



Cook

Peruvian

in America

Recipes with love from
**The Robot Book
Club**

Cook Peruvian in America

Vibrant Recipes for Everyday Home Cooking

The Robot Book Club

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Preface

This book, and The Robot Book Club, is an experiment large scale AI generation. Every page, from layout to images to copy, was generated with zero human review.

The authoring and publishing teams were implemented in the Kaya scripting language. They were given only the input: Peruvian Home Cooking.

This is the only page authored by a human: Hello there!

— Ted Benson

Prologue

The aroma hits you, even miles and generations removed. That specific, comforting whisper of garlic and onion hitting hot oil, the earthy depth of *aji panca*, the promise of something truly Peruvian blossoming in a kitchen far from Lima. For those who grew up hearing Spanish and tasting the homeland in their parents' cooking, yet navigated school lunches in Ohio or California, this scent is a compass. It points home, not to some idealized memory, but to the delicious, messy reality of it all.

This isn't a postcard from a Michelin-starred restaurant. It's not some academic survey of a cuisine. This is about the real stuff: the *Sopa a la Minuta* that healed a cold, the *Ají de Gallina* that defined Sunday, the *Pollada* that brought a community together. It's the soul food, the secret language, the very heartbeat of a Peruvian household. For a generation caught between two worlds, making these dishes isn't just cooking; it's an act of cultural preservation, a tangible link to heritage that you can actually taste.

The challenge, of course, is time. Life in America demands its own rhythm. No one, not anymore, has hours for a midday *almuerzo* on a Tuesday. This book understands that reality. It respects the authenticity of Grandma's secrets—the evaporated milk, the humble saltine crackers that transform sauces—while pragmatically adapting them for your weeknight. You won't need to scour obscure markets for every ingredient; what you need is likely already there, or easily found at your local Latin grocer.

Here, you'll find weeknight lifesavers that cut no corners on flavor. You'll discover the ritual of *El Lonche* re-imagined for busy evenings. You'll transform those legendary *Almuerzo* dishes into achievable suppers, and host weekend

gatherings that echo the true spirit of a *Pollada*. This is for those who crave the uncompromising taste of home, without compromise, right here, right now. Dive in.



Sopa a la Minuta & Los Salvavidas (Weeknight Lifesavers)

Fast, immensely comforting meals relying on quick-cooking proteins and pantry pastes to recreate the soul of the Peruvian kitchen in thirty minutes.

It's 7:00 PM on a Tuesday, and the world has already taken its pound of flesh. The last thing an exhausted kid of the diaspora wants after a brutal commute is a culinary project, but neither will a sad, drive-thru dinner suffice. You need the soul of home, and you need it in under thirty minutes. These are los salvavidas—the lifesavers. They are unpretentious, working-class miracles built on quick-cooking proteins, leftover rice, and the deep, reliable thrum of ají paste straight from the fridge.

Here is the food that actually gets eaten when the front door mercifully clicks shut. A steaming bowl of Sopa a la Minuta to resurrect the weary; the frantic, glorious sear of a chicken tallarín saltado; the humble, layered perfection of arroz tapado. No theatrics, no hours of simmering. Just fierce, unapologetic Peruvian comfort, engineered for the exhaustion of a modern weeknight.





Sopa a la Minuta

soh-pah ah lah mee-NOO-tah

If there is one dish that encapsulates the warmth of a Peruvian childhood on a busy weeknight, it is Sopa a la Minuta. Originally brought to Lima by Italian immigrants who cooked “alla minuta” (to order), this soup evolved through sheer necessity into a quintessential comfort food. It relies on humble pantry staples—ground beef, angel hair pasta, a good beef broth—anchored by the irreplaceable native aderezo of red onion, garlic, and ají panca. The absolute magic, the secret that bridges the gap between an Ohio suburb and a grandmother's kitchen in Peru, happens entirely off the heat: a splash of evaporated milk, delicate ribbons of egg, and dried oregano

aggressively rubbed between your palms right over the steaming pot to awaken its essential oils. It's fast, deeply practical, and fiercely authentic.

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp	vegetable oil	6 cup	beef broth
1/2 lb	ground beef (85/15)	1/4 lb	angel hair pasta <i>broken in half</i>
1 med	red onion <i>finely diced</i>	2 large	eggs <i>lightly beaten</i>
3 clove	garlic <i>minced</i>	1/2 cup	evaporated milk
2 tbsp	ají panca paste	1 tbsp	dried oregano
1 tbsp	tomato paste	to taste	kosher salt
1 large	Yukon Gold potato <i>peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>	to taste	black pepper

PREPARATION

- **Measure and prepare all of your ingredients before turning on the stove.**

The cooking process moves aggressively fast once the broth is boiling. Having your potatoes cubed, pasta broken, and eggs beaten ahead of time ensures you won't overcook the delicate angel hair while scrambling for the milk.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Brown the ground beef in a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat.**
Heat the oil, add the beef with a generous pinch of salt and pepper, and cook until no longer pink, breaking it apart with a wooden spoon. Remove the beef with a slotted spoon, leaving the rendered fat in the pot.

- 1. Sauté the red onion slowly in the rendered beef fat to build the aderezo.**
Lower the heat to medium. Cook the onions until completely softened and translucent, about 5 to 7 minutes—do not rush this step. Stir in the garlic, ají panca paste, and tomato paste, cooking until the mixture deepens to a dark brick red and the oil begins to separate.
- 2. Return the beef to the pot, add the potatoes and broth, and simmer.**
Bring the liquid to a rolling boil over high heat, then immediately reduce the heat to medium-low. Cover and let it simmer for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the potatoes are just fork-tender.
- 3. Stir in the angel hair pasta and cook until exactly al dente.**
Taste the broth and adjust the salt and pepper if needed. Simmer uncovered for 3 to 4 minutes; angel hair cooks incredibly fast, so keep a close eye on it to prevent it from turning to mush.
- 4. Turn off the heat completely and stir in the beaten eggs and evaporated milk.**
This is the grandmother's trick. Stir the soup gently in a circular motion to create a whirlpool, then slowly drizzle in the beaten eggs to form delicate ribbons. Stir in the evaporated milk until the soup takes on a beautiful creamy, opaque hue.
- 5. Crush the oregano directly into the soup by rubbing it vigorously between your palms.**
Hover your hands directly over the hot pot. This mechanical crushing releases the herb's essential oils and creates an intoxicating, deeply nostalgic aroma. Give it one final gentle stir and serve immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Yukon Gold potatoes flawlessly replicate the texture of native Andean papa amarilla.**
Russet potatoes are far too starchy and will disintegrate in the broth. The dense, buttery texture of a Yukon Gold holds its shape and provides the velvet mouthfeel essential to a proper Sopa a la Minuta.

- **Reheating leftovers will require an extra splash of liquid.**

Angel hair pasta acts like a sponge in the refrigerator. The next day, this will eat more like a thick, comforting pasta stew. A splash of water or extra beef broth when reheating will loosen it back to a soup consistency.



Arroz Tapado

ah-RROHS tah-PAH-doh

Arroz tapado translates to "covered rice," but in the Peruvian domestic vernacular, it is known as a *saca apuros*—a lifesaver. Born out of the necessity to feed unexpected guests, grandmothers transformed humble ground beef and rice into a towering, beautifully molded centerpiece. The secret to making this taste exactly like a home in Lima lies entirely in the patience of your *aderezo* and a quiet splash of oyster sauce to honor the deep *Chifa* influence running through the city's veins. It is Tuesday night dinner, elevated to an event.

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup vegetable oil
divided use

5 med garlic
cloves *finely minced and divided*

2 cup	long-grain white rice <i>rinsed until water runs clear</i>	1/2 tsp	dried oregano
2 1/4 cup	water	1/2 cup	dark raisins <i>soaked in warm water for 10 minutes and drained</i>
1 tsp	salt	1/4 cup	Kalamata olives <i>pitted and roughly chopped</i>
1 lb	ground beef <i>85/15 or 90/10 lean</i>	6 large	large eggs <i>2 hard-boiled and chopped, 4 left whole for frying</i>
1 large	red onion <i>finely diced</i>	2 tbsp	fresh parsley <i>finely chopped</i>
2 tbsp	ají panca paste	1/2 cup	beef broth
1 tbsp	tomato paste	2 large	very ripe plantains <i>peeled and sliced on a deep bias</i>
1 tbsp	oyster sauce		
1/2 tsp	ground cumin		

PREPARATION

- **Hydrate the raisins.**

Soak the dark raisins in warm water for ten minutes, then drain. This simple step ensures they plump up beautifully rather than remaining unpleasantly hard in the final dish.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Toast the rice with garlic to build the foundation.**

Heat two tablespoons of oil in a saucepan over medium-low heat and sauté two cloves of minced garlic just until fragrant. Add the rinsed rice, toasting gently for two minutes before adding water and salt, then simmer covered for fifteen to twenty minutes until tender and sticky enough to mold.

- 2. Brown the ground beef and render its fat.**

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat one tablespoon of oil and sear the beef with a pinch of salt and pepper until fully cooked. Remove the meat but leave the rendered fat in the pan.

1. Build the aderezo with absolute patience.

Reduce the heat to medium-low, add the diced red onion, and sweat it until completely translucent—do not rush this. Stir in the remaining three cloves of minced garlic, ají panca paste, cumin, and oregano, frying the chili paste until the oil separates slightly, then mix in the tomato paste.

2. Simmer the picadillo to ensure it stays juicy.

Return the beef to the skillet along with the oyster sauce and beef broth. Simmer for five to ten minutes until the liquid reduces into a rich coating that will flavor the rice without making it soggy.

3. Fold in the delicate ingredients off the heat.

Remove the skillet from the stove and gently fold in the plumped raisins, chopped olives, hard-boiled eggs, and fresh parsley to preserve their texture and vibrancy.

4. Fry the garnishes for the classic a lo pobre presentation.

In a separate pan, fry the plantain slices in a little oil until deeply caramelized, then fry the remaining four eggs sunny-side up.

5. Mold and invert the layers into a tight cylinder.

Lightly oil a small bowl or wide mug. Press a firm layer of hot rice into the bottom, add a generous and level layer of the meat filling, and finish with a final packed layer of rice. Place a serving plate upside down over the bowl, invert them together, and gently lift the bowl away.

6. Crown the dish and serve immediately.

Drape a fried egg over the rice tower and arrange the sweet plantains around the base, letting the broken yolk run down into the savory layers.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing the chili paste.**

Ají panca is a deep red, sun-dried Peruvian chili that provides an earthy, smoky flavor rather than sharp heat. You can easily find jars of the paste in the Hispanic aisle of standard grocery stores or at your local Latin market.

- **The meat selection.**

Purists in Lima might hand-mince sirloin, but a standard 85/15 or 90/10 ground beef is the universally accepted and highly realistic substitute for a weeknight dinner.



Tacu Tacu

Tacu Tacu is the ultimate expression of Afro-Peruvian resourcefulness, a brilliant method for turning last night's rice and beans into a crispy, creamy masterpiece. For the diaspora kid craving home on a Tuesday, it is the ultimate weeknight lifesaver. You do not need a simmering pot of day-old stewed beans to pull this off. A can of Mayocoba beans, aggressively seasoned with our holy trinity of red onion, garlic, and ají amarillo, gets you that deeply nostalgic, stick-to-your-ribs comfort in under thirty minutes. The secret here is texture: do not blend the beans into a paste. Mash half of them so you retain some whole beans, and leave the mixture surprisingly wet before frying. A dry Tacu Tacu is a sad Tacu Tacu.

