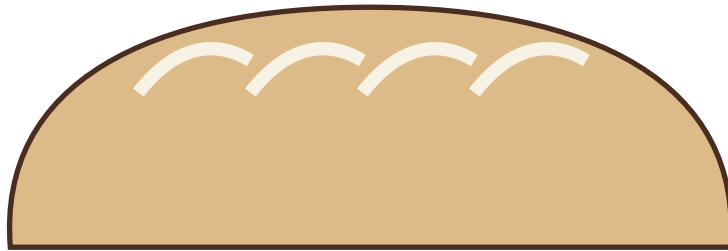


CHEF DAWN CREATES

The Two-Day Sourdough Session Guide

Make the loaf. Understand the process. Trust your hands.



FLOUR • WATER • SALT • STARTER

**THIS IS MORE
THAN A RECIPE**

This guide explains what to do, what to notice and why every step matters - from waking your starter on Day 1 to hearing the crust crackle after the bake on Day 2.

Your goal

Leave with a finished artisan loaf, a living starter and the ability to repeat the process in your own kitchen. The clock provides structure; the dough provides the answer.



Your class home base

Session details, recommended tools and booking information:

sourdough.chefdawncreates.com

Text Chef Dawn: 917-392-5500

The Complete Bread Map

Four ingredients become bread through time, temperature, fermentation and technique. Here is the entire journey before we slow it down.

ACTIVE STARTER	MAIN DOUGH
25 g mature starter 50 g water 50 g bread flour	450 g bread flour 300 g water 100 g active starter 10 g fine salt

The flow

1. FEED Wake the culture	2. MIX Hydrate and combine
3. FOLD Build strength	4. BULK Create gas and flavor
5. SHAPE Organize the dough	6. CHILL Develop and schedule
7. SCORE Direct expansion	8. BAKE Set structure and crust

Essential equipment

Digital scale • mixing bowl • spoon or dough whisk • dough scraper • clear bowl cover • banneton or towel-lined bowl • rice flour • parchment or bread sling • bread lame or razor • Dutch oven • heavy dry oven mitts • cooling rack

WHY IT MATTERS

Sourdough is a biological process, not a fixed timer. Flour strength, starter activity, dough temperature, room temperature and handling all change the pace. Recording those variables turns each loaf into useful information instead of a mystery.

Your session rhythm

DAY 1

Feed starter • mix dough • rest • folds • bulk ferment • preshape • final shape • refrigerate

DAY 2

Preheat • turn out • score • bake covered • bake uncovered • cool • evaluate

Day 1: Wake, Weigh & Mix

1

WAKE THE STARTER

Mix 25 g mature starter with 50 g water and 50 g bread flour. Mark the level and leave it at room temperature until it has roughly doubled, looks aerated and smells pleasantly fermented.

WHY IT MATTERS

The fresh flour and water replenish food and dilute accumulated acids. Yeasts generate carbon dioxide; lactic-acid bacteria acidify the mixture and create flavor compounds. A vigorous rise tells us the culture can leaven dough.

LOOK FOR

Bubbles throughout, a rounded or just-flattening top, clear expansion and a clean tangy aroma. A float test can mislead; visible activity is more useful.

2

WEIGH EVERYTHING

Place the bowl on a digital scale and tare it between additions. Use grams, not cups.

WHY IT MATTERS

Flour packs differently into cups, so volume measurements can shift hydration dramatically. Weight makes the formula repeatable and gives you information you can actually use on the next loaf.

LOOK FOR

A complete mise en place: flour, water, active starter and salt measured before mixing.

3

MIX THE DOUGH

Dissolve 100 g active starter in 300 g water. Add 450 g flour and 10 g salt. Mix until no dry flour remains, then cover and rest 30 minutes.

WHY IT MATTERS

Water hydrates flour proteins and starch. Mixing distributes starter and salt; the rest lets flour absorb water and allows gluten development to begin with very little effort. Salt adds flavor, strengthens the dough and moderates fermentation.

LOOK FOR

A rough, sticky, shaggy mass with no pockets of dry flour. It is not supposed to look smooth yet.

Day 1: Build Strength & Ferment

4

STRETCH AND FOLD

Complete 3 sets, about 30 minutes apart. With damp hands, lift one side until you feel resistance, fold it over the center, rotate the bowl and repeat around all four sides.

