

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. So today's an extra special episode. I'm actually streaming this recording live as I record it for you, my podcast listeners. So this is a sourdough Q and A. Basically everything you've ever wanted to know about why your sourdough starter is doing this or doing that, or smells weird or smells good, we're going to be addressing it. Hopefully I have a quite a list, so I think we're going to cover it in this podcast episode. So let's get started. I'm your host Jill Winger, and this is the podcast for the trailblazers, the Mavericks, the makers, the homesteaders, the modern pioneers, and the backyard farmers. If you've ever found yourself disenchanted with conformity and you kind of like to swim upstream while the rest of society rides the river of least resistance, well you have found your tribe. All right, so I'm just going to roll into these questions.

Speaker 1 ([01:03](#)):

We're going to go rapid fire and I'm going to try to get through as many as possible because at one o'clock my time I have to switch hats, put on my homeschool mom hat and go and be homeschool mom on a zoom call for our homeschool co-op with my nine year old daughter. So here we go. We're going to go rapid fire buckle up. Okay. The first question I got this one a bunch is why is my starter separating? Okay, why does it have black liquid on top? Why does it have a clear liquid on bottom? There is some different separation stuff happening. So first off, the most common separation would be a black or gray liquid on top. Rest assured that this is perfectly fine. This is normal. It's called hooch, believe it or not. And it's basically a waste product of the sourdough.

Speaker 1 ([01:56](#)):

And it happens when Mr Sourdough starter or Mrs Sourdough starter has eaten up all its food and it's ready for more. And so the good news is, is that you can either dump it off or you can stir it back in, but it's not a big deal. Even though it looks alarming. Right? When you see it on the jar, you're like, I killed it. I knew I was going to kill it and I killed it. But it's, it's totally fine. So if it's that gray liquid on top, you can blend it right back in. Um, but another question that I've been seeing pop up is some people will say that in their brand new baby starters, they're actually getting liquid on the bottom and it's a clear liquid kind of underneath the flour and the flour layer. So that's actually fairly common. I haven't had it happen all the time, but in new starters it can occur.

Speaker 1 ([02:46](#)):

And your best option for that would to just be, keep feeding it, maybe feed it a little more often, maybe try different water, maybe try different flour, maybe feed it twice a day instead of once a day. But don't worry quite yet. Just try switching things up, stirring it vigorously when you feed it. And I'm guessing that will correct itself. No, I meant to do this beginning. I'm going to mention it again in case you missed it. I'm not going to go through the step by step of how to start a starter today. Cause I just put up a blog post with everything you need to know and I feel like reading that info and seeing pictures is a little bit easier than me trying to describe it to you. So we have a link to that. You can go check that out and print off the recipe if you like.

Speaker 1 ([03:33](#)):

If you want to know how to start from ground zero, but in this question and answer session, I really want to more cover the problems that you guys are seeing or do some troubleshooting with you. So that's kind of the goal of what we're doing today. Okay. Next question. Do I always have to discard half of the starter or can sometimes I feed it without discarding to bulk it up? And my answer is absolutely. If

you know you're going to be doing a lot of baking on a given day, feel free to just add more flour and water and just bulk that baby up. Let me show you mine. I brought him out to the office. I don't have a name but it's boy, I'm pretty sure. And you can see mine's pretty dark right now. And I'm sorry for those of you listening on the podcast, you cannot see this.

Speaker 1 ([04:20](#)):

I'm showing it to my Facebook live people. It's darker because I've been feeding it whole wheat flour because you can't buy all purpose flour at the store right now. And I'm rationing the one bag I have left. So sourdough can do just fine with whole wheat, but you can see I have about a cup and a half of starter in here because I'm going to be probably making sourdough pancakes in the next day or two. And I need a, a big bulk of starter. So if I want to add more to this, like maybe in the morning I'll feed it a cup of flour, I'll feed it. Um, I dunno, three quarters cups of water and call it good. The only reason you discard is basically, well there's two reasons. Number one, it's to keep your sourdough starter from eventually needing a swimming pool to contain it, right?

Speaker 1 ([05:04](#)):

Cause it if you keep adding it on a one to one ratio, like it'll just grow and grow and grow and you'll have a ridiculous amount of starter. And then the second reason is it just saves you money and flour. You don't have to feed it as much with the discard. You can still make a lot of things. So a lot of folks get really worried and they're like, I don't want to waste things. I don't want to pour it down the drain. But like you don't have to, cause you can use it in brownies and crackers and biscuits and pancakes. And if you have my cookbook, there's a whole bunch of sourdough discard recipes in there. That makes it really, really simple. Okay, next question. Do you have to feed your starter two times per day? No, you don't have to. You can sometimes sourdough connoisseurs.

