

# How to Make a GF Sourdough Starter in 5 Easy Steps

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# Introduction

Diving into the world of gluten-free baking doesn't have to be intimidating, especially with the right tools and guidance at your fingertips. This bonus content is crafted to simplify the process of creating your own gluten-free sourdough starter in five easy steps. By combining detailed written instructions with a complementary video link, you'll have both visual and textual aids to ensure you can follow along without missing a beat.

Gluten-free sourdough bread brings a delightful variety to the table, offering those with dietary restrictions the chance to enjoy its unique flavors and textures. The creation of a sourdough starter is a key step in mastering gluten-free baking, providing a base for breads that are not only delicious but also easier to digest. In these steps, you'll learn how to mix, ferment, and maintain your starter using gluten-free flours, with practical tips to make each phase as straightforward as possible. The video content included will guide you visually through each part of the process, making it feel like you have a baking expert right there in your kitchen.

Together, we will transform simple ingredients into a living, bubbling starter that will serve as the heart of your gluten-free baking adventures. Let's get started and unlock the potential of gluten-free sourdough baking!

# Essentials of Gluten-Free Sourdough Starter

A sourdough starter is a living culture, traditionally used in bread making for its natural leavening properties. Unlike commercial yeast, a sourdough starter relies on wild yeasts and beneficial bacteria for fermentation. For those who follow a gluten-free diet, creating a sourdough starter without gluten offers a fantastic way to enjoy the unique flavors and textures of sourdough bread while maintaining dietary requirements.

## Benefits for Gluten-Free Diets:

- **Improved Digestibility:** The natural fermentation process helps break down complex carbohydrates and proteins, making the bread easier on the digestive system.
- **Enhanced Nutrient Availability:** Fermentation may increase the bioavailability of nutrients and decrease anti-nutrients, offering a healthier alternative to standard bread.
- **Rich Flavor Development:** Gluten-free sourdough provides a tangy depth of flavor that is often missing in regular gluten-free bread options, adding variety to a gluten-free diet.

## Ingredients Needed:

- **Gluten-Free Flour:** Choices include brown rice flour and buckwheat flour, both of which support a healthy fermentation environment.
- **Water:** It's crucial to use non-chlorinated or filtered water to protect the live cultures.
- **Organic Apple (optional):** Adding grated organic apple can enhance the fermentation process with natural yeasts and sugars, though it is not required.
- **Maple Syrup (optional):** A tablespoon of maple syrup can be added to provide additional sugars that help jump-start the fermentation.

## Tools Required:

- **Large Glass Jar:** A spacious, clean jar is necessary for mixing and storing the starter.
- **Kitchen Scale:** Precise measurements are vital to maintaining the balance of your starter.
- **Mixing Bowl:** For initial mixing of your starter ingredients.
- **Coffee Filter or Cheesecloth:** To cover the jar, allowing it to breathe while keeping contaminants out.
- **Rubber Band:** To secure the cover over your jar.

# Step 1:

## Creating the Initial Mix (day 1)

Creating your gluten-free sourdough starter begins with mixing the right ingredients in a conducive environment to kickstart the fermentation process. Here's how to do it:

### 1. Mixing the Ingredients:

Begin by measuring 500 grams (about 3.5 cups) of your chosen gluten-free flour—either brown rice flour or buckwheat flour. These flours are preferred for their fermentation properties and nutritional benefits. Add 360 mL (about 1.5 cups) of lukewarm filtered or non-chlorinated water to the flour. The water should be warm to touch but not hot, ideally around 70-75°F (21-24°C), to optimize the environment for yeast activity.

### Optional Ingredients:

- **Organic Apple:** Grate one organic apple, including the skin but excluding the core, and mix it into your flour and water. The natural sugars and yeasts on the skin of the apple help jump-start the fermentation.
- **Maple Syrup:** Alternatively, adding a tablespoon of maple syrup provides simple sugars that can feed the yeast and accelerate the initial activity.

### 2. Mixing Technique:

Combine the flour, water, and any optional ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Stir the mixture thoroughly until you achieve a consistency similar to a thick, yet slightly sloppy dough. Ensure that there are no dry spots and that the mixture is homogeneous.

