

Sourdough Discard Recipes

Ten Special Recipes for Every Occasion

By Zea Heptinstall

◆ **Bonus Book** ◆

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Introduction

Sourdough discard is one of the most rewarding ingredients in the home baker's kitchen. Far from being waste, it carries a gentle, complex tang that transforms even the simplest recipes into something truly special. This collection was created to celebrate that potential — to show that discard is not something to apologize for, but something to build around.

Each recipe here has been developed to go beyond the expected. You will find focaccia fragrant with Kalamata olives and roasted garlic, a showstopping chocolate babka laced with cardamom, tear-and-share rolls perfumed with lavender and honey, and a bold soda bread built on harissa and preserved lemon. These are not weeknight throwaway bakes — they are recipes worth making, worth sharing, and worth remembering.

A few notes before you begin: discard works best at room temperature, so allow it to come up from the fridge before using. The hydration and sourness of your particular discard will vary, so be prepared to adjust liquids by a tablespoon or two as needed. Always use a kitchen scale for precise results. And above all — enjoy the process. Bread made with sourdough discard bakes with a character and depth that is entirely its own.

Black Olive & Rosemary Focaccia

Crisp-edged, deeply savory, and impossibly fragrant — this is the focaccia you will make again and again.

Degree of difficulty: ★★███ | Average cost: \$3–\$6 | Prep time: 45 minutes + 1 hour rest | Servings: 12 pieces

Ingredients

- 200 g sourdough discard (100% hydration)
- 250 g bread flour (strong white)
- 180 ml warm water
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 1 tsp active dry yeast
- 4 tbsp good-quality extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 120 g pitted Kalamata olives, halved
- 2 tbsp fresh rosemary, roughly chopped
- 1 tsp flaky sea salt, for finishing
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

Directions

- Mix the dough:** Combine the discard, flour, warm water, fine salt, yeast, and 2 tbsp olive oil in a large bowl. Mix until a shaggy dough forms, then knead for 8 minutes until smooth and elastic.
- First rise:** Transfer to an oiled bowl, cover, and leave to rise at room temperature for 1 hour, or until noticeably puffy.
- Pan and dimple:** Pour 1 tbsp olive oil into a 10×14-inch baking sheet. Press the dough out to fill the pan. Cover and rest for 20 minutes, then dimple aggressively all over with your fingertips.
- Top and rest:** Scatter olives, garlic slices, and rosemary across the surface. Drizzle with remaining olive oil and sprinkle with flaky salt. Rest for a further 20 minutes while the oven preheats to 425°F (220°C).
- Bake:** Bake for 20–22 minutes until deeply golden and the edges are crisp. Transfer to a wire rack to cool for 10 minutes before tearing into pieces.

Tip: For the most flavorful result, use the oil from the olive jar in place of one tablespoon of olive oil. The brine carries an extraordinary depth of flavor into the dough.

Approx. 155 kcal per piece | Fat: 6 g | Carbs: 21 g | Protein: 4 g

Dark Chocolate & Cardamom Babka Swirl

A showstopping enriched bread laced with spiced dark chocolate — luxurious, dramatic, and deeply satisfying.

Degree of difficulty: ★★☆☆ | Average cost: \$5–\$8 | Prep time: 1 hour + overnight cold proof | Servings: 10 slices

Ingredients

- 180 g sourdough discard
- 300 g bread flour
- 100 ml warm whole milk
- 2 large eggs
- 50 g granulated sugar
- ¾ tsp fine salt
- 1 tsp active dry yeast
- 60 g unsalted butter, softened
- 120 g dark chocolate (70%), finely chopped
- 40 g unsalted butter (for filling)
- 30 g powdered sugar
- 1 tsp ground cardamom
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- Pinch of flaky sea salt, for finishing