Speaker 1 ([05:52](#)):

Will recommend a two times a day or even three times a day, especially if you have a sluggish starter is just not taking off. However, I usually feed mine once a day, like eight o'clock in the morning. That's my time. I feed it when I'm cleaning up breakfast dishes and it's perfectly fine. So there's a lot of opinions and there's a lot of flexibility with sourdough. And you'll hear a lot of different voices recommend a lot of different things. So ultimately you just kinda gotta figure out what rhythm works for you and what makes your starter the happiest. Okay. Next question. Can you use heritage wheat or things like rye flour, einkorn flour, spelt, et cetera? Absolutely. Rye flour is traditionally used in sourdough and it makes a fantastic starter. It's really, really a good flour option. And einkorn and if you're not familiar with einkorn, it's a type of heritage wheat that has a different type of gluten.

Speaker 1 ([06:57](#)):

And a lot of folks who struggle with our modern wheat can handle einkorn. You can totally make an einkorn sourdough starter. There's a lot of tutorials for that online. Just keep in mind it behaves a little bit differently. So for example, if you try to follow my sourdough starter tutorial that's on my blog and you're using einkorn flour and you're expecting it to bubble the same way and double the same way, then it is probably going to disappoint you because einkorn flour is going to be a little runnier in your starter. It's not going to bubble as high and rise as much, but it can still be done absolutely. And make some really, really good bread products as a result. Okay. Why does your starter get moldy or why does a starter get moldy? This question always surprises me when it pops up.

Speaker 1 ([07:47](#)):

I've never actually had a starter mold, so I had to do some research on this. And it seems like the most common reason that starters will get mold on them, is because there is some contamination either in the jars or in the flour itself. That's where that mold is going to come from. So if you're really, really struggling with this, you know, and you, you keep making starters and they keep getting moldy, I would suggest number one, making sure that jars and utensils you use are very, very clean. And number two, maybe switch up your flour. It's possible if you're buying flour at the store, maybe it's been sitting around for a while in a damp place or a warehouse and it has some more mold stuff going on with it. So try switching up flowers and giving it another try. Okay. When is a sourdough starter active and how do you tell?

Speaker 1 ([08:42](#)):

This is a great question because this is the key to making sourdough bread that actually behaves like bread and it isn't a brick, right? So when we first start our baby sourdough starter, it looks like flour and water because that's what it is. And it takes a little bit of time for all that wild yeast, whether it's in the air or the flour, depends on who you talk to. And that's a hotly debated topic, let me tell ya. Uh, but anyway, it takes a little while for that wild yeast to do its thing. So we only want to make things like bread or dinner rolls or cinnamon rolls. You know, the stuff that has to rise. We only want to do that when our starter is active and we know it's active when it starts to bubble consistently. After we feed it, I would say within four to six hours after feeding, it needs to be bubbling and growing up the jar, we also know it's active when it starts to really smell tangy.

Speaker 1 ([09:40](#)):

And we're going to talk about that more in a minute. The smell and the taste of sourdough when it has that really refreshing sour smell. And I wish we had scratch and sniff on Facebook live so I could help you understand what the smell is supposed to smell like. Cause some people, feel like, Oh my sourdough is bad cause it smells sour. And I'm like, no, that's, that's what you want. And there is a good sour and a bad sour. But when it smells good, when it's bubbly, you can see with mine. I hope you can see it. For those of you who are watching the video, it doesn't have a lot of bubbles in it right now. It just is kind of liquidy and flat. I would not use this starter for bread right now. I would, it would not, it would not help my bread rise and it would be a disappointment.

Speaker 1 ([10:25](#)):

So I would need to get him a little more happy before I use it for bread. I can use it for pancakes or brownies or whatever the discard recipes are, but not for bread. And if you have a brand new baby starter, you need to give it, I would say 10 to 14 days before you expect it to rise your bread for you because it needs some time. It needs some, it needs some, some days under its belt before it can really do the heavy lifting. Another way you can tell if your sourdough starter is active, you can take a teaspoon of it and plop it in a cup of cool water. And if it floats on top, it probably means it's going to be able to leaven your bread for you. Ultimately, I think this is the part of sourdough that can cause the most frustration for people.

