

Trim Healthy  
W I S D O M

## Healthiest Sourdough FAQ Course

This FAQ course is divided into four sections, and I'm your host, Serene. This is a cross between a fireside chat and a degree in sourdough making. I envision all the questions you might have and many of the challenges you may face, and I will answer them one by one.

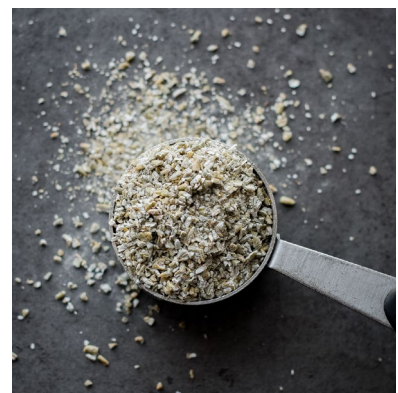
The first FAQ section answers any questions you'll have about *Peasant Bread* itself... details such as where to get and how to grind the grain, what pans to use, etc. Section 2 covers how to make a sleeping starter. Section 3 entails how to turn that sleeping starter into a *Cracked Rye Starter*. The last section, Section 4, covers any niggling questions and concerns about the starters you may have or come across as you journey into the sourdough world. At the end of this course, I'm hoping you'll feel like a sourdough beast... confident and raring to go!

### SECTION 1 PEASANT BREAD DEETS

#### How to Grind Cracked Grain:

Before I explain how to make cracked grain, just know you don't have to use it for *Peasant Bread*. The cracked version is superior for your blood sugar and gives a wonderful chewy texture (more about this later), but you can use regular milled grain if that's your preference or if you don't have a grinder and must buy your flour pre-ground. I'll share where you can purchase a solid grinder, the correct grains, and/or flour soon. Using regular fine-milled flour, the texture of your bread will just be a little different... not quite as "peasanty", but the flavor will still be wonderful.

If you want fair dinkum *Peasant Bread*, however, exactly as I make it, you'll use cracked grain. To crack it, simply grind the grain in a grinder that can give you a very coarse grind... essentially, you're just cracking it. The end result should look like cooked bulgur wheat (albeit a little mealier – check out the pic at right).



If you don't have a grinder with a very coarse grind setting, you can use a heavy-duty blender on its highest setting. Let it blend the grain for 8 seconds then turn the motor off. Take the blender jar off the base and shake it up and down to distribute the grain. Repeat this grind and shake process a few times until you have a super coarse-looking flour. (Place no more than 3 cups of dry grain berries in the blender jar at a time so you don't clog things up. I wouldn't be able to do this blender method for grinding flour for my 6 loaves but it may not be too annoying just obtaining flour for a couple of loaves.

If your family has been used to regular bread... say, store-bought white bread... it may take a little time to get used to the chewy, whole grain texture plus the more sour taste of the peasant kind. Know that both of these are excellent for your pause season, but if your family doesn't care as much about reversing insulin resistance as you do... and they didn't grow up with this bread like mine has and are not appreciating like change, you could perhaps try to ease them in by not having quite such a coarse grind of grain at first. Use a finer grind if you want them to learn to love this bread, then perhaps... slowly coarsen up the grind over time and slow cook them into loving it!

A word about younger children... starting them on this bread at a young age is excellent not only for their gut, overall health, and immune system... but also for the structure of their mouths and jaws. Children these days do not have to chew as much as in times past when coarser grinds of grain were the norm. This lack of thorough chewing prevents proper jaw structure and facial fitness. Learning to do things such as chomp on carrots and eat *Peasant Bread* as their daily fare can help children develop excellent jaw structure throughout their lives.

### Suggested Grain Grinders:

The grinder I use for my *Peasant Bread* and highly suggest to you is a [Mil-Rite electric grain mill from the Retsel Corporation](#). It is a solid metal dinosaur of a thing. It is indestructible and will be able to be passed down to your great-grandchildren for sure. I have no affiliation with this company except to say you will not waste your money on this purchase. You can grind fine to very coarse flour by tightening or loosening the two stones that swivel together when the motor runs. If you don't have this grinder, just use what you have and opt for the coarsest setting.

While we are on the subject of suggesting grain mills, if budget isn't a concern and you don't want to have to adjust your grinder for finer grain breads, I use the [Wonder Mill](#)

for fast grinding for my finer flour loaves. Of course, owning two grinders is not necessary; my husband is just wonderful about furnishing me with things I mention I would love for my hobbies/passions... sourdough bread making is a huge one of them. Two grinders allow me to keep one on a course setting for my *Peasant Bread* and *Peasant Protein Muffins* and the other on a fine setting for all my others.

### Where to Purchase Grains and Flours?

I purchase all my grains at [Azure Standard](#). You can buy pre-ground rye and spelt flour there too. Of course, there are other places online to purchase grains and flour. Just be sure they are in whole-grain form.

### Why Cracked Grain Vs. Fine Milled?

The reason I use course ground flour (cracked) for *Peasant Bread* is not only because it creates this incredible chewy and almost nutty texture but because, as I mentioned earlier, it further slows down the blood sugar response to this bread. Being super fermented and using only ancient grains, this bread is already gentle on blood sugar levels, but the larger the particle size of flour used, the slower your body extracts the glucose, so this makes *Peasant Bread* even more gentle. I eat this coarse cracked fermented bread as my mainstay and then enjoy finely milled, fully whole grain fermented bread on the weekends (which I make and call *Shabbat Bread* – recipe coming out in the hard copy of the Wisdom Cookbook) and for special dinners and occasions.

*Peasant Bread* is much quicker and easier to make, though. Even though it has greater health benefits due to being cracked and containing a larger portion of slow-burning rye (between the starter and the flour) than spelt, the ease of making it is the lazier reason why I live mostly on *Peasant Bread*.