Directions

- 1. Make the dough:** Mix discard, flour, milk, eggs, sugar, salt, and yeast into a rough dough. Knead for 5 minutes, then incorporate the softened butter gradually until the dough is smooth and silky, about 8 more minutes.
- 2. Cold proof:** Place in a lightly oiled bowl, cover, and refrigerate overnight (8–12 hours). The cold retard deepens the flavor beautifully.
- 3. Make the filling:** Melt chocolate and butter together gently. Stir in powdered sugar, cardamom, and cinnamon until smooth. Leave to cool to a spreadable consistency.
- 4. Shape:** Roll the chilled dough into a 14×18-inch rectangle. Spread chocolate filling evenly to the edges. Roll tightly into a log from the long side, then cut cleanly in half lengthways. Twist the two halves together, cut-side up, and place in a lined 9×5-inch loaf pan.
- 5. Final proof and bake:** Cover and proof at room temperature for 1.5–2 hours until risen. Bake at 350°F (175°C) for 35–38 minutes until deep golden and a skewer comes out clean. Cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack. Finish with a pinch of flaky salt.

Tip: Do not rush the cold proof — the overnight fermentation of the discard gives the babka an almost brioche-like depth. Slice with a serrated knife using gentle sawing motions to preserve the beautiful swirl.

Approx. 290 kcal per slice | Fat: 13 g | Carbs: 37 g | Protein: 6 g

Roasted Garlic & Gruyère Pull-Apart Loaf

Molten pockets of nutty Gruyère and mellow roasted garlic tucked into soft, pillowy bread — impossible to resist.

Degree of difficulty: ★★███ | Average cost: \$5–\$8 | Prep time: 40 minutes + 1.5 hours rising | Servings: 8 portions

Ingredients

- 200 g sourdough discard
- 280 g bread flour
- 150 ml warm water
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 1 tsp granulated sugar
- 1 tsp active dry yeast
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 whole head of garlic
- 130 g (about 4.5 oz) Gruyère cheese, coarsely grated
- 2 tbsp fresh chives, finely snipped
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter, melted (for brushing)

Directions

- 1. Roast the garlic:** Slice the top off a whole head of garlic, drizzle with olive oil, wrap in foil, and roast at 350°F (180°C) for 40 minutes. Squeeze out the soft, caramelized cloves and mash to a paste.
- 2. Make the dough:** Combine discard, flour, water, salt, sugar, yeast, and olive oil. Knead for 8 minutes to a smooth, slightly tacky dough. Cover and proof for 1 hour until doubled.
- 3. Divide and fill:** Divide the dough into 12 equal pieces. Flatten each piece, add a small spoonful of roasted garlic paste and a pinch of Gruyère, then pinch tightly to seal.
- 4. Arrange and prove:** Place filled balls seam-side down in a buttered 9-inch round cake pan, fitting them snugly. Cover and proof for 35–40 minutes until touching and puffed.
- 5. Bake and finish:** Brush with melted butter and bake at 400°F (200°C) for 22–25 minutes until deep golden. Scatter remaining Gruyère over the top in the final 5 minutes. Finish with chives and serve warm.

Tip: Roasting the garlic is the key step — raw garlic would overpower the loaf, but roasted garlic becomes sweet, nutty, and mellow. Make a double batch of roasted garlic paste; it keeps in the fridge for a week and is wonderful on everything.

Approx. 225 kcal per portion | Fat: 8 g | Carbs: 29 g | Protein: 9 g

Miso, Sesame & Scallion Flatbreads

Umami-rich and wonderfully chewy, these quick pan-fried flatbreads are unlike anything you have tasted before.

Degree of difficulty: ★■■■■■ | Average cost: \$3–\$5 | Prep time: 25 minutes | Servings: 6 flatbreads

Ingredients

- 200 g sourdough discard
- 120 g all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting
- 1 tbsp white miso paste
- 1 tbsp toasted sesame oil
- 4 scallions (green onions), finely sliced
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds (black or white)
- ½ tsp fine salt
- ¼ tsp white pepper
- 1 tsp rice vinegar
- Neutral oil, for frying

Directions

1. **Make the dough:** Mix discard, flour, miso paste, sesame oil, rice vinegar, salt, and white pepper until a soft, pliable dough forms. Fold in the scallions and sesame seeds.
2. **Rest:** Cover and rest for 15 minutes at room temperature. The dough will relax and become easier to handle.
3. **Divide and roll:** Divide into 6 equal pieces. On a lightly floured surface, roll each piece thinly to about ■ inch — irregular edges are perfectly fine and look wonderfully rustic.
4. **Fry:** Heat a dry or lightly oiled heavy-based skillet over medium-high heat. Cook each flatbread for 2–3 minutes per side until blistered, charred in spots, and cooked through.
5. **Serve:** Stack and cover with a clean kitchen towel to keep warm and pliable. Serve immediately with dipping sauce, hummus, or alongside soups.

