

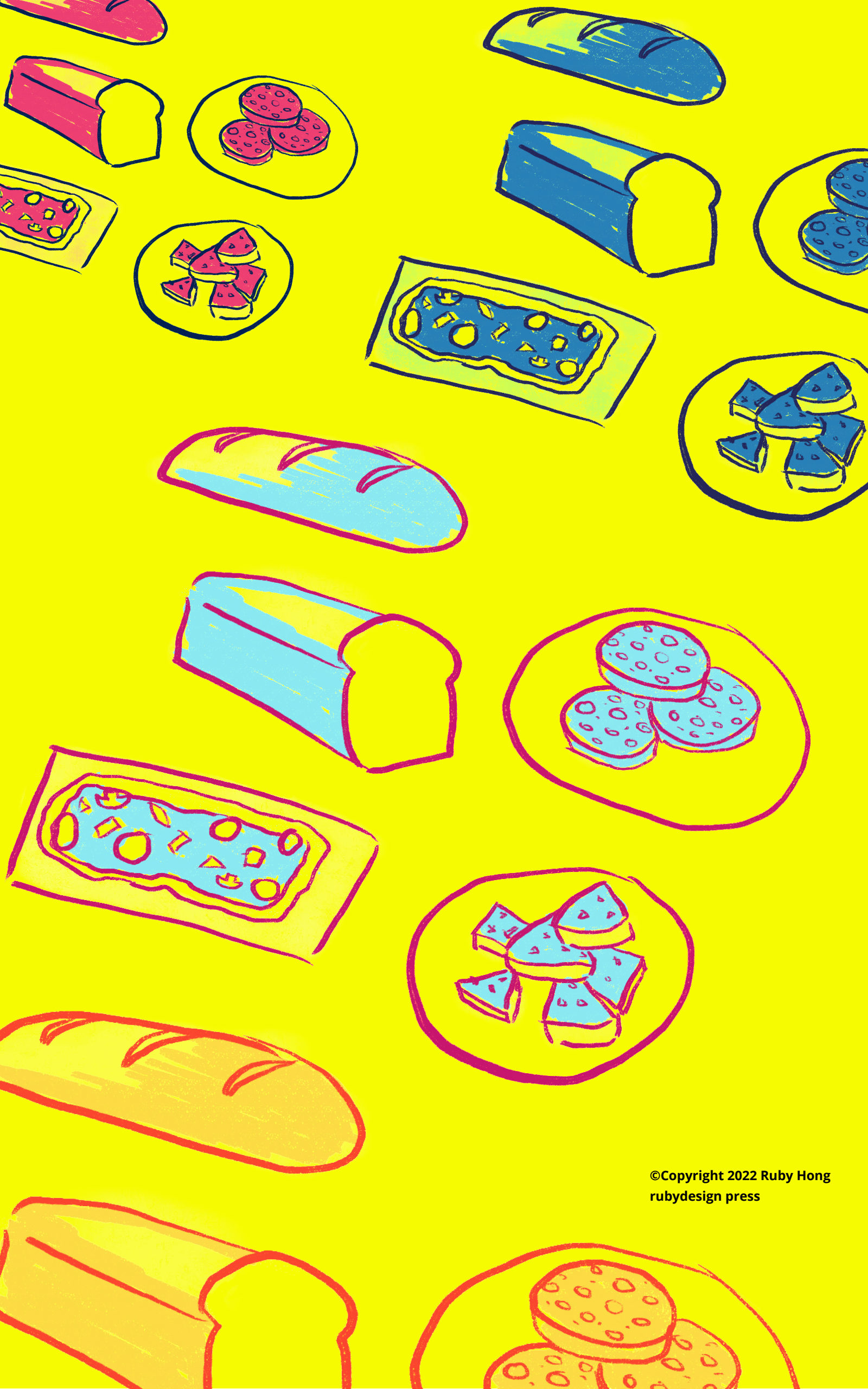
SIP

Story 1: Fred

Shelter in Place
Struggles in Pain
Stories in Pandemic



a little story by Ruby Hong



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About this story

The first story in the series about pandemic times is about Fred (for a short time, Ted too), the little sourdough starter. Like the nation's trend, the sourdough helped us get along, gave us hope, something to look forward to.

