The Fresh Loaf

Baguette

Community Bake

This is partial documentation of The Fresh Loaf's Community Bake of baguettes.

Organized by Dan, it is, as all Community Bakes (CBs) are, open to all who decide to participate. The bake commenced in mid-June 2020, and although has slowed down considerably in terms of participants, continues as all Community Bakes may also do. However, being that the baguette is challenge all its own and the "secrets" of them is also a never ending challenge, this particular CB has been in the forefront months longer than any of the dozen previous CBs.

My feeling is that if the collective knowledge that has been accumulated during this exercise were to be synthesized and organized into a single document, it would provide the premier manual of baguette baking for the home baker. Far more comprehensive than any documentation that we've yet to encounter.

I decided to compile every post for each of four baker's entries for the three month period of June-September 2020. Entries for each baker are featured in chronological order. The progress, trials and discoveries of ingredients, tools and methodologies, both good and bad, are included.

It would be nearly impossible to record every participant's entries, therefore I am focusing on four specific individuals.

The four intrepid souls were selected because they each created a dense running story of their own for the entire three month period. Each had a differing level of expertise in baking baguettes at the outset.

Benny had no experience with baguettes when the CB began in June, and he quickly applied his previous baking skills and analysis to excel in a very short time.

Dan had been trying baguettes on and off, mostly off over periods of time, with minimal success coming into the CB, but began to produce exceptional baguettes within a month.

Doc, whose approach is the most scientific of the four, had also dabbled in baguettes, but never as an applied and studied effort before, and has honed his skills to now produce superior quality baguettes.

Don, who came into the CB as far and away the most experienced of the baguette bakers. with exceptional skills at the outset, continued to grow beyond the formidable skill set he brought with him.

Each of the four could comfortably place their baguettes in artisan bakery windows, and I have little doubt that the breads would be considered at or above the level of what is currently for sale.

Other than some minor reformatting or spelling corrections, I have altered neither the content of the posts nor their chronological order.

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will be featuring one of our very own; the "Baguette Baker Extraordinaire", Alan, aka alfanso. He is among a handful of fine baguette bakers on TFL who have spent years concentrating on baguettes, alfanso's favored craft, and his baguettes are consistently outstanding and consistently consistent.. Consistence and repeatability, coupled with breads that visually signify a particular baker are the hallmark of excellence. When viewing an image of any of Alan's baguettes, those that have been around for a while know exactly who baked the bread. We are fortunate to have him on the forum.

Attention New Readers:
Although the Community Bake started some time back, it is still active. New participants are welcomed to join in at any time! It's constantly monitored and help of any kind is still available.
For those that are not familiar with Alan and his baguettes *check out his blog*.




Since the Covid Pandemic many new bakers have joined the forum. For those that are not familiar with our Community Bakes (CB) see *THIS LINK*. It should give you an idea of the concept and how things work.
Alan supplied the following information as a guide line to the bake. There are links below with additional resources.
Alan's choice of baguette for the CB is Pain au Levain with Whole Wheat, by Jeffrey Hamelman. Jeffrey Hamelman recently retired as Head Baker at the King Arthur Flour Company. His book, "*Bread: A Baker's Book of Techniques and Recipes, 2nd Edition*" is considered a "must have" by most of the bakers on this forum.

Alan writes:
I've attached the formula and some photos of my most recent bake of this bread. It is another really easy to manipulate bread that has a fantastic taste, but is not too heavy on the whole grain side. 1250g is a nice amount to create 4 "comfortable sized" baguettes.

I've simplified the formula a little by converting it from a 60% hydration to a 100% hydration levain.

Mr. Hamelman uses the term "Bread Flour" but in our realm this really means a standard AP flour with a similar protein profile to King Arthur AP flour, 11.7% protein.

This dough can also be mixed mechanically if you have neither developed the skills nor have the desire to mix by hand."

Pain au Levain w / WW, 100% levain

Jeffrey Hamelman, mod by alfanso

					Total Flour				
	Total Dough Weight (g)		1250		Prefermente	15.50%			
	Total Formula				Levain			Final Dough	
	Ingredients	%	Grams		%	Grams		Ingredients	Grams
	Total Flour	100.00%	736.2		100.00%	114.1		Final Flour	622.1
	Bread Flour	75.00%	552.1		100.0%	114.1		Bread Flour	438.0
	Whole Wheat	20.00%	147.2		0.0%			Whole Wheat	147.2
	Rye	5.00%	36.8		0.00%	0.0		Rye	36.8
	Water	65.00%	500.6		100%	114.1		Water	386.5
	Salt	1.80%	13.3					Salt	13.3
	Starter	3.10%	22.8		20%	22.8			
								Levain	228.2
	Totals	169.90%	1250.0		220%	251.0			1250.0

Autolyse levain, water, flours for 30min.
Add salt, mix. Then 150 French Folds, 5 min. rest, 150 FFs.
Bulk Ferment 2.5 hrs., Letter Folds at 40, 80 Min.
Divide. Pre-Shape. 20 min. rest. Shape. Onto floured couche
Retard for 12-16 hrs.
Oven to 480cF, 45 60 min.
remove from retard, onto oven peel, bake at 460cF.
13 min w/steam, rotate loaves, 10-15 min. more.
Vent oven for 3 min and remove to wire rack.

2 stage liquid levain build	
Stage 1	
Bread Flour	57.1
Rye	0.0
Water	57.1
Starter	22.8
Stage 2	
Bread Flour	57.1
Rye	0.0
Water	57.1
Total	251.0

NOTE - for those using home milled flour a tweak may be necessary. Whole grain (100% extraction) will absorb quite a bit more water than white flour as well as commercial whole wheat flour. Since I used home milled grain, it was necessary to add more water before the dough became extensible enough to slap and fold. I estimate the water added was approximately 28 grams which brought the hydration to ~72%. I should have taken my own advice and measured the additional water, but I didn't. For those using home milled grains, if would be helpful if you reported the extra water necessary to do the Slap & Folds. See *THIS TECHNIQUE*.

Additional Resources
Shaping and scoring Maurizio's baguettes
Scoring and baking Hamelman's pain au levain with mixed SD starters
Shaping and scoring Bouabsa baguettes (still in my infancy, they've come a long way since then!)
Martin Philip shaping and baking baguettes
Jeffrey Hamelman shapes baguettes

Everyone is welcomed. Both expert and novice can learn and improve their baking skills by participating and sharing their experience. Make sure to post your good, bad, and ugly breads. We learn much more from our failures, than we do from our successes.

The goal of every Community Bake is to learn from one another. There are no losers, only winners. Each and every participant should become a better baguette baker with the help of others.
Danny

There are a lot of talented bakers on TFL, many with their own specialties. And so it is with our cadre of baguette bakers here. Fewer in number than other baking crafts, but a group of standout bakers nonetheless. And we are always looking to recruit more to our battalion.

Dan asked me if I'd like participate and be a focus, and sure, why not. If we can interest some of you folks, newcomers as well as coax some long in the tooth TFL participants to attempt baguettes and nurture another skill for your personal baking handbook.

A reminder that this isn't a competition, but a way to learn and help others learn. Hopefully it will be a fulfilling experience and perhaps get a number of you to try your hand and see how you can also bake another fine product and shape.

Mr. Hamelman didn't create this formula/recipe specifically for baguettes, and does not mention that term anywhere within his write-up, actually referring to the shaping as round or oblong. However, I'm here to testify that pretty much any formula for levain and IDY breads can be turned into baguettes, sometimes with a little tweak here or there. My blog pages are chock-full of baguette bakes that were seemingly never intended to be baked in that shape.
A final note here, and an important one.

The spreadsheet and method presented above is just a framework for you to either follow faithfully or to build upon.

So, c'mon and join the Community Bake!

Baguette by Type

Pure Levain:	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26
Hybrid Levain & IDY/ADY:	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41
Pure IDY/ADY:	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35
Other styles	
Ficelle:	1, 2
PoBoy:	1, 2, 3
Demi:	1
Bahn Mi:	1

Benny

Mine weren't very successful. *9*

So I'm hopeful that these *10*

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Dan **32**

Mine weren’t very successful.

Mine weren’t very successful. I think they maybe overproofed, but unsure how they possibly could have. They didn’t get much in the way of oven spring and the crust just wouldn’t colour, so I’m thinking over proofing is the culprit. I bulk fermented at around 80ºF and didn’t see practically any rise in volume. I haven’t cut them yet, but they don’t look promising.

I used the Hamelman recipe reduced to 880 g total dough with the single stage levain at 60% hydration. I certainly got minimal oven spring. My second ever baguettes and only successful baguettes which were IDY had good oven spring and that was a major difference between these and those. I agree without oven spring, great bread is not possible.

I’ve just cut one open even though it is slightly warm to the touch and the crumb is gummy and closed and some huge holes at the top, totally underproofed. What I’ve been noticing lately is that when I’m using white flour my levain is much slower to rise. I thought it was the water for a while, but my partner tested it at work and the chlorine levels are really low.

When I make these again, I’m going to have to proof for longer. I will consider adding some diastatic malt to the dough.

So I’m hopeful that these

So I’m hopeful that these will have a nice crumb, fingers crossed. You’ll recall that my levain was super slow even when proofing at 80ºF, so when I mixed this dough I added 0.1% IDY. This move bulk fermentation along nicely and after about 2 hours had about 30% rise so I pre-shaped, rested then shaped on my cotton couche which I now use rice flour to ensure that there is no sticking and cold retard at 2ºF for about 15.5 hours. Baked as per recipe.

Benny's 5th set of baguettes

Happy Canada Day! To celebrate I started a double batch of baguettes yesterday and just pulled them out of the oven. I decided that I wanted to try an almost all white flour recipe since white flour baguettes are what remind me of Paris most. I used Abel's recipe that Alfanso kindly posted here.

I added a small amount about rye to the levain build but otherwise followed the recipe. Edit - I actually also dropped the hydration to about 70%. The rye was 2.5% of the flour. Because I cannot cold retard six baguettes in my fridge I decided it would be interesting to see the difference when cold retarding shaped baguettes vs. unshaped until after cold retard. However, because I cannot bake six baguettes at once, the shaped baguettes went into the oven after 13 hours of cold retard.

The second three were shaped after 13.5 hours of cold retard and then placed back in the fridge until the oven, baking steel, cast iron skillet and Silvia towel were back up to 500ºF. Oh because I forgot to drop the temperature from 500ºF to 480ºF at the start of baking the second set, they baked at 500ºF until halfway after removing the steaming gear.

Because I didn't weigh the dough when I divided, the first of baguettes were larger and didn't fit well on my cookie tray or baking steel. The second set fit much better. I think for my set up 280-290 g per baguette is optimal.

Oven spring seems pretty good especially on the second set. There are a bit of ears on some. The crumb will tell the story I guess.

Now the second set, I forgot to take a photo after scoring these, but I think scoring was a bit better as I did each score faster, I need much more practice. I also forgot to brush off the excess flour prior to scoring.

Here's the crumb on one of the first set with the shaped cold retard. I'm liking the flavour more without as much whole wheat and the crust is fairly thin and crisp. My favourite hybrid sourdough IDY baguette for flavour and texture so far.

Benny's 6th set of baguettes

One step forward, two steps back. I think this is the theme of today's bake for me. I once again used Abel's Baguette au Levain formula that Alfanso shared his formula for. This is an almost all white flour (my starter is fed red fife so the only whole grain is in the starter At 1%) using a levain 9% PFF and 0.07% IDY.

I used what I believe to be T55 flour this time instead of AP.
I bulk fermented until 30% rise, then cold retarded the whole dough in bulk in the fridge at 2ºF for 18hr 45 mins. Pre-shaped loosely, bench rested 10 mins then shaped. This is where I ran into problems. This dough was super extensible. By the time I was ready to roll the shaped dough it was already at the maximal length of my baking steel. Trying to roll it a little bit to get a better final shape made it too long. Once placed in the oven the ends were touching the oven's back wall or got folded under the parchment paper and under itself. At this point I should have side loaded them as the baking steel has more width than depth. I'll have to do this next time to allow me to better shape my baguettes.

Still no ears : (. More practice is needed. I also note that they are still not browning evenly. I wonder if adding the malt to the flour and mixing then before autolyse would more evenly distribute it and result in more even browning? Oh I also increase diastatic malt to 0.5%.

OK the outside wasn't much to look at, but the crumb, wow, pretty open and lacy. The dense areas at the ends are secondary to my squashing the ends when trying to fit them in the oven. Squashed up against the back of the oven and the door compressing the crumb. The crust is thin and crisp. The crumb has that nice sheen, gelatinized without being gummy or wet. I must do this again but get the shaping better and get some ears.

Benny's Seventh Set of Baguettes

Again using Abel's formula, 9% pre-fermented flour of which only 1.1% of the total dough was whole red fife. ⅓ of the flour was T55 (no more left now) and ⅔ was my 13.3% protein all purpose Canadian. IDY was used 0.07% and the hydration was 72% again. Now that I know that my all purpose is really high protein I might increase the hydration next time to 75%.

I fermentolysed the levain, flour, water, yeast and diastatic malt which I increased to 1% in the hopes of getting a better browning of the crust. Salt was added along with some water and mixed thoroughly with 100 slap and folds. The bulk fermentation took under 3 hours at 79ºF and I did two sets of coil folds. The dough was cold retarded en bulk for 21 hours because of scheduling issues. It was divided and pre-shaped into loose rolls, rested 10 mins then shaped into long batards. Here is where I could/should have rolled out longer than I did since once on the steel I noticed that I could have stretched them another 2-3 inches longer since I side loaded them this time. Baked with Silvia towel and cast iron skillet for 13 mins at 500ºF then removed steaming gear turned the oven to 480ºF convection hoping that I would get better browning. Baked a further total 12 mins oven on turning a few times and finally moved off the baking steel onto rack and left for a further 2 mins with the oven off and door ajar.




I'm really loving the flavour and texture, both of the thin crisp crust and soft crumb with good chew, of this formula. The crumb looks good to me, but I have work to do on getting a more extensible dough that is less elastic. These baguettes shortened from their initial length while in the couche a short time.

Because my all purpose is such high gluten, I'll try to increase the hydration to 75% and use far fewer slap and folds to build less gluten. I still need to adjust my scoring I think to get better ears, I did have a couple of ears on these but nothing to write home about.

I'm not sure why the browning of the crust is so uneven, could it be the spritzing of the dough I do after loading them in the oven?

The broiling rack, stuffed with crumpled aluminum is under the baking steel so it is buffering the baking steel from the direct heat of the bottom elements. It has surprisingly made a difference to the
baking steel on the broiling rack without the aluminum.

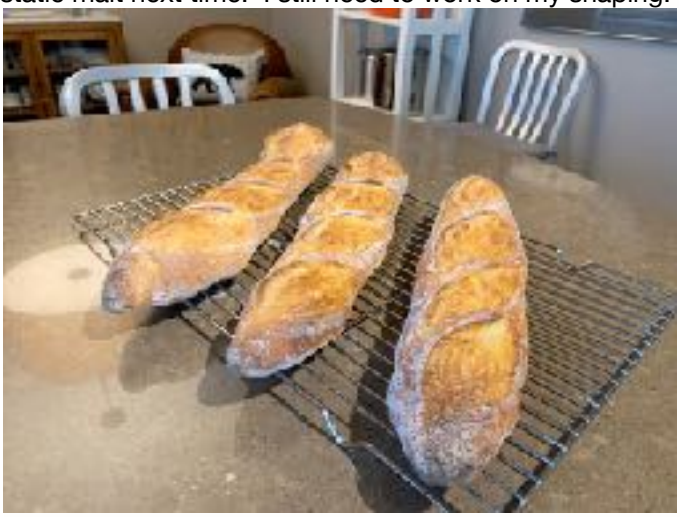
Benny's 8th set

Baguette au Levain - same formula (Abel) with the following changes, NY 0.25%, diastatic malt 0.5%, 73% hydration, all AP flour 13.3% protein. No slap and folds used, Rubaud used when adding salt and additional 15 g of water. BF 80ºF about 2 hours 15 mins with only one coil fold. Cold retard en bulk.

21 hours later preheated oven 500ºF, this time aluminum stuffed broiling rack with baking steel on second lowest rack, Sylvia towel on oven floor and cast iron skillet on top rack. Pre-shaped loosely in a roll, bench rested 10-15 mins. Then shaped on Silpat. I believe the NY helped with extensibility as they were easier to stretch than expected, but I think going to 75% hydration next time might also help a bit.

When placed in the couche, I didn't flour the dough sufficiently on the exposed part of the dough so when I flipped the first one out it stuck badly to the transfer board, damaging it when trying to remove it from the board. Of course I floured the remaining two immediately to prevent this from happening to them.

I scored this at about a 45* angle and tried to score more deeply. I think I have a bit more of an ear in a few places and think that this scoring is the way to go rather than so parallel to the dough surface. The browning took a long time, after the steaming of 13 mins baking at 500ºF they took an additional 19 mins to fully brown. I might go back up to 1% diastatic malt next time. I still need to work on my shaping.




The crumb from the last set that had some T55 flour in them (33%) was more successful than these. I wonder if I had them on the lower rack if they would have sprung better and had better crumb. The bottoms weren't nearly as browned on these leading me to think that they didn't get that initial burst of extreme heat. I had the Sylvia towel positioned immediately below the broiling rack set up and perhaps that reduced the temperature somewhat being constantly steamed. I guess I'll have a better idea after another bake, although, I will also be onto a new flour as I found some 12% AP flour yesterday that I'll try out.

The flavour of these is alright, not as good as the T55 or even the T55 blended with AP. They definitely had more chew and were slightly less crispy, some of this might have been related to the bake.

Baguettes No. 9

I don't feel that I'm progressing and improving lately. This time I tried a different flour, it was labelled as T55, but when I opened the package it had a fair amount of bran left in the flour. I decided to use it anyways since I purchased it. It wasn't as dark as a whole red fife, but nowhere near as pale as AP or bread flour.

I used the same formula with some minor changes including going back up to 1% diastatic malt and increasing the hydration to 73%. I did no slap and folds mixing the salt in with Rubaud kneading. I did two sets of coil folds and the dough had developed a good windowpane after the 2nd set. I did a bulk cold retard, this time it lasted 25 hours.

This dough was crazy extensible even without any NY. Unfortunately I had decided to roll it when I realized how extensible it was. I should have pre-shaped the 2nd and 3rd ones as boules to tighten them up, but of course I only thought of it after I had rolled all three. After a short bench rest, not wanting them to relax too much I shaped them. Again they were already quite long before I had a chance to even try to roll them, so in the end they were too long and I had to squeeze them onto the couche. I'm sure I lost any surface tension in the skin that I may have developed during shaping because of this.

Baked with the steaming gear above the baguettes which I think is the way to go for my oven. Baked @ 500*F for 13 mins with steam then an additional 13 mins rotating them. They got a bit too much colour this time. Oh I side loaded them this time.

I'll cross my fingers that the crumb is fine, but I have my doubt considering the problems with them being too long and my having to shorten them on the couche.

The crumb fortunately isn't too bad and the flavour is actually quite good. Not really T55 good but pretty good. The colour of the crumb is almost like 95% white with 5% whole wheat. There is density along the sides, it may have been when I tried to squash them shorter to fit on my couche in the cookie tray.

I may actually use this flour again and take into account its extensibility. I may decrease the hydration down to 70% and pre-shape tighter and in a boule. That'll give me more room to roll and stretch during final shaping.

Benny’s 10th set of Baguettes - with Ears and Grigne

For this 10th set of baguettes I used Abel’s formula with these changes from previous. Used the T? flour again that definitely has a small amount of bran in it. No NY used, 1% diastatic malt dissolved in the water. Hydration dropped to 68%, Rubaud after salt added followed by 2 sets of coil folds until aliquot jar had risen 30%. Cold Retard for 25 hours to work around my work schedule.

Pre-shaping done in a tight-ish boule started with the pre-heat of the oven. Rested and shaped. With the lower hydration these had more elasticity. Shaping went much better, I think I have to stay with hydration in this area. Scoring using the lame around 45-60* from horizontal and using quick strokes. I tried to go for the pointy ended shape and was more of less successful. They are probably a bit too fat, I will work on my shaping and hopefully improve if I can keep the dough consistent with the same flour and hydration from bake to bake. Changing flours so often leaves me with too many changing variables and with my nascent skills it too hard to deal with.

Preheated the oven 525ºF Silvia towel in for preheating. Dropped temperature to 500ºF when baguettes side loaded x 13 mins. Then removed steam equipment and dropped temperature to 480ºF and baked until browned.


I'm just happy to have improved a bit this time from last. It is easy to get down about your baguettes skills with the level of difficulty. I had my ruler out and they were stretched out to 16", but then they contracted in the couche while back in the fridge. Oh I didn't mention that I left them on the counter in the warm kitchen for 15 mins after shaping before putting them into the fridge. I wanted to give them a chance to puff up a bit but then cool down for scoring. I think I wasn't getting any tension on the skin the last few times especially when you over stretch and then squash them to fit. This time I felt that there was some tension in the skin. The skin took to the scoring better. I don't have as much angle on the blade and I'm scoring more deeply. I wonder if that is making the crust look thicker or if in fact it is thicker. We'll know at dinner time when I cut one open.

My baguettes didn't have a thick crust, maybe slightly thicker but not much. Still far far thinner than any sourdough batard's crust that I have ever baked.

As you can see in the crumb there is bran, not a ton, but it is there. So this isn't T55 or T65, maybe it is T75 as someone has surmised above.


Benny’s 11th set of baguettes

I decided to bake another set of baguettes using a new AP flour I found that is a bit lower in protein listed as 12%. In the end the T55 which probably was mislabeled had a bit too much of a whole grain flavour for baguettes for me.

i followed Abel’s formula again this time with 67% hydration. I dissolved the 0.25% NY, 0.5% diastatic malt, 0.07% IDY and Levain 9% PFF in the water rye mixed the flour. 20 mins later adding salt and mixed for 5 minutes with Rubaud. Then two sets of coil folds at 50 minute intervals and ended BF when 30% rise. Cold retard en bulk until next day. Preheated oven 500ºF and divided and preshaped dough in a loose boule. Rested 10 minutes then shaped. Shaping went well except that they did contract and shorten so aren’t as long as I had hoped, seems to be the way with my baguettes either too long or too short. Next time with this flour I would shape as a loose roll instead. I left them to bench rest 20 minutes in the couche then put them in the fridge. Once the oven was ready they were scored and baked at 500ºF with steam for 13 minutes then steam vented and convection turned on leaving the temperature at 500ºF. Baked another 13 minutes.

Not the best crumb I’ve had that would have been with the T55 flour but overall steps forward with shaping I think. I’m doing better with the right amount of flour on the bench now. Scoring was ok could have been more consistently deep will need more practice but scoring quickly seems best. I like the small blisters from brushing water on the dough.

Benny's 12th set of baguettes

AP flour 10% protein (PC brand)

No NY used, 1% diastatic malt, IDY and levain all dissolved in water. Then mixed the flour. 67% hydration approximately. Rubaud and bowl kneading done x 5 mins. Two sets of coil folds done at 50 mins intervals good windowpane after second set.

Aliquot jar rise to 35-40% then into fridge for cold retard overnight.

This flour without the NY is quite extensible. Next time pre-shape as a loose boule instead of loose roll.

After shaping left 20 mins room temperature rest in the couche.

My final shaping is much more successful when I pre-shape as a boule. With this low protein flour I think I can get away with it and still get the baguettes long enough without needing to pre-shape as a roll.

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OK here's the crumb. Fortunately despite the meh shaping the crumb is good. This flour is pretty good all around. Nice clean wheat flavour with a thin crisp brittle crust, I'm pretty happy with this. I'll keep my eyes out for good and proper T55 or T65 but I've been looking and not finding.

One thing I'd love to see one of you guys do, is see you do your pre-shape in a roll. The way I'm doing it is causing problems with shaping such that the only times I happy with the shaping is when I pre-shape as a boule. For this flour being quite extensible I think will work out fine, but less extensible flours my pre-shaping leads to fat ends and thin mid sections. I did bulk fermentation this time in my square shallow Pyrex dish which I use for my usual sourdough because it is ideal for coil folding. The idea being that I would divide them quite evenly in three rectangles which then could be rolled. So how would you go about turning these into a loose roll as the pre-shape. I've been folding the ends into the middle and then rolling, I don't think this is working because when I go to shape and stretch it out a bit the overlapping ends open apart leaving my with less dough in the midsection leading to the fat ends in then final baguettes.

