

# Taming “Shelter in Place” with Bird Watching and Bread-Making

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Local Parrots testing out the new feeder. Bird watching is fun and entertaining!

Amidst all this self-isolation, I've discovered new ways to keep from going crazy, which has happened a few times. The unexpected evolution of these new hobbies are spin-offs of my gardening and cooking passions. They are bird watching and bread-making, one using the right side of my brain and an inactive pursuit, and the other, more science-focused, active, and sometimes frustrating. Both have helped fend off the loneliness.

Weeding is my usual therapy and helps me generate ideas for my writing except for these days, my garden is the cleanest of weeds it's been in years. I started to tidy up the garage and that became boring all too soon but in the process, did find two old bird feeders. A good scrub and new seed were all that was needed to lure new feathered friends into my yard. It took a few weeks but now my garden is a flurry of birds. The doves arrive in the early morning and come back later for happy hour. The juvenile doves are so fun to watch, wobbly and still unsure of their new wings. Finches and sparrows feed mid-day and the bluejays, crows, parrots, and occasional hawk swing by to enjoy the vibe. I've observed the mourning doves' mating dance, parrots entertaining me and themselves, yellow-bellied, black and white spotted wrens who are so breathtakingly beautiful, and recently, a bluejay who loves to hang out with me on my patio. Time slips away and someday my mom will ask me what I did all day and I'll say, "I watched the birds!"

The doves especially have made such an impression on me, that they now have a role in the historical fiction novel I'm writing called *The Sicilian Sorceress*. Doves have been written about since the Bronze Age and were revered in ancient Greece as signs of peace, devotion, love, and friendship. Doves mate for life. The things I've learned!



These two doves mated in the tree next door, then came to my yard to discuss baby names.

Without this pandemic, I would never have met these new friends who keep me company during the lonely times and show me that all we really need is food, song, and love.



The trio taking turns.

On to my next new interest – bread-making. Pastries and baking were the focus, and passion, of my life for many years but only included smidgens of bread science. And what a science it is! Using a starter, instead of instant yeast is a whole new ballgame as I recently discovered. I tried making my own starter, then the flour shortage happened. According to King

Arthur's recipe, you must feed the starter with one cup of flour twice a day. My flour stash was quickly evaporating so that put an end to starting from scratch. A friend in Portland, Oregon sent me a starter and gave me directions to keep it going using way less flour so I was back in business. My friend Eva shared her technique for making sourdough bread and I thought to myself, "No sweat!" Wrong again. Two days of vigilant fermenting, stretching, and worshipping the dough resulted in a watery mess, without enough character to even form a ball. Dejected, it quickly found the trash can and I was more determined than ever to learn how to make a decent loaf. Not that I want to be a bread queen but I figure when your brain takes on a new challenge, it usually "rises" to the occasion. My aunt recommended Ken Forkish's book, [Flour, Water, Salt, Yeast](#) and I read almost half of it in one sitting. I'll start slow to gain confidence before I move onto more complicated bread. I don't have a choice – I just ordered 50# of flour!

# FLOUR WATER SALT YEAST

*The Fundamentals of  
Artisan Bread and Pizza*



KEN FORKISH

My new guide to successful bread baking.

I hope you are finding some diversions to help you through this delirious time. Please let me know what you are doing to stay sane.

As I learned from Sparky when things aren't going the way you want them to, Shift Your Energy!

*"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."*

– **Mahatma Gandhi**

Ciao for now,

*Mary* 