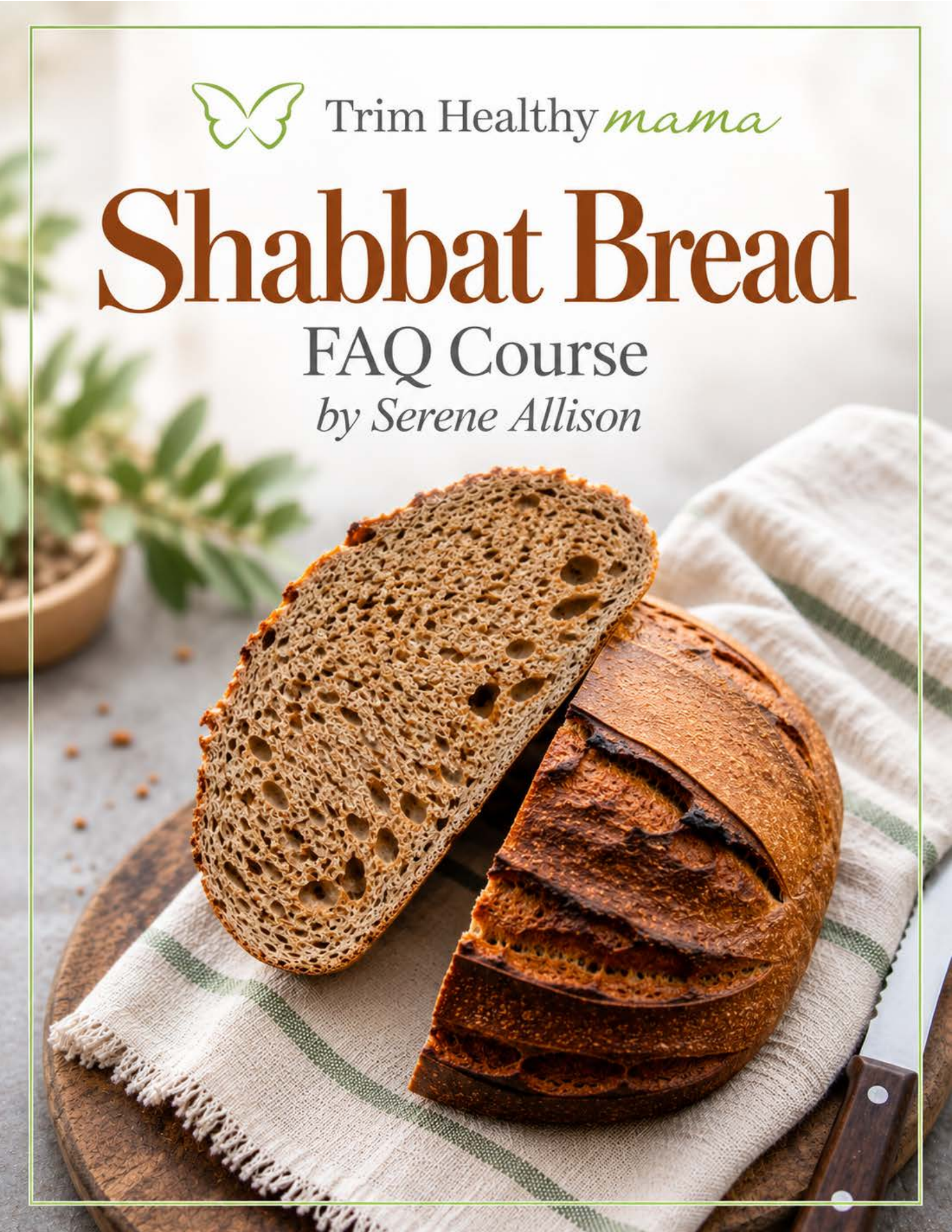
Trim Healthy *mama*

Shabbat Bread

FAQ Course

by Serene Allison



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The skeleton recipe for *Shabbat Bread* is on page 194 of the Hormone Harmony Made Simple cookbook for quick reference. In this course, you'll find all the needed details, and I'll walk you from beginning to end on how to make a successful, beautiful boule. Visit Hormone Harmony Resources for recommended products mentioned in this course.

