

BE MY VALENTINE SOURDOUGH

(from the Bewitching Kitchen)

475g bread flour

25g spelt flour

365g water

70g sourdough starter at 100% hydration

10g salt

1 tsp spice flavoring (Garam masala, Ras-El-Hanout, Za'atar)

Make the levain mixture about 6 hours before you plan to mix the dough. It should be very bubbly and active.

When you are ready to make the final dough, place the water in the bowl of a KitchenAid type mixer and dissolve the starter in it, mixing with a spatula briefly, then add the two types of flour, and salt. Turn the mixer on with the hook attachment and knead the dough for 4 minutes at low-speed all the time. You will notice the dough will gain quite a bit of structure even with just 4 minutes in the mixer. Remove from the machine, and transfer to a container lightly coated with oil, cover lightly with plastic wrap and allow it to ferment for 4 hours, folding every 45 minutes or so. Because the dough is already a bit developed from the initial time in the mixer, you should get very good structure after 3 and a half hours, or even sooner than that.

After four hours bulk fermentation, shape the dough as a ball, and place, seam side up, in a lightly floured banneton. Leave at room temperature one hour, and then place in the fridge overnight, from 8 to 12 hours.

Next morning, heat the oven to 450F. Place three strings over the dough nicely spaced, and touch the strings to glue them lightly to the bottom of the bread. Place a parchment paper on top, a flat baking sheet, and invert the dough, flipping it out of the banneton. Flour the surface of the dough, and tie the strings on top as shown in the composite picture. Score as desired, forming a heart pattern. You can paint with an air-brush, if desired.

Bake at 450F for 45 minutes, preferably covered for the first 30 minutes to retain steam. I cut the strings quickly after 30 minutes when I open the pan, and moved them gently out of the bread. Don't worry if some parts of the string stay glued to the bread, you can remove later. Cool completely over a rack before slicing.