

THE SOURDOUGH FORMULA

Welcome to Your Kitchen Bakery

A letter from my kitchen table

Hi, I'm Sarah.

I'm writing this from my kitchen in San Diego, with flour on my sleeve and a jar on the counter that has a name. Her name is Dolly. She's my sourdough starter, and she's the reason you and I are here together.

I didn't set out to sell bread. A few years ago I was making breakfast gift baskets from this same kitchen table: muffins, jam, a little card, all tucked into a basket with a bow. One week I had some extra dough, so I baked a small sourdough loaf and slipped it into each basket.

By Monday I had three messages that said almost the same thing: «Could I just get the bread?»

So I started baking once a week. Friday night I mixed the dough, Saturday morning I baked, and by lunch the loaves were waiting on my porch in brown paper bags. I priced my country loaf at $11 because that felt fair for something made by hand with three ingredients and a lot of love. It sold out. The next week it sold out again. I sold my first loaf in 2023, and I've baked almost every Saturday since.

Here's the part that still makes me smile: one loaf costs me about $1.40 to make. Flour, water, salt and a little food for Dolly. That's it. The rest is time, and most of that time the dough is doing the work while I sleep.

Today I keep a «Friday list» of regulars who pay ahead for their weekly loaf. Some of them have been on that list since the very first month. Twelve loaves on a Saturday is $132. Do that every week and it's about $500 a month from one home oven, one morning a week.

I wrote this course so you can do the same thing, step by step, even if you have never baked a loaf of bread in your life. I mean that. You don't need a culinary degree, a fancy kitchen, or a special mixer. You need a jar, a scale, a pot with a lid, and about five minutes a day for the next two weeks.

Let's bake.

With flour on my hands,

Sarah



My Saturday counter: Dolly in her jar, the first loaves cooling, and a stack of brown bags ready for the porch.

How this course works

Everything in this course is built around one simple idea: **learn one great loaf, then turn it into a small weekly business.** You don't need to learn fifty techniques. You need one reliable method that you can repeat until it feels like brushing your teeth.

Go through the modules in order

Each module builds on the one before it.

1. **Module 1 · Your Starter, From Scratch.** You grow your own starter, the Dolly method, in 14 days. Five minutes a day.
2. **Module 2 · The Master Loaf.** One formula, every step, with photos, a temperature table and a full troubleshooting tree. Every recipe in the course is a variation of this loaf.
3. **The recipes.** 32 breads, from the Classic Country Boule (my bestseller) to Jalapeño Cheddar and Chocolate Cherry. Every single one shows what it costs to make and what to sell it for.
4. **Pricing, bake day, selling legally and your launch.** The $9 / $11 / $14 price ladder, how to bake 12 to 20 loaves in one home oven on a Saturday, how to sell from home the

right way where you live (US states, Canada, the UK and Australia), your labels and price sign, your launch post, and the scripts that turn a one-time buyer into a standing weekly order paid on the 1st.

You can read ahead, of course. Most of my students read the recipes while their starter is growing, because it's fun to pick your first specialty loaf. Just bake in order: starter first, then the Master Loaf, then the variations.

Your members area

Everything lives in your members area too: every module as a PDF, the print-and-fill sheets, and your video classes (in your members area, marked «coming soon» until they go live). Log in from your phone in the kitchen whenever you want to check a step. Bookmark it now so it's one tap away on bake day.

Print the sheets

I'm a paper person in the kitchen. Screens get floury. I strongly suggest you print:

- The **Starter log** at the end of Module 1. Fill it in every day for 14 days.
- The **Master Loaf schedule** from Module 2. Tape it inside a cabinet door.
- The **Consistency checklist** at the end of Module 2.
- The **Cost & Price sheets** and the order sheets from the business modules.

Writing things down is the single biggest difference between people who bake one good loaf by luck and people who bake good loaves every week on purpose.

Your path: 14 days, Day 15, and your first Saturday

Here is the whole journey at a glance.

