Sourdough Starter Guide

A little of Nelly, from my kitchen to yours.

I've fallen in love with sourdough. It took me months to get my starter active and bubbly, and that starter is Nelly. I'm sharing a little of her with you so you can enjoy baking your own bread too.



Meet Nelly

Your starter is called **Nelly**. Please take great care of her. Always feed her with **high-protein flour** — strong or extra strong bread flour — and use **filtered or bottled water**.

Canadian flour is best, ideally with **over 13g protein per 100g**. I find **15g per 100g** ideal.

Where Nelly lives
Nelly can be kept in a jar on your kitchen side. Don't put an airtight lid on her.

Caring for Nelly, every day

Feed her daily at **1:5:5**. That means **1 part starter : 5 parts flour : 5 parts water, by weight**.

A DAILY FEED, FOR EXAMPLE

10g Nelly + 50g high-protein bread flour
+ 50g filtered or bottled water

Keep the amount of Nelly you need for her feed. The starter you remove is called **discard**: put it in the bin, or keep it to bake with. **Never pour it down the sink** — it can block the pipes.

I keep my discard in the fridge in an airtight jar, and take it out to bake discard recipes with.

A SIMPLE RHYTHM

Before you bake

This is the feeding routine I use before I start a loaf. Plan backwards from the time you'd like to begin making your dough.

DAY 1 · MORNING

A little wake-up feed

Feed Nelly at **1:1:1** — equal weights of starter, flour and water.

50g Nelly + 50g high-protein bread flour
+ 50g filtered or bottled water

DAY 1 · EVENING

Make your liquid starter

For your loaf, put **30g of Nelly in another jar** and add **150g of filtered or bottled water** and **150g of high-protein bread flour** — a **1:5:5** feed.

30g Nelly + 150g high-protein bread flour
+ 150g filtered or bottled water

About **12 hours later** she should be at peak and ready to bake with.

The rest of Nelly stays in her own jar and carries on with her daily feeds.

DAY 2 · BAKING DAY

Time to make your loaf

Use **130g of this liquid starter, at its peak,** in the recipe below.

Hayley's sourdough loaf

ONE LOAF · INGREDIENTS

130g liquid starter, at peak (made from Nelly)	About ½ cup
315g bottled or filtered water	About 1⅓ cups
500g extra strong bread flour	About 4 cups
10g salt	2 tsp

The higher the protein, the better. Canadian flour is best, ideally over **13g protein per 100g** — I find **15g** best.

US cup measures are approximate; use gram weights for accuracy.

Your loaf's method is on the next page.

HAYLEY'S METHOD

Mix, fold & prove

1. Mix the water and liquid starter, at peak, together in a bowl. Add the flour and salt, and mould into a dough.
2. Leave for **30 minutes**, then do your **slap and folds**.
3. Cover and leave for **30 minutes**, then do one round of **stretch and folds**.
4. Cover and rest for **30 minutes**, then do another round of **stretch and folds**.
5. Cover and leave for **30 minutes**, then do your **coil folds**.
6. Cover and leave for **30 minutes**, then do your final round of **coil folds**.
7. Cover and leave to **bulk ferment**. The dough should have doubled in size, not be too sticky to touch, and pull away from the bowl easily.
8. Do your **first shaping**, cover and leave for **30 minutes**.
9. Do your **final shaping**, put the dough in a **rice-floured banneton** and pop it in the fridge for an **overnight prove**.

Folds explained

Slap and folds: lift the dough, slap its lower end onto the worktop, then fold the rest over it.

Stretch and folds: lift and stretch one edge over the middle; turn the bowl and repeat around the dough.

Coil folds: lift the dough from underneath so its ends tuck under; turn the bowl and repeat.

The Dutch oven bake continues on the next page.

HAYLEY'S METHOD · CONTINUED

The Dutch oven bake

10 Preheat your Dutch oven in your oven at **240°C (464°F)** for **45 minutes** before baking.

11 Put your loaf in the Dutch oven, **lid on, for 25 minutes**. After **7 minutes** of that time, do an expansion score — a cut right down the middle — then put the lid back on for the rest of the 25 minutes.

12 After the 25 minutes, turn the oven down to **210°C (410°F)**, take the lid off and put the loaf back in for **10–15 minutes**.

The loaf is done when it sounds hollow when tapped underneath.

Take care: the Dutch oven is extremely hot. Use thick oven gloves.

Happy baking — and look after Nelly!
Hayley x