Easter Camp Sourdough Method

Start with 60% hydration (stiff) starter. Example times are included, but temperature affects them. Consider referring to https://keepitsweetkitchen.com/ or https://www.youtube.com/@keepitsweetkitchen for some of the advice I (Greg) have followed.

1. Mix and grow a levain 8pm

This is a separate starter to make the dough.

Ingredients

10g starter, 30g water, 50g flour

Method

Using a 250g jar or bigger, make a rough slurry with starter and water, then stir in the flour. It won't easily come together, so scrape it onto the bench and fold, knead and generally smash it together until it forms a smooth whole. Put it back in jar and gently press it down into the bottom. Put an elastic band around at about the level of the levain to mark the starting point, put the lid on (no need to be airtight) and leave it on the bench for about 15 hours.

2. Wait until the levain is peaked

While it is growing, it will be domed on top. When peaking, some creases will appear, then the dome will collapse. It will be at least doubled in size. With a long slow 15 hour growth, you have at least an hour after peaking to use it, or perhaps more.
If you want more help, look for advice online about this – it all generally says the same thing.

1b or 2b. Feed starter

Note: Instead of taking starter from the levain, you can take it from your starter at the same time as mixing the levain.

Ingredients

3g starter from peaked levain or from your own starter (discard any extra)
9g water
15g flour

Method

Using a 100g jar, make a rough slurry with starter and water, Like with the levain, scrape out, knead and return to the jar. Let it grow about 14 hours until nearly peaked, then store in the fridge until you next want it – potentially weeks later.

3. Mix dough 11:15am

Ingredients

60-90g starter, 190g water, 270g flour, 3g or ½ teaspoon salt

Method

Mix all ingredients together into a shaggy wet dough. Work it for at least 5 minutes until it becomes smoother and a little less sticky. Transfer to a clean 2L container with a lid, if possible with straight sides. From here, onward, try to not tear the dough.

4. Stretch and fold 12:30-2:30pm

At the following intervals after mixing, perform half a dozen or so stretch and folds. Wet hands will help it not stick. During the last one or two you will notice the dough resisting you more, indicating the gluten is developing strength.
Half an hour (optional) —— One hour —— 90 minutes (optional) —— Two hours

5. Bulk ferment 2:30pm-5:30pm

Leave the dough on the bench until it is fermented. Figuring out when it is done takes practice. It should be slightly domed, wobble when shaken, slowly come away from the sides without sticking, and have a few bubbles just below the surface.
https://thesourdoughjourney.com/what-is-two-stage-bulk-fermentation/ is a good description of another convenient option here.

6. Pre-shape, prepare proofing basket 5:30pm

This is where you start developing surface tension.
Gently pour the dough onto a clean dry bench. Tuck in the four ‘sides’, then use a slightly wet scraper or hands to rotate and push the dough underneath and around. Then leave it for 20 minutes to relax so it can be finally shaped.
Line and flour your proofing basket if using, or get out the bread tin.

7. Shape 6pm

Flip the dough, then gently stretch into a rectangle. Then do the ‘caddy clasp’ or ‘burrito fold’.
Caddy clasp: grab the sides, lift up and press together. Turn 90 degrees, repeat. Grab the loose sides and squish to ensure they are stuck together.
Burrito fold: At each fold, gently press to make sure they are stuck together. Fold the bottom third up. Pull out and fold one side over the centre, then pull out and fold the other side over the top. Roll from the bottom up with a gentle pulling and stretching as you go.
Other methods: Search the Internet!
Transfer to proofing basket (seam side up) or tin (seam side down), cover then proof in the fridge for at least 2 hours, or up to a week to develop more bready and sour flavour.

8. Bake

Preheat oven to 190°C. Slash then bake for 45 minutes. Consider a dutch oven (240°C lid on, then 200°C lid off) or other way of having a steamy environment for the first half of the time.
Aim for 97°C internal temperature. Cool for at least half an hour before eating.

Recommended variations

Make more

All of these ingredients can be scaled up directly. e.g. 150g starter + 350g water + 500g flour + 6g salt makes 1kg dough for a 350g plus a 650g loaf, cut to size at pre-shape time.

Feeding ratio

Stiffer is slower. Higher ratio of flour to starter is slower. 60% is just what we used this time.
Instead of the 1:5:3 ratio here, you can use 1:1:1 for about a 5 hour peak. Much faster!

Prefermented flour ratio

Less starter in your dough leads to a stronger flavour – yep, it seems backwards.

Swap ingredients

Swap up to 20% of the water for oil, honey, milk, or butter for a different texture.
Swap up to 15% of the flour for wholemeal or seeds. Increase this with experimentation.