Speaker 1 ([11:11](#)):

And so it's just one of those things like you can look at my videos and you can look at my blog post and find the tutorials online, but you just have to try it a few times and make a few bricks and then you'll start to understand what that starter's gonna look like when it's active and ready to roll. So, just keep on

trucking. You're gonna make mistakes and just, just embrace that and own it and it just part of the process. I can't underscore that enough. Alright. Can, you use freshly ground flour. Absolutely. If you have a grain mill, that's a great option. I've heard of folks, they say their sourdough starter likes the freshly ground flour that's a little bit warm and they'll use that in their starter. I've heard other folks say though, that they think that they're started as better with freshly ground flour that has had, I don't know, five or six days to age first.

Speaker 1 ([12:02](#)):

So try it. Like if you have a grain mill, grind it fresh, feed it for a day, see what happens, or let it sit in your fridge for a week and then feed it. I don't think you can't go wrong either way. I think it'll be just fine. Why is Sour, this one cracked me up. Why is sourdough called sourdough if it's not sour? Well it kinda depends on the starter. Some sour doughs are super sour and some aren't. And that's the beauty of it. A lot of times I'll have folks come to me and they'll say, I've been buying the sourdough loaves at like the grocery store bakery. And I do not like them. I don't think I'm gonna like sourdough. And the cool thing about making your own is that you have the Liberty to adjust the sourness. Right?

Speaker 1 ([12:48](#)):

And so, and here's the other thing. A lot of those loaves at your grocery store bakery are not real sourdough. They have some maybe vinegar or they have some different things in them. Some flavoring agents that give them a sour taste, but it's not the same sour that you would get from true sourdough. So if you don't like bakery, sourdough, try making your own, you might actually like it. But all that to say rabbit trail, the, the sourdough name comes from the process, right? So sourdough is fermentation. It's souring the dough and that's what we call it, call it sourdough. Even though sometimes the things we make with it aren't really that sour. Okay. Now, this next set of questions was super funny because I had a question that came in there. They say, how do I make my bread more sour? I want more Tang.

Speaker 1 ([13:40](#)):

And then the question right underneath it said, I don't like Tang. How do I make my bread sweeter? So it really depends on your pallets and what your family prefers. Here's a couple tips to get it on both ends of the spectrum because you can adjust this. This is the fun part of this process. Okay? Let's say you want your starter to be more sour. You're like a hardcore sourdough connoisseur and you want it tangy, man. Okay? So what you want to do is you want your starter to be a little thicker, use a little bit more flour than maybe it's generally called for. So it's going to be a more flour heavy feeding and a little bit thicker. Also, if you want to use whole wheat flours that can help contribute to increased sourness. Um, and if you do see any of the hooch, the grayish Brown liquid on top, just stir that back in.

Speaker 1 ([14:35](#)):

It has more acid in it. Just keep that acid in that starter, stir that right back in. And then another thing that contributes, to this is, um, the, the rise time. So when you go to make your bread, if you can let it rise in a slightly location and stretch that rise timeout, like sourdough already rises for quite a while, but stretch it out even further in a cool location and um, that will make this the finished product potentially a little bit more sour for you. Okay. Um, okay, so that's the more sour. If we want to go down to the less sour, you're like, I just don't want to do the whole super tangy vibe. So you're going to basically kind of do the opposite. You're going to feed more often. You're going to maybe feed, I don't know, try twice a day, try three times a day.

Speaker 1 ([15:28](#)):

I think three times might be a little bit much for a regular basis, but feed more frequently just to keep it refreshed more and it won't have as much time to just kind of sit in the jar and get super, super sour. And then another thing you can do is to help your loaves rise faster, which means you can get them in an extra warm location or put a little extra starter in those recipes to give it more oomph and it rises faster and it doesn't have as much time to break everything down and make everything super, super sour. So you have control, you just got to have to play with it a little bit. But the good news is you get to decide what it tastes like. Okay. So I'm seeing a few questions come in. Is there a recipe?

