

THE SOURDOUGH FORMULA

# Module 6 · Price It Right

This is the module that turns a lovely hobby into a little business that pays you every single week. I'm going to show you exactly what one loaf costs me, why I charge $9, $11 or $14 and never anything in between, and what I say when someone asks «how much?». By the end you'll have your own price ladder written down, in your own currency, on a sheet you can stick to the fridge.

Here's the good news before we start: sourdough is one of the most generous products you can make at home. The ingredients are flour, water and salt. The value is in your hands, your timing and your Saturday morning. People happily pay for that, and they come back every week.

## What a Loaf Really Costs

Most new bakers guess. They think «flour is cheap, so the bread is cheap». Then they either charge far too little or they feel unsure every time they name a price. Let's replace the guess with a number.

### The worked example: my Classic Country Boule

This is the Master Loaf: 500 g bread flour, 350 g water, 100 g active starter, 10 g salt. About 900 g (2 lb) of dough, around 1.6 lb once it's baked. Here is every cent that goes into it.

| Item | Amount | How I worked it out | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bread flour | 500 g (1.1 lb) | $0.55/lb × 1.1 lb | $0.61 |
| Starter food | flour for the 100 g of starter + Dolly's weekday feeds | about 140 g of flour mix, spread over the week's loaves | $0.15 |
| Salt | 10 g | a 3 lb box lasts months | $0.01 |
| Rice flour for the banneton | 1 tablespoon | $4 bag, about 80 loaves | $0.05 |
| Parchment sling | 1 sheet | $5 roll | $0.08 |
| Oven energy | share of preheat + one 45-min round | split between the 2 loaves in that round | $0.35 |
| «The odd loaf» buffer | about 10 % | for the one that gets a little flat and goes to my family | $0.15 |
| **Ingredient cost per loaf** | | | **$1.40** |

That's it. **$1.40.** I sell that loaf for **$11**.

Notice two lines that most people forget: the oven and the buffer. Including them is what makes the number honest. When you know your number is honest, you name your price with a calm, happy voice, and that voice sells.

> *Sarah's tip: Buy flour in bigger bags as soon as you're baking 8+ loaves a week. A 25 lb bag at Costco (about $11) brings bread flour down to $0.44/lb and your flour line drops from $0.61 to about $0.49. Same bread, more in your pocket.*

## Now add packaging

Packaging is optional, but I use it because a bread bag with a label and a bit of twine looks like a gift, and gifts get photographed and shared.

| Packaging item | Cost per loaf |
|---|---|
| Kraft or clear bread bag | $0.20 |
| Printed label | $0.08 |
| Twine or a sticker seal | $0.07 |
| **Packaging total** | **$0.35** |

So the full picture for one Classic Country Boule:

| | Amount |
|---|---|
| Ingredient cost | $1.40 |
| Packaging | $0.35 |
| **Real cost** | **$1.75** |
| **Sell at** | **$11.00** |
| **You keep** | **$9.25** |




*Every cost starts here: flour on the scale. Weighing is how you know your real number.*

### The formula, in one line

**Ingredient cost per loaf + packaging = real cost. Price comes from the ladder, never from the cost.**

The cost tells you whether a loaf is worth making. The ladder tells you what to charge. For classic loaves, a healthy target is a price at least **5 times your ingredient cost**. My classic boule is almost 8 times. That's the room that pays for your time, your electricity bill on a hot day, and the bag of flour you'll spill someday.

Every recipe in Module 3 already has its own «Cost & Price» table, so you never have to do this math from scratch for the recipes in this course. Use the worksheet at the end of this module when you invent your own loaf or when your local flour price is different from mine.