When	What you do	Time per day
Days 1–14	Grow your starter with the Dolly method (Module 1). Read Module 2 and the recipes while you wait.	About 5 minutes
Day 15	Bake your first Master Loaf, just for your family. Take notes.	15 minutes of hands-on time, spread across the day
The following days	Bake one or two more practice loaves. Taste, slice, give one to a neighbor.	Same as Day 15
Your first Saturday	Bake a small batch (4 to 6 loaves) for your first buyers from your 15-name list.	One morning
Every Saturday after	Grow to 12 loaves, then up to 20 if you want to.	One morning

> ***Sarah's tip:*** *Don't wait until your loaf is «perfect» to share it. My first porch loaves had little flaws only I could see. People were thrilled. A homemade sourdough loaf from a neighbor is special just as it is.*

What you need

You probably have half of this already. Everything else costs under $100 total, and it lasts for years.



Everything I use, laid out on my counter. Nothing fancy, and every piece pays for itself in one Saturday.

The gear (under $100)

Item	Why you need it	Approximate price (US)
Glass jar, 1 quart (1 liter), wide mouth	Dolly's home. Glass lets you see the bubbles and the rise.	$5
Digital kitchen scale (grams, 1 g steps)	Bread is baked by weight. This is the most important tool you'll buy.	$15
Cast iron Dutch oven, 5 to 6 quart, with lid (or a combo cooker)	Traps steam so your loaf rises tall and gets a crackly crust.	$40–50
Banneton, 9 inch round with cloth liner	Holds the loaf's shape overnight in the fridge.	$12
Lame or a double-edged razor blade	For scoring the top of the loaf right before baking.	$7
Bench scraper (metal or plastic)	Moves and shapes sticky dough without tearing it.	$5
Instant-read thermometer	Tells you the loaf is done inside (205–210 °F / 96–99 °C), and lets you check water and dough temperature.	$10
Total		**about $99**

No banneton yet? A medium mixing bowl lined with a clean, smooth cotton or linen kitchen towel works beautifully. Dust the towel generously with rice flour (or regular flour) so the dough doesn't stick. Many of my first loaves were proofed this way.

No lame? A plain double-edged razor blade does the same job. Hold it carefully by the edges, or clip it onto a coffee stirrer. A very sharp serrated knife also works in a pinch.

Selling in Canada, the UK or Australia? The same kit runs about CA$130, £80 or A$150. Cast iron Dutch ovens are often on sale in big supermarkets and department stores, and a plain enameled pot with a lid that's oven-safe to 500 °F (260 °C) is just as good.

Nice to have (not needed today)

- A second Dutch oven, once you bake for sale. Two pots in one oven doubles your Saturday output.

- A baking steel or stone (great for baguettes, ciabatta and pizza).
- Parchment paper, or reusable parchment «slings», to lower the loaf into the hot pot safely.
- A 2 quart (2 liter) clear container with straight sides for bulk fermentation. It makes reading the rise so much easier. A large glass bowl works too.
- Rice flour for dusting your banneton. It doesn't absorb water the way wheat flour does, so nothing sticks.
- Oven mitts that cover your forearms. A 500 °F pot deserves respect.

The flours



My three everyday flours in big glass jars: bread flour, whole wheat, and a little rye for special loaves.

You'll start with just two flours.

- **Bread flour** (unbleached, around 12–13 % protein). This is the backbone of almost every loaf in the course. King Arthur Bread Flour runs about $6.50 for a 5 lb bag ($0.55/lb at the store, about $0.44/lb in a 25 lb Costco bag). In the UK look for «strong white bread flour», in Canada «all-purpose» Canadian flour is already strong enough, and in Australia look for «baker's flour» or «bread flour».
- **Whole wheat flour** (about $0.70/lb). Your starter loves it at the beginning: the bran and germ bring extra natural yeasts and nutrients. In the UK it's «wholemeal».

- **Rye flour** (optional, about $1.10/lb). A spoonful perks up a sluggish starter, and you'll use it in the Rustic Light Rye.

Water: tap water is fine in most homes. If yours smells strongly of chlorine, leave a pitcher on the counter overnight, or use filtered water.

Salt: fine sea salt or any non-iodized fine salt. You'll weigh it, so the brand doesn't matter.

> ***Sarah's tip:*** *Buy your bread flour in the biggest bag you can store. Once you bake every Saturday, a 25 lb bag lasts about a month and brings the flour cost of each loaf down to around 25 cents.*

Kitchen vocabulary

Bakers use a handful of special words. Here they are in plain English, in the order you'll meet them.