### 3. Preparing the Fermentation Vessel:

Transfer the mixture into a large glass jar. Using a clean spoon or spatula, press down the mixture to remove any air pockets and to ensure an even distribution in the jar.

Clean the edges of the jar with a damp cloth to remove any residue. This helps prevent mold growth and ensures a clean fermentation environment.

### 4. Covering and Placing the Mix:

Cover the jar with a coffee filter or a double-layered cheesecloth. Secure it with a rubber band to allow the mix to breathe while keeping out dust and insects.

Place the jar in a warm spot in your kitchen or another area of your home that maintains a consistent temperature of about 70-75°F (21-24°C). Avoid direct sunlight but ensure the area is warm enough to support fermentation.

# Step 2:

## First Refreshment (day 2)

The first refreshment, or "feeding," of your sourdough starter is crucial for developing a strong and active culture. This step helps to nourish the yeast and bacteria, promoting growth and activity that are essential for a viable sourdough starter.

### **Understanding the Refreshment Process**

Refreshment involves adding fresh flour and water to your existing starter mixture. This process provides fresh food for the yeast and bacteria, encouraging their proliferation and maintaining the health of your starter.

Regular feeding ensures that your starter develops enough yeast and bacterial activity to leaven bread effectively. It also helps to balance the acidity and prevents the culture from becoming too sour or inhospitable for yeast activity.

### **How To Perform the First Refreshment**

#### **1. Assessing the Starter:**

Before adding new flour and water, check your starter for signs that it's ready to be fed. Look for small bubbles and a slight rise in volume, indicating yeast activity. The starter might also have a mild, slightly tangy or yeasty smell.

#### **2. Adding Flour and Water:**

Measure out equal parts by weight of gluten-free flour and lukewarm water. For the first refreshment, you typically want to use about 100 grams (approximately 3/4 cup) of flour and 100 mL (about 1/3 cup) of water.

Pour the water and sprinkle the flour over your existing starter. Stir thoroughly until the mixture is well combined and has the consistency of a thick batter. Ensure there are no dry lumps.

#### **3. Mixing Technique:**

Use a clean utensil to stir the mixture to incorporate air and distribute the new flour and water evenly. This also helps to even out the temperature and texture of the starter.

### **Visual And Olfactory Indicators for Refreshment**

- **Bubble Formation:** Look for bubbles throughout the starter, which indicate active fermentation.
- **Volume Increase:** If the starter has risen slightly or shows signs of expansion, it's a good indication that it's active and ready for refreshment.
- **Sour or Yeasty Aroma:** A noticeable, but not overpowering, sour or yeasty smell suggests that the starter is fermenting and could benefit from feeding.

- **Lack of Strong Odors:** If the starter begins to emit a sharp or unpleasant odor, it may indicate over-fermentation or contamination, in which case more frequent refreshments or adjustments to your method may be necessary.

## Step 3:

# Development and Maintenance (days 3 and 4)

Once your gluten-free sourdough starter has received its first refreshment, it will enter a critical phase of development and maintenance. Over the next few days, you will continue to feed your starter to enhance its strength and vitality. Proper care during this period is essential for establishing a robust culture that can consistently leaven bread.

### Refreshment Schedule for Days 3, and 4

#### 1. Daily Feedings:

Feed your starter once every 24 hours. This regular schedule helps stabilize the yeast and bacterial populations by providing consistent nourishment.

For each feeding, add 100 grams (about 3/4 cup) of gluten-free flour and 100 mL (approximately 1/3 cup) of lukewarm filtered water. These amounts can be adjusted slightly depending on the activity level and consistency of the starter.

#### 2. Procedure:

Before adding new flour and water, remove and discard approximately half of the existing starter. This step, known as "discarding," helps manage the quantity of starter and refreshes its food supply, preventing it from becoming too acidic.

Add the fresh flour and water to the remaining starter and mix thoroughly until smooth. Ensure there are no dry flour pockets and that the mixture has a uniform consistency.

### Tips for Maintaining an Ideal Environment

#### Temperature Control:

Keep your starter at a consistent temperature between 70-75°F (21-24°C). This range is optimal for sourdough cultures, promoting steady growth and activity.