## The $9 / $11 / $14 Price Ladder

Here is the whole pricing system I use, and it fits on an index card.

| Tier | Price | What goes here | Examples from the course |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Plain** | **$9** | Simple, everyday, sandwich and pan loaves | Soft Sandwich Loaf, Honey Whole Wheat Sandwich Loaf, Baguettes (pair) |
| **Classic** | **$11** | Hearth loaves, the «real sourdough» people picture | Classic Country Boule, Country Batard, Rustic Light Rye, Honey Oat |
| **Specialty** | **$14** | Loaves with inclusions | Jalapeño Cheddar, Cranberry Walnut, Rosemary Olive, Lemon Blueberry |
| Premium specialty | $12–16 | Pricier inclusions or special shapes | Chocolate Cherry $15, Fig & Walnut $15, Garlic Herb Wreath $16 |

### Why the ladder works

**Three prices make choosing easy.** When there's only one price, people decide «yes or no». When there are three, they decide «which one». That's a much nicer question for both of you.

**The middle one wins.** Most people pick the middle option on any menu. That's why my bestseller, the Classic Country Boule, sits right in the middle at $11. The $9 makes it feel reasonable; the $14 makes it feel like a smart choice.

**The specialty tier lifts the whole order.** A regular who usually takes one classic will add a Jalapeño Cheddar «for the weekend». One extra $14 loaf on a few orders each week adds up fast.

**Round numbers are friendly.** $9, $11, $14 are easy to pay with Venmo, Zelle, PayPal or cash, and easy to remember. Nobody has to dig for coins on your porch.

**It matches what people already see.** In most US towns, a sourdough loaf from an artisan bakery or a farmers market sits somewhere around $10–14. A supermarket «sourdough-style» loaf sits around $5–7, and your customers know it isn't the same thing. You sit right where real sourdough lives, made by a neighbor, baked that morning.

### How the ladder looks on a bake day

| Saturday mix | Loaves | Money in |
|---|---|---|
| 12 Classic | 12 × $11 | **$132** |
| 10 Classic + 6 Specialty + 4 Plain | 20 loaves | **$230** |

Twelve classic loaves, once a week, is about **$499 a month** after ingredients ($132 × 4.33 weeks = $572, minus about $73 of ingredients). Call it about $500 a month from one morning a week. Twenty mixed loaves is where it gets really fun.

## Why Never «Cost × 2», and Never «$5 Because It's Just Bread»

These are the two most common pricing mistakes I see, and they come from kindness. You're a nice person, you don't want to overcharge your neighbors. Let me show you why both of these hurt you and don't actually help anyone.

### «Cost × 2»

Cost × 2 works for reselling things you buy. It doesn't work for things you make by hand, because your ingredients are cheap and your time is the real product.

- Cost × 2 on my classic loaf = $1.40 × 2 = **$2.80**.
- Twelve loaves at $2.80 = $33.60 for a Friday afternoon, a Friday evening of shaping, and a Saturday morning at the oven.

That's not a business. That's a donation with flour on it. Your price pays for your time and skill, and the ladder already does that for you.

### «$5 because it's just bread»

It isn't «just bread». It's a naturally leavened loaf that took 24 hours, a starter you've kept alive for weeks, and a cold proof that gives it that flavor nobody can find in the store. When you say «$5», you're telling people it's ordinary, and they treat it as ordinary.

Here's what $5 does to your Saturday:

| | At $5 | At $11 |
|---|---|---|
| 12 loaves | $60 | $132 |
| After ingredients ($16.80) | $43 | $115 |
| Per month (4.33 Saturdays) | about $187 | about $499 |

Same flour. Same Saturday. Same oven. More than double the result. And here's the part that surprised me most: customers trust the $11 loaf more. A fair price says «this is good, and I'm serious about it».

