

The Shell Sourdough Recipe

Makes 2 large loaves

The equipment. See our [fancy](#) and [budget](#) shopping lists on Amazon.
to mix the dough

- 1 large, non-reactive, container (glass or plastic) with a lid or cover
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (360 g) sourdough starter
- 6 cups (720 g) unbleached, all-purpose flour
- 3 cups (720 g) water*
- 1 heaping tablespoon (17 g) salt
- 1 dough scraper

to rise

- 2 banneton brotforms 9" in diameter (*budget version: mixing bowls*)
- 2 linen towels to line the bowls (can also use paper towels)
- rice flour for dusting

to bake

- 1 bread lame (*budget version: sharp serrated knife*)
- 2 Dutch ovens (*budget version: 2 baking sheets*)
- 6 clay tiles (*budget version: 1 loaf pan filled with water*)
- cooling racks

**If possible, use water that has been de-chlorinated. You can let your water sit out overnight, or purchase spring water from the store.*

To make levain (8 hours)

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (360 g) sourdough starter
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (79 g) water*
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (60 g) unbleached all-purpose flour

The levain is completed when it has at least doubled in size and is very bubbly. Sometimes it floats in a bowl of water. Depending on the temperature in your room, it could take anywhere from 8 to 12 hours to build up the yeast population for your bread.

To make dough (4 hours)

To the levain, add:

- 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (660 g) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (592.5 g) water*

Stir in until your dough is "hairy" – which means you can start to get strings of gluten forming. Now you'll also want to soak your salt, but do not add it yet.

After 4 hours, add your salt.

1 tablespoon (17 g) salt, slightly heaping
2 tablespoon (30g) water*

After the dough has doubled, add your salt. Pinch it in there with your fingers. Squish the bubbles (they'll come back).

Start the stretch and folds. (1 hour)

This isn't kneading – you want to keep the air in the dough – but the act of stretching and folding, itself, traps in some air while also giving the bread more structure.

“Stretch and fold”: starting with the “north side” of the dough (furthest from you), stretch it up until about one-third to one-half of the dough is out of the bowl and fold it back over to the “south side” (toward you). Rotate the dish counter-clockwise 90 degrees, so that the “east side” is now “north”. Stretch the dough up and fold it over. Repeat (rotate, stretch, and fold) until you've done all 4 “sides”. Cover, set your timer for 20 minutes, and repeat until you've stretch and folded 3 times, or for 1 hour.

Shape your loaves. (5 minutes)

Dust your countertop with rice flour. Line your 9” bowls with the cotton or paper towels, and dust the towels with rice flour, too. Rice flour will not burn in the Dutch ovens like wheat flour, and will not easily incorporate into the dough; plus, it leaves a nice pattern on the loaves. Many bakers mist their towels with water and then coat them with rice flour and allow them to dry. This works well, and keeps the dough from sticking to the towels.

Turn out your dough onto the floured counter and then cut it in half. Shape one loaf at a time by pulling up the sides of the dough, folding them in, until you start to get a ball. (This is like a gentle, miniature stretch-and-fold session, as though you are folding an envelope.) Do not smash the loaf; you do not want to end up with a hard ball. Flip over the loaf on your work surface so that the seams are now on the bottom. Work your dough scraper around the loaf in a counter-clockwise manner, like you're turning a steering wheel. Then peel the loaf off of your counter and flip into your banneton, top side down (seam side up).

Cold proof. (8+ hours)

Cover and refrigerate overnight for at least 8 hours.

Prepare to bake. (~30 minutes, depending on oven)

Place Dutch ovens (or baking sheets) in the oven as close to centered as possible. On a lower rack directly below the pots, place your clay tiles (or loaf pan full of water). This will keep the bottom of your bread from burning. (The pan of water will fill the oven with steam to help your loaves rise.)

Pre-heat your oven to 500 degrees F with Dutch ovens (or baking sheets) and clay tiles (or steam-pan) in place. Allow oven to continue heating for at least 20 minutes after the “pre-heat” alarm goes off.

Remove Dutch ovens (or baking sheets) from oven. Remove bread from their cold proof. Carefully dump a loaf, seam side down into each baking vessel. Try not to let it “plop” into the oven (or onto the sheet), as this will pop the hard-earned bubbles.

Hold your lame (or knife) at a 45-degree angle and score the loaf ¼” (6mm) deep. A simple “(” across the top of the loaf will do.

Bake.

500F, 15 minutes

450F, 15 minutes

450F remove steam pan, 25 minutes

Remove bread from oven, remove loaves from sheets using wooden spatulas, cool completely on wire rack before slicing.

Enjoy!