

Rehydrating Your Starter

You can use any jar, but I generally use Mason jars because that's what I have, but there are lots of options. For this process, a pint size or 16oz jar will be big enough.

I recommend starting this process in the morning, so that later in the process when you're watching for the starter to peak, hopefully it happens during the day.

Day 1

Rehydration

- In a clean jar, combine 20g of dried sourdough starter with 30g of water, and mix vigorously. This will be a wet, clumpy mixture.
- Keep the mixture in a warm place in your kitchen, if you can, but it's more important to keep it somewhere you'll see it throughout the day.
- Check the starter every hour or so, and stir until all of the dried starter is hydrated and the mixture is a smooth, wet, pasty mix. This may take 4-8hrs.

First Feeding

Add 10g of flour, and 10g of water to your starter. Do not discard any of the original mix!

Day 2

Watch and Wait

- Check the starter mixture periodically on Day 2. If the water is separating from the starter, you can stir it in. You should start to see bubbles forming on top of the starter on day 2. This is yeast activating, which is very good!
- Monitor the starter throughout the day. You should see small bubbles completely covering the top of the starter.
- Wait until these bubbles start shrinking in size and/or number. This indicates that the starter has reactivated and has consumed the first feeding of flour.

Feeding #2

- When the bubbles have subsided, this indicates the initial feeding has been fully consumed.
- The starter should begin to smell vinegary.
- Feed the starter 20g of flour, and 20g of water. Do not discard anything yet!

Day 3

Watch and Wait

- Watch the starter after the second feeding. The starter should be completely covered with bubbles. It may not rise yet, because it is still a fairly wet mixture.

Feeding #3

- When the bubbles have mostly subsided, feed the starter again with 20g of flour, and 20g of water. Do not discard any of the original mix.
- By now, the mixture should be thickening up, and should rise after this feeding, so make a mark on the side of your jar so you know when it's rising/when it's doubled. You can use a sharpie, or just put a rubber band around the jar at the current level of your starter.

- Hopefully you're feeding early enough in the day to watch for peak activity. This should happen between 4-6hrs from the feeding.
- Peak activity means that the starter has risen as far as it's going to, and starts to fall. As the starter is growing, the top will dome slightly. As it peaks, it will flatten out, and then as it starts to fall, you may notice some ridges or valleys in the top, and of course the overall height will start to fall.

Discard and Feed

- When your starter has reached it's peak, and started to fall, it's time to feed again - and now it's also time to start discarding. As you get used to maintaining your discard, you'll get a feel for how much starter you want to maintain, but for now, retain 30g of your starter (I like to get a clean jar to feed my starter in, so my jar never gets nasty), and feed it 30g of flour, and 30g of water.
- Your starter should be doubling and peaking in 4-6hrs. If it's not yet, continue discarding and feeding at PEAK until it's happening in that 4-6hr window. That could take as long as a week, but it probably won't take that long (when I did this, it was ready on day 4).

Maintaining

To maintain your starter, there are a couple of options.

1. If you want to keep it ready to bake whenever you're in the mood, keep it on your counter. Up until this point, you have been feeding your starter at a 1:1:1 ratio, but long term, that ratio can weaken your starter. For my house and starter, I feed once a day, usually after I clean up dinner, and I retain 5g of starter, and feed it 20g water, 20g flour, then SET the mason jar lid on top - with NO RING. You want your starter covered and protected from wayward bacteria, but not airtight because the gasses will build up.
 - When I discard, I put it in a jar in the fridge, or spread it on parchment paper to dehydrate. The discard I keep in the fridge serves multiple purposes: I use it in baking recipes as an egg replacement; there are many discard recipes you can find online; and it's always a good idea to have a backup that you can revive, in case anything happens to your starter on the counter.
2. If you're only going to bake once a week or less - or you don't mind taking some time to get your starter revived, you can store your starter in the fridge. If you want to go this route, I would retain about 5g of starter, and 15-20g each of flour and water, and let it sit on the counter for about an hour, to let the fermentation get started, then put an airtight lid on it and store in the fridge.

Summary

1. Put 20g of dehydrated starter in a clean jar, add 30g of water, and mix vigorously. Check and stir about every hour, until the mix is a smooth, wet paste. This could take up to 4-8hrs.
2. When your mix has reached this point, feed it 10g flour, and 10g water, then mix thoroughly.
3. Day 2 - If there is water separation, mix it in.
4. You should see small bubbles completely covering the top of the starter, these will begin to shrink in size or number as the flour is consumed.
5. When the bubbles have subsided, feed again - 20g flour, 20g water, and mix well.
6. Day 3-ish - Once again, watch the bubbles! They should be plentiful and covering the entire surface.
7. When the bubbles have subsided, feed another 20g flour, 20g water, and mix well.
8. This mix should be thickening up, and should rise after the feeding. I recommend making a mark on the side of your jar, or using a rubber band to mark the level after the feeding, so you can see when it's risen.
9. When your starter has risen as high as it can, that's its 'peak' and then it will start to fall. Ideally, you want to feed at this point, before it falls all the way back to the original level.
10. Now that your starter is rising, it's time to maintain your starter with regular discarding and

feeding.

11. ****Do NOT discard down your sink****

12. For maintaining a starter on your counter, you should feed it at a ratio of 1:2:2 or higher. Continued feeding at a 1:1:1 ratio can lead to a weak and acidic starter, which will not make good bread. I feed roughly once a day, after dinner, 5g starter, 20g water, and 20 flour, or 1:4:4. You will have to watch yours and determine how long it can go.

13. To maintain your starter in the fridge, feed it a minimum of a 1:2:2 ratio, once a week, and plan on pulling it out the afternoon of the day before you want to bake, and feeding it before bed so it's freshly fed and very active. Keep an airtight lid on it while it's in the fridge.

14. Discard: You can throw the discard away, you can save it in the fridge for baking, or feed it to your chickens or compost pile. I recommend keeping at least a small amount in the fridge, or even dehydrating a few grams so that if anything happens to your main starter, you always have a backup. You can also freeze your backup, if you prefer.

15. Once your starter is doubling (or more) within 4-6hrs, you are ready to bake!

16. If your starter seems sluggish, thin & watery, or your dough isn't developing well, try doing a series of "peak to peak" feedings for 24-48hrs, depending on how it responds. Feed your starter, watch for it to peak, and feed it again at peak or just as it begins to fall, and continue to do this until your starter picks up in activity, smells warm and pleasantly sour, and peaks within that 4-6hr window.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out!

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Happy baking!