Tip: White miso adds a subtle, savory depth rather than a strongly fermented flavor — do not be tempted to swap for red miso, which would overpower the other elements. These flatbreads are best eaten fresh and hot from the pan.

Approx. 145 kcal per flatbread | Fat: 4 g | Carbs: 22 g | Protein: 4 g

Sun-Dried Tomato, Feta & Oregano Swirl Rolls

Spiraled rolls bursting with Mediterranean flavor — salty feta, sweet tomato, and fragrant oregano in every bite.

Degree of difficulty: ★★███ | Average cost: \$5–\$8 | Prep time: 45 minutes + 1 hour proofing | Servings: 9 rolls

Ingredients

- 180 g sourdough discard
- 300 g bread flour
- 140 ml warm water
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 1 tsp granulated sugar
- 1 tsp active dry yeast
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 100 g sun-dried tomatoes in oil, drained and finely chopped
- 120 g feta cheese, crumbled
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 egg, beaten, for glazing

Directions

- 1. Make the dough:** Combine discard, flour, water, salt, sugar, yeast, and olive oil. Knead for 8–10 minutes until smooth and elastic. Cover and proof for 1 hour until doubled.
- 2. Prepare filling:** Mix the chopped sun-dried tomatoes, crumbled feta, oregano, and red pepper flakes together in a bowl.
- 3. Roll and fill:** On a floured surface, roll the dough into a 12×16-inch rectangle. Spread the filling evenly, leaving a ¾-inch border along one long edge.
- 4. Roll and cut:** Roll tightly from the filled long edge toward the border. Using a sharp knife, cut into 9 equal rounds and place cut-side up in a lined 9-inch square baking pan.
- 5. Proof and bake:** Cover and proof for 30 minutes until puffed. Brush generously with beaten egg and bake at 375°F (190°C) for 22–25 minutes until deep golden. Cool for 10 minutes before pulling apart.

Tip: Make sure the sun-dried tomatoes are well drained and patted dry — excess oil can make the filling slide and prevent the rolls from holding their shape. For a golden, crispy base, place the baking pan directly on a preheated baking sheet in the oven.

Approx. 210 kcal per roll | Fat: 7 g | Carbs: 30 g | Protein: 7 g

Smoky Chipotle & Cheddar Cornbread

A bold, smoky twist on a Southern classic — tender, golden, and packed with layers of heat and sharp cheese.

Degree of difficulty: ★■■■■ | Average cost: \$3–\$5 | Prep time: 15 minutes | Servings: 9 squares

Ingredients

- 150 g sourdough discard
- 150 g fine yellow cornmeal
- 80 g all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¾ tsp fine salt
- 2 tbsp chipotle in adobo paste (from a can), finely mashed
- 2 large eggs
- 200 ml buttermilk
- 3 tbsp unsalted butter, melted
- 120 g (about 4 oz) sharp cheddar, grated
- 3 scallions (green onions), finely sliced
- 1 tbsp honey

Directions

- 1. Preheat and prep:** Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Pour 1 tbsp of butter into an 8-inch square baking pan and place in the hot oven for 5 minutes — the sizzling butter will create a glorious crust.
- 2. Mix wet ingredients:** Whisk together the discard, eggs, buttermilk, remaining melted butter, chipotle paste, and honey until smooth.
- 3. Combine:** Add cornmeal, flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt to the wet mixture. Fold until just combined — do not overmix. Fold in most of the cheddar and the scallions.
- 4. Bake:** Pour batter into the hot buttered pan and scatter the remaining cheddar on top. Bake for 22–25 minutes until golden, risen, and a skewer comes out clean.
- 5. Rest and serve:** Leave to cool in the pan for 10 minutes before cutting into squares. Best served warm.

