



SOURDOUGH INTRODUCTION WORKSHOP

Workshop Notes

SUMMARY

This workshop booklet is designed to support you on your sourdough journey; blending great ingredients, a little magic with the science behind sourdough. Inside you'll find simple explanations, practical tips, and handy tricks to help make sourdough feel achievable, flexible, and enjoyable. Use it as a guide, a reference, and a reminder that great bread comes from curiosity, practice, and ease, not perfection. Happy Baking

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Queensland Cheese Artisan 2026

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Sourdough starter overview

[How to create a starter](#)

CHECKLIST : CREATE NEW STARTER



WHAT YOU NEED

- **Glass Jar** - cleaned, approx ½ litre
- **Kitchen Scales**
- **Paper Towel**
- **Rubberbands** (x2)
- **Filtered water** - can use boiled water (that's cooled)
- **Bakers flour** - any good quality bakers flour; rye, white bakers, spelt

CHECK LIST

DAY 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mix : 50g Flour / 50g Water• Stir well, clean any flour paste mix• Cover jar with paper towel and rubberband. Leave on counter	
DAY 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discard half the mix (50g)• Add 50g flour + 50g water• Stir well, cover and leave on counter	
DAY 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discard two thirds the mix (100g)• Add 50g flour + 50g water• Stir well, cover and leave on counter	
DAY 4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• REPEAT DAY 3• Bubbles should increase.• May begin to rise and fall	
DAY 6-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• READY? May begin to rise and fall• Lots of bubbles, READY TO BAKE• Move to Big Boy Jar	

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[Creating a sourdough starter table](#)

→ CREATING A NEW SOURDOUGH STARTER

Creating a sourdough starter is simple but requires patience! Use good-quality flour (unbleached, organic is best) and filtered water to avoid chlorine. Always stir mix well, and let it sit at room temperature & use paper towel as lid. Feed it daily, and in about 5-7 days, you'll have a bubbly, active starter that doubles in size, its ready for baking!



DAY		FLOUR	WATER	SOURDOUGH STARTER	SOURDOUGH JAR	DISCHARGE/ RUBBISH
DAY 1		50g	50g		100g	
DAY 2		50g	50g	50g	150g	50g
DAY 3		50g	50g	50g	150g	100g
DAY 4		50g	50g	50g	150g	100g
DAY 5 +		50g	50g	50g	150g	100g

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[Your take home starter / Sourdough in Container](#)

This sourdough starter has been feed and can rest in the fridge, whilst you dream of your next bake. Remember starters in the fridge require feeding approx. 7-10 days.

[Feeding your sourdough starter](#)

Feed your starter regularly to be kept it active and to maintain its 'strength'. If is not fed regularly with flour and water, the wild yeast 'community' eventually die.

To feed your sourdough starter, firstly use a clean jar and utensils, remove all but approx. 50g of the sourdough starter from the jar. Add equal parts flour (50g) and filtered/boiled/spring water (50g) and stir well until all ingredients are combined. Seal the jar and store either:

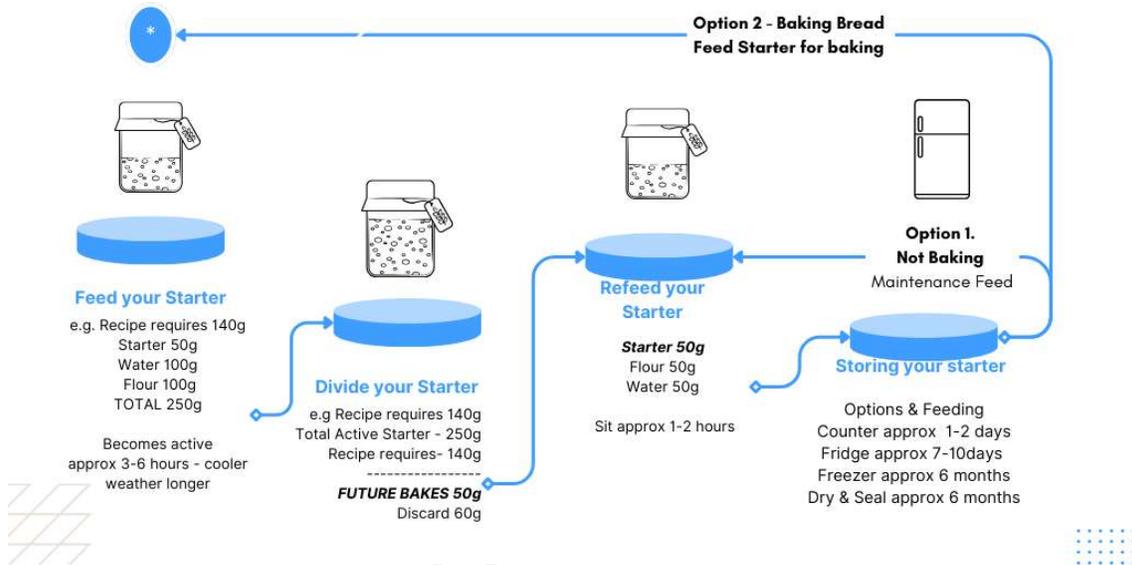
- **Room temperature** (if you are going to bake)
- or **in the fridge** (if you are not going to bake).

