



WFPNA

West Floral Park **SUMMER 2020** **NEWSLETTER**

Where Neighbors Turn Into Family and Friends

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Baking Your Cares Away by Harrison Zierer

What a time we live in. When this pandemic began and the stay at home ordinance was put in place I, like many of you, began looking for an outlet and something to do while stuck at home. I have always loved baking and while this would have been a great way to spend my time, there was no yeast in the stores! Luckily a neighbor on 18th Street was offering some sourdough starter on Nextdoor and I jumped at the opportunity. I had tried to create a starter a few months back but never had success with it. But here was an established starter ready for me to use. How hard could it be to bake sourdough bread?



A Brief History of Sourdough Bread

Sourdough is one of the oldest forms of bread in existence. Until the development of commercial yeasts, all leavened bread was made using naturally occurring yeasts, meaning that all bread was sourdough. The use of leavening was discovered and recorded by the Ancient Egyptians and the process of using natural yeast to leaven bread takes quite a bit of time. In fact, one of the reasons given for the importance of unleavened bread in the Jewish faith is that at the time of the exodus from Egypt, there wasn't enough time to let the dough rise overnight.

The introduction of commercial yeasts in the nineteenth century began the decline of sourdough breads. Government bills preventing night work and restricting work hours made more labor intensive production less sustainable and in response the bakers moved towards faster rising breads, such as the baguette. The prospectors and explorers in California revived sourdough as it was a practice to keep the "mother dough", or starter, leavening in their packs to make sure it didn't freeze in the bitter winters. It also allowed prospectors a reliable and renewable form of yeast while they were out searching for gold. As a result, the bread in San Francisco was predominately sourdough, with bakeries such as the Boudin Bakery still baking today from that same "mother dough" started in 1849.

What Makes Sourdough Bread Sourdough?

The answer is actually quite simple: natural yeast and time. Sourdough starter is created by combining water and flour (usually whole wheat or rye). Naturally wild yeast found on the flour grows and is "fed" over time. It creates an unpredictable culture of various yeasts which is why it can yield different results for different people.

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Upcoming West Floral Park Events

Due to COVID-19, we are not planning neighborhood events at this time. We will alert you about any upcoming events when it is safe to gather together.



(continued from page 1)

This is different from the packets of yeast purchased in the grocery store because those are typically one strain of yeast. Bread made from packaged yeast does work very quickly and efficiently, however, it is going to create a less flavorful bread.

My Journey of Baking Sourdough

I would love to say that I mastered sourdough bread on my first try, but I can't. I can't even say I mastered it on my tenth try. Because there are so many variable elements, it honestly has been a challenge to perfect. But now that I have mastered it, I will share some tips on what I have learned:



1. **Make sure you have an active starter.** You want that jar full of bubbles with a slight tangy smell. If you try to bake with an inactive starter or one that is just not quite ready, your bread will not ferment correctly and you'll be left with a solid brick that is quasi-inedible.



2. **Get your dough to the right consistency.** The recipe I have found that works brilliantly yields 2 loaves and contains 200 grams of sourdough starter, 800 grams of flour, 500 grams of water, and 16 grams of salt. It is a very wet and sticky dough which may seem wrong, but as long as you can handle it, try not to add more flour.

3. **Hydrate that dough.** Before adding your starter and salt, mix the flour and water until there is not dry spot and let it hydrate for 30-40 minutes. Hydration is key for encouraging those cultures in your starter to grow.

4. **Fold, fold, fold.** For the first three to four hours you will fold or "turn" your dough every 30 minutes. This builds up the gluten and again encourages those yeast cultures to grow. I will admit this is a step I omitted when I first attempted to bake, because it does take time and how important could it be? The answer, very.

5. **The fermentation takes time.** This is another area I rushed when first starting to bake. I was so used to our dry-active or fast rising yeast that I didn't fully understand letting the sourdough ferment for hours, literally means hours. I love a good quick bread that can rise for an hour or two, but sourdough is just not one of those breads. Don't shape your loaves until you see air bubbles starting to form in the dough.

6. After the initial fermentation, use a **well floured** banneton basket or small bowl to encourage your dough to rise up. Let it sit in the fridge overnight (12-16 hours). Again, sourdough is all about time. The longer you let it sit, the better and more complex the flavor will be.



7. **Get yourself a Dutch Oven.** This was probably my biggest revelation. Before using my Dutch Oven, my bread rose, developed beautiful air bubbles, tasted like sourdough, but it had one little problem: it exploded out the back or side. Was I scoring it incorrectly? Was my dough too wet? After many Youtube videos I learned that a Dutch Oven would solve this problem. When baking sourdough, you want a moist environment for the first 25-30 minutes. This allows the bread to rise while eliminating a crust forming and the Dutch oven accomplishes this beautifully. After 25 minutes, remove the lid to see a tall, lovely-formed loaf and bake for another 15-20 minutes to complete the bake and form the golden crust.



