

The Vintage Homemaker

with Melissa Ringstaff

Sweet Sourdough Bread

Twice a week, I bake my famous Sweet Sourdough Bread. This is really good bread. I make loaves for my family that are devoured as soon as I allow one to be sliced. Sometimes I give loaves away along with some homemade jam. It makes a lovely, thoughtful, and much appreciated gift! I love sourdough breads. If you have the starter, you don't need to buy yeast or cook with yeast in order to have good bread. And it isn't hard at all! Sourdough starters are very forgiving.

Sweet Sourdough Starter

To make the starter, mix together:

3/4 cup sugar

3 tbsp. instant potato flakes

1 cup warm water

1/4 tsp. active yeast (this is optional)

Let the mixture sit on your counter or in a warm area of your home for about 3 days. Every 3 - 5 days you need to feed your starter. This means that every 3 - 5 days you can make your bread. Or, you can feed it once or twice before baking your bread.

If you feed it more than once, you will have extra starter to either give away to a friend or bake extra batches of bread. The day (8 - 12 hours) before you want to bake your bread, you need to feed the starter. You will feed the starter the above mixture except you do not add the yeast. Keep your starter in a warm place to allow it to "grow" and sour. On the days you are not baking bread, you can leave it in the refrigerator or on your counter. Putting it in fridge slows the sourdough down.

I like to keep my starter in a quart size canning jar, wide mouth is my favorite, but any will work.

The day you want to bake your bread (at least 8 hours after feeding the starter) you want to pour 1 cup of the starter into another jar. This is your starter for next time. You will begin the process over again.



To make the bread:

1/3 cup sugar (this optional, but I like to add it)

1 1/2 cup warm water

6 cups bread flour or all-purpose flour

1/2 cup vegetable oil

1 cup starter

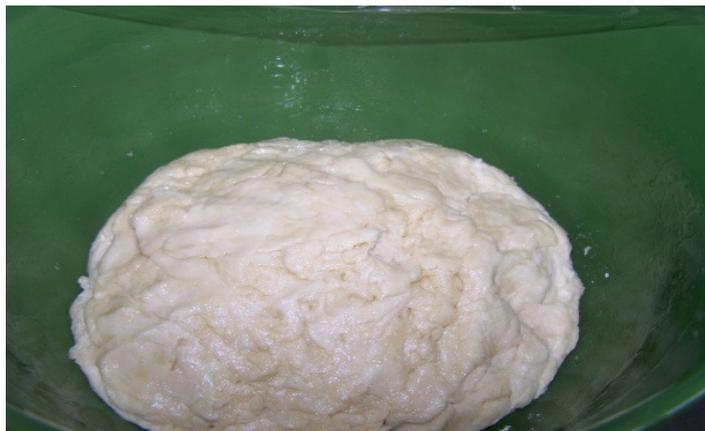
1 tbsp. salt

1 tbsp. yeast (optional - the bread will rise higher)

Mix everything together. You should have a nice soft dough. A good bread dough will feel similar to a baby's bottom. I love the feel of good dough!



Grease a large bowl and place dough in and turn to coat with oil. To save dishes, I usually just pull the ball of dough out of the way and pour the oil into the bowl, coating the dough with it.



Cover lightly and let stand 8 – 12 hours in a warm place. I like to place mine in the oven with the light on. After it has risen, punch dough down. Place on a lightly floured surface. Knead 2 or three times, just enough to get the air bubble out. This is so simple!



Divide into three parts.



Place into three greased loaf pans and brush with oil.



Place in a warm place to rise at least 5 hours. All day is really best. And again, I like to put mine in the oven with the light on. I cover them with a tea towel.



After rising, preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake loaves for 30 – 45 minutes. Remove from pans and brush with butter. Allow bread to cool. I store my bread in large plastic baggies. This bread does well frozen.



Melissa Ringstaff is a pastor's wife serving with her husband in the beautiful Appalachian Mountains of Southeastern Kentucky. They have nine children between them - which is a whole story in and of itself - five of whom are still living at home where they enjoy homeschooling. Melissa loves her dogs, chickens, horses and all the other critters who pass through her home. She is a country girl at heart. Blue jeans, flannel shirts, and mason jars are a few of her favorite things and she believes a dog and a horse are a girl's best friends - not diamonds!

Melissa is the Founding Editor and Publisher of a popular Christian women's website, A Virtuous Woman - <http://www.avirtuouswoman.org> and the author of several books including: "Spring Cleaning for the Heart and Home", "From Chaos to Calm: 15 Weeks to a Happy Home", and "The Homemaker's Journal: Keeping House".

You are invited to visit Melissa at "The Vintage Homemaker" today for more ideas on how you can serve your family at home: <http://www.melissaringstaff.com>