From flour and water to a strong, bubbly starter

A practical day-by-day guide created for the Crumb'n Get It Muskoka sourdough starter series.

Before you begin

A starter is a living culture. The calendar gives you a path, but your jar decides the pace.

YOUR SIMPLE FEEDING FORMULA

Keep 25 g starter, then add 25 g water + 25 g flour. This is a 1:1:1 feeding by weight. Stir well, scrape down the sides, mark the level, and cover loosely.

You need	Best choice
Jar	Small, straight-sided, clean jar with room to rise
Scale	Digital scale measuring grams
Flour	Inexpensive unbleached all-purpose flour is fine to begin
Water	Room-temperature water; if heavily chlorinated, let it sit overnight
Cover	Loose lid - not airtight, but protected from debris
Marker	Elastic band or washable marker to show the starting level

IMPORTANT

Do not pour starter or discard down the sink. Flour and water can harden in plumbing. Put it in the garbage or compost it where appropriate.

Choose one consistent feeding time. A warm kitchen moves faster; a cool kitchen moves more slowly. Use a clean spoon and avoid switching flours or routines every time the jar looks different.

DAY 1

BEGIN THE CULTURE

WHAT TO DO
Mix 25 g flour + 25 g water until no dry flour remains. Cover loosely and leave at room temperature for 24 hours.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
A thick paste, a few bubbles, or no visible activity at all.	Equal weights make the process easy to understand and repeat. A small batch limits waste.

Jenn's note: Do not chase perfection. You are creating the right environment and letting the microbes do the work.

DAY 2

FIRST CHECK-IN

WHAT TO DO
Look, smell, and note any change. Keep 25 g starter; discard the rest. Feed 25 g water + 25 g flour.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
A few bubbles, a strong rise, an unusual smell, or very little change.	Early activity can be a bacterial bloom, not mature yeast strength. It is information, not proof that the starter is ready.

Jenn's note: This may be the beginning of a false rise. Keep going.

DAY 3

EXPECT THE FALSE RISE

WHAT TO DO
Keep 25 g starter and feed 25 g water + 25 g flour. Mark the level immediately after feeding.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
A dramatic rise followed by collapse, many bubbles, or sudden quiet after yesterday's activity.	The early microbial population is changing. A false rise is common and does not mean you failed.

Jenn's note: A big rise today is exciting, but it is not yet the dependable rhythm needed for bread.

DAY 4

STAY CONSISTENT

WHAT TO DO
Repeat the 1:1:1 feeding. Observe before stirring: bubbles, height, top texture, smell, and streaks on the jar.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
The starter may look sleepy, thin, separated, or less impressive than Days 2-3.	The acidic environment is becoming more selective. The yeasts and lactic acid bacteria you want need time to establish.

Jenn's note: The quiet phase is where many people give up. Do not.

DAY 5

READ THE JAR

WHAT TO DO
Feed once today using the same method. Keep the jar comfortably warm, not hot.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
Small bubbles through the mixture; a floury, fruity, yogurty, tangy, or mildly boozy aroma.	Consistent conditions help you recognize a real pattern instead of reacting to every fluctuation.

DAY 6

WATCH THE RISE AND FALL

WHAT TO DO
Feed 1:1:1. Note the time fed, peak height, and when it begins to fall.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
A rounded or domed top while rising; a flatter top at peak; streaks above the starter after it falls.	Rise-and-fall evidence tells you more than a single glance at the clock.

DAY 7

ONE-WEEK REVIEW

WHAT TO DO
Continue once-daily feeding unless it is clearly peaking and collapsing much sooner than 24 hours.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
More predictable bubbles and aroma, but possibly inconsistent rise.	At one week, reliability matters more than one impressive rise. Many starters need longer than seven days.

Jenn's note: The goal is not to force it to be ready. The goal is to learn what ready looks like.

DAY 8

BUILD STRENGTH

WHAT TO DO
Feed 1:1:1. If your starter reliably peaks and falls well before the next feed, move to every 12 hours.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
Faster rise, finer bubbles, a webby interior, and a cleaner tangy aroma.	Feeding after the starter has used most of its food supports strength. Feeding too early can dilute a weak culture.

DAY 9

FOLLOW THE PATTERN

WHAT TO DO
Maintain the schedule that matches your starter: once daily if slow, every 12 hours if it is hungry sooner.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
A more repeatable rise after feeding. The amount of rise may still vary with temperature.	You are training consistency, not racing another person's timeline.

DAY 10

PRACTICE PEAK TIMING

WHAT TO DO
Mark the level and record how long doubling takes. Check for a domed top before it begins to flatten.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
Doubling may take 4-12 hours depending on strength and room temperature.	Knowing peak timing helps you decide when to mix dough later.

