

# tart, tasty sourdough

The Bay City's favorite bread is as treasured today as when the prospectors first introduced it.

**S**ourdough has a strong tradition in San Francisco, but it's known and baked the world over. The secret to this popular bread is a leavening agent known as a starter.

Some bakers prefer to purchase starter, but it's easily made by adding yeast to a batter of flour and water. The yeast (plus ambient wild yeasts and bacteria) soon flourish and develop a harmonious relationship that creates leavening and acidity, which gives sourdough bread its tartness. *The microbes also create a beer-like liquid that floats to the top; bakers sometimes stir it back in for extra flavor, but it's also OK to pour it off before using.*

The starter will be ready in a week, and it can keep indefinitely. In fact, the King Arthur Flour company boasts of having a starter that's more than 250 years old!

— Carlos Acevedo

## Sourdough Starter

Makes 3 cups; Total time: 7 days

- 1 pkg. active dry yeast (2¼ tsp.)
- 6 cups warm water (110°), divided
- 1 tsp. molasses or honey
- 6 cups all-purpose flour, divided

**Dissolve** yeast in 1 cup warm water in a 1-qt. container; stir in molasses and 1 cup flour; cover with a towel and set aside at room temperature for 24 hours. (The starter should become foamy and smell like beer.)

**Discard** all but 1 cup of starter, then add 1 cup water and 1 cup flour; repeat process, discarding excess and feeding 1 cup flour and 1 cup water daily for four more days.

The starter will be ready on the seventh day.

**Keep** remaining cup of starter refrigerated, and repeat process of discarding excess and feeding flour and water twice a week.

## Sourdough Rolls

Makes about 30 rolls

Total time: 1 hour + 3–4 hours rise time

- 1 tsp. active dry yeast
- ¼ cup warm water (110°)
- 2 cups Sourdough Starter (below left)
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ⅓ cup canola or vegetable oil, plus more to coat bowl
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tsp. table salt
- 3½–4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbsp. melted butter

**Dissolve** yeast in water in a large bowl. Add Sourdough Starter, eggs, ⅓ cup oil, sugar, and salt, whisking to mix ingredients. Stir in 3 cups flour; add more flour, ¼ cup at a time, until dough is too stiff to stir. Turn dough out onto a floured counter.

**Knead** dough until smooth but still moderately soft, 10–12 minutes, adding flour 1 Tbsp. at a time if dough is too sticky. Place dough in a bowl brushed with oil, turning dough to coat it with the oil. Cover bowl with a towel; let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, 2–2½ hours.

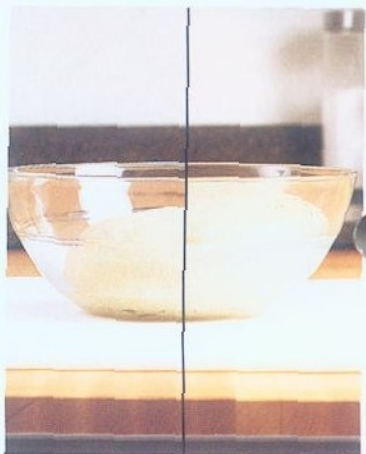
**Punch** down dough. With floured hands, pull off golf-ball-sized pieces of dough; shape pieces into balls. Arrange dough balls about ¼ inch apart in 2 greased cast-iron skillets. Cover skillets with plastic wrap; let dough rise again until rolls are roughly doubled in size, about 1–1½ hours. Preheat oven to 350°.

**Bake** rolls 20–25 minutes, or until golden. Brush roll tops with a light coating of melted butter. Allow rolls to cool slightly before serving, about 15 minutes.

Per roll: 109 cal; 3g total fat (0g sat); 13mg chol; 160mg sodium; 18g carb; 0g fiber; 3g protein



Add flour to the yeast mixture; stir to combine. If needed, add more flour until dough comes together.



The dough will double in size. How long this takes depends on the strength of the starter.



Roll golf-ball sized pieces, then place them, smooth side up, in a well-greased cast-iron skillet.