Starter. A living mix of flour and water that's full of wild yeast and friendly bacteria. It's what makes sourdough rise, and it's what gives it that gentle tang. You make it once and keep it for years. Mine is Dolly.

Feeding. Giving your starter fresh flour and water so the yeast and bacteria have food. In this course we feed 1:1:1 by weight: equal parts starter, flour and water.

Peak. The moment after a feeding when your starter has risen as high as it will go, usually 4 to 8 hours later. It's domed, bubbly and smells sweet and tangy. This is when it's strongest and ready to bake with.

Levain. A portion of starter that you feed specifically for one bake. Some bakers build a separate levain. In this course we keep it simple: on bake day you feed Dolly in the morning and use some of her at peak. Same thing, one less jar.

Discard. The extra starter you remove before feeding so the jar doesn't overflow. It's perfectly good food. It becomes Recipe 32, Sourdough Discard Crackers.

Autolyse (say «AW-toe-lees»). Mixing just the flour and water and letting them rest for 30 minutes before adding anything else. The flour soaks up the water and gluten starts forming on its own, so the dough becomes smoother with zero effort.

Bulk fermentation (or «bulk»). The first long rise, when the whole batch of dough sits in one container. This is where the flavor and strength develop. It's the most important stage to read well, and Module 2 teaches you exactly how.

Stretch and fold. A gentle way to strengthen dough without kneading. With a wet hand, you grab one side of the dough, stretch it up, and fold it over the top. Turn the bowl and repeat on all four sides. That's one «set».

Coil fold. A softer cousin of the stretch and fold. You lift the dough from the middle with both hands, let it stretch and fold under itself like a coil. Great for wetter doughs.

Pre-shape. Gently rounding the dough into a loose ball after bulk, to organize it before the final shape.

Bench rest. A 20 minute rest after the pre-shape, so the gluten relaxes and the dough is easy to shape.

Final shape. Folding and rolling the dough into its final form, building a tight «skin» on the outside. A **boule** is round. A **batard** is an oval, torpedo-shaped loaf.

Banneton. A basket (usually rattan) that holds the shaped dough while it proofs, so it keeps its shape and gets those pretty spiral lines.

Cold proof (or «retard»). The final rise, done in the fridge overnight, 10 to 16 hours. It slows everything down, deepens the flavor, and makes the dough firm and easy to score. It's also what lets you bake fresh bread first thing Saturday morning.

Score. The cut you make on top of the loaf right before it goes in the oven. It controls where the loaf opens up as it rises. It's also your signature.

Ear. The crunchy, raised lip of crust that forms along a well-made score. Bakers get a little obsessed with ears. You will too.

Oven spring. The big, fast rise the loaf takes in the first 15 to 20 minutes of baking, as the heat turns water to steam and the yeast makes one last push.

Crumb. The inside of the bread: the holes, the texture, the color. An «open crumb» has big, irregular holes. A «tight crumb» has small, even holes (perfect for sandwiches).

Hydration. How much water the dough has compared to the flour, written as a percentage. 350 g water ÷ 500 g flour = 70 % hydration. Higher hydration means a wetter, stickier dough and usually a more open crumb.

Baker's percentages. A way of writing a recipe where the flour is always 100 % and everything else is a percentage of the flour weight. It sounds technical but it's actually the easiest system there is. Here's why it's so useful:

Ingredient	Baker's %	For 1 loaf (500 g flour)	For 4 loaves (2,000 g flour)
Flour	100 %	500 g	2,000 g
Water	70 %	350 g	1,400 g
Starter	20 %	100 g	400 g
Salt	2 %	10 g	40 g

To scale any recipe, decide how much flour you want and multiply. Want four loaves? 2,000 g flour × 70 % = 1,400 g water. That's it. You'll use this every single Saturday.

Bench scraper. A flat rectangle of metal or plastic. Your third hand when shaping.

Dutch oven. A heavy pot with a tight lid. It traps the steam coming off the dough, which keeps the crust soft long enough for the loaf to rise fully before it turns golden and crisp.

Internal temperature. The temperature in the very center of the loaf. When it reads 205–210 °F (96–99 °C), your bread is fully baked.

Now go set up Dolly's jar. Module 1 starts today.