During cooler months or in cooler climates, consider placing your starter near a warm appliance, using a heating pad on a low setting, or storing it in an oven with the light on (but the oven turned off).

#### Monitoring Growth and Health:

Healthy growth is indicated by the presence of numerous small to medium-sized bubbles throughout the starter. You should also see the starter rise significantly between feedings, often doubling in volume.

Use a piece of tape or a rubber band around your jar at the level of your starter after each feeding to visually gauge how much it rises. This can help you determine if the starter is consistently active.

The smell should be pleasantly sour and yeasty. An overly sour, alcoholic, or any other off-putting smell can indicate that the starter needs more frequent feedings or that there may be an issue with contamination.

# Step 4:

## Evaluating Maturity (day 5)

After several days of feeding and caring for your gluten-free sourdough starter, it's time to assess its maturity and readiness for baking. A mature starter is active, bubbly, and has a pleasant aroma, indicating it is capable of effectively leavening bread.

### Criteria for Maturity

#### 1. Texture and Appearance:

A mature starter should have a light, fluffy texture, similar to a thick batter or soft dough. It should show a consistent pattern of bubbles throughout the mixture.

Look for the starter to double in volume within 4 to 6 hours after a feeding, which indicates strong yeast activity and sufficient fermentation power.

#### 2. Aroma:

The smell of a mature starter should be pleasantly sour, with hints of yeastiness, similar to classic sourdough. It should not have any off-putting or overly strong alcoholic smells.

A balanced, tangy scent is a good indicator that your starter has developed the right environment for the yeast and beneficial bacteria.

#### 3. Bubble Activity:

Visible bubbles, both on the surface and throughout the mass of the starter, are key indicators of a healthy and active sourdough starter.

When stirred, the starter should feel light and aerated, and you may even hear the bubbles popping.

### Troubleshooting a Sluggish Sourdough Starter

- If the starter appears sluggish or has decreased activity, consider increasing the feeding frequency to twice a day. This can help invigorate the yeast and bacteria by providing more consistent nourishment.
- Experiment with adjusting the flour-to-water ratio. Sometimes, a slightly thicker or thinner consistency can influence how the yeast behaves. A thicker starter tends to rise more visibly, which can be encouraging if you're monitoring its growth.
- Ensure that your starter is kept in a warm environment, ideally between 70-75°F (21-24°C). If your home is cool, find a warmer spot or use a method to gently heat the area around the starter, such as placing it in an off oven with the light on.

- Make sure your jar and utensils are very clean. Contamination can inhibit yeast activity or introduce unwanted bacteria that compete with the yeast.
- Occasionally, using a different type of gluten-free flour for one or two feedings can provide new nutrients and refresh the starter's environment.

## Step 5:

# Storage and Preliminary Use (days 6 and 7)

Once your gluten-free sourdough starter has matured and is showing all the signs of vigorous health—doubling in volume, filled with bubbles, and smelling pleasantly sour—it's ready for regular baking use or storage. Here's how to store your starter for future use and how to prepare it for baking after a period of dormancy.

### Storing the Sourdough Starter

To store the sourdough starter long-term, first ensure it is freshly fed and at peak activity. Then transfer it to the refrigerator. The cool temperature slows down the fermentation process, putting the starter in a dormant state.

Cover the jar loosely with a lid or a piece of plastic wrap secured with a rubber band. This will protect it from absorbing any odors from the fridge and prevent it from drying out.

Even in the refrigerator, your starter will need occasional feeding to keep it healthy. Generally, a weekly feeding is sufficient. Each time you feed it, discard half of the starter and replenish it with equal parts of gluten-free flour and water by weight. Allow the starter to sit at room temperature for a few hours after feeding so it can reactivate before returning it to the fridge.

### Preparing the Starter for Baking

#### **1. Activating the Starter Post-Rest:**

When you're ready to bake, take the starter out of the refrigerator at least 24 hours in advance. This gives it enough time to reactivate and reach full activity.

Feed the starter using your usual ratio of flour and water. After feeding, leave it at room temperature to allow it to rise and become bubbly.