This course is divided into four FAQ sections.

Section 1—Introduction FAQs
Section 2—Highly Activated Sleeping Sue FAQs
Section 3—Levain FAQs
Section 4—Bread Dough FAQs

SECTION 1—INTRODUCTION FAQS

Why Shabbat Bread

Our busy family bustles a bit too chaotically during the week, so whenever we can get everyone together, we love to adopt the Jewish tradition of relaxing around the table on Friday evenings. Although we try to make Shabbat happen every Friday night, the reality is it only happens a couple of times a month, but on those wonderful evenings, we celebrate with each other over good food and wine (grape juice for the littles). Shabbat means to "rest," and we all look forward to chilling together. This is the bread we use for our Shabbat meal. It is also perfect for any special event meal, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, or having company over for dinner. But of course, if you love it… you can make it for any day of the week. No special occasion required.

This is not a traditional Challah bread, which is usually braided and involves eggs in the ingredients. But there are no actual rules on what kind of bread must be used for Shabbat. In my mind, it should be special, festive, and loved by all. This bread fits that bill… but let's tag on a big ol "Gut Healthy" to it. My children don't care about the gut-healthy part of it, of course. They just know they love it. If you were to ask them their favorite part of our Shabbats, they would probably say, "The bread." That is not the deepest or most spiritual way they could answer, I suppose, but good bread makes the brain forget about much else!

How Is It Different

During our busy week, we Allisons all live on my *Peasant Bread* (page 186) or *Flatties* (page 192), which everyone loves, but those are not as artfully beautiful or festive. It can be difficult to end up with a beautiful yet ultimately healthy loaf of artisan sourdough bread. I tried for years without success. Most that are both beautiful and tasty have been cut with some refined wheat flour, or they use a starter that is not from a whole ancient grain. As a purist health nut ("Psycho Serene," Pearl calls me), none of those options makes my brain space happy.

For many years, I tried my hand at fully ancient whole-grain boules, but their texture and taste were never quite perfect. Finally, I created *Shabbat Bread*, and it was just right! It not only looks beautiful, but it is also ultimately fully gut beautiful… (That's a weird term, but it's a fact.)

While my *Peasant Bread* (page 186) doesn't require a levain and uses only a feisty starter to obtain its rise, *Shabbat Bread* is a more typical sourdough in that it uses a levain (which is an offshoot from *Sleeping Sue* (page 182) that is fed multiple times to create a powerful leavening agent). But *Shabbat Bread* is not typical in another way… as I just mentioned, even though it calls for spelt flour for the dough, it still initially uses a whole grain rye sleeping starter. This makes its very nature far more blood sugar friendly than most breads… especially Challah-style breads, which are notorious blood sugar bombs! And there is also something extra special about this crust, which gets to absolute chewy perfection after being steamed inside a cast-iron Dutch oven.

Speaking of that… let's talk about what to cook it in and what tools you'll need.

Must I Use a Dutch Oven and What Else Will I Need?

Yes… the best results come from a cast-iron Dutch oven, so I recommend you find one. You can find my recommendations at the resources linked at the beginning of this course for your proofing basket and any other tools you'll need to make your boule beautiful and successful.

How Big is the Boule? Should I go for a plain, fruit, or savory version?

This boule is nice and large. If you don't have a big family and it is not all eaten up during your special meal, you can enjoy eating from it all week long, or cut and freeze and have pieces ready to toast from the freezer. Since you are probably not feeding hordes of people like I am (my family is huge, and we often have our grown children and many grandchildren joining us for Shabbat), I have reduced my regular giant recipe that makes many boules to only one lovely, large boule for you. But if you're getting yours ready to bake on a Friday afternoon like I am, think of me… I'll be prepping ten boules. Now don't feel sorry for me with my ten. This is my hobby and my love language to my family. I even look at it as selfcare. On Friday, I have all ten boules ready and divide them into three types. I do two plain, four savory (aged gouda & jalapeno), and four fruit & nut (fig, cranberry & walnut). The first time you make *Shabbat Bread*, I recommend you start with the plain… well, unless you're an "always up for adventure" type, then go with your bad a$$ self! But you'll be learning stretch and folds (described later in the course) with the plain, and that might be enough to try to master the first time around. Once you get your first successful plain boule, you can try one of the "goodie" versions your next time around. If you're making your "goodie" loaf for a special event meal, I suggest not worrying about keeping it E. Go big or go home to make the bread spectacular! I do XO style and shove in lots of Gouda cheese and nuts when I want to impress!
I only bake four boules on Friday for our Shabbat meal (two plain and one each of the "goodie" versions), then I bake the rest over the weekend, and our home smells heavenly all weekend long! We're lucky, though, if we have any *Shabbat Bread* left by Tuesday. It gets quickly devoured, then back to *Peasant Bread* or *Flatties* we go!

