

Bill's Norwich Sourdough

(adapted from “My New Favorite Sourdough”, posted to the Wild Yeast Blog 2007-07-08)

Yield: 1900 g before baking

Times:

Mix/autolyse: 40 minutes

First fermentation: 1.5 hours, then retard for 12 – 16 hours

Shaping: 15 min plus time for oven to heat up

Bake: 28 minutes



Ingredients:

900 g white flour (12% protein, “hard” flour)

120 g whole rye flour (e.g., pumpernickel) or whole grain wheat (e.g., Red Fife organic)

600 g water at about 74°F

360 g mature 100% hydration sourdough starter

23 g salt

Method:

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer, mix the flours, water, and starter on low speed until just combined, about two minutes (until the dough no longer clings to the work bowl).
2. Let the dough autolyse for 30 minutes.
3. Add the salt and continue mixing on low or medium speed until the dough reaches a medium level of gluten development. This should only take about 3 or 4 minutes. Dough temperature should be 74F and pass the windowpane test.
4. Transfer the dough to an oiled container. Ferment at room temperature (72°F – 76°F) for 1.5 hours, removing to stretch and fold at 50 and 100 minutes.
5. After the second fold, refrigerate overnight (12 – 16 hours), then remove from the refrigerator. Weigh and shape the loaves right away. Hand-form bâtards or use banettons.
6. After this step, preheat the oven, with baking stone, to 475°F at “true convection”. You will also need steam during the initial phase of baking, so prepare for this now.
7. Turn the proofed loaves onto a semolina-sprinkled peel or parchment. Slash each one with two overlapping cuts that are almost parallel to the long axis of the bâtard.
8. Once the loaves are in the oven, turn the heat down to 450°F. Bake for 12 minutes with steam, then another 15 – 18 minutes without steam. The crust should be a deep brown and the internal temperature 200F. Then turn off the oven and leave the loaves in for 10 minutes longer, with the door ajar, to help them dry and get a very crispy crust.
9. Cool on a wire rack. Don't cut until the loaves are completely cool, if you can manage it!

Variation, with added fiber:

Instead of 900 g 12% flour, use this:

- 500 g 12% unbleached flour
- 385 g whole grain wheat flour
- 15 g King Arthur *Whole-Grain Bread Improver* (or increase the whole grain flour to 400g, but expect a slightly denser loaf than without whole grain and the improver)

Baking Notes:

1. First time I did this, I had a little over 1900 g of dough, which I shaped into four bâtards @ 490 grams.
2. I have also used oval banettons (brotforms): King Arthur Flour, in Norwich VT (<http://www.kingarthurfLOUR.com>) used to sell large oval ones (about 32 cm in length) and small ovals (about 25 cm in length), but as of the date of writing they had (temporarily?) discontinued them. Another source is Golda's Kitchen in Mississauga, ON (<http://www.goldaskitchen.com>); search using "brotform". I have two of each, so first I divide the dough into thirds (by weighing), then divide one of the thirds in half. The two thirds go into the larger banettons for final shaping; the two sixths into the smaller ones. The smaller loaves seem to bake at the same rate as the larger ones, so they all bake together. The loaves are only in the baskets about 20 min whilst the oven heats up but that is sufficient to relax the dough so it picks up the characteristic markings.
3. When docking (slashing) the dough, use a serrated bread knife, and keep the blade nearly parallel to the countertop. This will produce "ears" on your bread.
4. For steam, I have placed an old half-sheet pan beneath my baking stone, skewed so that one edge protrudes below the stone. When the oven reaches temp and I am ready to place the loaves into the oven, I open the door, place a towel over the glass window (otherwise, a stray drop could shatter the glass), and pour about 100mL of water into the sheet pan. I quickly remove the towel and shut the door for about 30 sec, then open the door and quickly insert the loaves. I have found that for my oven and typical bread temps, 100 mL of water in the half-sheet pan evaporates in 8-12 minutes.

When using steam, stand back when you open the door. You could scald yourself quite badly!

This recipe is based on one from the Wild Yeast Blog, accessed 2012 June 01.
<http://www.wildyeastblog.com/2007/07/08/my-new-favorite-sourdough/>