### Offering the Idea of Bulk Grinding:

The key to sustainable bread-making for me is to grind just one afternoon for the rest of the month. I find grinding too often very annoying with my super busy schedule. I

grind five buckets worth of bread at one time for my *Peasant Bread* needs. Each batch of prepped flour goes in one bucket, so this means I have enough for 4 weeks of bread (that's 24 loaves for our family, LOL) plus one extra bucket in case the first week of the next month is crazy and I need a week's grace before getting out the grinder again. I also love to have another batch available to give away as gifts, as this bread is always welcomed as a unique gift and a way to encourage your friends to eat healthier.

When I bake, since I am making six loaves at a time, that is a lot of grinding. Even though you won't be grinding as much flour as I do, I still strongly suggest doing your grinding in bulk if you want to bake more than once a month. *Peasant Bread* doesn't take much work or time on your part... fermentation is the only lengthy amount of time required, but that has nothing to do with you. But the grinding... can be kind of a bread-making deterrent if having to do it before every batch. Bulk grinding takes it off of your schedule for a full month plus. It is getting out the grinder every week and making a bit of a floury mess on your counter that can ruin a long-term bread-making plan, especially if you are super busy.

### How I Implement Bulk Grinding:

I just take one afternoon like a Sunday, put on my favorite podcast, and just grind away. I understand that freshly ground flour... ground on the day of bread making may possess a few more bio-available nutrients. But as I said... I don't love grinding! I would not have been able to keep up with bread making for all these decades if I didn't bulk grind. So, I get better health payoffs by grinding in bulk than fresh each time. And using up my flour within just a couple/few weeks versus buying flour that has sat for months, if not years, on the shelf, is still far superior.

Bulk grinding is not a lot of work either, just a bit of watching and refilling the grinder. You'll use a separate bucket to prep each batch of bread. It makes bread-making streamlined by having all the right dry measured ingredients in the bucket stored and ready for bread-making day. I use five 5-gallon buckets ... for 5 batches of bread. The number of buckets you will use will depend upon how many batches of bread you want to make per month. Perhaps if you are single or the only one eating *Peasant Bread* in your family... and you don't eat it every single day, you will only need one bucket as the 2 large loaves may last you close to a month. If you love this bread, though, and use it

daily, or if other family members are helping you eat it, you might want to grab a couple more buckets. To be clear, whether you're making the 2-loaf or the 4-loaf option of *Peasant Bread*, they will both fit in this one 2-gallon bucket I'll be recommending in an upcoming FAQ. You'll need more buckets if you want to bulk grind and have some set up and ready for your month. If you don't care about bulk grinding, only one bucket is necessary.

I begin grinding the cracked rye grain first, then measure it out into my buckets. I grind a bunch more rye than I need for my bread to feed the *Cracked Rye Starter* that leavens the bread (you'll learn about that soon). I grind enough extra cracked grain to fill around 4-gallon-sized zippies, which I keep in my fridge. This means that when I feed the starter all the grinding work is already done for when I have to feed my starter. Don't freak out at the filling 4 zippies thing – you won't need nearly that much if you're only making 2 loaves at a time. You'll probably be fine with filling just 1-2 zippies, perhaps 3 if you're making 4 loaves. After I grind the rye, I grind then measure out the cracked spelt flour into buckets. I make sure to put the salt into each bucket, too! Don't forget the 1 1/3 Tbs of salt in each of your buckets if you're making two loaves, or double that if you're making 4 loaves. Salt-free bread is gross! If I don't measure it in with the grain, I often forget it in the next soaking step. I stack and store my flour-filled buckets on top of one another in a corner of my pantry with the peace of mind that I have trimming, healing bread all tucked away for the month.

You'll also want to keep a small amount of fine pre-ground whole rye flour in a smaller zippy bag to be used for your initial sleeper starter feeding and to keep it alive and happy now and then. More about your sleeper starter soon. I also keep fine pre-ground spelt in my fridge for my *Fermented Flatbread* and my *Shabbat Bread* needs. So yup, since I make several versions of sourdough baked goods, I do always have quite a few flour bags in my fridge, but it saves me having to grind first for baking sessions and that works much better for my life.

### What Kind of Buckets?

I purchased mine as food grade, BPA-free grade, 5-gallon buckets from Lowe's. Perhaps you can find them elsewhere if you don't have a Lowe's. You can find smaller versions (2-gallon size) at Lowe's as well, and they're also food grade, which you want. If you buy a few of them, you'll have several baking sessions all pre-prepped and you can use this size for making your *Cracked Rye Starter* as well. This 2-gallon size will still give you

plenty of room to get your hands in and mix your 2 or 4-loaf batch super well when the time comes. If you have large bowls with lids that stack well, then more power to you. You can use those... but you won't be able to tell people you make sourdough bread in buckets at parties.

### Needed Deets on Soaking the Grain and Salt:

When you are ready to make a batch of bread, take out one of your pre-prepped buckets with its already measured flour and salt. Simply remove the lid and pour in the water listed in the recipe above. Mix the water with the grain thoroughly with your hands. Yeah, get your hands all in there! It's the absolute best way. Then, place the lid back on and let them soak for 12-24 hours. Don't put the buckets in the fridge! Room temperature is required for this soak; the salt in the grain protects it from spoilage.

For me, this process is so easy. I typically do it in the late evening, and its soak time is overnight while I sleep. This soak is best paired up with your *Cracked Rye Starter's* final feeding and ferment, which also takes 12 hours (but don't worry, that'll all make sense soon). 12 hours overnight or all day for the soak... that's what you need. I only give the "can go longer" option in the recipe as sometimes I am too busy for even the few minutes needed for the next step of putting the grain with the starter and throwing it in the pans after 12 hours, and I need another several hours of grace. You won't ruin it by going up to 24... but don't go longer than that.