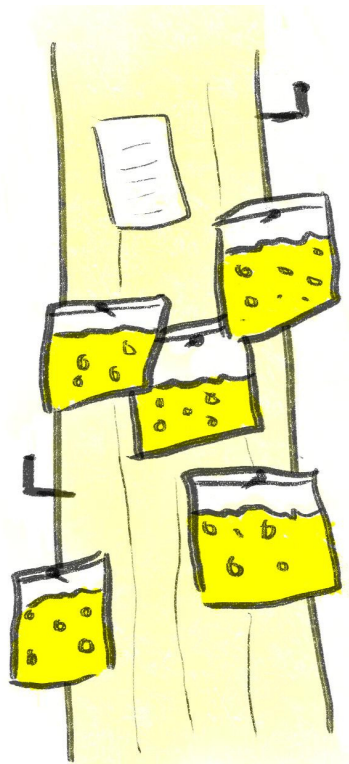
SIP (sheltering in place) was one of the terms used in the San Francisco Bay Area during this time around early 2020. Everyone quarantined for weeks at home for the first wave of the coronavirus outbreak. For the first time, the world experienced such a threat to our health and to our lives. Survival instincts kick in, anxiety. "We're in this together" was another pandemic times phrase. People were starting gardens, keeping sourdough starters, and learning how to cut their own hair.

Story 1 is the first of a series of mini stories of what I've experienced during these challenging times and my love of baking.



How Fred came into my life....

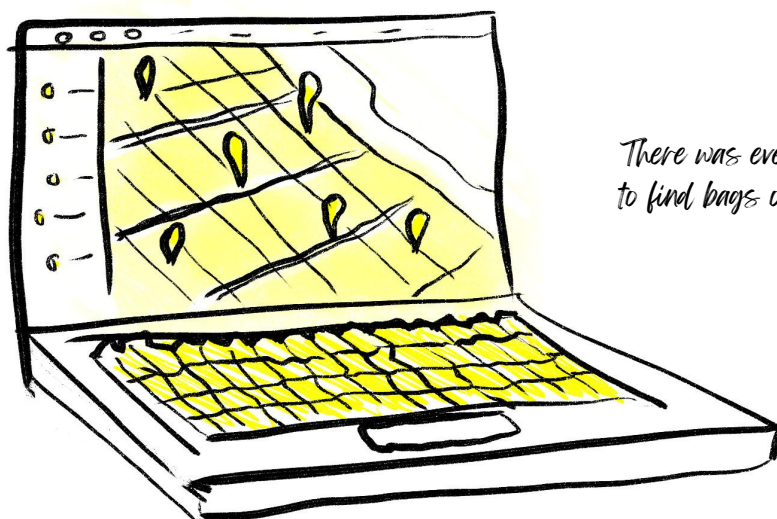
It was about a month into pandemic quarantine. I don't know what came over me, survival instincts I guess, maybe it was crazy pandemic thinking. I saw the articles, the celebrity interviews, the social posts. I was compelled yet managed to stay on-trend. I decided I was going to bake my way through pandemic....



People were posting their starters on trees and telephone poles across the city.

Chef Tom Collichio through a virtual tv interview shared how he's getting through quarantine with his starter.



