

THE SOURDOUGH FORMULA

Module 7 · The Saturday Bake Day

This is the module where everything comes together. You already know the Master Loaf. Now we bake 12 of them, or 20, in one ordinary home oven, with gear that costs less than $100, and have everything on the porch by lunch.

The secret isn't a bigger kitchen. It's a timeline. When every step has its time, bake day feels calm, even fun. I put on a podcast Friday afternoon, the kids help with labels Saturday morning, and the oven does the heavy lifting.

The Big Picture

Bake day is really two half-days:

- **Friday:** feed Dolly in the morning, mix in batches in the afternoon, fold, shape in the evening, and tuck everything into the fridge before bed.
- **Saturday:** bake straight from the fridge in rounds of two, cool, bag, label, and set up the porch.

The cold overnight proof is your best friend. It gives the flavor, makes shaped loaves easy to score, and lets you bake on *your* schedule instead of the dough's.

Building Enough Starter

Each loaf uses 100 g of active starter. For a big bake you build a large batch the night before so it's ready Friday afternoon, always keeping a little Dolly back for next week.

Bake size	Thursday 9 pm	Friday morning (1:1:1 feed)	Ready	Keep back for Dolly
12 loaves (1,200 g)	50 g Dolly + 200 g flour + 200 g water	8 am: 420 g starter + 420 g flour + 420 g water	noon–4 pm	50 g
20 loaves (2,000 g)	80 g Dolly + 320 g flour + 320 g water	7 am: 690 g starter + 690 g flour + 690 g water	11 am–3 pm	30 g, fed up again Saturday

Use a big clear container with a rubber band at the starting line. When it has doubled, domed and smells like yogurt and apples, it's ready.

> *Sarah's tip: Put your keep-back Dolly in a separate small jar before you build the big batch. Then there's zero chance of baking your whole starter into Saturday's bread.*

Batch Mixing: 4 Loaves at a Time

I mix in batches of 4 loaves. That's a dough size that's easy to fold by hand in one container, and it means three batches for 12 loaves, five for 20.

One 4-loaf batch

Ingredient	Amount
Bread flour (or 1,800 g bread + 200 g whole wheat)	2,000 g (about 4.4 lb)
Water	1,400 g
Active starter	400 g
Salt	40 g
Total dough	**about 3.84 kg (8.5 lb), cut into 4 pieces of 960 g**

For specialty batches, add the inclusions during the 2nd set of stretch and folds, exactly as each recipe says (four times the single-loaf amount).

Labeled containers

Every batch lives in its own food-safe container (2-gallon buckets or 12-quart tubs) with a strip of masking tape on the side:

- Batch letter and loaf type: **«A · Classic»**, **«B · Classic»**, **«C · Jalapeño Cheddar»**
- Mix time: **«mixed 3:00»**
- A line at the starting level, so you can see +50–75 %

Labels sound fussy. They're what lets you fold five doughs at once without thinking.



Three batches, three labels, three start lines. Staggered by 30 minutes so they never all need me at once.

Staggered by 30 minutes

Start each batch 30 minutes after the last. Then each one reaches folds, bulk end and shaping 30 minutes apart, and you're never doing everything at once. While batch A does its autolyse, you're mixing batch B.

The Timeline: 12 Loaves

Three batches of 4, all hearth loaves, two Dutch ovens.

Time	Batch A	Batch B	Batch C	You
Thu 9 pm				Build starter (see above), put Dolly's jar aside
Fri 8:00 am				Feed the big starter 1:1:1
2:45 pm				Starter check: doubled and domed
3:00 pm	Mix flour + water (autolyse)			Weigh out B and C flour while A rests
3:30 pm	Add starter + salt	Mix (autolyse)		
4:00 pm	Fold 1	Add starter + salt	Mix (autolyse)	
4:30 pm	Fold 2 (+ inclusions)	Fold 1	Add starter + salt	
5:00 pm	Fold 3	Fold 2 (+ inclusions)	Fold 1	
5:30 pm	Fold 4, then hands off	Fold 3	Fold 2 (+ inclusions)	
6:00 pm	Bulk	Fold 4, then hands off	Fold 3	
6:30 pm	Bulk	Bulk	Fold 4, then hands off	Dinner, then prep bannetons or towel-lined bowls, clear the fridge
8:30 pm	Pre-shape (+50–75 %)	Bulk	Bulk	
8:50 pm	Final shape → fridge	Pre-shape	Bulk	
9:10 pm		Final shape → fridge	Pre-shape	
9:30 pm			Final shape → fridge	Wipe the counter, set alarm