### More Deets on Mixing the Starter into The Bucket of Soaked Grain and Putting it into the Bread Tins:

After the 12-hour soak, it's time to add the *Cracked Rye Starter* amount listed in the *Peasant Bread* recipe and this is also done in the bucket. (You'll get the deets on how to make the *Cracked Rye Starter* in an upcoming FAQ, and by this time, it should have just finished its final ferment after its last feeding.) I just shove my hands into the bucket and punch and squish and stir with all my fingers springing into action. I find that hands do the best job of making the dough perfectly combined. You are not kneading here, just combining well. If you have sensitive hands to the natural acidity of the sourdough starter, then use food-safe gloves or a hefty, strong wooden spoon. The mixture should look like thick, mushy Scottish porridge... peasant porridge, to be exact!

It is not meant to look like regular bread dough. The rye makes it too sticky and wet to knead or fold and pull. The mushiness is perfect.

To get your mush into the pans, a great hack is to get your bare hands (or gloved hands) wet so it will not be so sticky to let go of into the pans. After the bread is divided into 2 or 4 pans, it won't look perfect. You don't want the top of your bread to look like ugly boogers; you want it flat and lovely, so moisten your hands again with water and flatten the top of the bread by patting it with your wet hands... slap, slap, slap on the top.

### More Deets on the Fermentation Time:

Now that your bread is in the pan, it's time for the ferment. This fermentation time does not have to be exactly 8 hours. You can go a little longer if you want... let's say you didn't wake up in time to put the bread in the ovens at exactly 8 hours, and it has been 9 hours since you filled the bread pans last night and left them to ferment. Just remember that too much overfermentation will collapse your bread and give you no oven spring. 7 hours can be enough time in a warm house, but no less. 8 hours in a regular temp house is about perfect. My life is here, there, and everywhere kind of busy so often I have left them fermenting in the pans for 10 hours or so... I don't sweat a wee dip in my bread... this is *Peasant Bread*, after all, and it is very forgiving. We are not handing out prizes for the most beautiful loaf remember... the prize is the taste and the blessing to your gut and waistline.

### More Deets on the Bake Time of 3 Hours with Steam:

This length of bake sounds super crazy long, doesn't it? Well, rye bread needs to be moist, or it gets as hard as bricks when cooked. *Peasant Bread* has a super wet dough to ensure a moist interior. It needs a full 3 hours in my oven to set up right, but my oven runs a little cooler than most. Maybe 2 ½ hours will be perfect for you... but if you find it too moist after a day post-baking... then extend it to the 3-hour mark next time. Toast your first round of a little bit too moist bread up. It'll be fine.

Steaming is an important part of getting the right texture for *Peasant Bread*. Using a Pyrex dish of water under your bread steams the dough, giving it an incredible malty and chewy texture.

### How to Get the Bread out of the Tins and when to Finally Cut into It:

After a few hours of cooling with the moistened, wrung-out dish towel laying over the top of the tins, you are ready to remove *Peasant Bread* from its tins. Using a butter knife, carefully release the bread from the tins by sliding the knife between the bread and the tin on all sides. Now, turn the tin upside down and hit it on a cutting board to help it come out with a quick thump.

Although super yummy right now, the bread will not be easily sliced. You can rip it and melt butter on it... but it will be gummy inside. True rye bread of a high percentage needs a good part of the day to set firmly inside. At my house, we usually can't wait. And since we make six loaves at a time, we always sacrifice one loaf to rip open in chunks and eat immediately. But we are a house of ruffians.

### Suggested Bread Tins for *Peasant Bread*:

The tins I love and suggest are [NSF 72060 Stainless Steel Vollrath](#). These are expensive, yes, but you can't wreck them. They make a perfect, large-sized bread loaf.... not an insipid loaf that doesn't slice up nicely for sandwiches. The size is length 10  $\frac{3}{8}$  by 5  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and it holds 3 quarts. I bought six of them and don't regret the purchase one tiny bit. They stack nicely together and don't rust when not in use. Don't use non-stick tins, as the sourdough will eat the coating off, and then you'll consume it yourself... ugh!! I find that tins work better than glass... but ceramic or crock material works lovely, too.

## SECTION 2

# HOW TO MAKE A SLEEPING STARTER

### What Do You Mean by Sleeping?

This starter spends most of her time sleeping in the fridge. She only comes out of the fridge when you want to activate her to create another starter. She's easy to make, easy to look after and she seeds all your future starters. In this case, for *Peasant Bread*, you'll



be turning her into a *Cracked Rye Starter*. But you can't achieve that without first making a Sleeping Starter. My other recipes... *Fermented Flatbread* and *Shabbat Bread*, coming out later in the hard-cover Wisdom Cookbook, will teach you how to convert her into a spelt starter.

### Why Are You Calling This Starter a “Her?”

Well, your sleeping starter is your real and living sourdough pet. I have given mine a name... I call her *Sleeping Sue* (she's in the image on the right). I'm not exactly sure why she's a she in my mind. But she's great at changing into whatever you need her to be. The older she gets, the more wonderful and robust her flavor characteristics are – isn't that like a woman lol? And the older she gets, the more skillfully she performs... um... for your baking, I mean. (I'll refrain from making a joke about, you know what, after almost 30 years of marriage, but that's kinda true, too.)



You only need one starter. *Sleeping Sue* (or whatever you call your pet – and it deserves an honorable name, so feel free to borrow mine if you don't have your own) will be the activator of all your future sourdough bread-making using any kind of grain. There is one scenario where you may want another sleeper starter – that would be if you have a gluten-free family member and you want to keep a completely separate gluten-free sourdough sleeper starter around. You actually can convert a regular grain starter into a gluten-free one, but it takes about a week and complicates things a bit if you want to keep going back and forth between making typical grain sourdough and gluten-free sourdough.)