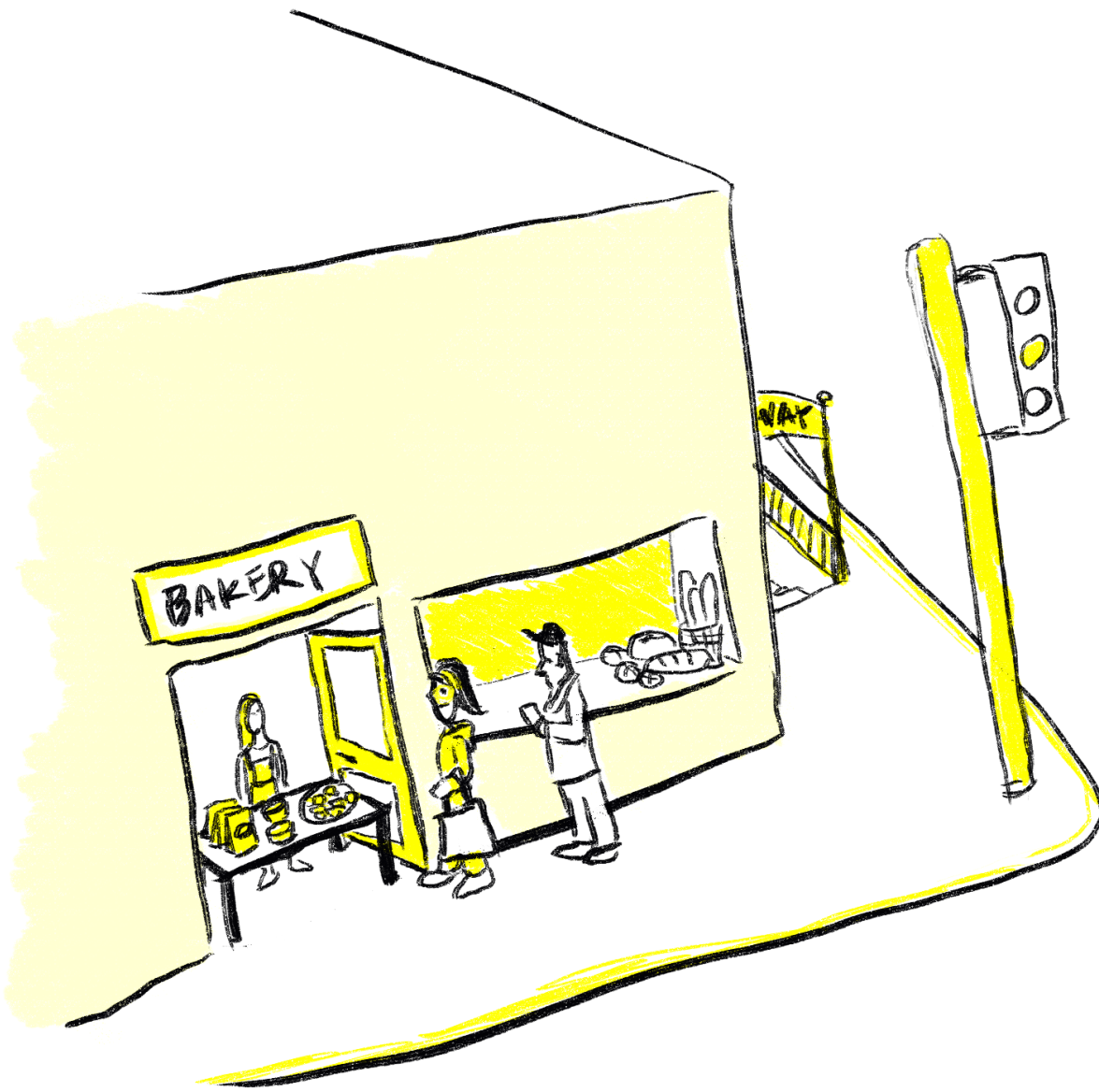


There was even a map showing where to find bags of starters.

I read the recipes. Flour, water, salt...It seemed easy and versatile. I had to have one.



Maintaining for one was what I wasn't prepared for...