Note : Your sourdough starter jar needs to be clean. However, reduce the use of disinfectants and other chemicals, as these products will kill your starter. I use my dishwasher or eco-friendly dishwashing liquid.



Maintaining your Sourdough Starter

This chart gives an overview of how to maintain your sourdough starter for years, if not decades. It covers feeding your starter for any recipe, ensuring you have a little starter left over for future bakes. To keep your starter alive, make sure to refresh it regularly by feeding it and store it properly when not in use.



[Storing your sourdough starter](#)

There are 3 ways to store sourdough starter if you won't be using it:

1. **In the refrigerator** (between bakes, quiet and easy access)
2. **In the freezer** (e.g. as a backup in freezer, going on holiday, having a break from baking)
3. **Dried and stored** in sealed container in the kitchen cabinet/freezer (as a backup, going on holiday, having a break from baking etc)

A sourdough starter can either be kept at room temperature or in the fridge.

If you aren't intending to use your sourdough starter every day, it is best kept in the fridge. **ALWAYS FEED BEFORE GOING INTO THE FRIDGE.** Feed your starter, seal the jar and leave at room temperature for approx. 2 hours before placing in the fridge to store.

Feed the starter in your fridge approx. once a week to maintain good starter health. Starter from your fridge may have a strong yeast smell, this is normal.

Can you leave your starter a room temperature, this will require regular feeding approx. once a day.

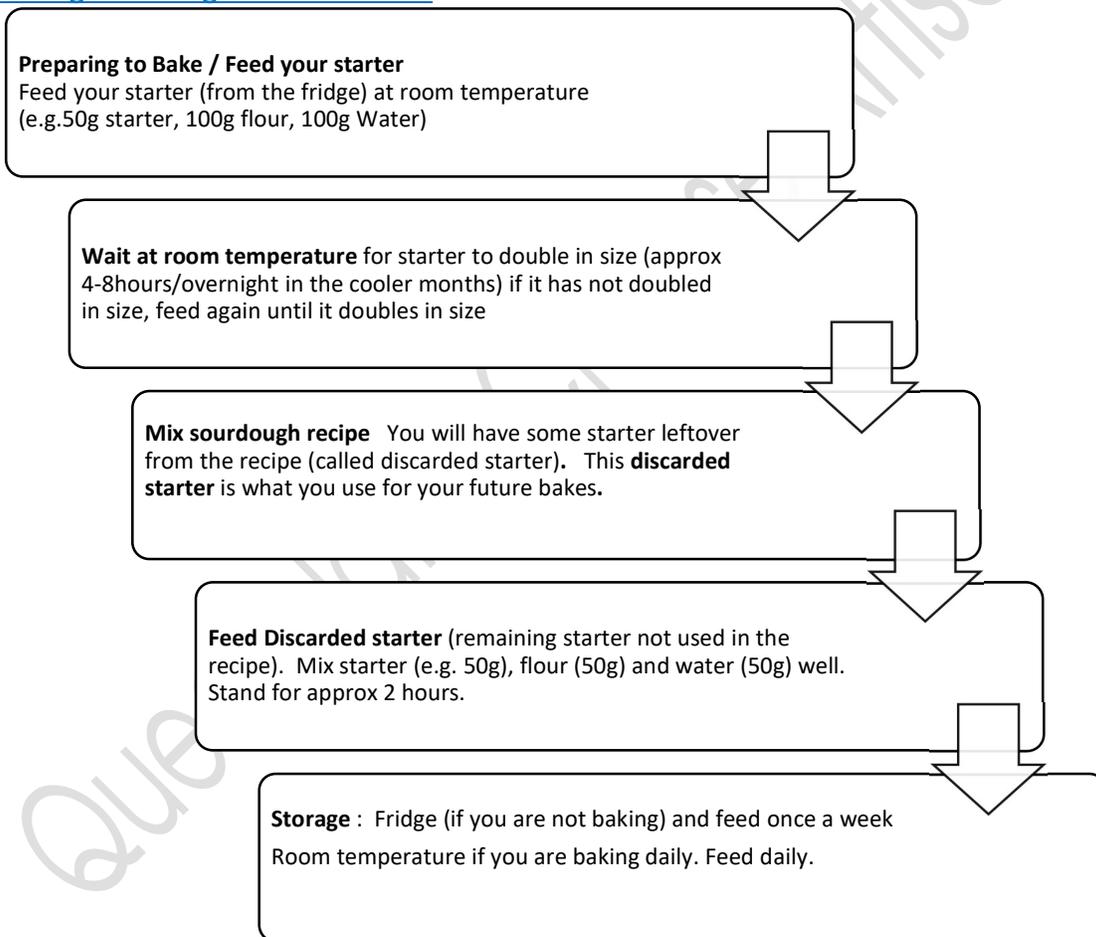
Increasing the volume of your sourdough starter