DAY 11

CONFIRM RECOVERY

WHAT TO DO
Feed again after the starter has peaked or is beginning to fall. Keep the ratio and flour consistent.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
A starter that rebounds predictably after feeding and smells pleasantly tangy.	One good cycle can be luck; repeated cycles show a stable culture.

DAY 12

REPEAT, DO NOT REINVENT

WHAT TO DO
Continue the established routine. Resist adding sugar, commercial yeast, or frequent flour changes to make it perform.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
Steady bubbles and a dependable rise, even if it is not extremely dramatic.	Repetition makes the culture easier to read and troubleshoot.

DAY 13

READINESS REHEARSAL

WHAT TO DO
Feed as you would before baking. Time the rise and note peak height. Do not rely on the float test alone.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
Doubling or more with bubbles throughout, a pleasantly fermented aroma, and repeatable timing.	Rise strength and predictable behaviour are better readiness measures than whether a spoonful floats.

DAY 14

READY - OR KEEP BUILDING

WHAT TO DO
If it has doubled predictably after several consecutive feedings, plan a small first bake. If not, keep the same routine for a few more days.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE	WHY IT MATTERS
A strong starter rises, peaks, and falls in a recognizable cycle. A young starter may still need patience.	Day 14 is a checkpoint, not a deadline. A starter is ready when its behaviour is reliable.

Jenn's note: Starter readiness is earned by repetition, not declared by the date.

Is it ready to bake?

Look for a pattern, not a party trick.

RISES PREDICTABLY

It doubles or more after feeding for several consecutive cycles.

HAS STRUCTURE

Bubbles appear throughout and the interior looks aerated, not merely foamy on top.

SMELLS HEALTHY

Expect floury, fruity, yogurty, tangy, or mildly boozy aromas - not mouldy or rotten.

SHOWS A FULL CYCLE

You can recognize its rise, peak, and fall.

RECOVERS AFTER FEEDING

It rebounds reliably instead of producing one isolated dramatic rise.

The float test can fail because of handling, flour choice, or timing. Use it only as an extra clue, never as the only decision.

After Day 14

Choose the routine that matches how often you bake.

IF YOU BAKE OFTEN

Keep the starter at room temperature and feed when it has peaked or is beginning to fall. A common maintenance feed is 25 g starter + 25 g water + 25 g flour; increase the amount or ratio when your recipe and timing require it.

IF YOU BAKE OCCASIONALLY

Once the starter is established and reliably active, feed it, allow activity to begin, then refrigerate. Refresh it before baking until it returns to its usual strong, predictable rise.

BEFORE A RECIPE

Build enough active starter for the recipe while preserving a small amount to maintain. Use it close to peak unless your recipe tells you otherwise.

A simple bread starting point

Jenn's everyday base: 50-100 g active starter, 350 g water, 500 g bread flour, and 10 g salt. The amount of starter and fermentation time can be adjusted for your room temperature and schedule.

This companion teaches starter development. Successful bread also depends on dough strength, fermentation, shaping, proofing, and baking.

Troubleshooting

Most young-starter problems are solved with consistency and time.

QUESTION OR SIGN	WHAT IT MEANS / WHAT TO DO
It rose on Day 2 or 3, then stopped	Likely a false rise followed by the normal quiet phase. Continue feeding.
There is liquid on top	The starter may be hungry or the mixture may be separating. Stir if appropriate, keep 25 g, and feed. Reassess timing and temperature.
It smells sharp or like alcohol	It has likely used much of its food. Feed it and watch how quickly it peaks.
It is not doubling	Keep conditions consistent, check that the room is not very cold, use unbleached flour, and give it more days.
Can I use bread flour?	Yes. Bread flour works, but inexpensive unbleached all-purpose flour is perfectly suitable for starting and reduces waste.
Can I skip discard?	Discard keeps the culture amount and acidity manageable and prevents each feed from requiring increasingly large amounts of flour and water.
Pink, orange, or fuzzy growth	Discard the entire starter, clean the equipment thoroughly, and begin again. Do not taste it.

REMEMBER
Do not chase perfection. Observe, feed, repeat, and learn the rhythm of your own jar.

14-day starter tracker

Record what your starter does. Patterns are easier to recognize on paper.

Day	Fed	Peak / rise	Aroma and notes
1	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____
6	_____	_____	_____
7	_____	_____	_____
8	_____	_____	_____
9	_____	_____	_____
10	_____	_____	_____
11	_____	_____	_____
12	_____	_____	_____
13	_____	_____	_____
14	_____	_____	_____

Created by Crumb'n Get It Muskoka

Huntsville, Ontario | crumbngetit.ca

For educational use. Kitchen temperature, flour, water, and local conditions all affect timing.