*Sleeping Sue* is so important for *Peasant Bread*, even though she is not a cracked starter as we need in the end for this style of bread. She is necessary because we need her as the initial activator for the *Cracked Rye Starter*. Sue gets to eat fine-milled rye flour for her food, and this is broken down more quickly into fast fuel for her leavening healthy biotics to get into action. Beginning with a sleeping cracked starter wouldn't work. It wouldn't provide enough fast action, and neither would feeding a cracked starter or cracked grain for its first meal (you will learn soon that the first meal for your *Cracked*

*Rye Starter* is fine rye flour, then it will get two cracked feedings after that.) Just a little blood sugar lesson here – sourdough bugs love fine flour because it is more instant and available. Think about that: cracked flour is a slower fuel for bugs just as it is a slower fuel for your blood sugar... that's what you want for your blood sugar... healthy carbs but a nice slow rise of them! This is just another reason to love *Peasant Bread*, which provides this exactly!

### *Sleeping Sue's Importance and Her Timing:*

*Sleeping Sue* will be the foundation for all your future sourdough baking. As I said, you'll let her sleep in the fridge most of the time, but then you'll wake her up again and put her to work two days before you bake bread. You'll learn to think ahead. Let's say you decide to bake *Peasant Bread* on Wednesday morning... well, that means you'll need to get *Sleeping Sue* out of the fridge on Monday morning and start activating her into becoming your *Cracked Rye Starter* (I'll teach you how to do this in a jiff soon.)

If you're a sourdough baker already, you probably have your own version of a *Sleeping Sue*. But it is probably not made from whole rye like Sue is, so not to be too judgmental... nah... I'll be judgmental... yours is probably not as blood sugar friendly, and that's not doing you as many favors if you're in a challenging pause season. Just being real! If you're in a challenging hormonal season, that means you likely have some form of insulin resistance and muscle wasting going on. Our Wisdom book teaches you how to turn that around, but using a regular, refined flour starter for your sourdough doesn't really help the situation. Sure, it is better than eating regular bread that hasn't been fermented, but it is not as kind to your blood sugar as a whole rye starter. You might also want to know that the bran in whole grains keeps sourdough starters happier... especially rye! Starters love whole, ancient grains... especially rye, and at the end of this course, I give you 7 reasons to use rye as your starter. After reading that, you can convert your own sleeping starter to whole rye, or you can ignore me and keep it as is if you prefer, and I'll still be your friend.

So, how do I make *Sleeping Sue*?

It's very easy... here you go.

# Sleeping Sue Starter

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 rounded tsp of any true sourdough starter (my suggested brand is [HERE](#))
- ½ cup fine-milled whole grain rye flour (not the cracked kind used for *Peasant Bread*)
- ⅓ cup room temp (baby bath temp), pure water

## INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Place the rounded tsp. of sourdough starter into a sterilized pint-sized jar
2. Feed it the (fine-milled, not cracked) rye flour and the water, then stir; you'll have a mashed potato kind of consistency.
3. Loosely place a lid on it (any kind of lid) and then let it sit at room temp for around 4 hours to activate and get the microbes leavening.
4. Once she's feisty and happy around the 4-hour mark, place *Sleeping Sue* at the back of the fridge until you pull her out for your next bread-making session. (be sure to keep her lid very loosely screwed on... even in the fridge... not tight!)

## Note:

The first time you make *Sleeping Sue*, it will usually also be around the same time you make your first *Cracked Rye Starter* for *Peasant Bread* if you're anxious to start bread making. You don't have to wait for the 4 hours until Sue is activated to start on the other if you have leftovers from the initial starter you purchased. Once Sue has been fed her portion of flour and water and is happily eating her first meal on your counter, you can get to making your first *Cracked Rye Starter*. I'll teach you how to create the *Cracked Rye Starter* in a different way this first time than at all future times, but the difference is no big deal. So, to be clear, you'll begin fermenting both starters on your counter around the same time if you have leftover purchased starter and you plan to make bread as soon as possible... which will be in two days' time. Just know that Sue only needs 4 hours for her feeding on your counter, whereas your *Cracked Rye Starter* will need 12 hours for its first feeding on your counter. Just always think ahead... once you start activating your *Cracked Rye Starter*, you'll need to make bread in two days. If you won't be ready to

make bread in two days when you first create *Sleeping Sue*, that's fine. She can be alone for her first feeding. Feed her, let her chow down for 4 hours, then put her in the fridge. Only start on your *Cracked Rye Starter* once the timing is right for you to begin actual bread baking in TWO DAYS' TIME!!!

### More Deets on How to Make *Sleeping Sue* (Like Where Will She Live, etc.?)

Before we get to learning about how to make the *Cracked Rye Starter*, I have some more helpful details on *Sleeping Sue*. If you order [this starter](#) that I recommend from our website, it will come to you as 2 Tbs worth in a jar, but that won't be *Sleeping Sue's* home. You'll get another pint-sized jar and sterilize it. She'll live happily in that. To do that, wash the jar in a regular manner, then put a metal utensil in it like a fork or knife. Pour boiling water into the jar. Leave for a minute or two, then pour water out, being sure all parts of the jar and opening get the boiling water on them. (Be sure your jar is fully cooled before adding your fine-grain starter to it. Never place any kind of good bug food product in contact with heat if you want it to live!

Once your little bit of starter is in the sterilized jar, as described in the instructions, you now add the rye flour and the room-temperature water to make a mashed potato consistency when stirred. Now, it's ferment time! The reason you only lightly screw a lid on for this (about quarter way screwed on... never properly screwed on) is that while it sits on the counter getting feisty, you need air to escape if need be.) Once the ferment time is up - congratulations... *Sleeping Sue* is now alive and well! But she still spends most of her time sleeping in the fridge, so that's where you'll put her now.

### Will *Sleeping Sue* Look a Certain Way When She is Active and Ready to Leaven?

Yes, she should rise to almost twice her initial height within the jar from her original height after her feed. After 4 hours of digesting her meal on your counter, she should get a wonderful honeycomb look that you can see through the sides of her jar. That's her sign of health! If she gets upset and sickly... perhaps she caught a bad microbe somehow... she will start to look flat and act lifeless... breathless, to be more specific... meaning no movement of air rising within her. But that's not super common, so don't worry about it at this point.

