The No-Knead Oval Loaf Masterclass

A complete batard recipe scaled for the 11.5-inch oval, steam-timing chart, scoring patterns, and the 5 crust-killing mistakes — a ZoxDeal bonus.

No-Knead Batard Recipe (fits the 11.5" oval)

- **Flour:** 500g bread flour | **Water:** 375g (75%) | **Salt:** 10g | **Yeast:** 2g instant (or 50g ripe starter + 4g salt adjustment)
- **Mix** until no dry flour remains. Rest 30 min, then 3 sets of stretch-and-folds over 2 hours.
- **Bulk ferment** 4–6 hours at room temp until 50% risen and jiggly.
- **Shape a tight batard:** the oval rewards surface tension — stitch the seam firmly.
- **Cold proof** 12–16 hours in the fridge, seam up in a floured banneton.

Steam-Timing Chart

- **0:00** — pot + lid into a cold oven; heat to 475°F (45 min preheat).
- **0:00 bake** — loaf in, lid ON. Bake 20 minutes (steam phase — do not peek).
- **0:20** — lid OFF. Bake 20–25 more minutes until deep mahogany.
- **Cool** 2 full hours before slicing. Cutting early = gummy crumb, always.

Scoring Patterns for Oval Loaves

- **Single curved slash:** one confident arc down the length — the classic batard ear.
- **Double parallel:** two straight slashes for a symmetric split.
- **Leaf pattern:** shallow angled cuts for a decorative finish (score cold dough for clean lines).

5 Crust-Killing Mistakes

- **Peeking during the steam phase** — every lid lift dumps the steam you need. Set a timer and walk away.
- **Underbaking for color fear** — pale crust = pale flavor. Go darker than feels safe.
- **Skipping the preheat** — a cold pot gives a dense, pale loaf. Full 45 minutes.
- **Slicing too soon** — the crumb is still cooking as it cools. Two hours minimum.
- **Wrong shape for the pot** — a boule in an oval wastes steam space. Match the loaf to the pot.

Bake boldly. — ZoxDeal