

ANITA ŠUMER

Bread Art

E-BOOK



PART **1** STENCILING, PAINTING, TOPPING, SCORING,
BEAUTIFYING, AND COMBINING THESE TECHNIQUES



DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO YOU,

MY DEAR SAŠO

You, without whom I never would have started baking sourdough bread nor discovered my passion for the most natural art of bread baking, which has now become my life's mission and purpose.

To you, with whom I shared my love for SourdoughMania and spread its gospel all around the world. I know that our shared devotion to sourdough baking only brought us closer to one another. You got so used to my decorated bread – whether it was adorned with an intricate scoring pattern, a myriad of natural food dyes, or any other form of artistic expression – that you always told me “there was something missing” whenever I baked a completely “plain” undecorated loaf of bread.

You loved every loaf I ever baked, you were so proud of me, and you supported me in everything I did, even in this amazing and incredible mania – the SourdoughMania.

You couldn't believe what we managed to create out of a seemingly simple mixture of flour, water, and salt, with the addition of a generous amount of love – the crucial ingredient that acted as the wind in our sails, manifested the beauty in our lives, and helped us overcome all manner of hardships.

Wherever you may be, know that every bread I bake and decorate is created with you in mind because I know that you would have loved it. I know that it would have put a smile on your lips and made your heart sing.

~~~~~  
SCAN THE QR CODE AND  
A TALE OF LOVE UNFOLDS.





## A HEARTFELT THANK YOU...

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To all of you who have made the creation of this book possible by believing in me and cheering me on.

To all of you without whom this book would not have been as sunny, joyful, and filled with love, freedom, and beauty. When we find beauty within ourselves, we begin to notice it all around us.

To my sourdough family, my mother and my grandmother, who are my biggest inspiration.

To my dear photographer Nik, who captured the images of my sourdough artworks exactly as I had pictured them in my mind and heart. You understood my vision and brought it to life almost without us needing to communicate with words.

To my dear Barbara, my editor and stylist, who presented my sourtastic creations in such a simple yet incredible light that it made them shine and stand out. Thank you for “airbrushing” my words too.

To my incredible designers Petja and Aleš, who have created a book that lives, breathes, shines, and radiates everything that I could have possibly wished for. You’ve threaded my creation with sunshine, coherence, and clarity.

To you, dear Karl and Morgan from Puratos, for inviting me to Belgium, where Morgan and I found a way to ferment my sadness and bake it into beautifully decorated breads.

To you, my dear coach Sanja, for always believing in me, even when I am struggling with doubt and second guessing my purpose. And to the entire SourdoughMania team, which has grown tremendously over the past year.

To my dear Slavica for all your support and encouragement. And for helping me cut up huge piles of leftover bread from all the photo shoots and turn it into deliciously crunchy croutons.

To my dear Vlasta for proofreading.

To my dear Fanika for all your wonderful bread cloths and the gorgeous flowers that we picked together in your garden.

To my dear Katarina and Zvezdana, who have acquainted me with the inedible world of edible plants, my love for which was born on a particularly breathtaking Saturday in July.

To my dear Zuhra for helping me find sunflowers, dry starflowers, and concoct other flowery beauties.

To you, my dear Katja, for your guidance on which plants are edible and which need to be used with caution— much like many other things in life.

To my dear Anja for working your own magic on the last photo shoot and contributing your unique tile to the mosaic of this book.

To my dear Robi, who helped us out with his photography equipment, and to my dear Peter, who lent us a helping hand with plates.

To the director of the Koroška Gallery of Fine Arts, Anja Hribernik, for being so kind as to graciously allow us to shoot the cover of this book in the gallery at a moment’s notice. I couldn’t have asked for, hoped for, or imagined a better place to create my cover photo in.

And a loud and proud, fully fermented thank you to all of you whose names aren’t specifically mentioned in this dedication. Know that I have so much gratitude and sunshine in my heart for all of you.

Anita



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PASSIONATE  
BREAD ARTIST

Anita Šumer



# AS DELICIOUS AS BREAD AND BEAUTIFUL TO BOOT

## IT ALL STARTED OUT OF LOVE

All this was born out of love. First and foremost, from the love for my dear husband Sašo, who had his gallbladder removed in 2012 and could no longer eat yeasted bread. Then from the love for better and healthier bread – sourdough bread. Although Sašo left this world much too soon, my sourtastic creations made his life better and brighter. He was so proud of us and of the story that was born out of our love.

