



Nutrition, Family, Consumer



Welcome to

OUR KITCHEN

By Robin Bagwell

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Friendship Cake

Friendship cake starters have been passed from person to person for more than a hundred years. The original concoction, a.k.a. Amish Friendship Cake or Herman Cake, started as a mixture of flour, sugar and water. Airborne yeast fermented the mixture which was a staple to early pioneers in bread making. This was before active dry yeast could be found at the grocery store. The starter was the leavening agent used to make pancakes, breads and cakes, and sourdough-packing pioneers relied on the mixture. Today it's more of a luxury or a novelty.

When the starter is passed on, a recipe and instructions are included. The mixture sits on the counter for 72 hours, until it becomes fermented. Then, according to a carefully prescribed ritual, the starter is fed and stirred daily. The stirring must be done with a wooden spoon for 10 more days. If it is not carefully nurtured, the starter will die.

If it lives, the resulting mass must be divided. One portion goes into a quick bread batter, another is kept and the two remaining portions are given to friends, thus the name -- friendship bread. The starter spreads to gigantic proportions, so be sure to pass it on. Friendship Bread starter is a frugal homemade gift that produces a mouth-watering bread with a distinctive taste.

The acids produced as a by-product of the growing yeast create the wonderful, unique flavor. The acids also help preserve the starter by inhibiting the growth of certain harmful bacteria.

Avoid starter recipes that call for the addition of milk, cream or eggs. These mixtures may change colors, start to smell putrid and look slimy. Recipes that call for milk, cream or eggs in the starter will support the growth of some modern day bacteria. *Salmonella*, *Clostridium perfringens* and *staphylococcus aureus* can grow in dairy products left at room temperature for hours. The modern version of the starter is also refrigerated after 72 hours as an added precaution.

The safety concerns are important because times have changed. The pioneers led different lifestyles. They exercised much more, worked harder and were exposed to fewer chemicals.

Friendship Cake Starter Recipe

- 1 package active dry yeast
- 3 cups warm water (105° to 115°F), divided
- 2 cups all purpose flour, sifted
- 2 tablespoons sugar

Starter food

1. Dissolve yeast in 1/2 cup warm water, stirring well; let stand 5 minutes or until bubbly.
2. Combine remaining water, flour and sugar in a medium size, non-metallic bowl; mix well. Add dissolved yeast and stir well.
3. Cover loosely with plastic wrap or cheesecloth and let stand in a warm place (80°-85°F) three days, stirring 2-3 times daily.
4. Refrigerate fermented mixture Stir daily and use within 11 days. Always bring starter to room temperature before using in cake recipe. Allow to set in a warm place for one hour or longer before using. Stir well, then measure amount needed for recipe.

5. Or, on day 10, divide the mixture. Measure two to three cups starter for recipe. Divide remaining starter into one cup portions. Place in plastic or glass containers, loosely cover with plastic wrap. Keep one cup for yourself and give one cup each to friends along with the "Nurturing Your Starter" instructions and cake recipe.

Nurturing Your Starter

Starter Food-- Starter should have a sweet yeasty smell. Any time you notice signs of spoilage, toss the starter and begin again. Do not add milk, cream, or eggs to starter or it may produce harmful bacteria.

Day #1 -- The day your receive your 1 cup of starter, stir the mixture with a wooden spoon, let it sit on a counter, loosely covered with crumpled plastic wrap or wax paper for one day. Do not refrigerate at this point. Use a non-metallic container.

Day #2, 3, 4 -- Refrigerate, stir each day, keep loosely covered.

Day #5 -- Transfer starter to a larger glass or ceramic jar or bowl. Add the following "starter food": 1 cup water, 1 cup flour and 1 cup sugar.

Stir to mix, cover loosely and return to the refrigerator. Mixture will expand. Your container should not be more than half full. Refrigerate the starter at this point.

Day #6, 7, 8, 9 -- Stir only and keep refrigerated, loosely covered.

Day # 10 -- You may need to transfer the batter to an even larger container. Add more starter food and stir. Allow starter to sit at room temperature for one hour. Remove 3 cups for three friends, and measure 3 cups for the recipe on **Page 4**.

Note: If you keep a cup for yourself, start over, beginning with Day #1.