



# Care and Use of Bruno the Sourdough

By Peter Combs

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# CARE AND FEEDING

### Greetings!

Hello! You are the newest owner of a descendant of Bruno, a live sourdough culture started in January of 2016 in San Bruno, California in the kitchen of Peter Combs and Kelsey Turbeville. Compared to store-bought yeast, Bruno requires a bit more care and advanced planning, but will reward you with a depth of flavor that you can't get anywhere else. Bruno has given us who-knows-how-many boules, loaves, pitas, waffles, and more, and we hope that it will be a welcome addition to your kitchen!

### General Care

I keep the bulk of the culture in my fridge in a large (~2qt) tupperware in my fridge. I like to keep it in an unsealed ziplock bag to help keep any stray dried bits from getting all over the place. Bruno is a live culture, so it does need to be fed at somewhat-regular intervals. At least every two weeks, I'll pour off about half of the starter from the tupperware and add in about a 75-100g of flour (about 1/3-1/2 cup) and an equal amount of water. Then back into the fridge it goes! If you go to the long side without feeding, a brownish liquid called bung will collect on the top. This is fine, just pour it off and add in a bit of extra water.

### Special Storage

I have heard, though have not tested myself, that the starter can be dehydrated by pouring a thin layer onto parchment paper and drying in a just-warm oven or in the sun. This way, you can either store some of the flakes in the freezer to rescue a long-forgotten starter or travel to some other locale to bake.

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## GENERAL BAKING CONSIDERATIONS

### Levain

Bruno is quite finicky coming straight from the fridge. I have sometimes gotten good bakes out of it by feeding the bulk culture in the tupperware and leaving it at room temperature for a day or two, but found this process to be very hit or miss. After some experimentation, I started creating a levain—basically, a short-term offshoot of the main culture that gets kept warm and fed regularly for a few days.

You'll want to start the feeding early—2 or 3 days before you start baking, make a levain by mixing 50 grams of cold starter with 50g of all-purpose flour and 50g of warm water (1.5oz) in a small bowl. Repeat as necessary twice a day until you have a nice bubbly, yeasty-smelling froth.

### Measurement

In the recipes that follow, I use weights in grams. This has a few advantages: first, it's more consistent than measuring flour by volume, which means you don't have to worry about whether you sift the flour or not; secondly, it's more convenient! You can just dump all the ingredients straight into your bowl and keep your cleanup to a single bowl and spoon. You can also scale a recipe up or down as needed (though times may need to be adjusted). I usually get things like flour and water down to the nearest 5 grams, though even that level of precision is more than you really need (for the salt, you want to be a bit more precise, but even 50% more won't hurt). I use a cheap digital scale we got off of Amazon for about \$15.

### Flours

For most recipes, a majority of the flour is bread flour. This has a higher gluten content than all-purpose flour, which in turn has more gluten than cake flour. This helps give the bread a nice chewy texture. Whole wheat is also relatively high in gluten, but will give a denser bread, so when baking with these, I will typically replace 10-20% of the bread flour with whole grain flour.

### Kneading

This is something that I find a lot of people worry about with bread, but given the relatively long bulk rise that the sourdough needs, in most cases all you need is to give it a firm stir with a wooden spoon for about a minute. The dough will still be quite sticky, but should come together into a ball.

### Baking

Parchment paper is great for reducing the amount of bread that sticks to your baking vessel. For boules, I like to use a dutch oven with its lid on for the first 20 minutes to help retain steam, which helps the bread rise. If you don't have a dutch oven, you can put a pan of hot water beneath the bread.

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## BASIC BOULE

Time: 10-20 hours (30m active)

Ingredient	Quantity
Well-fed, bubbly starter	50-100g
Warm water	300-350g
Bread flour	500g
Fine salt	10g

### Instructions

1. Whisk together the starter and water (total weight of 400 grams) with a fork or chopstick.
2. Pour in the flour and salt and mix until shaggy with the fork.
3. (Optional) let the dough autolyse for an hour or so. This helps release the gluten and minimize the amount of kneading required.
4. "Knead" the dough by stirring firmly with a wooden spoon. You only need to do this enough to bring the dough together into a sticky ball. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap.
5. **Bulk Rise:** Leave the starter in a warm place until approximately doubled. Depending on the temperature of your kitchen, this could be anywhere from 8-18 hours. I will often make the dough late in the evening, and it will be ready to bake in the morning, though if things are taking longer, I have been known to sit with a bowl in my lap like a kitten.
6. Scrape the dough out of the bowl onto a lightly floured counter. Gently flatten, then shape the dough into a ball by folding over four corners to the center of the dough. Turn right side up on the counter, then turn gently with your hands to form a smooth, tight ball.
7. Let rest for thirty minutes to an hour uncovered, either seam-side down in a dutch oven on parchment paper, or seam side up in a colander.
8. Preheat oven to 450° F.
9. Turn your dough out of the colander onto a square of parchment paper in a dutch oven.
10. Just before baking your boule, make one or more 1/4" to 1/2" slashes with a sharp knife, razor, or bread lame.
11. Bake covered in the dutch oven for 20m.
12. Uncover and bake an additional 30m.
13. Let cool on a rack for as long as you can stand the smell, then enjoy!

Serve *with*: mussels in wine sauce, roast chicken, almost anything!