I think a few factors go into getting the crumb based on what everyone has contributed in this massive CB. The basics I believe are lower protein flour and less dough development and then in final shaping iron fist in a velvet glove. With Abel's formula and Alan's instructions, I dissolve the levain, IDY and diastatic malt in the water then add the flour. I mix the flour until it just comes together, I don't do any kneading of any kind. After a 20 mins rest, sprinkle salt on and add some water to dimple and squeeze the dough until the salt is added, then Rubaud kneading gently for about 3-4 mins and until I cannot feel any salt. I remove a small portion of the dough at this point for the aliquot jar which then sits next to the Pyrex dish the dough is then placed in to rest 50 mins. Then two sets of coil folds 50 mins apart. That's it for dough handling. Then I wait until the aliquot jar this time reached 35-40% rise, up to now I left it until 30% rise but I wanted to see what the dough handling would be like going further and also see if the crumb would be more open. Then cold retard.

Because of work schedule, the dough was left in the fridge set to 2ºC for about 24 hours. I set the oven to 500ºF and then take the dough out of the fridge and divide. This is where I run into problems with pre-shaping. I think I've done best for final shaping when pre-shaping a boule but this time with the dough in a square Pyrex I decided I'd try to do a loose roll. Flipping the dough out onto a floured counter I divided into three equal rectangles weighed and portioned to be about 280 g each. I then do a letter fold with the ends to the middle and then rolled loosely. Left to sit on the counter in my warming kitchen for 20 mins. Each pre-shaped dough is flipped stretched trying to achieve a rectangle and then shaped fairly firmly attempting to get a bit of tension on the shaping. For two of the doughs unfortunately the ends were much fatter than the centers in shaping so I had a bit of the dumbbell shape happening. The third one seeing this was happening I letter folded each end in to try to get it more even before shaping. This extra manipulation ultimately degassed that one baguette a bit too much and one of the finished baguettes was flattish on one end.

Each was placed in the lightly floured couche and left to bench rest for an additional 20 minutes at which time I was going to place them in the fridge until the oven was up to temperature but the oven was ready within 10 mins of the bench rest starting. They were flipped out onto the transfer board and placed onto parchment. Flour was brushed off and they were scored. At this point I had intended to brush water on to get a bit of a shine but I forgot. They were loaded onto the usual baking steel setup with the steaming gear on the upper rack. Baked for 13 mins at 500ºF then steaming removed, temperature dropped to 480ºF and convection turned on to ensure steam released fully. After 5 mins turned and switched places on the steel, doing this again after another 5 mins. Temperature dropped to 350ºF and finished baking after another 3 mins.

I'm not sure what it is that I am doing that is different, but that is what I did with this bake. The crumb is a bit better than the last couple and perhaps pushing the bulk a bit was helpful for that along with the longer bench time after pre-shape and shape.

Benny's Baguettes set #13

I think these are the 13th set of baguettes and I had high hopes for them. I continue to use Abel's formula and haven't significantly changed any of my methods. Because the dough seemed fairly extensible last time (using the same 10% protein AP flour) I decided to pre-shape as a boule. After 15 mins of rest I then shaped trying to get them to 15-16" in length, which I almost achieved, although they contracted a bit in the couche. They rested in the couche on the counter for 20 mins. Because the kitchen seemed much hotter than usual the dough may have proofed more than usual during its bench time. I put them in the fridge for 5 mins before scoring, given the ambient temperature, I should have shortened the bench rest and extended the fridge time. The dough was very delicate to score and I did experience some difficulty with scoring. I brushed water on the baguettes liberally prior to baking which helped with blisters and shine. Not much in the way of ears to speak of. A couple of the ends of the baguettes are somewhat flat, this may be because my my fingers trying to hold the dough as I started to score, I'm unsure. I was hoping to improve, not sure that these are an improvement. They baked up darker than I intended. I had increased the oven temperature to 515ºF from my usual 500ºF thinking that this might help the oven spring since they were a bit over proofed so this contributed to the darker bake.

Fortunately the crumb is good, happy with that. I cannot complain at all about the soft texture to the crumb and the crisp thin crust. The flavour from this flour is actually quite good, a clean wheat flavour with a background complexity from the levain but without any sour notes whatsoever. I may never actually have good ears or grigne on my baguettes, I suppose that isn't the end of the world, but they are a nice to have. I still have the outward appearance to work on for sure.

Benny's 14th set of Baguettes au Levain

Back again with another set of baguettes again using Abel's formula which I've made a few minor changes to over time. Here is my current formula.

For three baguettes about 280 g (to account for aliquot jar)

				Total Flour				
Total Dough Weight (g)		900.3		Prefermented	9.09%			
Total Formula				Liquid Levain			Final Dough	
Ingredients	%	Grams		%	Grams		Ingredients	Grams
Total Flour	100.00%	522.5		100.00%	47.5		Final Flour	475
AP Flour/T55	100%	522.5		100%	47.5		AP Flour/T55	475
Strong Bread Flour	0%	0		0%	0.0		Bread Flour	0
Water	67%	353.5		100%	47.5		Water	
Autolyse (93%)	0.00%	0.0		0%	0.0		Autolyse(cool)	306
Final (7%)	0.00%	0.0		0%	0.0		Bassinage(v cool)	0
IDY	0.07%	0.38					IDY	0.38
Diastatic Malt Powder	1%	5.22					Malt	5.22
Salt	1.80%	9.38					Salt	9.38
Starter (in final dough)	2.20%	11.5		24%	11.5			
							Levain	95
Totals	176.89%	900.3		224%	106.5			900.3

I dissolve the levain, diastatic malt and IDY in the water and then add flour and mix until no dry flour is present. (No NY is used)

After 20 mins I add salt wetting the salt with water (I've measured and usually add about 4-6 g of water at this point, I should probably add that to the table above as the bassinage) and ensure that it is fully dissolve and mixed first with dimpling it and then pinching it in. The Rubaud kneading used for 3-4 minutes.

After 50 mins of rest at 82ºF coil folds are done with another set 50 mins later. Watching the aliquot jar bulk fermentation ended when 30% rise achieved. The dough is placed into a 2ºC fridge. The next day 18 hours later the dough is taken out of the fridge and divided and pre-shaped. I watched Abel's video and tried his pre-shape and shaping technique and really liked it. Once the pre-shape was done the oven was pre-heated set at 500ºF. After 20 mins the dough was shaped and placed onto the couche and left at very warm room temperature for 20 mins. The shaped dough was then placed in the fridge to firm up prior to scoring. The Silvia towel was then loaded into the oven filled with boiled water. After 20 minutes of chilling the shaped baguettes were transferred to the peel and then scored. This time the lame was about 45* angle to the dough surface, attempting to use quick cuts and maybe about 0.5 cm deep, however, I never quite get the score I want with one go so recut a bit to get the 0.5 cm depth. Flour is brushed off and then water is heavily brushed on.

The baguettes are then loaded into the oven and 250 mL of boiled water is poured in the cast iron skillet. The baguettes are baked with steam for 13 minutes. The steaming equipment is removed and the oven temperature is dropped to 480ºF convection on. After 5 mins they are rotated, after a further 5 mins they are rotated again and the oven temperature dropped to 375ºF. 3 minutes later they are done.

I have some flattish ends again, these are the baguettes with which I struggled a bit getting the length and applied too much downward rather than outward pressure. I still need more practice stretching and rolling. I have to concentrate on stretching outwards and not pressing downwards. The otherwise got a better lift so cutting the bulk was a positive and it helped with ears and grigne.

We shall see at dinner time if the crumb suffers from the reduction in bulk rise from 35-40 to 30%.

I'm pretty happy with the crumb, it isn't too different from the crumbs with the 35-40% rise. I think the benefits outweighs the negatives with reducing the rise back to 30% in bulk.






Benny's 15th set of baguettes

I can't believe I've made 15 sets of baguettes. I've never repeated any other formula so many times. Thankfully we really do enjoy the flavour of these baguettes. I am still doing Abel's formula and nothing has significantly changed there. The hydration must be around 67.5% so I haven't dropped the hydration to see if the ears would improve. However, I did change the bulk rise. This time I ended bulk at 25% rise in the aliquot jar (sorry to those of you who hate that word but it reminds me of organic chemistry and biochemistry labs which are much worse memories for me than any song might be for you). The dough went into cold retard for 24 hours in bulk. I pre-shaped as a loose roll, rested 20 mins and then shaped again using the method Abel used in his video. I'm pretty happy with his pre-shaping and shaping overall it is fewer steps than what I was doing and I don't see that much of a different in outcome so far. After shaping I put the baguettes en couche into the fridge and at that time started the oven. I wanted to try to stop any further fermentation since I was going for a lower bulk this time and didn't want to add much extra fermentation while the dough was at room temperature.

I really meant to change just one variable at a time and it was supposed to be bulk rise, but unbelievably the last bake the bottom crust was a bit underdone, so this time thinking about Dan and Geremy baking hot I decided to pre-heat and bake with steam at 525ºF. Then continue without steam at 500ºF.

As far as scoring goes, I now agree that I do not think I needed to score deeply, I am now scoring with about a 45* angle to the dough surface and maybe 0.25-0.5 cm depth. Also the dough was much more enjoyable to score being less proofed and cold. The scores were done quickly with pretty clean cuts. This time I am getting what are good ears and grigne for me. I think the issue all along has been I was pushing bulk fermentation to the limit. Past the limit really if one wanted to have ears and grigne and a good cross sectional profile to the baguette. I'm glad things are coming together gradually. Overall I'm pretty happy with how these look on the outside, I'll cut one to have with dinner and hope the crumb is still as open as the previous ones, but I suspect that it may not be since I think that it was pushing bulk so far that was getting me that crumb.

So the crumb, pretty good, there are some areas of higher density that I didn't have in the past. I think we have successfully answered the question of how I was getting such great open crumb, Don said it earlier somewhere. It was because I was pushing bulk fermentation. With this bake only going to 25% rise and then limiting bench rest during shaping I went in the opposite direction. The crumb is still fine, but just not quite as impressive as previous bakes with bulk pushed to 30-40%, but those were done at the cost of not having good oven spring, ears and grigne. What do you think, is this a good balance now?

Benny's 16th set of bagguettes 71.5% hydration

I really haven't baked any other bread as much as baguettes now if you count individual loaves. My 16th set using a new 10% AP flour from Quebec, I'm hoping it'll taste French. It certainly behaved French being more extensible, however, there were a couple of other factors that may have also contributed to the extensibility. For this set I increased hydration to 71.5% hoping to improve extensibility. As well, as per Dan's suggestion I kept and added last week's aliquot jar dough and used it like a Biga. The dead yeast in this may have increased extensibility. Finally I was more patient and allowed a full 30 mins bench rest between pre-shaping and shaping. In any event, I was able to stretch these to a full 16" with little to no contraction during couche rest. I again limited bulk rise to 25% in the aliquot jar.

I have decent shaping and fair ears and grigne. I wonder if the ears aren't quite as pronounced because of the higher hydration or if the longer bench rest in between pre-shape and shaping may have allowed more proofing than expected. If the crumb is still good I might try cutting back on bulk rise all the way to 20% and allow a longer bench rest to "catch up" a bit without going too far with proofing.


The crumb has taken a step backwards in openness with this bake, I am unsure why. One thought I have is whether the addition of the "Biga" could have affected it. I don't think I did a good job of working it into the dough very evenly though out. If the other baguettes have the same dense areas then that is obviously not it. If this is the only baguette with that characteristic then that is what I'll point towards.


Here is the crumb from the second baguette from yesterday's batch and the crumb is much better than the first.


Benny's Sesame Semolina Baguettes ala Alfanso No 1

Here is my take on Alan's Sesame Semolina Baguettes. I used his formula generally but made a few changes. I added 0.07% IDY and also did an overnight Saltolyse and levain build. I forgot how low hydration this was going to be so in the future I wouldn't do the overnight saltolyse and would instead just mix the levain IDY water and flours in the morning then add salt 20 mins later. I ended bulk at 25% rise in the aliquot jar and placed the dough en bulk in the fridge until the next afternoon. 26 hours or so after the start of cold retard the dough was divided and pre-shaped and left to rest in loose rolls for 20 mins. Shaping was a bit of a mishmash of different shaping techniques but I think I like shaping ala Abel the most and will try to stick to that in the future. These were very easy to roll out to 16" and in fact with the first one I had to cut one end because it rolled out to 18" way too long for my steel. It was a challenge to roll these on the wet towel and roll them in the sesame seeds, each time I felt like I was degassing them a bit and then stretching them as well. I wonder if the next time I was to make these again, if I should proof to 20% and then after shaping let them have a bench rest at warm room temperature to try to bounce back a bit from the shaping, wetting and sesame seed applications.

Having never baked anything with semolina to such a high percentage before I didn't know what to expect, but the dough was nice and extensible. The flavour of this baguette though, for a sesame seed fanatic is just outstanding. I'm not sure what the Semola Rimacinata is contributing for flavour but this is my favourite tasting baguette I've ever made. I dare say that it tastes better than the sesame baguette I used to buy at my favourite local bakery Blackbird.
The crumb has a lovely yellow hue from the Semola and is nice and tender without too much chew. The crust is very crispy with that amazing sesame flavour.

I have a line of dense crumb near the center of the baguette that when I examine it closely, I can faintly see white flour. I suspect that the dense crumb section is because of raw flour that got into the middle of this baguette when pre-shaping or shaping. I'll need to be a better job of brushing off the excess flour. If it wasn't for the yellow hue of the semolina I would never have seen this line in the dense area. I wonder if this causes some of the density in baguette crumb we see?

Anyhow, these baguette taste so good I just downed one plain no butter or anything for dinner.




Benny’s Sesame Semolina Sourdough Baguettes Set No.2

Back at the same sesame semolina sourdough baguettes but with some changes to try to improve the crumb. So I made some changes in the hopes of achieving a more open crumb. The first significant change I made was to delete the commercial yeast altogether, this change was made by accident and wasn’t planned as removing the commercial yeast wasn’t something that I thought would improve the crumb. In fact, I thought that the addition of commercial yeast was part of what was giving my an open crumb.

I increased the hydration from 67 to 71% and I also reduced bulk fermentation rise in the aliquot jar from 25 to 20%. My thinking there was increasing hydration is often one route to open crumb as long as you handle the dough well. The reduction in bulk rise was done to make dough handling easier. You see, when I had to transfer the shaped dough to a tray with a wet towel and roll it, then transfer it to the tray with the sesame seeds and roll it, I found that the dough felt like it was getting degassed and stretched out too long. So reducing bulk made the dough much easier to handle this much and once seeded and in the couche the dough was 16” long, the max for my baking steel. Finally to compensate for the reduced fermentation I added a 30 mins bench rest in the couche followed by my usual 30 minute chill in the fridge. The fridge time is intended to firm the dough up to make it easier to score.

I think my changes were very successful and I’m quite happy with the improvement in the crumb compared to my first set. Leaving out the commercial yeast didn’t have the negative effect that I expected in making the crust thicker nor did leaving it out make the crumb less open.

Dan

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Dan Bake #1 - Demi Baguettes

Baguettes done well is an expert endeavor. The signature length, coupled with the relatively small diameter of the dough presents unique challenges for every baker attempting to perfect the style. Open and airy crumb (ideally a crackly crust), uniform shape, and those gorgeous ears make this bread one that is admired by expert bakers and connoisseur alike.

Because of the perceived difficulty of mastering this bread, I chose to focus on shaping and attaining nice, uniform ears. For my initial challenge this is more than enough…

The first baguette bake was shaped as Demi Baguettes and used Alan's Commercial Yeast formula. Small (150g) breads were chosen. It seemed the small size would ease handling, simplify scoring, and besides they are so darn good looking.

As an early bake I was happy with the shape and ears, but should have BF and possibly proofed longer. I think the crumb was under fermented. Notice the dense crumb around the perimeter of the loaf.

Dan Bake #2

These baguettes were baked using Alan's SD formula and method above. Up until this baguette, I thought Commercial Yeast made the best tasting baguettes. These are very good eating. The crust and crumb are substantial but in no way hard to chew. Will SD baguettes have a much better shelf Life than CY? CY baguettes are good for about 24 hr. After that they go down hill quickly, IMO.

Each of the 4 loaves below were baked separately with different oven temps and steam settings.

Bake #1

500F - Steam for first 3 min - 1 min steam after 4 min - 1 min steam after 8 min - Used parchment paper - oven rack 1 level higher than the middle - Backed 20 min

Bake #2

485F - No steam - Heavy spritz after initial load - Additional spritz after 5 min - No parchment - Middle rack - Baked 20 min

Bake #3

485F - Pre-steamed 1 1/2 min - Steamed 2 1/2 min after loading dough - Rack in middle position - No parchment - Left the dough our of fridge and on counter for 30 min - Baked 18 min

Bake #4

485F - Pre-steamed 1 1/2 min - Steamed 2 1/2 min after loading dough - Rack in middle position - No parchment - Left the dough our of fridge and on counter for 60 min - Baked 16 min

For those that are not aware, I use an External Steam Generator. This is how the steam timing is handled. The appliance is nice to have, but is definitely not necessary for great bread. Almost no bakers on the forum use a device like this.
I welcome suggestions and instructions for improvement. I'm wide open to learn…

Dan’s Bake #3

I used Jim’s favorite formula from the Team USA 2008 Baguette Competition. I was intrigued with the fact that it uses 2 pre-ferments (SD & poolish) totaling 43.3% PPF. Haven’t tasted them yet but expect intense flavor from these.

This turned out to be the Bake from Hell!
During the second phase of the dough development, the mixer refused to start. Unable to troubleshoot the problem I elected to finish off by hand. NOTE - later learned the ground fault receptacle had tripped. Problem averted.
The dough was developed (in mixer) before remembering that the yeast, salt, and malt was left out. Had a heck of a time incorporating. Decided to use lamination to facilitate addition of omitted ingredients. This required a little extra water.
Forgot to preheat the oven, which delayed the completion of the final proof. Thank God, after these debacles things smoothed out

They were baked 2 at a time with various oven and steam settings. I went longer lengths on 3 of them this time. The dough was loaded side ways on an improved 22” board. The loading process went off without a hitch. I foresee long baguettes in my future. 22” would be a “legit” baguette.

NOTE - All breads were baked 2 at a time. Bake #1 & 2, followed by Bake #3 & 4. The following setting were used for all 4 breads. 485F, pre-steamed oven for 1 1/2 min - on the middle rack, and used no parchment. Variations are listed below.

Bake #1 & #2
Steamed 3 min after loading dough (NOTE - after 3 min the oven spring was very noticeable) - the dough were loaded side ways on a custom cut stone to facilitate the long length - Baked 16 min - Internal temp 208F
*** All Crumb Shots will be posted after the breads are sliced. The neighbors are getting "happy feet”.

Bake #3 & #4

Steamed 2 min after loading dough - Baked 14 min - Internal temp 207F

I got to taste this one. Keep in mind many things were very wrong with this bread. I liked this one less than the first and second bakes. All three bakes used different formulas. So far, Alan's SD formula (posted in the original post) takes the taste honors.

After all of the problems with this batch, I am thrilled they came out at all. The diastatic malt is a great aide for crust browning. A little goes a long way.

Dan’s Bake #4 is in the books

Baked 4 baguettes @ ~330g a piece. Used Alan’s SD formula above with no CY. The main focus for this bake was a softer crust and crumb. KendalM told me he also likes softer baggies. He told me to bake them hot and fast. They were baked in 15 min @ 500F. NOTE - my oven cooks hot and fast. It always has. The crust and crumb was much more to my liking this time. Thanks Geremy!

NOW, on to the next point of focus. More oven spring... a lot more.

Below are some thoughts. Looking for the opinions of others.

This profile image shows why I think the dough is setting up too early. Notice how the bottom of the loaf is raised high off the stone.

Initially thought they were over-proofed, but the crumb doesn’t seem to indicate that.

Starting to believe the crust is setting too quickly. This would account for the very round profile of the slice. The bottom of the loaf is rising high and quickly off the stone.

Considering the possibility of too much steam. I subscribe to Doc’s theory that steam doesn’t facilitate dough stretch, but that it does speed the browning and therefore the setting of the crust.

If the crust is setting too fast the crumb will be adversely affected and the scores will suffer. The oven spring will be prohibited from expansion once the crust sets.

Examine the crumb shot below after zooming in. It seems the center alveoli are rapidly expanding, but because the crust is setting up too fast the outer cell structure is compressed up against the hardened crust.
I may be barking up the wrong tree. If you think so, please share.

My granddaughter just sliced one.
Following KendalM’s advice to bake hot and fast has produced a softer bite and chew.

Dan's Bake #5

I decided to try KendalM's Tradition French Baguette formula. It uses King Arthur All Purpose flour (originally recommends French T65), 0.3% CY, 2% salt, and 73.3% hydration.

In an effort to slow the hardening of the crust, the oven was dropped from 500F to 450. The oven was pre-steamed for 90 seconds and then again 90 seconds of steam was injected immediately after the dough was loaded. The crust hardening was noticeably slowed and the oven spring was better as a result. Next time the temp will be raised to ~470-475. I think a little more heat will produce a slightly better result. There is more tweaking to do, but the choice to reduce the temp was a good one.

I am diggin' the sideways load. KendalM and I have kindred spirits.

MTLoaf mentioned that CY makes for a soft crumb with a thinner crust. That describes this bread exactly. In all honesty, I would have like more flavor. A small amount of whole wheat is destined to be one of the future tweaks.

The top baguette in the image below was spritzed with a Malted Barley and water mixture. I waited until the loaf was almost done before spraying. The result was subtle but nice. It was shiny and slightly darker.

Thanks Geremy, for taking the time to work with me. I have always been drawn to your enthusiasm...

Dan’s Bake #6

The more I bake these baguettes, the more expert Alan becomes…

Went with Alan’s formula that was listed in the original post. In an effort to produce a soft bite the dough was mixed with KAAP, Bob’s Red Mill Whole Wheat PASTRY Flour, and Whole Rye. Looks like the pastry flour lowered the protein enough to tenderize the bread. Yea!
All 4 bakes using Alan’s SD formula tasted great. IMO, the gluten was still stronger than I wished. Dough was mixed to 73% hydration and it was more difficult to shape. TIP - if while shaping the baguette the dough is too loose, put it in the freezer for 10-15 minutes. Shaping will be more manageable with a cold dough.

These baguettes were good, bad, and ugly.
good = taste and texture
bad = lacking oven spring, probably over-fermented AGAIN
ugly = ears were missing or lack luster

Lesson learned -
Lowering the baking stone allowed the dough more time before the crust hardened. If the dough would have sprung, things may have turned out exceptional.
Lowering the stone allow me to bake 2 of the baguettes at 550F. More experimenting needed.
The characteristics of baguette dough is a much greater concern than other types of bread. Baguettes will clearly reveal any flaws in your process. It is unforgiving.
•


If any bakers are interested in longer baguettes that require loading the sideways, see THIS LINK for an idea.

Dan's Bake #7

If practice makes perfect. I have a lot of practice left to do.

Deviated a little from Alan's formula. 85% Bread Flour, 10% Hard Red Wheat, 5% Whole Rye. Reducing the whole grain to 15% still provided a nice flavor. Not as intense as 25% WW, though, but never the less very nice. Since I used an 8 hour cold (38F) autolyse the hydration remained at 68%. The idea of the autolyse was to weaken the dough and make the it more extensible. I'm not sure the affect was achieved, but the crust and crumb were more tender than any other bake. That was enjoyable. The crumb was moist but not at all gummy. The crust was still too thick. But this bake started at 550F. I wanted to see if the crust would break and produce ears. Not so <disappointing>

Can someone break the code of silence and let us all know what it takes to get the crust to fracture and allow the oven spring to manifest those gorgeous ears? I hope to break the code but, "It don't come easy, you know it don't come easy".

HERE is an in-oven time lapse video of the bake. The oven was thoroughly pre-heated to 550F and ~8oz of water was injected as steam in the very beginning. Maybe someone will pickup a clue that will "break the code".

For the most part I am happy with the baggies, in large part due to the help rec'd in the Community Bake.
BUT those darn ears :-(…

NOTE - shaped baguette dough will shrink some. If a 22 incher is the goal, anticipate stretching out to 23.5-24" to allow for shrinkage.

I hate to throw in the towel and admit defeat. But I am tempted to increase the dough weight from 330g/dough to 500g and make some 20-22" long and beautiful batards. I think they would be a thing of beauty...

Dan's Bake # 8, would you believe?

Went with Martin Philip's Poolish Baguettes. WOW, does commercial yeast move fast!

The Bad

Another problematic bake. I strayed from Matin's method and did an autolyse. Problem was the dough didn't have enough water to fully hydrate the flour. The poolish was so large. It should have been mixed in as instructed to fully hydrate the dough. The dough was mixed similar to the way butter is cut into a pie crust. Mostly hydrated but not completely. Thought it might be a good experiment. It was, with terrible results :-(Definitely learned something. The levain was difficult to incorporate and the dough never did give up the pea sized bits of flour.

