

# Bread Matters

## Sourdough Country Bread

The classic *Pain de Campagne* - adapted from **Bread Matters** by Andrew Whitley (Fourth Estate), available from [www.breadmatters.com](http://www.breadmatters.com)

**Note:** "sourdough" means a mixture of flour and water that is allowed to ferment naturally.

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*This is a delicious full-flavoured bread with a chewy crumb and thick crust made without added yeast. Wild yeasts in the flour multiply to raise the dough and naturally-occurring beneficial lactic acid bacteria (which produce lactic, acetic and other acids) develop to give the bread its tangy flavour and make it more digestible.*

*The amounts given in the start-up section of this recipe may seem a bit over-precise, but beginning with relatively small quantities means that you don't need to throw any of your leaven away (as is sometimes recommended by less waste-conscious methods). Digital scales that are sensitive to one gram are a great help. But absolute precision is not necessary.*

### Starting a Wheat Sourdough from Scratch

**Stage 1** If you don't already have a sourdough starter, you can get some from [Bread Matters](#) or from a baking friend. It's also easy to make your own:

Take 40 grams of wholemeal flour and 40 ml of warm water; mix them to a sloppy paste and put in a lidded plastic tub in a warm place (as near 30°C as you can manage). Leave for 24 hours and then add another 40 g of flour and 40 ml of water; Stir well and return to the warm place. Repeat on Day 3. On Day 4 add 120 g of white flour and 60 ml of warm water. On Day 5 you should have a nicely fermenting, slightly fruit/acidic-smelling starter.

### Using a Sourdough to Make Bread

*To make one large or two small loaves*

**Stage 2** Making a 'Production Leaven' (a process known as 'refreshment')

160 g \* original leaven (i.e. some of the starter you have just made or an old one from the fridge)  
200 g flour (75/25 white/wholemeal, or as you prefer)  
120 ml warm water (35°C)  
**480 g total 'production leaven'**

Mix to a dough and leave in a warm place for 4 hours or in a cool place for 12 hours. Then use this leaven to make your dough.

*\* If you are making the exact quantities in this recipe, you will have about 240 g of your original leaven left. This goes into a sealed pot in the fridge to wait for the next time you are making bread.*

## Stage 2 Making the Final Dough

300 g refreshed 'production leaven' from Stage 1 (put the remaining 180 g or so in your leaven pot in the fridge)  
400 g flour (75/25 white/wholemeal, or as you prefer)  
300 ml warm water (35°C)  
8 g sea salt  
**1008 g total 'final dough'**

Make a fairly soft dough. Knead until smooth and elastic. Cut into the desired size, mould, into a round, dip in flour (brown rice flour is best) and place in a floured proving basket (*banneton*) or a bowl lined with a floured linen cloth. Cover with a polythene bag and leave to prove in a warm place for up to 5 hours, until the dough has roughly doubled in volume. Turn out onto a baking sheet lined with silicone paper. Slash the dough with a sharp knife or razor blade to make the pattern of your choice.

Bake in a fairly hot oven (220°C dropping to 200°C after ten minutes) to develop a good crust.

Unused leaven may be stored in the fridge for some weeks. Leaven may also be frozen. To revive it, defrost it thoroughly and do a preliminary refreshment as described in 'Stage 2 - Making a Production Leaven', but take care to work out how much you will need to make bread with at the dough stage and adjust the quantities back from there.