There is no pressure to make the ten with me; I just thought some of you may want to do bulk baking (they freeze nicely, so you'll have ten Friday nights covered). You can thaw the bread out, then reheat that crust in the oven right before your meal to make sure it is warm and, ultimately, chewy. Or give some

loaves to friends and family. My Christmas and birthday present to Pearl is always a fruit & nut loaf, which is her favorite boule. I've asked her if she ever wants anything different, and I always get a big *"No... don't you dare give me something else!"* You probably also have friends or family who are not so interested in the baking part but who will love the receiving part. Christmas made easy! Bake a bunch of boules and spread the gut-healthy cheer!

If making ten sounds like a lot of work, it's not really much more than making just one loaf, as I just use a giant container to knead the bread in instead of a small one. It just takes a bit more muscle for that big amount of dough. To make ten boules, you just double the recipe three times. That's the inverse of how I came up with the ingredients for your one boule. I divided my big ten-boule recipe by half to get five, then half again to get 2, and then by half again to just give you one big boule. So do the opposite. Double your one boule amount, then again, and then again, and you'll get ten. You won't need ten Dutch ovens... but I do have four, so I can bake that many at a time, which is the most my oven will hold.

Why gram measurements instead of cups and tablespoons?

Your boule-making process is not much work... it just requires patience and precision. The ingredients in this recipe are weighed in grams and not measured in cups or tablespoons because, unlike my *Peasant Bread* (page 186), which is a bit more forgiving, you have to be exact here to get that perfect crust. Using a food scale that measures in grams is necessary. Because I make such large batches and have to weigh 6000 grams of flour on the scale at a time, plus the weight of the receptacle holding the flour, I have a high-end one called My Weigh KD-8000. You won't need a gadget as pricey if you're just making one boule. Now, onto the nitty-gritty details you need for successful *Shabbat Bread*. Let's head to Stage 1.

SECTION 2—HIGHLY ACTIVATED SLEEPING SUE FAQS

It's time for a reminder of the directions for *Shabbat Bread*, which involves *Sleeping Sue* on page 182. Let's look again at Step 1:

STEP 1: HOW TO HIGHLY ACTIVATE SLEEPING SUE

In the evening, four days before bake day, take *Sleeping Sue* out of the fridge and begin the first of four feedings. Feed her according to regular feeding instructions on page 182. Discard before each new feeding. If baking on Friday, the 1st feeding is Monday night, the 2nd Tuesday morning, the 3rd Tuesday night, and the 4th Wednesday morning. (See the *Peasant Bread FAQ Course* on our website for details on high activation, how to discard, and more.)

Why does Sleeping Sue need "high activation?"

When it comes to artisan sourdough bread baking, you have to think ahead. You don't just get ingredients out and bake bread on a whim . . . you're not using store-bought yeast, so you need to first create a rising agent strong enough to cause dense, whole, ancient grains to puff up into bread texture. This is much more of a challenge than when working with refined white flour. That has a lot of gluten, so it puffs up easily. Ancient grains have far less gluten. And once they've been soured, they have less still . . . in fact, barely any, as the gluten gets broken down in the souring process! That's a good thing, as we don't want excess gluten, but it is not as easy to get a bread rise. To make things more challenging, since we're not using regular yeast, we must use either a large, feisty starter (like with *Peasant Bread*) or a very powerful levain, as in this bread.

