

CRAFT GUIDE · FREE PRINTABLE

Banneton vs Bowl

Definitive sourdough proofing guide — rattan, towel-lined bowl, glass, brotform, and no basket. Hydration rules, proofing times, photos, and a decision chart.



Left to right: rattan banneton · towel-lined bowl · glass bowl · brotform · no basket

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crosodo.com/resources/banneton-vs-bowl

The short answer

A banneton beats a bowl for sourdough above ~75% hydration — it holds the loaf vertical, wicks moisture for cleaner scoring, and releases reliably. Below ~70% hydration a floured bowl works fine and costs nothing. Both work; the basket just makes the narrow door wider.

Quick verdict

Buy an 8–9" rattan banneton (\$15–30) if you bake 75%+ weekly, sell at market, or run overnight cold proofs. For occasional low-hydration boules, a towel-lined bowl is enough.

Five vessels, side by side

"Banneton vs bowl" is the search query. The real kitchen choice is broader: rattan banneton, towel-lined bowl, glass bowl, brotform (wood-pulp or plastic), or no basket at all.

Vessel	Structure	Wicking	Best hydration	Cost	Best for
Rattan banneton	Excellent	Strong	75%+	\$15–30	Weekly high-hydration, cold proof, market loaves
Bowl + linen towel	Fair	Moderate	≥70%	\$0–5	Beginners, low hydration, room-temp proof
Glass bowl (no towel)	Poor	None	≥68% only	\$0	Bulk ferment only — not ideal for final proof
Brotform (wood pulp / plastic)	Good	Medium / none	72–78%	\$8–20	Budget upgrade; wood pulp better than plastic
No basket (board only)	None	None	≥65%	\$0	Stiff doughs, free-form hearth loaves, pizza

When each vessel works

By hydration

Hydration	Recommended vessel	Why
≤65%	Board or bowl	Dough holds itself; basket optional
66–70%	Bowl + floured linen	Enough structure; towel helps release
71–74%	Either bowl or banneton	Bowl works; basket improves height
75–80%	Rattan banneton	Needs lateral support + dry skin
80%+	Well-seasoned rattan + rice flour	Wet dough spreads without rigid sides

By proofing time

Final proof	Vessel note
1–3 hrs room temp	Bowl is fine if dough is ≤72%
4–8 hrs cool room	Prefer banneton or heavily floured towel
12–18 hrs cold retard	Banneton + rice flour is most reliable
18+ hrs cold	Seasoned rattan only — towels stick more over time

By dough type

- Country loaf / high-hydration boule — rattan round 9”.
- Batard / oval — oval banneton only; bowls cannot hold length.
- Whole-wheat / rye blends — banneton helps (dough is often wetter, weaker).
- Enriched / sandwich — often proof in the pan; skip the basket.
- Market flights / minis — mini 6” bannetons for consistent sets.

What dough looks like in each vessel

Visual intent matters for this query. Study the skin, the support at the sides, and how much the dough spreads.



Rattan banneton — spiral rings, tall sides, dry flour skin.



Towel-lined bowl — soft sides, ~80% of the benefit.



Glass bowl — no wicking; better for bulk than final proof.



Brotform / wood pulp — smooth support, lighter price.



No basket — free-form on a board; needs stiff dough.

How to proof without sticking

Most “my dough stuck” failures are flour mistakes, not vessel mistakes.

- Dust with rice flour (or 50/50 rice + bread flour). AP alone turns to paste overnight.
- Dust more than you think — the liner or basket should look white before the dough goes in.
- Season a new rattan: mist lightly, dust rice flour, dry overnight. Repeat 2–3 times.
- Use lint-free linen or flour-sack cotton, never terry cloth.
- Bulk ferment in a bowl always; use the banneton only for final proof.

Common misuse

Never bulk ferment in a banneton. You need a straight-sided container to judge rise and do folds. Shape after bulk, then move to the basket for the final proof.

Size guide

Size	Dough weight	Notes
Round 8–9”	500–750 g	Standard beginner size; fits 5-qt Dutch oven
Round 10”	1–1.2 kg	Needs 6-qt Dutch oven
Oval 10”	750 g–1 kg	Batards; needs oblong vessel or combo cooker
Mini 6”	300–350 g	Market flights; often sold in sets

Care for a rattan banneton

- After each use: tap out flour, air-dry fully. Do not wash with soap.
- If dough stuck: dry completely, then brush. Do not wet the basket.
- Store with airflow in a dry place.
- Deep clean if needed: 250°F oven for 20 minutes to dry thoroughly.

Decision chart

If you...	Then...
Just starting out	Use the bowl you have + rice flour on a tea towel
Bake 70–75% doughs weekly	Bowl is fine; upgrade when you want consistency
Bake 78%+ or overnight cold proof	Get a round 9” rattan banneton
Sell at a market	Bannetons for shape, stack, and cleaner ears
Want oval loaves	Oval banneton — bowls cannot do batards
Need cheapest test	Bowl + linen couche (~\$5) before buying rattan

Shop bannetons & proofing gear

Browse live banneton and proofing picks in the Crosodo marketplace: crosodo.com/marketplace (filter Bannetons & Proofing). Pair with the free starter guide at crosodo.com/resources/sourdough-starter and the full web guide at crosodo.com/resources/banneton-vs-bowl.

FAQ

Do I need a banneton for sourdough?

Above ~75% hydration, yes for consistent shape and release. Below ~70%, a floured bowl is fine.

Can I use a bowl instead of a banneton?

Yes — line with floured linen. You keep ~80% of the benefit at a fraction of the cost.

Bulk ferment in bowl or banneton?

Bowl only. Banneton is for final proof after shaping.

What size for a 500 g loaf?

8–9 inch round holds 500–750 g dough.

How much does a banneton cost?

Rattan \$15–30; wood-pulp \$8–15; plastic brotforms \$10–20 (no wicking).

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