

Speaker 1: [00:02](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. So sourdough is something that captured my imagination way back at the beginning of my homestead journey. I actually found an old recipe book I had created around sourdough the other day and I had a little post it note that said date of first starter October 11 2010 which literally was right at the beginning of when I even understood what homesteading was. It was a long time ago, but I have been doing sourdough on and off since then. And I've learned a few things, not only how to make my own starter, but also how to keep it going and not let it take over your life. So I've talked about sourdough in my prairie homestead cookbook and in the heritage cooking crash course series. However, I know sometimes it just helps to hear someone talk you through the process. So in today's episode, I'm going to tell you exactly how I start my own sourdough starters from thin air, no cultures or special ingredients required.

Speaker 1: [01:12](#) I am your host Jill winger. And for the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you who feel dischanted by modern life, I'll help you leave the rat race and create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills. So I've had some massive sourdough failures, numerous failures over the years. I've done the classic brick loaf that you can use as a paperweight or a doorstep. And I've had the loaves that taste way too sour or have the texture of a sandpaper that no one wants to eat. And I've killed the starter. I've cooked the sour sourdough starter by accident. I have let it die on the counter. I've neglected it in the fridge. Uh, I've done a lot of things. So, I know how to fail at sourdough, but I also have learned a method that works for me.

Speaker 1: [02:10](#) So today I just want to talk about how to make your own starter. Cause this is a question I get a ton and in a future episode I will walk you through how I care for my starter and use it, whether that's on a regular basis or more of an intermittent basis. But today it's all about how to get one going. Now, like I mentioned in the introduction, I have a full sourdough recipe along with extra recipes in the Prairie homestead cookbook. So if you have my cookbook, I think it's in the pantry staples section in the back, you will find my sourdough technique right there. And if you have the heritage cooking crash course, there's a whole video module, several of them actually where I take you into my kitchen and show you the sourdough in some of the things I make with it.

Speaker 1: [03:01](#) But today is kind of the down and dirty version of how I do this. It is not as complicated as you think. I have a lot of folks who

come to me who are overthinking the sourdough process and I promise you it is not complicated. So let's dive in. Here we go. Okay. So a few things to know before you start. If you have other things, culturing in your kitchen, kombucha, Kiefer, sauerkraut, whatever, you want to keep your sourdough starter away from them, which surprises a lot of people, but they actually can cross contaminate, which makes them all funky and not super edible. So just keep it farther away. I have my kombucha continuous brew system on my Island and then I kind of keep my sourdough over in the opposite corner of my kitchen. I don't have a massive kitchen and I don't really overthink this.

Speaker 1: [03:56](#) Basically, I just would encourage you not to have them side by side. You'll probably be fine. Also, do not use chlorinated water to feed your sourdough starter. If you live in town and you have chlorine in your tap water though, here's a quick fix. You can pour some water into a jar or a bowl and then leave it on your counter overnight. Uncovered chlorine actually evaporates pretty quickly. So as long as you give it a chance to evaporate, most of it should be gone from the water in the morning and then you can safely use that to feed your starter without having to worry about the chlorine killing off any of the beneficial organisms in your starter. Also there are lots of different ways to do this. And so if you Google how to make your own sourdough starter, you will find 5 million different techniques and tweaks and varieties.

Speaker 1: [04:56](#) I would suggest that you pick a method and you just go with it. Whether that's my method or someone else's, you will drive yourself crazy trying to take something from all of them. So just pick one and odds are you'll be just fine. They all kind of work out the same. In the end, we just all have different preferences and little things that we do. I personally use flour and water to start my starters. There's people who suggest sugar and grapes and potato flakes, and I've just never ever found those things to be necessary. It's just an added step with more risk for weirdness or contamination. So I just keep mine super simple. There are dehydrated sourdough starters that you can buy online and those are an option you can do that. They might give you a starter, a little bit of a jumpstart or introduce different flavor strains into your starter if you're going for a certain Tang with your sourdough.

Speaker 1: [06:00](#) But again, I've tried those in the past. I've made my own just out of flour and water and I haven't noticed a huge difference. So generally I just go with the cheap easy method and skip the commercial sourdough starter packets. If you have a friend with

a starter, you can absolutely grab a little bit of culture from them. That's an option. And then just start feeding it at home. So lots of ways to get started. But it doesn't have to be complicated no matter which method you choose. So we're going to gather our materials first. Like I mentioned, you're going to need flour and water. I recommend whole wheat flour for your first initial dose. You don't have to do that. The whole wheat tends to be more whole obviously, and it has more of those beneficial bacterias on it. So it can give your starter just a little bit of a headstart.

Speaker 1: [06:58](#) Again, not necessary. So don't go out and buy whole wheat just for this. If you have it already, might be a good time to break it out. Also, make sure that you use a big enough jar for your starter. You can start in a pint or a quart eventually, you might kind of run out of space because sourdough starter grows and especially if you're not using it and you're not discarding it regularly. So I kinda stick with a two quart or half gallon Mason jar for mine. It gives me enough for when the starter gets really active and bubbly and rises to the top, there's enough room for it and I don't have to worry about it overflowing, which has definitely happened to me in the past. And like I said, just a reminder, excuse me, use that uncoordinated water for sure. And preferably unbleached flour as you feed and maintain your starter.