Also the dough never did come together well. It was weak and too airy. Shaping was difficult. Less yeast is probably a good call. Maybe even, much less.

We are encouraged to post the good, the bad, and the ugly. Others learn valuable lessons from our shared mistakes. Here's a tip - make sure to thoroughly hydrate your autolyse.

The Good

This bread was the closest ever baked that came very close to the kind of "French Bread" that we make Po Boys with in the New Orleans area. The bite and chew was very nice. The crumb was squeezable soft, kind of like Charmin. When squeezed the loaf gave in without much resistance. The crust was thin, but not crackly. Maybe one day I'll get crackly.

The scoring went extremely well. I went back to a hand made lame with a scoop bend in the blade. Scoring was reasonably pleasant considering the dough was never chilled. Cuts were decisive and confidence is growing. The crust busted ears in 2.5 - 3 minutes, but the oven spring was so huge it swelled up and covered the ears. A pretty good problem to have, IMO.

The Ugly

I can't say anything was ugly.

The smaller (330g) baguette was baked with an aluminum cover and had 15 seconds of injected steam.

The 515g baguette was baked on the stone with a steam pan inverted about 7 inches above on a rack. Steam was provided by 8 ounces of boiling water poured into another steam pan filled with lava rocks.

Both breads bake at 550F from beginning to end. They took 17 & 18 minutes.

The larger sized baguette seems better suited for sandwiches. I know the French would frown, but…

I sincerely hope that no bakers shy away from any of our Community Bakes because they think they skills are not up to the challenge. Community Bakes are not a competition, but a vehicle for learning. Everyone is encouraged to join in and learn along with us.

MTLoaf made an observation that held true here. Commercial yeast makes the softest bread. I don't think SD can come close when a light bite and a soft chew is desired.

Dan’s Bake #9

WOW! 9 bakes. Some people get it right away, and others learn quite quickly. But for those of us that struggle, persistence is the driving force that leads us on.

Used Alan’s take on Hamelman’s SD Formula, but tweaked the whole grains, 83% KAAP, 10% Hard Red Spring Wheat, 5% Spelt, & 2% Fava Beans. Each of the 4) 440g loaves were baked individually. The idea here is to try different baking variables (oven & steam settings, etc..

Settings shared by all 4 bakes
550F for 10 minutes, 550F w/convection for 7-10minutes
Dough was retarded approximately 24 hr.
NOTE - Bake #1 is on the bottom and #4 is on the top.

Bake #1
Pre-steam 90 seconds of injected steam
1.5 cups of water in pan w/lava rocks - steam pan was inverted over the dough positioned 2 slots above
90 seconds of steam injected after loading
Bake time - 17 minutes

Bake #2
No injected steam
3 cups of water in pan w/lava rocks - No inverted steam pan
Paint dough w/water after scoring
Error - Forgot to turn convection of for the first 5 minutes of bake
Bake time - 16 minutes

Bake #3
2 cups of water in pan w/lava rocks - no inverted pan
Dough was not painted w/water
No injected steam
Blocked of top oven vent attempting to hold more steam
Bake time - 17 minutes

Bake #4
Pre-steam 90 seconds of injected steam
1.5 cups of water in pan w/lava rocks - steam pan was inverted over the dough positioned 2 slots above
180 seconds of steam injected after loading
Blocked of top oven vent attempting to hold more steam
Bake time 17 minutes

Only 1 loaf was opened, the other 3 were given away. I’ve baked so many baguettes, I fear I may be running out of eaters. Believe it or not, baguettes are not a favorite of mine or my wife. But the challenge is a great one...

Dan's Bake #10

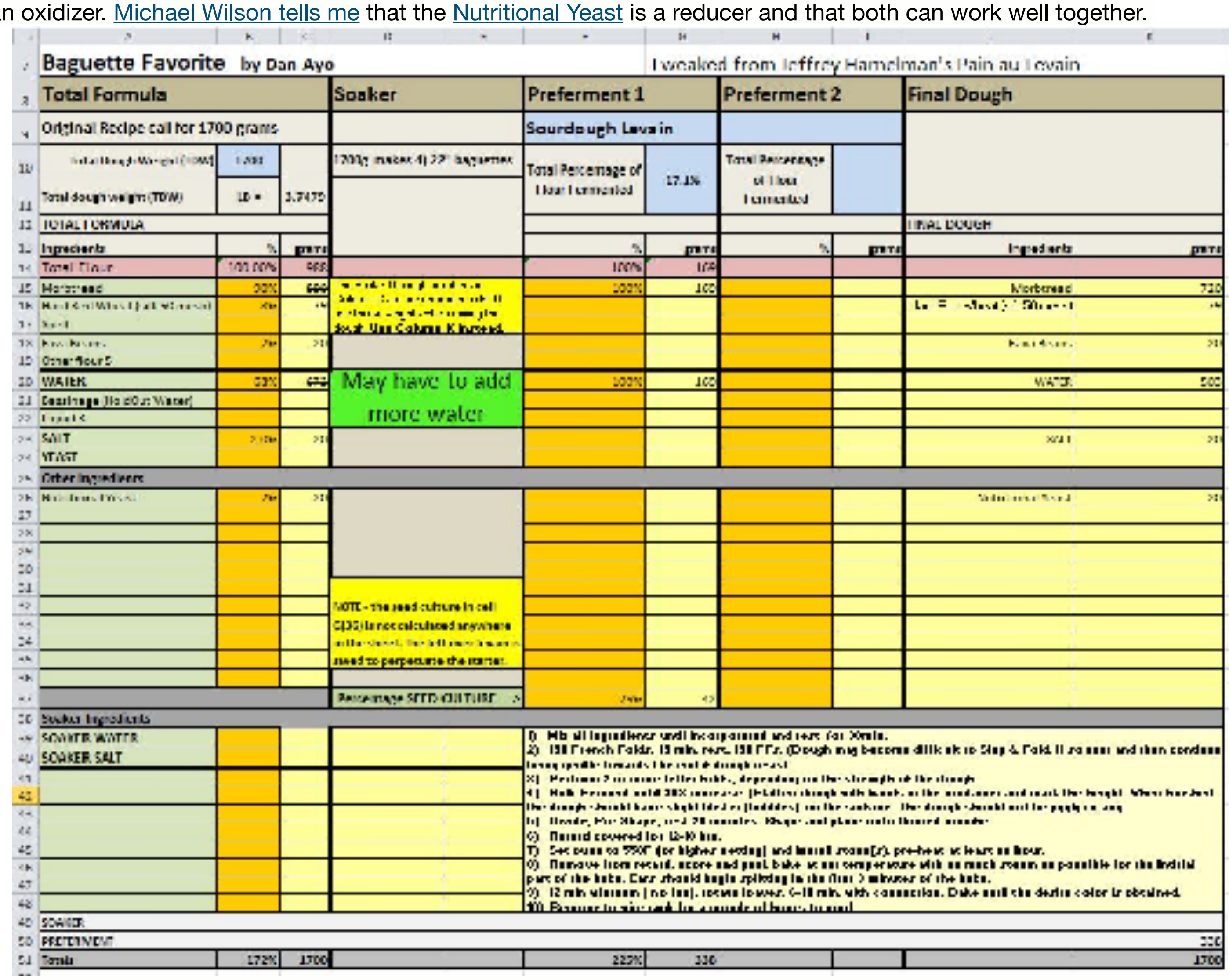
After Bake #9 I thought I was finished. I feared the neighbors were being over-whelmed with baguettes. Well, they weren't. They all told me to keep them coming. Thank God, I didn't stop at #9 because this latest bake has changed the way I think about baguettes.

The latest group of breads have changed my opinion on baguettes. I was not a fan of the skinny loaves. But low and behold out of the oven popped a loaf of bread that had a crispy crust with a little bite, but the crumb was creamy and soft. When the loaf is squeezed, the outside has a slight resistance, but there is also the promise of a soft interior as the loaf compresses and smoothly regains it's shape. The bite is extraordinary. First the resistant crunch, followed by the pleasant surrender of the creamy crumb. The distinct, but smooth lactic sour is evident in every delectable bite. After baking so very many loaves, I was fortunate to arrive at "Baguette Nirvana”.

If you’ll notice, this time the writeup was about texture and flavor. A departure from my other bakes, where oven spring, ears, and coloration was the goal of the day. Without attempting, the bite, flavor and texture turned out to be king. After all is said and done, it is the flavor that always rules.

The bread is so special (IMO) it seemed good to post the spreadsheet encase others wanted to experience what I have. Notice that this baguette utilizes Nutritional Yeast and Fava Bean flour. I can't say for sure that they contributed to the taste and/or texture, but I am convinced that the resulting dough was as extensible as any 68% hydrated dough that I've ever handled, BY FAR!

Note the white colored crumb, even though there is 10% whole grain. That is a direct result of Fava Bean flour, which is an oxidizer. Michael Wilson tells me that the Nutritional Yeast is a reducer and that both can work well together.



Baguette Favorite by Dan Ayo — Tweaked from Jeffrey Hamelman's Pain au Levain

Total Formula			Soaker	Preferment 1		Preferment 2		Final Dough	
Original Recipe call for 1700 grams				Sourdough Levain					
Total Dough Weight (TDW)	[illegible]		1700g makes 4) 22" baguettes	Total Percentage of Flour Fermented	17.1%	Total Percentage of Flour Fermented			
Total dough weight (TDW)	[illegible]	3.7479							
TOTAL FORMULA								FINAL DOUGH	
Ingredients	%	grams		%	grams	%	grams	Ingredients	grams
Total Flour	[illegible]	[illegible]		100%	[illegible]				
Morbread	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] ... Use Column K instead.	100%	[illegible]			Morbread	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]						[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]									
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]						[illegible]	[illegible]
Other flour 5									
WATER	[illegible]	[illegible]	May have to add more water	100%	[illegible]			WATER	[illegible]
[illegible] (Hold Out Water)									
[illegible]									
SALT	[illegible]	[illegible]						SALT	[illegible]
YEAST									
Other Ingredients									
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]						[illegible]	[illegible]
			NOTE - the seed culture in cell [illegible] is not calculated anywhere in the sheet. [illegible] used to perpetuate the starter.						
			Percentage SEED CULTURE ->	[illegible]	[illegible]				
Soaker Ingredients									
SOAKER WATER									
SOAKER SALT									
SOAKER									
PREFERMENT									[illegible]
Totals	172%	1700		225%	330				1700

1) Mix all ingredients until incorporated and rest for 30min.
2) [illegible] French Folds. [illegible] min. rest. [illegible] (Dough may become difficult to Slap & Fold [illegible]) [illegible]
3) [illegible]
4) Bulk Ferment until [illegible] [illegible]
5) [illegible]
6) Retard covered for 12-[illegible] hrs.
7) Set oven to 550F (or higher setting) and install steam(s). pre-heat at least an hour.
8) Remove from retard, score and peel. bake at [illegible] temperature with as much steam as possible for the initial part of the bake. Ears should begin splitting in the first [illegible] minutes of the bake.
9) 12 min. [illegible] (no [illegible]). [illegible] lower. [illegible] min. with convection. Bake until the desired color is obtained.
10) [illegible]

I appreciate the help and patience of so many bakers on this forum. Without which my breads would not be nearly as nice.

Dan’s Bake #11

I’ve baked a lot of bread for each and every Community Bake, but this one tops them all. This bake attempted to duplicate Bake #10. A few exceptions, dropped the Fava Bean, eliminated the Slap & Folds, and raised the hydration to 70%.

It is reassuring to know that my favorite baguette (bake #10) wasn’t a fluke and can be easily duplicated. The crispy crust and creamy medium soft interior doesn’t disappoint. I detect no noticeable difference with or without the Fava Beans.

Two separate batches were baked, the main difference being the first was 550F and the second, 485F. In all images below the first bake is at the bottom of the image. The crumb shot shows bake #1 and also #2.
The varied bakes may have taught me something. High heat, darker coloration but more importantly, the crumb was more open.

A shaping mistake may have also lead to an important discovery (to be determined). The loaf at the very top was shaped without pre-shaping, and then stretched out. Contrary to popular belief, can it be that a super tight shape is not necessary? And the slightly looser shape may facilitate more oven spring due to less compressive force. Much more experimentation is needed before any type of conclusion can be drawn. This also causes me to consider whether weaker flour will produce more open and lofty baguettes.

I hope some don't find these post obnoxious. Am Im pleased with these latest bakes, absolutely! But these post are not meant to brag, but to share. This is the purpose of the CBs.
Spoiler Alert...
If these post are irritating, please don't check in tomorrow. I'll be baking #12 and it may succeed. But I've baked enough bread to know that "ugly" is just waiting around the corner to humble the proud baker. <I am laughing out loud>

Dan's Bake #12

Same formula as the last few bakes. The only exception is 70% hydration and dropped the Fava Beans. The retard was also done in bulk which was new for me. All loaves were bakes with ~9 oz. of low pressure steam. A foil heat shield was placed on a rack 2 positions above the baking stone to minimize the affects of top heat for the first 10 minutes and then removed.

First bake was 2 loaves and they are located at the top of the images. The dough was removed from the fridge and pre-shaped and/or shaped right away, then shaped minutes after. Shaping went very well with the chilled dough. The first dough on the very bottom was shaped without pre-shaping as part of an on-going experiment.

The second 2 loaves, located at the bottom of the images were forgotten on the bench. I intended to put them back in the fridge after shaping. They sat for ~1 hr @ 73F. Another experiment was born.

I know the bottom loaf was over-proofed. They were accidentally left out for at least an hour @ 73F. General consensus would surely say they were under-proofed. The things we know, we only think we know...
I will be bulk retarding baguettes in the future.

Dan’s Bake #13, a Baker’s Dozen

Needed a change, so went with a commercially yeasted Bouabsa @ 75%. Even with KAAP it was surprising how well the high hydration dough handled. The shaping will require a little adjusting and the crumb needs work, but for a first attempt, it’s a great start. Each baggie weighed ~320g. Seems they were a little light for the length.

A possible point of interest to some. The baguettes were pulled from bulk retard after 8 hr. They were immediately divided and then shaped. There was no pre-shaping. The whole operation took only a few minutes and they were placed back into the fridge couched and sealed in a plastic bag.

Notice the image below. One dough was slashed towards me and the other away. The dough has been scored slashing towards me in the past. So many experienced bakers slash away from them, so it was given a try. It felt very good and the scores may have been slightly better. But the big plus about scoring away was the hand position when slanting the blade felt more comfortable and there was no need to lean way over the dough to see. Will consider slashing away from the body in the future.

Lessons derived during this bake

If thin, crispy, & crunchy crust coupled with a super creamy and soft crumb is you bag, commercial yeast is the way to go. SD, although much more complex in flavor will not get the texture and chew you desire.
There is no need to fear 75% hydration. Even with all purpose flour
Commercially yeasted baguettes are more simple and less complicated (relatively little work).
Alan taught me to pull the bulk retard (half way through) to shape, then send back to the fridge (sweet idea).
Scoring away from the body seems better and feels more natural.
The Biggie - Steam

Steam

My steam comes from an external source that is injected into the oven via the top steam vent. High pressure steam is not desirable and has powerful affects. Low pressure is definitely the way to go.
Notice in the image below how one side (circled in red) is more browned and heavily blistered. You could call these third degree burns :-).

The blister in that specific location are a result of high pressure steam streaming down upon it. It is apparent that some type of diffusion will be required to more evenly disperse the steam and also high pressure steam should not be used once the dough is loaded. High pressure steam (used to release Pressure Cooker pressure) will only be used to pre-steam in the future. This won't relate to many bakers, but Albacore and anyone else incorporating External Steam Injection may benefit.

In Bake #13 the crumb is nice, but could be improved. The concern is the tight crumb around the perimeter of the loaf. Any suggestions are appreciated.

I noticed from an image in the prior bake (pictured above), a distinct difference in cell structure. In the image below the lower loaf was mistakenly forgotten on the counter for an hour. Notice the tight cell structure around the perimeter. As a result of an error on my part it proofed at room temp at least an hour more that the top loaf. Is this issue with the image above and the loaf on the bottom below completely fermentation are or other things coming into play?

Dan’s Bake #14 “takes a licking & keeps on ticking”

Big changes this time. Tried authentic french T65 flour, a first for me. It was a learning adventure for sure. The characteristics is this flour is very unlike any other flour I’ve ever used. Bouabsa was the baguette of the day, but the hydration was reduced from 75% to 69. A much needed reduction. The flour is weak by nature and requires gentle handling. The gluten forms easily and a super supple and smooth dough is easily attainable. It displays a shiny and very cream colored appearance. The windowpane is surprisingly nice, although thin.
The bread bakes up exquisitely, and the crust crackles and the crumb is creamy, moist, and has a wonderful soft texture. The contrast between the crunchy crust and the soft interior is more pronounced than anything I’ve produced in the past.

The taste can best be described as clean, very clean. It should pair well with many additions and make great sandwiches. Update - just tried a piece with Truffle Salt and fresh cracked Black Pepper. It is wonderful! As a self confessed “sour head”, it lacks the depth and complexity that is so familiar to me. It will never replace sourdough, but it shouldn’t compete in the same arena.

Is the flour worth $2.62 per pound? For me, a resounding yes! Mostly because of the marvelous textures that I’ve been unable to produce from American flours. Future bakes may sway my opinion, but for now, “I’m a very happy camper”.

Even though things went awry during the bake, the results were surprisingly stellar. The crumb is much improved. God is smiling upon me. the saying, “you deserve a break today, is fits me perfectly”.

Below is a quick YouTube video showing the In-oven bake.
Use Video is best viewed using THIS LINK.

Dan’s Bake #15 - Still at it

I’ve got the French Flour Blues. For Baguette excellence this French T65 flour will require some work to perfect on my part. But for me, it is well worth the effort. One bite into this ridiculously crunchy crust that is quickly followed up by the incredible softness of the creamy crumb is plenty enough to goad me on... This flour is special.

Baked Bouabsa again. Went with 70% hydration and 2% Fava Beans. I had hoped that the Fava Beans will give adequate strength for a beginner like me to handle it with more ease. I was wrong. The dough was removed from the fridge ~12 hours later to shape, couche, and retard again. Shaping the cold dough was difficult. The dough was entirely too extensible for my present skills. It stretched out way beyond the 22” length that my home oven will allow. So, I decided to cut 1/3 off the length and make a couple of Ficelles. Managed to salvage that. But the shaping was nuttin’ nice. NOW, let’s discuss scoring! Even with a super frigid dough the skins are extremely delicate. In the past with other flours a very low angle (filleting) score produced super results, but that was not to be the case with these babies. Next time the dough will be scored at ~45-60 degrees, a deeper angle. The more shallow angle caused the blade to skip across the surface of the dough on a couple of slashes.

But, I say again. The eating is absolutely exquisite!

Dan’s Bake #16

Never have I ever baked so many breads for any other CB before. The challenges of this bread coupled with the progressive success drives me forward. This bake used Hamelman’s Baguette de Tradition, which calls for no retardation. It started around 10AM and came out of the oven mid-afternoon. The hydration was reduced to 66% which was a little low, but french flour is a learning experience for Americans. The flavor was not as good (but still excellent) as the Bouabsa, but the crunch and texture was even better, if you can believe that. Prior to this week, I was thoroughly convinced that bread with this type of bite and chew was completely impossible with a home oven. Thrilled to find out I was dead wrong. Still have lots of work ahead before this flour is dialed in. But the journey will produce lots of great eating…

OH! The higher angle slashing made scoring a good deal easier, although the low hydration should have also affected that. The dough was scored after proofing an hour at room temp.

Dan’s Bake #17 - Ficelles

It is said, “practice makes perfect”. But how much practice? This is the 17th bake and I still have a long row to hoe....but the harder I work to achieve something, the more I appreciate it when I do

.

This bake used T65 @ 72.5% hydration and was very developed via mixing and 300 slap & folds and a couple of S&F. This flour will not accept a lot of water. It was pre-shaped cold, rested and then shaped. They proofed in the couche for about 30 minutes. Scoring was nigh on impossible, similar to trying to score a ballon that was filled with Vaseline. BUT, no matter how they bake up they crispy, crunchy, and crumb texture never disappoint.

The theme of this bake: Sometimes chicken, sometimes feathers... We said, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The crumb is showing improvements. I tested my 6 year old CY and discovered it was weak, so I upped the percentage from 0.16% to 0.24%. A new pound is on order.

Dan’s Bake #18 - Ficelles with Gold Medal AP

My neighbor is an avid cake baker, so I used some of her Gold Medal AP flour. This week a Famag was delivered, so I am adjusting to a new machine. This was a good test (blind), because I forgot I was using GM AP. Machine mixed for ~10 minutes, but the dough didn’t seem strong enough. 100 slap and folds were performed and the dough gained good strength. Shaped after BF, couched, and retarded overnight. In hind sight, it would have benefited the crumb to allow the dough to proof a little on the counter.

It was a great test because it was virtually a blind bake. Remember, I thought this was French T65. It could be justified that the crumb was tight because the final proof was omitted, but the flavor was completely off. I couldn’t imagine how the T65 all of a sudden taste so bad. It was not a good flavor at all. Don’t drink champagne if all you can afford is kool aid :-)

Bottom Line -
Gold Medal flour is not by bag.

Dan's Bake #19

Bouabsa, T65, 66% hydration. This particular T65 develops gluten with little to no effort. It is a weak flour but at 66% hydration it was slightly elastic and could have used more extensibility. 2% more water and this dough changes dramatically. Future bakes with this flour will progressively increase the hydration and receive very little machine and/or hand development. Again, these are the lightest, crackly, crunchy baguettes. Unlike those made with any other flour.

I followed Maurizio's advice to proof the dough a great deal in order to produce open crumb. So the BF went ~1.5 hours at 78F then retarded ~16 hours (DT 39F), then shaped couched and proofed ~1 hour at 74F. The dough felt somewhat airy, but not overly so. Slashing went well, probably due to 66% hydration.

The Demi on the top left was par-baked. (First 12 minutes). It was wrapped in foil and frozen. It will be re-baked at 350F for ~7 minutes as a test.

Considering 66% hydration, the crumb turned out very nice. Next time a little more water, though.

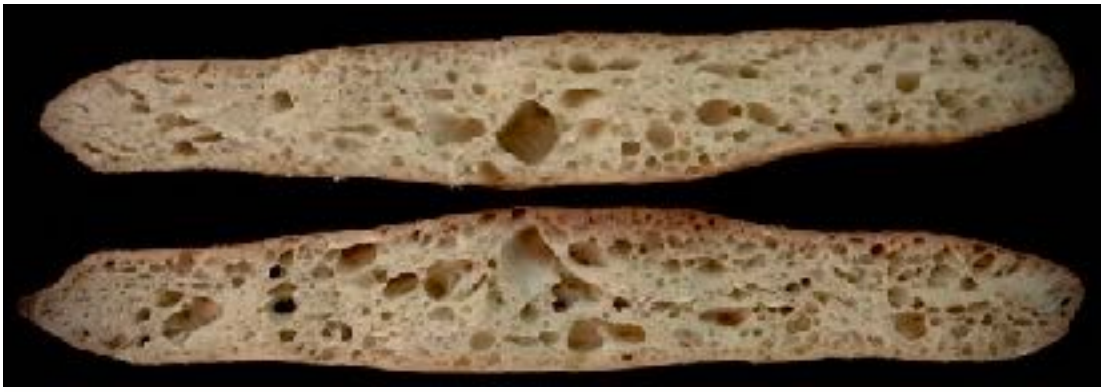
Dan’s Bake #20

French flour is giving me fits! Went 68% hydration this time and it was way wet. Decided to give it 300 uninterrupted slap & folds hoping that they would bring strength to the dough. Shaping was a challenge. The dough was super slack and very sticky.

Since the bake before this was too dry at 66% and this bake is too wet at 68%, the only assumption it that 67% should be the best. It’s hard to believe that this flour is so water sensitive. Think about it, 14 grams of flour is the difference between sloppy wet and super dry. Geremy just got his T65 and he tells me that 72% is probably just right. Either he knows something I don’t or we have very different flour.

The dough was scored at approximately a 60 degree angle, but with such a slack dough, ears were not to be. Same old, same old. Bread always turns out a great texture and taste. Were it not for that, I abandon it in favor of the good ole USA flour.

Making small strides towards sloped ends during shaping.



Dan’s Bake #21

Thanks to Geremy, I am getting a better handle on the French flour. I followed his instructions verbatim. Even borrowed my neighbors Kitchenaid mixer to duplicate exactly what Geremy was doing. The bake used all CY @ 0.32%. Past Bouabsa bakes were difficult at 68% hydration but with the new instructions 72% was very doable. I am wondering if the fact that I was mixing the IDY with the dough water may have had a detrimental affect on the dough. That seems strange, but recently read that IDY should be mixed dry with the flour, which I did for this bake.