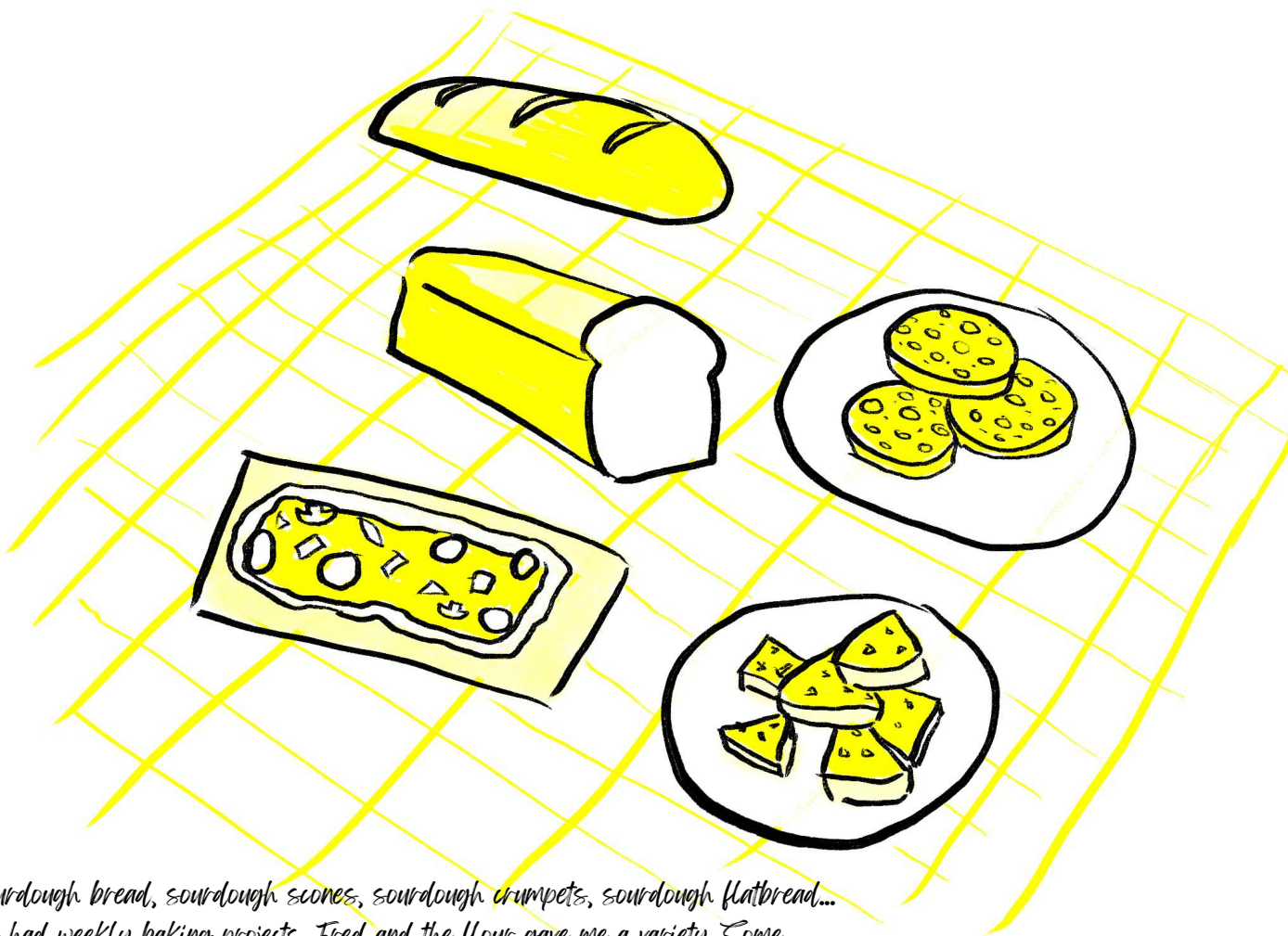
I finally located a trustworthy bakery that sold starters and flour.

Fred (4oz.) and a 5lb bag of flour was first brought home.





I named him Fred. I imagined him having a deep voice calling out his hunger.