Time	Batch A	Batch B	Batch C	You
Sat 6:15 am				Dutch ovens in, preheat to 500 °F (260 °C)
7:00 am	Rounds 1–2			Bake (see rotation table)
8:30 am		Rounds 3–4		Bake; bag the first loaves once cool
10:00 am			Rounds 5–6	Bake; set up the porch
11:30 am				Last loaves out; cleanup
12:00 pm				Porch pickup opens (last round is cool by 1:30)

Bulk times are for a 75 °F (24 °C) kitchen. Warmer kitchen, faster bulk; cooler, slower. Always shape by the dough (+50–75 %, domed, jiggly, bubbles on the sides), not by the clock. The table just tells you roughly when to look.

The Timeline: 20 Loaves

Twenty loaves = 12 hearth loaves in the Dutch ovens + 8 Soft Sandwich or Honey Whole Wheat loaves in loaf pans, which bake 4 to a rack, 8 at once. Five batches, plus a slightly earlier Saturday start. Every loaf still gets its 10+ hours of cold proof.

Time	What's happening
Thu 9 pm	Build starter for 20 (see table above)
Fri 7:00 am	Feed the big starter 1:1:1
3:00 pm	Batch A (Classic) autolyse
3:30 pm	Batch B (Classic) autolyse · A gets starter + salt
4:00 pm	Batch C (Specialty) autolyse · B starter + salt · A fold 1
4:30 pm	Batch D (Sandwich) autolyse · C starter + salt · B fold 1 · A fold 2
5:00 pm	Batch E (Sandwich) autolyse · D starter + salt · C fold 1 · B fold 2 · A fold 3
5:30–7:00 pm	Folds continue in order, each batch 30 min behind the one before
8:00–9:30 pm	Hearth batches A, B, C: pre-shape, rest, final shape → fridge
9:00–10:00 pm	Pan loaves D and E: shape into greased pans → fridge
Sat 5:15 am	Dutch ovens in, preheat to 500 °F (260 °C)
6:00–10:30 am	6 rounds of hearth loaves, 2 at a time
10:30 am	Dutch ovens out, oven down to 400 °F (205 °C), pans out of the fridge
10:45–11:30 am	All 8 pan loaves at once, two racks, swap racks at 25 min
11:30 am–1:30 pm	Cool, bag, label
12:00–2:00 pm	Porch pickup (pan-loaf orders in the later slots)

> *Sarah's tip: Give your 20-loaf customers a pickup slot when they order: «11:45–12:30» or «1:00–2:00». The early rounds go to the early slots. It spreads people out and nobody ever gets a warm-inside loaf.*

Fridge Space for 12–20 Bannetons

The cold proof is non-negotiable, so you need room for every shaped loaf. You don't need a second fridge to start. Here's how I fit them.

- **Clear the fridge Friday at lunch.** Move drinks, condiments and leftovers into a cooler with ice packs for the night. The middle shelves become the bread shelves.
- **Take out a shelf.** Removing one shelf usually lets bannetons stack two high with a sheet pan between layers.
- **Sheet-pan couche.** Line a half sheet pan with a floured linen or flour-sack towel, pleat it between loaves, and fit 3 batards per pan. Stack pans with four upturned cups as spacers.
- **Bowls and colanders.** Any bowl about 8–9 inches across, lined with a floured towel, is a perfect banneton. Mixing bowls nest when empty and fit oddly shaped gaps when full.
- **Plastic bag hats.** Cover each banneton with a shower cap or a clean produce bag so loaves don't dry out and can touch the next pan without sticking.
- **The cold-weather cooler.** In winter, a big cooler with frozen ice packs on top and bottom holds 6 loaves happily overnight. Keep a fridge thermometer inside and aim for 38–40 °F (3–4 °C).
- **Pan loaves on the bottom.** Loaf pans are sturdy and flat; they make a stable base for a sheet pan on top.
- **Later:** a second-hand garage fridge is the single best upgrade once you're baking 16+ every week.



Friday 10:30 pm: twelve loaves tucked in, two shelves, sheet pans and a lot of happy planning.

Oven Rotation

One home oven bakes **2 hearth loaves per round**, either in 2 Dutch ovens or open on a baking steel with steam. Each round takes about 45 minutes, including reloading.

Option A: 2 Dutch ovens (my setup)

Preheat both pots in the oven at 500 °F (260 °C) for 45 minutes. Load each round straight from the fridge: flip onto a parchment sling, score, lower into the pot, lid on.

