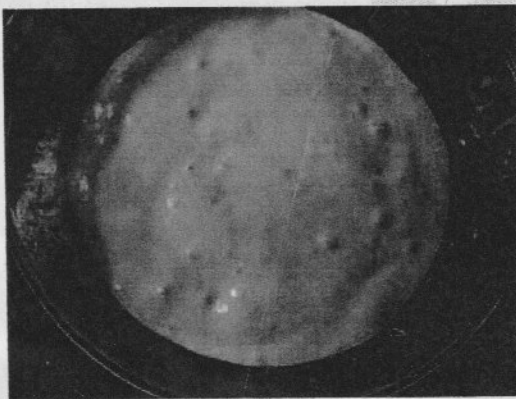
Top tips before starting

- Ensure containers for mixing and fermenting are sterile. Use boiling water.
- Ensure good personal hygiene.
- Use organic and/or untreated flours
- For the mother and chef stages use water at 35°C : For the levain use water at 18°C
- Make sure the container is the correct size and apply a lid; the process is mainly anaerobic.
- Use flours with higher ash content for best results.

Stage 1 – The Mother

To start the process of building a mature levain a catalyst is required as well as flour and water. Typically a catalyst could be raisins or honey which will aid and stimulate the wild yeast. Although a catalyst is not essential as the flour should provide the entire micro flora to achieve a good sourdough.

Combine the flours, and water (35°C) and mix together, cover and allow to rest at 27°C for 12 hours.



Stage 2 – The chef

To the mother add more water (35°C) and flour and combine, cover and allow to rest for 24 hours at 27°C. After this time there should be a little CO₂ and volume in the chef.

Stage 3 – The levain

Add flour and water (18°C) to the remaining chef and mix, cover and allow to rest for a further 24 hours. When mature the levain will look bubbly and have a very mild lactic aroma.

After the 24 hours fermentation period in stage 3 the levain is ready to use.

Repeat stage 3 to refresh the levain, always hold some of the levain back for refreshment. Feeding will greatly rely on your requirements. Always keep the flour and water ratio the same so the recipe is balanced at all times.

3 day scratch levain recipe

Ingredient	Stage 1 - Mother	Stage 2 - Chef	Stage 3 - Levain
Organic wheat flour	45g	45g	100g
Dark rye flour	5g	5g	
Water	40ml	40ml	80ml
Mother		90g	
Chef			180g
Total	90	180	360

Feeding your Sourdough/Levain

Ingredient	G	Bakers %
Organic/untreated wheat flour	100	100
Water *	60 - 100	60 - 100
Mature levain *	10	10 < >

Comments

High ash content flours will speed up the fermentation rate and change the acidity profile and level. Non wheat and gluten free flours will have a similar impact.

The level of water will impact on the speed of fermentation and also impact on the acidity profile.

The level of mature levain will impact on maturity rate.

Drying Sourdough/Levain

It's a good idea to dry out your sourdough in case you need it as a back up. It will keep for months or up to a year in an airtight container or even freezing in a thick polythene sealed bag.

After all it's very similar to dried yeast but with addition of the lactobacilli bacteria, flour and water from the feeding.

Recipe for drying sourdough

Ingredient	G	Bakers %
Organic/untreated wheat flour	100	100
Water *	100	100
Mature levain *	10	10

Stage 1

Combine all ingredients together in a bowl and mix by hand until a smooth paste is formed.

Stage 2

Thinly spread the paste evenly over baking parchment and then place on top of a cooling wire.

Stage 3

Allow to air dry at room temperature for 1 – 2 days or until fully dried. It should resemble a poppadum!

Stage 4

Either using a pestle and mortar or food blender reduce to a fine powder and store in an airtight container. Store in a cool dry place avoiding sunlight or place into the freezer.

Reviving the Dried Sourdough/Levain

The sourdough is simply being revived by using moisture and temperature to "wake up" the dormant wild yeast and lactobacilli.

Recipe

Ingredient	G	Bakers %
Organic/untreated wheat flour	100	100
Water (35°C)	100	100
Dried sourdough/levain	100	100

Stage 1

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix by hand until a smooth paste is formed. Cover and allow to ferment for 24 hours at 30 - 35°C.

Stage 2

Ready to use.

THE SCHOOL OF
ARTISAN FOOD
COPYRIGHT