

CRUMBCRAFT CULTURE · FREE GUIDE

# THE 7-DAY SOURDOUGH STARTER CHEAT-SHEET

*the food-engineer & busy-mum method*

**WELCOME — WHY THIS SCHEDULE FITS REAL LIFE**

Hi, I'm Ana — a food engineer and a busy mum in the Netherlands. Most starter guides fail beginners for one of two reasons: they either demand rigid 4-hour timers, or they skip the basic science of *why* your jar goes quiet on Day 4. Wild yeast and lactic acid bacteria only care about **temperature, flour nutrients, and a clean 1:1:1 ratio**. This 5-minute-a-day method builds a strong, predictable starter in 7 days.

## 1. YOUR SIMPLE 5-ITEM KIT

**EQUIPMENT (NO FANCY GEAR)**

- **Straight-Sided Glass Jar** (500–750 ml, wide mouth)
- **Digital Kitchen Scale** (weighing in grams removes 90% of guesswork)
- **Rubber Band** (marks starting level after each feed)

**INGREDIENTS THAT WORK FASTEST**

- **Whole Rye or Whole Wheat Flour** (Days 1–4: carries 3x more wild microbes & minerals than white flour)
- **Unbleached White Bread Flour** (Days 3–7: structure)
- **Warm Water (26–28°C)** (dechlorinated or EU/NL tap water)

## 2. THE DAY 1-7 SCHEDULE (ONCE A DAY, 5 MINUTES)

| DAY   | WHAT TO MIX (GRAMS)                                                     | WHAT YOU'LL SEE & SMELL                                                 | FOOD-ENGINEER PRINCIPLE                                                                                    |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Day 1 | 50g whole rye (or whole wheat) + 50g warm water (28°C)                  | Thick paste. No bubbles yet. Fresh, earthy grain smell.                 | Stir well, scrape jar sides clean, cover loosely (never airtight!), keep warm (21–24°C).                   |
| Day 2 | <i>No feeding needed</i> — just stir once morning & evening             | A few surface bubbles or a sudden early "false rise".                   | Stirring redistributes oxygen. Early gas is from <i>Leuconostoc</i> bacteria, not wild yeast yet.          |
| Day 3 | Keep 50g starter + 25g rye + 25g white flour + 50g water                | Bubbles + tangy or funky smell (like sour milk or vinegar).             | Lactic acid bacteria lower the pH, clearing out unwanted microbes so wild yeast can take over.             |
| Day 4 | Keep 50g starter + 25g rye + 25g white flour + 50g water                | <b>"The Day 4 Quiet Zone"</b> — often looks flat with very few bubbles. | <b>Don't throw it out!</b> Your starter isn't dead; the ecosystem is shifting to acid-tolerant wild yeast. |
| Day 5 | Keep 50g starter + 50g white bread flour + 50g water                    | Small, even bubbles throughout; smells like yogurt or ripe fruit.       | Move your rubber band to the new base line after feeding so you can see the peak dome.                     |
| Day 6 | Keep 30g starter + 60g white bread flour + 60g water (1:2:2)            | Doubles in height within 6–8 hours; domed top at peak.                  | A 1:2:2 ratio gives the growing yeast population double the food to build strength.                        |
| Day 7 | Keep 30g starter + 60g white flour (or 50g white + 10g rye) + 60g water | <b>Doubles in 4–6 hours</b> at 22–24°C, airy webbing, creamy tang.      | <b>Ready to bake!</b> Use at peak dome, then store the remaining 30–50g in the fridge between bakes.       |

### 3. "IS IT READY TO BAKE?" — SKIP THE FLOAT TEST, CHECK THESE 3 SIGNS

The internet's "float test" lies: a Day-2 bacterial false rise can float, and a strong Day-7 starter can sink just because your spoon knocked the air out. Use these 3 food-engineer checks instead:

**1. DOUBLES IN 4–6 HRS**  
After a 1:2:2 feed at ~22–24°C, it rises to **2x its starting height** above the rubber band two days in a row.

