

THE SOURDOUGH FORMULA

Recipe 11 · Sourdough Ciabatta

Big holes, thin crust, olive oil in every bite. This is the one that gets photographed.

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Why people buy it: those huge, glossy holes make the best panini, bruschetta and «dip it in olive oil» bread, and you can't buy it fresh in most neighborhoods.

- **Tier & price:** Everyday · **$10 for a pair**
- **Makes:** 2 ciabatta loaves, about 10 × 4 in (25 × 10 cm) each
- **Difficulty:** Tricky (wet dough, gentle hands)
- **Timeline:** Friday 8 am feed → 4 pm mix → coil folds → dough rests in its tub in the fridge overnight → Saturday 7 am divide, 45–60 min proof → bake around 8 am

Ingredients

Ingredient	Grams	Cups (approx.)
Bread flour	400 g	3¼ cups
Water, 80 °F (27 °C)	300 g + 20 g	1¼ cups + 4 tsp
Active starter	80 g	⅓ cup + 1 tbsp
Fine sea salt	9 g	1½ tsp
Olive oil, for the tub and hands	15 ml	1 tbsp
Flour or semolina, for dusting	a spoonful	1 tbsp

What changes vs. the Master Loaf

- **High hydration: 80 %.** The extra 20 g of water is added in the 1st set of folds («bassinage»), once the gluten has started.
- **Coil folds in an oiled, straight-sided tub** instead of stretches in a bowl.
- **Bulk until +75–100 %**, then the **whole tub** goes in the fridge. There's no pre-shape or final shape: you cut the dough Saturday morning and handle it as little as possible.
- **Open-baked on a steel or stone with steam**, no Dutch oven, no scoring.

Steps

1. **The morning feed:** feed Dolly at 8 am.
2. **Mix** 300 g water and the flour. Autolyse 30 minutes (Master Loaf step 1).

3. **Add the starter, then the salt** (Master Loaf step 2). Move the dough into a tub rubbed with olive oil.
4. **Coil folds: 4 sets**, 30 minutes apart (see Recipe 8, step 4). In the **1st set**, drizzle in the extra 20 g of water a little at a time, squeezing it in before you fold.
5. **Bulk** at 75 °F (24 °C) until the dough has grown 75–100 %, is full of bubbles and jiggles like jello, 4–5 hours from mixing.
6. **Cold bulk:** lid on, and the tub goes into the fridge overnight, 10–14 hours.
7. **Saturday morning:** generously flour the counter. Tip the tub upside down and let the dough slide out on its own.
8. **Divide.** Flour the top, then use a bench scraper to cut it into 2 rectangles. Don't knead and don't press out the bubbles.
9. **Flip each piece** onto a floured sheet of parchment (floured side down), gently tugging it into a 10 × 4 in rectangle. Dimple lightly with your fingertips if the top is uneven.
10. **Proof** uncovered 45–60 minutes while the oven heats, until puffy.
11. **Bake.** Oven at 500 °F (260 °C) with a steel on the middle rack and a steam pan below. Slide in the parchment, pour 1 cup of boiling water in the steam pan, lower to **475 °F (245 °C)**. Bake 10 minutes, remove the steam pan, bake 12–15 minutes more until golden and 205 °F (96 °C) inside.
12. **Cool** at least 1 hour before slicing or bagging.

Shaping, scoring & baking specifics

- **No scoring:** the floury top and natural cracks are the look.
- **Transfer tip:** keep each ciabatta on its own parchment strip so you can slide them onto the steel without stretching them.
- **Tub:** a 4-quart straight-sided container makes it easy to see the rise and tip out the dough cleanly.

Cost & Price

Ingredient	Amount	Cost
Bread flour	400 g	$0.49
Starter (with feed)	80 g	$0.20
Olive oil	15 ml	$0.15
Salt	9 g	$0.01
Flour or semolina (dusting)	1 tbsp	$0.05
Oven share	½ bake	$0.46
Total ingredients		**$1.36**
Packaging (1 bag for the pair)	1 set	$0.35
Sell at		**$10.00**
You keep		**$8.29**

How to sell it

Panini and sandwich lovers, Italian-dinner hosts, the neighbor with a fancy olive oil collection. Post a photo of the crumb: ciabatta sells itself on those holes.

Menu line to copy: *Sourdough Ciabatta (pair). Airy, open crumb and a thin crackly crust. Perfect for panini and olive oil. $10 for two*

> ***Sarah's tip: The wetter it feels, the better it bakes. Flour the counter, not the dough, and touch it as little as you can. Every time you handle it you're popping holes someone paid for.***

If it goes wrong

- **Flat as a slipper:** that's the name, and a little flatness is right. If it's very thin, it under-fermented; let bulk reach a full +75 %.
- **Small, even holes:** too much handling at divide time. Cut and flip, nothing more.
- **Sticks to everything:** oil your hands and scraper, and use plenty of flour on the counter.