## What Should *Sleeping Sue* Smell Like in Her Different Stages?

When she is healthy and after she's been sleeping in the fridge for a while, say a week or so... she should smell pleasantly sour and have a yeasty aroma that can be thought of as a mild beery smell. Some of the starters you make with her might smell stronger as they have longer ferment times. Sourdough starters have a smell; just get used to it. Don't freak out when they smell... cuz they will! In our modern kitchens, often filled with pre-packaged food, many of us modern folk have lost the scent of what real food smells like... or the ingredients that make us that real food. Real kitchens smell... not rotten... but not sterile like surgical hospitals, so don't overanalyze a starter's natural B.O! Hehe!

The only time *Sleeping Sue's* smell will barely be detected is when you first make her... or right after a meal. She stops letting off so much B.O. after she's feeling fat and happy. We'll talk later in the course about leaving her too long in the fridge without feedings... this stresses her out, and when this happens, she gets really desperate for a feed and starts smelling like a whole brewery... she gets really yeasty and rank!! Don't worry... if she has not been more than 2-3 weeks without a meal, you probably haven't starved her to death... just give her a meal. She'll start chilling out and stop stinking so much. After a ½ cup fine rye and a 1/3 cup tepid water... her favorite food... she'll be all sweet and mild again... If she starts smelling truly rotten, though, she might have got contaminated with something not so healthy... this is usually because she has been neglected, and her good bugs were not fed well, and they starved to death, leaving an environment for other snarly hosts to take over. Or some other bug got into her. Only at that point will you have to chuck her and start again.

### Note:

Also, in the final section (Section 4 of this FAQ course), I will provide more answers to any more niggling questions you may have about *Sleeping Sue*... like whether you should ever clean her jar or what to do if you leave her alone too long in the fridge without feeding her.

Can you make a backup in case she... dare I say it... dies???? But for now... you need to make *Peasant Bread* in short order so let's get to learning about creating your first *Cracked Rye Starter*.

## SECTION 3

# HOW TO MAKE A CRACKED RYE STARTER

You saw in the actual recipe that *Peasant Bread* requires a *Cracked Rye Starter*. You will use *Sleeping Sue* to make all your future *Cracked Rye Starter* creations for your *Peasant Bread* batches, but if this is your first time making the bread, you'll want to use up the rest of your purchased starter to make the Cracked Rye one. Usually, purchased starters come to you as about 2 Tbs worth (purchase the one I recommended [HERE](#)), and you've only used 1 tsp so far to bring *Sleeping Sue* to life. She will be reliably there for your future *Cracked Rye Starters*, but let's not waste the rest of the starter you spent money on. For this reason, ... I am giving you two ways to start the *Cracked Rye Starter*. The first will use your leftover starter. You'll only do it like that once... just this first time. The second option uses *Sleeping Sue*, and you'll make it that way for all your future times.

### How Long Does *Cracked Rye Starter* Take to Be Ready?

It will be ready to use for baking after 3 easy feedings. All three feedings need 12 hours to chomp up the food, so the total time for *Cracked Rye Starter* activation is 36 hours. After that time, you'll mix it into the bucket with your other *Peasant Bread* ingredients, and everything will have a final ferment for 8 hours. That's why I mentioned earlier... think two days ahead for *Peasant Bread* Making! 36 hours for the starter, then a full 8 hours for the final ferment in the bread tins... add the two together, and you realize this is why two days are required. Don't worry, though... time is the only main thing required... all you'll be doing is feeding your starter a few times and getting your hands in a bucket a time or two. But let's say you start your *Cracked Rye Starter* Thursday morning... this means you'll be putting bread in the oven sometime on Saturday morning.

### Cracked Rye Starter Ingredients & Three Feedings:

Base – *Sleeping Sue* minus one rounded teaspoon (or if this is your first time and you purchased a store-bought starter, use leftover contents of the starter after using the one rounded teaspoon to make your *Sleeping Sue*)

### First Feeding:

1 cup fine-milled whole-grain rye flour  
1 cup room temp pure water

### Second Feeding:

1½ cups cracked rye flour  
1½ cups room temp pure water

### Third Feeding:

4 cups cracked rye flour  
4 cups room temp pure water

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. If this is your first time baking *Peasant Bread* and you purchased a starter, place the leftover starter in a sterilized food-grade bucket, pot, or bowl that has a lid. If this is not your first time, place the full *Sleeping Sue* (minus 1 rounded tsp.) into the container.
2. For the first feeding, add the allotted amount of fine flour and water. Stir well to obtain an oatmeal-type consistency.
3. Place a lid on the bucket or bowl and leave to ferment for 12 hours on the counter.
4. Now feed it the cracked grain and water amount for the second feeding. Stir well. Place the lid on again and let ferment for another 12 hours.
5. Give it a third and final feeding with the allotted flour and water, stir, and then let it have its final 12-hour ferment (try to loosely coincide this with your 12-hour cracked grain bread flour soak; if your last starter ferment has been a bit longer, that's fine).

### More Deets on *Cracked Rye Starter*:

I use a 2-gallon bucket for my *Cracked Rye Starter*. You don't have to use a bucket, but if not, you'll need a bowl, pot, or container (plastic, ceramic, or stainless steel) large enough for the end goal amount of your *Cracked Rye Starter* ingredients, plus room for expansion from fermentation. An old crockpot works if you still have the lid. You need a fitting lid to keep winged or crawling bugs out.