Sleeping Sue does best on two full days of feedings (four feedings in total) to get her powerful enough for the levain. When you make *Peasant Bread,* you start the process two days before baking. *Shabbat Bread* is different. You need to start four days ahead because *Sleeping Sue* usually needs two days to get strong enough for the levain. The levain night happens two days before the actual bake. It becomes a natural flow, so don't let it stress you out. It is all fun and games and will feel like a very ordinary part of your life after a while. And hey… if you don't get started early enough, you can rush the process. You can take Sue's activation down to one day (two feeds) if you need to. Four feeds just make her spunkier and more willing to push the rise.

Tell me more about Sleeping Sue's activation process and what it means to discard.

At the end of the two days of activation, *Sleeping Sue* will be small but mighty. She won't be growing in size as you'll be using a discard method, but she will be growing in power and might. Let's look at this a bit further...

I'm going by your bake day being Friday, but it doesn't have to be. You might bake on any day of the week. If you work outside of the home on weekdays, you might use your weekends for baking. But let's take Friday, for example's sake. Monday night, you'll take *Sleeping Sue* out of the fridge and feed her according to the directions on page 182. The next morning, she needs another feed, but if you just keep adding more food and water to her small jar, she'll get too big for a levain. So right before each feed, you'll discard all but the rounded teaspoon amount listed on page 182. The small amount goes back into the jar and gets another feed, and the larger part (the discard) goes into another jar for other uses. Don't waste this discard. Just keep it in the fridge. You can use it for so many things. There are lots of great recipes online using discard, but I usually just add mine to my *Spelt Starter* to beef that up for *Flatties* (page 192). So long as my *Spelt Starter* for my *Flatties* is ¾ spelt adding rye discard to about ¼ of her total doesn't really change the end result much... and only makes it healthier.

In *Peasant Bread*, you use all of *Sleeping Sue's* first discard as the base for your feisty *Cracked Rye Starter* (page 184). And you do the same to create the *Spelt Starter* (page 190) for *Flatties* (page 192). But here, with *Shabbat Bread*, things are different. The discard is not part of the actual *Shabbat Bread* recipe...only the little bit that is put back in the jar each time. That little bit is fed 4 times, and each time, you will discard, and she just keeps gaining in strength. On Wednesday evening, *Sleeping Sue* is all fat and happy from her 4th feeding earlier in the day, and she is also much more powerful. Her feedings have made her a rising monster! You will only need to add 7 grams of her to the levain, and that small amount will be powerful enough to make your artisan bread rise. On Wednesday evening, when assembling your levain, remove the 7 grams from *Sleeping Sue*, but there is no need to discard this time. Just put the rest of her back in the fridge to sleep.

SECTION 3—LEVAIN FAQS

Let's have another look at the levain ingredients and directions. The levain is your rising agent for *Shabbat Bread*. The ingredients for it are on page 194 in the skeleton *Shabbat Bread* recipe, but I want you to be very familiar with them and their directions, so let's revisit them here and then explain further.

- 7 grams highly activated *Sleeping Sue* (page 182)
- 56 grams whole-grain rye (purchased pre-ground or home-ground into flour)
- 50 grams pure water

STEP 2: LEVAIN NIGHT—PREPARE THE LEVAIN

If you are baking on Friday, then Wednesday night (two days after high activation) will be your levain night. Measure the levain ingredients accurately and place them in a container with a lid. Stir well and cover. Allow to ferment overnight (12 hours).

What are the details on the timing of levain night?

If you want to start proofing your bread at 9 in the morning, then mix the levain ingredients at 9 p.m. on levain night. If you want to start earlier, say you have to rush off to work the next morning, and you want to proof your bread at 6 a.m. before you leave, then start at 6 p.m. on levain night. Want to push it later? No worries… whatever floats your boat, but you must give the levain 12 hours for an overnight ferment.

What kind of water should be used for mixing?

Make sure the water you use is pure (not straight tap) and nice and warm… not hot, though. You want your levain to be nice and cozy all night long, getting all bubbly and beautiful for you.

Can I ferment the levain anywhere in my house?

The only way your levain will be cozy all night is to make sure it doesn't get a chill, so if your house is cold, you might want to wrap the closed container in a heavy towel and place it in a cozy corner. Sometimes, in the winter, I take my levain into my bedroom, which is warmer and less drafty than my kitchen. During warmer months, your levain should be fine in the kitchen on your counter.

