



## Florapan® French-Style Sourdough Starter

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Florapan® French-Style Sourdough will allow you to make tasty bread with excellent texture, consistently, without the demanding job of keeping a starter fed. Any sourdough will change over time, due to native bacteria being introduced into it; using the French-Style sourdough starter allows you to achieve the same results, batch after batch. Once you've opened and used some of the starter packet, close it tightly and freeze the rest for up to 6 months.

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**Before starting your bread, think about the following variables: temperature, water, flour, and time. Let's examine these elements before we get started:**

- **TEMPERATURE:** If you're making the same bread recipe time after time, but getting different results, check that the temperature at which you keep your sponge (the initial mixture made from the French-Style Sourdough Starter, flour, and water) is consistent. There's not one exact optimum temperature that everyone will agree upon, because everyone doesn't like the same flavor in his or her bread. In general, try to keep your sponge between 70°F and 90°F. At cooler temperatures (65°F or below), the sponge will take longer to develop than the stated 18 to 20 hours, and won't develop as much tangy flavor.
  - **WATER:** If you have water that's heavily chlorinated, it will affect the flavor of the bread and the action of the sponge. Either use bottled water, or let the water sit in an open container for a day to let the chlorine dissipate.
  - **FLOUR:** Use only unbleached, unbromated flour. The protein level in King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour, or Artisan Bread Flour, is perfect for crusty, country-style breads.
  - **TIME:** The hardest part of a recipe is, for us, stating a "rising" time. Just about everything you do while making bread can affect the rising time. Please be flexible and build enough time into your schedule to allow the dough to develop its optimum flavor and rise.
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### SPONGE

1/4 teaspoon French-Style Sourdough Starter  
2 cups (240g) King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour or Artisan Bread Flour  
1 cup (227g) warm water

In a medium-sized mixing bowl, or in the bucket of your bread machine, mix the starter and the flour together. Mix in the water. Stir for several minutes to activate the gluten. (If you're using a bread machine for this step, cancel after about 6 minutes of kneading.)

Cover and set aside in a warm (70°F to 90°F) place for 18 to 20 hours. When ready, the sponge should have expanded by about one-third (or more), and developed bubbles and a pleasing aroma. You may do this step up to 7 days ahead, then refrigerate until ready to use the sponge. (If you want to enhance the sour flavor, substitute 1/2 cup rye or whole wheat flour for 1/2 cup of the unbleached all-purpose flour in your sponge.)

*(continued on back)*



## DOUGH

all of the sponge (above)

3 cups (360g) King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour or Artisan Bread Flour

3/4 cup (170g) warm water\*

1 1/2 teaspoons salt (many artisan bakers prefer sea salt)

1/2 teaspoon instant yeast

\*This amount of water is a guideline. You may need to add a tablespoon or two more in the winter, or use a little less in the summer. Flour can absorb water, or dry out. Use your sense of touch to tell you if you need to sprinkle a little water over the dough, or add a little flour. The dough should feel slightly tacky, firm, but soft enough to “relax.”

**DOUGH:** Add the flour to the sponge along with the water, salt and yeast. Stir to form a shaggy mass, then let the mixture sit for 20 to 30 minutes. (This resting period, called the autolyse, allows the flour to absorb the water before you start kneading; it will make kneading easier, and also help prevent you from adding too much flour to the dough.)

Turn the dough out onto a lightly greased work surface. (Using a lightly floured work surface is OK, but the idea is not to work too much flour into the dough. A dough that’s slack and slightly sticky will produce a loaf with much better texture. Many people knead in too much flour, thinking the dough is too sticky to work with, then end up with dry or crumbly bread.) The dough starts out sticky, so a bench knife is a handy tool. When the dough is kneaded enough, about 8 to 10 minutes by hand, 6 to 8 minutes in an electric mixer or bread machine, or about 90 seconds in a food processor, it will feel firm, slightly sticky, and elastic.

Place the dough in a greased bowl, turning to coat all sides, cover the bowl, and set it in a warm place (though not above 90°F). Don’t try to rush the dough by raising it at a temperature above 90°F; the best bread rises slowly, so give the dough time. After an hour, and again at the 2-hour mark, gently deflate it and fold it over a few times to redistribute the yeast and oxygen, and dispel some of the carbon dioxide. In 2 to 3 hours the dough should have almost doubled.

**SHAPING:** Turn the dough out onto a lightly greased work surface. Divide the dough in half, and form each half into a round. Let the dough rest for 20 minutes or so, covered; then form the pieces into whatever shapes you prefer—round, oval or baguette. Raising your loaves in a couche, banneton or linen cloth will help them achieve a thick, chewy crust. If you don’t have any of these, use a linen (or other smooth—not terry cloth) dishtowel to line a round bowl. Heavily flour the forms you’re using, place the shaped loaves in them seam-side up, and cover. Let the loaves rise for 2 or more hours; the dough should have almost doubled.

**BAKING:** Preheat your oven to 475°F for 30 minutes. Turn the loaves out onto a floured baker’s peel (if you have a baking stone in your oven), or onto lightly floured baking sheets. Note: If you want really big holes in your loaves and loads of flavor, dust them with flour, cover, then refrigerate overnight. Next day, remove the loaves from the fridge, and let them rest, still covered, at room temperature while you preheat your oven, about 30 minutes. Uncover the loaves and bake as directed below.

Slash the loaves several times using a lame, sharp knife or razor blade. Just before placing the loaves in the oven, spritz them several times with water.

Put the loaves into the oven, spritz with water after 30 seconds, and again at 1 minute and 2 minutes. Turn the oven temperature down to 450°F and bake for 18 to 25 minutes. Be sure the bread is baked through, and the crust well browned. The bread should feel firm and sound hollow when tapped, and its internal temperature should read 195°F on a digital thermometer. Much of the flavor is concentrated in a deep brown crust, so don’t be afraid to bake it until it’s good and dark. (**Note:** a sourdough bread will never become as dark as a non-sourdough, so use your digital thermometer to gauge its doneness; take the bread out when it’s between 195°F and 205°F.)

Remove the bread from the oven. Now tilt your head close, and listen: as the bread cools, you should hear it crackle. This is the sound of a good loaf. It’s hard not to tear off a piece right away, but the bread is still baking and developing flavor as it cools — it really will taste better after an hour of cooling. Yield: 2 loaves.

This is a basic recipe and a great one to use as a jumping-off point. Feel free to substitute some rye or whole wheat flour for some of the white flour; you may have to adjust the water a little because all flours absorb liquids at a different rate. Add chopped nuts, seeds, or herbs, or use the dough to make crusty rolls—the possibilities are quite varied.