How Different Ratios Impact Your Starter

Using different feeding ratios when you feed your starter can impact the way it behaves. Below are some common feeding ratios and the typical changes they cause. Remember, when we feed our starter flour and water, it eats and this is how it builds and maintains it's yeast/bacteria population. When it peaks, it gets through all the food and then begins to 'fall' or become hungry.

First let's break down what starter feeding ratios mean:

Ratio of 1:1:1
1 part starter, 1 part water, 1 part flour
10g starter, 10g water, 10g flour

1:1:1 (small)- Example: 10g starter, 10g water, 10g flour. This feeding ratio is great for beginners that are getting to know their starter and how quickly it can eat. It is ideal for a quick peak or to build a levain that you will bake with. If this feeding ratio is used for maintenance longterm, it will eventually lead to an overly acidic or weak starter. ***Typical peak time is 3-5 hours in a 75 degree environment.**

1:4:4 (medium) -Example: 10g starter, 40g water, 40g flour. This feeding ratio is loved by many as a daily 'maintenance feeding' ratio when used am and pm (2x a day). It allows for the yeast and bacteria in a starter to have more food and water which means, a longer time until it peaks and needs to be fed again. This is a great ratio if you feed 2x a day and would like to avoid having an acidic starter. ***Typical peak time is 6-8 hours in a 75 degree environment.**

1:7:7 or higher (large) -Example: 10g starter, 70g water, 70g flour. This feeding ratio is great to use if you'd like to feed your starter in the evening and have it peak in the morning for a bake. This ratio also ensures your starter will not sit hungry for long, if at all. ***Typical peak time is be 10-12+ hours in a 75 degree environment.**

Quick Tip: the higher the ratio, the longer it will take for your starter to peak. The colder your starter, the longer it will take to peak. If you'd like a faster peak, use warm water and store your starter some place warm- a proofer or oven with the light on are great for this.

How to find your perfect ratio for maintenance feeding- Experiment! Try feeding your starter in a 1:4:4 ratio in the am-note how long it takes to peak. Adjust your ratio by either increasing the ratio (if it peaked too quickly) or decreasing the ratio (if it took too long to peak). Ideally, your starter will peak, fall, and not have longer than a few hours until it's next feed. Calibrate your feedings as the seasons change. For example, my maintenance feeding is 1:4:4 in the winter and 1:6:6 in the summer.

*Times may vary depending on your starter's health, climate, and what it is fed with.