Tip: The hot butter in the pan is the secret to an incredible crispy base and sides — do not skip this step. Chipotle in adobo varies in heat; start with 1½ tbsp if you prefer a milder result and work up from there.

Approx. 200 kcal per square | Fat: 9 g | Carbs: 22 g | Protein: 7 g

Lavender, Honey & Lemon Tear-and-Share

Delicate, floral, and gently sweet — these soft, perfumed rolls are extraordinary at brunch or with afternoon tea.

Degree of difficulty: ★★███ | Average cost: \$3–\$6 | Prep time: 40 minutes + 1.5 hours proofing | Servings: 12 rolls

Ingredients

- 180 g sourdough discard
- 320 g bread flour
- 120 ml warm whole milk
- 60 ml warm water
- 3 tbsp runny honey
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 1 tsp active dry yeast
- 40 g unsalted butter, softened
- Zest of 2 unwaxed lemons
- 1½ tsp culinary dried lavender, lightly crushed
- 1 egg, beaten, for glazing
- 2 tbsp honey mixed with 1 tbsp warm water, for finishing glaze

Directions

1. **Make the dough:** Combine discard, flour, warm milk, water, honey, salt, and yeast. Knead for 5 minutes, then incorporate butter, lemon zest, and lavender and continue kneading for 6–8 minutes until the dough is smooth and fragrant.
2. **First proof:** Place in a lightly oiled bowl, cover, and proof for 1 hour until doubled.
3. **Shape:** Divide into 12 equal pieces and roll each into a smooth ball. Arrange in a buttered 12-inch round pan or baking dish, leaving tiny gaps between them.
4. **Second proof:** Cover and proof for 35–40 minutes until the rolls are touching and puffed.
5. **Bake and glaze:** Brush with beaten egg and bake at 375°F (190°C) for 18–20 minutes until golden. Remove from the oven and immediately brush generously with the honey glaze while still hot.

Tip: Use only food-grade dried lavender and crush it lightly to release the oils without making the flavor soapy. The honey glaze applied while the rolls are hot creates a beautiful shine and a subtle sweetness that makes these rolls extraordinary.

Approx. 170 kcal per roll | Fat: 3.5 g | Carbs: 30 g | Protein: 5 g

Walnut, Blue Cheese & Fig Boule

A sophisticated, complex loaf with creamy blue cheese, sweet dried fig, and the earthy crunch of walnuts.

Degree of difficulty: ★★★■ | Average cost: \$7–\$11 | Prep time: 30 minutes + 2 hours proofing | Servings: 10 slices

Ingredients

- 200 g sourdough discard
- 250 g bread flour
- 80 g dark rye flour
- 200 ml warm water
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 1 tsp active dry yeast
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 100 g Gorgonzola or other blue cheese, crumbled into chunks
- 80 g dried figs, stems removed and roughly chopped
- 70 g walnuts, lightly toasted and roughly broken
- 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves
- Rice flour or fine cornmeal, for dusting

Directions

- 1. Make the dough:** Combine discard, both flours, water, salt, yeast, and olive oil. Knead for 8–10 minutes until smooth. The dough will be slightly sticky — resist adding more flour.
- 2. Incorporate fillings:** Gently fold in blue cheese, figs, walnuts, and thyme during the last minute of kneading, distributing evenly without overworking.
- 3. Proof:** Shape into a round, place in a well-floured proofing basket or a bowl lined with a floured cloth, seam-side up. Cover and proof for 1.5–2 hours until noticeably risen.
- 4. Score and bake:** Preheat oven to 450°F (230°C) with a lidded Dutch oven inside. Turn the dough onto a sheet of parchment paper, dust with rice flour, and score the top with a sharp blade. Lower carefully into the hot Dutch oven, replace the lid, and bake for 20 minutes. Remove the lid and bake for a further 20–22 minutes until deeply browned.
- 5. Cool:** Transfer to a wire rack and cool for at least 1 hour before slicing — this loaf needs time for the crumb to set around the cheese.

