

Friendship Cake – Starter culture

Day 1

In a glass or crockery bowl mix 1 tspn sugar, 1 cup plain flour, 1 cup warm water (you should be able to put your finger in the water comfortably) and a sprinkle of dried yeast. If it's very doughy, add some more water. It should be thick but still runny.

Mix well, cover and leave overnight in a warm spot

Day 2

Mix well and cover. It should be bubbling or even have a froth on the top.

Day 3

Add 1 cup milk, 1 cup plain flour and ½ cup sugar. Mix well and cover.

Day 4 & 5

Mix well and cover.

Day 6

Same as day 3

Day 7, 8 & 9

Mix well and cover

Day 10

Make your cake!

Here's why it's called a friendship cake – you use 1 ½ cups of the starter for your cake, give away a cup of the starter to a friend, along with a copy of this recipe, and keep a cup of starter to begin your next batch.

If you have been given a cup of starter or are starting a new batch – begin at day 3.

If you don't want to start a new batch of starter right away, keep ½ cup of the starter in a largish glass jar, feed it with ½ cup milk, 1 teaspoon sugar and ¼ cup plain flour. Cover loosely and keep in the fridge. Every two weeks, if you haven't used it to make a cake, throw out half the starter and feed it as above. This keeps the yeast alive.

Make sure the jar is loosely covered as this will continue to ferment and produce gases. Basically it turns into natural yoghurt, the milk doesn't go off.

Note 1: If at any stage you notice any form of mould on your starter THROW IT OUT! I have never had a problem with mould, in all the years I've been using sourdough, however it is a possibility.

Note 2: If you have plain flour and water sourdough starter already, use that and begin at day 3.

Friendship Cake – Recipe

In a bowl, mix the following dry ingredients together:

1 cup sugar

2 cups plain flour

1 ½ tspn cinnamon

¾ tspn nutmeg

½ tspn salt

1 ½ tspn bicarb soda

2 teaspoons baking powder

In the bowl with 1 ½ cups of starter culture, add:

2 tspn vanilla

3 eggs

2/3 cup melted butter or oil

Beat the wet ingredients together then add the dry ingredients. Mix well.

Add in ½ cup finely chopped walnuts and 1 cup of crushed pineapple (drained). I use a 450gm tin; it's slightly more than a cup after draining.

Mix well together. Pour mix into a large lined, greased and floured cake tin. Bake in a moderate oven for 40-45 minutes. Test with a skewer to make sure the centre is cooked. I find that I usually need to cover the cake with foil so the top doesn't burn.

This is quite a moist, heavy cake, so make sure it's not too deep in the cake tin. About 5cm (2 inch) max.

I have also made this successfully as cupcakes for my daughter to take to school. These were made without the walnuts as her school is nut-free. I like the texture of the walnuts, but the cake is fine without them.