INGREDIENTS

5 tbsp	vegetable oil <i>divided</i>	1 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil
1 slice	thick-cut bacon <i>finely diced</i>	4 large	eggs
1/2 med	red onion <i>finely diced</i>	2 large	sweet plantains <i>peeled and sliced diagonally</i>
3 clove	garlic <i>minced to a paste</i>	1 med	red onion <i>sliced razor-thin</i>
3 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	1 med	jalapeño <i>seeded and minced</i>
1/2 tsp	dried oregano <i>crushed</i>	3 large	fresh limes <i>juiced</i>
15 1/2 oz	Mayocoba beans <i>undrained</i>	2 tbsp	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>
2 cup	long-grain white rice <i>cooked and chilled overnight</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt

PREPARATION

- **Ice the onions for the Salsa Criolla.**

Soak the razor-thin red onion slices in a bowl of ice water for ten minutes, then drain and pat dry. This grandmother-approved trick extracts the harsh sulfurous compounds, leaving them sweet and hyper-crisp for the salsa.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sauté the bacon until crisp, then build the sofrito.**

Add the diced red onion, garlic, ají amarillo paste, and crushed oregano to the rendered fat, cooking until the raw chili mellows and the oil glows bright orange.

- 2. Pour the entire can of beans into the skillet and mash exactly half of them.**

Keep that starchy liquid in the pan; you want to create a creamy paste studded with whole beans to hold the dish together.

- 1. Fold in the cold, day-old rice until it absorbs the golden aderezo.**
Mix aggressively. The texture should feel almost sloppy and wet; if it feels dry, splash in a little broth or water so it doesn't turn into a sad brick.
- 2. Press the rice and bean mixture into a thick oval pancake in a hot, oiled skillet.**
Let it sear completely undisturbed over medium-high heat until a dark, golden-brown crust forms on the bottom.
- 3. Carefully flip the mass to crisp the other side, then slide it onto a plate.**
If it breaks slightly when you flip it, congratulate yourself—that means the inside is authentically creamy. Off the heat, drizzle with good olive oil.
- 4. Fry the sweet plantains until deeply caramelized and cook the eggs sunny-side up.**
These are the essential accompaniments that turn a humble leftover dish into a decadent feast.
- 5. Top the crispy Tacu Tacu with the plantain and egg, and crown it with freshly dressed Salsa Criolla.**
Toss your iced red onions with the jalapeño, cilantro, and lime juice at the absolute last second so they stay hyper-crisp, cutting right through the richness of the beans.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The necessity of day-old rice.**

Freshly cooked rice retains too much moisture and active starch, which will turn your Tacu Tacu into a gummy mush instead of a crispy-edged delight.

- **Maintain the wetness.**

Do not drain the canned beans; that starchy canning liquid simulates the crucial jugo de guiso required to keep the interior perfectly moist and creamy.



Tallarines Rojos con Atún

tah-yah-REE-nes RO-hos kon ah-TOON

If you ask any first-generation Peruvian American what their parents made on a Tuesday night when they had exactly twenty minutes to feed the family, the answer is usually Tallarines Rojos con Atún. It is the ultimate "salvavidas"—a weeknight lifesaver born from Genoese immigrants in coastal Peru. This adaptation swaps the all-day simmer of a traditional Italian meat ragù for the aggressive, high-speed heat of blended tomatoes, red onion, and the earthy magic of dried Andean mushrooms. Paired with pantry-staple canned tuna, this isn't fussy restaurant food; it is a vivid, inexpensive, unpretentious bowl of home.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	dried spaghetti	3 cloves	garlic <i>minced into a paste</i>
10 oz	canned tuna in oil <i>thoroughly drained</i>	1 tbsp	ají panca paste
4 large	Roma tomatoes <i>ends trimmed</i>	2 tbsp	tomato paste
1 small	carrot <i>peeled, cut in half</i>	1 small	Peruvian hongos y laurel packet
2 tbsp	vegetable oil	1/2 tsp	ground cumin
1 med	red onion <i>finely diced</i>	to taste	kosher salt
		to taste	black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Blend the fresh tomatoes and half the carrot into a smooth puree.**
Add a splash of water just to get the blender blades moving. Blending the fresh tomatoes with a piece of carrot is the traditional Peruvian shortcut to sweeten the sauce naturally, neutralizing the acidic bite of the tomatoes without relying on refined sugar.
- 2. Boil the spaghetti in heavily salted water until exactly al dente.**
Time this so the pasta finishes cooking right around the time your sauce is ready, roughly 10 to 12 minutes.
- 3. Sweat the red onion in oil to build the foundation of the aderezo.**
Heat the vegetable oil in a large, deep skillet or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the diced onion and a pinch of salt, cooking patiently for 5 to 6 minutes until deeply softened and translucent.
- 4. Fry the garlic and ají panca paste until highly fragrant.**
Stir them into the softened onions and cook constantly for about 60 seconds.

- 1. Grate the remaining carrot half into the skillet and toast the tomato paste and spices.**

Add the tomato paste, cumin, and black pepper, stirring for another minute until the paste darkens slightly.

- 2. Pour in the blended tomato puree and submerge the hongos y laurel.**

The mixture will bubble up vigorously as the dried mushroom and bay leaves hit the hot sauce.

- 3. Simmer the tuco rapidly until the oil separates from the tomato solids.**

Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for 10 to 12 minutes. You will know it is ready when the sauce thickens to a brick-red and starts to crackle or fry slightly at the edges.

- 4. Remove the sauce from the heat and gently fold in the drained tuna.**

Turn the heat to its absolute lowest setting or off entirely. Do not boil the tuna, or it will turn into a fishy mush—you merely want to warm it through in the hot sauce.

- 5. Toss the cooked pasta directly in the skillet until every strand is coated.**

Serve immediately, perhaps finished with a dusting of grated parmesan or a side of Papa a la Huancaína for the true Lima diner experience.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Finding the magic mushroom packet.**

You can find small cellophane packets of Doña Isabel brand 'hongos y laurel' at almost any Latin market. If you are stuck at a standard suburban supermarket, swap in one large dried porcini mushroom and one standard bay leaf to replicate that signature earthy depth.

- **Treat the tuna with respect.**

Never boil the canned tuna in the sauce. It will turn tough, stringy, and aggressively fishy. Fold it in at the very end just to warm it through and marry with the tomato.



Pollo al Sillao

Growing up, the smell of Pollo al Sillao meant comfort was exactly thirty minutes away. Born from the Chinese migration to Peru in the nineteenth century, this Chifa staple is a masterclass in making a few pantry ingredients sing. While a lot of Asian-American chicken dishes lean heavily on sugar, this leans into deep, savory umami, elevated by a secret weapon: Chinese five-spice. It yields a glossy, ginger-laced gravy meant to pool over thick slices of Yukon Gold potatoes and fluffy white rice, tasting like pure, unadulterated home. Leave the skin on the chicken—your grandmother would insist.

INGREDIENTS

6 large	bone-in skin-on chicken thighs	2 tbsp	neutral cooking oil
1/2 cup	soy sauce	4 med	scallions <i>white parts minced, green parts cut into 2-inch batons</i>
2 tbsp	oyster sauce	1 cup	chicken broth
1 tbsp	fresh ginger <i>peeled and grated</i>	1 med	red bell pepper <i>sliced into thin strips</i>
3 med cloves	garlic <i>minced or grated to a paste</i>	1 tbsp	cornstarch <i>dissolved in 2 tbsp of cold water</i>
1/2 tsp	Chinese five-spice powder	1 tbsp	toasted sesame seeds
1 tsp	sugar	2 cup	white rice <i>steamed, for serving</i>
1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	3 large	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>boiled in salted water and sliced into thick rounds</i>
1 tbsp	sesame oil		

PREPARATION

- **Maximize your short marinade window.**

Use the 15 to 20 minutes the chicken spends in the soy sauce mixture to chop your bell pepper, prep the scallions, and get the rice and potatoes going.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Marinate the chicken briefly to build the baseline flavor.**

In a large bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, oyster sauce, ginger, garlic, five-spice, sugar, black pepper, and sesame oil. Toss the chicken thighs in the mix, working the liquid under the skin, and let it sit at room temperature for 15 to 20 minutes.

1. Sear the chicken to render the fat and develop the fond.

Pull the chicken from the bowl, shaking off the excess liquid, but save that marinade. Heat the neutral oil in a heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Sear the thighs skin-side down for 4 to 5 minutes until deeply browned, flip for 2 minutes, then remove to a plate.

2. Build the flavor base in the rendered chicken fat.

Drop the heat to medium. Toss the minced white parts of the scallions into the hot fat, sautéing for a minute while scraping up all the browned bits stuck to the bottom of the pot.

3. Braise the chicken in the savory broth.

Return the chicken to the pot, skin-side up. Pour in the reserved marinade and the chicken broth. Bring it to a gentle boil, cover, drop the heat to low, and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes until the chicken is tender.

4. Add the bell peppers and thicken the gravy.

Uncover and stir in the red bell pepper strips, letting them cook for just 3 to 4 minutes so they keep their crisp bite. Give your cold cornstarch slurry a quick stir and pour it into the bubbling sauce, stirring gently until it transforms into a rich, glossy gravy.

5. Garnish and serve the traditional Peruvian way.

Kill the heat and fold in the green scallion batons. Lay a glazed thigh over thick slices of boiled potato, spoon that heavy, pepper-studded gravy over the top, and hit it with toasted sesame seeds. Serve alongside a generous mound of white rice.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Make it gluten-free with a simple substitution.**

Use Tamari instead of standard soy sauce and ensure your oyster sauce is certified gluten-free. The cornstarch naturally keeps the thickening process safe.

- **Sync your sides for a seamless weeknight meal.**

While the chicken braises, let your rice cooker run its cycle and boil the potatoes on a back burner. The timing aligns perfectly so everything finishes hot at the same time.



Tallarín Saltado de Pollo

tah-yah-REEN sahl-TAH-doh deh POH-yoh

While the beef version gets all the glory, tallarín saltado de pollo is the true, unsung hero of the Peruvian weeknight. It is a beautiful, chaotic collision of Chinese wok technique and Italian pasta, born in the coastal kitchens of Lima and perfectly suited for an American suburb. The secret here is speed and starch. If you are still chopping tomatoes while the chicken sears, you have already lost. Prep everything first, and whatever you do, do not pour that starchy pasta water down the drain. A heavy splash of it is exactly what binds the soy sauce and vinegar into a glossy, savory glaze that coats every single strand. Fast, authentic, and profoundly comforting.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	spaghetti	2 med	roma tomatoes <i>cut into wedges, seeds and wet pulp removed</i>
1 lb	boneless skinless chicken thighs <i>cut into 1-inch cubes</i>	1 med	aji amarillo <i>halved, seeded, and sliced into thin strips (or use 1 tbsp aji amarillo paste)</i>
5 tbsp	soy sauce <i>divided</i>	4 med	scallions <i>chopped into 2-inch batons, white and green parts separated</i>
4 small	garlic <i>minced</i>	1 tbsp	fresh ginger <i>peeled and finely minced</i>
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	2 tbsp	red wine vinegar
1/2 tsp	ground black pepper	1 tbsp	oyster sauce
1/4 tsp	kosher salt	3 tbsp	neutral cooking oil
1 large	red onion <i>halved, core removed, and cut into 1/2-inch petals</i>	1/4 cup	fresh cilantro <i>roughly chopped</i>

PREPARATION

- **Chop all your vegetables before turning on the stove.**

This dish cooks violently fast in under ten minutes. You must have your mise en place fully prepared and stationed next to the burner.

- **Marinate the chicken.**

In a bowl, toss the cubed chicken with 1 tablespoon of the soy sauce, half of the minced garlic, the cumin, black pepper, and salt. Let it sit while you prep everything else.

- **Mix the sauce base.**

In a small bowl, whisk together the remaining 4 tablespoons of soy sauce, red wine vinegar, oyster sauce, and 1/4 cup of the reserved pasta water. Keep it right next to the stove.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Boil the pasta to al dente.**

Cook the spaghetti in heavily salted water for 1 to 2 minutes less than the package instructions dictate. Crucially, scoop out and reserve 1/2 cup of the starchy pasta water before draining the noodles.