If you want to increase the amount of sourdough starter you have, for gifting to a friend or to increase the amount of sourdough baked. You just need to 'feed' your start more (equal parts, 200g starter, 200g flour, 200g water), without discarding any starter. I often increase the volume for workshops and I double numerous times over 2-3 days.

Fridge Sourdough : Grey liquid on Top and Smelly Sourdough

If your starter has a grey liquid on top and it's very smelly, it means your starter is hungry. I drain the liquid (aka ethanol), before I feed the starter. Some people stir the liquid back into the starter, this increases the flavour of your starter and therefore your bread. Starters can be very smelly at times, its normal.

Baking Sourdough Bread timeline



Using your sourdough starter/Activate your starter for baking

When you want to use your sourdough starter in a recipe, feed it and stand at room temperature for 4-8 hours before you intend using it. It should at least double in volume (use a rubber band or marker pen as the starting level indicator) and bubbles will start breaking the surface in this time, which will indicate that it is strong and 'active' enough to use. The

time will vary depending on whether it has been stored in the fridge and the temperature at which it is standing. If it doesn't, repeat the feeding and standing process until it does.

Remove the amount you require for the recipe and then repeat the feeding process and either stand at room temperature to use again or transfer to the fridge to store. (as per the above chart)

Once your starter is ready to use, you can begin your sourdough baking.

Active starter — quick check

- **Rise:** Doubles (or more) in 4–6 hours after feeding (mark the jar).
- **Peak:** Bubbly surface, just starting to level or fall.
- **Float test:** A teaspoon floats in water.
- **Look & smell:** Thick, airy, elastic; smells pleasantly yeasty/sour.

Recipes

Basic Sourdough Loaf

Basic Sourdough

Ingredients

Levain/Active Starter 1:1:1

- 50g starter
- 100g water
- 100g flour

Dough

- 140 grams starter
- 240 grams water
- 400 grams flour (I use unbleached bakers white/Spelt)
- 9 grams salt (not iodine salt)

Instructions

1. Mix the ingredients together, cover and let set for ½ hour

2. Bulk ferment stage - Fold the dough (either just fold in half and flatten out or stretch/fold each corner into the middle then flatten out). Wet hands are good for folding and handling dough

3. During the first two hours after mixing, fold dough every 30 minutes (ie. 4 folds)

- 1st fold (30 mins) Time :
- 2nd Fold (30 mins) Time :
- 3rd Fold (30 mins) Time :
- 4th Fold (30 mins) Time :

4. During the next 2 hours, fold dough every hour (e.g. 1-2 folds)

- 1st fold (1 Hour) Time :
- 2nd Fold (Maybe) Time :

5. Bulk ferment (step 3 & 4) is around 5 hours

6. After final fold, let dough rest for 30 minutes. Look for signs of success fermentation. ie air bubbles, poke test

7. Shaping dough, and put dough into bowl/basket which is lined with floured teatowel/clothes or floured. Apparently 16cm diameter. Cover with cloth

10. Let the dough proof at room temp (around 21c, less if hotter) for around 2 hours (could be sooner). If its colder, your dough might take a bit longer. Or I put the dough in the fridge.



