

Sourdough Bread San Francisco Style

An old favorite of mine, from the 1960's

Internet address:



- 1 1/2 cups hot water
- 1 package active dry yeast
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger (I know, it's odd)
- 1/4 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1 cup sourdough batter
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 3 1/2 cups bread flour
- 1 cup bread flour, or maybe 1 1/2 cups used on the kneading board

Carolyn T's Blog - Tasting Spoons
<http://tastingspoons.com>

Servings: 28

Notes: The ground ginger and sugar in the yeast mixture adds no flavor - it's there only to give the yeast a little something to feed on. It's an old "trick" I learned in the 1960s when I first started baking bread. It gives the yeast a little jump start, supposedly.

1. In a 2-cup measuring glass cup (or something similar, but NOT metal) add the hot tap water (not too hot or it will kill the yeast) and ground ginger and tiny bit of sugar, then sprinkle in the yeast, stirring to dissolve. Set aside for about 5-10 minutes to allow the yeast to bloom. If it doesn't get lumpy and bubbly, it may not be active yeast anymore.
2. Place sourdough batter in a large bowl and add sugar, salt, then add the yeast mixture along with a cup or so of flour. Stir well so all the ingredients are thoroughly mixed before adding more flour. Add about 3 more cups of flour and stir until it's one big ball of dough, adding a bit more flour if needed to bring it together.
3. [If you wear rings, I recommend you take them off for this step and for Step #5.] Pour the mixture out onto your kitchen counter - sprinkle the board and the dough very lightly with more flour - and knead for 3-4 minutes until the dough is one cohesive ball and has no streaks of flour. It's better if this dough (at this point) is VERY STICKY. You can also do this step with a dough hook on your stand mixer, or the plastic dough blade in the food processor. Don't over-work the dough at this point.
4. Roll dough into a lightly greased bowl (big enough to allow the dough to double in size) and place in a warm environment - about 90°F for 1 1/2-2 hours until the dough has doubled.
5. Punch dough down and pour out onto a flour-sprinkled surface again and knead well for 8-10 minutes (or use the dough hook of stand mixer or dough blade in food processor) and work the dough until it's a very smooth ball, elastic in texture. Add more flour in very small increments if the dough is too sticky. The aim is to just barely keep the stickiness under control. Adding more flour at this point can make a dry loaf of bread.
6. Using your hands mold the dough into an elongated oval, or a large round, or into 2 loaf shapes for bread pans. Pull the outside edges down and underneath so you have a very smooth surface. NOTE: sometimes sourdough bread just won't hold its shape on a flat baking sheet surface, but will rise and just spread out rather than up. If that happens, you'll need to confine it in a bread pan or some other shaped pan or oven-proof casserole dish so it has sides to contain it.
7. Dampen a light weight cotton kitchen towel (not terrycloth because it will snag on the dough) and lay it over the sourdough and place the loaf, again, in a warm place. It will take less time to rise, about 1 - 1 1/2 hours.
8. Preheat oven to 400°F. Place a shallow pan of just-under-boiling water on an oven shelf below the shelf for the bread. Brush the outside edges of the bread with water and use a very sharp knife (serrated works) to cut at least 2 slashes (about 3 inches long each) across the dough, near the top, at least an inch or 2 apart. Bake for 35 minutes for bread loaves, about 40 minutes for a French (oval) shaped loaf) and about 55 minutes for one very large round loaf.

Yield: 2 loaves

Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 82 Calories; trace Fat (4.2% calories from fat); 3g Protein; 16g Carbohydrate; trace Dietary Fiber; 0mg Cholesterol; 153mg Sodium. Exchanges: 1 Grain(Starch); 0 Lean Meat; 0 Fat; 0 Other Carbohydrates.