Although the dough was not super strong, it was definitely more manageable. Shaping was better, but nothing has shaped nearly as well as Hamelman’s Pain au Levain. None came even close! If I were into Instagram fame, there is no doubt, Hamelman’s Pain au Levain would be the choice. Great bread for the Baguette CB, Alan! The dough was chilled after the final proof and before slashing.

Dan’s Bake #22

Went back to basics. Baked the formula in the original post (Hamelman’s Pain au Levain). No deviation except 0.5% Nutritional Yeast. After mixing the dough, even at 68% hydration, it was a dream to handle. Slap and folds were a joy, very unlike earlier attempts without NY. I did an overnight autolyse in the fridge using only water and flour. Before retarding I was concerned that the dough was too extensible. But after removing from the bulk retard to shape, the dough handled quite nicely. There was no CY added, only raised with SD.
I love the loaf on the bottom. Would be thrilled to consistently produce loaves like that. The scoring was varied on each loaf. Still looking for the perfect slash!

Dan’s Bake #23

I’ve done some good, done some ugly, but this one was definitely bad :-(

I wanted to try Benny’s baguettes, so Able’s Baguette au Levain was the choice. A new french flour (T80) was used. Benny’s method was followed closely. But T80 at that hydration was a mess. Shaping was terrible. The baguette crumb looked bad and tasted worse. I have grown extremely fond of a thin crust and soft chew. SD doesn’t give me that.

Either the dough will require more gluten development or the hydration will need to be lowered. It was confirmed that I am not a fan of sourdough baguettes, even at small amounts of pre-fermented flour. Unless I learn something new, baguettes that suit me utilize commercial yeast with no hint of SD.

To the connoisseur, the baguettes are not eatable. But the birds will love them.

Benny has mastered that formula, but the french flour didn’t work out for me. So back to Bouabsa or Louis Lamour’s Baguette au Tradition Francaise.

I also learned that the T80 is not a good choice for levain. After it had fully matured the levain was soupy and the gluten was broken down. Note to self, “use American flour for starters and levains”.

Update - after giving this some thought, the levain may have over-fermented since the T80 contains a large amount of bran. I don’t think that was the case, though. From what I’ve learned thus far, it seems that french flour is not the best choice for long fermentation and levains or starters that mix high ratios like 1:5:5. The ~12 hr fermentation breaks down the gluten.

Dan’s Bake #24

Used Louis Lamour’s formula and T80. It was a quickie bake. I have been busy with the outdoor project, but needed bread.

I am coming to the conclusion that T80 is not suited for baguettes. Neither the texture or flavor was nearly as nice as T65. So, Bake # 25 will use T65 and KA AP (50/50). What to see what that combo will produce.

Boy! French flour is humbling. I finally nailed the baguettes using American flours, but got super spoiled for texture and flavor with French flours. But, I shall persevere...

Dan’s Bake #25

Tried 50/50 T65 and KA AP. The dough was stronger, but the flavor wasn’t there. I will say the crust and crumb was excellent!

Used Louis Lamour’s formula again. Didn’t refrigerate. Crumb had a great texture but was tight (too much proofing?).

It is a huge let down eating a sub-par baguette after you’ve had a great French Flour version. I am permanently ruined...

Bake #26

Still working to dial in the T65. It has been a long journey, but a major breakthrough may be right around the corner. For those that are not “gifted”, perseverance is an absolute necessity.

French flour is very foreign to my previous skill sets. Even though it is a weak flour, it develops gluten quickly. I am under the impression that developing the gluten up-front helps when handling the sticky, slack dough later in the process. BUT, if the dough is worked too much, the precious flavor is compromised. Because of this consideration the next batch will be mixed on slow speed only and for as short a time as possible, while still developing the gluten. It’s a challenge to make a good looking baguette, but a beast of a job to make a great looking baguette that possesses the texture, chew, and flavor that is expected from a traditional french version. When it comes to food, the French are un-excelled.

BF ~30%. Shaped dough was final proofed using the finger indention and was terminated a little earlier. The dough was then placed in the freezer to finished proofing and stiffen up a bite for slashing. That worked very well. Whereas previous slashing of un-chilled T65 was a “drag fest”, the chilled dough slashed cleanly with moderate effort.

These were baked at 485F. Previous bakes were at 550F initially, then dropped to 485.

I have hopes that I am sneaking up on the crumb. The focus is on terminating the BF @ <30%. The BF temp is also cool (73F) in order to eliminate rise during retard. The present hypothesis is that gassy dough hinders shaping. That the cell structure will form during Final Proof and especially during the initial phase of the bake. Nothing proven, just hypothetical at this point. Benny has set the bar, and a number of us are determined to jump it...

Dan’s Bake #27

Enjoying incremental increases... The less aggressive (slow speed) mixing seemed to work out. The flavor was better and the dough (68% hydration) handled well. The ability to shape T65 is getting better. 68% seems a good hydration and developing the gluten early is facilitating better handling. Calculated the increase in the aliquot jar. 30% at the end of the 73F bulk ferment. The dough in the jar rose to ~50% after retardation (~21hr). Raised the bake temp from 485F (last bake) to 500F. I think I am consistently getting better crumb on the bottom half than the top. Thinking more top heat may help eliminate this. Plan to raise the stone another notch.

Ears are improving... So is the color of the crumb.
Overall - Continual Improvement Process (CIP).

Recently started baking one smaller baguette so that it can be sliced and eaten hot, straight out of the oven.
Appreciation and Thankfulness -
I can vividly recall how much I struggled to produce ears on a baguette. Alan has worked patiently with me over the last two years or so. THANKS for sticking with me...
Danny
Now, if these two possible hurricanes could die before they run over us or our neighbors.

Dan’s Bake #28

This was a quick experiment. Used T65 and a cold autolyse. Mixed water and flour by hand to avoid any gluten development. The dough rec’d a total of 5 min mixing at slow speed in the hope that the lightly mixed dough would not be oxidized and consequently taste better.

I can’t really say that the flavor benefited from the above.

The BF increase by about 12% and was then retarded at 50F for 4 hours until the dough looked like it had completed the final proof. The dough had risen and looked ready. It was scored and baked cold. For that reason the loaves were shortened to fit my retarder.

The results didn’t seem worth the effort.

The stone was elevated one position higher in hopes that the heat coming from the top might open the crust on the top of the loaf. BUT, the bottom is still more open than the top.

Dan’s Bake #29 & 30

It is possible that an interesting fact was learned during these bakes. Both bakes used KAAP flour and CY only. My supply of T65 is dwindling. Bake #29 was 70% hydration and 5 grams of chocolate malt was used for crust and crumb coloring, and also an interesting note in flavor. The goal of both bakes was to develop the gluten up front via machine mixing and secondly to BF until doubling. Both doughs were aggressively degassed to facilitate efficient shaping. The thought was that even though the gas was somewhat pressed out, maybe the cell structure would become re-established during the final proof. Sadly, this was not the case. In both bakes the crumb was relatively even and closed. Bake 29 was so sticky, that an additional bake was decided upon with the hydration reduced to 68%. Here is where I think I learned a valuable lesson. Is it possible that a CY only dough is by nature stickier and more slack (than a similar SD version) because the tightening affect of the SD levain is not present? It was surprising how sticky, slack, and wet the KAAP doughs felt. It was until a number of slap & folds were performed on each dough that the dough started to behave. What a marvelous tool is slap & fold! Even though Bake 30 was 68% hydrated it was still slack and sticky.

Anyway, here are the results. Even though the crumb was not open the crust and crumb texture was very much to my liking. Crisp, thin, with a soft crumb. Flavor was fair for American flour.

The loaves at the top were Bake 29. They are easily distinguished by the dark color that was produced from the chocolate malt.

Again, the darker crumb is bake 29.

For many, failure is the price of admission that enables one to stand upon the pedestal of success…

Dan’s Bake #31

It is a little tempting to go back to the formulas that produced stellar visual results for me, but the search for perfect taste and texture continues to dominate.

For this bake KAAP was used to bake Abel’s hybrid baguettes. The hydration, including the oil was 70.5%. 3% olive oil was added with the idea of softening the chew. It seems that was successful.

Notice the difference in the ears on both loaves. The top baguette was scored with a very low angle to the dough. Somewhat similar to filleting a fish. The bottom bread was scored in a more (but not totally) straight down angle.

Conclusion - oil does in fact tenderize the bread.

Dan’s Bake #32

A Big Change!

This bake was a typical New Orleans Po Boy bread. It is the Cajun rendition of the Baguette. It is similar to the baguette in shape, but the chew, crumb, and texture is quite different. My wife likes these.

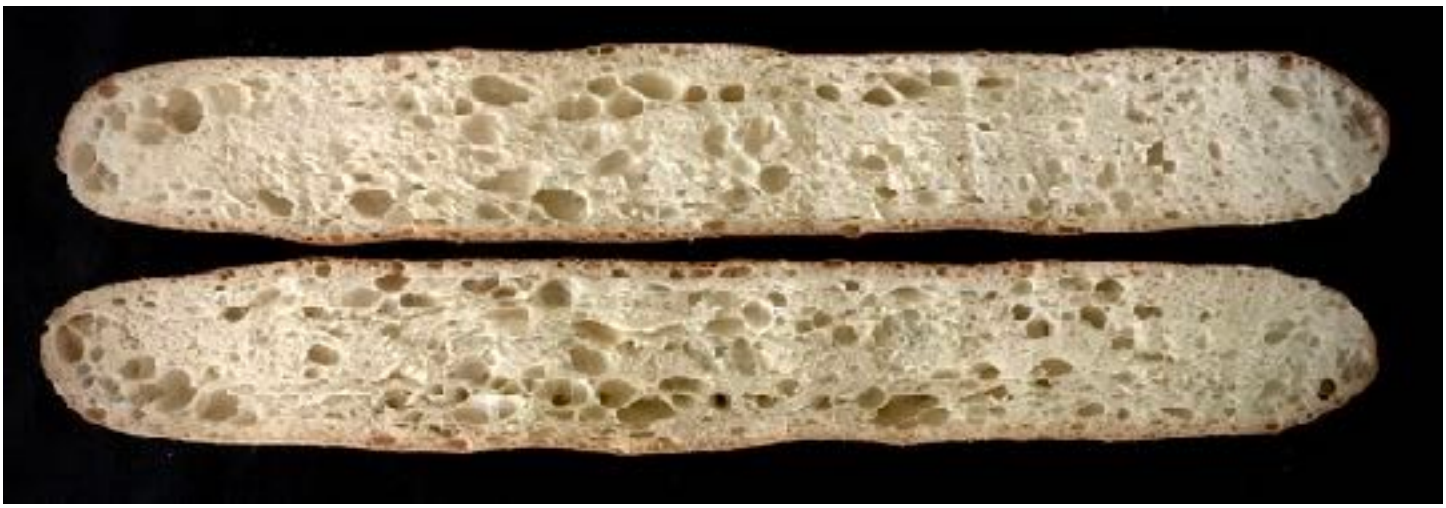
The formula can be SEEN HERE. A Frenchman might pass out! It calls for vegetable shortening and sugar... But it do make a mean shrimp PoBoy. I have the spreadsheet with ingredients in grams if anyone is interested. They can be made easily in a morning.

Dan’s Bake #33

Used the same formula (Saveur’s) as Bake #32. Since Doc is getting nice crumb when dough that is fully developed up front, I gave that a try. 4 separate mixing sessions at speed #0 for 6 min (24 min total - ending DT = 77F) with a 20-30 min rest between. The dough was super supple and I think it had the “plastic” qualities that Michael mentioned in a post today.

In order to keep the dough cool I used 2/3 of the water weight in shaved ice. I used too much because the dough after the first mix was 33F. I think this slowed the heck out of the CY.

At any rate the bread produced was typical of the New Orleans PoBoy breads. Crumb was a little more open, but I have a long way to go towards producing a crumb similar to Doc’s. Next bake my be Bahn Mi!



Dan’s Bake #34

Vietnamese Baguettes - Banh Mi

I followed the formula and process in THIS VIDEO. Bottom Line, the flavor was poor. I think there was too much yeast. Possible the dough was over oxidized.

The crumb was dense, there was too much dough in each bite. This didn’t work for me.
UpDate - after more thought I think I know why this bread lacked flavor and was blah. Salt 1.59% coupled with CY 1.79%. The dough fermented too quickly…

Dan’s Bake #35

Abandoned the Banh Mi and went back to the New Orleans PoyBoy. I suspected the tight crumb may have been due to over development of the gluten. So these were hand mixed. Still has a texture more like cake than open crumb bread.

Next attempt will use less sugar and/or fats. The dough baked only 16 minutes at 550F (my sweet spot for ears) but the crust was too dark and the bottoms were slightly darker (less sugar for sure).
The great news is this bake used T65 flour and produced very nice ears. The dough behaved very well, although I messed up the water and had to wind up adding more water and going by feel. Wished I hadn’t done that…

I did learn a trick for shallow scoring and it seemed to help a lot. See THIS LINK. Too bad the top bread came of the loading board crooked. Tried, to no avail, to straighten it.

The flavor of the T65 did not come through on these. Another disappointing bake as far as flavor is concerned. The flour tasted stale, which I don’t think was the case. I know the gluten was not over worked. Best guess is the dough with added sugar and fat didn’t like the high heat bake (550F). But, the ears did :-)
Ba+k to the drawing board…

Dan's Bake #36

Just an hour ago in a previous post I wrote, "Ya know, you may be thinking success is way off in the distance, when it could happen your next attempt."

Could it possibly be, my time has come?

This bake used Louis Lamour's Traditional French Baguette formula with T65. The hydration was upped to 70% and minimal hand mixing was utilized. I did not want to develop a strong gluten. The goal was a 25% rise (Aliquot), but it got away from me and ended up at 34%. After so many bakes, I sincerely hope I am getting close to dialing in This crumb thing. But it'll take consistently to confirm...
Starting to gets ears with the T65 and higher hydration.

NOTE - the crumb on both of these loaves was a very nice pale yellow, much like semolina. I attribute this to the flour and also the way the dough was gently worked and not over oxidized. A very recent bake used T65 and was thoroughly mixed in the mixer. The result was a bright white crumb and the taste was so bad, the bread was fed to the birds. But for this bake the flavor was good and the texture was great. Still wondering if the flour isn't staling prematurely. But because my home is lite up like a surgical room (6000K, super high lumen LED) the true color gets washed away. I do like bright light... But guess what, Patsy must have some bat genes in her DNA because she is ALWAYS dimming things down :-)

Dan’s Bake #37

Doc has enjoyed so much success with his baguettes, I decided to try his formula using sd only and T65 flour. I deviated in that the dough was mixed by hand and purposely did not highly develop the gluten. The idea was that hopefully a great tasting french flour textured bread would be produced. The bread was chewy and required a strong bite. The flavor produced by CY only is much more to my liking. I failed in both categories, but the experiment added to my repertoire of knowledge.

I used this bake to test Tom’s Steam Curtain. Those results were mixed. The crust was shiny and there were a few blisters (a great Improvement over my typical breads), but the bread baked extremely pale and required 26 min @ 550F. Normally baguettes are baked in 16-18 min @ 550F. I assume the conversion to steam zapped a lot of heat from the oven. There are many mysteries that I’ve yet to uncover.

The bottom loaf was too long for the smaller stone used for the steam curtain. I was glad to have saved it, but it won’t win any beauty contest.

Doc

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Late entry

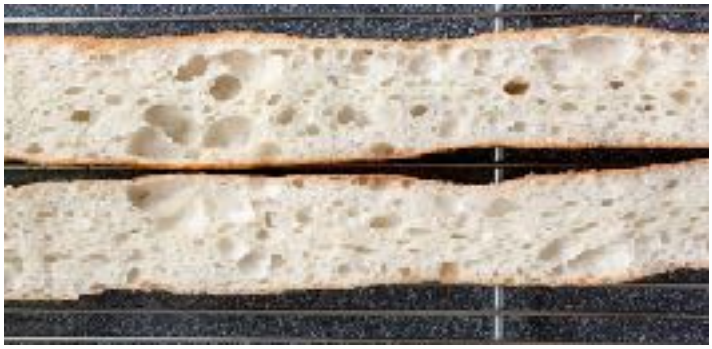
This is the first time in a long time that I have used an interrupted slash for a baguette (I usually do a single longitudinal slash) so please cut me some slack for appearance. The crumb is not as open as I would like, but I was in a hurry and did not retard the dough at all. I was late getting started and this was out of the oven 4:30 after water hit flour. The crumb shot is from the least attractive loaf of the lot as the other two were given away, but is probably representative. The oven cycle is designed to develop a fairly thick and dark but not charred crust with a firm but not dry crumb. The flour is a high gluten white, bleached and enriched, with malted barley flour and ascorbic acid added.

Formulation/process:

- 67% hydration, batch weight 1788g at divide/shape so 3 x ~ 596g "baguettes" which is admittedly a bit large
- 11.7% pre-fermented flour [100% hydration levain (28 + 114 + 114) fermented for ~12 hrs @ ~83°F and losing 3g of CO2 in the process]
- 1.9% salt
- 2 hr BF from wetting the flour
- 20 min autolyse (included levain but no salt)
- Mix time 9 min in Assistent N28 with roller and scraper at speed 6 (maximum for use of roller and scraper)
- Dough temp at end of mix: 86°F
- Divide/preshape/20 min rest/shape (32min total)
- Proof ~90 min on counter
- Brush with water to remove surface flour
- Top with kosher salt (~1.6g/loaf)
- Slash just before oven entry
- Bake w/ steam 500°F start, free fall for 2 min to 390°F during steam addition before reheating to 500°F then 8 min @ 500°F/100% humidity, 8 min @ 450°F 20% humidity, 2 min @ 390°F/0% humidity (total time 20 min)
- Convection fan was on low speed for the first 10 min and intermittently (20 sec on/120 sec off) for the remainder of the bake cycle.
- I will probably never make baguettes as pretty as Alfonso, but it is fun to try, and the neighborhood enjoys the residuals as well as the failures.

Delta BF time

I mixed up a batch of dough at 67% hydration 11.7% pre-fermented flour, 2% salt, using 100% high gluten white flour. But did a couple of things differently:
1. stopped mixing as soon as the dough came off the bottom of the bowl
2. after ~40 min of BF I split the batch into two parts and finished a 1 hr BF on one half and a 2 hr BF on the other half.
But since they came from the same batch, the proof times were going to be different. In this instance I over-proofed both of them. The biggest difference is in the crumb. The first photo below is the short BF (60 min) loaf; the second photo is the baguette that had a 2 hr BF. The dough was shaped into 300g baguettes and proofed. The first batch proofed for ~2 hr before baking. The second batch was shaped into 300g baguettes as well and was proofed for about 90 min (for equivalence it should have been 1 hr but the oven was busy with the first batch). Oven cycle was 500°F w/ steam for 6 min then 450°F with the steam generator off for an additional 11 min. Crumb texture is good, crust is typical sourdough crust (well toasted, fairly thick, crunchy, flavorful). All baguettes were shaped to ~20" lengths, (constrained by my 21" pans).
So next time I will use the 2 hr BF and shorten the proof time, but I may also reduce the dough temperature. The dough was quite extensible and handled easily, was very easy to shape but was so extensible that it was hard to get a uniform diameter, and was floppy when transferring to the pans. It would have benefitted from being retarded to slow down the proof somewhat and I suspect that chilling them would have made it easier to handle when it came time to transfer to the pan.
The thing that surprises me is the irregularity of the hole sizes in the crumb of the short BF batch. Anybody have an idea why?



I am confounded by how open the crumb the crumb is with 67% in the first place. It doesn't lineup with my reasoning that open crumb is related to hydration. I haven't worked with high gluten flour much and was under the impression that it required more kneading to develop fully. To venture a guess in this riddle is a step through the looking glass into wonderland. Maybe the longer fermentation filled in the gaps in the dough or it was a shaping issue. I would be interested to hear your thoughts on the matter.

These are the two that didn't get sectioned (both from the long BF batch). As you would expect for over-proofed baguettes that were too soft to score by somebody with a new lame who rarely uses an interrupted slash. Good oven spring, just not enough tension to get the surface to fracture. Soft dough was impossible to straighten out once it hit the pan so sort of wandering from side to side. Just a little bit of an ear at one end of both loaves but nothing you could use to pick them up with.
Anything I missed? Or different approaches to fixing the defects?

Nutritional yeast effects at 0.125% and 0.25%

Two small batches with nutritional yeast made 3x 350g baguettes each. 11.8% pff, 67% hydration, 2% salt, 100% high gluten white flour. 23°C BF for 3 hr, with folds at 20 min intervals until it had enough strength. Bulk retard at 38°F for to 40°F dough temp. Shape direct from retard, counter proof for 45 min and bake.

The two on the left had 0.25% nutritional yeast added and the two on the right had 0.125%. There was a significant difference in extensibility from the beginning and both batches shaped without a pre-shaping step or rest. The 0.125% batch wanted to spring back a little but was easily persuaded to do what I asked. I will probably adopt the 0.25% nutritional yeast number when I want some increase in extensibility. Both batches were soft and tender when they went to the oven so I might try a batch with no counter proof just to see what difference it makes. The other option is to put them back into the retarder at a little higher temp for a longer time so that they still handle well on the way to the oven.

Replicated result

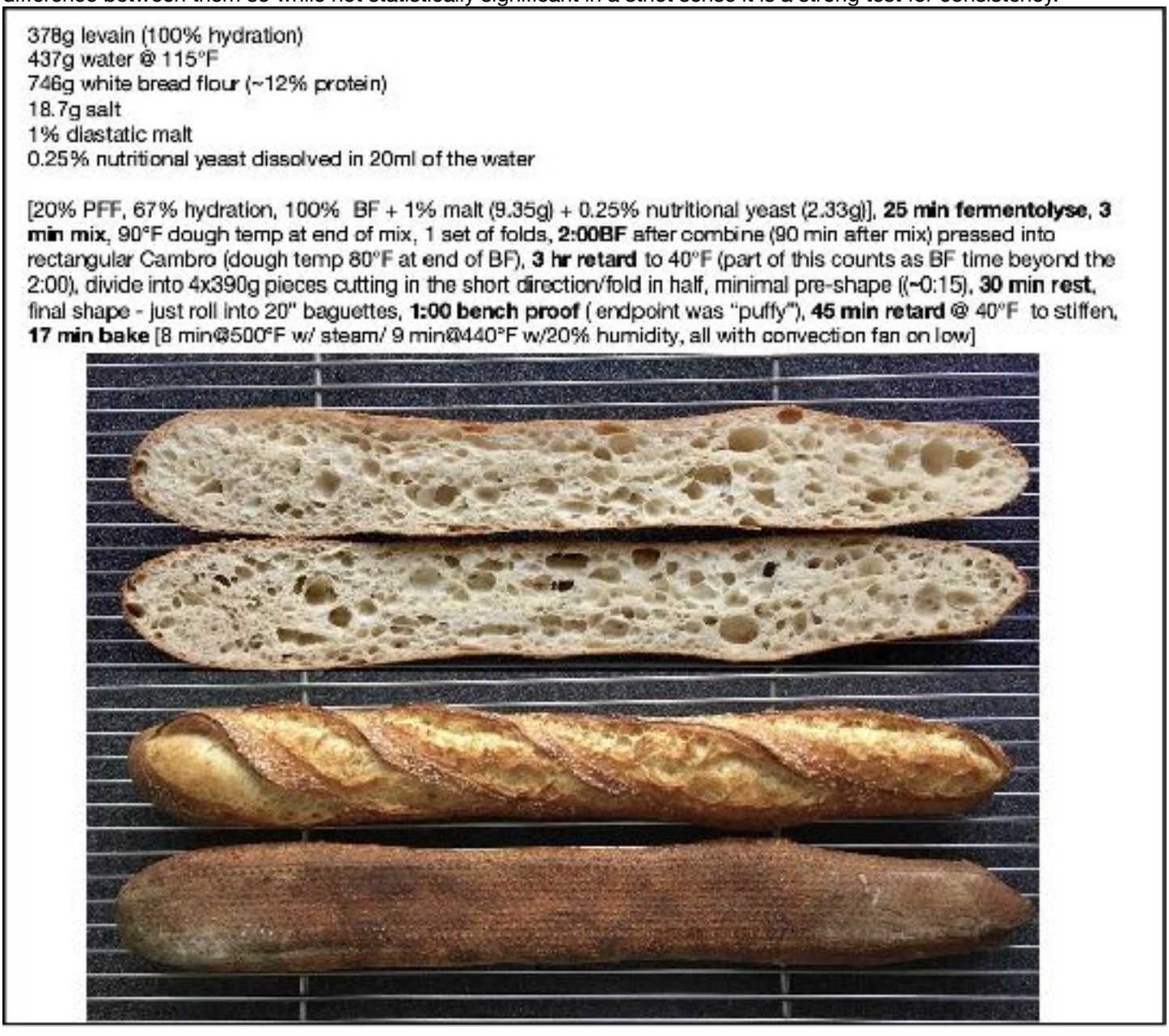
The baguette in the photo below is one of four in a batch that was split in half. Two baguettes were baked as described in the image and two were put back into the retarder and the temperature set to average 44°F overnight (up from 38°F for the previous extended retard batch). Those will be baked tomorrow after about 18 hrs of additional cold time.