This recipe makes one loaf around 780g.

It's a one day mix and bake sourdough.

Mix and folded over 5-6 hours and CAN be proofed the dough overnight in the fridge or left on the counter to proof (approx. 2-4 hours).

Active starter, Quick check

- Rise: Doubles (or more) in 4-6 hours after feeding (mark the jar).
- Peak: Domed, bubbly surface, just starting to level or fall.
- Float test: A teaspoon floats in water.
- Look & smell: Thick, airy, elastic; smells pleasantly yeasty/sour.



Basic Sourdough (cont)

Baking

- Preheat oven 260c for approx. 30 minutes before baking bread
- Place Dutch oven/pizza stone/ceramic baking dish/ loaf tin with roasting lid (I use metal bowl) 5 minutes before the bake to preheat. If you are using loaf tins there is no need to preheat.
- Turn out the loaf from the bowl (if teatowel is sticky to the dough, use a little water to help release). You can add rice flour on top for the white artisan/rustic look.
- **Score;** Use a razor blade or lame to score (cut) the top of the dough to allow for 'controlled' expansion
- Slide your dough into your dish or on to the pizza stone and **spray lightly with water** and cover with lid/roasting lid/big metal bowl – its very hot be careful. **USE BAKING PAPER TO ALLOW EASE OF DOUGH MOMENT, REDUCE RISK OF DOUGH STICKY.**
- Add a tray/baking dish of water (eg grill tray) into the oven to promote more steam for great results. Experiment with ice, hot water, room temperature water, etc.
- Turn oven down to 230c and let bread bake for 14 minutes
- Remove lid and turn loaf in the oven for even browning
- Bake for 15-20 minutes.
- Loaf is ready/done when the crust is a nice dark colour & the loaf sounds hollow when you hit it
- Turn out on a cooling rack and loaf to cool



Spelt Sourdough

SPELT FLOUR

Ingredients

Levain

- 70g starter
- 70g water
- 70g flour)

Dough

- 100% Wholemeal Spelt Sourdough
- 400g Spelt Flour
- 10g Salt
- 320g Water
- 20g Honey
- 150 active starter/Levain (50g starter, 50g water, 50g flour)

Directions

- Combine Levain, flour, honey and water. Rest for 30/60 mins to allow autolyse occur mix in salt. Rest for 30 mins
- 3 x 30 mins stretch and fold
- 60 mins to prove (maybe less in Qld heat)
- Take dough from bowl and preshape
- Rest for 10 mins
- Shape - either proving basket or hand shape
- Either
 - Bake the bread after 2 hours of proving on bench
 - Prove in the fridge for up to 18 hours - ready to bake in 6 hours.
- Preheat oven - 230C
- Bake for 35 mins with lid on and an additional 5 mins with lid off

Notes

Mix up the flours - both white flour and spelt flour, wholemeal mix. Have used 20% stoneground flour/80% white bakers flour. The recipe was made available by Firehouse Bakery in Ireland.



Overnight Sourdough Loaf

MIX FLOUR

Ingredients

Levain

- 30g starter
- 60g water
- 60g flour

Dough

- 80grams active starter/leaven
- 330 grams water
- 400 grams white flour
- 100 grams wholemeal or stoneground white baking flour
- 10 grams salt in 20g cold water (not iodine salt) (approx. 1 tablespoon)



Directions

- Make dough. Mix the starter with water. Add flour. Mix well into a large ball.
- **Autolyse.** Cover with damp cloth/lid. Rest for 40–60 minutes
- **Add Salt water.** Make dimples in the flour mix with your fingers. Add Salt water solution.
- **Rest.** Leave for 10 mins to settle..
- **Bulk ferment stage** – Wet hands are good for folding and handling dough. **Stretch & Fold**; During the hour & half after mixing, fold dough every 30 minutes (ie. 3-4 stretch & folds)
- Let to rise at room temperature for couple of hours
- Refrigerate overnight or at room temperature for next 2-3 hours
- Bake at 250c/260c for 25mins covered. Remove cover, bake uncovered for 10 minutes



Options : Can use 500% white bakers flour

Timings Summary Sheets

These sourdough timing sheets give a clear, visual guide to where you are in the process and what to do next.