Speaker 1: [07:54](#) Okay, so here is the actual process. So simple, you're not going to believe this. Okay? So what you do first, you're going to take a half a cup of whole wheat flour and mix it with a quarter cup of water. Now, depending on what type of wholewheat flour you're using, if it's really course, you may need to add a little bit more water. We're looking for a slurry, but it needs to be on the thick side. So I would say you want this to look like thick pancake batter. If it's really, really, really thick, then you need to add a little bit more water than that quarter cup just to get that consistency. But don't worry, it doesn't have to be perfection. Just get it close and close counts. So you're going to mix the flour and water in the dark. You're going to stir it vigorously. Then you're going to loosely cover it.

Speaker 1: [08:42](#) And this can just be putting the lid on, but not screwing it on. Just kind of setting the lid on top. Or you can take a dish cloth and a rubber band or a paper coffee filter and a rubber band, whatever. We just don't want it air tight. And then we're going to let it sit for 24 hours. Now after that 24 hours is up, you're going to add another half cup of flour. Generally at this point I switched over to unbleached all purpose flour and I add another quarter cup of water. I stir it, I cover it back up loosely and I let

it sit for another 24 hours. Okay? Now at this point, after that second 24 hours, hopefully you're going to see some bubbles start in your starter, kind of at the bottom, they'll be little, you'll see them through the glass. You may not though, so don't worry if they're not visible, but you may see them at this point in the process.

Speaker 1: [09:35](#) Now step three, the next day, before you feed it, this time, kind of the third round, you're going to discard half of the starter. So you're gonna pour half of it out, which I understand might cause alarm for some of you cause I don't like wasting things either. But at this point if you keep feeding it, it's just going to get ginormous and take over your kitchen. So we kind of have to keep those ratios in the right level to make sure that we're not wasting flour in the long run. So at this point the starter is not going to be super sour. It's not going to be super beneficial to any recipe. I guess if you wanted to, you could use it to make sourdough pancakes or something like that, but you probably won't have a whole lot of it and it's probably just easier to put it in your compost pile or give it to your chickens or something like that.

Speaker 1: [10:26](#) So dump out half of it and then feed the starter that's remaining in the jar with another half cup of flour and a quarter cup of water. Stir cover and sit for 24 hours. And at this point it's kind of like Groundhog day. You're just going to be repeating that over and over until the starter doubles and gets all bubbly and happy within four to six hours of you feeding it. So people sometimes get panicky at this point. They are on day four, day five, and they're not really seeing bubbles yet or they saw a few bubbles and then the bubbles stop. And I'm going to encourage you just to keep going. I would say give your starter at least seven to 10 days before you make a judgment call on it. Sometimes it just takes time. Sometimes it needs a little more warmth. The cultures will be happier when your house is warm.

Speaker 1: [11:20](#) So if your, your kitchen is cool and drafty, then you may need to move it to a warmer location in your house. I wouldn't recommend direct sunlight, but just maybe a place that's closer to the heater or closer to the stove without scorching it obviously. Sometimes it has to do with the flour you're using. So perhaps if you're not seeing bubbles after a week and it doesn't look any different, try a different variety of flour. A different brand. Maybe one that's more organic or more, uh, whole wheat, see what happens and maybe the water you're using. I've heard stories that occasionally there are locations or people's homes that just don't have enough wild yeast floating in the air to get into the culture. But honestly, I've never had

that happen and I haven't heard any first hand stories of that happening. Most everybody I know is able to get their culture going with a wild yeast in their house.

Speaker 1:

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However, if worst comes to worse and you're just not having results, you can discard the starter that won't take off for you. And you could use a commercial starter as a, as a starting point just to kind of get things rolling. So once your starter is happy and active and it doubles consistently after each daily feeding. And I should have mentioned at this point, I'm just feeding my starter once a day, then it is ready for you to start using it in recipes. Whether it is breads or you're using it in pancakes or the brownies in the Prairie Homestead cookbook or crackers or whatever. So in an upcoming episode that will be coming very soon. I will be diving into some of my strategies for how I care and maintain a sourdough starter without burning through tons of flour, without having to be baking every day of my life.

Speaker 1:

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Right? There's some tricks of the trade that will make sourdough fit into your lifestyle without kind of running your calendar for you. So for now, I just want you to get that starter going, get out the flour in the water and then we'll go from there with some more tips than a future episode. So I hope that was inspiring and know that heritage cooking and old fashioned kitchen skills don't have to be complicated. They can be much more simple than you think. It just helps to have someone showing you the way. And speaking of that, if you are falling in love with the idea of an old fashioned intentional kitchen full of nourishing food, you will love my heritage kitchen handbook. It's a little ebook that I put together last year and it's full of my very best tricks for cooking and eating like a farmer, no matter where you live, you can grab it for free over at www.dotheritagekitchenhandbook.com and that's it for now. If you have a minute and you enjoyed this episode, I would appreciate it so much if you had to pop over to your favorite podcast player and leave a quick review so more people can find this podcast. But thanks for listening and we will catch up on the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcasts. Happy homesteading.