If using *Sleeping Sue* (which you will be doing for all future bread-making sessions, bar the first one), scrape her out of the jar into your *Cracked Rye Starter* bucket, pot, or bowl. Just be sure that 1 rounded teaspoon of her remains in the pint jar (DO NOT WASH THE JAR BEFORE PUTTING HER BACK IN!). Keep all the scrapings on the side of the jar that didn't go into your *Cracked Rye Starter* container... she loves those extras, too. She likes to live with them. They style her pint jar home and keep her happy and secure in her environment. Feed her ½ cup fine rye and ⅓ cup room-temperature pure water again. Leave her out for 4 hours again, then put her back in the fridge to sleep. You'll use her again whenever you're ready. This cycle of using her (all but 1 rounded tsp), then feeding her and leaving her out for 4 hours before allowing her to sleep in the refrigerator again will be what you'll do countless times in your future. It will come to be one of the rhythms of your life.

After you've given your *Cracked Rye Starter* its initial feeding with the fine rye flour (which gives more immediate and broken-down food for it to get fat and happier more quickly), don't forget that the next two feedings will be different. They'll use cracked rye flour as their food. This ensures your blood sugar will be slower to rise when you eat the bread.

### Choose How You'll Use Up Your *Cracked Rye Starter*:

Once your *Cracked Rye Starter* is ready, you'll have enough to make *Peasant Bread*. My suggestion is to start with the 2 loaves option. If so, you'll have the exact amount of *Cracked Rye Starter* left to make a batch of *Peasant Protein Muffins*. You can do this directly after the bread is cooked (or at the same time if you have the oven space) or put the *Cracked Rye Starter* in the fridge and make *Peasant Protein Muffins* when you feel ready... later in your week, perhaps. *Cracked Rye Starter* will be ready to go right out of



the fridge for *Peasant Protein Muffins*, no need to feed it again as we're not relying on it for the rise of those muffins.

If you're not much of a muffin person yet and want to make only two loaves, you'll still have leftover *Cracked Rye Starter*, so you need to use it up. You can choose to make the 4 loaves of bread option, or I guess you can do what Pearl suggests. She's been editing my course here and wants to interject something.

*(P – Okay... as I've been reading through all this and deciding whether I want to be a Peasant Bread sourdough maker or not, (btw... my answer is yes. Serene has made it look all doable enough that I think I shall start making it) I had an idea. Serene has a recipe for Fermented Flatbread... basically, it is for lazy people like me who don't want to make bread. All we have to do is throw starter batter on the griddle, and it becomes yummy, healthy sourdough wraps. I've tasted Serene's "Flatties," as we call them around here, and I love them. So, I asked Serene... why can't people who don't want to make more than 2 loaves of Peasant Bread just use the leftover Cracked Rye Starter as Flatties instead of having to make 4 loaves at a time if they don't want to make the Peasant Protein Muffins?*

*Serene told me... no, that only works with a spelt starter. She said she's tried this with rye, and it is too gummy.*

*"People have to convert Sleeping Sue to spelt for the Flatties to work!" she said vehemently.*

*Well, that sounds like a whole bunch of needless effort to me, even though she kept insisting the effort is nothing and anyone with half a brain can do it. But I wouldn't take her word for it. I went to her house the other day and demanded she give me some of her Cracked Rye Starter to see if I can make lazy Flatties out of it. I whipped a batch up in no time and all, and yes, she's right in that they're different from her spelt starter ones. They are chewier from the cracked rye grain... I wouldn't call them gummy, though. They're just not springy. They are sour... but all in all... I'm here to tell you they're quite wonderful in their own way!*

*I played around with the recipe a bit. I added just a little more egg whites to the recipe than she calls for in her official Fermented Flatbread recipe... 1/3 cup instead of 1/4 cup. I also added a small pinch of baking soda to cut some of the super sour flavor (you want to keep some sour, of course, since that is extremely insulin-sensitizing, but a tiny pinch should be fine.) I spread them out pretty thinly on the sprayed griddle to avoid any of the gumminess Serene warned me about. I made a big batch, and since then, I have used them as rustic-style pizza crust bases, put meat and veggies in them, loaded them with Good Culture Cottage*

*Cheese and my Sweet & Tangy Beets – (yum!), I've had them as super healthy sour pancakes, and I've also had them as luscious XO's with melted butter and honey. All were delicious options to me. Some of you might turn up a superior nose to them as Serene does, too, but if you're ultra-lazy like me and don't want to convert starters from rye to spelt and all that nonsense... try it!!!)*

Okay... Pearl is out of here. And all I'll say to her suggestion is "Hmmp" ... with my nose in the air!

### More Info on Cracked Rye Starter Timing:

For me, at least, the actual baking part of *Peasant Bread* works best in the morning. However, my life is crazy, so my best plans have been waylaid plenty of times, and I've baked the bread at all kinds of ridiculous times of the day or night. If you're just starting out, you'll feel more at peace, giving yourself the morning to bake. Just remember, though, that your bread needs 8 hours to ferment once you've soaked it, then mix it with the *Cracked Rye Starter*. I find this last 8-hour ferment works best overnight. After my *Cracked Rye Starter* has had its last ferment during the day and the grain has been soaking all day as well (both around 12 hours each), I mix them in the bucket and put them into the pans right before I go to bed. I let it ferment overnight so they're ready for a bake in the morning. As a reminder, the bake takes 3 hours, then a while to rest in the pans.

All this means is that if you work outside of the home, you'll be best to bake on a morning when you're home. Or you can do the math and figure out another bake time that will work for you... maybe an early evening bake time will be perfect for you. Even if you work outside of the home, your bread can be fermenting in its pans while you're gone, and then you can time your return to get it in the oven at around that 8-hour ferment mark. Whichever time of day you decide to bake your bread, just always keep in mind that this whole *Peasant Bread* baking process will take 2 days once you start activating your *Cracked Rye Starter*. Remember that, and everything will work out perfectly.

## Section 4

# Remaining Niggling Concerns & Questions

Gah... There's So Much to Learn???!!!

Time for a “cheerlead” in the mental game of sourdough feeding and converting. Don't get put off by all the steps I've outlined here in this FAQ course. While at first it does seem involved and may feel complicated on the first read or first one or two baking go-arounds, all these steps become second nature after a while. Most of the steps only take the time it takes to brush your teeth, so they are not time-consuming or exhausting. Soon they will be programmed into your brain and can be done on the fly as you are rushing in or out the door. If I can do it, so can you!