Tip: Keep the blue cheese in larger chunks rather than crumbling it finely — big pockets of melted cheese throughout the loaf are what make each slice extraordinary. This loaf pairs magnificently with a glass of port or a dark fruit chutney.

Approx. 230 kcal per slice | Fat: 10 g | Carbs: 27 g | Protein: 8 g

Spiced Carrot & Ginger Breakfast Loaf

Warmly spiced, moist, and packed with natural sweetness — a breakfast loaf that feels like a treat but bakes like bread.

Degree of difficulty: ★■■■■ | Average cost: \$3–\$5 | Prep time: 20 minutes | Servings: 10 slices

Ingredients

- 200 g sourdough discard
- 200 g all-purpose flour
- 100 g whole wheat flour
- 1½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¾ tsp fine salt
- 2 tsp ground ginger
- 1½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- 3 large eggs
- 80 ml neutral oil
- 100 g light brown sugar, packed
- 200 g carrots (approx. 2 medium), coarsely grated
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, grated
- 60 g pecans or walnuts, roughly chopped
- Zest of 1 orange

Directions

1. **Prepare:** Preheat oven to 340°F (170°C). Line a 9×5-inch loaf pan with parchment paper.
2. **Mix wet ingredients:** Whisk together the discard, eggs, oil, sugar, fresh ginger, and orange zest until well combined.
3. **Add vegetables:** Fold the grated carrots into the wet mixture — do not squeeze out the moisture as it keeps the loaf tender.
4. **Combine:** Add both flours, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and all ground spices. Fold until just combined. Stir in the nuts.
5. **Bake and cool:** Pour into the prepared pan and bake for 55–60 minutes until a skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack. Slice when fully cool.

Tip: Do not be tempted to drain the carrots — their moisture is what gives this loaf its signature tenderness. For an even more luxurious result, spread slices with a little cream cheese and a drizzle of honey.

Approx. 220 kcal per slice | Fat: 9 g | Carbs: 30 g | Protein: 5 g

Harissa, Preserved Lemon & Herb Soda Bread

A fiery, fragrant, no-yeast loaf that comes together in minutes — bold North African flavors in a beautiful rustic crust.

Degree of difficulty: ★■■■■■ | Average cost: \$3–\$5 | Prep time: 10 minutes | Servings: 8 wedges

Ingredients

- 180 g sourdough discard
- 250 g all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting
- 100 g whole wheat flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 250 ml buttermilk
- 2 tbsp harissa paste (rose harissa if available)
- 1 preserved lemon, pulp discarded, rind finely chopped
- 2 tbsp fresh cilantro, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp fresh mint, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp cumin seeds

Directions

1. **Preheat:** Preheat the oven to 410°F (210°C). Dust a baking sheet with flour.
2. **Mix the dough:** In a large bowl, combine both flours, baking soda, and salt. In a separate bowl, whisk together the discard, buttermilk, harissa, preserved lemon, olive oil, and fresh herbs.
3. **Bring together:** Pour the wet mixture into the dry ingredients and mix quickly with a fork until a shaggy, rough dough forms. Do not overwork — soda bread should be mixed as little as possible.
4. **Shape and score:** Turn onto a floured surface and shape into a round about 8 inches in diameter. Place on the prepared baking sheet, scatter cumin seeds over the top, and cut a deep cross through the center.
5. **Bake:** Bake for 30–35 minutes until the crust is golden brown and the loaf sounds hollow when tapped on the base. Cool on a wire rack for at least 20 minutes before tearing.

Tip: Harissa varies enormously in heat between brands — taste yours before adding and adjust to preference. Preserved lemons are widely available at Middle Eastern grocery stores and many supermarkets; their sharp, salty citrus flavor is the defining note of this loaf and cannot be replicated by fresh lemon.

Approx. 175 kcal per wedge | Fat: 3 g | Carbs: 31 g | Protein: 5 g