> *Sarah's tip: If your inner voice says «but who will pay $11?», remember the people who asked me first were the ones who'd already tasted it. Taste sells. The price just has to be clear.*

## Pricing in £, CA$ and A$

Your ladder works everywhere. What changes is the number, because every country has its own sense of «a good loaf costs about this much». Below are typical local farmers-market ranges for a real sourdough loaf.

| Market | Typical local farmers-market range | A ladder that works |
|---|---|---|
| United States | $10–14 | **$9 / $11 / $14** |
| United Kingdom | £5–8 | **£5 / £6.50 / £8** |
| Canada | CA$12–16 | **CA$12 / CA$14 / CA$16** |
| Australia | A$12–16 | **A$12 / A$14 / A$16** |

These are typical ranges, not rules. Your town might sit higher or lower. Big cities and tourist towns usually run higher; small towns often run a little lower. That's why you check yours.

### How to check your local price in 10 minutes

Set a timer. This is quick.

1. **Minutes 1–3:** Look up the two or three closest farmers markets online and find the bakery stalls. Many post their price list or their menu photos.
2. **Minutes 4–6:** Search your town name plus «sourdough» on Instagram and Facebook Marketplace or local groups. Note what home bakers and micro-bakeries charge for a plain country loaf and for a loaf with cheese or fruit.
3. **Minutes 7–8:** Check one nice bakery or café in your area and one upscale grocery for their sourdough price.
4. **Minutes 9–10:** Write down the numbers. Set your Classic price in the **upper middle** of what you found. Plain sits one step below, Specialty a step or two above.

Example from a reader in Manchester: she found £4.50, £5.80, £6.50 and £7 for plain country loaves. She set her ladder at £5 / £6.50 / £8 and sold out her first weekend.

Then do the 5× check: divide your Classic price by your ingredient cost per loaf (use the worksheet). If it's 5 or more, you're in great shape.

## The Two Sentences to Say When Someone Asks «How Much?»

Here's the moment that used to make me blush. Someone tastes your bread at a party, or sees it on your porch, and asks: «How much do you sell those for?»

You answer in exactly two sentences. Sentence one: the price and what it is. Sentence two: an easy next step.

> *«It's $11 for my classic country loaf, baked fresh Saturday morning with just flour, water and salt. Want me to save you one this Saturday?»*

That's it. Then stop talking and smile. The question at the end is the most important part, because it turns curiosity into an order.

A few versions for different moments:

- **At the school gate:** «They're $11 for the classic and $14 for the cheese ones, I bake every Saturday. Should I put your name down for this week?»
- **By text:** «Classic country is $11, specialty loaves like jalapeño cheddar are $14. I'm baking Saturday, porch pickup by lunch. Want one?»
- **When they ask about a specific flavor:** «The cranberry walnut is $14, it's a favorite for breakfast toast. I can save you one for Saturday if you like.»
- **UK version:** «It's £6.50 for my classic sourdough, baked fresh on Saturday morning. Shall I save you one this week?»

Say the price with the same voice you'd use to say the time. Calm, friendly, done.

## Answers to «That's Expensive»

Most people will never say it. A few will, often as a little joke. That's fine. It's a normal thing to say and it usually means «tell me why it's worth it». Here are warm, easy answers. Pick the one that sounds like you.

- **The time answer:** «It really is a slow loaf. It takes about 24 hours from start to finish, with a cold overnight rise. That's where the flavor comes from.»
- **The ingredient answer:** «It's just flour, water and salt, no additives. It keeps for days and makes the best toast.»
- **The comparison answer:** «It's about what the bakeries charge, and mine comes out of the oven a few hours before you pick it up.»
- **The smaller-option answer:** «If you'd like to try it first, the sandwich loaf is $9 and it's great for the kids' lunches.»
- **The friendly close:** «No pressure at all. If you ever want one, I bake every Saturday.»

Notice what's missing: no apology, no discount, no long explanation. You offer a reason or a smaller option, and you keep the door open. Many of my best regulars are people who said «that's expensive» once and then ordered three weeks later after trying a slice at a friend's house.