2. **Sear the chicken over maximum heat.**

Heat a large heavy skillet or wok until smoking. Add 2 tablespoons of oil, then the chicken in a single layer. Leave it completely untouched for 2 minutes to develop a golden crust, then toss for another 3 minutes until cooked through. Remove to a plate.

3. **Blister the vegetables.**

To the same screaming hot pan, add a drop more oil if needed. Toss in the red onion petals, white scallion batons, and aji amarillo for 1 minute until the edges char slightly but the centers remain crisp. Add the remaining garlic, ginger, and tomatoes, tossing for just 30 seconds.

4. **Deglaze to create the saltado flavor.**

Return the chicken and its resting juices to the pan. Pour the sauce mixture around the hot edges of the pan—it should immediately vaporize the vinegar and release a cloud of tangy, savory steam.

5. **Marry the pasta and sauce.**

Instantly dump the drained spaghetti into the pan. Use tongs to aggressively toss the noodles with the chicken, vegetables, and sauce for 1 to 2 minutes. The starch will emulsify the liquids into a rich glaze.

6. **Finish and serve.**

Turn off the heat. Toss in the scallion greens and cilantro. Serve immediately straight from the pan, ensuring everyone gets plenty of the savory jugo.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not crowd the pan.**

Standard American stoves lack the BTUs of a commercial wok burner. If your pan is small, sear the chicken in batches. Crowding drops the temperature, causing the meat to steam pale rather than sear golden.

- **Sourcing aji amarillo.**

If you cannot find whole frozen peppers at your local Latin market, a tablespoon of jarred aji amarillo paste works perfectly. Add it to the pan right when you toss in the garlic and ginger.



Bistec Encebollado

For first-generation kids growing up in the American suburbs, the sharp, mouthwatering crackle of red wine vinegar hitting a hot skillet meant one thing: Tuesday night salvation. This is not the high-BTU wok theater of lomo saltado, but a pragmatic, deeply savory lifesaver engineered for tired parents. The grandmother's secret lies in sheer mechanics—aggressively pounding tough, economical cuts of beef until tender, then searing them hard. From there, earth-toned ají panca, salty soy sauce, and crisp red onions coalesce into a rich, instant pan sauce that tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb top round steak
sliced into 4 individual portions

1 tsp kosher salt

1/2 tsp	black pepper	1 tbsp	ají panca paste
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	1/2 tbsp	ají amarillo paste
2 tbsp	vegetable oil <i>divided</i>	3 tbsp	red wine vinegar
1 large	red onion <i>peeled, halved, and cut into thick slices</i>	2 tbsp	soy sauce
2 med	Roma tomatoes <i>sliced into thick wedges</i>	1/4 cup	beef broth
1 tbsp	garlic paste	1 tsp	dried oregano
		2 tbsp	fresh cilantro <i>roughly chopped</i>

PREPARATION

- **Tenderize the beef.**

Place the steaks on a cutting board, cover with plastic wrap, and aggressively pound them with a meat mallet until they are no more than 1/4-inch thick to break down tough muscle fibers.

- **Season the meat.**

Season both sides of the pounded steaks generously with the salt, black pepper, and cumin.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Execute a hard sear on the steaks.**

Heat a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat with one tablespoon of oil until shimmering. Sear the steaks for just under two minutes per side to build a crust without overcooking, then remove to a plate to catch the juices.

- 2. Build the authentic sofrito.**

Lower the heat to medium, add the remaining oil to the unwashed pan, and sauté the garlic and ají panca paste for one minute until dark and highly aromatic.

1. Soften the onions and tomatoes.

Toss the thick red onion slices and ají amarillo paste into the chili-garlic oil, cooking for two to three minutes until softened but still retaining a firm crunch, then add the tomato wedges for one more minute.

2. Deglaze the pan and create the emulsion.

Pour in the red wine vinegar and soy sauce, using a wooden spoon to scrape all the polymerized browned bits from the pan bottom. Add the beef broth and crush the dried oregano between your palms directly into the pan, letting the sauce reduce for sixty seconds.

3. Reunite the meat and serve.

Return the steaks and their resting juices to the skillet, tossing them gently in the pan sauce for a minute to warm through before pulling from the heat and garnishing with cilantro.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing the flavor base.**

Ají panca and ají amarillo pastes are non-negotiable for authentic Peruvian flavor. Look for jars by brands like Goya or Doña Isabel in the Hispanic aisle of standard American supermarkets.

● **The ultimate weeknight shortcut.**

If pounding steaks on a Tuesday night is a bridge too far, grab pre-tenderized cube steak from the butcher. It absorbs the vinegar and soy sauce beautifully and shaves minutes off the prep time.



Ají de Gallina

ah-HEE deh gah-YEE-nah

If there's a single dish that defines the beating heart of a Peruvian kitchen, it's Ají de Gallina. Born from a collision of Spanish colonization and indigenous ingenuity, this vibrant stew traded expensive European almonds for local pecans and swapped sugar for the unmistakable, sun-kissed heat of the native ají amarillo pepper. While traditionalists might preach about spending hours boiling an old hen, the reality of the modern home is far more practical: good shredded chicken, store-bought bone broth, and a meticulously cooked flavor base. Master the low-and-slow fry of the aderezo until the oil physically splits from the chili paste, and you'll capture the exact, intoxicating smell of a Sunday in Lima.

INGREDIENTS

4 slices	white sandwich bread <i>crusts removed and torn into pieces</i>	1 lb	cooked chicken breast <i>shredded by hand into thick strands</i>
1 cup	evaporated milk	1/2 cup	pecans <i>lightly toasted and finely chopped</i>
1 1/2 cup	chicken bone broth <i>divided</i>	1/3 cup	Parmesan cheese <i>grated</i>
3 tbsp	neutral vegetable oil	1 tsp	kosher salt <i>to taste</i>
1 large	red onion <i>very finely diced</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
4 cloves	garlic <i>minced or grated to a paste</i>	3 med	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>boiled peeled and sliced into thick rounds</i>
1/2 cup	ají amarillo paste	3 large	hard-boiled eggs <i>peeled and quartered</i>
1 tbsp	ají panca paste	1/4 cup	Peruvian black olives <i>pitted</i>
1/2 tsp	ground turmeric	2 cup	cooked white rice <i>warm for serving</i>
1/4 tsp	ground cumin		

PREPARATION

- **Soak and blend the thickener.**

In a blender, combine the torn bread, evaporated milk, and 1/2 cup of the chicken broth. Let it sit for 5 minutes to soften, then blend until completely smooth and silky.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the flavor base slowly.**

Heat the vegetable oil in a large, wide pot over medium-low heat. Add the finely diced red onion and a pinch of salt, cooking patiently until the onions are completely soft and melting into the oil, about 10 to 12 minutes. Add the garlic, cumin, and turmeric, cooking for 2 more minutes.

1. Caramelize the chili paste to the splitting point.

Stir in the ají amarillo and ají panca pastes. Continue to cook over medium-low heat until the mixture thickens slightly and the oil begins to separate and pool around the edges. Do not rush this; it cooks out the raw edge of the pepper and unlocks its sweet, fruity flavor.

2. Combine and simmer.

Pour the blended bread and milk mixture into the pot with the chili base. Stir vigorously to combine until it turns a vibrant golden yellow. Bring to a gentle simmer and let it bubble thickly for 5 minutes, splashing in the remaining 1 cup of chicken broth to achieve the consistency of a rich, creamy gravy.

3. Fold in the chicken and finish off the heat.

Add the shredded chicken, folding gently to coat every strand, and let it warm through for 2 to 3 minutes. Crucially, remove the pot from the heat completely before stirring in the chopped pecans and Parmesan cheese to ensure the dairy doesn't curdle or separate.

4. Plate it the Peruvian way.

Serve a generous ladle of the hot, creamy stew over the sliced boiled potatoes, accompanied by a mound of white rice, and garnished with the hard-boiled egg wedges and black olives.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The chili conundrum.**

The soul of this dish is ají amarillo, easily found frozen or jarred in Latin markets. If you're utterly stranded, blending roasted yellow bell peppers with a seeded habanero provides an acceptable weeknight approximation for color and heat.

● **Crackers in a pinch.**

Standard white bread gives the sauce its signature silky texture, but substituting a sleeve of crushed saltine crackers is a completely authentic, if slightly gummier, shortcut used in homes all over Lima.



Chupe de Langostinos

choo-peh deh lahn-goh-stee-nohs

If you want to know the true heart of Peruvian home cooking, look no further than the chupe. Originating from the mountainous Arequipa region, this hearty, soul-warming chowder is a masterclass in culinary mestizaje. The ultimate secret separating a true chupe from a generic seafood soup is the coral. You do not throw away the shrimp shells. You fry them, you blend them, and you extract every drop of briny essence to give the soup its bright orange soul. While your shells simmer, you build your flavor base. In forty-five minutes, you've got a pot of magic that tastes exactly like a Sunday afternoon in Lima.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	large shell-on shrimp <i>peeled, meat refrigerated, shells and heads reserved</i>	2 med	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled and cut into large bite-sized cubes</i>
1 tbsp	vegetable oil	1 ear	frozen choclo <i>cut into 1-inch thick rounds, or substitute standard sweet corn</i>
4 cup	water <i>or mild fish stock</i>	1/2 cup	frozen green peas
2 tbsp	vegetable oil	1/2 cup	frozen fava beans <i>peeled, or substitute edamame</i>
1 med	red onion <i>very finely diced</i>	1 cup	evaporated milk
4 clove	garlic <i>minced</i>	4 oz	queso fresco <i>cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>
2 tbsp	ají panca paste	1 tbsp	huacatay paste <i>or substitute 1/4 cup minced fresh cilantro mixed with 1 tbsp fresh mint</i>
1 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	4 large	eggs
1 tsp	dried oregano	1 tsp	salt <i>to taste</i>
1/4 cup	long-grain white rice <i>rinsed</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly cracked, to taste</i>

PREPARATION

- **Prepare the shrimp.**

Peel the shrimp before you begin cooking, storing the meat in the refrigerator and reserving every single shell and head for the stock.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Extract the coral.**

Heat one tablespoon of oil in a saucepan, add the reserved shrimp shells, and sauté until deeply toasted and bright orange. Pour in the water, simmer for fifteen minutes, then pulse the entire mixture in a blender before straining hard to extract the rich broth.

1. Build the aderezo.

In a large Dutch oven, slowly sweat the diced red onion in the remaining two tablespoons of oil until meltingly soft. Add the garlic, ají panca, ají amarillo, and oregano, frying until the oil separates and the raw chili flavor mellows into a deep, dark base.

2. Simmer the starches.

Pour the strained shrimp stock into your finished aderezo, bring to a gentle boil, and stir in the rinsed rice, potatoes, and corn. Cover and simmer for fifteen to twenty minutes until the potatoes are fork-tender.

3. Finish the chowder.

Stir in the raw shrimp, peas, fava beans, evaporated milk, cubed queso fresco, and huacatay paste. Season boldly with salt and pepper, letting it cook for just a couple of minutes until the shrimp turn pink.

4. Poach the eggs.

With the soup at a very gentle simmer, carefully crack the eggs directly into the broth. Leave them completely undisturbed for three to four minutes until the whites are set but the yolks remain soft.

5. Serve immediately.

Ladle the hot soup into deep bowls, making sure everyone gets a piece of corn, plenty of shrimp, and a whole poached egg resting on top to break open right before eating.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Do not throw away the shrimp shells.**

Frying and blending the shells and heads extracts the briny essence that gives this soup its authentic flavor and signature bright orange color.

● **Source the holy trinity.**

Ají panca, ají amarillo, and huacatay are indispensable to Peruvian cuisine; look for jarred paste versions in the Hispanic aisle of your local supermarket.



El Lonche (The Evening Bridge)

Honoring the deeply ingrained late-afternoon Peruvian tea tradition that doubles as a light weeknight dinner.