**2. DOMED & WEBBED**  
The surface is slightly domed at peak (not sunken) and the glass walls show a lacy honeycomb of bubbles.

**3. CREAMY AROMA**  
Smells pleasantly tangy like Greek yogurt or ripe apples — never harsh like acetone or sour milk.

### 4. TOP 6 BEGINNER PROBLEMS & INSTANT FIXES

| WHAT YOU SEE                              | WHY IT HAPPENS (THE SCIENCE)                                                          | EXACT FIX                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Flat on Day 3–5 after bubbling on Day 2   | Early gas-producing bacteria died off as pH dropped; wild yeast is still multiplying. | Keep going! Feed once every 24h at 1:1:1 and keep the jar at 22–24°C.                                           |
| Dark liquid on top ("Hooch")              | Alcohol byproduct of fermentation — your starter ran out of sugars and is hungry.     | Harmless. Pour it off (or stir in for extra tang) and give a fresh 1:2:2 feed.                                  |
| Smells like nail polish / acetone         | Underfed starter accumulating ethyl acetate from starving microbes.                   | Keep 20g starter and feed 40g flour + 40g water (1:2:2) twice in 24 hours.                                      |
| Too runny; bubbles pop on top             | Too much water or over-active enzymes breaking down flour proteins.                   | Weigh in grams (1 cup flour ≠ 1 cup water!). Reduce water by 5–10g next feed.                                   |
| Cold kitchen (<19°C in autumn/winter)     | Yeast activity slows by ~50% for every 5°C drop below 25°C.                           | Mix with 28°C water and rest the jar in a switched-off oven with a mug of hot water.                            |
| Fuzzy pink, orange, green, or black spots | True mold contamination (usually from dried dough on the upper jar walls).            | <b>Safety rule:</b> Scrape jar walls clean every feed. If visible mold appears, discard jar contents & restart. |

### 5. PRINTABLE 7-DAY STARTER FEEDING LOG

| DAY & TIME        | STARTER KEPT | FLOUR + WATER ADDED             | ROOM TEMP | HOURS TO 2X | SMELL & BUBBLE NOTES |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------|----------------------|
| Day 1 · ____:____ | New Jar      | 50g rye + 50g water             | ____ °C   | —           |                      |
| Day 2 · ____:____ | Stir Only    | No flour/water added today      | ____ °C   | ____ hrs    |                      |
| Day 3 · ____:____ | 50g          | 25g rye + 25g white + 50g water | ____ °C   | ____ hrs    |                      |
| Day 4 · ____:____ | 50g          | 25g rye + 25g white + 50g water | ____ °C   | ____ hrs    |                      |
| Day 5 · ____:____ | 50g          | 50g white + 50g water           | ____ °C   | ____ hrs    |                      |
| Day 6 · ____:____ | 30g          | 60g white + 60g water (1:2:2)   | ____ °C   | ____ hrs    |                      |
| Day 7 · ____:____ | 30g          | 60g white + 60g water (1:2:2)   | ____ °C   | ____ hrs    |                      |

**READY FOR DAY 8? BAKE YOUR FIRST LOAF WITHOUT KNEADING**  
Now that your starter is bubbling, don't lose momentum to a dense, gummy first loaf. Grab **"Your First Loaf: The Easy Sourdough Guide"** (our 30-page step-by-step handbook with the 4-fold method, visual crumb diagnosis, and busy-parent schedule — including a **Free 30-Day Pass to CrumbCraft Club** for weekly recipes & direct Q&A with Ana).  
**GET "YOUR FIRST LOAF" + FREE 30-DAY CRUMBCRAFT CLUB PASS → [CRUMBCRAFTCULTURE.COM](https://crumbcraftculture.com)**

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**Educational & Culinary Disclaimer:** Sourdough fermentation times depend on ambient kitchen temperature, flour composition, and starter maturity. Always discard any starter showing visible pink, orange, green, or black fuzzy mold. Nutritional and digestibility notes are shared from a food-science perspective for general informational purposes only and do not constitute medical or dietary advice.