

Andrew's Basic Sourdough Starter or 'Levain'

Season: All

Makes: 1 loaf

Recipe source: This recipe is courtesy of Andrew O'Hara, of Phillippa's Breads, Pastries & Provisions

This sourdough starter (also known as 'leaven' or 'levain') is used to make bread dough rise, instead of yeast. This rising agent is known to date back to at least 17th-century France, while others claim it may have been used in Ancient Egyptian times!

Note: This sourdough starter takes at least one week to prepare.

Equipment:

metric measuring scales
and spoons
large mixing bowl
clean tea towel

Ingredients:

300 g white flour, plus extra
for dusting
2 tbsp water

What to do:

1. Mix 50 g of flour with 2 tablespoons of water in the large bowl until a rough dough forms. Add more water or flour if required – the dough should be stretchy but not sticky.
2. Tip the dough onto a clean work surface dusted with flour and knead for 5 minutes. This dough is called the 'chef'.
3. Place the dough back in the bowl, cover with a clean damp tea towel and set aside in a warm place for 3 days.
4. To refresh, remove the dough 'crust' from the outside. Mix the 'chef' with 100 g flour and enough water to make a firm dough. This is now called the 'levain'. Cover again with a damp tea towel and set the levain aside to rise for 2 days.
5. To refresh again, remove the dough 'crust' from the outside. Mix the levain with 150 g flour and enough water to make a firm dough. Cover and set aside.
6. After 12 hours the levain will be ready to use in a bread recipe of your choice.