

English Muffins with Sourdough Starter

I found this recipe at Sourdough Home; they took it from somewhere else online. I altered it slightly to match what I had in my kitchen, and scaled it to use the amount of sourdough starter you throw out when you feed it, if you're following the recipes in my book. It makes about 15 muffins.

What's great about this recipe is it uses a little sugar (which helps the sourdough microorganisms get going) and a little baking soda (which helps the muffins rise even if your starter is lagging.)

0.160 kg starter (this is half, or what you throw away when you feed your starter)
1 Tbsp honey or 1 tsp sugar
1 cup water
2 cups all purpose flour
½ tsp baking soda
~1 cup flour
1 tsp salt
cornmeal for sprinkling under rising muffins
butter for cooking

Day 1:

Mix the first three in a container big enough to allow expansion. Add the 2 cups flour and mix just until there are no dry spots. Cover and leave at room temperature. (If your house is cold, try to find a warm place—around 70 degrees.)

Day 2:

Get your pans ready—sprinkled with cornmeal. The original recipe said to use wax paper, too, but I found it to stick and make a mess, and it's less wasteful not to use it anyway so I don't bother. You can use cookie sheets. I use numerous wide Tupperware containers so that I can cover the muffins easily, like mini proof boxes.

The mixture should have risen a lot. Sprinkle on the baking soda and salt and stir in. Now use the 1 cup of flour but not all at once! Flour your kneading surface well, dump the wet dough onto it, and work flour into it. You want the dough to be workable without becoming stiff. Don't add so much flour that it becomes un-moist!

Once the dough is sticking to itself somewhat, scrape your surface clean, sprinkle some new flour out, clean your hands off, and knead for 5 minutes. This is going to be messy. Working as quickly as possible will help stop the wet dough from sticking to you! Focus on working quickly and not on having the dough behave perfectly.

Now you need to roll out the dough. Scrape your surface clean, wash your hands, and sprinkle new flour out. Use a rolling pin (or wine bottle) to roll the dough out to ½ inch

thick. Use a cookie cutter to cut out the muffins, placing each on the cornmeal. (Note: you can make shapes! Hearts work great.) Leave space between the muffins, but they won't need too much space. Re-knead the scraps of dough briefly and cut more muffins.

Cover the muffins and put them somewhere warm until they rise, about an hour but longer is okay. Warmth really helps. Also, they rise better if they are a little drier; as always there is a tradeoff between moistness and bigness! (You can also sprinkle cornmeal on top of them so it's on both sides when they cook—I haven't tried this yet.)

Now to cook! Preheat your griddle or frying pan. The first time, you have to find the heat setting that enables your muffin to cook inside without burning outside. On my stove this is halfway between medium and low, so I'd start there and see what happens. Let the pan preheat well! It is much easier to gauge how the temperature setting works if the pan is well preheated; otherwise you end up adjusting and readjusting.

Drop a little butter in the pan (it should sizzle) and spread it around. Then place 3 or 4 muffins in. Cook for 4 minutes; ideally, they will poof up like little domes. Flip (they should be lightly browned) and depress them slightly to make the poofy side flat. Don't kill them! Just flatten slightly. After another 4 minutes, remove from pan.

Between muffins, try to scrape the cornmeal out of the pan or at least to the edge; otherwise you'll start to get a burning smell. Also, if the tops of the rising muffins are dried out, put the dry side down in the pan, so that the moist side can expand.

These muffins freeze great if you can't eat a whole batch at once. Slice before freezing for easy toasting later.