What if I haven't baked bread for a while? Can *Sleeping Sue* sleep too long?

There are times when life gets too busy for even the simplicity of *Peasant Bread*. *Sleeping Sue* can sleep forever as long as you give her a twice-monthly little boost meal. Every two weeks or so, take her out of her fridge and remove all but 1 rounded tsp. of her contents (be sure to leave all the lovely dregs along the sides of the jar as well, as she loves those as her decorations). Feed her with ½ cup of fine whole grain rye flour and ⅓ cup of water for that mashed potato consistency after stirring. Put her lid back on loosely and leave her to activate on the counter for 4 hours, then place her back to sleep in the fridge. She'll be fat and happy for another couple of weeks or so. The discarded portion you removed from Sue can be stored in a quart jar in the fridge, and when it is full, you can make any sourdough discard recipe that you can find online (suggested [culturedfoodlife.com](http://culturedfoodlife.com)), but if you don't want to mess with all that...just throw it out or feed it to your compost. But hey, if you can't be bothered feeding her every two weeks, just dry preserve her as I'll soon suggest and be done with her until you are ready again.

In all honesty, though, you can probably extend this fridge comatose of *Sleeping Sue* for a full month without a feed if life gets crazy. I have done this a time or two before. It's not exactly meant to be done, but I'm a rule-breaker, and things have still worked out. If you're a bad pet owner like me and leave her too long now and then, you might need to scrape her top layer off. It can start to look a little funky when you finally pull her out of the fridge and wake her up for baking. She'll still probably be lovely and healthy under this layer if she's anything like my Sue. But if she stinks and you can't find a

healthy layer to her even deeper underneath... then chuck her! She died! Moment of silence...

There is a way to avoid her complete death, though... you put a portion of her away in dehydrated form... in case of such a sad occasion. I am about to tell you how to reserve one or more dehydrated portions of *Sleeping Sue* for these desperate times and for when you are going out of town for more than a month or when you want to take more than a month-long break from baking. Dehydrating a part of her will ensure you don't have to go and buy another starter and start again from scratch. (If you do, though... no shame.)

### How to Dry-Preserve *Sleeping Sue*:

*Sleeping Sue* can go into a long-term coma state by dehydrating her. This is useful if you're going away and won't be around to be a pet owner for a few weeks or if you're going into a "too busy to bake bread season." The other reason you may want to dehydrate her is not because you want to stop being a pet owner but because you want a backup version if something happens to your current *Sleeping Sue* (perhaps she gets accidentally thrown out by a family member cleaning out your fridge thinking she is old food.) Some of you may think dehydrating her as a backup plant is worth the effort over purchasing another starter if she passes away. Others of you won't sweat the money and just buy another one if the unthinkable happens to Sue.

You'll dehydrate her when she's at her healthiest. Take her out and give her favorite meal... well, her only meal, but it's still her favorite. Once she's gotten fat and happy again after sitting on the counter eating that for 4 hours, you should start to see the honeycomb appearance on the side of the jar... little happy air bubbles. (Don't get too "rulesy" over this time... it might take more than four hours for this, just don't go below 4 hours). Scrape her out and smear her as thinly as possible onto parchment paper, laying over a cookie sheet, or directly onto a silicone mat.

Leave her to dehydrate in room air with a household fan on low blowing over her. The fan also keeps winged creatures from landing on her and making themselves feel at home. If you are extra worried, then you can place a pop-up fly netting over the top. It takes, on average, 24 hours to get her nice and dry... depending upon the humidity level of your home. It may take a lot longer in humid environments... up to a few days.

If you have a dehydrator, then you have a perfect setup. The only issue is that you need to keep it under 105 degrees to keep the leavening microbes alive, and this is why an oven will not work... as its temperatures do not stay low enough. Freeze dryers are also a wonderful way to dry your starter if you happen to have one.

When she is FULLY dry, you'll know when this happens as she will snap and not stay bendy. Break her up and put her in a zippy or a glass jar. Just make sure whatever container you use is airtight. Some folks like to "wizz" their dehydrated Sue's into a powder in a clean coffee and spice grinder, but I can't be bothered with all that.

Store her in an airtight container in a dark, dry cupboard that is not near any heat source. She's now ready for a long-term coma state. If you're not going away but dehydrating her as a backup plan (life insurance against accident or death) and you want to keep your current *Sleeping Sue* going, just remember to leave that 1 rounded tsp. of Sue in the jar after you've scraped out the rest of her to dehydrate. And you'll have fed her again before you put her back in the fridge.

### How to Rehydrate *Sleeping Sue*:

It is a four-day process waking Sue up from her dehydrated coma, but don't get freaked out; it is hardly any work for you.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

#### Day 1:

1. Place 1 rounded tsp of dehydrated *Sleeping Sue* back into a sterilized but cooled pint jar (her original home). You might have to crush it with the back of a spoon before measuring it as a rounded tsp., so it is close to accurate.
2. Add 1 Tbs plus 1 tsp pure room-temperature water into the jar and let her rehydrate for a couple of hours.
3. Now add 1 Tbs fine (not cracked) rye flour plus 1 Tbs pure tepid water. Stir well and leave Sue out on the counter with her loose-fitting lid. Also... you could use a self-fulfilling prophecy over her and change her name for a few days, so she gets

the message to WAKE UP! Perhaps you could call her “Spirited Sue” or “Sprightly Sue.” She might need that positive energy while coming out of her coma... hehe. She also needs warmth... not too much, but she won't want to wake up in a too-cold house. If your house is cold, then you might have to get extra maternal. Wrap her in a blanket like a precious baby, and if need be, put her closer to a heat source like a little heater. My home is big and drafty, so in the winter, I often must wrap *Sleeping Sue* up, even if she's not coming out of a coma... just to get her warm and happy during a feeding. I take her to my bedroom in a cozy, warmer corner. Some sourdough pet owners use their oven with just a pilot light on as a warm place. And just as a rabbit trail... the pioneers who traversed out west on the wagon trains often wore their sourdough starter in a leather satchel around their necks and under their clothes against their skin to keep it warm and well in the harsh winters.