The interesting thing in this batch is the relatively tight crumb on the left end of the loaf and the open crumb in the rest of it.

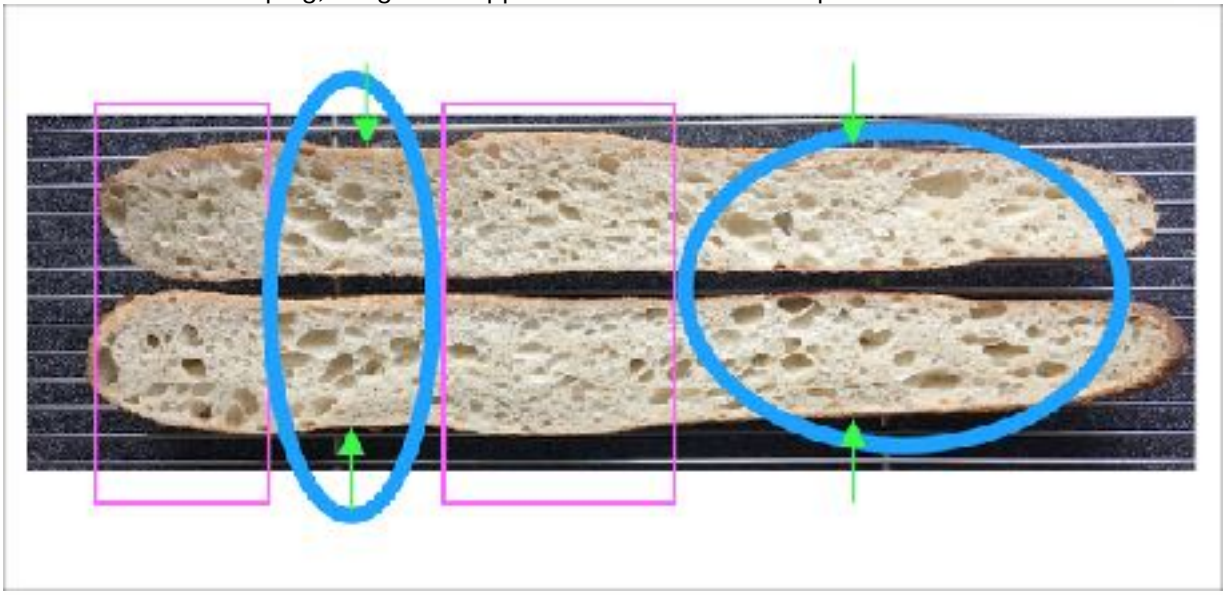
The prior batch of four had one baguette that was only pre-shaped and not rolled out because it was already a little over-length, while the other three were folded in half and cinched for a preshape then rolled to 21" during final shaping. The one loaf that was not rolled had a tight crumb and the other three had reasonably open crumb.

For this batch all four were folded and cinched for preshape then rolled out to 21" for final shaping. This one (of the first two baked) had a big end and the rest of it was fairly cylindrical. After cutting it open it became clear what happened. The fat end has a more dense crumb.

There are two more that will be baked tomorrow and we will see if there is any visible difference between the short retard and the long retard as manifested in the openness of the crumb. In the recent past I have not seen any significant difference between the crumb of a loaf that was retarded to 40°F core temperature (~3 hrs) and a loaf that was retarded for 16 hrs. So I don't expect any difference this time either but this trial has two baguettes in each batch and no difference between them so while not statistically significant in a strict sense it is a strong test for consistency.



The second half of the batch was retarded overnight at ~44°F and baked this morning after ~16 additional cold hours. The result is supportive of the theory that retard time has little effect on crumb openness and that I am inconsistent in shaping baguettes. The image below illustrates the different zones where the dough was compressed during shaping (surrounded by the blue ellipses) and the areas that were not (enclosed in pink boxes) where the crumb remains fairly uniform and somewhat dense. The green arrows point to the smaller cross-section produced by the compression during shaping.
Other than the inconsistent shaping, the general appearance of the crumb is quite similar to the loaf above.



The photo below illustrates an esthetic benefit of a long retard at a slightly higher temperature (44°F vs 38°F in this case). There is prolific blistering of the crust, though there is still a lot of experimentation to nail down the specific conditions that lead to this end point.

And the crust is slightly darker than the loaves baked (with minimal retardation) yesterday (when the retard was just enough to cool off the dough so that it was easier to handle). This is a little surprising, but attests to the low temperature activity to the diastatic malt (added for its alpha amylase enzymes).

Very much on plan

For the past couple of weeks I have felt like I was throwing stones in the pond and watching them splash rather than really hitting anything. Collecting data so to speak with nothing to show for it. But listening carefully to those who have been baking nice baguettes and trying to analyze the common threads of success then validate them with my own experiments (I think of them as component tests) has helped me build a tool-kit and some design principles to follow.

The technique part still needs work (scoring and shaping) but the foundation feels firm. Today was a batch that was really designed and only a couple of things changed: BF was shorter than I had planned because the dough was getting soft and puffy and I really wanted it to be relatively firm when it came time to shape so I went to retard 30 min ahead of the plan; then the post shaping counter proof was allotted 90 min and was very poofy after 60 so they went back into the cooler to get ready for the oven. Could they have gone longer? Probably. I am always more afraid of over-proofing than under-proofing. Because the dough temperature is so high I may take another 30 min off of BF next time and recover it in final proof, or what I really want to do is to find a retard temperature vs time chart that will give a more sour baguette without damaging the crumb and allow me to specify in advance when they will be ready to bake. I now know that if they get down to 40°F then I can hold them there almost indefinitely. Tonight I am playing with a +4°F higher retard temperature and will see in the AM if there is any significant difference. At some point I will get to the place where the yeast continues to make CO2 and it all goes into solution in the liquid phase of the dough then explodes in the oven when it comes out of solution - making for nice oven spring and tons of surface blisters. But that requires incremental testing rather than Monte Carlo.

The 90°F dough temperature is my starting point since everything comes out of the gate running hard. I have run a few experiments at 100°F and they work just fine from a microbiology perspective but the physical properties are not what I want them to be (the higher temperature should work even better with instant yeast, but I am sticking with levain until I get as good as I think I can). Even a 67% hydration dough behaves like it wants to be made into ciabatta. But the dough temperature quickly comes down into the high 80's even in my kitchen which like yours sits at around 78°F in the summer. I have run some tests in the winter at dough temperatures in the mid 60's but it takes a whole day to do what otherwise can be done in 5 hrs and I don't really see a significant difference.

Yes, the flour is malted and has ascorbic acid as well so I don't need to add any to counteract the nutritional yeast. And I do it to get adequate browning without requiring too much extra oven time. I would like to find a way to reduce the bottom crust browning, but that is graduate work and I don't want to change more than one thing at a time since we are trying to do science as well as art.

The fact that to get the very open crumb requires that the cell structure receive some significant manipulation during final shaping is a new concept for me. So I am trying to understand how rolling serves to collapse and consolidate alveoli. I need to sleep on it and roll it in my mind while watching the cell walls contact each other and see how they merge then figure out what defines the boundary of the successor cell. It seems most likely that the process is driven by surface tension but what allows it to be so uniform and what is the range of conditions that allows it to happen without totally collapsing the loaf (which it obviously can if you make an error).

Then I want to step up the hydration a tick or two after I get this process to be predictably repeatable. And there are a few points on the flour protein scale to be investigated. The ~12% that I am currently using is higher than the ~11% that others are suggesting so I am compensating by under-mixing which in this case worked well.

Differences and similarities

Multiple variations on the theme this time. Switched to KA AP flour. Stayed with 4 x 390g, 1% diastatic malt + 0.25% nutritional yeast dissolved in 20ml of the water. Dough temperature was a little lower (85°F vs 90°F). Moved some of the fermentation time from bulk (90 min) to final proof (2 hr) - to the detriment of the final results. Retard at the end of BF was 2 hr - just enough to get the dough temperature down to 45°F to improve handling during shaping. Baked two pans of two baguettes each at the same time (with noticeable differences in oven spring and browning with the upper set turning out less brown but with increased oven spring). Crumb (bottom photo) is not as uniform and noticeably tighter than the last batch (I attribute this to the shorter BF). Shaping was similar to last batch: cut off a strip of dough, fold it in half, cinch it up (net about 10" long), rest 30 min, tighten once more and roll out to 20".

Proof on the counter 2 hr, retard 45 min to stiffen the dough then bake - so this was eight hours end to end.

The lame was rolled over further (maybe 15°) for the two at the bottom with a noticeable difference in the ears, but they were also baked lower in the oven which becomes a confuser.

I think next round will increase BF to about 3 hr and push the final proof as far as I think I can before chilling and baking.

thin crackly crust without commercial yeast

This is a first for me. A batch of all sourdough baguettes with a decent open crumb, distinct ears, balanced coloration top and bottom, acceptable shaping, and a nice thin crackly crust.

Process capture:

- 388 levain (28 starter + 186 H2O + 186 BF) ; 406 H2O + 50 w/ 5g NY;   777 AP + 10g DM; 19.4 NaCl
- 1655g total dough weight
- 67% hydration, 20% pre-fermented flour
- 0.5% NY (5g),
- 1% DM (10g),
- 2% salt,

- dissolve NY in 50g water
- Add 388g levain [built with 12% protein bread flour], water, NY, DM, flour (777g Freedom's Choice AP with 10.5% protein) (average protein 10.7% including protein in levain flour)
- 50 min fermentolyse w/ 110°F water (500ml; microwave 45 sec)
- 5 min mix, Dough temp 83°F (might get by with 4 min after the 50 min autolyse)
- 2:30 hr BF (from combine) w/1 fold after mixing
- 2 hr retard @ 40°F (to a core temperature of ~45°F)
- divide into 4 x 409g aliquots
- pre-shape gently
- rest 30 min
- Shape - not easy to roll out, lumpy and resistant to stretching
- proof 1:45 at room temp
- retard >45 min (1:30 this time)
- transfer to pans, brush with water, sprinkle with kosher salt (1g/baguette)
- bake (preheat to 525°F, 2 min @ 390°F for steam, 6 min @ 500°F 100% humidity/low fan speed, 9 min @ 430°F/20% humidity/low fan speed)
- The low net protein level made a big difference and I was able to fully develop the gluten before BF requiring no folds.
- Shortened the BF to 2:30 (measured from when water hits flour) because of the high dough temp and to allow for some continued fermentation during the first part of retard.
- Shaping was still not what I want even with the nutritional yeast it was fighting me. Maybe I need to let it rest longer after pre-shape (suggestions here welcome).
- Chilled dough handled well on the way to the oven. Don't fully understand why the bottoms are not as brown as prior batches run with the same oven program.

Confirmation and a little better shaping

This was a repeat of yesterday except that I did not fully chill the dough before divide and shape. Because I had something come up when I would otherwise have been doing divide/shape I stuck it in the retarder but at 65°F and not at 38°F, so I figure that it was equivalent to a 3:30 BF with a dough temperature of 67°F (vs 40°F) when it was time to divide. The desired result was achieved in that the warmer dough was more extensible and easier to pre-shape and shape. And instead of trying to fight it for final shaping I did it in two steps with a 10 min rest in between. Another small thing was to roll the dough in only one direction when stretching it (away from me) rather than compressing it in both directions. These small changes appear to have made a significant difference in the uniformity of the barrel diameter. When I got done shaping I was somewhat concerned that all of what appeared to be surface bubbles would make for malformed loaves. But as they proofed (for 1:00 on the counter and then retarded at 50°F for three hours while I was off doing something else) the irregularities disappeared. They were easy to load, easy to slash and baked up with the same crust coloration as yesterday (a slightly lighter bottom crust than I had seen prior to yesterday, and excellent coloration on top) and with nice ears and I think somewhat better crumb than yesterday. So all round a pleasing day.

The fermentolyse today was 20 minutes (vs 50 min) and I saw no difference in outcome which adds weight to the claim that 20 min is enough time to get the benefit of autolyse (no salt). The diastatic malt was also added along with the salt just to see if there was any noticeable difference and I observed none.

Tomorrow I am going to take the last step in dropping the protein content by using 100% 10.5% protein AP flour in both the levain and in the final dough.

“Today

“Tomorrow”

After tomorrow I have a number of single parameter changes that I want to search through to see what the partial derivatives are in those dimensions: oven fan speed, loaf weight, slash variations, water temperature, BF duration, PFF, and mix duration/speed. And by that time my new Famag mixer should be here and the conversion from Assistent to Famag needs to be done with a stable baseline.

And *above right* are "tomorrow" baguettes in a place where it is easier to compare with "yesterday" baguettes.

The difference is that the levain was made with the same AP flour that was used for the dough (as opposed to using a 12% protein bread flour).

The thing that I had not thought about until after these were shaped was that the bread flour that made up 20% of yesterday's batch contained ascorbic acid and the AP flour contains none. So how much of an impact can that have? At the moment I am not sure, but this batch (using 0.5% nutritional yeast and flour containing no ascorbic acid) was almost plastic and were gently pre-shaped, rested for 30 min then shaped in one stage. So my hypothesis is that there was insufficient oxidizer in the dough to cancel out the effects of the glutathione that was introduced with the nutritional yeast and thus the dough remained compliant all the way to the oven. I think the crumb is slightly more open, but not significantly so. The flavor is good, crumb texture is good. Color is good, and without the need for a 3 hr retard they were out of the oven quite a bit sooner than yesterday. I did retard them for a couple of extra hours @ 50°F while I did a Zoom chat but that was just to hold them until I could bake them rather than an essential process step. So they could have been done in six hours from flour hits water including 45 min retard prior to oven entry (plus 10 hrs to build the levain).

Another day; another trial run

@ Benny - your crumb is beyond compare. I am working to emulate your results.

Here is today's run. Better shaping and a little more open crumb (chasing Benny). The upper two were baked on the baseline oven program while the bottom two were run on high convection fan speed for the first 8 minutes and they were in the oven for only 10 min of the baseline 17 min profile (which means they did not get the last 7 minutes @ 430°F/low fan speed). They were getting too brown so I pulled them to cut my losses.

The formulation was the same but the bulk fermentation time dropped from 3:00 to 2:30 with the additional 30 min added back to final proof.

The dough was still quite soft and somewhat difficult to handle, there was no preshaping to speak of, just fold them over and let them sit for 20 min so that they were fully stuck together at the fold, then tighten them up and roll them out. Two of the four needed a short rest and a second stage of lengthening to reach 20", but a one minute rest was enough and once they got to 20" they did not rebound.

Note that the slash did not open well on the two that were baked at high fan speed. I think that the surface may have been so well cooked by the time the heat got in deep and the oven spring started to expand strongly that it could not break open at the slash. So this might be a case of too much early heat and might suggest that a lower start temperature or fan off in a convection oven might produce a better result (let oven spring get started before increasing the heat transfer to the crust).

Friday baguettes (more brown/less brown)

Further reduced bulk fermentation to 2:00 with a dough temperature starting at 84.8°F and finishing at 81°F. Slightly shorter mix time today (3:30 vs 4:00 yesterday) and I may have paid a price for that slight undermixing, though it had pulled itself off the sides and bottom of the bowl before I quit. Dough was on the sticky side of workable but with minimal flour I was able to divide and preshape, and after a 20 min rest (which it probably didn't need) I was able to tighten it up and roll out a decent baguette. A 2:00 room temperature final proof and a 2:00 retard for timing made them ready to bake when I was ready. Two oven cycles today, one was the baseline time and temperature but with the pan containing the baguettes sitting on a layer of 3/8" quarry tile that was sitting on an oven rack (I could not find my 1/4" stack of 6"x6" quarry tile so these were 3/8" x 4" x 8" on a 13" x 21" rack. The fan speed for the first batch was low and high for the second batch. The result was a lighter bottom crust for both batches (but too light to get full flavor out of the final bread). So the current baseline is still the best option (until I find something better). The high fan speed was not invoked until after the slashes had started to open (successful strategy) but the ears were not great for either batch so I may decrease the hydration a couple of percent and see what that does. The crumb is not as uniform as it was yesterday and I suspect that is due to insufficient mixing and probably more difficult handling at final shaping. The dough is quite soft when dividing so that would benefit from a little cooler dough temperature which would mean a longer bulk fermentation.

I pulled a 32g sample after completing the mix and weighed it at multiple points during the last 1:30 of BF. It lost 100mg of CO_2 which is about 0.44% of the weight of the flour (0.26% of dough weight) which should be accurate enough to use as a monitor for a slower/lower temperature bulk ferment. If this technique is successful it will offer a definitive way to achieve the same bulk fermentation end point without using time and texture to decide when it is done. The fermentation seems to be quite rapid and for a 28g sample to lose 100mg in 90 min the resolution is about 1% which seems incredibly precise to me. And the sample size could be as large as 110g so the accuracy might be increased by a factor of 4 if that turns out to be important.
Next batch will be a little lower hydration and a slightly different oven cycle.

Continuous improvement

After a number of trials that made small changes (all of which produced worse results than without the changes) I tried something new - putting the retard in a different place in the process. This was a case where I ran a 10 hr autolyse at 40°F and 60% hydration with no levain or salt (combined for 5 min @ speed 1 on the Famag IM-5 spiral mixer). The levain (12% PFF) was then added and mixed in for 5 minutes at speed 1. Then the remaining water was mixed in to bring the hydration to 69% and 1.5% salt was added during a 10 min mix at speed 1 followed by 1 minute at speed 4. The dough had no diastatic malt or nutritional yeast. The flour was ~13% protein, bleached, enriched, with ascorbic acid added. Dough temperature at completion of the bassinage was 67.4°F. Bulk fermentation was 4:30 with dough temperature rising to 74°F (warm day).

Divide and shape was an attempt to minimize manipulation so followed Abel's guidance. A 30 minute rest was followed by two folds and rolling to size (20") using as little flour as I could arrange. Final proof was about 2:00 at room temperature followed immediately by baking for 17 minutes without any chilling to stiffen up the dough.

Slashing was not easy even going quickly as the blade wanted to drag - and I was not going deep. But the ears came out quite well and the crumb is about the best I have achieved so far. These are large for baguettes at 425g but I think that is a contributor to the ears since the oven spring generates a lot of diameter increase which really helps break open the slash and push up the ear. Good color without adding diastatic malt. And the dough exhibited nice extensibility which I attribute to the long cold autolyse. The baguette that I sliced open was not as uniform in diameter as I would like, but I know what I did during pre-shaping that precipitated a big lump in the middle and I think I can do better next time. And the crumb in the tips of the cut loaf are a little tight for reasons I understand and should be able to correct with more practice.

Again repeatability

Same formulation as yesterday but because I had a mid-day meeting I had to retard for 4hrs after BF and before divide/shape. And it over-fermented as well so it was a little hard to shape, plus I did not chill before baking so slashing was again sticky though it came out OK. This is 100% levain with no commercial yeast but based on Bennie's results I will probably give it a try as the only change. The first shot is my regular 3 whole +1 cut, the second shot is one a neighbor sent of the one she received which might actually be a better looking crumb. Shaping seemed to fix the problem of yesterday but still not as open as Bennie's.

With 707mg of IDY

This batch went back to the 10.7% protein that comes from mixing up the levain with a 13% bread flour and making up the dough with 10.5% AP (12% PFF). 69% hydration, cold autolyse with AP flour and water only. 1.5% salt (which is a little low, even when there is salt sprinkled on the crust). Put levain in mixer, added IDY and autolysed 60% hydration dough, mix on speed 1 adding 43g of water and 15g salt over 8 min. After 10 min at speed 1; double spindle speed to 200/min for one additional minute. 3:00 BF from a starting DT = 67°F and finishing at 76°F (82°F kitchen) with two folds when it came off the mixer then one more at 20 min to see how it was doing. Aliquot jar showed 28% volume increase at 3:00 after start of mix. Divide, 30 min rest, shape, counter proof for 90 min and chill in 38°F retarder for 3 hr for timing. Standard oven cycle (preheat to 525F, bake 8 min @ 500°F 100% humidity, then 9 min @ 430°F 20% humidity.

Pre-bake chill made slashing easy, and I tried to use the full 1/3 of the circumference as boundaries for slash lines. This increases the spacing between adjacent slashes which helps to keep the belts from breaking and seems to make for better ears. There is clearly some adjustment to be made in terms of slash placement to minimize the tendency of the loaf to twist counter to the direction of the slashes. I need to do some measurements to calculate how to set up the boundaries for the slash offsets as they progress down the barrel.

The result shows that it is not just the inclusion of a small amount of IDY that yields Benny's crumb.

“Today”

“Yesterday”

I have included the photo of yesterday's batch *above right* for comparison. Not much difference that I can see, so the impact of the addition of .07% IDY is not a significant change.

N.B.
When I started this challenge I had no idea what would come out of the oven. It was very much like tossing stones in a pond and watching what happened. Eventually I got to a place where I was consistently making ugly "baguettes". But once they were consistent I could see the impact of making single parameter adjustments. So many parameters and so many relationships between them: time, temperature of each step and ingredient, type of flour, protein level, ash content, bleached/unbleached, %salt, aliquot jar, poke test, window pane, P/L values, oven cycle, shaping, slashing, browning, ascorbic acid, L-cysteine/nutritional yeast, diastatic malt, hydration, autolyse, bassinage, retard time/ temperature, steaming, mixer type and capabilities, ... crust thickness, crumb color and tenderness, ... and of course taste.

I am now (after almost 5 months) at a place where I am happy to give the test baguettes to the neighbors, and they seem happy to get them. And every batch has a single change or if an improvement was observed becomes a repeat with no change to verify consistency and define a new baseline. There is a constant quest to understand what makes a difference (and how much of a difference) and how to simplify to get rid of non-value added steps (like discovering that a long period of refrigeration at low temperatures is useful to stop the process when you have to interrupt it, but what happens during the cool down time it takes to reach the low stable temperature is very important and has to be understood and planned carefully). Details count, mostly, but some things actually don't seem to make any difference (within certain bounds). And you need to know what is important and what is not. And baguettes are quite unforgiving of process errors. So it has been great fun, with more foreseeable fun as things continue to improve (slowly).

Shorter Bulk Ferment

Levain	water	flour	salt
247	532+40	888 +10	18

Design point:

PFF	levain hydration	net hydration	salt	total dough wt
12.0%	100%	69.0%	1.8%	1725g

Made 252g levain (30g seed + 111g 13% protein bread flour + 111g water; 10 hr @ ~82°F).

- Combine 532 water + 888 10.5% protein AP flour + 10 DM, mix for 5 min @ speed 1.
- Autolyse for 10 hr @ 40°F.
- Bassinage in 247g of 82°F levain (252g as mixed - 3g of CO2 - 2g of bowl and scraper losses) + 43g 99°F water w/ 0.703g IDY dissolved in it, followed by 18g salt.
- Incorporate levain, then water/yeast, then salt in 8 min as part of 10 min @ speed 1.
- DT=64.1°@10 min on speed 1.
- DT=67.2 after an additional 2 min @ speed 4.
- Very extensible but it feels a little granular when pulling a window pane (don't know why)
- BF– ~2:00 (to 120% of initial volume according to aliquot jar with 30g of dough + 10ml water) with folds at 0, 20, and 60 min (objective is full gluten development at end of shaping).
- Divide into 4 x 424g pieces (handles better than with a longer BF), used very little flour on silicone baking mat which assures that dough sticks and re-integrates during shaping. There was a fair amount of flour on the couche to keep dough from sticking to the scale pan.
- Preshape to 10" logs, rest 20, min, final shape to 20" (one baguette took two stages to roll to full length).
- Counter proof ~1:00 @78°, already feels slightly overproofed.
- Retard @ 47° for ~2:30 to chill and delay bake to 1500. {next time run retard @ 40°F for 1 hr, then raise it to a higher temperature in an attempt to re-saturate the liquid phase of the dough with CO2 before baking}
- Slash wide and long, bake 17 min (8 min @ 500°F w/ steam and low fan, 9 min @ 340°F, 20 % humidity).