SOURDOUGH TIMINGS	
SOURDOUGH - 400G FLOUR, PAGE 7 • 400G FLOUR • 140G ACTIVE STARTER • 240 G WATER • 9G SALT	
DESCRIPTION	TIME
START TIME - MIX DOUGH	
1 - STRETCH & FOLD - 30 MINS	
2 - STRETCH & FOLD - 30 MINS	
3 - STRETCH & FOLD - 30 MINS	
4 - STRETCH & FOLD - 30 MINS	
1 - STRETCH & FOLD - 1 HOUR	
2 - STRETCH & FOLD - 1 HOUR (MAYBE)	
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OVERNIGHT SOURDOUGH TIMINGS	
SOURDOUGH - 500G FLOUR, PAGE 10 • 500G FLOUR • 50-80G ACTIVE STARTER • 320 G WATER • 10G SALT + 20G WATER	
DESCRIPTION	TIME
MIX DOUGH WITHOUT SALT 40-45 MINS	
ADD SALT (NOT MIX) - 10MINS	
1 - STRETCH & FOLD - 30 MINS	
2 - STRETCH & FOLD - 30 MINS	
3 - STRETCH & FOLD - 30 MINS	
4 - STRETCH & FOLD - 30 MINS (MAYBE)	
PROOF SIGNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIRINESS: DOUGH FEEL LIGHT & AIRY, NOT DENSE OR HEAVY. • SHAPE: HOLD ITS SHAPE. • BUBBLES: SEE BUBBLES • POKE TEST: LIGHTLY POKE THE DOUGH WITH A FLOURED FINGER. IF IT SPRINGS BACK SLOWLY, LEAVING A SLIGHT INDENTATION, IT'S READY.
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Fermentation & Proofing Process

FERMENTATION & PROOFING

Bulk Fermentation

This is the first STAGE of your dough after mixing and before shaping. During this stage, usually lasting 2–4 hours, your dough ferments. You perform a series of **stretches and folds** during this time to help build dough strength. Yeast activity produces carbon dioxide and organic acids—developing flavour, strengthening gluten, and creating the structure for your loaf.

Proofing (Final Fermentation)

This is the last rise after the dough has been shaped, just before it goes into the oven. It typically lasts 30 minutes to 2 hours (on the counter) or 12-18 hours in the fridge depending on temperature and dough type. During proofing, yeast continues to ferment, generating gases and acids that give your loaf its final shape, flavour, and volume. Proper proofing ensures a light, well-textured crumb, and good oven spring

Signs of Proper Sourdough Dough Proofing

- **Light and airy feel:** Dough should feel soft, light, puffy, bubbles, and full of air. (aka Dough is not tight)
- **Slow spring-back:** A gentle poke leaves an indent that slowly springs back within about 10 seconds.
- **Smooth surface:** The top should look smooth, with possible bubbles showing.
- **Jiggly movement:** When gently shaken, the dough should wobble slightly like jelly.

COLD PROOFING (OVERNIGHT FRIDGE)

Cold proofing produces :

- More complex flavour (often more sour)
- Easier to score because the dough is firmer
- May produce a blistered crust

TIMINGS :

- **8 to 16 hours** on **FRIDGE**
- Bake - direct for fridge or allow to warm up

WARM PROOFING (SAME-DAY)

Warm proofing produces?

- Less sour flavour
- More grain flavour comes through
- Dough can be softer
- Harder to score

TIMINGS

- **1.5 TO 3 hours** on **COUNTER**
- QLD Temperatures are warmer

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CAN I CHANGE STARTER FLOUR ?



TIPS & TRICKS

Yes, you can change the flour you feed your sourdough starter (for example, from white baker's flour to spelt flour).

It's best to do this gradually over a few days by using partial feeds of both flours, slowly increasing the new flour each feed.

A few tips to keep things happy:

- Watch how your starter responds after the first feed
- Keep it warm (on the kitchen counter) and feed it regularly during the transition
- Don't worry if it behaves a little differently at first, that's normal

THE PROCESS

FEEDING SCHEDULE	WHITE FLOUR	SPELT FLOUR
DAY 1	75% e.g. 35g	25% e.g. 15g
DAY 2	50% e.g. 25g	50% e.g. 25g
DAY 3	25% e.g. 15g	75% e.g. 35g
DAY 4	0	100% eg 50g

Quick Summary

You can switch to any flour (rye, spelt, etc.). Do it slowly using a 75/25 mix at first, then increase the new flour.