#### Day 2:

1. Once again, add just 1 Tbs fine rye flour and 1 Tbs room temp water today. Stir, loosely place on lid. Put her back on the counter in a warm area of your house.

#### Day 3:

1. Same as day 2. Add 1 Tbs fine rye flour and the same amount of pure, room-temperature (baby bath temp) water.

#### Day 4:

1. Today, if you see some form of bubbles starting to show action on the sides of the jar when you check on her, then she's livening up! You can now discard all but 1 rounded tsp. of her (and, of course, keep all those lovely dregs along the side of the jar) and feed her the original *Sleeping Sue* meal of ½ cup of fine rye flour and ⅓ cup of pure tepid water. You can then put her back in the fridge and treat her normally (take her out when you need her), or if you wait another 4 hours... yeah, leave her out for another 4, you can go straight to using her to make *Cracked Rye Starter* and begin your bread making process which will go into the oven in 2 day's time.

2. If you saw no bubble action today, then don't discard it. Repeat another day the process of adding 1 Tbs more fine rye flour and 1 Tbs of tepid pure water without discarding till the day 5 mark.

### Besides Starving Her, are there any other Things I Should Know About How to Keep Her from Dying?

Since we're on the subject of Sue's potential demise... and how to avoid that or at least have a backup plan for if it happens, I'll warn you about other things that are mortal strikes. Chlorinated water will kill her! Excessive heat will kill her. She likes to live at a comfy room temp. Cold won't kill her, but it will put her to sleep, and she won't leaven at too cold temperatures. Oh... and it is a myth that stainless steel pots or utensils will harm her. I stir my *Sleeping Sue* with a regular kitchen soup spoon or fork and often make a big levain from her for my *Shabbat Bread* in a stainless-steel pot. Lesser metals like aluminum or metals high in nickel will be corroded by her, though, and are also not a healthy choice for her most active life.

### Do I ever need to clean *Sleeping Sue's* jar?

You only have to clean the jar every other month or so if you begin with a sterilized jar and only use clean utensils when dealing with your starter. Just remember to put her back in a not just cleaned but sterilized jar.

### Can I use other types of flour for *Sleeping Sue*? Why so fixed on rye, Serene?

We've covered this elsewhere in this course, but let's give it some more airtime. To answer the question... yes, you can. Most sourdough starters are fed unbleached white wheat flour. Rye is obviously not the only way to feed a successful starter in the sourdough world. I choose to use it for many very wonderful reasons that may sway you to use it also.

1. **Fantastic Fermenting:** Rye loves to ferment. It rushes into fermentation. It was born for the job with its hydrophilic nature which draws water into itself.

Wholegrain rye flour is a superfood for sourdough. It has extremely charged enzymatic activity that really revs up the fermentation process. This faster metabolism of rye flour provides a more robust multiplication of wild yeast and lactobacilli bacteria. For this reason, a “little pep of rye flour thrown in” is known as a medicine for a lagging and sickly regular flour sourdough starter.

2. **Ancient, Whole Grain Merits:** Rye is not only one of the slowest-burning whole grains..., but it is also one of the ancient ones. Many people only think of grains like Kamut, spelt, and einkorn as the ancient ones, but rye is one of them, too. The studies on rye’s gut-boosting abilities are immense, and it also helps release incretin hormones to lower insulin resistance and slash food noise, but we won’t go into that here as we did in the Wisdom book. I don’t use stripped flour in any part of my breadmaking, and despite the trend to do so... neither do you. The bread that I love to live on and the one I use to help my family’s health thrive must be incredibly blood sugar friendly, and I don’t leave any window open to spike blood sugar levels like using even small portions of stripped flour.
3. **Soluble Fiber:** One of the ways in which rye protects against too high blood sugar is through its soluble fiber. It forms a gel-like texture in your stomach. This satiating formation of soluble gel not only slays elevated blood sugar like a boss but it keeps us all full for longer.
4. **Moisture Galore:** Rye’s ability to hold moisture is a fourth reason why I use it in my starter. I love the leaven portion of my bread to provide moistness to whatever other whole grain I choose to use in my bread. I make spelt bread Boule’s for our weekend bread (what I call Shabbat Bread), and when the leaven portion is made of rye, the bread stays far moister and fresher for much longer than when I use 100% spelt, even in the leaven!
5. **It’s Cheaper!** Some of you might put this at number 1! My fifth reason is that rye is less expensive than most other organic ancient grains and that factors in for something as staple as bread, which is the backbone of my large family’s diet.
6. **Less Hooch:** After playing with starters for many years, I find that rye gives me less hooch (the darker-colored liquid that forms on top of your starter when it is put to sleep or left a little too long without food). It seems to be just more resilient!



7. **Feisty Fermentation:** I love the special talent rye flour has for feisty fermentation. It gives sourdough the perfect environment to bring out the most rich and complex sourdough flavors. It also provides a special tang, unlike any other flour.

So, that was a super long answer to the question of why I use rye, but yes, you can choose another flour for feeding. You can change your starter to other flours whenever

you so desire, as well. You can purchase a starter made from any flour and very soon change it to another when you get it home and start feeding it yourself. If your friend gives you a starter, don't be concerned about what type of flour it comes from. You can change a regular white wheat starter to fully wholegrain rye, a rye starter to fully spelt, or a spelt starter to a 100% einkorn flour starter. So don't worry about having to purchase a rye starter or any particular variety to begin with. All that matters is that it is super active and happy and if you got it from a friend. that it made wonderful bread for her... or him!