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Sourdough Blackberry Bannock-12 step Program

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- Skills and guides - DIY, Making things. -



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Description :

Bannock in its simplest form is a great trail bread that consists of flour, water, salt and some leavening agent. Leavening can be achieved with either baking powder, soda or sourdough yeast starter. This pictorial recipe uses a sourdough yeast starter and blackberries to make a semi-sweet bannock. The basic sourdough sponge can be used for many breadstuffs with just minor variations in the process.

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Infinite sourdough variations can be used to produce bannock and many other excellent types of bread. This is a pictorial recipe for a sourdough bannock with blackberries. This semi-sweet dough with berries makes for a great trail lunch with cheese. Here is my 12 step pictorial process for this bannock.

Sourdough starter, this one is about 12 years old and this is what it looks like after a week of non-use. Not terribly attractive but nice and sour with a hint of alcohol aroma. This starter was made long ago with water, flour and a cake of bread yeast. I keep a small jar in the refrigerator as an emergency backup in case this main working batch somehow goes bad. But I have never had to restore this one.



Sourdough Starter, dormant

I mixed up the starter, and removed about a cup of the starter to a separate bowl. I added about a half cup of water and less than a cup of flour to the starter to replace the bit used. I keep this like a thin pancake batter in consistency.



Refresh Starter

I add honey (2+ tablespoons or so) and some flour to the starter, mix, cover and let rest for a while. This is still batter-like but much thicker than the starter. Sometimes I allow this sponge to work overnight other times an hour or so. This step is useful if the starter has not been used for a long time. This allows the poor dormant yeast spores to realize they have just entered the good life....of course, if they knew the oven was coming....well the celebration would probably be a bit less intense...



Add Honey to Bannock batter



Add flour to Bannock batter

After it is obvious the yeast has woken up (bubbles in the sponge), I added milk or in this case heavy cream (did not have any milk), and stir in more flour and some salt (half-teaspoon) to make a soft dough. Water works just as well, but milk or cream makes for a richer dough.



Add cream to sponge

To the soft dough, I add about $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of soda, this both neutralized some of the acid in the starter and produces carbon dioxide to assist with the raising. I do this very near the end of mixing and folding to keep the gas formed in the acid-base reaction in the dough as much as possible. I turn this out on a floured board and knead a few turns.

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Not like making bread, but just enough to distribute the soda evenly and make a flat somewhat sticky cake.



Add soda to soft dough

In this case, I added some frozen blackberries picked last summer.



Add frozen blackberries

Distribute and press into the dough.



Press in frozen fruit

Fold a couple of times and reform into a cake.



Fold in fruit

Drop it into a buttered iron pan and allow to rise for as long as you want (I waited about 4 hours, but this all depends on temperature and yeast activity). For me, I need a minimum of 2 hours and have gone as long as 8 on cool days, but too long you run the risk of huge gas bubbles that can fall.



Press into buttered Iron pan



Let rise, then bake

Bake at 350 degrees until done, (30-40 minutes or so), the bannock will sound hollow when thumped.



Done, break and eat

This can also be baked in a dutch oven with coals on a campfire, or even slowly fried over coals, then the pan propped up to bake the top. Reflector oven baking of bannock is next on my list of things to do. Mostly I bake these in an indoor oven. Outdoor cooking requires a bit of attention to control the heat but the results are generally good and the outside experience flavors the end result, no matter the actual precision of the baking.

Notes:

Baking powder can be used instead of soda, and the bannock can be baked without waiting for the yeast to rise, but this makes for a bit less desirable bannock in my opinion.

The proportions are not at all important, thinner dough will rise higher; a thicker one will make for a denser bannock. Adding honey, sugar etc is not necessary if a more traditional bannock is desired. I generally add at least a small bit of honey to give the yeast some quick simple sugars that they can utilize, but this is not necessary. Soda and sourdough batter will make carbon dioxide without waiting for the yeast to raise the dough, but this usually results in a fairly heavy bannock. Addition of dried fruits of any sort makes for a good trail lunch, especially when combined with a handful of gorp or some cheese. I like using frozen berries as they essentially make jam during the baking process. Butter or other fats can also be added if desired. I generally do not add any but the fats in milk and in this case the cream. Bannock is an often overlooked breadstuff that can be made quickly or, when time allows more slowly, producing a variety of different results.

Any number of breadstuffs can be made using sourdough starter. It can be used as pancake batter. The soda trick here works very well, making light fluffy pancakes. Starter, an egg or two, some more flour, a bit of sugar or honey, and either milk or water are combined until about the right consistency is achieved, then a bit of soda added to really froth this up. Here is last weekends breakfast prep.



Sourdough Pancake Batter



Griddle Work



Flip



Breakfast

I use essentially the same bannock dough with a bit of sugar and a couple of eggs added to make cinnamon rolls.



Cinnamon Rolls, Ingredients

Roll out, paint with butter, add brown sugar and cinnamon, roll into a jelly roll shape and cut.

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Rolled out with filling



Roll and cut

Make sure there is plenty of butter and brown sugar in the bottom of the pan to make plenty of sweet sticky goo.



Sweet Sticky Goo

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Place in an iron pan, crowd them right together. Let rise until doubled in size and bake at 350 for 30-40 minutes.



Ready to Bake

These are a real treat.



Baked and Ready to Eat

One last note: Bannock should be broken, not cut. According to tradition, cut bannock is bad luck.

Post-scriptum :

Version 1.0 5/10/2004

Version 1.1 5/18/2004 Pancake Images added

Version 1.2 5/24/2004 Cinnamon Rolls Images added