In Peru, the hours between a heavy, late lunch and a distant dinner are sacred territory. El Lonche is the bridge. It's an unspoken agreement to stop the clock, put on the kettle, and surrender to the twilight. This isn't high tea for the idle rich; it's a daily ritual of survival and comfort in a loud, demanding world. This is the hour of the working class and the matriarchs alike, where the exhaust of the city gives way to the quiet clink of spoons against mugs.

What lands on the table does heavy lifting. It's the geometric, mayo-laced perfection of El Triple, the greasy, glorious salvation of Pan con Chicharrón that works just as well on a slow Sunday morning, or the dense comfort of tamales and hot chocolate when the coastal damp seeps into the bones. No fuss. No pretense. Just the unapologetic, life-affirming food that gets you through to tomorrow.





Sándwich Triple Clásico

sahn-gwee-che tree-pleh

If there is one bite that instantly transports a Peruvian back to childhood birthdays and late afternoon gatherings, it is the Triple. It is a masterclass in structural engineering disguised as a simple sandwich: three perfect layers of avocado, egg, and tomato stacked between soft white bread. The secret to recreating the exact taste of a Lima café in an American kitchen lies in two straightforward tricks: doctoring supermarket mayonnaise with fresh lime juice to build a waterproof barrier against the wet ingredients, and wrapping the finished triangles in a damp cloth to keep the crumb impossibly soft.

INGREDIENTS

8 slices	standard white sandwich bread	2 large	eggs <i>hard-boiled and peeled</i>
1 med	Hass avocado <i>peeled, pitted, and thinly sliced</i>	1/2 cup	high-quality mayonnaise
1 large	Roma tomato <i>thinly sliced, wet seed pulp gently removed</i>	1 med	lime <i>juiced</i>
		1/2 tsp	kosher salt
		1/4 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Doctor the mayonnaise to mimic the bright tang of Peruvian scratch-made versions.

In a small bowl, stir the mayonnaise with 1 teaspoon of the fresh lime juice and a tiny pinch of kosher salt.

2. Bind the egg layer so it does not spill out when bitten.

Finely chop the hard-boiled eggs and mix them with 1 tablespoon of the doctored mayonnaise and a pinch of salt to create a cohesive paste.

3. Season the avocado to prevent oxidation.

Gently toss the avocado slices with a squeeze of the remaining lime juice, salt, and black pepper.

4. Construct the waterproof architecture.

Lay out four slices of bread and spread the doctored mayonnaise thinly on every single side that will touch a filling. Layer the avocado evenly across the bottom slice, stack the second bread slice, spread the egg mixture, stack the third slice, and finish with the tomato layer and the final cap of bread. Repeat for the second sandwich.

1. Trim and portion.

Using a sharp serrated knife, gently saw off the crusts on all four sides to create perfectly flush squares, then cut the sandwiches diagonally from corner to corner to create four mini triangles each.

2. Deploy the damp cloth trick.

If you are not eating immediately, arrange the triangles on a platter and drape a barely damp paper towel lightly over them to lock in the moisture and keep the bread cloud-soft until serving.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Removing the tomato seeds is non-negotiable.**

Roma tomatoes have less water content than beefsteaks, but poking out the wet seed pulp before layering is still vital to maintaining the bread's structural integrity.



Sánduche de Pollo con Ají Amarillo

sahn-goo-cheh deh poh-yo kohn ah-hee ah-mah-ree-yo

If you search for a Peruvian chicken sandwich online, you'll find a restaurant-style fantasy of grilled meat and green sauce. That's not what you eat at home. Between five and seven in the evening, when the day is winding down and families gather for El Lonche, the real deal is a fiercely savory, shredded chicken salad bound by the fruity, golden heat of ají amarillo. It's practical, it uses yesterday's rotisserie chicken or a quick-poached breast, and it hits you with an immediate, uncomplicated nostalgia that tastes exactly like a Lima kitchen on a Tuesday night.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	boneless skinless chicken breasts	to taste	kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper
1 med	celery stalk <i>halved</i>	2 med	celery stalks <i>de-stringed and finely diced</i>
1/4 med	yellow onion <i>peeled</i>	4 large	soft-crust Kaiser rolls or ciabatta <i>lightly toasted</i>
1 tsp	kosher salt	4 large	crisp lettuce leaves
3/4 cup	mayonnaise	1 med	tomato <i>thinly sliced</i>
3 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	1 cup	shoestring potato sticks
1 tsp	yellow mustard		
1/2 med	lime <i>juiced</i>		

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Poach the chicken breasts with the halved celery stalk, onion, and salt in gently simmering water for twenty to twenty-five minutes.**

Place them in a medium pot, cover with about an inch of water, and bring to a simmer.

- 2. Transfer the cooked chicken to a mixing bowl, but do not discard the cooking liquid.**

Save about half a cup of the hot poaching broth; this is the secret to a perfectly moist filling without dumping in jars of extra mayonnaise.

- 3. Use an electric hand mixer on low speed directly in the bowl to shred the hot chicken breasts in seconds.**

This is a brilliant, zero-fuss grandmother's trick that yields perfectly even, fine strands without the tedium of using two forks. Let the meat cool to room temperature.

- 1. Whisk the mayonnaise, ají amarillo paste, mustard, and lime juice together until smooth and deeply golden.**

Taste and adjust with salt and pepper; it should be savory, tangy, and carry a gentle, warming heat. Do not substitute fresh jalapeños for the ají amarillo paste—the fruity, unmistakable Peruvian flavor is irreplaceable.

- 2. Fold the diced celery and the ají mayonnaise into the cooled chicken until thoroughly coated.**

If the mixture looks stiff, splash in the reserved hot chicken broth one tablespoon at a time until the salad is incredibly juicy and loose.

- 3. Layer the bottom of each toasted roll with lettuce and tomato, pile on the chicken salad, and top heavily with shoestring potatoes before closing.**

Add the potatoes at the absolute last second so they maintain their essential crunch. Serve immediately alongside a hot cup of tea or coffee.

CHEF'S NOTES

- The rotisserie shortcut is a perfectly acceptable and deeply authentic weeknight alternative.**

If you don't have time to poach raw meat, substitute three to four cups of shredded leftover supermarket rotisserie chicken and use a splash of low-sodium chicken stock in place of the poaching broth to hydrate the salad.



Pan con Chicharrón

pahn kohn chee-chah-rohn

If there is one aroma that transports a Peruvian kid straight back to a Sunday morning in Lima, it is pork fat rendering down with garlic, mint, and aji panca. The real grandmother's trick to this sandwich is patience. You do not just fry the pork belly; you boil it into submission first, letting the spiced water evaporate until the meat fries perfectly in its own rendered fat. To make this masterpiece work on a busy Tuesday in Ohio, boil the pork over the weekend. Come dinnertime, you just need a hot skillet, some crusty bread, and fifteen minutes to build the undisputed king of Peruvian sandwiches.

INGREDIENTS

2 lb	pork belly <i>skin on or off, cut into 2-inch chunks</i>	2 med	orange sweet potatoes <i>peeled and cut into 1/4-inch thick rounds</i>
3 cup	water	1 large	red onion <i>halved and thinly sliced pole-to-pole</i>
3 med	garlic cloves <i>smashed</i>	1 med	ají limo or jalapeño <i>seeded and minced</i>
1 tbsp	ají panca paste	2 large	limes <i>juiced</i>
1/2 tsp	achiote powder	1/4 cup	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>
1 sprig	fresh mint	1 pinch	salt
1 tsp	salt	4 large	crusty Kaiser rolls or ciabatta buns <i>halved and lightly toasted</i>
1/2 tsp	whole black peppercorns		
2 tbsp	lard or neutral oil		

PREPARATION

- **Boil the pork ahead of time to make this a fifteen-minute weeknight meal.**

Execute the boiling step on a Sunday. Once the water evaporates, pull the tender pork out, store it in the fridge, and save the rendered fat. On Tuesday night, simply fry the chilled slices in that fat to crisp them up.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Submerge the sliced red onions in a bowl of ice-cold, heavily salted water.**

This is a non-negotiable Peruvian secret. The cold saltwater strips away the harsh sulfurous bite, leaving the onion crisp, sweet, and perfectly primed to absorb the lime juice later. Soak for at least 15 minutes, then drain well.

- 1. Combine the pork belly, water, garlic, ají panca, achiote, mint, salt, and peppercorns in a heavy-bottomed pot and bring to a boil.**

Once boiling, drop the heat to a steady simmer and let it cook uncovered for about 45 to 50 minutes. The goal is twofold: tenderize the tough pork belly and evaporate the water completely.

- 2. Once the water evaporates and the pork begins to sizzle in its own fat, add the lard and fry the chunks.**

Turn occasionally until they develop a deep, mahogany-brown crust on all sides, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove the pork with a slotted spoon, let it rest on a paper towel, and slice thickly.

- 3. Fry the sweet potato rounds in a separate skillet using a shallow layer of hot oil or the rendered pork fat.**

Cook over medium heat until deeply caramelized on the edges and fork-tender in the center. Drain on paper towels and season lightly with salt.

- 4. Toss the drained, rinsed red onions vigorously with the minced chili, lime juice, cilantro, and a generous pinch of salt.**

The acid will instantly begin to gently cook the onions, turning them a vibrant, beautiful pink.

- 5. Build the sandwiches from the bottom up on the toasted rolls.**

Lay down a generous, overlapping layer of warm sweet potatoes, followed by a heavy hand of the crispy pork belly. Cap it off with a towering mound of the bright, acidic salsa criolla right on top of the fat before closing the bun.

CHEF'S NOTES

- Do not stress if you cannot find traditional pan francés peruano.**

High-quality ciabatta or crusty Kaiser rolls are the best structural substitutes available in a standard American grocery store, as they hold the dense meat and wet salsa without disintegrating.



Butifarra Rápida

In traditional Lima households, the smell of Jamón del País bubbling on the stove meant a celebration was coming. The canonical method demands tying a massive pork leg and boiling it in seasoned broth for hours—a beautiful labor of love fundamentally incompatible with a Tuesday night in Ohio. This adaptation is the working diaspora’s cheat code. By swapping the massive roast for a lean tenderloin and searing it hard with an authentic achiote rub, the home cook captures the exact, nostalgic flavor of a true Peruvian lonche in under forty minutes. Built on a crusty roll and crowned with a sharp, lime-soaked Sarsa Criolla, it’s a profound tether to the homeland that doesn’t demand the sacrifice of your entire evening.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	pork tenderloin <i>patted completely dry</i>	1 med	Fresno chili <i>seeds and ribs removed, minced finely</i>
1 1/2 tbsp	neutral oil	3 tbsp	lime juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>
1 tsp	achiote powder	1 tbsp	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>
3 med cloves	garlic <i>minced or pressed into a paste</i>	1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1 tbsp	white vinegar	4 large	ciabatta rolls <i>sliced in half, top interior crumb slightly hollowed out</i>
1 tsp	ground cumin	4 large	iceberg lettuce leaves <i>washed and crisped</i>
1/2 tsp	dried oregano	1/4 cup	mayonnaise
1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	1 tsp	yellow mustard
1 tsp	kosher salt	1 tsp	aji amarillo paste
1 med	red onion <i>sliced paper-thin (feather cut)</i>		

PREPARATION

- **Hollow out the bread.**

Traditional Peruvian Pan Francés has an incredibly airy crumb that American ciabatta lacks. Scooping out a bit of the top interior prevents the sandwich from becoming overly dense and gives the Sarsa a place to sit.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix the aderezo.**

In a glass or metal bowl, whisk the neutral oil, achiote powder, minced garlic, white vinegar, cumin, oregano, black pepper, and one teaspoon of kosher salt into a thick, vibrant paste. This synthesizes the exact flavor base of the traditional ham into a quick rub.

1. Coat and sear the pork.

Rub the achiote paste generously over the dried pork tenderloin. Heat a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat with a splash of oil. Sear the pork on all sides until a deep, dark crust forms, about 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and let it rest for at least 10 minutes so the juices don't bleed out when sliced.