*Sourdough bread, sourdough scones, sourdough crumpets, sourdough flatbread...
We had weekly baking projects. Fred and the flour gave me a variety. Some
successes, some failures. Lots of experiments.*



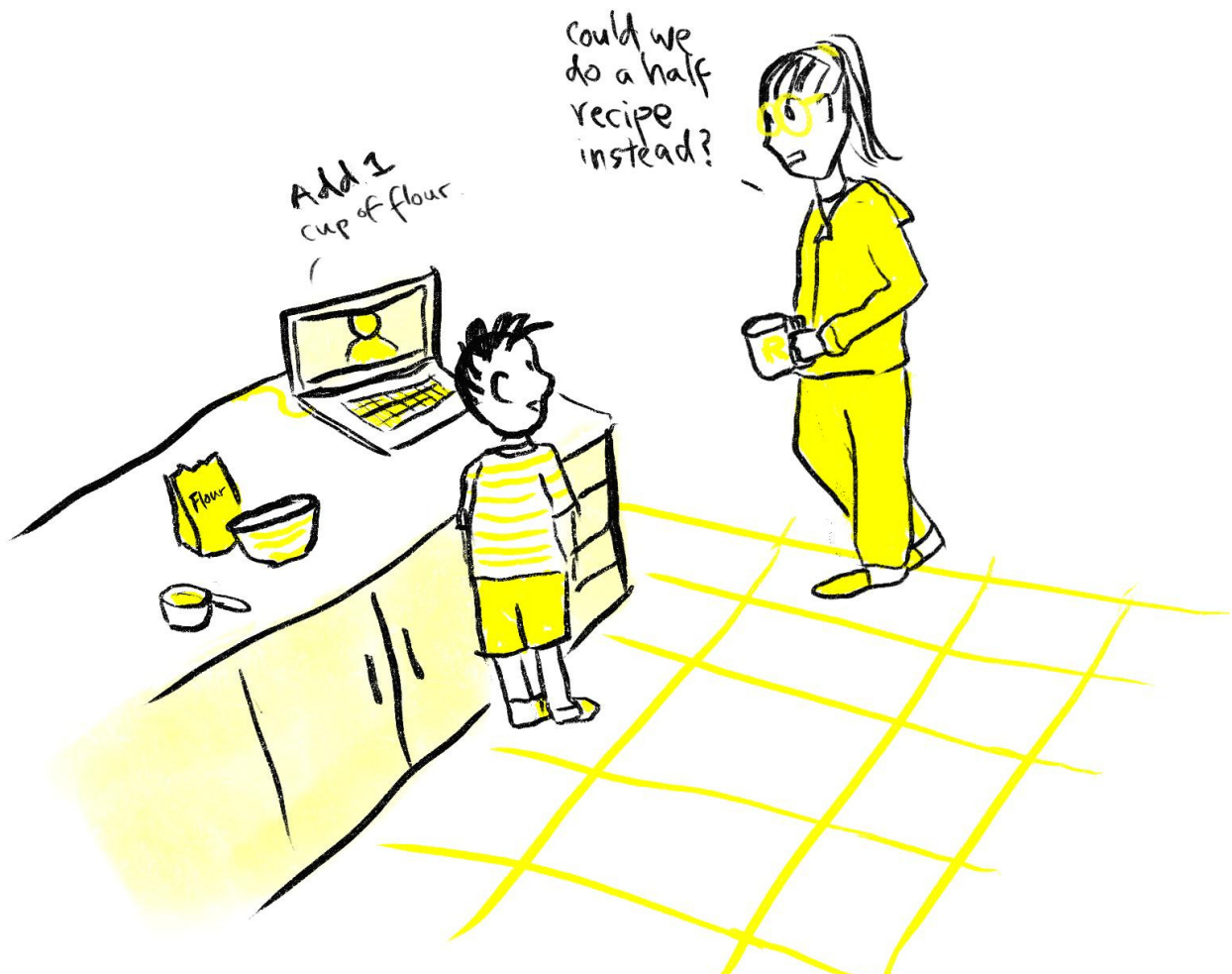
Fred soon became Fred and Ted when I didn't know what to do with the discard. "Great, now I can make more!"