Look for activity (bubbles, rise). If it's slow, repeat the same mix another day.

Be patient 🍞

Troubleshooting & Baking Tips

Is Your Starter Ready?

- **Rise:** Doubles (or more) in 4–6 hours after feeding
- **Peak:** Bubbly surface just starting to level or fall
- **Float test:** A teaspoon floats in water
- **Look & smell:** Thick, airy, elastic; pleasantly yeasty/sour

Common Problems & Easy Fixes

Dense or heavy loaf

- Starter not active enough → bake closer to peak
- Under-fermented dough → allow longer bulk ferment
- Dough too dry → increase hydration slightly

Poor oven spring

- Dough over-proofed → shorten final proof
- Not enough steam → add steam at the start of baking
- Loose shaping → build more surface tension

Pale crust

- Oven not hot enough → preheat longer
- Bake uncovered for the final stage

Crust too thick or hard

- Bake slightly shorter
- Reduce oven temperature after oven spring
- Increase hydration a little

Tight crumb (few holes)

- Increase hydration gradually
- Handle dough gently when shaping
- Ensure dough is fully fermented

Sourness control

- More sour → longer, cooler fermentation
- Less sour → shorter fermentation, warmer temperatures

Pro Tips

- Temperature matters more than the clock
- Watch the dough, not the recipe
- Take notes every bake teaches you something

Shaping

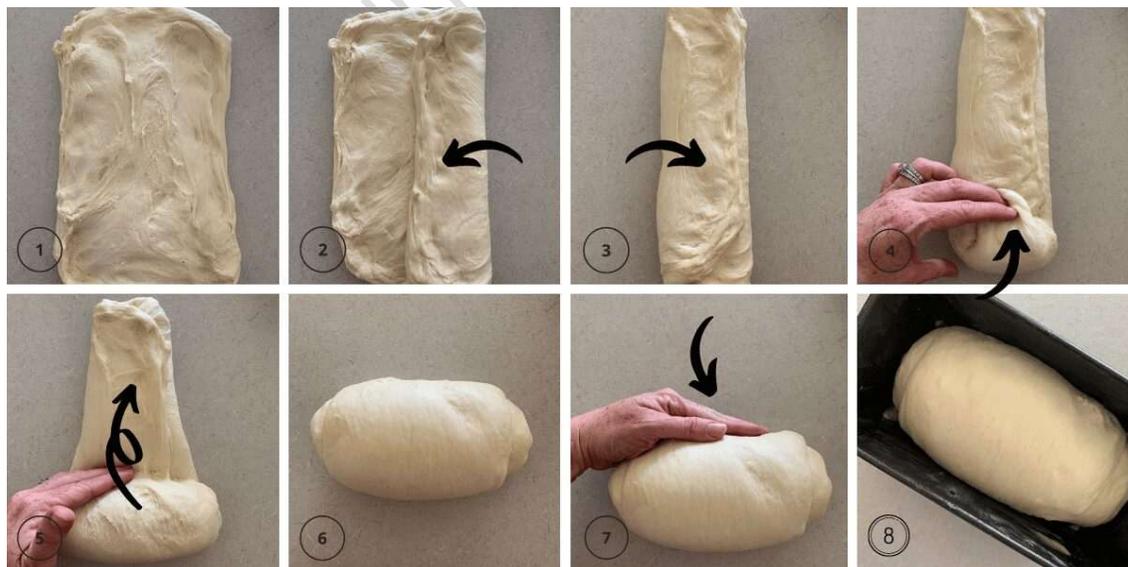
Shaping Sourdough — quick summary

Shape after bulk fermentation, when the dough feels light, airy, and relaxed. Use minimal flour and handle gently to avoid knocking out gas. Pre-shape to organise the dough, rest 15–30 **minutes (Pre-shape is optional, I often just final once)**, then final shape by folding to build surface tension. Aim for a smooth, taut outer skin, this helps hold structure and improves oven spring.