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## ADVANCED BOULES

### Ingredient Substitutions and Additions

All of the recipes below start with the  recipe above, with simple modifications

**Rye Sourdough:** Replace 100-125 grams of the bread flour with dark rye flour. This is my favorite!

**Fruit and Nut Sourdough:** At the shaping step, mix in about a cup of dried fruit and/or chopped nuts.

**Herb Sourdough:** Pull the fine leaves off of two or three sprigs of rosemary and mix in at the shaping step.

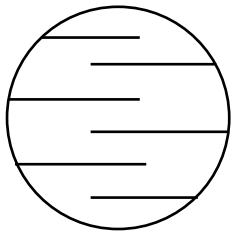
### Bread Bowls

Before shaping, split the dough into thirds to make miniature boules. These are just about the right size for serving clam chowder or (my preference) salmon chowder.

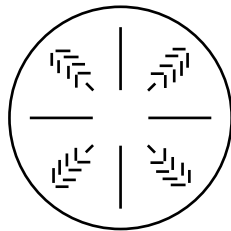


### Advanced Slashing

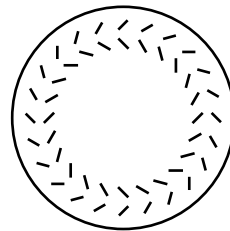
Slashing the dough is an easy way to add some dramatic flair to the finished loaf. Just prior to baking, gently spread a couple tablespoons of all purpose flour on the boule, then slash of the designs below, or make up your own!



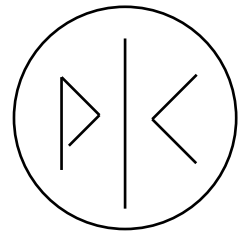
*Zebra Loaf*



*Leaf Loaf*



*Pinwheel*



*Monogrammed Loaf*



## PITA BREAD

Ingredient	Quantity
Well-fed, bubbly starter	100g
Warm water	350g
Honey	10g
Olive Oil	25g
Bread flour	500g
Fine salt	10g

1. Mix all the wet ingredients, then add in the flour and salt and mix until dough is shaggy
2. Let autolyse for 30m to an hour, then knead with a wooden spoon.
3. Cover and let rise for 8-10 hours in a warm place
4. Scrape out dough onto a well floured counter and cut into eight roughly equally sized pieces.
5. Preheat oven at 500° F (or as hot as it will go without broil), with either a cast-iron skillet, comal, or a pizza stone on the middle rack.
6. Roll each piece into a smooth ball in your floured hands.
7. With a rolling pin, roll out each ball into a flat, 4" diameter disk.
8. Place disks one or two at a time onto the pizza stone and bake 2 or 3 minutes until puffy.
9. Keep warm on a plate with a clean, dry kitchen towel.

*Serve with:* hummus, tabouleh, falafel

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## FOCACCIA

Ingredient	Quantity
Well-fed, bubbly starter	50g
Cool water	375g
Honey	20g
Bread or All-purpose flour	500g
Fine salt	10g
Olive Oil	to taste
Flaky or kosher salt	to taste

1. Whisk together the starter, water, and honey.
2. Add the flour and salt, then mix with a fork to incorporate, then finish mixing by hand. Having your hands damp will minimize the amount of dough that sticks.
3. Let rise for 12-18 hours overnight until doubled (or more).
4. In the morning, line a sheet pan with parchment paper, then drizzle a few tablespoons of olive oil.
5. Scrape the dough out onto the olive oil and flip it over a few times so its coated.
6. Cover and let rest for 1-2 hours or until very puffy
7. Preheat oven to 425°F
8. Gently stretch the dough into a rough rectangle or oval shape.
9. Use your fingers to dimple the dough, pressing all the way to the bottom of the pan.
10. Drizzle a bit more olive oil into the dimples, sprinkle with flaky salt.
11. Bake for 25-30 minutes until crisp and golden brown.
12. Cool before cutting into wedges with a pizza wheel.

*Serving:* Great along side salads, makes a nice flat sandwich bread if sliced bagel-wise.

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# WAFFLES

Leftover starter makes a great substitute for buttermilk in all kinds of recipes that require some tanginess.

Ingredient	Quantity
Leftover starter	120g / 1/2 cup
Milk	240g / 1 cup
Unsalted butter, melted	30g / 2tbsp
Large egg	1
All-purpose flour	120g / 1 cup
Sugar	1tbsp
Baking soda	10g / 2tsp
Fine salt	pinch or two

If you only have salted butter, skip adding the salt.

1. Preheat waffle iron
2. Whisk together the leftover starter, milk, melted butter, and egg in a large bowl. Add the dry ingredients and continue to whisk until smooth.
3. If the batter seems too thick, add more milk to thin out to desired consistency.
4. Lightly coat the waffle iron with cooking spray
5. Pour in batter to fill the waffle iron, then cook for 3 to 5 minutes.

*Serve with:* Maple syrup, mixed berries, butter, sliced nuts, etc.

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### THANKS!

Lots of credit goes to Kelsey for knowing me well enough to suggest that as a scientist and amateur baker, I might enjoy collecting and raising my own sourdough starter. Much research ensued, followed not long after by a successful starter.

Thanks also to everyone who has taken some of the sourdough, found new recipes and techniques, and in turn, passed the starter on to others. Bread is great for sharing with others!

As I find new recipes, I'll try to keep this recipe book up to date at <http://www.combslab.net/bruno.pdf>

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