Speaker 1 ([16:13](#)):

Yes. If you go up to the show notes or whatever it is, the description of this Facebook live, we have a blog post for you with all of the how to get started info right there so you don't have to take notes. And then also I have put all of my sourdough tutorials along with all my canning tutorials, my fermentation stuff, my gardening stuff. We've bundled it all up, we're calling it the homestead master pack and we've slashed the price down to just like ridiculously low. And you can check that out over theprairiehomestead.com/masterpack and grab that while it's available. Because if you're ready to deep dive into this stuff, if you're like, I'm tired of being independent on the grocery store, I am boosting my self sufficiency. That is going to be the very first step, the best step that you can take.

Speaker 1 ([17:01](#)):

All right, next question. How do you get a loaf with that good open crumb or those nice holes in it? So I totally understand this question because I would use to make sourdough and then I would see the pictures of other people sourdough and there's just didn't look like mine and I felt bad about myself because I'm like, I want it to be like the bakery loaves. So it's pretty simple though. If you want the loaves with the big open crumb and the bubble that looked like that French bakery bread, you just need to have a dough with more hydration. So you need to have a wetter dough. Now, the downfall of this is if you're new to sourdough, wetter doughs are a little bit tricky to handle. They take a little more finesse. And I remember the first time I tried to do a really high hydration dough, like it was like falling on my fingers and it was all over the place.

Speaker 1 ([17:56](#)):

And so when you're first starting, and if you go into my, the sourdough information we have in the master pack, you'll see that those recipes, they don't have giant holes in the bread. They don't have an open crumb because I wanted it to be basic and simple for you guys. So they're a little bit more of a dry dough. But as you get more comfortable, you can increase the water in that dough and how you're folding the doughs. And that's where you're ultimately going to get that sort of artisan bread look on the inside. Okay, what do I do if my kitchen is cold? Great question. Because sourdough definitely prefers a warmer environment. It doesn't have to be hot, but if you have a super drafty old house, you know, I know we used to totally have that where the wind would blow and the curtains would shake inside.

Speaker 1 ([18:45](#)):

Right. Old houses. Gotta love 'em. How do you keep your starter going? Or more importantly, how do you get your sourdough bread to actually rise? So it takes a little bit of, uh, creativity. You can keep your starter like by a stove. Like if you have, have wood heat like we do, I wouldn't stick like right next to the stove, but I would put it in the vicinity. You can keep it by your oven. Not, I wouldn't keep it on top, but next to the oven. If you're, you bake a lot, you cook a lot, just that radiant heat will help it stay happy.

You can leave it in your oven with the oven light on. That one scares me a little bit because I just forget and then I turn the oven on and kill it. So be careful with that one.

Speaker 1 ([19:28](#)):

You can use a cooler like, uh, like a little drink cooler and put a, a warm heating pad or something in there. Keep it warm. You can wrap it in a towel. You can use a seedling mat. Those heat mats that help seedlings get started. So you just kinda gotta get creative. I wouldn't put it in a window cause that light can break it down. But just think about the warmest area of your kitchen, whether it's by the stove, maybe on top of your refrigerator and try to keep it in that location if possible. Okay. I have bubbles in my starter, but it's not growing. So I would say if this is happening to repeatedly, there's a couple things that could be going on. Number one, it just might be a baby starter and it might need more time before it can really start to grow.

Speaker 1 ([20:17](#)):

So maybe just give it a few more days before you give up on it. Number two, you might need to try a different flour. There's a lot of variety in the different flours you're going to get at the grocery store in their age. What's inside. You might just need to try a different brand to see if that has more oomph to help all the yeast in there kind of do its thing. Or maybe here's what I've found. If my starter is very, very runny, which is, it's not the end of the world, but if it is runny, doesn't seem to bubble or rise up the sides of the jar as consistently. So this starter, and like I said, I just switched mine to whole wheat cause I'm rationing my all purpose. It's pretty runny. Maybe not. Maybe it's not running well, it was running. I fed it a little more flour, but when it's runny it won't rise up the jar.

Speaker 1 ([21:07](#)):

Okay. It needs to be a little thicker with a little more flour content to have like the ability to crawl up the sides and really start to bubble. So just tweak it. Just play with more feedings, different flours, more flour, and to see what happens. All right. This was, this is a big question I had a lot of folks ask questions around the refrigeration process. How do I refrigerate a starter? Why? How long can it be in there? So for those of you who are new to this concept, there's two ways you can keep a starter. You can keep it on your countertop and feed it every single day, or you can use it when you want to, but then you can store it in your refrigerator the rest of the time so you're not having to babysit it. And you're also not having to use a lot of flour to keep it going.

