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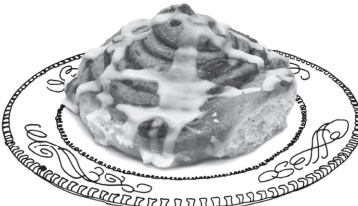
Pies include strawberry-rhubarb,  
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We invite you to try our  
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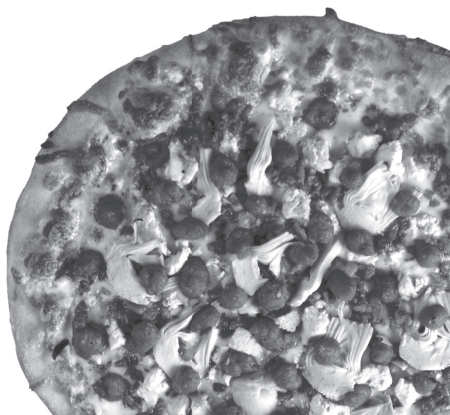
Breakfast - Lunch - Pizza - Dinner

Online Ordering - [villagebaker.us](http://villagebaker.us)

You may order any of our offerings online.  
Pictured right, 12" Baker's Wife Pizza

Curbside pick-up - 616-935-7312

If you feel more comfortable staying in your car,  
call in your order and we will have it ready for  
you at a convenient time. You may pay over the  
phone and we run your order out to your car.



## The Lure of Sourdough

by Oran Rankin, the Village Baker



Maybe it is that mild yet deeply complex aroma of a freshly sliced loaf of sourdough that has such a comforting quality, or maybe it's the golden brown crust and creamy crumb that brings us back to a favorite bakery; but whatever the reason, there has been a renewed interest in sourdough bread making.

Sourdough bread has only four essential ingredients: flour, water, sour culture and salt. The wild yeasts and bacteria in the sour culture will slowly ferment the bread dough, leavening it while producing a wide array of subtle flavors. Then while the loaves are being baked, this fermentation rapidly speeds up, causing them to bloom into their finished shape. This natural process has been used by bakers for thousands of years; Pliny the Elder described the process in his *Natural History* written in about 70 AD. And, even after my 25 years as a baker, unloading a good batch of sourdough from the oven still gives me the greatest of satisfaction.

One of the privileges of being the Village Baker is helping and encouraging home bakers, so what follows are a few tips and techniques that I hope will be of value to those ready for the challenge of creating a great boule or batard.

A scale is essential. A "cup" of flour can be anywhere from four to five and a half ounces depending on how dense it's packed. Salt can vary quite a bit depending on its grind, and producing loaves of exactly the same size will give your bread a professional appearance. A decent scale will weigh to at least eight pounds and should be accurate to no less than .25 ounce.

Kneading dough by hand is a labor of love for some; for the rest of us a good stand mixer is required.

Mixing water and flour in an open container, 50% of each by weight, and keeping it warm for a day or two, is a good method for "catching" your own wild yeasts. Once the mixture becomes frothy it's ready to use. While tried and true, this technique may be a little less reliable than obtaining a starter from a local bakery or from one of a number of suppliers that specialize in sourdoughs. Once you have a thriving culture it will need fed so that a portion can be used for baking, and the remainder reserved to remain as your new "house" sour culture. Using the paddle on the stand mixer, begin with eight ounces flour. While on a low speed, slowly pour in 32 ounces boiling hot water. (This will sterilize your medium.) When you have a nice smooth paste, and when it has cooled to about 110°F, "spike" it with a couple ounces or so of your ripe culture. In a day or so it will become very frothy, then it will settle down. At this point it should be refrigerated and is ready to use, but it will need to be freshened about once a week. Of course, the best way to keep it fresh is to make a lot of bread!

Now you are ready to mix.

### Oran's Basic Sourdough Formula

By weight:

5.5 ounces sour culture  
17.5 ounces warm water  
1 ounce sea salt  
40 ounces flour

On low speed, mix just until combined, then increase to a higher speed and knead for five to eight minutes. The dough should be fairly still but smooth and elastic. Place dough in an oiled mixing bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Your sourdough will now ferment, and the longer and cooler the

