

This recipe is designed for a 24-hour cycle, focusing on a long, cold secondary fermentation (retardation) in the refrigerator.

This "slow-mo" approach has two major benefits:

1. **Flavor:** It allows enzymes and bacteria more time to break down starches, creating a deeper, more complex, slightly sour flavor.
2. **Digestibility:** The long fermentation breaks down more gluten and FODMAPs.
3. **Schedule:** It conveniently splits the work between two days, meaning you bake first thing in the morning with dough prepared the night before.

Baker's Percentages & Specs

- **Total Flour:** 1000g (100%)
 - **Total Water:** 750g (75% Hydration)
 - **Starter (Inoculation):** 250g (25%)
 - **Salt:** 20g (2%)
 - **Total Dough Weight:** Approx 1770g (Two loaves of ~885g each)
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Ingredients

The Leaven (Prepare 4–6 hours before mixing)

You need 250g of active, bubbly starter at 100% hydration.

- *To build this:* Mix **125g bread flour**, **125g lukewarm water**, and **25g–50g of your mother starter**. Let it rise until doubled and peak activity.

The Main Dough

- **250g** Active Sourdough Starter (from above)
 - **875g** Bread Flour (or a mix of 775g bread flour and 100g whole wheat for depth)
 - **600g** Water (lukewarm, around 75–80°F/24–27°C) - *Initial Mix*
 - **25g** Water (reserved for mixing salt) - *Bassinage*
 - **20g** Fine Sea Salt
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The 24-Hour Schedule (Example Timer)

This schedule assumes a kitchen temperature of roughly 72°F–75°F (22°C–24°C). If your kitchen is cooler, bulk fermentation will take longer.

DAY 1: The Build & Bulk

8:00 AM: Feed Your Starter

Prepare the leaven as described in the ingredients section. You want it to hit its peak right around 1:00 PM.

12:00 PM: Autolyse (Optional but recommended)

In a large mixing bowl, combine the **875g flour** and the **600g initial water**. Mix by hand just until no dry flour remains—it will be shaggy. Cover and let rest for 1 hour. This jumpstarts gluten development and makes the dough easier to handle later.

1:00 PM: The Mix (The 24-Hour clock starts now)

1. Add the **250g active starter** over the top of your autolysed dough. Dimple it in with wet fingers, then fold the dough over itself to incorporate.
2. Sprinkle the **20g salt** over the dough. Pour the reserved **25g of water** on top of the salt to help it dissolve.
3. Mix thoroughly by squeezing the dough between your thumb and fingers (the "pincer method") and folding it until the starter, salt, and water are fully integrated. The dough will feel slightly slippery at first, but will come together after 3–5 minutes of mixing.

1:30 PM – 6:30 PM: Bulk Fermentation (The Warm Rise)

The goal is to build strength and let the dough grow by about 30% to 50% in volume.

- **1:30 PM (Set 1 - Stretch and Fold):** Grab one side of the dough, stretch it up high without tearing, and fold it to the center. Rotate the bowl 90 degrees and repeat for all four sides.
- **2:00 PM (Set 2 - Stretch and Fold)**
- **2:30 PM (Set 3 - Stretch and Fold)**
- **3:15 PM (Set 4 - Coil Fold):** Lift the dough from the middle with both hands, letting the bottom droop and tuck under itself. Rotate 90 degrees and repeat. This is gentler than stretch and folds.
- **4:00 PM (Set 5 - Coil Fold):** By now the dough should feel smooth, strong, and hold its shape in the bowl.
- **The Rest:** Let the dough sit undisturbed until about 6:30 PM.

Crucial Check: At 6:30 PM, the dough should have risen noticeably (30–50%), look domed around the edges, show some bubbles on the surface, and feel airy and "alive" when you jiggle the bowl. If it still looks dense and flat, extend this time.

6:30 PM: Divide and Preshape

1. Gently turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface.
2. Use a bench scraper to divide the dough into two equal pieces (weigh them for accuracy; they should be around 885g each).
3. Gently shape each piece into a round boule using your bench scraper to create tension.

4. Let them rest uncovered on the bench for 20–30 minutes to relax.

7:00 PM: Final Shape & The Long Cold Sleep

1. Dust two bannetons (proofing baskets) generously with rice flour (rice flour prevents sticking better than wheat flour during long cold proofs).
2. Shape your loaves into your desired shape (batard/oval or boule/round). Create tight tension on the surface "skin" of the dough.
3. Place the dough seam-side up into the bannetons.
4. Stitch the bottom seam together if needed to create more tension.
5. Place the bannetons into plastic bags (like produce bags) and tie them shut so the dough doesn't dry out.
6. **Immediately place them into the refrigerator (ideally around 38°F–40°F / 3°C–4°C).**

DAY 2: The Bake

8:00 AM: Preheat

The dough has now been fermenting slowly for 13 hours in the cold. Place two Dutch ovens into your oven and preheat to 500°F (260°C) for a full hour.

9:00 AM: Bake (24 Hours later)

1. Take one banneton out of the fridge. (Leave the other one in the cold until the first is done baking, unless you can fit two Dutch ovens at once).
2. Turn the cold, firm dough out onto a piece of parchment paper.
3. Dust off excess flour and score the loaf cleanly with a lame or razor blade. Cold dough scores very easily.
4. Use the parchment paper to lower the dough into the ripping hot Dutch oven.
5. Cover with the lid and bake for **20 minutes**.
6. Remove the lid. Lower the oven temperature to **450°F (230°C)**.
7. Bake uncovered for another **20–30 minutes**. You are looking for a deep, dark caramelized crust. Don't be afraid of dark color; that's where the flavor is.
8. Remove the loaf to a wire rack. Reheat the Dutch oven for 15 minutes and repeat with the second loaf.
9. Wait at least 1 hour (preferably 2) before slicing to prevent a gummy interior.