WHY IT MATTERS

Folding aligns and strengthens the gluten network without aggressive kneading. That network must become elastic enough to trap the carbon dioxide produced during fermentation.

LOOK FOR

Each round should feel smoother, stronger and less slack. Stretch gently; tearing damages the developing network.

5

BULK FERMENTATION

Cover and leave the dough at room temperature until fermentation is clearly established. Around 70°F, this formula may need roughly 5-8 hours, but use the dough rather than the clock.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is when the culture produces gas, acids and flavor while the dough gains volume and internal structure. Too little bulk creates dense bread; too much can weaken gluten until the dough spreads and cannot hold gas.

LOOK FOR

Meaningful expansion, bubbles at the sides and surface, a smoother slightly domed top, a lighter feel and a gentle jiggle. Do not demand an exact doubling in every kitchen.

Temperature changes the timeline

COOLER DOUGH

Fermentation moves more slowly. Expect more time and check for visual cues before shaping.

WARMER DOUGH

Fermentation moves faster. Begin checking earlier so the dough does not over-ferment.

Chef Dawn's rule: time is evidence, not a command. Write down the room temperature, approximate dough temperature, start time and the cues you saw.

Day 1: Shape & Cold-Proof

6

PRESHAPE

Turn the dough onto an unfloured surface. Use the bench scraper and cupped hands to pull it into a tidy round. Rest uncovered for about 30 minutes.

WHY IT MATTERS

Preshaping gathers a loose fermented dough into an organized form and starts creating surface tension. The bench rest lets the gluten relax so final shaping is possible without tearing.

LOOK FOR

After resting, the dough should look relaxed but not collapse into a puddle.

7

FINAL SHAPE

Dust the banneton well with rice flour. Shape the dough firmly but gently into a round or oval, then place it seam-side up in the basket.

WHY IT MATTERS

Final shaping creates an outer skin of tension and arranges the interior so the loaf rises upward rather than spreading outward. Rice flour contains no gluten, so it absorbs less into the wet dough and resists sticking better than wheat flour.

LOOK FOR

A smooth taut outer surface with no tearing. Preserve internal gas; do not mash the dough flat.

8

FINAL PROOF AND REFRIGERATION

Cover. Give the dough about 1 hour at room temperature, then refrigerate for 8-24 hours.

WHY IT MATTERS

The final proof allows continued gas production after shaping. Refrigeration slows the culture, deepens flavor, firms the dough for cleaner scoring and gives you control over bake time. Cold does not stop fermentation instantly.

LOOK FOR

A slightly puffier loaf that still has strength. If it is already very fragile before refrigeration, it may be too far fermented.

OVERNIGHT HANDOFF

Keep the banneton covered so the surface does not dry out. Day 2 begins with a fully preheated oven and cold dough taken straight from the refrigerator.

Day 2: Score, Bake & Cool

9

PREHEAT THOROUGHLY

Place the Dutch oven on the middle rack and preheat to 450°F for at least 30 minutes. Place a sheet pan on a lower rack if bottoms tend to darken.

WHY IT MATTERS

A fully heated vessel delivers immediate energy to the dough. That rapid heat expands trapped gases before the crust sets - the dramatic lift called oven spring.

LOOK FOR

The oven and Dutch oven are fully saturated with heat, not merely showing the target temperature.

10

TURN OUT AND SCORE

Invert the cold dough onto parchment. Hold the lame about 45° to the surface and make one confident slash roughly 1/4-1/2 inch deep.

WHY IT MATTERS

The loaf needs a controlled weak point. Without it, expanding gas can rupture the crust randomly. An angled cut creates a flap that can lift into an ear; a vertical cut tends to open more symmetrically.

LOOK FOR

One clean continuous cut. Avoid repeated sawing, pressing or decorative cuts so deep that they weaken the loaf.

11

BAKE COVERED, THEN UNCOVERED

Lower the dough safely into the hot Dutch oven. Cover and bake 20 minutes. Remove the lid and bake another 15-25 minutes until deeply golden to brown.

WHY IT MATTERS

The covered pot traps moisture released by the dough, delaying crust formation so the loaf can expand. Uncovering releases steam and allows browning, crisping and flavor-building reactions at the surface.

LOOK FOR

Strong rise, an opened score and the crust color you prefer. Rotate only if your oven browns unevenly.

Day 2: Finish Strong

1
2

COOL COMPLETELY

Transfer to a rack and wait at least 1 hour before slicing.