Results:

- Seems to have been a little over-proofed.
- Diastatic malt did add a little color to the crust.
- Almost no ear. Suspect high hydration due to multiple small additions (6g to wet BF container surface, wet hands for three folds). {note to self - reduce hydration and reduce final proof and see if ear reappears}
- Shaping is OK; longer scoring and wider separation and a little more overlap worked fine with no obvious lumps along the length and less obvious twisting of the loaf.
- Crumb is irregular but uniform with no obvious places where it was crushed during shaping.
- Crisp, almost bell-like snap which I now attribute to lower protein flour - gives the feel of a thinner crust (crumb/crust closeup below)

Lower hydration for lower protein flour

Another day, another iteration.

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total wt (g)
12.0%	100%	65.0%	1.8%	1725

levain	water	added 10.5% AP flour	salt	IDY
248	548	889 + 10 DM	18.6	0.7g

Made 254g levain (lost 3g to CO2 and 3g to bowl and scraper)

- Combine 548 water + 899 flour + 10 DM, mix for 5 min @ speed 1
- Autolyse for 10 hr @ 40°F.
- Bassinage in 248g levain 0.73g IDY sprinkled on levain + 18.6g salt (1449g net wt of autolysed flour + water + collected condensation)
- Incorporate levain, then salt in 8 min as part of 10 min @ speed 1
- DT=~62°@10 min on speed 1
- DT=66.3°F after an additional 1 min @ speed 4
- BF- ~2:30 (to 120% of initial volume according to aliquot jar with 30g of dough + 10ml water)
- Cut one slice of dough and minimally shape. (bottom loaf in upper photo, on the right in crumb shot)
- Cut a second slice and fold lengthwise then immediately roll out to 20” in two stages (second loaf from bottom, second from the right)
- Divide remaining dough into 2 ~equal pieces, preshape into 10” logs and rest 15 min. Roll out to 20”. (top two loaves in upper photo, left two loaves in crumb shot)
- Counter proof at 81° room temp for ~1:00; plan for an additional 30 min of effective proof time as it chills in the retarder
- Retard @40°F for 2 hr. Check proof progress to avoid over proofing
- Dough temperature was 45°F @ 2:00
- Slash wide and long
- Bake using BAG-STM2 oven program (preheat to 525°F, bake with steam and low fan speed for 8 minutes; reduce temperature to 340°F and humidity to 20%, reverse loaves and bake an additional 9 min)

Changes from last bake:

- Lower hydration (65% vs 69%),
- Fully chilled before slashing (45°F vs 55°F), and not over proofed.

Improvements:

- Lower hydration and not over proofing combined to make BIG EARS.
- Lower hydration made shaping and slashing easier
- Fully chilling the dough before baking may have further contributed to ease of slashing (cuts were clean and there was no drag and there was no obvious slicing open of alveoli).

Insights:

- It is clear that you don't need super high hydration to get an open crumb (Trevor Wilson makes that point strongly; this is some supporting evidence).
- Every flour has an optimum hydration level which maximizes loaf volume, and a lower protein level in the flour generally has a lower optimum hydration as well. The right dough texture for handling should be the objective when setting the hydration. And every flour is different, to the point where two flours with approximately the same protein level may need significantly different amounts of water (up to ±1% hydration) to deliver the dough handling qualities you want.
- You need the right surface to shape on, and the right amount of flour on the surface to provide the necessary friction for shaping and rolling.
- Lower protein flour seems to produce a more crispy ("thinner") crust, perhaps for the same reason that soft wheat flour is used for crackers.
- While shaping really is about shaping, the openness of the crumb is much more heavily influenced by the steps that occur before the end of bulk fermentation (e.g., flour selection, hydration, autolyse, gluten development/mixing/folding)

Crumb shots of all four baguettes included below for comparison

59% hydration baguettes - and unexpected results

PFF	Levain hydration	Dough hydration	Salt	Total dough wt
12.0%	59%	59.0%	1.8%	1725g

Levain (59%)	Water	AP flour	Salt
203g (27+68+116)	557g	934g + 10g DM	19.3g

Dough:
Made up stiff levain (59%) and let it ferment for 9 hours
Mixed flour + water at 59% hydration and autolysed at 40°F overnight
1496g cold autolysed flour and water (including condensation)
203g levain
0.728g IDY sprinkled on levain
19.3 salt added during first 6 min of mixing

- Mix 10 min at speed 0; final DT=71.1°F (up from ~62°F for the 65% hydration batch)
- BF'ed to 125% of original volume based on 30g sample in 100g aliquot jar
- Divided into 4 parts and preshaped, rested 30 min, final shaped
- Counter proof for 2:30 at which point they were still a little under proofed; decided to go to the oven and bake without any retard
- Baked using BAG-STM2 program (slashed using Benny's guidance - lame rotated 45° CW - produced great ears but I don't know if that was technique or just the stiff dough).

Process changes from last bake:

- Lower hydration (59% vs 65%)
- A little more bulk fermentation (but I think not enough)
- Dough was not chilled before slashing

Results changes:

- This dough was really a pleasure to work with. The best comparison I can make is with the dough that Martin uses in this shaping demo
- And strangely, this dough was amazingly extensible (which I did not expect) and each baguette was almost trivial to roll out to 21 or 22" and had to be somewhat compressed to get them to fit within a 20" wide couche. Two baguettes were folded lengthwise to shorten the dough-piece before pre-shaping. After a 30 min rest, all of the dough was fully relaxed and was then easily shaped without resistance. I can't tell after the fact which ones were folded and which ones were just cut and rolled after a 30 min rest.
- Lower hydration probably contributed to big ears and more oven spring (enough to break the straps separating the gringe in many places)
- Lower hydration again improved shaping and slashing
- Lower hydration may have contributed to more browning as well, but the crumb was not as moist as it was with the 65% dough
- These came out darker than prior batches and the crumb is not as open as it has been in the past.
- The less open crumb I attribute to an insufficiently long bulk fermentation, so next time I will step up the target volume increase to 50% and perhaps also extend the final proof a little. The fact that I did not need to chill the dough before going to the oven says a lot about the dough texture at that point.

59% hydration with a proper bulk fermentation

Today I did a repeat of the prior batch but allowed it to bulk ferment to 140% of post mix volume. This batch has a little better crumb, but it seems that I still didn't wait long enough for it to fully proof (note broken straps where oven spring just pulled them apart. For some reason the dough was quite a bit colder at the beginning of bulk ferment (65.8°F vs 71.1°F) and to get to 140%, it took 3:50 with one fold after 20 min. The crumb is not really tight, but it is not as open as I would prefer so I may make a few more runs in this vicinity to poke around and see if I can figure out what is going on.

I thought this next photo was cool so I include it here for that reason alone. It looks like I need to overlap the slashes a little more to get increased uniformity along the barrel, and clearly a longer proof.

59% hydration, no commercial yeast

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total dough wt
12.0%	59%	59.0%	1.8%	1725g

205 (27+69+118) levain 557 H2O 934 AP + 10 DM 19.3 salt

- Make 213g stiff levain (59%) and 59% hydration autolysed flour/water (mixed at speed 0 for 6 min then kneaded a few turns to homogenize) at 40°F overnight starting at 2115

- 0620 mix
- 1496 cold autolysed flour and water (including condensation)
- 210g net levain
- Omit IDY
- 19.3 salt
- Mix 10 min at speed 0; final DT=64.4°F
- Take 30g for aliquot jar. + 9ml H2O =39ml
- 1 fold @ 3:20
- BF to 150% of original volume
- BF time =~5:50 from start of mixing (this is probably a result of deleting the IDY)
- Divide into 4 parts (425g) and preshape (7 min), rest 30 min, final shape (5 min) [first baguette pre-shaped was cut long then final shaped immediately without a pre-shape step]
- Counter proof for ~4:00 (aliquot jar is now at 100ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 60ml expansion so 200% dough volume growth and dough is floating on the added water)
- Retard 2:00@40°F to make it easier to slash
- Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle
- By the time the loaves were baked and cooled, it had been 13:30 since mixing.

The crust is thin and crisp, the ears opened nicely, lots of oven spring, but crumb is again tighter than I would like it. I am speculating that it is a combination of a very stiff dough and the omission of the commercial yeast that kept the crumb from opening up during BF. There was some loss of gas when pre-shaping but not a lot, however final proof took forever and I suspect that a lot of CO2 leaked out due to high internal pressure (stiff dough) and just a long time on the bench. Two hours of retard was insufficient to add much dissolved CO2 to the dough and as a result there were no significant blisters on the surface (perhaps another effect of the long proof). Again the dough was very nice to handle and shape (quite extensible after the 30 min rest).

So on the basis of this result I will put the IDY back in and run another 59% batch in a couple of days with a little longer BF and also a longer final proof than I used last Friday (and hopefully not as long as today).

59% with IDY and long BF and proof

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total dough weight
12.0%	59%	59.0%	1.8%	1725g

209g levain (28g seed +69g H2O +118g bread flour); 557g H2O ; 934g 10.5% AP + 10g DM + 0.7g IDY; 19.3g salt

Make 214g stiff levain (59%) and 59% hydration autolysed flour/water (mixed at speed 0 for 6 min then kneaded a few turns to homogenize) at 40°F overnight starting at 1940

- Combine 1496 cold autolysed flour and water (including condensation)
- 209g net levain (5g net loss to bowl + scraper)
- 0.7 IDY sprinkled on top of levain just before mixing
- 19.3 salt (added during the mix after 4 minutes and before 6 minutes)
- Mix 10 min at speed 0; DT=63.0°F
- Then 1 min @ speed 4; DT=65.6°F (so 1 min @ speed 4 adds 2.6°F to this dough)
- Take 30g for aliquot jar. + 10 g H2O = ~40ml total
- 1 set of folds just after mix
- BF to 150% of original volume
- BF time =~5:00 from start of mixing (this is ~1:00 less than without the IDY so there is some speed up but not a huge amount.
- Divide into 4 parts (425g), rest 30 min, final shape
- Counter proof for ~3:00 (aliquot jar is by now at 100ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 60ml expansion so 200% dough volume growth and dough is floating on the added water)
- Retard 1:00@40°F to make it easier to slash
- Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Results:
Big holes in crumb are probably an artifact of folding strips of flabby dough during pre-shaping. I think the way to fix this is to cut the dough into more rectangular pieces and just roll them up, cinching them occasionally. Objective is a very symmetric preshaped log. I may back off on the BF just a little to make the dough easier to handle (maybe 140% vs 150% volume increase). The dough continues to expand during the post divide rest so this can be accounted for as part of bulk fermentation. A neighbor who received an uncut loaf sent a photo showing that the loaf she got had a better looking crumb than the one I chose to slice open.
Flavor was good (mild sour with lots of toasty notes from the dark bottom crust) and the crust was delicately crisp.

End of 59% (at least for now)

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total dough wt
12.0%	59%	59.0%	1.8%	1725

209g levain (28g seed+69g H2O+118g bread flour); 557 H2O; 934 AP + 10 DM + 0.7 IDY 19.3 salt

Make 214g stiff levain (59%) and 59% hydration autolysed flour/water (mixed at speed 0 for 6 min then kneaded a few turns to homogenize) at 40°F overnight starting at 2015

- 9 hrs later (levain fermentation time is the same as the cold autolyse time but at ~84°F):
- Combine 1493g cold autolysed flour and water (including condensation)
- 209g net levain (5g net loss to bowl + scraper)
- 0.7 IDY sprinkled on top of levain just before mixing
- 19.3 salt (added during the mix after 4 minutes and before 6 minutes)
- Mix 10 min at speed 0; DT=62.7F
- Then 2 min @ speed 4; DT=68.4°F (so 2 min @ speed 4 adds 5.3°F to this dough)
- Take 30g for aliquot jar. + 10 g H2O = ~40ml total
- 1 set of folds just after mix; press dough down to uniform thickness in 5L rectangular Cambro container
- BF to ~150% of original volume
- BF time =~4:00 from start of mixing
- Divide into 4 parts (425g), pre-shape into uniform 10" logs, rest 30 min, final shape by rolling out to 20"
- Counter proof for ~1:30 (by that time the aliquot jar is at 80ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 40ml expansion so 130% dough volume growth (230% of post mix dough volume) and dough is not yet floating on the added water)
- Retard 2:00@40°F to make it easier to slash
- Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Results:
This was a pretty good bake. Crumb is not as open as some higher hydration loaves, but it is fairly uniform, and everything worked the way it was supposed to. Could have proofed a little longer but these are fine. I started using the aliquot jar to track volume increase during both the rest after dividing and proofing. Because the dough starts cold and CO2 production is by its nature an exponential process, it really accelerates after it gets to 120% of initial volume. Added an extra minute of high speed mixing (up from 1 to 2 minutes) to see if the gluten development was negatively impacted (it was not) and to increase the dough temperature a little (saw the same 2.6°F increase per minute of mixing that I observed yesterday). Excellent crust, nice flavor, overall very good bread. But it can be better.

The next set of experiments will increase hydration and examine a few minor points along the way. First, an effort to get the yeast off to a better start by dissolving it in some warm water with a tiny bit of sugar then bassinage it into the 59% dough and in the process raise the dough hydration to 62%. Second, move up to 65% total hydration and see how the results compare with the previous batch run at that hydration. Third, a big change to eliminate the overnight cold autolyse and observe what happens with a 30 minute room temperature autolyse (again at 65%) and the other changes that have accrued over the last few weeks. I am just about out of diastatic malt and my new supply is being shipped via USPS so we will see whether I have a batch or two without any added DM.

The weather is supposed to get really hot over the weekend and I don't want to run the a/c and the oven simultaneously so I may or may not skip a few days, but I should be through this next series by the end of next week.

Better crumb @ 65% hydration/10.5% AP flour

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	batch weight
12.0%	60%	65%	1.9%	1748 net after mix

202 levain (28+68+112 bread flour) + 555 H2O + (53 H2O + 0.7IDY) + 926 AP + 10 DM + 0.7 IDY + 20 salt

Make 208g stiff levain (60%) and 60% hydration autolysed flour/water at 40°F overnight starting at 2000 (mixed at speed 0 for 6 min then kneaded a few turns by hand to homogenize before refrigerating)

Combine:
- 1474 cold autolysed flour and water (including condensation)
- 201g net levain (5g net loss to bowl + scraper)
- 0.7 IDY + 53g (100°) warm water + pinch sugar - mix a few minutes ahead and bassinage in at end of slow mix
- 20 salt (added during the mix after 4 minutes and before 6 minutes)

- Mix 10 min at speed 0; mix in salt; bassinage in yeast + water
- Then 1 min @ speed 4; DT=67.6°F
- Take 30g for aliquot jar. + 10 g H2O = ~40ml total
- 1 set of folds just after mix
- Fold again at 2:00 (2 sets)
- Fold again at 3:00 (1 set)
- BF to ~150% of original volume, finishing ~4:00 from start of mixing
- Divide into 4 parts (430g) and preshape (5 min), rest 30 min, final shape (5 min)
- Counter proof for ~1:05 (aliquot jar is now at 80ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 40ml expansion so 133% dough volume growth and dough is floating on the added water) (233% of post-mix volume)
- Retard 1:00@40°F to make it easier to slash
- Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Crumb is better and ears are not a good as they have been. I think this batch was slightly overproofed, in part because it is warm here (82° in the kitchen this morning and even though the dough started out cool, it was near kitchen temperature when it was divided) and I should have put them into retard sooner so they accumulated another ~30 min of proof time while they were cooling down.

I am now routinely using Abel Sierra's approach to pre-shaping and it gives good control and it is relatively easy to produce a symmetric preshaped baguette. A 30 minute rest give enough time for the dough to completely relax so that final shaping is easy, though at 65% hydration and warm it was delicate (but from the photo it looks successful).
For some reason this batch has a more assertive acidity which is unusual for this starter. I would like to better understand how to replicate that. The flavor is excellent. I tasted the residual dough that was in the aliquot jar and it was really tangy which matched the finished baguette flavor.

Even with the one hour of pre-bake retard, the scoring was a bit ragged (which is why I judged it to be overproofed) and deflated some surface bubbles. As usual, when that happens, the ears are not good and this case made that point again. My suspicion is that this flour (at 10.5%) really wants to be mixed to a lower hydration (maybe 62-63%) so next time I will probably go there but repeat the long cold autolyse. Since the viscosity is a strong function of temperature, it may be possible to go to a little higher hydration when the weather is a few degrees cooler
.
Mixing the IDY with warm (100°F) water and a pinch of sugar seemed to get it off to a better start even though there was very little IDY in the batch (0.065%).

62% hydration - new baseline for 10.5% AP flour

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	batch size
12.0%	62%	62.0%	2.0%	1755

208g levain (28 + 72 + 116 AP flour) + 584g H2O + 932 AP + 10 diastatic malt + 21.40 salt

Make 216g stiff levain (62%) and 62% hydration autolysed flour/water (mix at speed 0 for 6 min then knead a few turns to homogenize) then knead in IDY and refrigerate at 40°F overnight starting at 2000

Combine:
- 1518g cold autolysed flour and water (including condensation)
- [0.7g IDY kneaded into flour and water and included in the autolyse]
- 211g net levain
- 21.3 salt (added during the mix after 4 minutes and before 6 minutes)

- Mix 10 min at speed 0;
- Then 1 min @ speed 4; Dough temperature=67.0°F
- Take 30g for aliquot jar. + 10 g H2O = ~40ml total

- Fold just after mix (1 set)
- Fold again at 1:00 (1 set)
- Fold again at 2:00 (1 set)
- BF to ~140% of original volume (~3:30 from start of mixing)

Divide into 4 parts (~434g) and preshape (5 min), rest 20 min, final shape (5 min)

Counter proof for ~0:45; aliquot jar is now at 68ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 28ml expansion so about double dough volume growth and dough is floating on the added water)

Retard 1:45@40°F to make it easier to slash

Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Insights:
Reducing the dough hydration to 62% improved dough handling marginally, but the ears now are robust enough to pick up a baguette by its ears.

Incorporating the IDY into the cold autolyse had no observable impact. There was no indication when the autolysed flour and water (and IDY) was removed from the refrigerator that there was any yeast in the mix. After mixing, the dough was quite extensible, though somewhat sticky for the first two folds. The resulting dough had adequate strength after the third set of folds and was sitting high at 3:30 into bulk fermentation and the aliquot jar indicated that it had expanded to ~140% of post-mix volume. Shaping was easy though the dough was soft. 45 minutes of counter proof was enough, so I was comfortable with retarding at that point for 1:45 to stiffen them up to improve handling and slashing.

The slightly stiffer dough produced nice ears, though among the 20 slashes there are multiple examples of both good and bad. And since it was all the same dough that has to be related to an inconsistent lame operator. Maybe inconsistent blade rotation. After they were out of the oven I noticed that most of the straps had not broken which is an indication that there was somewhat less oven spring. Color is good indicating that my new batch of diastatic malt has about the same activity as the last batch.

Next I am going to shorten up the autolyse to 30 min, but incorporate the levain and the yeast (but not the salt) when the components are combined, then mix in the salt after the 30 min autolyse is finished. With the omission of a cold 10 hr autolyse, the dough temperature will be higher and I expect the bulk fermentation will want to be shorter. I will use the aliquot jar to determine when to divide (probably @140% of post mix volume).

And Alan's classic shot (to emphasize the fairly nice ears on this batch):

62% + overnight room temp autolyse w/ salt

This worked fine, but there are certainly better ways to get to this end point.

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total batch weight
12.0%	77%	62.0%	2.0%	1755g

227 levain (28 seed + 88 H2O + 119 BF -8 losses) + 565 H2O + 932 AP + 10 diastatic malt + 21.40 salt

Make 235g stiff levain (77%) by including in the levain all excess water above what is needed to do the autolyse at 60% hydration

Combine:
- 565g cold water (refrigerated)
- 932g AP flour
- 10g diastatic malt
- 21.3g salt after 4 minutes and before 6 minutes
- Mix 7 minutes at speed 0
- Refrigerate 2 hr then take out and let it autolyse 9 hr overnight at room temperature (72°F)

- In the AM - Mix 10 min at speed 0 to incorporate:
- autolysed flour, water, salt + 227g net levain
- 0.7 IDY
- Then mix 10 min @ speed 4; DT=80°F
- Take 30g for aliquot jar. + 10 g H2O = ~40ml total
- 1 set of folds just after mix +
- folds at 0:20, 1:00, 1:30
- BF to ~125% of original volume (48ml on aliquot jar)(2:30 from start of mixing)
- Very little gas lost during preshaping; dough handled easily
- Divide into 4 parts (~430g) and pre-shape (5 min), rest 30 min, final shape (6 min)
- At the completion of shaping, the aliquot jar was at 55ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 15ml expansion so about 150% dough volume increase) and dough was not yet floating on the added water though within a few minutes it did break loose and float with the top of the dough above the meniscus).
- Counter proof for ~0:45
- Retard 2:00 @40°F to make it easier to slash - with significant volume increase during the retard.
- Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle.

The slashes were all at a shallow angle per Danny's demo and the ears are more pronounced than on some prior batches when the slash was more perpendicular to the surface of the dough. Also tried to score in a more narrow lane down the middle of the loaf to reduce the circumferential extent of the slash, and the most visible consequence seems to be that none of the straps are broken! I will attempt to confirm this result in a future bake.

Bulk ferment was to 125% of post-mix volume (according to the aliquot jar though the dough temperature was probably a little above that of the aliquot jar so perhaps the real end point was a little above 125%. In this case there was no obvious bubble popping or deflation during pre-shaping. The loaf that is sectioned below was the most resistant to extension at final shaping with some larger alveoli which I have come to expect when I can feel bubbles in the dough as it is rolled out.

Getting the 77% hydration levain and the 60% hydration autolysed flour/water/salt to combine required a substantially longer mix (10 min @ speed 4 vs 2 min @ speed 4) than I was planning, and as a result the dough temperature climbed to over 80*F before it was satisfactorily smooth - and it still took multiple folds over the first 90 minutes of BF before it felt right. But after that it behaved very well. I don't know if the need for additional folds was due to the warm dough not mixing completely because of the lower viscosity or because the salt was in the dough for the warm autolyse or for some other reason. This did not seem to be the case when the autolyse was done in the refrigerator without the salt. It may be better to mix the levain at 60% hydration then after it is mixed with the 60% hydration autolysed flour, bassinage in the additional 21ml of water needed to bring the dough hydration up to 62%.

PS - everybody who received one of these reported that it was one of the best ever (which was my assessment from a flavor and crust texture perspective). So both stable, and in a good place.

62% hydration, no autolyse

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total batch weight
12.0%	77%	62.0%	2.0%	1755

227 (28 seed + 88 H2O + 119 BF -8 losses) 563 H2O 931 AP + 10 diastatic malt 21.30 salt

Make 235g stiff levain (77%) by putting excess water above what is needed to do the initial mixing of the flour and water at 60% hydration when incorporating the the levain.

Process -

Combine:

- 231g net levain (apparently the losses were only 4g)
- 0.7 IDY on top of the levain
- 563g cold water (refrigerated)
- 10g diastatic malt
- 931g AP flour
- 21.3g salt after 4 minutes and before 6 minutes
- Mix 10 min at speed 0 to incorporate everything

- Dough temp = 68.6°F @5 min on speed 0 (surprisingly high for using 38° water)
- Dough temp = 70.6°F @ 10 min on speed 0.
- Dough temp = 77.8°F @ 6 min on speed 4.
- Dough temp = 80.2°F @ 8 min on speed 4.
- Take 30g for aliquot jar.
- [Massage dough into the corners of the aliquot jar with a wet finger to eliminate air bubbles then approximately level the dough surface by poking it down and then add + 10 g H2O to make ~40ml total in the jar]
- 2 sequential sets of folds just after mixing and no additional folds during bulk fermentation. The dough was checked for window pane formation and extensibility after each successive 2 minutes of mixing at speed 4; gluten seemed to be fully developed by the end of the mix cycle and the dough did not stick to the sides or bottom of the rectangular Cambro fermentation container when folded.
- Dough is remarkably easier to handle today (without an autolyse).
- BF to ~130% of original volume (meniscus at 50ml level on aliquot jar at ~3:00 from start of mixing)
- Very little gas lost during preshaping; dough handled easily

- Divide into 4 parts (~430g) and pre-shape (5 min), rest 30 min, final shape (7 min). Not as extensible as the prior batch but made cooperative by using two stages for shaping. Next time perhaps extend rest period to 45 min.
- Counter proof for ~2:00
- (aliquot jar was at 70ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 30ml expansion so about 100% dough volume increase relative to end of mix)
- Retard 1:45 @40°F to make it easier to slash. The aliquot jar level was up to ~90ml by the time the baguettes were baked.
- Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Analysis-

Crumb is not quite as nice as some prior bakes so something was different. Maybe the lower BF extent.
Lack of an autolyse seemed to make the dough handle more easily, enough different today to make me wonder if I mis-measured something yesterday. Will try this again to verify the difference.

