

# Sourdough



Sourdough bread, known for its tangy flavor from fermentation, originated in ancient Egypt around 1500 B.C., making it the oldest form of leavened bread. Sourdough contains fermented grains, which aid in digestion and provide additional benefits like prebiotics that support gut health.

Sourdough baking has risen in popularity by 18% in the last year, and its estimated global market was \$2.61 billion in 2024. Homemade sourdough bread uses just three ingredients: flour, water, and salt. In Illinois, 60 million bushels of wheat are harvested each year, which is enough to make 2.5 billion pounds of flour. That's a lot of bread!

The most traditional type of sourdough bread is a round loaf called a boule. Sourdough can also be baked in many other shapes as well as into sandwich-style loaves. Sourdough starter discard can be used to make many types of delicious baked goods and snacks.



A sourdough starter is a symbiotic culture of wild yeasts and bacteria that acts as a natural leavening agent. Sourdough starters can be made from scratch using flour and water. A sourdough starter is alive and requires regular feeding. Starters are fed by adding more flour and water for the yeast bacteria to consume.





# Meet the Seversons

Brian Severson Farms | Dwight, IL

## Tell us about your farm.

We are a fifth/sixth generation family farm that is going back and finding the old, good tasting grain varieties that have been lost in this past century and raising and processing them as they had been hundreds of years ago. We grow an heirloom variety of each of the three main commodity wheats grown in the U.S. (Hard Red Spring - for bread flour; Hard Red Winter - for all-purpose flour; and Soft Red Winter - for pastry flour), as well as a 10,000-year old ancient wheat: Einkorn.

## What is the process of milling wheat into flour? Where do you sell your flour?

Our milling process is simply a single pass through a stone mill, very similar to the water driven stone mills used for the past 1,800 years. We sell our flour at Chicago area farmers markets, on our website, on Amazon and through small wholesalers, and at specialty shops/groceries.

## How did you begin baking sourdough bread? What does the process look like?

Our daughter, Sarah, started baking sourdough with our home-grown flour in high school and scaled the business after completing culinary school. We can produce a loaf of bread entirely on our farm, with the only inputs being sunlight, rain, fresh air and soil (though a little purchased salt makes it taste better). Depending on field rotations, sometimes our flour is milled and then bread is made with it in a kitchen less than 100 feet from the field it was grown in, and it never left the farm.



Brian in the mill room!

All photos on this page courtesy of Brian Severson Farms / Quality Organic