Name: _____ Date: _____

A Jar of Bubbling Sourdough Starter

Circle group

A glass jar sits on a kitchen counter. It holds a thick, bubbly paste. It looks like a mistake, but it is a baker's treasure. It is called a sourdough starter. It can make bread rise without store-bought yeast.

A starter begins with flour and water. Flour has tiny living things on it. More float in from the air. Two kinds matter most. One is wild yeast. It eats the sugar in flour and gives off a gas. The gas makes bubbles. The other kind is friendly bacteria. They make acids. The acids give sourdough its tangy taste. After a few days in a warm spot, the mix starts to bubble and smell sharp.

A starter is alive, so it needs food. Every day or so, the baker throws out some paste. Then the baker stirs in fresh flour and water. This feeds the yeast and the bacteria. If the baker forgets, the starter gets weak. Regular feeding can often bring it back.

To bake, the baker mixes a spoonful of starter into the dough. The yeast fills the dough with bubbles. The dough slowly puffs up. Some starters have lasted for many years. Bakers sometimes share a spoonful with friends.

Questions

1. What two ingredients does a starter begin with?

_____

_____

2. What does wild yeast give off to make bubbles?

_____

_____

3. What gives sourdough its tangy taste?

_____

_____

4. How does a baker feed a starter?

_____

_____

5. Why is a starter called alive?

_____

_____

6. What may happen if a starter is not fed?

_____

_____

Words to know

starter: a mix of flour, water and living yeast used to begin bread dough
yeast: a tiny living thing that makes gas bubbles when it eats sugar
bacteria: tiny living things too small to see
tangy: having a sharp, sour taste
dough: a thick mix of flour and water that is baked into bread

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

A Jar of Bubbling Sourdough Starter

Triangle group

On a kitchen counter, a glass jar holds a thick, bubbly paste. It looks like something that went wrong, but it is actually a baker's treasure. It is called a sourdough starter, and it can make bread rise without any store-bought yeast.

A starter begins with just flour and water. Flour carries tiny living things on it, and more drift in from the air. Two kinds matter most. One is wild yeast, which eats the sugars in flour and gives off a gas that makes bubbles. The other is a group of friendly bacteria, which make acids that give sourdough its tangy taste. After a few days of sitting in a warm spot, the mixture starts to bubble and smell sharp.

A starter is alive, so it needs to be fed. Every day or so, the baker throws out some of the paste and stirs in fresh flour and water. This gives the yeast and bacteria new food and keeps them healthy. If the baker forgets for a while, the starter gets hungry and weak, but it can often be brought back with regular feeding.

When it is time to bake, the baker mixes a spoonful of starter into the dough. The yeast fills the dough with gas bubbles, and the dough slowly puffs up. Some starters have been kept going for many years, and bakers sometimes share a spoonful with friends.

Questions

1. What two ingredients does a sourdough starter begin with?

_____

_____

2. What does wild yeast give off that makes bubbles?

_____

_____

3. What gives sourdough its tangy taste?

_____

_____

4. How does a baker feed a starter?

_____

_____

5. Why does the author call the starter alive?

_____

_____

6. What might happen to a starter that is not fed for a while?

_____

_____

Words to know

starter: a mix of flour, water and living yeast used to begin bread dough
yeast: a tiny living thing that makes gas bubbles when it eats sugar
bacteria: tiny living things too small to see
tangy: having a sharp, sour taste
dough: a thick mix of flour and water that is baked into bread

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

A Jar of Bubbling Sourdough Starter

Square group

On a kitchen counter sits a glass jar filled with a thick, bubbly paste. At first glance it resembles an experiment that has gone wrong, yet it is truly a baker's treasure. This mixture, known as a sourdough starter, is capable of making bread rise without any commercial yeast whatsoever.

A starter begins with nothing more than flour and water. Flour carries microscopic living things on its surface, and others drift in from the surrounding air. Two groups matter most. Wild yeast consumes the sugars in the flour and releases a gas that creates bubbles. A community of friendly bacteria produces acids, and those acids are responsible for sourdough's distinctive tangy flavor. After several days in a warm spot, the mixture begins to bubble and develops a sharp smell.

Because a starter is alive, it must be fed regularly. Every day or so, the baker discards a portion of the paste and stirs in fresh flour and water. This supplies the yeast and bacteria with new food and keeps them healthy. If the baker neglects the jar for a while, the starter grows hungry and weak, although consistent feeding can often revive it.

When it is time to bake, the baker blends a spoonful of starter into the dough. The yeast fills the dough with gas bubbles, and the dough gradually swells. Certain starters have been kept going for many years, and bakers sometimes share a spoonful with their friends.

Questions

1. What are the only two ingredients a sourdough starter begins with?

_____

_____

2. What does wild yeast release that creates bubbles?

_____

_____

3. What produces the acids that give sourdough its tangy flavor?

_____

_____

4. How does a baker feed a starter?

_____

_____

5. Why does the passage describe the starter as alive?

_____

_____

6. What could happen to a starter that is neglected for a while?

_____

_____

Words to know

starter: a mix of flour, water and living yeast used to begin bread dough
yeast: a tiny living thing that makes gas bubbles when it eats sugar
bacteria: tiny living things too small to see
tangy: having a sharp, sour taste
dough: a thick mix of flour and water that is baked into bread

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: A Jar of Bubbling Sourdough Starter

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: A Jar of Bubbling Sourdough Starter

Easier · 202 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.6

1. Flour and water.
2. A gas.
3. Acids made by friendly bacteria.
4. The baker throws out some paste and stirs in fresh flour and water.
5. It has living yeast and bacteria that eat and need food.
6. It gets hungry and weak.

Triangle: A Jar of Bubbling Sourdough Starter

This passage · 233 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.2

1. Flour and water.
2. A gas.
3. Acids made by friendly bacteria.
4. By throwing out some paste and stirring in fresh flour and water.
5. It holds living yeast and bacteria that eat, grow and need feeding.
6. It would get hungry and weak.

Square: A Jar of Bubbling Sourdough Starter

Harder · 240 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.6

1. Flour and water.
2. A gas.
3. A community of friendly bacteria.
4. By discarding some paste and stirring in fresh flour and water.
5. It contains living yeast and bacteria that consume food, grow and need regular feeding.
6. It would grow hungry and weak, though feeding may revive it.