Next time, combine the flour and water and mix for 5 min at speed 0 as if it was going to autolyse, then add the levain and IDY and continue mixing for another 5 minutes at speed 0 to fully combine them before moving to speed 4 to develop the gluten.

I tried a new trick with the aliquot jar by using a wet finger to massage the 30g dough sample down onto the bottom of the jar with no trapped air pockets. This seemed to allow the dough to expand further without detaching from the bottom and floating until very late in the process.

I noticed today that the baguettes seemed to be quite uniform in diameter when they were loaded, but one end emerged slightly larger than the other and it seems to be the end that was initially at the back of the oven that was larger (they get rotated about half way through the bake). I wonder if there is a non-uniform distribution of steam or hot air.

A low angle slash yielded nice ears in the cold dough, and again sticking to a more narrow lane down the middle of the loaf seemed to reduce the tendency of the straps to fracture/tear completely. May try to score two deep and two shallow next time and see how that impacts the appearance.

I have been using 700mg of IDY for a while and have never detected a commercial yeast taste - in fact these have been remarkably sour for such a rapid fermentation. I may increase the amount of IDY to 0.2% and see what difference that makes.

0.2% is too much IDY

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total batch size
12.0%	77%	62.0%	2.0%	1755

227 (28 seed + 88 H2O + 119 BF -8 losses) 565 H2O 932 AP + 10 diastatic malt 21.40 salt

Make 235g stiff levain (77%) by putting into the levain the excess water above what is needed to do the autolyse at 60% hydration

Process:

- Combine the 932 AP flour, 10 diastatic malt, and 566 cold water and mix for 5 min at speed 0 as if it was going to autolyse, then add 227g levain and 2.088g IDY and continue mixing for another 5 minutes at speed 0 to fully combine them before moving to speed 4 to develop the gluten. Incorporate the salt during the first 2 min.
-
- Mix at speed 4 in 2 minute increments until fully developed, checking temperature and gluten development after each step (adding salt during the first 2 minutes)
- 69.6°F @ 10 min on speed 0.
- 71.8° @2 min on speed 4
- 73.4° @4 min on speed 4
- 75.6° @6 min on speed 4.
- 78.3°F@ 8 min on speed 4.
- 80.6°F @ 10 min on speed 4 [this progression is almost exactly 1.09°F/minute of mixing time]
- Take 30g for aliquot jar. Massage into the corners of the jar with a wet finger to eliminate air bubbles then add + 10 g H2O = ~40ml total
- BF to ~150% of original volume (to 55ml in aliquot jar at ~2:50 from start of mixing)
- Divide into 4 parts (~430g) and pre-shape (5 min), rest 25min, final shape (7 min).
- Counter proof for 0:45
- Aliquot jar =75ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 35ml expansion so about 35/30=115% dough volume increase since end of mix)
- Retard 2:00 @40°F to make it easier to slash
- Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Summary: Good but not great
While the additional IDY took some time off the total process by accelerating bulk fermentation, there was a cost in terms of flavor. Not so much that there was a dominant commercial yeast element, but because the normal complexity and acidity of the levain seems to be suppressed. On the other hand this batch seemed to be somewhat over fermented during BF which may have contributed to the off flavor profile. It handled very well for pre-shaping, but final shaping suffered from a lack of the easy extensibility of previous batches. I don't know whether this was related to not using an autolyse or to adding more IDY. The crumb seems compressed, though the center of this loaf (which I thought might have been crushed) turned out to be quite open.

I kept one uncut loaf which I will let stale overnight and plan to make bruschetta with it tomorrow. I will have a better sense of the hole distribution after I get all of the slices laid out tomorrow.

I will cut the IDY in half and do a repeat tomorrow using an overnight cold autolyse (and try to BF to 25-30% volume increase instead of 50%) before shaping.

62%, 10 hr cold autolyse, 0.1% IDY, BF to 125%

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total batch weight
12.0%	77%	62.0%	2.0%	1755g

227 (28 seed + 88 H2O + 119 BF -8 losses) 565 H2O 932 AP + 10 diastatic malt 21.40 salt

Make 235g stiff levain (77%) by putting into the levain the excess water above what is needed to do the autolyse at 60% hydration

Process:

- Combined the 932 AP flour, 10 diastatic malt, and 566 cold water and mixed for 6 min at speed 0 (~100RPM spindle speed). Kneaded a few turns until it was fully smooth, placed in bowl and covered bowl with StretchTite, refrigerated overnight (10 hr). In the AM combined 229g levain and 1.01g IDY with the autolysed flour/water and continued to mix for 5 minutes at speed 0 to fully combine them before moving to speed 4 to develop the gluten. Incorporated the salt during the first 2 minutes at speed 0.

- Mixed at speed 4 (~200 RPM spindle speed) in 2 minute increments for a total of 6 minutes (until fully developed)
- Dough temperature:
- 55.0° after 5 min @speed 0
- 59.1° after 2 min @ 4
- 63.2° after 4 min @ 4
- 67.5° after 6 min @ 4 (very good extensibility)
- (note temperature rose by 1.05°F/min while mixing at speed 4)

- Take 30g for aliquot jar. Shape it into a somewhat long but narrow cylinder and lower it into the aliquot jar; spreading it out into the corners after contacting the bottom without trapping any air. Give it a few seconds to firmly attach to the sides then massage into the corners of the jar with a wet finger to eliminate any remaining air bubbles then add + 10 g H2O = ~40ml total
- BF to ~125% of original volume (48 ml on aliquot jar)(~3:15 from start of mixing)
- Divide into 4 parts (~430g) and pre-shape (5 min), rest 35min, final shape (7 min).
- Counter proof for 1:15
- Aliquot jar =70ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 30ml expansion, so about 100% dough volume increase when it went to the retarder)
- Retard 1:45 @40°F to make it easier to slash
- Score two loaves [two at the bottom of image] shallow (~5mm) and two loaves deep (~1 cm) [two at the top]
- Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Analysis:
This seems to be right on the mark - dough took only 6 minutes at high speed (200 RPM spindle speed) to get to full gluten development with very good extensibility when shaped (perhaps aided by the cold autolyse and a 35min rest after pre-shaping); a uniformly open crumb, good ears, good color, crackly crust. I think I like the results of a deeper score (~1 cm in this case without much blade rotation so pretty much a straight down cut though with a curved lame blade).

The reduced extent of bulk fermentation (to 125% of post-mix volume instead of 150% yesterday) took longer because of the lower dough temperature but made shaping much easier, and the pre-shaped loaves were very extensible and thus amenable to stretching before final shaping and rolled out with almost no effort at all (after resting for a full 35 min during which they increased further in volume).

The reduction in IDY from 0.2% to 0.1% eliminated the flavor component that I associate with commercial yeast and again allowed the levain to again take center stage, so 0.1% will be the upper bound for future efforts.
These could probably have proofed a little longer before going to the retarder since they handled so nicely when they came out. [note to self: be patient]

66%, 10 hr cold autolyse, high gluten flour, 0.1% IDY

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total batch size
11.8%	100%	66.1%	2.0%	1795 - 30 for aliquot jar

227g levain (28 seed + 115 H2O + 115 BF -8 losses) + 565 H2O + 932 AP + 10 diastatic malt + 21.40 salt

Make 258g levain (100%) by putting into the levain the excess water above what is needed to do the autolyse at 60% hydration

Process:
Combine the 932 high gluten white bread flour and 566 room temperature water and mix for 6 min at speed 0. Turn out on the counter and knead a few turns until it is fully smooth then put it in a bowl and cover with StretchTite; refrigerate overnight.
In the AM add 251g levain with 1.01g IDY sprinkled on top and 10g of diastatic malt to the autolysed flour and water; continue mixing for another 5 minutes at speed 0 to fully combine the ingredients before moving to speed 4 to develop the gluten. Incorporate the salt during the last 2 min at speed 0.

Mix at speed 4 in 2 minute increments until fully developed:
Dough temperature:
59.2° after 5 min @speed 0
64.0° @2 min on 4
68.7° @4 min on 4
Add 10g water since the dough seems to be a little stiff
72.7° @6 min on speed 4
[this temperature increase is 2.28°F/min of mix time so a BIG increase for using high gluten flour even at a higher hydration]
Dough looks like this at the end of the mix

Take 30g for aliquot jar and add 10g of water to bring it up to the 40ml mark

BF to ~125% of original volume (48 ml on aliquot jar; ~3:30 from start of mixing)
Divide into 4 parts (~430g) and pre-shape (5 min), rest 35min, final shape (7 min).

Counter proof for 1:15 (dough is soft but not poofy)

Retard 2:45 @40°F to make it easier to slash (next time try retarding at 50°F to see if
Score narrowly down the middle of the loaf with 1/4"- 3/8" offset
Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Analysis:
This is my new baseline!

This was a move from AP flour to high gluten flour, making an effort to add enough water (up to 66.1% hydration) to have approximately the same dough texture as I was getting with the AP flour at 62% hydration. I will probably go up 1% next time just to see when it gets too soft to handle.

The results are quite pleasing, with an even more open crumb (and without any lighting changes), easy to shape after a 35 minute rest (I used a two-stage final shaping protocol for two of the four loaves that were a little short after the first stage of rolling out).

The crust is explosively crunchy (as opposed to crispy), but the higher gluten (speculation) gives it a little more resistance; color is good, taste is excellent.

Scoring looks a little better this round, with the higher protein flour apparently providing enough strength to keep the straps from breaking even with more expansion during proof and more oven spring. I also note that the loaves are not as lumpy as some I have shaped and scored in the past.

Summary:
This was bake #29 by my count (there were a number of dead-end trials that were not worth wasting time too write up, but that is part of making progress). And I think that the results reflect the cumulative effects of following the data and making small, single parameter changes to understand the impact on the end product. The contributions of everybody who is posting and commenting have contributed a lot of value to the evolution.

Trevor's guidance to avoid screwing it up at each step is always in the front of my mind. Benny set the example of consistent open crumb, and he was the origin of the use of the aliquot jar for measuring BF volume increase. He also pointed to Abel's pre-shaping style which has been a key improvement. Alan and Geremy have coached on techniques that have proven to be valuable for improving consistency and appearance. The experiments with low hydration dough were very informative, and your observations about minimizing the use of flour on the bench and the dough were flashbulb events that got me to differentiate between tacky dough and sticky dough so my dough handling skills have improved a lot as a result.

I now add 1% diastatic malt where I previously did not. And I keep nutritional yeast as an option which I am not currently using. For a long time I avoided using commercial yeast, but when the experimental matrix was filled without it and I started adding under Benny's guidance 0.065% (and eventually 0.1%) things improved further. So it is a cumulative result based on data-driven experimentation and process consistency. Having gone to a very low protein flour to get good crumb, discovering the very clear relationship between hydration and protein level and their joint impact on optimum handling qualities, then exploiting that to go back to a high gluten flour while in the process taking advantage of the additional strength to increase the degree of proof and thus get even better crumb. Just incremental improvements while deriving the design principles.

A repeat without commercial yeast

High gluten flour, cold overnight autolyse, NO IDY, 125% BF, 35 min rest

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total batch weight
11.8%	100%	66.7%	2.0%	1776g + 30g for aliquot jar

227 (29 seed + 115 H2O + 115 BF -8 losses) 566 H2O 932 AP + 10 diastatic malt 21.40 salt

Make 259g levain (100%) by putting into the levain the excess water above what is needed to do the autolyse at 62% hydration

Process:
combine the 932 AP flour, 10g diastatic malt, and 566 cold water and mix for 7 min at speed 0. Knead a few turns until it is fully smooth and cover bowl with StretchTite and refrigerate overnight. (Yielded 1502g net autolysed dough)

In the AM add the 252g levain and no IDY and continue mixing for another 6 minutes at speed 0 to fully combine before moving to speed 4 to develop the gluten. Incorporate the salt during the first 2 min at speed 0.

56.8° after 6 min @speed 0
Mix at speed 4 in 2 minute increments until fully developed
61.0° @2 min on 4
66.0° @4 min on 4
Add 10g water [this little big of bassinaged liquid seemed to do a lot for the dough - making it smooth and strong and extensible]
70.3° @6 min on speed 4.
(2.25°F/min)
71.6° after transfer to BF container and removal of 30g for aliquot jar

Ferment in retarder for 3:30@66°F, then 1:30 at room temperature (~80°F) to ~125% of original volume (48 ml on aliquot jar)(~5:00 from start of mixing). BF in retarder at 66°F average was intended to slow it down a little so that it would not over-ferment while I was off at a meeting. This was probably not essential since there was no IDY in the mix and it was bound to be slow in any case

Divide into 4 parts (~444g) and pre-shape (5 min), rest 35min, final shape (7 min).
Counter proof for 1:15 (until it was puffy and soft)

Retard 1:45 @40°F to make it easier to slash
Aliquot jar was at 70ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 30ml expansion so about 30/30=100% dough volume increase) when it went to the oven, but the aliquot jar had been on the counter while the dough was in the retarder.

Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Analysis:
Including the DM in with the long cold autolyse seems to provide a darker bottom crust than adding it to the mix in the morning when the levain and the autolysed flour are combined and mixed.

Since Bennie ran a batch that had beautiful crumb without any commercial yeast, I decided that I would make the same adjustment to my successful baseline (which uses 0.1% IDY) and observe the result. Other than taking a while longer, the results are quite good. Shaping was somewhat hurried (and it shows), but the crumb is as good or better than previous trials.

The somewhat darker bottom crust is an improvement for those who like a dark bake (count me in that group).

Back to 0.1% IDY to assess repeatability

9/19/20: High gluten flour, cold overnight autolyse, 0.1% IDY, 125% BF, 35 min rest, 3 x 425g + 2 x 250g baguettes

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total batch size
11.8%	100%	66.1%	2.0%	1802 (includes 30g for aliquot jar)

227 (28 seed + 115 H2O + 115 BF -8 losses) 566 H2O 932 AP + 10 diastatic malt 21.40 salt

Make 259g levain (100%) by putting into the levain the excess water above what is needed to do the autolyse at 62% hydration

Process:
combine the 932 AP flour, 10g diastatic malt, and 566 cold water and mix for 7 min at speed 0. Knead a few turns until it is fully smooth and cover bowl with StretchTite and refrigerate overnight.

In the AM add the 252g levain and 1.048g IDY and continue mixing for another 6 minutes at speed 0 to fully combine before moving to speed 4 to develop the gluten. Incorporate the salt during the first 2 min at speed 0.

58.2° after 6 min @speed 0
Mix at speed 4 in 2 minute increments until fully developed
62.6° @2 min on 4
66.6° @4 min on 4
Add 10g water and bassinage into the mix during the next 2 min @ speed 4
70.6° @6 min on speed 4. (still not fully developed so mix another minute)
72.9° @7 min on speed 4
(2.06°F/min)

Take 30g for aliquot jar.

Ferment to ~125% of original volume (48 ml on aliquot jar)(~3:30 from start of mixing)
Divide into 5 parts (3x ~424g + 2 x 250g) and pre-shape (5 min), rest 35min, final shape (7 min).

Counter proof for 1:00
Aliquot jar =70ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 30ml expansion so about 30/30=100% dough volume increase)

Retard 1:15 @40°F to make it easier to slash

Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle
Assessment:
This batch was for a birthday party so I didn't want to go too far off the farm but because I only needed three loaves, I decided to make two 250g baguettes just to see what the ears and the crumb would look like.

The crumb looks good on both the large and the small loaves, but the ears on the small baguettes are not impressive. The dough felt like it was over-proofed when it was slashed and the ears on all of the loaves are sub-par.

Other than that, the timing was close to yesterday with a couple of small differences: the temperatures at the various stages of mixing were sightly different, and the bulk fermentation was perhaps a couple of percent above the planned 25% volume increase just because of the few extra minutes it took to get prepared to divide the dough. With the IDY in the mix, it starts slow but by the end of BF things are moving quite rapidly and can easily go further than intended.

70% hydration and high gluten flour

Raise hydration to 70%, High gluten flour, cold overnight autolyse, 0.1% IDY in autolyse, 120% BF, 25 min rest, 8 x 250g baguettes

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	dough batch size
11.8%	100%	70%	2.0%	2000 + 30 for aliquot jar

285 [28 + 132 +132 - 7] 623g H2O + 62g bassinage 1039g HGW + 12g DM 23.60g salt

Make 292g levain (100%) by putting into the levain the excess water above what is needed to do the autolyse at 62% hydration

Process:
Combine the 1039g AP flour, 12g diastatic malt, + 1g IDY and 623g cold water and mix for 7 min at speed 0. Knead a few turns until it is fully smooth and cover bowl with StretchTite and refrigerate overnight. (Yielded 1668g net autolysed dough)

In the AM add the 285g levain and continue mixing for another 6 minutes at speed 0 to fully combine before moving to speed 4 to develop the gluten. Incorporate the salt during the first 2 min at speed 0.

57.8° after 5 min @speed 0
Mix at speed 4 in 2 minute increments until fully developed
61.4° @2 min on 4
65.0° @4 min on 4
Add 62g water
67.8° @6 min on speed 4.
70.4° @8 min on speed 4
73.1° @10 min on speed 4
74.4° @11 min on speed 4
(1.51°F/min)
71.6° after transfer to BF container and removal of 30g for aliquot jar

Take 30g for aliquot jar - add water up to 40ml mark

Ferment to ~120% of original volume (48 ml on aliquot jar)(~2:30 from start of mixing)
Divide into 8 parts (8 x 250g) and pre-shape (5 min), rest 25min, final shape (7 min).

Counter proof for 1:05
Aliquot jar =70ml (30ml dough, 10ml water, 30ml expansion so about 30/30=100% dough volume increase)
[This 100% volume increase in the aliquot jar between the beginning of bulk fermentation and the end of counter proofing seems to be consistent from batch to batch]

Retard 2:30 @40°F to make it easier to slash

Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Analysis:
The crumb is more open than when mixing at 66.1% hydration, and adding 0.1% IDY in the diastatic malt and mixing it in with the flour before combining the water for the autolyse seems to have accelerated the bulk fermentation and shortened it by about an hour (3:30 to 2:30). There was a small amount of volume increase visible after the overnight cold autolyse (maybe a few percent). The last time I tried this with 0.065% IDY, there was no observable impact. The fact that this batch required more mixing to reach acceptable gluten development is curious. The temperature rise rate during mixing was also quite a bit less than last time, perhaps because of the added 62g of water and the resulting lower viscosity.

At 70% hydration, the dough was substantially harder to handle even when dividing and shaping at 20% bulk fermentation. The ears are hardly distinguishable - possibly because there were so many baguettes loaded at the same time that the rate of heating was inadequate to generate the required oven spring to open the slash. Try backing down to 68% hydration.

The baguettes on the next to the top rack of the oven (the three baguettes on the right in the photo) have a darker crust. Perhaps this is because there was nothing above them.

69.6%, high gluten flour, 0.1% IDY in autolyse, 120% BF

This was supposed to be built at 68% hydration (down from 70%), but the way it got mixed, it turned into 69.6% and it behaved like it through the whole process, High gluten flour, cold overnight autolyse, 0.13% IDY in autolyse, 120% BF, 35 min rest, 4 x 425g baguettes

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total batch size
12.0%	100%	68.0%	2.0%	1700+30

247 levain from (28 + 112 + 112 - 5) 538 + 40 H2O 886g HGW + 10g DM + 1.3g IDY 20.35g salt

Make 252g levain (100%) by putting into the levain the excess water above what is needed to do the autolyse at 60% hydration (in the future plan 8g extra for mixer and bowl losses)

Process:
combine the 886g AP flour, 10g diastatic malt, + 1.3g IDY and 538g cold water and mix for 7 min at speed 0. Knead a few turns until it is fully smooth and cover bowl with StretchTite and refrigerate overnight. (Yielded 1427g net autolysed dough)

In the AM add the 252g levain and continue mixing for another 4 minutes at speed 0 to fully combine before moving to speed 4 to develop the gluten. Incorporate the salt during the first 2 min at speed 0.
Temperature vs mixing time:
58.2° after 5 min @speed 0
Mix at speed 4 in 2 minute increments until fully developed
61.9° @2 min on 4
65.1° @4 min on 4
Add 40g water
67.3° @6 min on speed 4
69.0° @8 min on speed 4
70.7° @10 min on speed 4
72.4° @12 min on speed 4
74.3° @14 min on speed 4
76.4° @16 min on speed 4
77.6° @17 min on speed 4
78.6° @18 min on speed 4
Temp rise rate decreases over time as the dough viscosity goes down, then increases as gluten development makes the dough stronger
Take 30g for aliquot jar - add water up to 42ml mark

Ferment to ~120% of original volume (48 ml on aliquot jar)(~2:00 from start of mixing)
Divide into 4 parts (8 x 425g) and pre-shape (5 min), rest 35min, final shape (7 min).

Counter proof for 1:00
Aliquot jar =60ml

Retard 4:00 @40°F for timing and to make it easier to slash

Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle

Analysis:

At 69.6% hydration, the dough was not much easier to handle than at 70%.
The dough behaved differently today with the temperature rise during mixing starting out steep, declined somewhat as the dough warmed up, and then went up again as the gluten developed and made the dough more resistant. Eighteen minutes of high speed mixing seems excessive but until then the dough was not forming a good window pane and was not fully smooth.

On the final loaves, the ears were indistinct and the crumb was quite open. It still seemed to have been over-fermented even though I started to divide 30 min earlier and with about 2% less volume increase relative to the prior batch (at 70% hydration).

The pre-shaped baguettes rested for a full 35 minutes (10 min longer than yesterday) and bench proofed for only 60 min before being retarded. When it came time to slash, the dough handled well, but the scoring cut through a lot of air pockets that were just below the surface. The reduced extensibility is probably the source of the somewhat closed crumb at the ends of the cut baguette.

As Benny pointed out, the fact that the yeast is active during the autolyse means that there is already some dough volume increase prior to the end of mixing which I had not previously accounted for. And because I put in 1/4t of IDY rather than separately weighing exactly 1g, it had an extra 300mg in the batch which probably helped accelerate the bulk fermentation even further.

66% baguettes made w/ high gluten flour

Reduced hydration to 66%, 12% PFF, High gluten flour, cold overnight autolyse, 0.1% IDY in autolyse, 120% BF, 35 min rest, 4 x 425g baguettes

PFF	levain hydration	dough hydration	salt	total batch weight
12.0%	100%	66.0%	2.0%	1738

248 levain from (28 + 114 + 114) 553 H2O + (6g in 5 liter Cambro) 900g HGW + 10g DM + 1.0g IDY 20.7g salt

Process:
Combine the 900g AP flour, 10g diastatic malt, + 1.0g IDY and 553g cold water and mix for 7 min at speed 0. Knead a few turns until it is fully smooth and cover bowl with StretchTite and refrigerate overnight. (Yielded 1455g net autolysed dough)

In the AM add the 248g levain to the autolysed flour/water and mix for 5 minutes at speed 0 to fully combine before moving to speed 4 to develop the gluten. Incorporate the salt during this interval at speed 0.
Temperature vs mixing time:
57.3° after 5 min @speed 0
Mix at speed 4 in 2 minute increments until fully developed
60.7° @2 min on speed 4
64.4° @4 min on speed 4
67.8° @6 min on speed 4
71.9° @8 min on speed 4

Take 30g for aliquot jar - add water up to 42ml mark

Ferment to ~120% of original volume (water level rises to the 48 ml mark on aliquot jar)(~2:00 from start of mixing)[don't wait for the water to reach 48ml, be ready for it and divide dough as soon as it gets there)
Divide into 4 parts (8 x 425g) and pre-shape (5 min), rest covered for 35min, final shape (7 min).

Counter proof for 0:45
Aliquot jar = 60ml

Retard 2:00 @50°F to make it easier to slash

Bake using BAG-STM2 oven cycle
425g at pre-shape; 335g when cooled. 8-9" in circumference, 21" long on the pan and 19" long when cool

Analysis:

This is my new baseline formulation for baguettes made with levain and high gluten flour.
The flour and water were combined at 60% hydration and cold autolysed for 10 hrs. Then in the morning the levain and the cold autolysed dough were combined, salt added, followed by gluten development at 66% hydration. This might be reversed with gluten development occurring at 60% followed by mixing in the levain and then the salt. The dough was easy to handle and needed no additional folding during bulk fermentation.

When they started to expand in the oven, I wondered if I was going to have a few loaves that all looked like a fat snake that had swallowed a family of rats (there was a bulge for every slash along the length of the loaf) but after they had fully baked, most of the irregularity had evened itself out and they are pretty straight.

Dividing and pre-shaping were straight forward without any sense that the dough was over fermented. These rolled out a little short of the desired 21", but the pre-shaped dough pieces were a little longer than I usually make them, so I will try to make them about another inch longer to begin with and see how that works out.