I've always thrived on all forms of creative expression ever since I was a little girl and anything homemade has always been near and dear to my heart.

I remember making handmade birthday cards myself, doing my own giftwrapping, and making the world brighter with my creations. Before I eventually turned to decorating bread I also loved painting and designing my own nails. That's how, years back, my blog entitled *Konadomania* was born, inspired by the Konad nail art stencils that were popular at the time. By now, I guess you can see in which direction I have always been drawn and realize that SourdoughMania was never my first "mania", nor was its creation a coincidence.

When I was first acquainted with a sourdough starter, the oldest leavening agent in the world consisting of a mixture of flour and water, I had no idea what my new "discovery" would ferment into. From the invitation to visit the world's first Sourdough Library in Belgium in 2016, to becoming the ambassador of the online campaign *The Quest for Sourdough*, starting my Instagram profile *@sourdough\_mania* with over 85,000 followers, to seeing my posts shared worldwide, having over 45 million people

watch compilations of my work (videos, photographs), founding the first Slovenian sourdough baking group, to publishing the first Slovenian book about Sourdough – a bestseller that has since been translated into several foreign languages – and to holding workshops in Slovenia and all around the world. The number of workshops I have organized has long since passed the 100 mark, with more than 2000 people in attendance. Sašo and I triggered a real "Sourdough Mania", which spread across all of Slovenia and is now gaining traction beyond its borders. Sharing the love of sourdough baking has become my purpose, one that I continue with my beloved Sašo in my mind and heart.

Why has my bread garnered so much attention? Bread baking has been around for millennia after all. And simple scoring patterns have been a part of any baker's trade since the very beginning. The purpose of scoring dough is practical in nature. It creates a "vent" that allows the air trapped in the dough to escape while baking and enables the dough to spread and rise further in the oven. In order for that process known as the oven spring to take place, the dough needs to be properly proofed and there needs to be enough humidity (steam) in the oven. The first thing that most likely drew people to my bread was that it looked different than the norm. I liked adding in a touch of creativity into my scoring patterns and making my loaves more aesthetically pleasing. So, I started using my dough as a canvas on which I drew different patterns and motives such as flowers animals, hearts, stars, portraits, and so on.

My Instagram posts quickly started gaining likes and comments, which led to me being approached by various global media houses including Business Insider, Daily Mail,



Buzzfeed, Bored Panda, UNILAD, Frida, George Takei, and many others. The content I had started sharing out of the love of making beautiful things and baking healthy bread began attracting a lot of attention. The collages of my photographs and videos that these media houses made got millions of views. Soon after my work was noticed by foreign media, Slovenian media houses followed suit. I still remember the first Slovenian article about me written by the talented Karina Cunder Rešič for the culinary segment of a major Slovenian newspaper - Odprta Kuhinja (Open Kitchen).

I find inspiration for my floury art in various natural motifs, my surroundings, and in the hints and ideas suggested by my friends. That's how I created designs such as interwoven wheat ears, olive tree branches, Easter and Christmas motifs, portraits of famous celebrities, and many more. But it didn't stop there. Soon, I decided to spice up my scoring patterns with the use of stencils and natural food coloring. And I first started painting on sourdough in 2017.

The sourdough "pumpkin" bread I made in 2016 nearly fooled Martha Stewart into thinking it had grown in a pumpkin patch and not sprung from an oven. My design enchanted her enough to share it on her Instagram profile.

The book you are currently reading is my third. I had been meaning to write it for a long time, but it was my late husband Sašo who finally inspired and "kicked" me into action in October 2019. I started writing this book two months after his death. But before this book could have its debut, my first book *SourdoughMania – the Complete Guide to Sourdough Baking* had to come to life. In it I thoroughly and systematically, as well as visually, delved into the art of baking with sourdough. I addressed everything, from different types of flours and making and maintaining a sourdough starter, to kneading, shaping, and scoring dough, and dissected the entire baking process. The book also included numerous recipes. I am a firm believer in learning the basics first, building your knowledge, and really understanding your craft, before diving into the aesthetics of things. Substance needs to come first for the looks to be able to follow.