2. Wash the red onions.

This is non-negotiable for a proper Sarsa Criolla. Place the thinly sliced onions in a bowl of cold water, agitate them gently with your fingers, let sit for 3 minutes, then drain thoroughly to strip away the harsh sulfurous bite.

3. Mix the Sarsa Criolla.

In a medium bowl, toss the washed onions with the minced chili, lime juice, cilantro, and the remaining half-teaspoon of kosher salt. Do this right before serving so the onions stay fresh and bright, rather than turning pickled and limp.

4. Build the Butifarra.

Stir the mayonnaise, mustard, and aji amarillo paste together and spread generously on both halves of the hollowed rolls. Lay down a crisp lettuce leaf, top with paper-thin slices of the rested pork, and crown with a heavy mound of Sarsa Criolla. Close the sandwich and serve immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Mind the achiote.**

Achiote is a powerful natural dye. It will permanently stain plastic bowls and wooden cutting boards a vibrant yellow-orange, so stick to glass or metal when mixing the marinade.

● **Adjust the acid.**

American supermarket limes are often less acidic than the Peruvian Limón Sutil. If your Sarsa tastes flat, add a few drops of white vinegar to simulate that sharp, authentic punch.



Tequeños de Queso con Crema a la Huancaína

teh-KEHN-yos deh KEH-so kohn CREH-mah ah lah wahn-kah-EE-nah

The smell of wonton wrappers hitting hot oil, followed closely by the earthy, sweet aroma of aji amarillo and garlic toasting in a pan, is the universal trigger for a Peruvian after-school lonche. The tequeño is a beautiful accident of history—a Venezuelan concept adopted by Chinese-Peruvian immigrants, stuffed with melting Andean cheese. Recreating it in an American suburb doesn't require a specialty grocer, just the patience to learn the ultimate family secret: never rush the Huancaína sauce. Cooking down the chili paste and onions until they surrender their sweetness is the difference between a decent condiment and the one your grandmother made.

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp	vegetable oil	6 oz	feta cheese <i>crumbled</i>
1/2 med	red onion <i>roughly chopped</i>	4 med	saltine crackers
2 large	garlic cloves <i>peeled and smashed</i>	30 med	wonton wrappers
3 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	12 oz	Monterey Jack cheese <i>cut into 2-inch batons</i>
1/4 cup	yellow bell pepper <i>chopped</i>	1 large	egg <i>lightly beaten</i>
1 cup	evaporated milk	1 1/2 cup	vegetable oil <i>for frying</i>

PREPARATION

- **Protect the wrappers.**

Keep your stack of wonton wrappers covered with a damp paper towel while you assemble the tequeños so they don't dry out and crack.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the grandmother's sofrito.**

Place a skillet over medium-low heat and add 2 tablespoons of oil, the chopped red onion, and smashed garlic. Cook slowly for 5 to 7 minutes until the onions are translucent and their sharp bite has mellowed into a fragrant sweetness. Do not let them brown.

- 2. Caramelize the chili paste.**

Stir in the ají amarillo paste and yellow bell pepper, cooking for another 3 to 4 minutes until the oil turns a brilliant, sunset orange. This step extracts the flavor compounds and cooks out the raw taste of the chili paste. Remove from heat and let it cool slightly.

1. **Blend the emulsion.**

Transfer the warm chili mixture, including all its golden oil, to a blender. Add the crumbled feta and evaporated milk, blending on high until completely smooth. While the blender is running, drop in the saltine crackers one by one until the sauce thickens to the consistency of heavy cream. Transfer to a bowl and chill in the refrigerator.

2. **Roll the tequeños.**

Lay a wonton wrapper flat, dip your finger in the beaten egg, and trace the entire outer edge of the square. Place a cheese baton near the bottom edge, roll the wrapper tightly over it, and pinch the left and right sides firmly together to seal them. A tight seal is crucial so the cheese doesn't blow out in the hot oil.

3. **Fry to a blistered crunch.**

Heat the remaining vegetable oil in a deep skillet over medium-high heat to 350°F. Working in small batches, fry the tequeños for 1 to 2 minutes per side until deeply golden brown and blistered. Drain on paper towels and serve immediately alongside the chilled Crema a la Huancaína.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **A crucial note on the cheese.**

Do not use Mexican 'queso fresco' from an American supermarket for the filling, as it will only heat up and crumble. Monterey Jack or Gouda perfectly replicates the gooey interior of an authentic Peruvian tequeño.

- **Repurpose your leftovers.**

In modern Lima, the tequeño is a vessel for classic Peruvian stews. If you make Lomo Saltado or Ají de Gallina earlier in the week, chop up the leftovers and use them alongside or instead of the cheese.



Revuelto de "Salchicha Huachana"

re-vwel-to de sal-chee-cha wa-cha-na

The smell of orange-tinted pork fat hitting a hot skillet is the universal bat-signal for a Peruvian breakfast, but it is just as vital for El Lonche—that crucial, late-afternoon bridge meal. Huacho sausage was perfected by immigrant families blending old-world charcuterie with indigenous achiote and local bitter orange. Finding the real deal in the States is tough, and commercial brands lean heavily on synthetic dyes. The secret the grandmothers know? You don't need to stuff sausage casings to get the magic. We are making a brilliant, casing-free bulk sausage

you can prep on a quiet Sunday. By Tuesday night, you are scrambling it with eggs in a dry pan, letting the rendered red fat do all the heavy lifting. Pure, unadulterated comfort.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	ground pork shoulder	1 tsp	black pepper <i>finely ground</i>
2 tbsp	pork lard <i>melted</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1 1/2 tbsp	achiote paste	1 tbsp	fresh orange juice
2 large cloves	garlic <i>smashed to a paste</i>	1 tbsp	fresh lime juice
1 tbsp	ají panca paste	6 large	eggs <i>lightly beaten</i>
1 tsp	ground cumin	4 med	crusty ciabatta or french rolls <i>sliced</i>

PREPARATION

- **Dissolve the achiote paste into the melted pork lard.**

This is the chemical and visual soul of the dish. Stir the achiote into the warm liquid fat until fully incorporated and bright orange, then let it cool slightly.

- **Mix the sausage base aggressively.**

In a large mixing bowl, combine the ground pork, achiote-lard, garlic, ají panca, cumin, black pepper, salt, orange juice, and lime juice. Use your hands to knead the mixture for two to three minutes until the fat and protein emulsify into a sticky, unified mass.

- **Let the meat cure in the refrigerator.**

Transfer the sausage to an airtight container, press it flat, and chill for at least 24 hours and up to three days. The citrus and spices need time to penetrate the fat, developing that deep, tangy umami that separates real Huacho sausage from generic breakfast meat.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place a large non-stick skillet over medium heat without any oil.

This is a crucial lesson in thermodynamics for this dish. Do not add cooking fat to the pan; the seasoned pork already has everything it needs to fry.

2. Fry the sausage in its own rendered fat.

Drop a half-pound of the cured meat into the hot, dry pan. Use a wooden spoon to continuously break it into very small crumbles, letting it sizzle for 6 to 8 minutes until cooked through and slightly crispy at the edges. It should be swimming in its own bright orange oil.

3. Fold the eggs directly into the sizzling pork.

Lower the heat to medium-low and pour the lightly beaten eggs over the meat. Gently fold the mixture with a spatula, allowing the eggs to absorb all that gorgeous, heavily seasoned red fat.

4. Pull the pan off the heat while the eggs are still juicy.

A proper Peruvian revuelto should be softly set and tender, never dry. Serve immediately with crusty bread to mop up every drop of the savory oil.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Keep the remaining sausage in the fridge or freezer.**

This recipe makes a pound of bulk sausage base but only uses a half-pound for a six-egg scramble. It keeps beautifully, meaning your next weeknight meal is only 10 minutes away.



Sartén de Tamal de los Domingos

The Peruvian Sunday breakfast is a sacred institution—plates piled high with fried pork, crusty bread, and steaming banana-leaf-wrapped tamales that some grandmother woke up at four in the morning to make. But for the diaspora kid living in Ohio, pulling off a traditional tamal on a Tuesday night is a pipe dream. Enter the skillet tamal. Borrowed from the pragmatic home kitchens of Moquegua, this brilliant hack treats the dish like a stuffed savory pancake. You get all the canonical, smoky flavors of ají panca and rich corn masa, plus a beautiful, crispy bottom crust you'd never get from a steamer, all in under an hour.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	frozen Peruvian choclo or canned white hominy <i>thawed, or drained and rinsed well if using canned hominy</i>	1/2 lb	boneless skinless chicken thighs <i>cut into bite-sized pieces</i>
1/2 cup	chicken broth <i>warm</i>	1 med	red onion <i>finely diced</i>
1/4 cup	manteca de cerdo or vegetable shortening <i>melted</i>	3 med clove	garlic <i>minced</i>
2 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	1 large	roma tomato <i>peeled, seeded, and finely diced</i>
2 tbsp	ají panca paste <i>divided</i>	1/4 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1 tsp	salt	2 large	large eggs <i>hard-boiled, peeled, and sliced into rounds</i>
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	8 med	Botija or Kalamata olives <i>pitted</i>
3 tbsp	vegetable oil <i>divided</i>	1/4 cup	roasted peanuts
		1 cup	salsa criolla <i>for serving</i>

PREPARATION

- **Prepare the corn base.**

If using frozen choclo, allow it to thaw completely. If using canned hominy, drain and rinse it aggressively in a colander to remove the canning liquid.

- **Boil and cool the eggs.**

Prepare the hard-boiled eggs well in advance so they are completely cool to the touch, ensuring they peel easily and slice cleanly into structural rounds.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Process the corn into a coarse masa.**

In a food processor, pulse the choclo or hominy with the warm chicken broth until it forms a thick, slightly coarse purée with a rustic, sandy texture.

2. **Hydrate the masa with fat and flavor.**

Transfer the purée to a bowl and fold in the melted lard, ají amarillo paste, one tablespoon of the ají panca paste, salt, and cumin until the dough turns a vibrant, pale orange.

3. **Brown the chicken.**

In a skillet over medium-high heat, add a tablespoon of oil and sauté the diced chicken until browned on all sides, then remove it to a plate, leaving the fat behind in the pan.

4. **Start the aderezo.**

Lower the heat to medium, add another tablespoon of oil and the diced onion, and cook until translucent while scraping up any browned bits from the chicken.

5. **Finish the aderezo paste.**

Add the garlic and remaining tablespoon of ají panca, cook for two minutes, then stir in the tomato and cook until it breaks down into a thick, jammy paste before stirring the chicken back in and removing from the heat.

6. **Layer the base of the skillet tamal.**

In a well-oiled 9-inch non-stick or cast-iron skillet over low heat, spread exactly half of the masa mixture into an even, flat layer across the bottom.

7. **Add the canonical fillings.**

Spoon the chicken aderezo evenly over the masa leaving a half-inch border, then distribute the sliced eggs, pitted olives, and roasted peanuts across the filling layer.

1. Seal the tamal and cook the first side.

Gently spread the remaining masa over the top to completely encase the filling, cover the skillet with a tight-fitting lid, and cook on medium-low heat for 10 to 12 minutes until a deep golden-brown crust forms on the bottom.

2. Execute the flip and finish cooking.

Remove the skillet from the heat, place a large flat plate upside down over it, and confidently invert them together so the tamal falls onto the plate crust-side up; gently slide it back into the pan raw-side down and cook uncovered for another 10 minutes.

3. Rest, slice, and serve.

Slide the finished tamal onto a cutting board, let it rest for five minutes so the starches set, then slice it into wedges and serve immediately topped generously with salsa criolla.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Mastering the skillet flip.**

The key to a successful skillet tamal is avoiding hesitation. Place the plate flush against the skillet, hold them tightly together with oven mitts, and invert them quickly and confidently. If the pan looks dry after the flip, add a tiny splash of oil before sliding the tamal back in to ensure a crispy crust on the second side.