8. Finally, **let it cool.** I am guilty with most breads of wanting to eat them warm out of the oven. And while you can do this with some breads, you really want your sourdough to rest for about an hour and develop its crumb structure. If you cut into a hot loaf right away, it may seem under-baked. Again, it just needs time.





Independence Day was very different this year in our neighborhood. The sounds of kids on bikes, dogs, and golf carts parading up Rosewood and down Westwood could not be heard, but instead the sounds of a neighborhood concert filled the air. Neighbors gathered, socially distant of course, on Allen and Donna Layne's front yard and were treated to an hour long concert played by three of our talented West Floral Park residents: Preston Doughty, Pasquale Talarico, and Allen Layne. Delicious ice cream treats were provided by Mel Steiner and while this Fourth of July event was definitely more laid back than our usual parade, it was enjoyed by all who attended and was much appreciated!

It's the Most ~~Wonderful~~ Time of the Year



ITCHY

Have you noticed a lot more mosquitos? Well, it's that time of year again. Citronella lamps, bug spray, and lots of anti-itch cream are found in homes throughout our neighborhood. If you are looking for more information or advice on how to handle this new breed of irritating pests, our neighbor from Jack Fisher Park, Les Hall, wrote a great article for the Voice of OC about the new *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito.

The article can be found at:
<https://voiceofoc.org/2020/07/hall-help-mosquitoes/>

Congratulations to our West Floral Park Garden of the Season Winner!



**Home of Andy and Katie Sutton
at 2015 Louise Street**

The WFPNA Beautification Committee is proud to announce our "Garden of the Season" award for the summer season. Our committee looks at all of the homes in our wonderful neighborhood. Neighbors who demonstrate "above-and-beyond" efforts to maintain and improve their front yards help to make our neighborhood a more beautiful place to live and contribute to the value of our homes.

Garden Award Guidelines

- *Pruned, trimmed, and shaped foliage; edged and defined lawns; yard is free of debris and clutter.
- *Water-wise gardening: plants and trees that reduce the need for watering, while preserving the integrity and continuity of the landscapes for which the WFP neighborhood is known.
- *Excellence in home and property maintenance.
- *Overall landscape design, including elements that are original and creative.
- *Garden beds that are neat in appearance, weed-free, mulched, etc.
- *Landscape design that fits the home's architecture.
- *Overall, beautiful curb appeal.



Throughout the past few months, we have seen a lot of sidewalk chalk art in the neighborhood, but it's hard to compete with Annie Corcoran of Towner Street. Annie's beautiful creations inspire neighbors out on a walk and bring joy with their positive and uplifting messages. Go Annie!





FORE! Golf on Westwood

by
Nichole Doughty



Looking for ways to combat boredom during these times? Well, If you happened to be walking down Westwood Avenue last Saturday afternoon, chances are you stumbled upon a group of men wearing masks and social distancing while holding a golf pitching wedge. That's right, two of our Westwood residents, **Steve Tancredi** and **Steve Doughty**, found a way to entertain themselves during COVID 19 by grabbing their golf wedges along with some squishy golf balls and a few big red buckets, and created a makeshift golf course. Each man would hit balls from their home aiming for the bucket across the street, taking turns back and forth. After doing this for a few weeks, they thought it would be fun to get some of their golfing buddies out to create a golf tournament. The tournament was limited to 16 attendees, all local residents who were asked to wear masks and bring their own pitching wedge. Big red buckets were set out on eight of the neighbors lawns and groups were formed to hit balls back and forth as well as observe how many shots were being made. The name of the tournament was dubbed the "Almost Golf Westwood Quarantine Classic" and even a trophy has been made. The next tournament will be the 5th event and they have even added a Long Drive Contest. If you're interested in joining, contact Steve Tancredi at standcredi51@gmail.com.



Stay Connected!

Even though we are socially distancing, stay connected to your WFP neighbors!

Email: Send us a message at westfloralpark@gmail.com to be added to our distribution list.



Instagram: Follow us @WestFloralPark for pictures of our neighborhood or follow us on **Facebook** for even more content.

Nextdoor.com: WFP residents can sign up on [Nextdoor.com/join/JXNKHE](https://www.nextdoor.com/join/JXNKHE) at any time by going directly to the website.



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The Fourth of July concert was not the only music West Floral Park residents have been treated to during this quarantine time. **Sabrina Lentini** of Riviera Drive has been performing Sunday evening concerts for anyone who wants to relax, unwind, and enjoy her music and talent.



neighbors
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