#### **2. Observing Readiness for Baking:**

A starter is ready for baking when it has doubled in size and shows a lot of surface activity, typically within 4 to 6 hours of being fed. This indicates that the yeast is active enough to leaven bread effectively.

The starter should have a pleasant, yeasty aroma and be filled with bubbles. If it's sluggish, give it another feeding and allow more time to increase activity.

### Tips for Optimal Use

- Keeping your starter in a consistently warm spot during this activation phase can help speed up the process.
- Regularly using and feeding your sourdough starter can improve its strength and longevity. The more you bake and maintain your starter, the more resilient it becomes.
- If your starter doesn't reactivate well after being in the fridge, it may require a few consecutive feedings at room temperature to restore its vitality.

## Video Tutorial

As we continue to explore the art of gluten-free baking, this next segment brings our written instructions to vibrant life. Join us in this video where Chantal Secours, with her expert touch, demonstrates each step in creating a robust gluten-free sourdough starter. From mixing your initial ingredients to the final stir before baking, every detail is covered to ensure your success.

We owe a heartfelt thank you to Chantal Secours for not only demonstrating these techniques but for making them easy and accessible for all. Her clear guidance and practical tips are invaluable, enhancing our journey into gluten-free baking.

### [Enjoy the Video on You Tube](#)



# Gluten-Free Sourdough Bread Recipe

**Preparation Time:** 15 minutes

**Resting Time:** 6 - 8 hours

**Cook Time:** 35 minutes

**Total Time:** About 8 hours, 50 minutes

**Yield:** 1 loaf

## INGREDIENTS:

- ½ cup sourdough starter
- 2 tablespoons + 2 teaspoons spring water
- 1 egg
- 1 ⅛ cups measure-for-measure gluten-free flour blend (includes xanthan gum)
- ½ tablespoon sugar
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon oil

## DIRECTIONS:

1. In a mixing bowl, whisk together the sourdough starter, spring water, and egg until thoroughly combined.
2. In a separate bowl, blend the gluten-free flour, sugar, and salt together until well mixed.
3. Add oil to the dry ingredients and stir until the mixture is evenly combined.
4. Gradually pour the wet ingredients into the bowl with the flour and oil mixture. Stir briskly until the mixture is well-blended and forms a tacky, but shapeable ball.
5. Cover the bowl with a cloth and allow it to rest in a warm area for 6 to 8 hours, letting the dough rise and develop flavors.
6. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and lightly dust it with gluten-free flour.
7. Carefully transfer the dough onto the prepared baking sheet, using a spatula or hands lightly dusted with gluten-free flour to prevent sticking.
8. Preheat your oven and a dutch oven (or an oven-safe dish with a lid) to 500 degrees Fahrenheit. If you don't have a lid, you can use foil to cover the dish.
9. Make a few shallow slashes on the top of the dough with a sharp knife to help it expand during baking.
10. Using the edges of the parchment paper, lift the dough and place it into the preheated dutch oven. Cover and bake for 15 minutes.
11. After 15 minutes, reduce the oven temperature to 450 degrees Fahrenheit, uncover the bread, and continue baking for an additional 20 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown and the slashes appear lighter in color.
12. Remove the bread from the oven, lift it out of the dutch oven using the parchment paper, and transfer it to a cooling rack. Discard the parchment paper.
13. Allow the bread to cool completely before slicing to enjoy the full texture and flavor.

# Conclusion

As we wrap up this special bonus section, I hope you feel equipped and inspired to embrace the world of gluten-free sourdough baking. We've journeyed through the nuances of creating a lively sourdough starter and explored how simple ingredients can transform into something truly magical under the right care.

Thank you for joining me in this delicious exploration. Whether you're a novice baker or a seasoned pro seeking gluten-free alternatives, the steps we've shared here are designed to bring satisfaction and joy into your baking. Remember, each loaf you bake is not just food—it's a celebration of tradition and innovation, adapted to meet the needs of every body.

Continue to experiment with flavors and techniques, and let your kitchen be a place of endless discovery and delight. Here's to many more joyful baking days ahead!