Speaker 1 ([21:57](#)):

And so I will do this when we go on vacation sometimes in the summer, I just am not in the mood to bake. I want to be outside. So I will stick my starter in the fridge. My goal is to bring it out at least once a month and feed it and maybe make something with it. But that doesn't always happen. And if you saw a YouTube video I posted last year, I may or may not have left my starter in the fridge for like nine months or so and completely neglected it and I was able to revive it in like 48 hours. So they're surprisingly resilient and resistance to abuse, cause I'm probably not the greatest sourdough mom in the world. Excuse me. But you can leave yours in the fridge for quite awhile. In a perfect world, bring it out every month, give it a feeding and then stick it back in.

Speaker 1 ([22:43](#)):

But if you forget, I wouldn't give up on it quite yet. Even if you open up the fridge and it's got the black or gray liquid on top, totally fine. Just feed it, keep it on your counter. Give it a few days to get started

back up and I think you'll be just fine. Okay. What do you do when your sourdough starter has a pink or orange color? So this is one of the few times that I feel like it's pretty serious. In sourdough triage. Sourdough starters can really vary in color. They can be brownish, they can be white, they can be gray. Though that's, that's OK. When they started to get pink or orange and they get a different kind of sour smell, I can't quite explain it, but you know, it's not the happy sour, it's the not happy sour. That's when you're potentially on the verge of losing it.

Speaker 1 ([23:36](#)):

And the only times I've actually seen my starter kind of get pink and orange is if I leave it on the counter in the summer when it's hot outside, my house is warm, um, for like, let's say like a week and I don't feed it and it basically starves to death. So sometimes it's not good to be a starter at my house, but if you get a little pink tinge, sometimes you can feed it aggressively and bring it back. But if it's super pink or super orange, it's probably best to toss it. What do I do if my starter smells like alcohol or like nail Polish remover? That would be that smell and talking about, that's not the happy smell. So you could try to save it by feeding it more frequently. Keep it on the counter, get it fed, get it revived, like doing CPR on the sourdough starter.

Speaker 1 ([24:20](#)):

But that's a sign you need to be paying attention to it cause it's probably, it's not happy. It's not a happy starter. Um, okay. Why is my starter so thick? Probably cause you're not adding enough water. Add more water. You can follow recipes and ratios for starters, but all flour is different. So if you like even in my cookbook in, in my heritage cooking crash course, you follow the formula. And if it looks like, like biscuit dough, instead of pancake batter, definitely add more flour. How do you switch over to different flour? And like switch your starter over. So you list that, you go from all purpose to whole wheat or you go from whole wheat to einkorn. It's actually pretty easy. So here's what I would recommend. Number one, get your starter strong. So feed it well.

Speaker 1 ([25:12](#)):

Put it on your calendar. Don't forget, make sure you're really consistent for a few days. Make sure it's happy and bubbly and then, as backup, I want you to divide it. So take half of the starter, stick it in a separate jar and put it in the refrigerator just in case. This has saved my bacon more than once. And then with the, the half that you're leaving out on the counter, just switch the flour like the next time you feed it, just feed it the different flour and give it a couple of days to kind of make adjustments. I wouldn't necessarily recommend, instantly switching and then expecting it to go into a bread recipe that same day, but it's pretty resilient. And this starter I have here with me in the office today, it was all purpose, its whole life, all purpose flour. And then I had to just switch to whole wheat during this whole, grocery store issue we've all been having and it's doing fine.

Speaker 1 ([26:03](#)):

So just switch it over, but it never hurts to have a backup. Okay. I see a question. If I live in the city, can I use tap water? Does it need to be hard water? I don't think the hardness or the softness of the water is gonna play a huge, uh, role in your starter's health, but you want to make sure it's not chlorinated. So be sure to be feeding your starter with unchlorinated water. And the good news is if you live in town and your water is chlorinated, all you have to do is put in a pitcher or a cup and let it sit out on your counter overnight uncovered and chlorine evaporates pretty easily so that way you can feed with that

evaporated water and you don't have to go buy water at the grocery store because who wants to do that?

