

1898 YUKON SOURDOUGH STARTER

In June 2018, Lone Christensen gave me permission to use her family's sourdough starter at Well Bread Culinary Centre Inc. I am gifting you this starter and trust you will nourish it, use it often and **freely** pass it on to anyone else who wants some. This sourdough starter is different from some others in that most recipes it is used in, it becomes the main ingredient of your baked product; not a small addition to a larger dough like other sourdough starters are used. Other than the first initial feedings, there are no "discard half and feed the remaining starter" instructions. The recipes on Lone's pages are based on the quantity you get every time you activate your starter; minus the bit you return to the fridge in your dedicated sourdough starter container.

HOW TO ACTIVATE YOUR DRY STARTER

If you received dry starter you will need to hydrate and feed it a few times before you can use it. Allow at least two – four days, or more, for this process.

In a glass, plastic or stainless steel, non-reactive bowl, mix:

1-2 Tbsp of dry, powdered starter (the amount you received)

1 cup all purpose flour (I use Robin Hood or No-Name All Purpose, unbleached)

1 cup warm water (it should be slightly warmer than body temperature, not hot)

¼ cup white sugar (I use Rogers or Redpath)

Mix the warm water and sugar together. Mix in the flour and dry starter and scrape down the sides of the bowl. Leave this mixture on your countertop loosely covered with a plate or loose plastic wrap or a tea towel for two days to properly activate it. You should see bubbles forming on the surface of your starter within about 24 hours. Do not panic if you don't. Give it a gentle stir, leave it alone and check on it later or the next day. It should smell only faintly sour within two days and have some evidence of life (small bubbles forming in the starter and pooling on the surface).

After 48 hours:

remove 125g (approx. ½ cup) of the starter (discard the rest) and mix it with:

340 g (approx. 1.5 cups) of warm water

340g (approx. 2 cups) of all-purpose flour

26 g (2 Tbsp) of white sugar.

Leave this out on the counter loosely covered with a plate or loosely covered with plastic wrap. If your starter is active and strong you will see a lot of activity within 6-12 hours of this 2nd feeding. You may need to repeat this process multiple times to properly activate your starter. Do not panic. I have had to feed mine up to 5 times to get it properly active. Sourdough starter is a living organism. It will not always act predictably, nor will it always respond the same way even though you are following the same procedure every time. The bacteria are affected by the new environment, you, the water, the bowl you are mixing it in, the temperature of your house, and the flour you are feeding it.

When the starter is active and has several hours of growth from the 2nd and subsequent feedings, portion yourself off approximately 125g (1/2 cup) of starter and put it in a glass container with a lid that does not fit airtight and keep it in your fridge. I leave the lid slightly askew so the starter can breathe but not dry out. Label this starter: DO NOT THROW OUT!! 120-YEAR-OLD SOURDOUGH STARTER or something to that effect and put it somewhere safe in your fridge. Once the starter is cold it will go dormant and will not produce any more gas. In a few days you may see a clear, yellowish liquid forming on the top of your dormant culture. This is normal. You can leave this cold, dormant, starter in your fridge for weeks without having to feed it but I recommend waking it up at least twice a month with a good feeding. Take it out of the fridge, stir in the yellowish liquid from the top, let it warm to room temperature, then add it to **340g AP flour, 340g warm water, 26g white sugar.**

HOW TO DRY YOUR OWN STARTER

Spread a sheet of parchment paper over a sheet pan. If you don't have parchment paper you can use aluminum foil, but the starter will stick to it. You can very lightly oil the aluminum foil, but excess oil can kill your culture. That is why I always recommend and use parchment paper.

Spread a thin layer of liquid, active starter over the entire sheet. Do not put too much on the sheet at any one time; it will take too long to dry and may develop mould before it dries completely. Put the sourdough lined sheet pan on top of your fridge to dry, uncovered the entire time, for 5 days. After 5 days, break up the pieces of dry starter, blend it in your food processor or blender until it is broken-up enough to store in an envelope or small package (it mails better if it's nice and powdery). Keep this dry and safe because you never know when you might need it! Lone and I have both killed our liquid starters a couple times! My starter is most active about 4-6 hours after the 2nd feeding and that is when I spread it out on a sheet pan to dry. If I know my starter was vigorously alive when I put it to dry, I trust it will wake up from its dormant state upon hydration. It has never failed me yet!

HOW TO FEED AND CARE FOR YOUR LIQUID, ACTIVE SOURDOUGH CULTURE

If you received active, liquid sourdough starter from me at a Well Bread class (about ½ cup) feed it as soon as you get home: **340g AP flour, 340g warm water, 26g white sugar**. Mix well in a glass, plastic or stainless-steel bowl and leave on your counter loosely covered with a plate or loose plastic wrap. Check it in a few hours to make sure you see plenty of activity. If your kitchen is cool this will slow your starter down. Starter is a living organism just like you and I – it likes the climate comfortably warm and humid. 24°C/75°F is the optimum room temperature for sourdough cultures.

The starter will naturally collect wild yeasts and bacteria from the air in your home/bakery; therefore, over time, it will develop a slightly different personality and flavour than the original I forwarded to you. This is the magic of sourdough starter and I encourage you experiment with it and feed it interesting flours over the course of your life (it will outlive you by the way). Work with clean, NOT disinfected hands. The natural yeast and bacteria on your hands and home surfaces need to become familiar with the ones in this starter. Never ever put commercial yeast into the starter culture you store in your fridge. The commercial yeasts wreak havoc on the wild yeast and I've seen the culture turn black and die off completely because of this. If you are in a hurry and need your bread dough to rise quickly then add some commercial yeast to your final dough product, just do not ever add any to the starter that you store in your fridge.

Name your starter! I am not kidding. If you name it, you will be inclined to take better care of it. I call mine Klondike and talk to it every time I rehydrate and use it. This is a living culture. It's old. I'm polite. I don't want to take any chances. What I know about Klondike is it has experienced some hard times and I think it's a bit neurotic in a 'neglected-child-turned-sketchy-adult' kind of way. If you're too nice to it, it will behave badly to test you. Don't do anything complicated with your starter; just feed it, use it often and always keep a portion of it in the fridge until you need to resurrect it. If you have questions, or want to share your experience with your sourdough starter, please drop me a note at: chef@wellbread.ca

To learn more about Lone Christensen and this sourdough starter, watch the video on YouTube: [The Quest for Sourdough – Klondike Goldrush | Part 3](#)

Visit the Puratos Sourdough Library online to see where Lone's 1898 Sourdough lives in Belgium: <https://www.puratos.ca/en/about-puratos/our-commitments/next-generation/product-heritage/sourdough-library>

www.wellbread.ca/videos & recipes for more information Lone Christensen provided and her recipes.

This 1898 sourdough has been DNA tested by the Puratos Sourdough lab in Belgium. Its origins are from sourdough bacteria in San Francisco. It was most likely obtained from gold miners on the Chilkoot trail that had come from the California Gold Rush.

Best wishes to you and your new, old bacteria family!

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