● **Sourcing the holy trinity of Peruvian flavor.**

You can find frozen choclo, ají amarillo paste, and ají panca paste at almost any local Latin market, or order them easily online. These are non-negotiable for achieving that authentic, smoky, coastal tamal flavor at home.



Chocolate Caliente, Panetón y Mantequilla

cho-ko-lah-teh kah-lyen-teh, pah-neh-tohn ee mahn-teh-kee-yah

In Peru, hot chocolate isn't some powdery afterthought stirred into microwaved milk. It's the undisputed king of El Lonche—that late afternoon bridge between lunch and dinner—and the bizarrely beloved centerpiece of sweltering summer Christmases. The secret here, the thing that makes it taste exactly like a grandmother's kitchen in Lima, is starting with a potent, dark tea of cinnamon and clove rather than dairy. Built on that aromatic foundation is the caramelized richness of evaporated milk, a pinch of cornstarch for velvety weight,

and a finishing pat of salted butter. Served next to hot, buttered slices of slightly stale panetón, it is domestic comfort food perfected—a pure hit of unadulterated nostalgia.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	water	1/2 tbsp	cornstarch
2 large	cinnamon sticks	1 tbsp	cold water
4 small	whole cloves	1 tsp	salted butter
1 med	orange peel <i>cut into a wide strip, white pith removed</i>	1/4 tsp	vanilla extract
4 oz	Peruvian chocolate para taza <i>roughly chopped</i>	4 large	Panetón <i>cut into thick slices, ideally a few days old</i>
12 oz	evaporated milk	2 tbsp	salted butter <i>softened to room temperature</i>
2 tbsp	granulated sugar		

PREPARATION

- **Preheat the oven to 350°F.**

Get the oven hot before you begin the chocolate so it is ready for the panetón toasts.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Boil the spice infusion.**

Combine the water, cinnamon sticks, cloves, and orange peel in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring it to a rolling boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer for five to eight minutes until the liquid turns a dark, aromatic amber. You cannot extract this deep flavor by steeping spices in fat, so do not skip this step.

1. Melt the chocolate.

Drop the heat to low, fish out the whole spices and peel with a slotted spoon, and immediately whisk in the chopped chocolate paste. Keep whisking until the chocolate is entirely melted, smooth, and glossy.

2. Incorporate the milk and sugar.

Pour in the evaporated milk and granulated sugar. Whisk to combine and keep the pot at a very gentle simmer; if you let it come to a hard boil, the milk proteins will separate and ruin the texture.

3. Thicken the hot chocolate.

Stir the cornstarch and cold water together in a small bowl to form a smooth slurry, then slowly whisk it into the hot pot. Keep whisking gently for about two minutes until the liquid transforms, gaining a velvety weight that just coats the back of a spoon.

4. Add the finishing gloss.

Turn off the heat and drop in the teaspoon of salted butter and vanilla extract. Stir until the butter vanishes, leaving a rich sheen on the surface that perfectly bridges the sweet and bitter notes.

5. Toast and butter the panetón.

Lay the thick slices of panetón directly on the rack of the preheated oven for five to eight minutes until the edges are crispy and the fruit sugars caramelize. Pull them out and immediately slather them with the softened salted butter.

6. Serve immediately.

Pour the thick chocolate into large mugs and serve alongside the warm, buttery toasts. The move here is to take a bite of the crispy panetón, followed by a sip of the hot chocolate, letting the flavors mix together.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Sourcing the chocolate.**

Pure Peruvian cacao paste (chocolate para taza) is the authentic move here, often found at Latin markets under the brand Sol del Cusco. If you are stuck with standard American grocery stores, substitute 1/2 cup of high-quality unsweetened cocoa powder and 1 ounce of bittersweet baking chocolate to restore the fat structure.



Almuerzo Turned Supper (The Heavy Hitters)

Translating the hearty, multi-course midday feast of Peru to the American 6:00 PM dinner table.

In Lima, the real damage is done at one o'clock in the afternoon. The almuerzo is a sprawling, unapologetic masterpiece of carb-on-carb brilliance—the kind of heavy, glorious meal that practically demands a nap. But reality in the States

dictates that the main event happens at six in the evening, sandwiched between a commute and sheer exhaustion. These are the heavy hitters of childhood memory, dragged kicking and screaming into the American workweek.

Here is the ají de gallina and the lomo saltado, the deeply stained seco and the uncompromising arroz con pollo. The timeline has been bent—a repurposed rotisserie chicken here, a faster braise there—but the soul of the thing remains entirely intact. These aren't compromises. They are vital survival tactics for keeping the old-school family table alive on a Wednesday night.





Lomo Saltado

Lomo saltado is a beautiful, violent collision of Chinese wok technique and the Peruvian larder. It is loud, fast, and intoxicating—the smell of soy sauce hitting screaming-hot metal in an Ohio suburb is an instant ticket back to Lima. For a weeknight, your secret weapons are patience with the sear, knowing the right substitute for elusive *ají amarillo*, and unapologetically using frozen French fries so you can focus your energy exactly where it belongs.

INGREDIENTS

16 oz	frozen thick-cut French fries	1 lb	top sirloin or flank steak <i>trimmed of excess fat and cut against the grain into 1/2-inch thick strips</i>
2 cup	cooked long-grain white rice	1 large	red onion <i>cut into thick 1/2-inch wedges</i>

2 med	Roma tomatoes <i>cored seeded and cut into thick wedges</i>	3 small	garlic <i>minced</i>
2 tbsp	vegetable or canola oil	1 clove	
3 tbsp	low-sodium soy sauce	1 tsp	fresh ginger <i>freshly grated</i>
2 tbsp	red wine vinegar	1/2 tsp	ground cumin
1 tbsp	oyster sauce	1/4 cup	beef broth
1 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	1/4 cup	fresh cilantro <i>roughly chopped</i>

PREPARATION

- **Mise en place is strictly non-negotiable for this dish.**

Once the oil hits the pan, you have exactly five minutes until dinner. Chop every vegetable, slice the beef, and mix the soy sauce, vinegar, oyster sauce, and beef broth in a small bowl before you even think about turning on the stove.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Start the carbohydrates.**

Get your rice warming and toss the frozen fries into the air fryer or oven so they finish exactly when the stir-fry does.

- 2. Sear the beef in small batches over screaming high heat.**

Season the steak lightly with salt, pepper, and cumin. Heat a heavy cast-iron skillet or wok until smoking, add half the oil, and lay in half the beef. Leave it completely alone for a minute to build a crust, toss for thirty seconds, then remove to a plate. Repeat. If you crowd the pan, the meat boils in its own juices and the magic dies.

- 3. Blister the vegetables.**

Add the remaining oil to the smoking pan and toss in the red onion wedges for exactly forty-five seconds so they char but keep their crunch. Add the garlic, ginger, and ají amarillo paste, stirring constantly for fifteen seconds until fragrant.

1. Deglaze and bring it all together.

Add the tomatoes, then immediately pour in the soy sauce mixture—it will hiss and bubble fiercely. Slide the beef and its resting juices back into the pan, tossing vigorously for thirty seconds until the sauce thickens slightly into a glaze, then kill the heat.

2. Fold in half the fries to soak up the juices.

Toss the chopped cilantro and exactly half of your hot, crispy fries directly into the wok, folding them gently so they absorb that glorious, tangy beef juice. Serve immediately with the rice and the remaining fries on the side for pure textural crunch.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The Ají Amarillo Hack.**

If you cannot find jarred or frozen ají amarillo at a local Latin market, blend half a yellow bell pepper, one serrano pepper, and a teaspoon of olive oil. It perfectly mimics the vibrant color, fruitiness, and clean heat of the authentic Peruvian chili.

● **The Tomato Rule.**

Do not skip removing the seeds and pulp from your Roma tomatoes. Their excess water will dilute your sauce and turn the wok into a soup instead of a properly tight, glossy saltado.



Tallarines Verdes con Bistec

tah-yah-REE-nes VEHR-des kohn bees-TEK

When 19th-century Ligurian sailors landed in Peru, they wanted pesto. Pine nuts and Parmesan were out of the question, so they adapted, swapping in local pecans, Andean queso fresco, and evaporated milk to make ends meet. The result isn't a cheap knockoff; it's an evolution. This is an unapologetically rich, earthy green sauce born of necessity, built on a caramelized sofrito base rather than raw garlic. Piled high alongside a fiercely seared, soy-marinated steak whose pan juices bleed right into the noodles, it's the ultimate working-class heavy hitter of the Peruvian weeknight.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	thin-sliced sirloin steak <i>cut into 4 equal portions</i>	1/2 med	red onion <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 tbsp	soy sauce	3 large	garlic cloves <i>smashed</i>
1 tbsp	red wine vinegar	1/3 cup	pecans <i>lightly toasted</i>
1 tsp	garlic paste	6 cup	fresh baby spinach <i>packed</i>
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	2 cup	fresh basil leaves <i>packed</i>
1 tsp	kosher salt	1/2 cup	evaporated milk
1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	5 oz	Mexican queso fresco <i>roughly crumbled</i>
1 tbsp	vegetable oil	1/4 cup	Parmesan cheese <i>grated, plus extra for serving</i>
1 lb	spaghetti		
2 tbsp	olive oil		

PREPARATION

- **Synchronize your workflow.**

Marinate the steak while the pasta water comes to a boil. Make the sauce while the pasta cooks. Sear the meat right at the end so everything hits the plate piping hot.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Marinate the steak.**

Place the beef on a plate and massage the soy sauce, red wine vinegar, garlic paste, cumin, salt, and black pepper into the meat. Let it sit at room temperature while you build the rest of the meal to guarantee a proper sear.

- 2. Boil the pasta and reserve the starchy water.**

Drop the spaghetti into a large pot of heavily salted boiling water and cook until al dente. Before draining, scoop out half a cup of the cooking water and set it aside—this starch is the secret to a glossy emulsion.

1. Caramelize the sofrito.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium. Cook the red onion and smashed garlic for 5 to 7 minutes until soft, translucent, and just beginning to brown at the edges. Don't skip this; blending raw alliums will ruin the sauce.

2. Wilt the greens in the residual heat.

Turn off the heat entirely and throw the spinach and basil directly into the hot pan. Toss them for about 60 seconds until they turn a vibrant, dark green. This eliminates their raw bitterness without the hassle of a separate blanching pot.

3. Blend the salsa verde.

Scrape the entire contents of the skillet—greens, onions, garlic, and oil—into a blender. Add the toasted pecans, evaporated milk, queso fresco, and Parmesan, blending on high until completely smooth and creamy.

4. Emulsify the pasta.

Pour the green sauce over the drained pasta in the empty pot over low heat. Add a splash of the reserved pasta water and toss vigorously with tongs until the sauce clings luxuriously to every strand.

5. Sear the steak and build the plate.

Wipe out the skillet, add the vegetable oil, and place it over medium-high heat until almost smoking. Sear the steaks for just 2 minutes per side to achieve a dark crust. Plate the steak alongside a generous mound of the green noodles, pouring any savory pan juices directly over the meat and pasta.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The saltine cracker trick.**

If your sauce looks a bit too watery after blending, drop in 2 or 3 standard saltine crackers and blend again. It's a classic grandmother's secret for perfect thickening.

● **The true Lima touch.**

If you have access to a Latin market, drop a tablespoon of jarred ají amarillo paste into the blender with the greens. It won't make it overtly spicy, but it adds an unmistakably warm Peruvian backbone.