Speaker 1 ([26:49](#)):

Not me. Um, okay. How do you replace packaged yeast? So let's say you have a bread recipe in your cookbooks and you want to turn it into a sourdough recipe. I wish I had a really simple, easy formula for this for you guys. Like there is a way to do it, but it can be kind of cumbersome. So I would say that my very best recommendation is to just find an equivalent recipe that's designed for sourdough. So if you want to make sourdough cinnamon rolls, instead of using a regular cinnamon roll recipe and trying to get it converted over, just go Google sourdough cinnamon rolls and you're probably gonna find some really, really good recipes. But if you're desperate and you feel like experimenting, you can try doing about a cup of sourdough starter to one package of yeast or a packet abuse or those little envelopes.

Speaker 1 ([27:47](#)):

And they usually hold two in one quarter teaspoons of dry active yeast. So if you're not gonna use that, then potentially you could just use a cup of sourdough starter. Now the tricky part though is that's a big bulk, right? A flour and water. So you've got to then adjust the remaining ingredients in that recipe. You're going to have to reduce the flour and reduce the water to make sure that you don't get your consistencies all off. So it's a little tricky and you have to make sure you rise it at least twice as long as the recipe states, if it's being written for active dry yeast. So I would just find a recipe that's written for sourdough. I think it will make your life a lot easier. Okay. Um, let's see. I had another question. Does container size matter? It does. Once you start bulking your starter up because eventually it will overflow, which been there, done that.

Speaker 1 ([28:46](#)):

Super fun to clean up. So I like to use a, this is a half gallon Mason jar. When I first started, sometimes I'll use a quart size, which is half the size of this guy. But if you have, if you're not discarding every day, like it will overflow. So that would be the only consideration with containers. I don't like to keep mine in plastic or metal, but a good glass jar or a glass crock will be just fine. Okay. And then I, last question on my list is gluten free starters. I get this question a bunch. Honestly, I don't cook with gluten free flour as much, so I don't have personal experience in this arena, but I know it can be done. And I was doing a little research and King Arthur flour, which is a brand of flour I really like and I trust their advice.

Speaker 1 ([29:38](#)):

They have a gluten free sourdough starter tutorial on their website. And so if you Google, King Arthur gluten-free sourdough starter, it'll come up on Google and I would start with them. There's a lot of different techniques though. So I do think there is hope though. If you are gluten free, you still want to do sourdough, I think it's absolutely possible. Okay. I'm just going to look at a few of these questions that are coming in right now. Do you keep the jar the starter is enclosed. Um, I will, I just like to keep it loosely covered to keep out bugs, dust, junk from going in. You can use like a paper towel with a rubber band or a little scrap of dishcloths with a rubber band. Or for me, I just take my canning lid and I just, I don't screw it down.

Speaker 1 ([30:29](#)):

I just set it on top. So that's what I do. I don't, don't, you know, crank it down super tight, but that's been sufficient for me. Let's see. Laura says, I borrowed some starter that was ready to go but didn't get to

use it right away and I just stuck it in the fridge. Do I need to discard and then feed? Yeah. Laura, what I would do is yet pour off half of it. And then I would go ahead and feed it and leave it on your counter and expect it to take a couple of days for it to kind of wake back up. So, so be patient with it, but I bet you'll be just fine. Bridget, how often do you clean out your jar? Not enough if you judge or if you just looked at him. How nasty my jar is. I would say I try to clean it out once a month, but sometimes it just builds up.

Speaker 1 ([31:13](#)):

It actually builds up quick because flour and water is kinda like school paste. You remember the paste like that? I don't think that they sell paste anymore. Like kids crafts, it was a disaster. That's kind of like sourdough starter. It's like paste and it builds up quickly. How long before it's ready to use. If you're just starting a sourdough starter from scratch, I would give it 10 to 14 days before you expect it to rise your bread, you can use it for pancakes, waffles, biscuits with some baking powder in them. I have a recipe for sourdough brownies in my cookbook, but you're going to need to give it a good while, at least 10 days, two weeks to get strong before you use it for bread. How long can you keep your starter on the counter while using it and feeding it?

Speaker 1 ([32:00](#)):

Uh, indefinitely? You could, as long as you're feeding it every day, it can go forever. I know if people who have a hundred year old sourdough starters, you know, Oregon trail sourdough starters, so you can absolutely keep it out. You think about the pioneers are the ones who brought this over, right? In their wagons and they didn't have refrigeration. And so this was a part of their rhythm in their kitchen and in their food preparation. So if they can do this, we can do this. Um, let's see. Khalida I have my whole wheat starter stored in the fridge because we have been out of town at the beginning of the month. Now it has a black liquid film over it. Is that hooch? Should I drain it off or mix it in? It's probably just hooch. I would, it's up to you. If you feel weird about it, you can drain it off. Otherwise just mix it in, give it some feeding and yeah, let it kind of revive on the counter. Sarah says, I have a starter from the 1930s. That is so cool. That's just like the best heirloom ever, isn't it?