Round	Loaves	In (lid on, 475 °F / 245 °C)	Lid off (450 °F / 230 °C)	Out	Reheat pots
1	1–2	7:00	7:20	7:42	lids on, back in for 3 min
2	3–4	7:45	8:05	8:27	3 min
3	5–6	8:30	8:50	9:12	3 min
4	7–8	9:15	9:35	9:57	3 min
5	9–10	10:00	10:20	10:42	3 min
6	11–12	10:45	11:05	11:27	done

Between rounds, turn the oven back up to 500 °F (260 °C) while the empty pots reheat with their lids on, then drop to 475 °F (245 °C) the moment the new loaves go in. Set two timers per round: one for «lid off», one for «out». Check internal temperature on the first loaf of each round: 205–210 °F (96–99 °C).

For the 20-loaf day, start Round 1 at 6:00 and the same rhythm finishes Round 6 at 10:27.

Option B: Baking steel + steam (plus loaf pans)

A steel on the middle rack and a cast-iron skillet (or a sheet pan with lava rocks) on the bottom rack for steam. Preheat 1 hour at 500 °F (260 °C).

Round	What bakes	Steam phase	Vent phase	Out
1	2 batards on the steel	7:00–7:20, 1 cup boiling water in skillet, 475 °F (245 °C)	7:20–7:42, skillet out, 450 °F (230 °C)	7:42
2	2 batards on the steel	7:45–8:05	8:05–8:27	8:27
3	2 batards on the steel	8:30–8:50	8:50–9:12	9:12
4	2 batards on the steel	9:15–9:35	9:35–9:57	9:57
5	2 batards on the steel	10:00–10:20	10:20–10:42	10:42
6	2 batards on the steel	10:45–11:05	11:05–11:27	11:27
Pans	Up to 8 pan loaves on 2 racks, steel out	none, 400 °F (205 °C)	40–45 min, swap racks at 25 min	internal 195–200 °F (90–93 °C)

Batards (oval loaves) fit two on a steel more easily than boules. Load with a thin cutting board or the back of a sheet pan as a peel, on parchment.



Round three: two pots, lids off, and the kitchen smells unbelievable.

Cooling and Bagging

- **Cool on a rack for at least 2 hours.** The crumb finishes setting as it cools. A warm loaf bagged too soon goes soft and steamy. Your oven racks, a cooling rack on top of a sheet pan, or even upturned muffin tins work.
- **Give each loaf space.** Two inches between loaves so air moves.
- **Label by round.** A sticky note on the counter by each pair, «R1 7:42», tells you which loaves are ready to bag.
- **Bag when cool to the touch on the bottom.** Tap it: hollow sound, room-temperature base.
- **Paper or kraft bags** keep the crust crisp for the day. Clear bags look beautiful and keep it softer longer. Either works; just be consistent.
- **Name on every bag.** Write the customer's name on the label or a tag the moment you bag. Pre-printed labels from your Friday list make this fast.



Rounds one to four cooling, each pair with its sticky note. Bagging starts at the left.

Porch Pickup Setup

My porch pickup takes 10 minutes to set up and runs itself.

- **A small table or a wide shelf** in the shade, never in direct sun.
- **A bread crate or big basket** with bags standing upright, names facing out, sorted alphabetically.
- **A cover:** a clean linen towel over the top, or a lidded storage tote if it's windy.
- **A small sign** with the pickup window and your payment handle (most orders are prepaid from the Friday list; this is for extras).
- **Extras basket** for walk-ups, with prices on a little card.
- **A text when it's ready:** «Bread's on the porch! Your bag has your name on it. Have a lovely weekend.» Send it as a group text or one by one.
- **A thank-you treat once in a while:** a little bag of discard crackers in a regular's bag.



The porch at noon: names out, towel on, extras basket on the side.

Cleaning in 20 Minutes

Flour gets everywhere. That's okay. Here's the 20-minute reset, in order:

1. **Minutes 0–3:** Dry scrape. Bench scraper on the counter, dried dough into the trash (never down the drain).
2. **Minutes 3–8:** Containers and bowls soak in cold water first (cold lifts dough, hot glues it), then a quick wash.
3. **Minutes 8–11:** Bannetons and towels: shake out the rice flour outside, let bannetons air-dry upside down, towels into the wash.
4. **Minutes 11–14:** Dutch ovens: once cool, wipe out with a dry towel. No soap needed for enameled or seasoned cast iron unless something spilled.
5. **Minutes 14–17:** Counter and handles: wipe with hot soapy water, then a food-safe sanitizer.
6. **Minutes 17–20:** Sweep the floor, put the scale and scrapers back in their bin, refill the flour container for next week.

