

THE SOURDOUGH FORMULA

Recipe 9 · Sourdough Baguettes

Two crackly baguettes, sold as a pair. They never make it home without the tip torn off.

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Why people buy it: a real crackly baguette is the thing people miss most from Paris trips, and they want two for the dinner party tonight.

- **Tier & price:** Everyday · Plain · **$9 for a pair**
- **Makes:** 2 baguettes, about 380 g of dough each, 14–15 in (36–38 cm) long (fits a home oven)
- **Difficulty:** Tricky (the shaping takes 3 bakes to feel natural, and then it's easy)
- **Timeline:** Friday 8 am feed → 4 pm mix → shape around 9 pm → couche in the fridge → Saturday 7 am bake on a steel with steam

Ingredients

Ingredient	Grams	Cups (approx.)
Bread flour	400 g	3¼ cups
Water, 80 °F (27 °C)	280 g	1 cup + 3 tbsp
Active starter	80 g	⅓ cup + 1 tbsp
Fine sea salt	8 g	1½ tsp
Rice flour or semolina, for the couche	a spoonful	1 tbsp

What changes vs. the Master Loaf

- **All white bread flour**, 70 % hydration, a little less starter (20 %) for a mild flavor.
- **Divided in two** and shaped into long baguettes.
- **Proofed on a couche** (a floured linen cloth or a clean, flat-weave tea towel) instead of a banneton.
- **Open-baked** on a baking steel or stone with steam, not in a Dutch oven. The Dutch oven is too small for a baguette.

Steps

1. Do the morning feed, then follow **Master Loaf steps 1–4** with these amounts: mix and autolyse, add the starter and salt, 4 sets of folds, bulk to +50–75 %.
2. **Divide** the dough into 2 pieces of about 380 g each.

3. **Pre-shape** each piece into a loose log: pat into a rough rectangle, fold the top third down and the bottom third up. Rest seam down, covered, for 25 minutes.
4. **Shape.** Flip one log seam up and pat it gently into a rectangle about 6 × 8 in (15 × 20 cm), long side facing you.
5. Fold the top third down and press the edge with your fingertips. Turn the dough around and fold the other long side over in the same way.
6. Now fold the whole thing in half lengthwise, sealing the edges together firmly with the heel of your hand as you go. You have a tight cylinder.
7. **Roll it out.** Place both hands in the middle and roll back and forth, moving your hands outward as you roll, until it's 14 in (36 cm) long. Press a little harder at the very ends to make them pointy.
8. **Couche.** Lay a floured couche on a baking sheet. Place the baguette seam up, pleat the cloth up on both sides to support it, then shape and place the second.
9. **Cold proof** covered, 8–12 hours (Master Loaf step 7).
10. **Bake.** Preheat the oven to 500 °F (260 °C) for 45 minutes with a baking steel (or stone, or an upside-down sheet pan) on the middle rack and a metal pan on the bottom rack.
11. Roll each baguette onto a floured transfer board, then flip it seam down onto a sheet of parchment. Score.
12. Slide parchment and baguettes onto the steel. Carefully pour 1 cup of boiling water into the bottom pan and close the door. Lower to **475 °F (245 °C)**.
13. After **12 minutes**, remove the steam pan. Bake **12–14 minutes** more until deep golden and 205 °F (96 °C) inside.
14. Cool at least 45 minutes. Baguettes are thin, so they're ready sooner than a boule.

Shaping, scoring & baking specifics

- **Score:** 3 or 4 slashes, each about 4 in long, almost parallel to the length of the baguette, and each one overlapping the previous by about a third. Hold the blade nearly flat, at a 30° angle, and cut quickly and shallow (¼ in / 6 mm).
- **Steam** is what gives the crackly, shiny crust. If you have a lava-rock pan or a rolled wet towel in a pan, even better.
- **Bake-day hint:** baguettes bake in 25 minutes total, so they fit right into the gap between Dutch oven rounds.

Cost & Price

Ingredient	Amount	Cost
Bread flour	400 g	$0.49
Starter (with feed)	80 g	$0.20
Salt	8 g	$0.01
Rice flour or semolina (dusting)	1 tbsp	$0.05
Oven share	½ bake	$0.46
Total ingredients		**$1.21**
Packaging (1 long bag for the pair)	1 set	$0.35
Sell at		**$9.00**
You keep		**$7.44**

How to sell it

Dinner-party hosts, cheese-board people, anyone making soup or pasta tonight. They're best eaten the same day, so sell them on Saturday pickup only and say so.

Menu line to copy: *Sourdough Baguettes (pair). Crackly crust, chewy open crumb. Baked this morning, best enjoyed today. $9 for two*

> ***Sarah's tip: Your first baguettes will look like rolling pins. Keep going. By the third bake the shape clicks, and nobody at a dinner table has ever complained about a slightly chubby baguette.***

If it goes wrong

- **Pale, dull crust:** not enough steam. Pour the water right as the door closes and don't open it for 12 minutes.
- **Scores didn't open:** the cuts were too vertical or too deep. Hold the blade flatter and cut shallower.
- **Baguette bursts along the side:** the seam wasn't sealed. Press firmly with the heel of your hand during shaping.