Speaker 1 ([32:59](#)):

What is the ideal ratio to add each day when trying to revamp from being in the fridge in preparation to bake? So there's a lot of thought on this. Um, and there's people who get really complicated with ratios. My just down and dirty method is I go one to one to one. So if I have one part, let's say four ounces of sourdough starter in my jar, then I feed it four ounces of water and four ounces of flour. And I will just do that repeatedly until it, I will, I do that every day. And then if you're waiting for it to revive, I do that until the bubble start to bubble consistently four to six hours after I feed it.

Speaker 1 ([33:39](#)):

Let's see. Gretta, how soon after you start a starter, can you use a discard for your recipes? Also, do you use your starter after you take it out of the fridge right away or feed it. After you take it out of the fridge, I would give it a couple of days to wake back up before you use it in recipes and you can use a discard immediately. Honestly, like if I'm doing a brand new starter on day two, the discard isn't really sour yet. It's just flour and water. So I usually will just like give that to the chickens. But on days three, four and beyond, you absolutely could use it in a discard recipe. There's nothing wrong with that. It might not be super tangy, but who cares? I mean you're at least not throwing it away.

Speaker 1 ([34:20](#)):

Okay. Debbie says I'm on day five. I noticed that it is not bubbling or growing. Debbie, I've noticed there's a little bit of a lull on days four to six sometimes. So I would keep on trucking. Don't give up quite yet. However, if you're just seeing like zero activity, maybe try switching out to different flour if you can, and then making sure your water is not chlorinated, that could be potentially causing some issues. Did you say a refrigerated starter should be fed one time a month? If you can, but if you don't, it's probably going to be fine. I can attest it will probably survive if you leave the starter on the counter indefinitely is one feeding a day sufficient? I think so. That's what I do. Yeah. Do I measure or weigh? I think weight is better. So I've kind of learned what my measuring cups look like when there's four ounces of flour and four ounces of water in them or whatever, you know, eight ounces. I can kind of eyeball it, but yes, if you're not sure, I would start with weighing your flour and weighing your water and making sure that matches the weight of the sourdough starter you have. It doesn't have to be down to like decimal point accuracy, but it needs to be close for best results. How much starter per loaf of bread it on the recipe? Usually I would say I've seen recipes call for between a quarter cup and one cup, probably more half cup is the average. So it doesn't take much.

Speaker 1 ([35:49](#)):

So Ashley says, wait, so four to four to four grows quick. Yes, it's four ounces to four ounces to four ounces. If your starter is four ounces, if you have eight ounces of starter, then you need to use eight ounces of water and eight ounces of flour. If you have 16 ounces of starter, then you need to use 16 ounces of water and 16 ounces of flour. So it's just that ratio of weight one-to-one to one. And that's why like if you think about it, if you just keep adding and adding and adding, eventually you're going to have like 150 ounces of starter that you would need to feed 150 ounces of flour and water and then you're like literally swimming in it. So that's why we discard is to keep that ratio low enough to be manageable and not like spend all your life savings on flour.

Speaker 1 ([36:35](#)):

When do I, when I do the float test, should I stir the starter first? I wouldn't stir it. I would let it, you know, feed it, let it sit for a couple hours and then just take a spoonful out and give it a try. Then, I, if I don't know how much is in the container, would you suggest what, what do you suggest? I don't have a food scale yet. Do you need to discard it every time you take out of the, take it out of the fridge? If you don't have a scale, just like eyeball it. So sometimes what I'll do is I'll take a measuring cup out and hold it next to the container and be like, does this look like it would fit into there? And you've just do your best to eyeball. I would say I wouldn't get super hung up on the weight as long as you're doing your best to match it, you know what I mean?

Speaker 1 ([37:16](#)):

Like make sure it looks it's as close as you possibly can be. Um, if you don't have a scale, and I don't know if you have to discard it when you take it out of the fridge. I just think that sometimes getting rid of some of the like sluggish starter, the dormant starter before you feed it can help. Just give it an extra candy. Says how many bubbles should there be when making a new starter? Those first few days there'll be a handful of bubbles and we want to see that increase. And eventually when it's ready for you to make bread with it, it's more about how it doubles in size. So it'll go down to being like this in the jar and it'll go like this in the jar and you'll see tons of bubbles through the glass. So that's what I would be watching for more than anything.

