



Sourdough Rice Bread

This is a versatile and straight forward gluten free bread. It lends itself to countless variations. Sourdough refers to dough or batter which is fermented and leavened by naturally occurring wild yeast. These yeasts and lactic acid bacteria are present in most grain based flours including rice. This system is based on gathering and domesticating these yeasts and perpetuating them in the form of a sourdough starter or "mother". Initially, this mother is made over a 2- 3 days, and once active, can be used indefinitely, providing you care for it and bake regularly. This sourdough baking system requires a little pre planning, and almost no work.

Getting "Mother" started

Day 1 (pm) - mix 30g of brown rice flour with 30g of warm water (35°C). Mix this well and leave uncovered in a warm place (30°C) for 24 hours. I use a plant propagator but an airing cupboard works as well.

Day 2 (pm) - mix a further 30g of water and flour with day 1's mix and leave in a warm place for 12 hours.

Day 3 (am) - repeat this twice more at 4 hour intervals if you can. By now you will have about 250g of active starter. If it has some aeration and looks and feels fluffy then it's ready to use. Have a little taste; it should be a little sour with a sweet, alcoholic flavour. If there is no obvious activity, discard 2/3ds of the mixture and follow the day 3 pattern.

Keeping "Mother":

If not baking regularly, i.e. 3 - 4 times a week, keep the starter in the fridge where it goes dormant and can stay that way for a good amount of time – but with a rice starter regular refreshing will help it to stay fruity and active.

Refreshing "Mother":

The first thing you will need to do before making sourdough bread is to refresh your "Mother" and make what is known as a production batter or leaven. This means adding extra water and flour which both provides extra fermentable sugar for the culture to feed on and also introduces new wild yeasts to the starter. You will need to make this production batter each time you want to bake.

Production formula:

Take 30g of the "Mother" starter and add 50g of rice flour and 50g of water. Mix this and allow it to ferment at 30°C for at least 4 hours. You will use 100g of this in the recipe below.

Return the remaining 30g to the main mother and return that to the fridge.

Making Bread:

Take 100g of refreshed starter and mix with 200g of brown rice flour and 200g of warm water, 3g of salt and 15g of sugar which is optional, but does take the edge off the bitter aftertaste of rice flour.

I usually add up to 50g of small seeds like sesame, poppy and flax.

Mix this well by hand until you have a light smooth "Gloop".

Oil a 500g bread tin and slop in the gloop! Smooth down and dust with extra seeds. Place in a blown up plastic bag and proof in a warm place for 4 -5 hours. It tends to increase size slowly at first and then proves up quite quickly. It will almost come up to the top of the tin.

Pre heat the oven to its hottest setting. Bake the load at this temperature for 5 minutes, then turn the heat down to 200°C and bake for a further 30 – 35 minutes.

Turn it out and cool on a rack – Don't cut into it for a few hours as the starch takes a few hours to set.





Polenta and almond shortbread

This shortbread is gluten free and absolutely delicious. It will make 1 small tray (20cm by 15cm) of shortbread and keeps well if stored in an airtight container.

175 fine polenta/maize meal

100g ground almonds, I prefer to toast and grind whole almonds

100g margarine or butter (room temperature)

75g brown sugar

Zest of 1 unwaxed lemon

Pinch of salt

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 190c/375f
2. Mix together the maize, almonds, sugar, pinch of salt and zest.
3. Rub in the butter or margarine until the mixture is crumbly.
4. Press the mixture evenly into a greased baking tray and prick with a fork.
5. Bake for 20-25 minutes
6. Cut into slices while still warm, and allow it to cool in the tray.
7. This shortbread does harden up as it cools, so don't be tempted to handle it while still warm.





Gluten free short crust pastry

A basic gluten free pastry which works equally well with sweet or savoury recipes. While it is easy pastry to make, it is quite hard to work with as it lacks the gluten to bind it.

Makes 400g of pastry

200g plain gluten free flour
100g butter, room temperature
1 egg
30ml cold water
¼ tsp salt

Method:

1. Cut the butter into cubes and lightly rub into the flour.
2. Add the egg and water and mix until smooth.
3. Ball this up, wrap in cling film and chill for at least 30 minutes before use.

Top tips:

- A simple tip which make rolling it out easier is to roll the pastry out between two pieces of baking parchment, then cut it to your chosen size and shape and use the under paper to help transfer the rolled out pastry.
- Once baked, this pastry tends to be harder and dryer than conventional short crust pastry. To compensate, you may want to make your chosen filling slightly wetter than normal to make the finished item moister.





Buckwheat pancakes - Gallettes de Sarrasin

While crepes or pancakes are made all over the world from local flours, Gallettes de Sarrasin from Brittany, are made with buckwheat flour. The ancient name for Buckwheat is Saracen Corn as it comes from East Asia. It is most often grown and used in very hot, dry places with poor soil. It is gluten free, high in protein and is a good source of complex carbohydrates. These gallettes are delicious stuffed with sweet or savoury fillings. My personal favourite is creamy garlic mushrooms with blue cheese.

Makes 8 large gallettes

2 free range eggs

450ml/ 1-pint semi-skimmed milk

125/5oz buckwheat flour, you can also use 50% self-raising white wheat or gluten free flour for lighter crepes

¼ tsp salt

1 tbsp melted butter or sunflower oil

1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

1. Beat the eggs and milk together with a balloon whisk.
2. Add the bicarbonate of soda, butter, salt and 1 tablespoon of buckwheat flour at a time and whisk together. Adding one spoon at a time helps to one to avoid a lumpy batter. The batter should be reasonably thin with the pouring texture of single cream.
3. Heat a cast iron or non-stick frying pan over a medium to hot heat and lightly grease with a paper towel dipped in sunflower oil.
4. Add enough batter to coat the bottom of the pan and cook until the up facing side is dry and has bubbles forming. Turn and cook the other side until done.
5. Continue to cook the rest of the crepes in this way, storing then on a plate under a tea cloth with a sheet of kitchen paper between each one.





Almond clafoutis

With caramelized rhubarb

Clafoutis are the French version of an Eve's pudding. They are traditionally made with cherries, but I love it made with rhubarb. For simplicity, I make mine in an oven proof frying pan, but you can do this in two stages and transfer the rhubarb to a baking tray before topping with the batter and baking. It is a very forgiving dish if you get your timing right and lends itself to countless variations. Serves 4

3 big stalks of rhubarb, about 400g
25g/1oz butter
25g/1oz brown sugar

25g/1oz butter, melted
75g/3oz caster sugar
75g/30z self-raising Gluten Free flour
75g//2oz ground almonds
3 eggs, beaten
100ml milk

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180 C/350F/Gas 4/5
2. Prepare the rhubarb – top and tail and slice each piece in half lengthways and then cut into pieces
3. Heat a medium sized frying pan on a low - medium heat and melt 1tbsp of butter
4. Add the rhubarb and cook gently for 5 minutes. The fruit should start to soften and give off a little liquid. Add the sugar and turn the heat up slightly and cook for a further few minutes or until a light glossy caramel has formed and then remove from the heat. This is where you need to be attentive as it only takes moments for the caramel to catch and burn.
5. If your frying pan is oven safe you can finish the dish off in the pan, alternatively, transfer the caramelized rhubarb to medium sided round or oval ovenproof dish.
6. To make the batter, beat the eggs, milk, caster sugar and melted butter together and then fold in the flour and ground almonds, you are after a batter with a smooth dropping consistency like loose double cream.
7. Spread the batter over rhubarb bake for 15 - 20 minute until golden.
8. Serve hot or at room temperature.