Then with the help and encouragement of my dear friend Barbara, my second book (which was supposed to be the third) titled *Sweet and Savory SourdoughMania*<sup>1</sup>, *the Sequel to the Worldwide Bestseller* was "born". In it I set my sights on deciphering the secrets of the stiff (or sweet) sourdough starter and sharing more than 77 different recipes for baking sweet and savory sourdough delights, along with dishes that re-purposed old, slightly dry bread.

Dear SourdoughManiac, you won't find the basics of sourdough baking in this book because that is not its purpose. Instead, it is intended as a companion to all of you more experienced home and professional bakers who yearn to add a decorative touch to your already delicious and healthy creations, ones that will attract captivated glances and delight recipients.

In this book I will share all my best secrets to creating bread art that I have learned in over 9 years of working with sourdough since 2012. My wish is to help you create edible art that will be both exquisite to the palate and breathtaking to the eye. I want to help you bake bread that you will be proud of and overjoyed to gift to your friends and loved ones.

A beautifully decorated loaf is a wonderful, heartfelt gift that no one ever gets tired of receiving. It is also a present that will never be left somewhere to gather dust.

By gifting bread, you are giving people a piece of yourself – your time, and your love – and spreading your passion and enthusiasm for this healthy art of baking.

That's what makes homemade bread the perfect gift.

Let's bake the world a better, more dazzlingly ornate place,

Anita

<sup>1</sup> Not yet available in English, but in German (*Noch verrückter nach Sauerteig*), French (*Le levain passionnément*), Dutch (*Backen met desem*), Croatian (*Slana i sladka kvasomanija*).

# BASIC RECIPES AND DOUGH SHAPING TECHNIQUES

## LET'S REPEAT LEST WE FORGET

**A**lthough this book is not intended to introduce its readers to sourdough baking, I think it's important that we start at the beginning. I've always loved doing everything systematically. I am going to share a very basic sourdough bread recipe with you that you can feel free to adapt to your own needs, preferences, and flour. If you notice that your dough can absorb more water, add it in. Or set some aside and add it in later if necessary.

If you want to decorate your loaves, I suggest you make the dough using white wheat flour, as it will make the colors and the toppings you sprinkle upon it really stand out. You can also replace 50 % of the white flour with whole-wheat flour, but keep in mind that darker-colored flour will make your dough and your baked bread appear darker once baked. When kneading different types of dough you will also need to adjust the amount of water to suit the types of flours you are working with. In cases where a certain design or decorating technique can work with multiple flour types I will clearly state so.

This book will be of help to you even if you don't bake using a sourdough starter because you can apply all the decorating techniques mentioned in this book to yeasted bread too. Instead of using a sourdough starter, simply add about 0.01 % to 3 % of baker's yeast per kilogram of flour to your dough. When you do the math, this means that you need about 1-30 g of yeast per kilogram of flour.

If you are using fresh yeast, divide the amount you need by 3 to get the amount of dry yeast you need for the same recipe. In practice this means that you can either use 30 g of fresh yeast or 10 g of dry yeast. If you add 30 g of fresh yeast to your flour, your loaf will be ready in about 3 hours (from making the dough to baking your bread), at a room temperature of 24°C/75.2°F. If you use 1 g of fresh yeast per kilogram of flour, this process will take approximately 15 hours at a room temperature of 24°C/75.2°F, or 18 hours at 18°C/64.4°F. You can also proof your dough in the refrigerator. You might find the various amounts of yeast strange, seeing as how we typically use yeast, but please know that even a tiny amount of yeast packs a punch and contains enough yeast cultures to ensure your dough rises properly. Did you know that 1 g of yeast contains at least 10 billion yeast cultures? The less yeast you add, the slower the dough will rise and the richer the aroma it will develop.