WHY IT MATTERS

The crumb is still setting after the loaf leaves the oven. Steam redistributes and starches stabilize. Cutting early releases moisture and compresses the interior, producing a gummy texture.

LOOK FOR

The loaf feels much cooler, the crust sounds crisp and the crumb slices cleanly.

Read the finished loaf

OVEN SPRING

Did the loaf rise upward and open at the score? Strong spring reflects useful gas retention, sound fermentation and enough early heat.

CRUST

A deeply colored crust carries more toasted flavor. Pale bread often needs more uncovered baking.

CRUMB

Look for a fully set, resilient interior. An open crumb is not the only mark of quality; even fermentation and a pleasant texture matter more.

FLAVOR

Taste for wheat, acidity and balance. More sour is not automatically better.

BOTTOM

If it is too dark or tough, shield the Dutch oven on the next bake with a pan on the rack below.

YOUR NOTES

Record what you saw and felt before deciding what to change next time.

Store it well

Once completely cool, store cut-side down for short-term use or in a bread bag/container suited to your preferred crust. For longer storage, slice and freeze. Refrigeration tends to accelerate staling, although toasting can refresh frozen slices beautifully.

What Fermentation Changes

Sourdough does not make wheat magically consequence-free. It does change the dough before it reaches your digestive system, and the degree of change depends on flour, microbes, fermentation time, temperature and recipe.

1. IN THE DOUGH Yeasts and lactic-acid bacteria consume available carbohydrates. They produce carbon dioxide, organic acids and many flavor compounds. Enzymes also begin modifying proteins and carbohydrates.	2. DURING BAKING Heat expands gas, gelatinizes starch, sets proteins and creates the crust. Most starter microorganisms are no longer alive after baking, so ordinary sourdough bread should not be marketed as a live probiotic food.
3. IN THE MOUTH Chewing breaks the bread into smaller particles. Salivary amylase starts breaking starch into smaller carbohydrates.	4. IN THE STOMACH Acid and enzymes continue digestion. The structure and acidity of the bread may influence how quickly the meal leaves the stomach, but responses vary.
5. IN THE SMALL INTESTINE Digestive enzymes reduce starches to absorbable sugars and proteins to peptides and amino acids. Glucose enters the bloodstream; insulin helps the body use or store it.	6. IN THE COLON Carbohydrates and fibers not absorbed earlier reach gut microbes. Fermentation there can produce gases and short-chain fatty acids. The amount and individual response vary widely.

What people mean by “easier to digest”

That phrase is too vague to promise. Some sourdough processes reduce fructans, a major wheat FODMAP, and small human studies have reported differences in gas production, gastric emptying or symptoms. But one pilot trial in people with IBS found that a specially made low-FODMAP sourdough wheat bread was not better tolerated than the comparison bread. The honest conclusion: some people may notice a difference; others will not.

WHY IT MATTERS

Fermentation method matters. A long-fermented loaf is not automatically low-FODMAP, low-glycemic or highly digestible. Specific cultures, flour, formulation, time and temperature determine the result.

Not a probiotic claim

The starter contains living organisms, but baking is a lethal heat step for most of them. Researchers are studying non-living microbial components and fermentation products sometimes called postbiotic-like compounds, but clinical evidence is not strong enough to promise a gut-health benefit from an ordinary home loaf.

Nutrition: The Straight Story

ENERGY & CARBOHYDRATE Sourdough is still bread and remains a concentrated source of starch and calories. Fermentation does not erase carbohydrate.	PROTEIN Wheat flour supplies protein. Fermentation can partially break proteins into smaller peptides and amino acids, but the loaf remains a wheat product containing gluten.
FIBER Fiber depends mainly on the flour. Whole-grain flour provides substantially more fiber and micronutrients than refined white flour; fermentation cannot replace what milling removed.	MINERALS Fermentation can reduce phytic acid under the right conditions. Because phytate binds minerals, reducing it may improve potential mineral availability, especially in whole-grain bread. That is a possibility, not a guarantee for every loaf.
BLOOD GLUCOSE Acids, fermentation and bread structure may moderate post-meal glucose in some recipes or people. A systematic review found a smaller glucose rise in some comparisons, especially for whole-wheat sourdough, but evidence certainty was low to very low.	SATIETY Protein, fiber, water, acidity and meal composition all influence fullness. Research does not support calling every sourdough loaf uniquely filling.