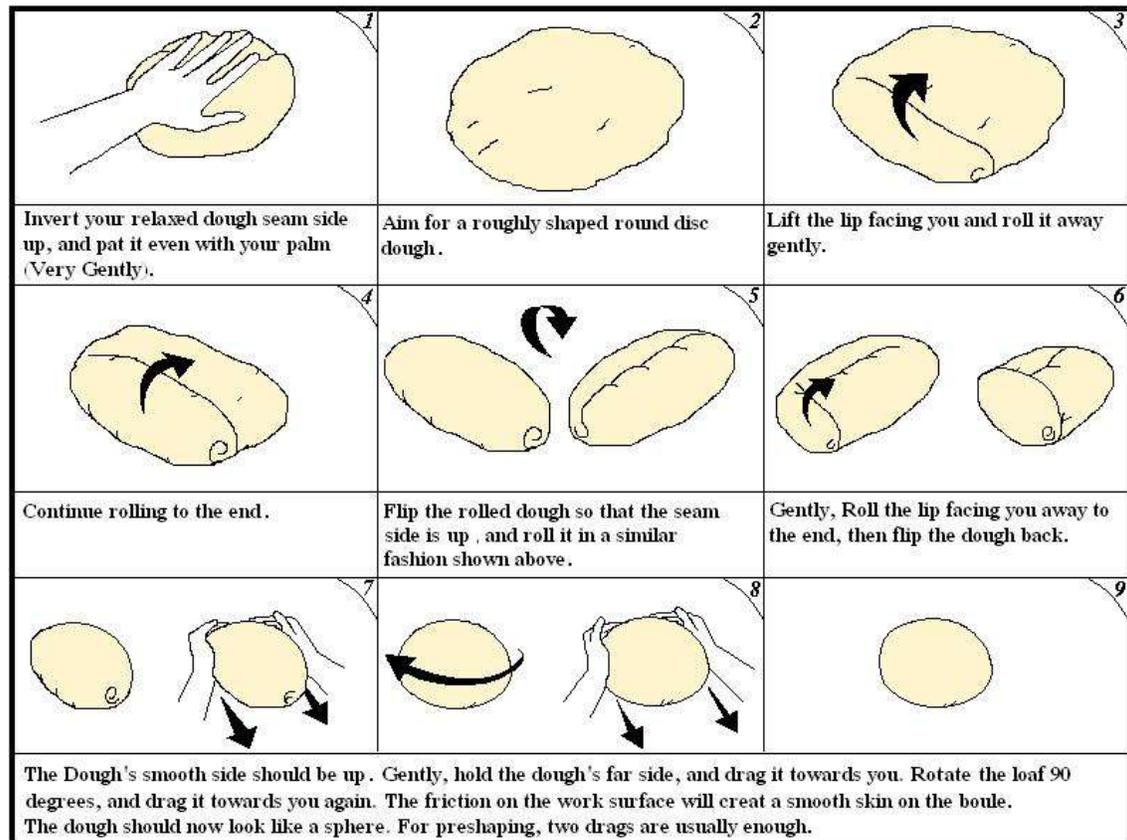
Shaping tips

- Watch the dough, not the clock
- Use confident, gentle movements
- If the dough resists, rest it and try again
- Good tension = better rise and crumb

Shape for a loaf tin or long Banneton



Shape for a round loaf



Flavouring Sourdough — Workshop Overview

Adding flavour to sourdough is a great way to get creative, but a light hand goes a long way. Think *balance*, not overloaded. Don't add too much additional moisture (drain items like olives etc).

Flavour ideas

Liquids (replace all or part of the water):

- Coffee, tea, chai, or turmeric-infused water
- Pineapple juice (50/50 with water)
- Beetroot juice, carrot juice (small amounts)
- Curry-spiced water or stock (watch the salt)

Dry additions (mix into dough):

- Activated charcoal

- Turmeric, curry powder, paprika, cumin
- Seeds: sesame, sunflower, pumpkin, linseed
- Nuts: walnuts, pecans, hazelnuts (toast first)

Chunky add-ins (best added late):

- Olives, cheese, sundried tomatoes
- Roasted garlic, rosemary, herbs
- Red onion (raw or lightly sautéed)
- Dates
- Berries
- Chocolate
- Pumpkin (cube or mashed) (use drier varieties, not butternut)

Key tips

- Don't overload the dough; less is more
- Watch salt levels (olives, cheese, sundried tomatoes all add salt)
- Avoid very wet ingredients (eg. butternut pumpkin)
- Add chunky ingredients during the **last stretch & fold** to protect dough structure
- Adjust hydration if using juices or wet add-ins

Flavoured loaves are about curiosity and balance, experiment, take notes, and have fun with it 🧀 ✨