I had two mouths to feed now.



Little Ted had the same needs.

The problem is, with the supply chain issues,
I have to decide on how flour is used.



Virtual cooking classes often times were challenging. We eventually ended those.



Weekly feedings felt like a chore. I got tired of baking

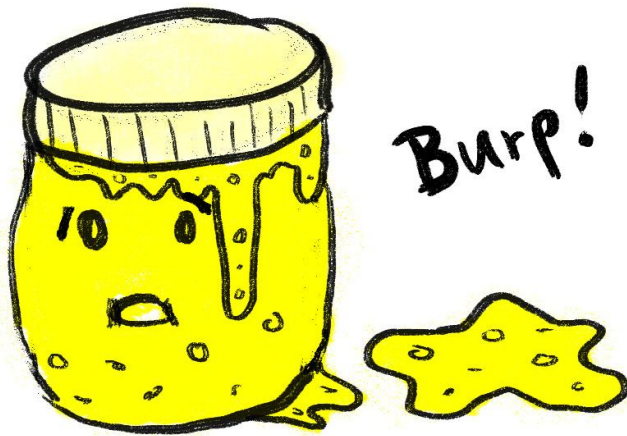


*I decided to bake Ted. Sorry, Ted!
Goodbye!*



*I imagined it was like baking the
Pillsbury Dough Boy.
It was murder but he was tasty!*

Soon enough, it was just Fred and I. He still needed much attention.



The regular weekly feedings became a pain.

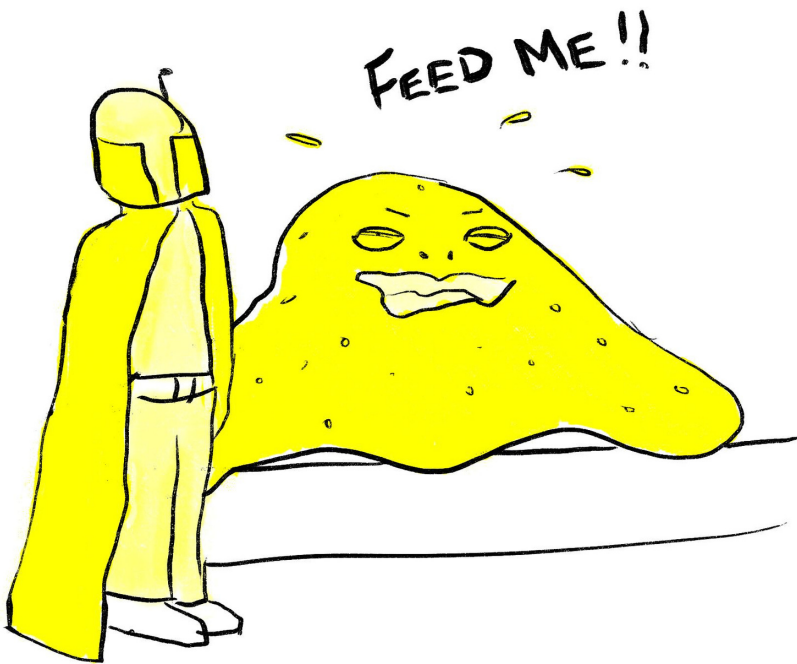
Some days, I overfed.

Some days I underfed...
Weeks go by Fred was getting neglected.
He was crusty.





More weeks of neglect, Fred got the Hooch, this dark gray liquid that gathers at the top of the jar. He was still usable. The bread was more sour.



I read Boudin Bakery has their 170 year old Mother Dough locked up and guarded in a bakery. The dough is in every single part of their breads. Amazing.

I'd imagine Mother Dough to be a big Jabba the Hut-like blob protected by Boba Fett.