> *Sarah's tip: Keep one plastic bin that holds everything for bake day: scale, scrapers, thermometer, lame, rice flour, masking tape, marker, parchment. Friday afternoon you pull out one bin; Saturday afternoon you put back one bin.*

The Equipment List Under $100

You already have an oven, a fridge, mixing bowls and towels. This is everything else, for about **$98**.

Item	Why	Approx price	Nice-to-have later
Digital kitchen scale (to 5 kg / 11 lb, 1 g steps)	Every recipe is by weight; weighing is how 20 loaves come out the same	$15	A second scale just for the starter
Cast-iron combo cooker or 5-qt Dutch oven	Traps steam for a great rise and crust	$35	A second one, so you bake 2 per round without borrowing a pot
An oven-safe lidded pot you already own	Your second «Dutch oven» to start	$0	Baking steel ($60–90) for open baking
Bench scraper	Dividing, shaping, cleaning	$5	A curved bowl scraper too
3 food-safe 2-gallon buckets	One per 4-loaf batch	$12	Clear 12-quart square tubs with lids
12 flour-sack towels	Line bowls as bannetons; cover dough	$12	12–20 rattan bannetons ($8–12 each)
Rice flour	Loaves release cleanly from towels and bannetons	$4	
Parchment roll	Slings for lowering loaves into hot pots	$5	Reusable silicone bread slings
Instant-read thermometer	Checks 205–210 °F (96–99 °C) inside each loaf	$10	A probe thermometer with alarm
Razor blade or sharp serrated knife	Scoring	$0 (in your drawer)	A bread lame
Total		**about $98**	

Packaging (bags, labels, twine) is counted per loaf at about $0.35, so it lives in your pricing, not in this list. Loaf pans for sandwich loaves (9×5 in, about $8 each) are your first add-on when you start the 20-loaf day.

Scaling to Twice a Week

When your Saturday sells out and the waitlist grows, the easiest next step is a second bake day, not a bigger one.

- **Pick a weekday pair.** Tuesday-into-Wednesday works for many people: feed Tuesday morning, mix Tuesday afternoon, bake Wednesday morning, pickup by lunch or after school.
- **Make the weekday smaller.** Saturday stays your big bake; the weekday is 8–12 loaves, often the Bread Club members who'd love bread midweek.
- **Keep the same timeline.** Same starter build, same batches, same rotation. Your brain already knows it.
- **Refresh Dolly in between.** Back to normal 1:1:1 feeds the day after each bake.
- **Order flour in bulk.** Two bakes a week is when the 25 lb or 50 lb bags make the most sense.
- **Two weekly order lists,** two pickup texts, two batches of labels. Same system, twice.

Twice a week at 12 classic loaves is about **$1,000 a month** after ingredients. Same kitchen, same oven, just one more morning.

Checklist: Friday Night

- [ ] □ Weekly Order List printed, loaf counts written down per type
- [ ] □ Dolly's keep-back jar set aside before the big build
- [ ] □ All batches mixed, labeled with letter, type and mix time
- [ ] □ Inclusions added during the 2nd set of folds for specialty batches
- [ ] □ Every batch reached +50–75 % before shaping
- [ ] □ Bannetons, bowls or couche pans floured with rice flour
- [ ] □ Every shaped loaf covered and in the fridge (38–40 °F / 3–4 °C)
- [ ] □ Count check: number of loaves in the fridge = number on the order list (+ extras)
- [ ] □ Labels printed and sorted by name
- [ ] □ Parchment slings cut, thermometer and lame on the counter
- [ ] □ Dutch ovens on the oven rack, ready for the morning preheat
- [ ] □ Alarm set for preheat time

Checklist: Saturday Morning

- [ ] □ Oven and pots preheating 45 minutes (Dutch ovens) or 1 hour (steel)
- [ ] □ Two timers ready: «lid off» and «out»
- [ ] □ First loaf of each round checked: 205–210 °F (96–99 °C)
- [ ] □ Every round on the rack with a sticky note and time
- [ ] □ Loaves cooled at least 2 hours before bagging
- [ ] □ Bags named and labeled, sorted alphabetically
- [ ] □ Porch table in the shade, crate, cover, sign, extras basket
- [ ] □ «Bread's on the porch!» text sent
- [ ] □ Cleaning reset done in 20 minutes
- [ ] □ Dolly fed and back to her normal routine
- [ ] □ Money in noted on the Monthly Profit Tracker

Bake day done. Put your feet up, have a slice with butter. You earned it.