



Making Bread from Scratch

By Diane Whitten

One baking skill that many homesteaders enjoy is breadmaking. Truly there is nothing like a fresh baked loaf of bread, the aroma as it comes out of the oven, and the flavor of homemade bread can't be duplicated on a commercial level. Since bread is such a important food for sustenance, breadmaking is a great skill to cultivate.

Baking Skills

One of the best sources for learning this skill is King Arthur Flour, a Vermont based company. Their website, www.kingarthurfLOUR.com, is not only chock full of all types of baking recipes, it includes a vast learning library, including videos. Want to make your own sourdough starter? They've got directions and a video, including tips to increase your success. They also sell baking products, including a sourdough starter, if you want to get a jump start on your bread.



Advantages of Sourdough

In times of food shortage one bread ingredient that may be hard to find is yeast. If you make and continue to feed a sourdough starter, yeast won't be needed for leavening. Sourdough starter contains beneficial yeast and bacteria that create gasses which when caught in the dough, cause the bread to rise. Of course, using added yeast is a more fool-proof way to make bread, since you'll be putting a known amount of yeast in your bread recipe. So making sourdough bread is more challenging, but it's a time honored method used by homesteaders for centuries. In fact, European immigrants to American often dehydrated their sourdough starter, so they could bring it with them. That's how important it was to their homestead.

Flavor is another great advantage of sourdough bread. The flavors created by the yeast and bacteria through the production of lactic acid and acetic acid are what give sourdough its unique sour flavor. The sourdough starter can be used not only for bread, but for pizza crust, pretzels and many other recipes.

Digestibility is another reason people enjoy sourdough bread. Sourdough is a fermented product, the combination of yeast and bacteria predigests the flour making digestion in the gut easier, plus increases absorption of micro-nutrients, including magnesium and phosphorus.

Storing Flour

Flour is not as shelf-stable as you might think. If you're stocking up on flour make sure it's in an airtight container.



The best place for long-term storage is in the refrigerator or freezer. Whole grain flour should particularly be stored in the freezer because the oil in the germ can become rancid, and develop an off flavor. Even in the freezer whole grain flour will lose quality after just 6 months, white flour after one year. Freezing also has the added benefit of killing insects that might be in the flour. Even if your flour does develop a slight off flavor, it's still fine to bake with. Remember to rotate your flour, when you buy a new bag of flour put it in the pantry, refrigerator or freezer and use a bag that you bought earlier.