> *Sarah's tip: Keep a few sample slices in the freezer. When someone is curious, toast one and hand it over. The bread answers the price question better than any sentence.*

## Bundles and Subscriptions

Once a few people buy every week, it's time to make that official. A bundle or a subscription turns «I'll text you when I want one» into «my bread arrives every Saturday». Your income becomes predictable, you know exactly how much to bake, and you never have leftover loaves.

### The Bread Club: 4 loaves a month, prepaid

This is my favorite thing in the whole business.

| Bread Club option | What they get | Paid on the 1st | Per loaf |
|---|---|---|---|
| Plain Club | 1 Plain loaf every Saturday | $34 | $8.50 |
| Classic Club | 1 Classic loaf every Saturday | $42 | $10.50 |
| Specialty Club | 1 Specialty loaf every Saturday | $54 | $13.50 |
| Family Club | 2 Classic loaves every Saturday | $84 | $10.50 |

How it works:

- They pay for **4 Saturdays** on the **1st of the month**. Payment first, bread after.
- The small saving (about 50 cents a loaf) is a thank-you for paying ahead, not a sale. It's the only price break I give, and it pays me back many times because I bake to a known number.
- **Months with 5 Saturdays:** I tell members in advance. The 5th Saturday is a «member's choice» loaf they can add at the regular price, or skip. Easy.

- **Skips:** members can skip one Saturday a month with notice by Wednesday; I move that loaf to the next week or the next month.
- **Swaps:** Classic Club members can swap to any Specialty loaf for +$3 that week. Lots of them do.

The full subscription scripts, including the exact message that turns a one-time buyer into a member, live in the selling part of this course (your subscription scripts). Here we're just setting the prices.

### Bundles for single orders

Bundles make bigger orders easy without discounting:

| Bundle | What's inside | Price |
|---|---|---|
| Weekend Pair | 1 Classic + 1 Specialty | $25 |
| Dinner Party Box | 1 Focaccia + 1 Rosemary Olive + 1 bag Discard Crackers | $36 |
| Sandwich Week | 2 Plain sandwich loaves | $18 |
| Pizza Night | Pizza Dough Kit (4 balls) + 1 bag Discard Crackers | $20 |

These are simply the ladder prices added up. You're not giving anything away; you're making the decision faster. A bundle with a nice name sells better than the same loaves listed one by one.

## When and How to Raise Your Prices

Raising prices is a sign that things are going well. It's a happy moment, not a nervous one.

### When to raise

Raise your prices when **one or more** of these is true:

- You've sold out **3 Saturdays in a row** and people are asking to be added to a waitlist.
- Your flour price has gone up and your Classic is below **5×** ingredient cost.
- It's been **12 months** since your last price change.
- You're moving to a nicer bag, a new specialty line, or you added porch delivery.

### How to raise

1. **Go up by $1** on one tier at a time (or by 50p in the UK, CA$1 or A$1). Small steps feel natural.
2. **Announce 2 weeks ahead**, with a friendly short message.
3. **Thank your regulars.** Bread Club members keep their current price for one more month.
4. **Change everything at once:** your menu, price sign, order form and labels, so it looks planned and professional.

A message you can copy:

> *«Hi friends! Quick bread update: starting Saturday the 15th, Classic loaves will be $12 and Specialty $15. Plain stays at $9. Bread Club members keep their current price through next month as a thank-you. I'm so grateful you're part of my Saturdays. See you on the porch!»*

That's it. No long story about flour prices, no apology. Most people reply with a heart.

## Discounts You Never Give

Clear rules make every conversation easier. These are the discounts I simply don't offer, and what I do instead.

| Discount I don't give | Why | What I do instead |
|---|---|---|
| «First order» discount | It teaches people your real price is lower | Offer a toasted sample slice |
| Haggling («could you do $8?») | One price for everyone keeps it fair and simple | «The sandwich loaf is $9 if you'd like a smaller option» |
| «Friends price» | Friends are your best ambassadors, they want you to win | Give a loaf as a birthday gift, as a gift, not a discount |
| Buy-one-get-one | Halves your money on the busiest day | Bundles at the regular ladder prices |
| Day-old discounts | Your brand is «baked this morning» | Freeze extras for your family, turn them into croutons, or bake to exact orders |
| Price match with the supermarket | It's a different product | Smile: «Mine's a slow, naturally leavened loaf, baked a few hours before pickup» |

The only price break in my business is the Bread Club's small «thank you for paying ahead». Everything else is the ladder.