Cau Cau de Pollo

kow-kow deh poy-yoh

There is a time and place for spending three hours scrubbing and boiling beef tripe, but a Tuesday night in an American suburb isn't it. This is the canonical, modern-day pivot—a vibrant, turmeric-stained chicken and potato stew that sacrifices none of the homeland's soul. Built on a patiently fried aderezo of red onion and ají amarillo, and unapologetically fragrant with fresh spearmint, this is exactly what a Peruvian kitchen smells like at one in the afternoon. It is fast, fiercely comforting, and tastes remarkably like home.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb	boneless skinless chicken breast <i>cut into bite-sized cubes</i>	4 med	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>
2 tbsp	vegetable oil	2 cup	low-sodium chicken broth
1 large	red onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/2 cup	carrots <i>finely diced</i>
3 med	garlic <i>minced to a paste</i>	1/2 cup	frozen green peas
3 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	1 bunch	fresh spearmint <i>divided into 3 whole sprigs and 2 tbsp finely chopped leaves</i>
1 tsp	ground turmeric	1 tsp	kosher salt
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	1/2 tsp	black pepper
1 tsp	dried oregano	4 cup	long-grain white rice <i>steamed</i>

PREPARATION

- **Source the ají amarillo.**

You won't find fresh Peruvian yellow chilies in most American supermarkets, but the jarred paste is ubiquitous in the Latin aisle and perfectly authentic for the diaspora kitchen.

- **Choose the right potato.**

Avoid russets at all costs. Starch management is key here; use Yukon Golds so they hold their cubic shape while naturally thickening the broth, rather than disintegrating into mush.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sear the chicken to build a savory foundation.**

Heat the vegetable oil in a heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat, season the chicken cubes with salt and pepper, and let them sit untouched in the pan for two minutes to develop a golden crust before removing them with a slotted spoon.

1. Take your time sweating the aderezo.

Lower the heat to medium-low, add the red onion to the remaining oil, and sauté for five to seven minutes until translucent while scraping up the browned chicken bits.

2. Fry the spices until the oil separates.

Stir in the garlic, cumin, turmeric, and ají amarillo paste, letting it fry gently for about five minutes until the mixture looks like a thick jam and the oil visibly pools at the edges.

3. Simmer the stew with the whole mint sprigs.

Return the chicken to the pot, crush the oregano between your palms, and add the potatoes, chicken broth, and the three whole mint sprigs, then cover and simmer on low for 12 to 15 minutes.

4. Add the vegetables at the very end.

Discard the wilted mint sprigs, stir in the diced carrots and frozen peas, and simmer uncovered for three more minutes so they stay bright and texturally distinct.

5. Finish with fresh mint off the heat.

Turn off the stove, adjust the seasoning to taste, and stir in the freshly chopped mint to release its sweet, volatile aromas right before ladling the stew over steamed white rice.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The weeknight pivot.**

While traditionalists might long for the tripe-based Cau Cau de Mondongo, this chicken variation is a widely celebrated adaptation in Lima today that respects your time without compromising the heritage flavor.



Seco de Carne

It smells like Sunday lunch at a grandmother's house in Lima—a hypnotic blend of simmering cilantro, smoky ají panca, and sweet red onions. Seco de carne is the ultimate Peruvian comfort food, unapologetically green and deeply rooted in history. We're keeping the traditional coastal soul of the stew but optimizing the timeline for a Tuesday night. The secret to making it taste exactly like the homeland? Respect the aderezo, and for god's sake, sear your meat properly.

INGREDIENTS

2 large bunches fresh cilantro
roughly chopped, stems and leaves included

1 handful fresh spinach
rinsed

1 1/2 cup beef broth
divided

2 lb beef chuck roast
cut into 1.5-inch cubes

2 tbsp	vegetable oil	1 tbsp	apple cider vinegar
1 large	red onion <i>very finely diced</i>	1 med	Yukon gold potato <i>peeled and cut into large chunks</i>
4 med cloves	garlic <i>minced to a paste</i>	2 med	carrots <i>peeled and sliced into thick coins</i>
2 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	3/4 cup	frozen green peas
1 tbsp	ají panca paste	2 tsp	kosher salt
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	1 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1 cup	Mexican-style lager		

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Blend the green gold.

In a blender, combine the cilantro, spinach, and 1/2 cup of the beef broth. Blend until it forms a completely smooth, vibrant green puree. Reserve exactly one tablespoon of this raw puree to stir in at the very end.

2. Sear for your survival.

Pat the beef cubes completely dry with paper towels and season generously with the salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Working in two batches so you don't crowd the pan, sear the beef until a dark, crusty brown forms on the sides. Do not skip this; boiling grey meat is a crime against your heritage. Remove the beef to a plate.

3. Respect the aderezo.

Lower the heat to medium-low. In the remaining beef fat, sweat the finely diced red onion, scraping up the browned bits from the beef, until it is completely translucent and sweet—about 8 to 10 minutes. Add the minced garlic, cumin, ají amarillo, and ají panca. Fry this paste continuously until the oil begins to separate from the solids.

1. Fry the green puree and deglaze.

Pour in the blended cilantro puree, remembering to keep that one tablespoon reserved, and fry in the aderezo for 3 minutes until it darkens slightly. Pour in the lager and apple cider vinegar, letting it bubble and reduce for 2 minutes to cook off the alcohol.

2. Take it low and slow.

Return the beef and any resting juices to the pot. Add the remaining 1 cup of beef broth. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to the lowest setting, cover tightly, and simmer for 1 hour and 15 minutes.

3. Add the final textures.

Once the meat is fork-tender, drop in the potatoes and carrots. Simmer uncovered for 15 minutes until the potatoes are soft and the sauce has thickened. Stir in the frozen peas during the last 3 minutes just to warm them through so they stay bright green.

4. Apply the grandma flourish.

Turn off the heat. Stir in that reserved tablespoon of raw cilantro puree to hit the kitchen with a fresh, green explosion of aroma right before serving. Taste for salt.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The Spinach Secret.**

Blending a handful of raw spinach into the cilantro doesn't change the flavor, but it chemically locks in the bright green chlorophyll so your stew doesn't oxidize into a muddy brown during the long braise.

● **The Chicha Hack.**

Traditional coastal recipes use chicha de jora, an indigenous fermented corn beer. Mixing a Mexican-style lager with a splash of apple cider vinegar perfectly mimics its specific malty, slightly sour profile for the American kitchen.

- **Pressure Cooker Adaptation.**

This adapts flawlessly to a weeknight Instant Pot. Use the Sauté function for the searing and aderezo. Once the liquid is added, cook on High Pressure for 35 minutes, quick release, and simmer the delicate vegetables in the residual heat.



Tallarines Rojos con Pollo

tah-yah-REE-nes RO-hos kon PO-yo

This is the ultimate Peruvian comfort food, born from Italian immigrants attempting a ragù in the Andes. The result isn't a substitute; it's a masterpiece. The grandmothers' secrets are practical and brilliant: ají panca for earthy depth, blended carrots for sweetness, and steeped dried mushrooms for a haunting, nostalgic aroma. In a modern American kitchen, dried porcini perfectly replicate the traditional Andean fungi, delivering a fierce, umami-heavy red sauce that demands to coat every single noodle.

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup dried porcini mushrooms **2 med** dried bay leaves

1/2 cup	boiling water	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1 lb	roma tomatoes <i>roughly chopped</i>	2 tbsp	vegetable oil
1 large	carrot <i>peeled and roughly chopped</i>	1 large	red onion <i>finely diced</i>
4 large	bone-in, skin-on chicken pieces	2 tbsp	tomato paste
3 tbsp	pasta de ají panca <i>divided</i>	1/2 tsp	dried oregano
4 tsp	garlic paste <i>divided</i>	1/4 tsp	ground cumin
1 tsp	kosher salt	1 cup	chicken broth
		1 lb	spaghetti
		1/4 cup	parmesan cheese <i>grated, for serving</i>

PREPARATION

- **Steep the mushrooms.**

Place the dried porcini mushrooms and bay leaves in a small bowl, pour in the boiling water, and steep for 15 minutes.

- **Chop and strain.**

Fish out the softened mushrooms and chop them finely, reserving the dark soaking liquid but leaving the gritty last teaspoon behind.

- **Blend the vegetable base.**

Combine the tomatoes and carrot in a blender, pureeing until completely smooth to bypass hours of slow simmering.

- **Season the chicken.**

Coat the chicken pieces generously with the salt, pepper, 1 tablespoon of the ají panca paste, and 1 teaspoon of the garlic paste.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Sear the chicken fiercely.**

Heat the vegetable oil in a large, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Place the chicken skin-side down and sear until deeply golden and crusty, about 5 to 7 minutes per side, then remove to a plate and leave the precious fat and browned bits in the pot.

2. **Build the aderezo.**

Lower the heat to medium, drop the diced red onion into the rendered chicken fat, and sauté slowly until translucent. Scrape up the fond as you go, then stir in the remaining 2 tablespoons of ají panca, the remaining garlic paste, and the cumin, cooking for 2 minutes until the oil turns a deep, brick red.

3. **Caramelize and simmer.**

Stir the tomato paste into the onions for a minute before pouring in the blended tomato-carrot puree. Toss in the chopped mushrooms, bay leaves, the reserved mushroom soaking liquid, and the dried oregano, rubbing it between your palms to release its oils.

4. **Braise the chicken.**

Nestle the seared chicken and any accumulated juices back into the pot, pour in the chicken broth, and bring to a gentle boil. Lower the heat, cover, and simmer for 30 to 35 minutes until the meat is meltingly tender and the sauce has reduced to a rich, dark stew.

5. **Coat the pasta.**

While the sauce reduces, boil the spaghetti in heavily salted water just until al dente. Drain the pasta, pull the chicken out of the sauce, and dump the noodles directly into the pot, tossing vigorously until every strand is heavily stained red.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Balance the acidity.**

If your fresh tomatoes lean too acidic after simmering, a traditional grandmother's trick is to stir in a tiny pinch of sugar or a splash of evaporated milk at the very end to round out the harsh notes.



Arroz con Pollo

To understand true Peruvian home cooking, you follow the smell. It is the intoxicating aroma of cilantro, garlic, and bright aji amarillo sizzling in hot chicken fat, chased by the malty hiss of dark beer hitting a heavy pot. This is no watered-down, tourist-friendly plate; it is an unapologetic, one-pot masterpiece passed down by grandmothers who knew exactly how to coax maximum flavor out of a weeknight. The secret to that staggering emerald green color without the grassy bitterness is a simple handful of spinach. It is a deeply nostalgic, intensely savory heavy-hitter that tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1 large fresh cilantro
leaves and tender stems only

1 cup fresh baby spinach
packed

1/2 cup	chicken broth	4 large	garlic cloves <i>minced</i>
2 lb	bone-in skin-on chicken thighs and drumsticks <i>patted dry</i>	3 tbsp	ají amarillo paste
1 tsp	kosher salt	1/2 cup	dark beer
1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	2 cup	long-grain white rice <i>rinsed well and drained</i>
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	2 1/2 cup	chicken broth
2 tbsp	neutral cooking oil	1 cup	frozen mixed vegetables <i>peas, carrots, and corn</i>
1 large	red onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/2 med	red bell pepper <i>sliced into thin strips</i>

PREPARATION

- **The green base can be blended up to three days in advance.**

Store it in a tightly sealed jar in the fridge to drastically cut down on weeknight prep time.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Blend the cilantro, spinach, and a half-cup of chicken broth until completely smooth and violently green.**

Set this aside; the spinach is the trick to locking in that unapologetic emerald color without making the dish taste bitter.

- 2. Season the chicken aggressively with salt, pepper, and cumin, then sear skin-side down in hot oil until golden brown.**

Use a heavy Dutch oven over medium-high heat. You aren't cooking the bird through here—you're just rendering out the fat to create the savory foundation for the rice. Once crispy, move the chicken to a plate and leave the fat in the pot.

- 3. Sweat the diced red onion in the rendered chicken fat, scraping up the browned bits from the bottom of the pot.**

Cook over medium heat until the onions are soft and translucent, about five minutes.

- 1. Stir in the minced garlic and ají amarillo paste, frying the mixture until deeply fragrant.**

Don't just warm it up; let the chili paste actually fry in the oil for two to three minutes so it mellows its raw bite and releases its essential oils.