Some wrinkles when slashing, but nice texture and not over-proofed. I continue to want to make slashes that migrate from one side of the loaf to the other but keep forgetting after I pick up the lame. You can see the way the slashes cause the loaf to twist during baking - the objective would be to position the slashes to prevent, compensate for, or undo that twist.

Great color, nice crumb, excellent flavor.

Don

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Breaking ground

Finally the weekend is here and I get to bake rather than work. It was helpful to sit on the bench and see a few pitches thrown to know what to expect. I didn't want to wander too far off the reservation while still keeping in the spirit of a baguette with more whole grain. The recipe is pretty much what we call country bread but I like the french word of campagne better. The rye grows wild in the wheat fields there and is harvested along with the wheat. I make a version of it in my regular sourdough rotation and even an Approachable pan loaf.

My baton preference is the Bouabsa recipe an all white flour yeasted version that to me symbolize the ideal. I saw a recipe for "country" baguette in the Martin Phillips book that seem to line up with the target so I went with a version of that. His has 15% WW which I changed to 5% and substituted the other 10% with half rye and spelt. It calls for 20% prefermented flour overnight levain and the IDY kicker(I used half of the called for yeast of 3/4 tsp) with 73% hydration. Total dough weight is 675 gr that I rolled into two and baked sideways to hopefully get a longer thinner stick. A short hand mix, one compass fold and two coil folds in the first hour and another hour before dividing resting and shaping. A one hour proof with no retarding.They didn't want to lengthen without forcing them so I had to settle for short and fat. The cuts were a bit ragged and that I attribute to not enough sleep followed by too much coffee.

the obligatory crumb shot

The crust was indeed nice and crispy and the flavor was much better than anticipated, and plenty sour. I think I can do better with the crumb I may have rushed things a bit and swung at the first pitch. I may try these again tomorrow. I hope I am not considered a heretic for throwing in some yeast but I would encourage you all to give it a try. Thanks everyone for participating and thanks for the information and inspiration Alfanso.
The other one was compromised by trying to stretch the length out too much probably because I folded the preshape on the wrong bias. This is the most sour bread I have had in quite some time. Not sure why but the taste was really exceptional.

On second thought maybe overproofed a little. First time with a new recipe is always a shot in the dark.

Mistakes happen but all is not lost

Yesterday's bake was not quite what I was hoping for. Some of it was from doing a new recipe for the first time but they didn't go as expected. I consider myself a fairly competent baguette baker. I was pursuing batons long before I even had a sourdough starter. I found TFL looking for help with them and found it in DMSnyders Bouabsa baguettes. It was after then that I noticed that most of the subject matter pertained to sourdough and I soon figured out that that was where the in-crowd was and I read, learned and pineapple juiced my way to a starter. As I flailed away making many of the mistakes I see from others asking for help with today I could still manage a decent baggie and the skills where helpful in the dough handling department in the sourdough venture.

So this morning I thought I had a plan and then things went south quickly. I suppose experience helped salvage some of my bone headed moves but here goes. I was planning on making one batch to see if improvements could be had. The first mix I read the total recipe and dumped in those ingredients without the levain. I salvaged that by just converting it into this weeks pizza dough. The second attempt was mixed correctly I thought until I realized my discard jar was left out on the counter last night and was used instead of the levain I mixed last night. I was going to count on the IDY to salvage that blunder. I still had a fresh jar of starter which became dough number three.

The first discard batch baked up okay but they didn't want to brown and had an aged out quality to them. The dough was easy to shape and rolled out much better than yesterdays but that might be because yesterday I mistakenly used my AP/rice flour mix for dusting instead of the dough flour. I don't recommend that. The last bake was nice to work with and the results were inline with expectations. Long story short this is them.

The two on the left are the discard starter sticks. I used my favorite Wheat Montana AP flour today instead of the KAAP and used 5% WW 5%WWW and 5% rye.

The IDY does make for a thin and crispy crust. Why? I don't know.

I am happy with this effort. I upped the hydration to my normal 75% The flavor is good surprisingly and sour once again. When I can find the time I will do a more thorough blog about Martin Phillips Country Baguettes

Ear we go again

Dan you and I are in the same boat in more ways than just being fishing guides who bake. It would be fun to share a boat someday carrying on like yahoos. I am so hooked (pardon the pun) on traditional french baguettes that I can't seem to stray too far off the shore. Glad to see you out exploring the territory and searching for the good holes.

This has been fun to add sourdough and whole grain to what has been for me an IDY baguette dogma. I want to explore Alfanso style in the future but I thought it would help others who are just starting out to see other options and possibilities in the baguette realm.

I used two of Martin Phillips formulas from his book except for using 1/3 of the yeast called for. An all white yeasted poolish one and his sourdough/yeasted country one that I the did in the other bakes but reduced the whole grain to 8% of half rye and wheat.They scale out at 330 grams and will be more elongated when the new stone arrives. Since these bakes don't allow us to share the taste and chew. I have been trying to improve the visual aspect and working on symmetry and shape and worrying less about holes in the crumb and getting a rustic result. No matter what recipe I use or hydration I change I end up with the same look. We all seem to have an individually unique and distinct style, kind of like penmanship that is hard to counterfeit.

The previous one were baked straight through and were a joy to work with, but today they were lightly mixed early in the morning with two folds and retarded till late afternoon. The bulk was further along than I wanted and the dough was a little too gassy but still handled well enough to shape. I try to elongate as much as possible before rolling them on the bench which I try to do with as few rotations as possible. Sometimes only three or four. That also makes it easier to find the seam which goes up in the couche. Tension is built before the rolling out them out. My tendency to max out the hydration causes the blade to catch while scoring and that causes the jagged ears I'm guessing but the angle must be steep enough to create the flap.

Ear they are

One oder of french toast prepped for the morning.

Poolish on the left sourdough on the right.

N.B.
Adequate steaming to start and removing it after 10 minutes is what I do and then leaving them in the oven turned off with the door cracked should help the crust. I would think that a lot of tension in the shaping would make for a thinner crust but will leave that question to the pros.

Less protein by adding rye or more whole grains should create a softer chew. I always thought a well developed gluten (think pan de mie) would soften the crumb but maybe that is the butter and milk. Baguettes are a different animal and don't respond to the same treatment as other breads.

My other thought would be to try doing them without retarding them. I have noticed I get a lighter bread sometimes when I bake straight through.
IDY might come in a red bag but that should not brand the bread with Scarlet Letters. While I would not use it to make sourdough bread because I enjoy the chew. It makes for a nice baguette even with a levain in the mix.

Bouabsa Baguettes

This formula is everything I desire in a baton. What Janedo gave to DmSnyder who may as well have been Moses coming down the mountain with the tablets when he developed this recipe. It is my go to formula. For this bake I scaled it down to make two longish side loaders.

370 KAF AP 6 grams of Fava bean flour 280 grams water 8 grams salt 1/8 tsp IDY Autolyse for 20 minutes with the yeast then the salt and 15 grams of water that was held back. Mixed with the Rubaud method until it just comes together. Three folds every 20 minutes and up to an hour of floor time or less if it is warm like now. I just want to see a little movement to know the yeast is starting to work before retarding in the fridge for 21 hours. Divide cold and letter fold seam up rest 20 to 30 minutes and shape. The proof is seam up and less than an hour and baked at 480 on a stone with a sheet pan above with boiling water poured in after loading and removed after ten minutes. Baked for 24 minutes total. The dough had risen more than I would have liked in the fridge, almost doubling but was still manageable. I remembered to photograph the scoring this time.

Just removed the steam

Was not as open as usual and this one got a little mashed in the center. It is a somewhat delicate dough when pushed to the 75% water. They scale out at 290gr and ended up just short of my 17" stone. If you try this recipe keep the dough from doubling and the proof is not long because they rely mostly on oven spring.

The crust shatters when you cut them. Maybe could have rested or proofed these a little longer.

I feel somewhat responsible for taking this CB down a spur line with the yeast thrown in but I would have been remiss to not to include the Bouabsas in what has become a rather long compendium of baguettetry. My last bake will be an attempt at the recipe at the top and a salute to the General of the baguette battalion Alfanso

It goes to show you never can tell

C’est la vie say the old folks. It goes to show you never can tell. Maybe I should have put these in the lead off spot in the baton order. I finally got around to the recipe for this CB last because I am a yeasted baguette devotee. The crust and the less lively dough which is not as fun to work with just never yielded a very good stick for me. Well my dogma just got run over by my karma so to speak.

I used the basic recipe 675 total dough with a 5% of the whole wheat swapped out for a more white flour so 20% instead. The leavain was an overnight that was all whole grain at 100% hydration. I planned to up the hydration to the limit but that ended up around 75% anyway and to bake it straight through with my usual short mix and a couple of coil folds. Life intruded after 3 hours of the bulk so I tucked it in the fridge. Got home after 4 hours and pulled the dough out and let it sit for an our before dividing and letter folding this time seam down. I shaped a rather loose and lifeless dough about 40 minutes later and turned the oven to 500 with my new Fibrament stone in place. The dough had shown some growth after a 45 minute proof and the scores went ok but I was not optimistic about the outcome. They went flat in the oven but started to show some spring and the cuts opened so maybe all was ok. They came out looking better than hoped not a lot of growth and I was expecting a dense crumb.

The crust wasn't light but it was crisper than expected but the crumb!

The crumb was unlike anything I have ever produced with sourdough baguettes.If the results are because of my new stone that has been named "Third rock from the sun" after the Jimi Hendrix song. I am sorry I didn't get it sooner. I think I just got lucky but my faith in the SD baggie has been restored.

What are the holes for? Show? No PB&J
Natural light bleaches out the whole grain. The crust had a beef jerky like quality to it today but another day under wraps should meld it in in with the crumb.

Four scores and seven baguettes ago

Fourscore and seven baguettes ago our Alfanso brought forth, on this community bake, a new damnation, conceived in sourdough and yeast, and dedicated to the proposition that all breads are created equal. Some just take more practice. I went off the rails a little on my last bake with the additives. Adding fava bean flour to one batch and nutritional yeast to the other. The FB did noticeably strengthen the gluten to the point of needing more water to loosen things up which I didn't add. The NY did the opposite and made a dough that you could pull like toffee. Two percent FB is about a tablespoon 2% NY is at least a 1/4 cup and overwhelmed the mix in color, texture and taste. The FB had less affect on flavor but still a stepped on quality to the all white flour mix.

I used the Bouabsa recipe 400 gr total flour roughly 73% hydration on both and a rounded 1/8 tsp yeast. I used ADY in the NY and it worked the same. It seems that no matter what recipe I use I get the same looking baton out of the oven more or less. It seems to me the scores account for much of the appearance of a baguette and we all have a distinct way to make the same cut.

FB on top first time to get 7 scores on a baggie. The NY had a nice yellow open crumb but the taste was just off putting to me. If I were to use it again I would cut it by at least half

After trying different recipes I am back to where I started. I prefer the yeasted batons with or without sourdough for eating qualities. The crust is far better, the PB&J sandwiches are easier to bite into, the french toast is lighter and the croutons are not rock hard. Maybe because of where I live my breads are all north of 70% hydration and besides I just like working with a wet dough. I am fascinated by holes and drawn to them. Sometimes that comes with a cost but other times a big open reward.

I also want to add that baguettes freeze well wrapped in plastic and reheat to good as new (325 degrees 8 minutes) So there is no excuse not to keep on practicing.

Edit: For the international viewers the first paragraph was hacked from one of the greatest speeches in our US history that we don't have to apologize for. Gettysburg address

Yet another Bouabsa batch

This time no additives and the recipe done by the book. 500 gr Wheat Montana AP 75% water, it scales out to three 18 inch batons at 290 gr each What I learned today was I need to put more tension in the pre-shape to keep them from stretching so easily. They were weak in the middle and too thin before trying to roll them out. I am going to try rolling an oval and resting them seam down next time. Baked at 480 with steam from above. The new stone is better on the rack a notch higher.

Pleased with the crust and crumb but I need to work on getting back to a uniform shape and figure out why the ends are lifting off the stone so much.

The crumb had a yellowish color that happens now and then, which I think means the carotenoids are still in there and have been not worked out of the dough from too much kneading. Doc will probably want to weigh in on that one so I will just say they tasted good.

BBGA USA

I have been wanting to try this recipe posted way back in the beginning on page one detailed here USA baguettes I upped the hydration to 70 to allow for local dry conditions. I scaled them to 290 grams per to keep the same ratio in a 17 or 18 inch 45cm length. I have decided that is a better length for my stone and oven. In trout fishing catching a 20 incher is the line to cross to be considered a trophy. I caught one and liked it but the shorter length just suits me better.

The dough handled fairly well but I am still struggling with the Goldilocks just right amount of tension in the pre-shape. I decide to load these sans parchment and slithered them off the peel one at a time and it took too long to straighten and arrange them. I think the delay caused them not to be steamed quite right. I see a home made super peel in my future. I keep trying to score more down the center to create that nice pattern but my batons seem to break their shackles and burst out of their shirt like The Hulk when he gets angry. I still like the eggshell thin crust though.

Overall it's a nice recipe and you get a lot of strength immediately from the 40% poolish but that had almost dissipated by shaping time. I added 25 gr of stiff starter to the mix but hard to say what the effect was. The flavor was good, I was happy with the crumb but the crust was a little stronger yet still had a nice crunch.

I enjoyed trying different recipes in this CB but I will probably go back to where I started with the Bouabsa as my preferred baguette recipe.

N.B.
I am pretty much a recipe follower as written by the author. The only difference using the BBGA USA was that I hand mixed and upped the hydration to slightly above 70%. I follow almost exactly the recipe for the Bouabsa baggies down to the 21 hour retard more or less. I have probably made them a hundred times in the past mostly during my pre sourdough days. The main difference in my approach from what others are doing is the short mix with no slap and folds or significant gluten development and I am using more water to get an open crumb which changes the handling characteristics. I suppose it would be easier to reduce the hydration and work with a more forgivable dough but that only makes the process slightly easier at the risk of a tighter crumb. It is rare for me to have smooth sailing and a dough that isn't difficult to shape in someway and it was so frustrating in the beginning and even now it is. I think that is why most people give up on the idea after a few attempts. Us knuckleheads persevere! My timing of the steps is based on the room temps and fermenting progress on that given day. I don't see my crumb as that much different from what you and others are posting. The main difference I see is in the scoring. For some reason my crust seems tear rather than constrain the oven spring so maybe that is how I get the holes. I was frankly surprised that the crumb was so open the last time with the BBGA USA and I generally don't have a clue as to how it will be until I slice it.

I will try to remember to photograph the stages next time. I am putting the finishing touches on my scrap plywood extra wide super peel that I hope is going to be a game changer for this side loader.

Super Duper Peel

Had a nice first run. The loading went smoothly and no parchment was burned in the making of this picture. I made the BBGA USA again because every new recipe deserves a second chance. Maybe it was from all the practice lately or the 70% hydration but this dough was a pleasure to work with and as easy as any I have had yet. The extra tension in the pre shape really helped to roll them out. I am still getting the bursting oven spring but the crumb is nice and open when that happens.

This made for a nice tuna salad sandwich. Everyones baguettes are improving so much. We will have this thing down pat in a few years.

Dialed in

You are in the groove Dan. There was a baguette baker in you that was trying to get out and you have released the beast. I really like how you are baking them now. You have figured out your oven an it is working well for you. Your scoring is exemplary and now pointy ends for a new point on the compass to follow. I have found the 73 DT to work well with the IDY and it does help with extensibility.

I did do some Bouabsas with ADY used like IDY today. The dough had risen too much in the fridge so I folded it and put it back in until this afternoon and they worked out really well so if that happens sometime just degas and delay. Then out of the fridge and into the oven in less than an hour.

I wanted to use the natural light from the window for a change. Someone please stop me. I can't find the off switch.

Can't cure baguette fever

I am still in baguette mode so why not post it. The Bouabsa recipe again and the last of its kind for a while because I will hopefully be working with the french flour next weekend and we will see how it compares. Wheat Montana AP with 78% hydration because it is really dry here now. I just rolled up the dough in a tube shape and rested seam up. I think I will switch to a fat oval batard type pre shape next time because they end up too skinny in the middles otherwise. I did get a nice double taper on one of them anyway. Used ADY again and retarded for 21 hours. I should have added some malt because they didn't want to brown. The crooked one got stuck on the stone when I went to slide it in place and it wiggled out of line and affected the crumb at that spot. Otherwise the Super Duper Peel is working smoothly now with the right belt tension.

The french flour must really be something because these taste really good. I saw a great T-shirt yesterday that said
Montana
social distancing
since 1889

My first french flour baguettes

I have always wondered about the flours I bake with that come from the shelf of most supermarkets. I try to buy the best available which used to be King Arthur but it has been gone from our shelves for a while. I am fortunate to live near wheat country and the local flour is pretty good (Wheat Montana) and it goes along with the effort to purchase locally. However the boys in the band were singing the praises of this flour and I saw it as a rare opportunity to bake with really good flour for once. I don't know if I will ever make it to France but I have one more good reason to go now.

I used The Bouabsa formula of course and mixed it in my normal way a 20 minute autolyse with the 1/4 tsp SAF IDY at 70% water. Added the salt and 15 gr more water and mixed Rubaud for a minute or two rested for 10 and mixed another minute. Two coil folds in the first hour and one more an hour later as I put it in the fridge for the night, two and a half hours after starting. The dough had a silky texture but very sticky at the same time. When I looked this morning the dough had doubled and was domed so I punched it down and did another coil fold and went to work. I took it out of the fridge after 18 hours and divided it folded the ends in and rolled up a loose tube rested seam up. Shaped 15 minutes later and proofed 40 minutes. The dough was sticky and needed a lot of the precious flour on the bench to work with it but it was a pleasure to roll with even though quite delicate. The skin was not very taut and the scoring was jagged but that may have something to do with the warm afternoon. Baked at 480 for 23 minutes with steam under the stone as the change to allow smoother loading with the super duper peel. The smell from the oven was very different from the normal aroma.
Voila

They look very similar to the other sticks I posted

The crust was worth the price of admission alone.

The crumb was lovely and soft and melted on the tongue.
The flour didn't disappoint on the flavor and mouth feel. The crust was the best I have ever had. It was like deep fried cotton candy if there was such a thing. The flavor lingers with a long finish. A real eating pleasure.
I have enough flour to make baguettes 19 more times and will look forward to everyone of them. Thanks again to Kendalm for hooking us up with the good stuff.

Busy baking

I am working too much for an old man who would rather not be, so I have to cram all my bread baking into a weekend. In some ways it's nice having three separate doughs to focus on nearly uninterrupted rather than having all that down time waiting on a single dough. Sometimes it all goes smoothly and the breads hit the oven on schedule and then there are days like today where they came out okay but missed the mark for a variety of reasons.

Pain Au Levain, Approachable cinnamon raisin, French flour Bouabsa
I finally had one of those baguette doughs that was too elastic to shape and work with that you guys are using NY to combat. In my case the bulk ferment went too far. I should have folded it again in the fridge last night. The dough was quite strong for weak french flour and not pleasant to roll out. They weren't a disaster but not what I was hoping for except of course the flavor and texture and the crust that is in a league of it's own. I tried to use shorter slashes and do an extra cut to keep the crust shackles from bursting and tidy up things a bit. It almost worked and might work better next time with a better shape and proof.

Mashed a couple of ends and wrestled too much with them and was surprised to see any crumb intact.
A work in progress I wish I wasn't

Baguette quandary

I have been working towards a more tidy scoring pattern that doesn't tear apart the strip of crust that holds the grigne in the elliptical shape. I don't know what it's called but it is like the open crumb is being shackled by this thin strip of crust. That is my dilemma. I prefer the open crumb but still want the neat appearance of the slashes not bursting the baton open. I keep meaning to do one long score down the length to see what happens to the crumb. My plan was to use shorter cuts in a 19 inch stick I got 7 slashes but some bursting still occurred. Perhaps it's a shaping issue or they are under proofed.

This weekend I used the divine french flour again and the Bouabsa recipe with similar results. The bulk was left on the counter too long by mistake and the dough needed a couple more folds in the fridge to degas it and get it chilled. The shaping went well and the super duper peel is working well and the edge helps to straighten them out on the stone. I an also trying to achieve the graceful taper. Which is a challenge on another level that my left hand doesn't get.

I pushed the hydration to 74% which is about the limit for me with this flour. The flavor of this flour is incredible even the burnt ends have a special taste and the crust is like no other.

Weekend wands

This weekends wands were an incremental improvement in shaping and scoring, I used a curved lame to score with and shortened the length of the cuts to try to get a more uniform pattern with less bursting. They are getting better slowly and the shaping is becoming more natural with all the practice lately. Putting more emphasis on the pre-shape by building some tension helps to make the final shape go smoothly. The French flour is so tasty and nice to work with that it is the only flour I want to make them with from now on.

Judging by the burnt ends 18 inches is at the limit of the length possible in my oven. The ends do not taste burnt like they do with American AP they have a surprisingly rich taste.

The crumb was nice and open for going from the fridge to the oven in less than an hour. They photograph best when cut lengthwise to make a sandwich but I prefer to eat them sliced.

The crust shatters when you cut them. Safety glasses recommended ;-)

Mucho Guistos

I wanted to give the ecstasy powder the weekend off and see if I could find a reasonable domestic alternative for the french flour. I found some Guistos 00 organic pizza flour that they tout as similar to European flour. I used my normal Bouabsa recipe with the 75% hydration. The dough had a similar feel just not quite as soft and silky. It fermented slower and did not exhibit the same extensibility as it did when used to make pizza.

I would say it was the second best flour I have used for baguettes. It was better than any AP I have tried and the crust was very crispy but the flavor was lacking compared to the Auguste. The store also had their organic AP and I may give it a try assuming that it is a lower protein flour.

They baked up ok but didn't grow much during the proof. The crust was really thin and crispy.

Since Benny has been given the open crumb award, the shaping prize is in Dan's pocket and Alfanso has the best ears. I have no chance at the best scoring so I am claiming the thinnest crust award Thank you very much.
Bonus photo Is the backlit baggie like the guy in the video above.

Giving it a rest

Sometimes when things aren't working, it is better to give it a rest and come back to it. I finally have a brief pause in the action around here so I can get back to baking. I will be returning to fishing guide work soon and that means a lot of bread for boat lunches. Covid torpedoes be damned! To make up for lost time and stock up for the future I did a double batch from a single mix.

- 1000 grams Wheat Montana AP It really is a nice baggie flour if you see it on the shelf
- 750 ml water 20 grams salt 1/2 tsp IDY
- Mix flour water yeast autolyse 20 minutes add salt add 50 gr water (held back) mix a couple of minutes by hand rest 10 minutes mix again for a couple more minutes 2 coil folds spaced apart by 40 minutes divide after 2 hours and refrigerated for 18 hours It was really dry here so I probably ended up closer to 76 or 77% water overall
- Take out of fridge divide into 290 gr pieces and letter fold rest 15 to 20 minutes then shape and proof for 45 minutes
- Bake at 480 with steam for 10 minutes and 14 more minutes, rearranging in the oven as necessary.

This is ready for bulk retard. The dough had risen to middle rim overnight which is more rising than I like see. I should have folded it again in the fridge last night. As a result it was very elastic and strong and fought back after being rested for only 15 minutes. The second dough was rested longer and was easier to elongate. I take the second dough out 30 minutes after the first repeat the same steps to make sure the oven is ready for them. It is easier for me than retarding the shaped ones.

The straps held together a little better for some reason this time.The lower torpedoes where from the dough that had a lot of resistance and the slender version was rested longer with less tension in the pre-shape.

Grigne from ear to ear. I was pretty pleased with this bake overall and while the flavor and crust was not on par with the french flour it was within shouting distance.

I stretched these hard enough for the bubbles to come to the surface while rolling and I did not expect the crumb to survive but it reabsorbed them and they stayed intact. Go figure

Rolling in the Dough

Nice to see that you boys are still at it while I have been hard at work. Benny making jeweled slippers, Dan is doing Po'boys, Doc is stacking them up like cord wood and Geremy has finally laid down his markers. Alans CB will go on forever. I have a little break in the action to do some baking again so I mixed up some T65 wonderdust batons. This flour is not as robust as American AP but the flavor and texture is really incredible. The burnt ends taste nothing like other flours.

I was a little rusty from the layoff so the shaping, scoring and loading did not go as smoothly as before.

Tapers, blunts and a barbell. My hands wanted to do them all.

The crumb did not suffer from the clumsy handling and scoring.

I wonder if the wetter dough leads to a thinner crust. These were 74% hydration which I am convinced helps to get a more open crumb.

This flour does not seem to attain the volume and strength of US AP but it excels in the eating department.
The road goes on forever and the party never ends.

Baguette Mastery

Benny

Dan

Doc

Don