

**Family Living
Focus**
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The other day someone called and asked, "How safe are sourdough starters and friendship breads?" This is a situation involving helpful bacteria and harmful bacteria. Some bacteria contributes to making foods such as cheese, yogurt, sauerkraut and sourdough. Harmful bacteria may cause foodborne illness.

The concern arises when the instructions say to leave the product, which often contains milk, at room temperature. Food science experts at Cornell, Oregon State, and Washington State Universities have commented that here seems to be little risk of contacting foodborne illness from properly prepared and handled starter.

"Properly prepared starters are safe because they become acidic due to the fermentation action of lactic acid forming bacteria present in the mixture. These bacteria and the acid environment formed inhibit the growth of bacteria."

Recently there has been a revived interest in the starters used to make several kinds of breads and cakes. Sourdough has a pungent, earthy flavor it imparts to baked goods that yeast cannot provide. Before we had the modern convenience of purchased yeast, folks made a mixture called sourdough which needed to be replenished and tended each day. It is said that

they even slept with it to keep it warm so it would be ready to make flapjacks in the morning.

Many people have their favorite recipes which they share with friends along with a cup of starter dough. In some recipes the starter itself makes the bread rise; in others additional leavening agents are used. Good starters add a characteristic flavor and texture to bread products. An experienced sourdough baker will be able to tell whether or not they have the intended result.

There are some precautions for handling sourdough and friendship breads starters:

For best results, **store the starter in the refrigerator.** Use a scalded glass jar or plastic bowl with a cover. Storing in a warm place increases the possibility that unwanted bacteria will ruin the product. Refrigeration does not harm the yeast, it just slows the rate of growth.

If you prepare sourdough starter from scratch, pasteurized milk will not produce lactic acid and form a good starter because the pasteurization has killed the bacteria that initiate the process. Pasteurized milk can be added to already-started

starters because the organisms from the original culture are there. Experts suggest using a starter recipe that calls for cultured buttermilk or yogurt with active bacterial cultures.

Be aware that a starter may have been originally started using raw milk and may be a source of harmful bacteria. **Never taste raw starter.** The baking process will destroy harmful bacteria that may be present.

Discard starters that smell bad, turn reddish, orange, or green in color or grow mold. Good starters are bubbly and

have a sour smell; friendship bread starter should have a sweet, tangy smell.

Starter can be frozen if it is not going to be used for several weeks. When you want to use it, thaw in the refrigerator, stirring occasionally. When completely thawed, set out at room temperature for 24 hours to increase fermentation action.

Use personal and kitchen cleanliness when preparing starters.

Practice, experience and good recipes add up to success in making sourdough breads and other baked products.

Here's Some Real Cool Facts!

Everyone knows that meat and ice cream should be stored in the freezer, but what about potato chips? Chips in the freezer and batteries in the refrigerator are two suggestions from the home economists at Whirlpool Corporation for getting the most out of your refrigerator/freezer.

In addition to batteries in the fridge, the experts also recommend keeping film there until it is to be used. And forget the old tale about never putting bananas in the refrigerator. They'll stay fresher longer when placed in a plastic bag and stored in the crisper drawer. The skins will darken, but the bananas will stay white and solid.

To get the best possible service out of a refrigerator/freezer, there are a couple of important things to keep in mind. First, arrange foods on the refrigerator and freezer shelves so that air can circulate freely. Over-crowding can cause the temperature to rise. Secondly, never line the refrigerator shelves with foil. This will block air circulation causing poor performance from the unit.

For food safety it is necessary to al-

ways make sure everything in the refrigerator is covered or properly wrapped. Exposed food can be contaminated with bacteria from the air - even inside the fridge.

Here are some unusual ideas to consider. Don't throw away leftover coffee or tea. Iced tea and iced coffee tastes better over ice cubes made from coffee or tea. Simply freeze old coffee or tea in an ice cube tray. Empty the tray into a freezer bag and keep on hand for later use.

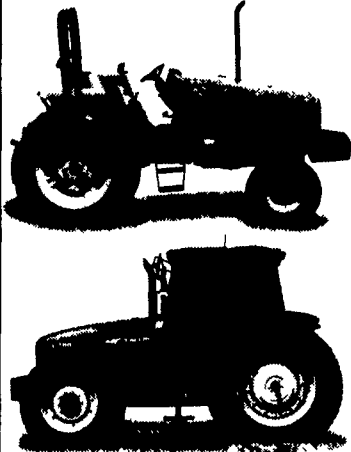
When preparing a large amount of salad for a dinner party and refrigerator space is sparse, thoroughly wash out the crisper bin and make the salad right there in the bin. This saves space and the salad remains crisp until it is served.

For more information about salads, freezers, cold potato chips and a host of other household tips, visit Whirlpool's home page on the World Wide Web at www.WhirlpoolAppliance.com

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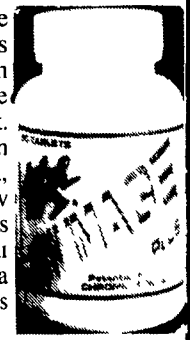
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