> *Sarah's tip: When you want to be generous, give more, not less. A little bag of discard crackers tucked into a Bread Club bag at the end of the month costs you about 60 cents and makes people tell their friends.*

# Print-and-Fill Sheets

Print these, or copy them into a notebook. Fill them in with a pencil; prices change, and pencils are friendly.

## Cost per Loaf Worksheet

Use one sheet per recipe. Fill in what you actually paid.

**Recipe: _____ Date: _____**

| Ingredient | Price I paid | Package size | Amount per loaf | Cost per loaf |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bread flour | | | | |
| Whole wheat / other flour | | | | |
| Starter food | | | | |
| Salt | | | | |
| Inclusion 1 | | | | |
| Inclusion 2 | | | | |
| Inclusion 3 | | | | |
| Rice flour / dusting | | | | |
| Parchment | | | | |
| Oven energy share | | | | |
| Buffer (10 %) | | | | |
| **Ingredient cost per loaf** | | | | |
| Packaging (bag, label, twine) | | | | |
| **Real cost per loaf** | | | | |
| **My ladder price** | | | | |
| **I keep per loaf** | | | | |
| **Price ÷ ingredient cost (aim for 5× or more on classics)** | | | | |

Quick math: cost per loaf = (price I paid ÷ package size) × amount per loaf. Keep units the same: pounds with pounds, grams with grams (1 lb = 454 g).

## My Price Ladder

| Tier | My loaves in this tier | My price | Ingredient cost | Real cost | I keep |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plain | | | | | |
| Plain | | | | | |
| Classic | | | | | |
| Classic | | | | | |
| Classic | | | | | |
| Specialty | | | | | |
| Specialty | | | | | |
| Specialty | | | | | |
| Premium | | | | | |
| Bundle | | | | | |
| Bundle | | | | | |
| Bread Club | | | | | |

**My currency:** _____ **Local range I found:** _____ **Date I checked:** _____

## Weekly Order List

**Bake day:** _____ **Pickup window:** _____

| Name | Loaf | Qty | Paid | Pickup |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Totals** | | | | |

**Loaves to bake:** Plain ___ Classic ___ Specialty ___ Extras for walk-ups ___

## Monthly Profit Tracker

**Month:** _____

| Week | Loaves sold | Money in | Ingredients | Packaging | Profit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | | | | | |
| Week 2 | | | | | |
| Week 3 | | | | | |
| Week 4 | | | | | |
| Week 5 | | | | | |
| Bread Club (paid on the 1st) | | | | | |
| **Month total** | | | | | |

**Bread Club members this month: ___ Best-selling loaf: _____ Next month's goal: _____**



*Four Bread Club bags, paid on the 1st, ready before the porch even opens.*

# Your Pricing Checklist

- [ ] □ I filled in the Cost per Loaf Worksheet for my Classic loaf

- [ ] □ I know my ingredient cost and my real cost with packaging
- [ ] □ I checked my local price in 10 minutes and wrote down what I found
- [ ] □ I wrote my ladder: Plain, Classic, Specialty, in my currency
- [ ] □ I practiced my two sentences out loud (yes, out loud)
- [ ] □ I chose one answer for «that's expensive» that sounds like me
- [ ] □ I set my Bread Club prices
- [ ] □ I printed the Weekly Order List for this Saturday

You now have a price you can say with a smile. Next, let's plan the Saturday that fills all those orders.