SECTION 4—BREAD DOUGH FAQS

Let's revisit the ingredients and directions for the bread dough, on page 194, then answer questions and add more details for every direction step . . .

MAIN BREAD DOUGH INGREDIENTS

- 750 grams whole-grain spelled (purchased as pre-ground or home-ground into flour)
- 563 grams pure water
- Entire levain
- 19 grams Mineral Salt

OPTIONS FOR A SAVORY BOULE

- 6–8 ounces gouda (cut into small cubes)
- ¼ - ½ cup pickled jalapeños (amount of jalapeños depends upon spice tolerance)

OPTIONS FOR A FRUIT BOULE

- Fresh, thawed from frozen or dried unsweetened cranberries (or *Dried Cranberry Hack* from page 261)
- Desired amounts of dried figs (diced)
- Walnuts (diced) don't go overboard with amounts if wanting to stay in E mode, we go all out XO)

STEP 3: MAKE THE DOUGH

The next day (12 hours later or Thursday morning), measure all the dough ingredients accurately and place them in a large bowl. Mix all ingredients together well with your hands (this is your knead; it will be 5 minutes), then cover the bowl with plastic wrap or an unscented plastic bag. Let rest for 45 minutes.

Is there a specific order for combining the bread dough ingredients?

Yes. Place a large bowl on your scale. Tare it first (let the number go back to zero) to subtract the weight of the bowl, then measure in your flour first. Tare that number again so your scale goes back to zero again, then add the water (lovely and warm but not hot) and measure to the accurate number of grams. Take the measuring bowl off the scale and add in your bubbly levain. Measure the Mineral Salt separately in a small container and add the salt to the bowl with the other ingredients.

How do I mix with my hands?

This will be sticky and fun. Just get in there, combine ingredients with your hands, and punch the dough around and down for five minutes max. This will be your only official kneading.

Tell me about this first rest for 45 minutes.

This rest should be covered. Since I am making a huge 10-boule dough, I use an unscented garbage bag and drape it over my extra-huge bowl. Plastic wrap or just any old plastic bag over your smaller bowl should work. If it has a proper lid and you haven't lost it... more power to you and your organized bowl skills! (I have no such skills.)

This first rest is longer than the others between the "stretch and folds." It's officially referred to as an autolyze. The benefit of a nice long autolyze is to kick-start the gluten development without the need for additional kneading. It makes the dough much more pliable in your hands for when the time comes to do your "stretch and folds."

Speaking of 'stretch and folds," let's relook at that direction step, then fill in the deets...

STEP 4: STRETCH AND FOLDS

After 45 minutes have passed, keep the dough in the bowl and stretch and fold it every 30 minutes for 4–6 rounds. This is not a lot of work, as each stretch and fold just takes a few minutes, but in total, another 2–3 hours will pass.

What does this stretch and fold movement look like?

I love this part of the process. It is fun, quick, and easy. You will do at least four and a maximum of six of these stretch and folds with a 30-minute rest between each one (30 minutes is more usual, but you can push it to 15 minutes if you need to… let's say you only have an hour or so to stretch and fold because life happens).

Fill a cereal bowl with warm water and place it near your mixing bowl of dough. Dunk your fingers in the water to get them hydrated to touch your dough. Watered hands will keep your hands from getting sticky when you handle the very hydrated dough. Imagine the dough is a clock face. Start at 12 o'clock and stretch the part of the dough at the top of the clock face up as far as you can without it breaking, then pull it all the way over the dough toward you, and then fold it back down into the dough. Now turn the bowl so the 3 o'clock is facing you, stretch that portion up and over toward you, then fold. Do this in like manner at six o'clock and finish at 12 o'clock again. The dough will start to tighten up, but if you feel the dough is still nice and loose, you can have another "stretch and fold" go around the clock face again. The aim is to tighten the dough up again without punching out the lovely air forming within the matrix of the gluten strands.

30 minutes later, do another "stretch and fold" session, followed by two more in between your half-hour rests. You might want to refresh the warm water bowl between "stretch and folds" and before preparing the dough for the proofing basket. You will always need moist hands to handle this dough.

Seems like a lot of work for a loaf of bread?