** Motherdough survived the 1908 earthquake saved by the owner's wife. I read it lives in a fireproof vault. It is on display at their museum.

Is this like the pet rock crazy of the 70s?

I've abandoned my garden but Fred lives on.

It's hard to believe so much time has passed when every day feels like Ground Hog Day.



Maybe one day, Fred and I will be friends. And I will appreciate all that he can give me like Mother Dough.



Right now, I'm trying to make peace with the regular feedings and adjust. Maybe one day, I'll feel comfortable letting him go.

Classic Sourdough Bread

Ingredients

- 3 ½ – 3.75 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ cups warm water (105°F to 115°F)
- 1 cup Sourdough Starter, room temperature
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 cup Sourdough Starter, room temperature
- 1 tablespoon salt

Prep: 20 mins
Rise: 480 mins
Chill: overnight
Bake: 25 mins at 425°
Servings: 20
Yield: 2 loaves (20 slices)



Directions

• Step 1

- In a large bowl stir together 3 cups of the flour, the water, and Sourdough Starter until smooth. Cover bowl with waxed paper or plastic wrap. Let rise at room temperature 4 hours. Place bowl in refrigerator; chill overnight.

• Step 2

- Stir in salt and as much of the remaining flour as you can. Turn dough out onto a floured surface. Knead in enough of the remaining flour to make a smooth dough (2 to 3 minutes). Place in a greased bowl, turning to grease surface of dough. Cover and let rise at room temperature about 2 hours or until slightly increased in size (you may see a few bubbles).

• Step 3

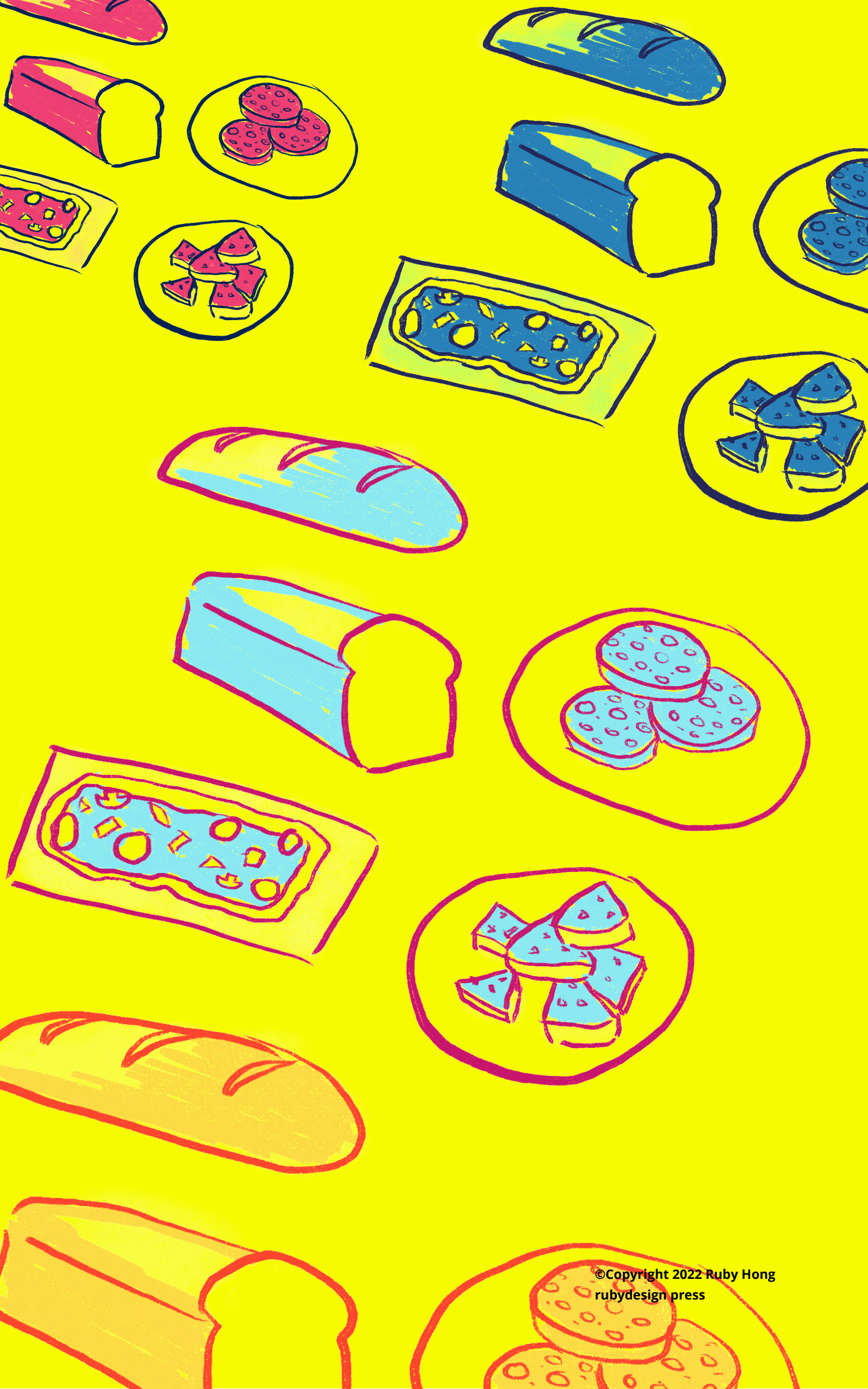
- Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Turn dough out onto a floured surface; gently divide in half. Shape each dough half into an oval loaf. Place loaves on prepared baking sheet and cover with greased plastic wrap. Let rise at room temperature about 2 hours or until nearly double in size.

