## **"CHUCK WAGONS ON THE TRAIL"**

After the Civil War, chuck wagons became even more popular than before since the cattle industry grew and large trail drives were set in motion. Chuck wagons were used to carry supplies that are typically found in a kitchen. Those things included various foods and spices, pots and pans, cooking utensils, water barrels, and other necessary items for feeding military troops, families of settlers, or livestock workers as they moved herds across the land.



Union wagon train entering Petersburg

In the American West, Charles Goodnight is given credit for the development of the classic chuck wagon in 1866. He was one of the largest cattle drive operators and owned the first cattle ranch in Texas. Goodnight wanted a chuck wagon that would endure long cattle drives that often went over harsh and dangerous terrain. He had his first chuck wagon built from seasoned bois d'arc, the toughest wood available at the time. He took a government surplus Studebaker wagon and completely reconstructed it to meet his personal specifications. The wagon was known for the "chuck box" that had hinged lids that could be lifted and lowered.

It was constructed with drawers and shelves to hold various items as well. Often times a box was built on the front of the wagon to carry tools as well. The cook, often known in old western movies as "Cookie", could make a camp fire and have the convenience of feeding the hungry cowboys right off the back of the chuck wagon.



One of the most useful and prized articles carried on the chuck wagon was the sourdough keg. These kegs were usually made from white oak wood and held around two gallons of product. The sourdough starter would be made and added upon each time "Cookie" needed to make more biscuits.

## Sourdough Starter Recipe:

## Ingredients

- 6 tablespoons instant mashed potato flakes
- 6 tablespoons white sugar
- 2 cup warm water
- 4 teaspoons active dry yeast

## **Directions**



- Mix the Ingredients together (instant potatoes, sugar, water, and yeast) into a covered container. A small crock with a lid will work but any enameled or glazed container will do. Note: Do not place in a metal container.
- 2. Let the starter sit on the kitchen counter for 5 days at room temperature. Stir once daily with a wood spoon.
- 3. On the fifth day, feed the starter with 3 tablespoons instant potatoes, 3 tablespoons sugar, and 1 cup warm water.
- 4. After feeding on the fifth day, your starter will be ready for use about six hours after the feeding.
- 5. Remove, 1 cup of the starter to use in any sourdough recipe.
- 6. Refrigerate the remaining starter.
- 7. Every five days, feed the starter again with 3 tablespoons instant potatoes, 3 tablespoons sugar and 1 cup water. Note: Always remove 1 cup of starter and feed for each use. Let starter rest at room temperature 6 hours before use. If starter is not being used in a recipe, keep refrigerated and discard 1 cup of starter after each feeding.

On discard starter, place in a zip lock bag and tape your favorite recipe with it and share with a friend. Starter can continue growing and last for decades besides making for excellent flavor of biscuits and breads.



David Parks, Chuckwagon Chef, King Ranch, Texas during the November 2009 Ranch-hand Breakfast