Nah… it's really not. While sourdough bread baking is not for everyone, those of us who love it know it is just a wee bit of work here and there on a day that you can be pottering around your home doing other wonderful things. These stretch and folds are just a little something to do amid other joys around the home.

Don't freak and geek out about being exactly on time for them… sometimes I am 10–15 mins shy of their perfect timing… I don't let the clock rule my bread-making or let it get me all stressed out and start hating the whole process. *Shabbat Bread* should be made with laughter and fun! On to the next direction step…

STEP 5: PREPARE THE PROOFING BASKET, ADD OPTIONAL ADD-INS, AND THEN SHAPE THE DOUGH

Dust the proofing basket with brown rice flour, add optional add-ins to the dough, then use your hands to shape the dough into a boule. Place it in the proofing basket.

How do I dust a proofing basket?

Typically, a linen cover comes with your proofing basket. You'll place this in your basket and generously sprinkle it with brown rice flour. I just grind brown rice in my grinder once a month and keep it in a zippie in my fridge. A high-end blender could probably do the same thing if you don't have a grinder. You could alternatively purchase brown rice flour already ground. The reason for the brown rice flour is that it has no gluten, so it does not get very sticky and works as a lovely absorbent barrier between the proofing basket covers and the very wet dough. It also puts a dusty look on the tops of the bread boules so that when they are inverted into the Dutch ovens, they can be scored into beautiful artwork, and the flour makes the artwork pop! Some use cornmeal, and that can work in a pinch.

How do I add in the "goodies" for fruit or savory versions?

First, a word about the fruit version. During cranberry season, I really stock my freezer with bags and bags of cranberries so I can have fresh cranberries in my bread all year long. Every time I go to the grocery store, I put extra fresh cranberry bags in my cart. Yes, you can buy unsweetened dried cranberries, but they are very expensive (the *Dried Cranberry Hack* on page 261 is less expensive but still pricey). So, mostly, I just pull some frozen cranberries out of my freezer. In between "stretch and folds" I put a tray of them into a hot oven and then turn the oven off. This way, the cranberries thaw, and I can drain off the bleeding juice that may come out before adding it to my bowl of figs and

walnuts that I make ready to add to my portioned bread dough for this flavor profile. Don't ever place frozen or cold cranberries straight from the freezer into your dough… the temperature will stop the rise and fermentation.

To add your goodies to your dough, refresh your warm water for your "stretch and fold," dampen your hands again, and combine your additions into the dough by doing the same "stretch and fold" action over and around the goodies. You are not trying to tighten the dough now… you are just trying to get your goodies added without wrecking it. So DO NOT punch and squish the dough like regular kneading as you get them added! It might take a few rounds of "stretch and fold" around the clock face to get them added in. If you find your dough gets too tight and it's still not quite fully combined, give the dough a rest for 15 minutes, then try again. Of course, if you're only making a plain boule, then ignore this step.

How do I shape the dough into a boule?

Many people roll their dough here to create a boule, but I've tried it. It takes too long, and I hate it.

Here's what works for me… I use freshly moistened hands to pick up my dough (plain or "goodied" up) and stretch the surface of the boule in my hands as I form a nice tight ball. The action is like stretching the surface of a big ball as you turn it around in your hands. It is almost like pulling the skin layer of it across and around the boule. You're tightening up the gluten strands so that when it sits proofing, it will be like a balloon skin filling with air, and you will get a lovely rise as *Sue* does her job! This is much harder to do with chunky goodies inside that are poky, but those additions are super yummy and worth the fiddly business. Your ball should start to smooth and tighten up. Now place it into the proofing basket and onto the next step…

STEP 6: PROOF AND RETARD THE DOUGH

Allow the dough to proof by letting it sit in its basket for 3–4 hours or until it passes the finger press test. Once proofed, retard the dough by placing the basket of proofed dough in the refrigerator to sit uncovered for 24 hours.

Where is the best place for it to proof, and what the heck does proof mean?