Speaker 1 ([38:01](#)):

Can you start her in a bread machine? I would think so. I don't haven't used a bread machine in so long. My only concern would be that, if the bread machine is preprogrammed with a certain rise time, sometimes sourdough needs much longer. So you, as long as you could adjust that, I think it would be fine. Kristin said made my first loaf and it was really dense. There's a lot of factors there so you have to make sure your starters active enough to get air in that loaf to rise it. And then also, potentially the recipe we're using had a high flour so it was a little bit more dense and crumbly. So you could use a different flower potentially or use less flour. Or just make sure your starters super active.

Speaker 1 ([38:47](#)):

I'm Susan, I had watery stuff. Yes, totally normal. Uh, keep, keep going, keep feeding it. Keep stirring that back in. Don't give up on it yet. Do I discard everyday when I'm starting from scratch? I usually do. Yeah. And those first, that first week or so, I like to keep that discard just to make sure it's fresh and, and doesn't get kind of, I don't know. This is, this is like my gut feeling on it. I don't know if there's science, but I feel like I don't want to like slug it down with too much mass in there. I want to make sure it has enough to get, uh, with the fresh flour and water. So that's just how I think of it. But maybe, I don't know. There's no science to back that up, but yes, I do discard everyday in those first little bits.

Speaker 1 ([39:28](#)):

Where do you go to get the master pack? So if you go to theprairiehomestead.com/masterpack, the link should be up there in the description. You can check it out. It's literally everything I've created the last, uh, whatever, eight years of blogging. Like all of the stuff from growing your own food, canning, fermentation, sourdough, um, curing your own meat, all of the stuff in a big bundle with a single login and a ton of bonuses. I got ton of bonuses. So we put it all together, theprairie homestead.com/masterpack. And my microphone is, my microphone says we're done. We're done here. Okay, hold on. We'll take a couple more. And then I got to go homeschool my children for the rest of my afternoon. I feed mine a quarter cup flour and a quarter cup water twice a day regardless of how much starter is this. Okay. Um, you know, Jen, I think that it could work, it's definitely going to keep it from dying. But if you are wanting, I mean I guess I'd have to ask, do you get that good bubble in that good action happening? Cause I feel like that might not be enough to keep it super duper active, but it's definitely probably going to be enough to keep it from, from dying. So just play with it and uh, potentially, I mean, you probably be okay with that.

Speaker 1 ([40:41](#)):

Could you cover what the float test is again? Yes. So you're not sure if your starter's active enough for bread. Take a cup of cool water, take your starter like four or five hours after you fed it. Just take a small spoonful out and plop it in the water. And if it floats, it likely means you're okay to use it as yeast in your bread. Is it normal to see a skin on your starter prior to feeding? I've had that sometimes. Usually when my house is a little bit hot, you know, and it's just evaporating the liquid on that top layer. I usually just kind of stir the skin back in. If that keeps happening and it's kind of bothering you, you can just cover your sourdough maybe a little more securely to keep the moisture from evaporating out. But I wouldn't worry about it too much.

Speaker 1 ([41:31](#)):

okay. I'll take one more. Does city water kill the starter that you started on well water. Not necessarily, but if your city water has chlorine in it, I would be careful with that and evaporate like we've talked

about a minute ago. Set your cup of water out on the counter overnight. Let the chlorine evaporate off before you use it for your starter.

Speaker 1 ([41:53](#)):

okay. How much should you discard every day? I usually discard about half or so. You'll kind of get in your groove with that. All right, my friends, this was so fun. We should do this more often. Thank you for joining. I'm sorry I couldn't get to all the questions but if you came on later there's a good chance your question was answered back at the beginning of this recording. So go back and have a listen. If you're curious, if you want to grab that master pack, head on over to theprairiehomestead.com/masterpack to have a look. It's only available for a short period of time, so grab it while you can and that's it. Thanks so much for listening. If you are on the podcast right now, I appreciate you tuning in and I would be so grateful if you could pop over to your favorite podcast app and leave a quick review just because it helps more people find us and bring all the amazing pieces of homesteading into their lives. So that's it. Thanks so much, and we'll talk soon. Take care, friends.