When using a stencil or adding seeds on top of loaves, it's alright for the dough to have a higher hydration level. This means that you can use more water than the recipe says you need. But make sure to knead the dough sufficiently to ensure proper gluten development. I also recommend doing a few extra series of stretches and folds.<sup>2</sup> An enforced and well-developed gluten network will help the dough maintain its shape even with intricate and complicated scoring patterns.

<sup>2</sup> Šumer, A. (2020). *Sourdoughmania, the complete guide to sourdough baking*. London: Grub Street. Also available in German (*Verrückt nach Sauerteig*), French (*Levain à la folie*), Dutch (*Passie voor desem*), and Croatian (*Kvasomanija*).



# MY BREAD ART BEGINNINGS

## A PIONEER IN SCORING 2.0

I think my unusual and aesthetically pleasing bread scoring patterns inspired the meeting of SourdoughManiacs from all over the world at the planet's first Sourdough Library in Belgium in 2016. That's when I also became the ambassador of sourdough baking and of the online library project called *The Quest for Sourdough*. Karl De Smedt from Puratos noticed how often I was posting pictures of my creative bread designs in the Facebook group called *Perfect Sourdough*.

He even commented somewhere that I was the pioneer of Bread Scoring 2.0. With the basic 1.0 scoring patterns being straight lines, half-circles, crosses and so on, my creative approaches to the final stages of the baking process had, according to Karl, taken the practice of scoring dough to a whole new level. Apart from depicting many natural motifs with my scoring

patterns, I soon started using my dough as a canvas onto which to “paint” characters and images. I even carved my own portrait into a boule once following a caricature drawing of my face. Even back then I was combining different techniques for decorating as well as drawing and painting on bread both before and after baking.

The decorating techniques discussed in this book are categorized based on difficulty, from the easiest to the hardest. By the end of the book I will show you how to play around with implementing several techniques simultaneously.

And since I don't know a single person who can say no to a slice of freshly baked bread, I will also show you how to properly giftwrap your creations and turn them the perfect present.

## LEGEND

### DIFFICULTY

#### EASY



#### MEDIUM



#### ADVANCED



### DOUGH HYDRATION\*

#### LOW (UP TO 60 %)



#### MEDIUM (UP TO 75 %)



#### HIGH (75 % AND ABOVE)



\* Hydration is the amount of water added to the flour and it varies from flour type to flour type. Some can absorb more, others less.









# BREAD SCORING

LOOKING SHARP,  
BREAD ART!

*Bread Art*



## THE WHEAT EAR

The wheat ear is probably the most universal bread scoring pattern. It is so simple, yet so elegant and versatile. I think it might even be my favorite!

**TOOLS:**

a tea ball infuser, flour, a toothpick or a wooden skewer, the Sourtastic Scoring Knife, parchment paper (optional).

**DIFFICULTY:**

medium

**DOUGH HYDRATION:**

low to high

If you score multiple wheat ears, distribute them evenly throughout the entire surface of the dough, and adjust the depth of your cuts to how proofed your dough is, you don't have to cut the deeper gash. If you are just getting starte(r)d with scoring dough, I suggest you don't skip this "safety step" and add in the deeper gash just in case.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE  
THE VIDEO SCORING TUTORIAL.





**1 /** First flip the proofed dough gently out of the banneton and onto a piece of parchment paper. Then brush away any excess flour from its surface.



**2 /** Next, dust the dough with a fresh layer of finely milled flour and caress it again to brush off the excess.



**3 /** Start scoring the wheat ear at its peak. Make the first cut at the top of the dough, right in the middle. Hold the blade at a 90-degree angle and score the next lines slightly diagonally from the top line. The cuts should be short and around 1-2 millimeters/a fraction of an inch deep.



**4 /** Continue scoring shallow cuts down the length of the dough then mirror the same design on the other side. Try to keep the cuts even in length and depth. They should also run parallel to one another and be equally spaced from one another.



**5 /** Finish making the cuts based on how long and big you want your wheat ear to be.



**6 /** Trace the stem by gently pressing a wooden skewer into the dough in the middle of the two rows of cuts.



**7 /** Then run the blade lightly down the indented stem just enough to "scratch" the dough's surface. The depth of the stem should be much shallower than that of the scored wheat ears.



**8 /** Score the two leaves at the end of the stem. When scoring the leaves, the depth of the cut should be slightly uneven. Make it shallower at the beginning and the end and deeper in the middle.



**9 /** Finally, score a deep line into the side of the dough. This deeper cut will keep your design intact and prevent the wheat ear from cracking uncontrollably.



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