This proof will be the time when *Sleeping Sue* causes the bread dough to get an initial rise (although it will get another spring in the hot oven). Proofing works best in a warm place. Sometimes in the winter, I have to bring a little heater and put it close to my bread. A humid place is also advantageous… like proofing next to a pot of simmering soup. But don't get too caught up with all these details. As long as your bread does not get a chill, you'll be jake, mate… Aussie slang for "great". You will want to leave it for about 3 hours, then check it with the finger-press test. It might need another hour for a total of 4 to proof.

What the finger press test?

The finger press test is how you'll check to see if your dough is ready to retard (cold ferment). Press the dough with your finger. If it springs back immediately, it needs more time proofing. If, after pressing it slowly, it springs back to the halfway mark, then it is Goldilocks perfect and ready to retard in the fridge. However, if it doesn't respond at all and there is no spring back whatsoever, then your dough is over-proofed. Oopsie… nothing for it but to check it sooner next time. Your bread will still be delish… just not as high… don't stress!

What is "retarding" all about, and why does the bread need it?

Retarding your bread allows the process of cool fermentation. It ferments even more without getting overly sour-tasting, and the cold temps prevent over-proofing. Remember, over-proofing means flatter bread, and it will not retain its boule shape properly. Retarding brings a better, rounder flavor and more health benefits. Your grain gets to break down further in the fridge and become even more abundant with vitamins and minerals. Time fermenting equals nutrition! More nutrients are able to be digested by the living microbes, increasing their bioavailability for your body!

While some sourdough bakers see a tiny bit more rise during this retarding time, I don't notice any with this bread. Retarding usually takes 24 hours or so (I say "or so" because you don't have to stress a couple hours sooner or even a few hours later). I have left my bread retarding for 36 hours and even 48 hours. The first 24-hour mark is around perfect, though… it's just that life happens, and you might not get to be at home to bake the bread at this time. Always remember

our motto... bread making is meant to be laughter and fun... not the clock and stress! You are making bread because you want healthier bread for a healthier life. If you add a bunch of shoulder-stiffening stress into your bread mix...well, it just AIN'T healthier for you!!!!! Keep it all fun and games, aye?

Let's examine the final direction step...

STEP 7: BAKE THE BOULE

On bake day (Friday), place a covered Dutch oven inside your oven and preheat at 500°F for one hour. While heating, remove the boule from the refrigerator and its proofing basket and place it on parchment paper. Score the top with a stencil and scoring knife (that came in your kit) or just score however you like with a razor blade. Carefully place the boule in the hot Dutch oven. Lower oven temperature to 475°F and bake with the lid on for 30 minutes. Remove the lid, place a pan of water in the oven for steam, and then continue baking for another 30 minutes. Remove bread from oven and cool on a wire rack for one hour before slicing or... if your family is as uncouth as mine... immediately devour by ripping into it with hands, jovially fighting off other family members, then slathering prized pieces with Irish butter.

How do I remove the boule from the proofing basket and prep it for the oven?

Take your boule basket out of the fridge. Place a square of parchment paper large enough to cover the proofing basket and overlap four inches or so on either side. Tip the basket over and peel out the boule onto the parchment. You are basically inverting the boule, and now the bottom of the boule with rice flour dusted on it will be the top of your final bread. It will look like a perfect, basket-shaped hill. Dust your hands lightly with the rice flour and spread the rice flour out more evenly over the top.

Now pick up the boule by holding the parchment paper and lift it into the Dutch oven (that you have carefully removed from the oven with ultra-thick mitts... it will be extremely hot.) Remove the lid. Score your desired patterns on the top... being careful not to deflate the bread. Place the lid back on and carefully place the Dutch oven back in the hot oven. Don't forget to turn the oven down to 475°F according to directions, and add the steaming water in the last half of the bake time.

How do I remove the bread once it is cooked?

Take the Dutch oven out of the oven and lift the bread out by holding the corners of the parchment paper. Be careful, as the parchment breaks easily after being in the oven at such high heat.

Should I let the bread cool before eating?

Yes, you should cool the bread on a wire rack. It is best to let it sit for an hour before slicing to keep the crumb structure from squishing when slicing. But as I mentioned, in our home, we can't seem to wait that long, and we just rip into one of the loaves like savages.

P.S. No two ovens are exactly the same and may perform differently. You might have to adjust the time or the temperature a wee bit to not over- or undercook.