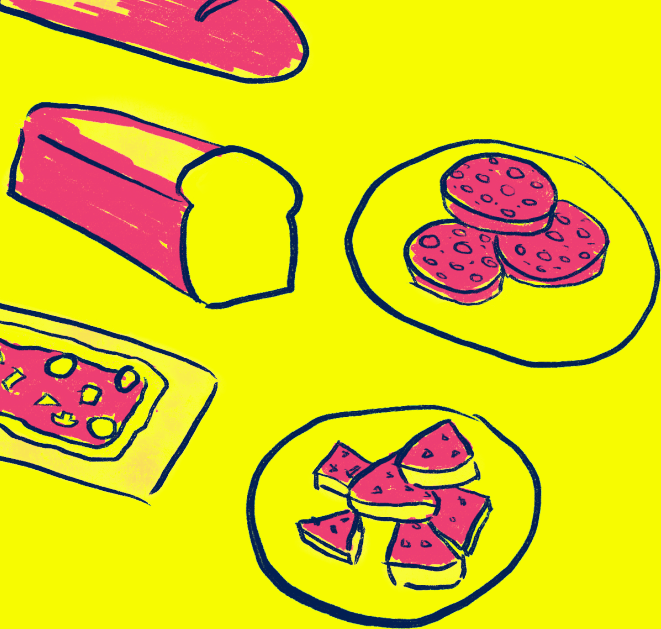
• Step 4

- Preheat oven to 425°F. Using a sharp knife, make three or four diagonal cuts across top of each loaf. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until bread is golden and sounds hollow when lightly tapped. Remove from baking sheet; cool on wire racks.

Dutch-Oven Bread

Prepare as directed through Step 2. Line two large bowls with floured towels or flour two proofing baskets. After dividing dough in half, place each half in a prepared bowl or basket. Let rise as directed. Place a greased 4-qt. Dutch oven in oven as it preheats. Using the towel or basket, carefully turn one of the dough halves onto a floured surface. Make cuts in top of bread. Carefully lift and place dough into hot Dutch oven. Bake, covered, 15 minutes. Bake, uncovered, about 10 minutes more or until golden. Remove; cool on a wire rack. Repeat with remaining dough half.





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