

My Favorite Sourdough Sandwich Bread – Comfort du Jour

A freshly baked loaf of homemade sourdough bread was the last thing I made in our old, time-worn kitchen, and it was the first thing I made in the new kitchen. The bread I made both times was this one—a sourdough-based recipe by Maurizio Leo, a master bread maker whose own blog, *The Perfect Loaf*.

This bread, which Maurizio has named [Sourdough Sandwich Bread with Pre-cooked Flour](#), is a favorite at our house because of its softness, height, chewy crust and versatility for sandwiches, toast and just plain eating with a fat schmear of soft butter. As the recipe name suggests, there is an amount of the flour that is pre-cooked, specifically with whole milk, and this pre-cooking of the flour creates a sticky, roux-like addition that lends a beautiful texture to the finished bread and, as a bonus, prolongs its shelf life. This pre-cooking technique itself is not new; the Japanese have been doing it for a long time, and they call it “tangzhong.” But the combination of that milk-cooked method with sourdough and no added commercial yeast sends it straight over the top for me. Quite simply, I *love* this bread.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

This recipe requires use of a mature, ripe starter. Plan to feed your starter eight to 12 hours before making this dough.

All ingredients are listed by weight. I highly recommend use of a digital scale for sourdough baking.

Plan to have a shallow pan available for steam baking. It is also helpful, but not essential, to have a digital thermometer for testing doneness of the bread at the end of baking time.

INGREDIENTS

148 g whole milk
38 g whole wheat flour* (see notes)
175 g room temperature water
18 g honey (or maple syrup, molasses, malt syrup, sorghum, etc.)
32 g olive oil
106 g sourdough starter, recently refreshed
295 g bread flour
78 g whole wheat flour*
8.5 oz. fine sea salt

*NOTES

I have had great success using whole grain rye flour in the first step of pre-cooking. The resulting dough will be rather sticky, but I find it more manageable to handle it with wet hands.

If you want to increase the nutrition by using more whole wheat flour in this recipe, try swapping about 30 grams for equal amount of the bread flour. Greater adjustment may require that you also increase the volume of water by a small amount, as whole wheat flour absorbs more water.

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Alternative sweeteners can be an equal swap by weight if they are liquid. If you swap in sugar or brown sugar, try using two heaping tablespoons, and add them with the dry ingredients rather than in the starter mixture.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk together milk and first amount of flour in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until mixture thickens and becomes sticky and heavy. Remove from heat and spread the mixture out onto a plate to cool for several minutes.
2. Combine bread flour, whole wheat flour and salt in a bowl.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine starter, water, honey and olive oil until blended and smooth. Add pre-cooked flour mixture and blend with the beater blade until smooth. Add dry ingredients all at once and mix with the beater blade until all the flour is incorporated and the dough begins to look organized on the blade. Scrape dough from blade and cover the bowl. Allow it to rest for about 30 minutes before kneading.
4. Switch to the dough hook, kneading the dough on speed two for about 7 minutes. Spray a large glass bowl with oil and transfer the dough into the bowl. Cover and rest it for 30 minutes.
5. Wet your hands, then stretch and fold the dough like this: Loosen the dough from the edge of the bowl that is farthest away from you and lift it, stretching and folding it down toward the center. Rotate the bowl to fold the opposite, then rotate the bowl to repeat the folds on the sides of the dough. Cover and rest again and repeat the folds twice more at 30-minute intervals.
6. By the final stretch and fold, you will find that the dough has built enough strength to feel resistant. Prepare a large loaf pan, oiling and dusting with semolina or cornmeal if needed to reduce sticking.
7. Shape the loaf by flattening it out onto a flour-covered board, then rolling it up tightly into a cylinder shape. Pinch the final rolled edge to seal it and pinch the ends of the roll if they are uneven. Cover the loaf pan with plastic wrap or an elastic bowl cover and let it nap in a warm spot in the kitchen, with no drafts. Final proofing will be about 90 minutes.
8. Preheat oven to 400° F, with one rack in the center of the oven and another rack below it for the steam pan. When oven reaches temperature, place a shallow pan of hot tap water on the lower rack and allow it to preheat 10 minutes longer.
9. Bake the bread with steam for 20 minutes. Remove the steam pan, rotate the bread for even browning, and cover with a loose tent foil if the bread is browning quickly. If the loaf is still pale, the foil may not be necessary. Bake an additional 25 minutes without steam. Internal temperature of finished bread should be 205° F. Remove from pan right away and cool on a rack.