Approximate nutrition for this class loaf

Calculated from approximately 500 g total flour in the dough and divided into 12 equal servings. Your flour brand, starter hydration, baked weight and slice size will change the numbers.

PER 1/12 LOAF	APPROXIMATE AMOUNT
Calories	150
Carbohydrate	30 g
Protein	5 g
Fiber	about 1 g with refined flour
Fat	less than 1 g
Sodium	about 325 mg

Build a more balanced plate

Use a sensible portion and pair bread with protein, vegetables, healthy fat or a fiber-rich food. Toasting or calling bread “artisan” does not cancel its carbohydrate. If you monitor blood glucose, your own measured response matters more than a general claim.

Who Needs Extra Caution

WHEAT SOURDOUGH IS NOT GLUTEN-FREE

Standard sourdough made with wheat flour is not safe for celiac disease and is not appropriate for a wheat allergy. Fermentation may break down some proteins, but a home sourdough process does not reliably reduce gluten to a medically safe level. Anyone with a diagnosed condition should follow their clinician's guidance and use properly labeled foods.

Troubleshooting by symptom

Starter barely rises It may be cold, underfed or not yet mature. Give it time, use a warmer location and feed consistently before mixing dough.	Dough is very sticky Use damp hands and a scraper. Stickiness alone does not mean “add lots of flour.” Watch whether folds build strength.
Dough barely expands The starter may be weak, dough may be cool or bulk may need more time.	Dough becomes loose and fragile It may be over-fermented or the flour may not support the hydration. Shape promptly and shorten the next bulk.
Loaf spreads flat Look at starter strength, bulk duration, shaping tension and final proof. Any one can be the limiting factor.	Dense crumb Often under-fermentation, weak starter or insufficient dough strength; an overly tight shape can also remove gas.
Gummy crumb Cool fully. If it persists, bake longer and review fermentation.	Burned bottom Shield with a sheet pan below the pot, move the rack or reduce heat after the covered portion.

Food and equipment safety

A preheated Dutch oven is dangerously hot. Clear the work area, use substantial dry mitts, keep handles oriented safely and lower the loaf with parchment or a sling. Do not add water or ice to hot enameled cookware unless the manufacturer explicitly permits it. Cool bread on a clean rack and store only after it is fully cool.

Your Next-Loaf Plan

Confidence comes from repeating the process and changing one variable at a time.

1. NOTE Record flour, starter feed, room temperature, mix time, bulk end, cold-proof length and bake time.	2. EVALUATE After cooling, assess height, score opening, crust, crumb and flavor.
3. CHOOSE ONE CHANGE If needed, change one variable: starter strength, bulk time, hydration, shaping or bake.	4. REPEAT Bake again before you forget what the dough felt like.

Starter care after class

Keep a small amount of starter rather than a huge jar. For occasional baking, refrigerate it and refresh it before use. For frequent baking, maintain it at room temperature with regular feedings. Use clean utensils, allow room for expansion and discard the culture if you see fuzzy mold or unusual pink/orange discoloration.

Chef Dawn's three rules

1	Use a scale. Accuracy makes learning possible.
2	Watch the dough, not just the clock.
3	Take notes. Your next loaf should teach you something from this one.

Evidence behind the nutrition section

1. Rolim PM et al. [Sourdough and post-meal glycemia: systematic review and meta-analysis](#). Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr. Evidence certainty ranged from low to very low.
2. Korem T et al. [Bread affects people differently: randomized crossover trial](#). Cell Metab. 2017.
3. Laatikainen R et al. [Low-FODMAP sourdough wheat bread in IBS: pilot study](#). Nutrients. 2017.
4. Polese B et al. [Postprandial gastrointestinal function after sourdough baked goods](#). J Nutr. 2018.
5. Longin CFH et al. [Breadmaking method, phytic acid and minerals](#). Foods. 2023.
6. Pérez-Alvarado O et al. [Sourdough microbes, baking and postbiotic-like components](#). Front Microbiol. 2022.
7. Di Cagno R et al. [Specialized fully hydrolyzed wheat product in celiac disease: small pilot](#). The authors state such foods should not be recommended without formal trials.



Keep learning with Chef Dawn
Private culinary experiences in Carlsbad and North County San Diego
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Educational information only; not medical or nutrition advice. People with celiac disease, wheat allergy, diabetes, IBS or another diagnosed condition should follow individualized guidance from a qualified clinician.