- 2. Pour the blended green base into the pot and simmer until it darkens slightly.**

Cooking the puree for three to five minutes kills the raw, grassy flavor of the herbs.

- 3. Deglaze the pan with the dark beer.**

Let the alcohol cook off for about two minutes. The malty hiss hitting the pan mimics the historical use of fermented Andean chicha de jora.

- 4. Return the chicken to the pot, add the remaining two and a half cups of broth, and simmer for fifteen minutes.**

Bring it to a gentle boil, cover, and reduce the heat to medium-low. Once the chicken is mostly cooked, carefully remove it to a plate once more.

- 5. Stir the rinsed white rice and frozen vegetables into the boiling green broth.**

Taste the liquid—it should taste slightly saltier than you think it needs to be, as the rice will absorb a lot of it. Gently lay the red bell pepper strips on top of the liquid.

- 6. Lower the heat to a bare whisper, nestle the chicken back on top, and cover tightly to steam.**

Cook undisturbed for twenty to twenty-five minutes until the rice is tender and has absorbed all the liquid. Let it rest off the heat for five minutes before fluffing and serving.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Never substitute the ají amarillo paste for generic chili powder or jalapeños.**

Its distinct fruity heat is the absolute soul of this dish, and jars of it are easily found in the international aisle of most standard supermarkets.

- **Serve with a side of Salsa Criolla.**

A quick relish of pickled red onions, cilantro, and lime juice cuts through the savory richness of the rice perfectly.



Bistec a lo Pobre

bees-TEK ah lo POH-breH

They call it "poor man's steak," an ironic joke for a mountain of protein and carbohydrates that was historically a lavish indulgence. Today, it is a beloved Peruvian supper and a masterclass in unapologetic comfort. The grandmother's secret isn't in expensive cuts, but in a sharp garlic-vinegar paste that tenderizes the beef, snipping the edges of the steak so it sears perfectly flat, and a crown of runny egg yolk that coats every grain of toasted garlic rice. It is the genuine taste of a Lima home kitchen, adapted to the reality of an American weeknight.

INGREDIENTS

4 small sirloin or ribeye steaks
pounded to 1/2-inch thickness

3 cloves	garlic <i>crushed into a paste with a pinch of salt</i>	1 1/2 cup	water
1 tbsp	white vinegar	1 tsp	kosher salt
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	2 large	sweet plantains <i>peeled and sliced in half lengthwise</i>
1/2 tsp	black pepper	1 1/2 lb	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled and cut into thick fries</i>
1 tbsp	vegetable oil	1 cup	neutral cooking oil
2 cloves	garlic <i>finely minced</i>	4 large	eggs
1 1/2 cup	long-grain white rice <i>rinsed until water runs completely clear and drained well</i>	to taste	kosher salt

PREPARATION

- **Pound the steaks thin.**

If you bought standard thickness steaks instead of thin-cut, place them between plastic wrap and pound them to a half-inch thickness before marinating.

- **Rinse the rice aggressively.**

Wash the long-grain rice in a fine-mesh strainer under cold water until it runs perfectly clear. This removes surface starch and is mandatory for achieving the distinct, separate grains of authentic arroz graneado.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Toast the garlic and rice for the arroz graneado.**

Heat one tablespoon of vegetable oil in a pot over medium heat. Gently fry the minced garlic until fragrant, taking care not to let it brown. Stir in the washed rice, toasting it in the garlic oil until the grains turn slightly translucent and sizzle. Add the water and one teaspoon of salt, bring to a boil, then cover the pot and drop the heat to the absolute minimum for twenty to twenty-five minutes.

1. Massage the aderezo into the beef.

While the rice cooks, mix the crushed garlic paste, white vinegar, cumin, and black pepper. Rub this paste thoroughly into the thin steaks and leave them at room temperature. Do not salt the meat yet, as salt will draw out the moisture before it hits the pan.

2. Snip the edges of the steaks to prevent curling.

Using kitchen shears or a sharp knife, make quarter-inch cuts about every two inches around the perimeter of each steak. This traditional trick ensures the thin meat stays perfectly flat in the hot skillet, allowing it to develop an even, hard crust instead of doming up.

3. Fry the potatoes and plantains, holding them in a warm oven.

Heat the neutral oil in a heavy skillet. Fry the thick-cut potatoes until golden and crisp, then transfer them to a wire rack in a 200°F oven. Over medium-low heat, fry the plantain slices in the same oil until their natural sugars caramelize to a deep brown on both sides. Transfer them to the oven to stay hot.

4. Sear the steaks and fry the eggs sunny-side up.

Wipe out the skillet, crank the heat to high, and add a fresh slick of oil. Generously salt the steaks right before dropping them in, searing for two to three minutes per side until deeply crusted. Simultaneously, in a separate non-stick pan, fry the eggs so the whites are firmly set but the yolks remain entirely liquid.

5. Assemble the plate so the egg yolk sauces the dish.

Fluff the rice with a fork and plate a generous mound alongside the fries and caramelized plantains. Place the hot steak in the center and crown it directly with the fried egg, allowing the liquid yolk to break and dress the meat and rice.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Plan ahead for the plantains.**

To achieve the essential sweet contrast, the plantains must be incredibly ripe. Buy them well in advance and let them sit on the counter until the skins are almost entirely black.

- **Use the right potatoes.**

Yukon Golds are the closest American supermarket equivalent to the Peruvian papa amarilla, offering the required buttery interior and crisp exterior when fried.



La Pollada del Fin de Semana (The Weekend Gatherings)

A guide to the iconic Peruvian backyard gathering. Focused on community, charcoal, and celebration.

Smoke is the universal signal for a good time, but in a Peruvian backyard, it means something specific. A pollada isn't just a cookout; it's a fiercely communal act—a mechanism of neighborhood diplomacy cooked over hot coals. You follow the scent of cumin, ají panca, and char drifting over the fences. This is the food of the people, happening away from the white-tablecloth joints of Lima, out in the open air, fueled by cold beer and loud music.

The menu doesn't need to be complicated, but it has to be right. Chickens marinated until the skin hums with flavor, skewers of beef heart snapping on the grill, and a chaotic, beautiful spread of cremas applied with total disregard for moderation. These are the unpretentious backyard bangers that turn an ordinary Saturday afternoon into a sacred institution.





La Auténtica Pollada Peruana

lah ow-ten-tee-kah po-yah-dah peh-roo-ah-nah

If you grew up in a Peruvian household, you know the smell of a pollada. It's the scent of loud music, crowded backyards, and survival. Born out of economic crisis in 1980s Lima, these weekend gatherings were how neighborhoods kept each other afloat, trading prepaid tickets for unforgettable plates of aggressively marinated chicken, boiled potatoes, and fiery rocoto sauce. To pull this off in an American kitchen, you don't need obscure equipment—just the discipline of time. The unapologetic blend of smoky aji panca, soy sauce, and dark beer does the heavy lifting while you sleep, yielding a crust that is dark, savory, and exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

4 large	bone-in skin-on chicken leg quarters	1 large	carrot <i>peeled and grated</i>
1/4 cup	aji panca paste	2 large	limes <i>juiced</i>
2 tbsp	soy sauce	1 tbsp	olive oil
2 tbsp	red wine vinegar	4 med	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>boiled and peeled</i>
1/4 cup	dark beer	2 med	rocoto peppers <i>halved, seeds and white veins completely scraped out and discarded</i>
2 tbsp	fresh garlic <i>finely minced or grated into a paste</i>	1 med	garlic clove <i>smashed</i>
1 tsp	ground cumin	1/4 med	red onion <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 tsp	dried oregano	2 tbsp	vegetable oil
1/2 tsp	black pepper	1/4 cup	evaporated milk
1 tsp	salt	5 small	saltine crackers
1/2 tsp	MSG <i>optional</i>	1 tsp	huacatay paste
1/4 cup	vegetable oil		
1/4 med	green cabbage <i>very finely shredded</i>		

PREPARATION

- **Plan for an overnight rest.**

The secret to the depth of flavor in a pollada is time; prep the chicken and submerge it in the marinade on Sunday night so it is ready to fry by Monday evening.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Slash and pierce the chicken.**

Using a sharp knife, make deep slashes right down to the bone, then aggressively pierce the skin and meat all over with a fork so the marinade can penetrate the thick American cuts.

2. **Mix the dark marinade.**

In a large bowl, whisk the ají panca, soy sauce, red wine vinegar, dark beer, grated garlic, cumin, oregano, black pepper, salt, and MSG into a fragrant slurry.

3. **Massage and wait.**

Add the chicken to the bowl, working the marinade deep into the slashes and under the skin, then cover tightly and refrigerate for a minimum of four hours, but ideally overnight.

4. **Prepare the creamy rocoto sauce.**

Boil the cleaned rocoto halves for 5 to 8 minutes in a small pot of heavily salted water to tame the aggressive heat, then drain and lightly sauté with the chopped onion and smashed garlic clove. Transfer to a blender and blend completely smooth with the evaporated milk, huacatay, 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil, a pinch of salt, and crackers.

5. **Fry the chicken.**

Let the chicken rest at room temperature for 15 minutes while heating 1/4 cup of vegetable oil in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Fry skin-side down undisturbed for 6 to 8 minutes until a dark mahogany crust forms, then flip, cover, and cook for another 10 to 15 minutes until the juices run clear.

6. **Toss the salad and serve.**

Toss the shredded cabbage and carrots with the lime juice, olive oil, and a pinch of salt. Serve the hot chicken immediately alongside the boiled potatoes and the acidic salad, generously drenched in the crema de rocoto.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The air-fryer alternative.**

To avoid splattering oil on a Tuesday night, arrange the marinated quarters skin-side up in an air fryer at 375°F for 25 to 30 minutes until crispy and cooked through.

- **Do not substitute the chilies.**

Ají panca and rocoto have no direct Mexican equivalents; seek out the jarred pastes or frozen peppers in the Goya aisle or at a local Latin market for the true, uncompromising flavor.



Pollo a la Brasa "Al Toque"

Forget the sanitized food blogs. Real Peruvian rotisserie chicken doesn't hide from MSG—it embraces it, along with dark beer and a fiercely hot oven, to create that unforgettable, deeply savory mahogany skin. For the working parent who doesn't have a commercial rotombo spit in the backyard, spatchcocking the bird levels the playing field, cutting the roasting time in half without sacrificing the soul of the dish. Serve it with a double batch of the authentic, sofrito-based green sauce, thick-cut fries, and a cold beer.

INGREDIENTS

4 lb	whole chicken <i>spatchcocked (backbone removed)</i>	3 tbsp	soy sauce
2 tbsp	ají panca paste	1/4 cup	dark beer

1 tbsp	white vinegar	1/2 med	red onion <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 tbsp	garlic paste	3 med	garlic cloves <i>smashed</i>
1 tsp	ground cumin	3 tbsp	ají amarillo paste
1 tsp	dried oregano	1/4 cup	evaporated milk
1/2 tsp	dried rosemary <i>crushed</i>	3 med	soda crackers
1 tsp	black pepper	1 tbsp	huacatay paste
1 tsp	MSG	1/4 cup	mayonnaise
1 tbsp	kosher salt	1 tsp	yellow mustard
1/4 tsp	Chinese 5-spice	1/2 tsp	dried oregano
1 tbsp	vegetable oil	1/2 tsp	kosher salt

PREPARATION

- **Dry the chicken aggressively.**

Pat the spatchcocked bird completely dry with paper towels, as moisture is the enemy of crispy, blistered skin.

- **Mix the aderezo.**

In a bowl, whisk together the ají panca, soy sauce, dark beer, vinegar, garlic paste, cumin, 1 teaspoon oregano, rosemary, black pepper, MSG, 1 tablespoon kosher salt, and Chinese 5-spice.

- **Massage the marinade deeply.**

Loosen the skin over the breasts and thighs with your fingers, rubbing the marinade directly onto the meat before coating the entire outside of the bird.

- **Marinate the bird.**

Place the coated chicken in a zip-top bag or covered dish in the fridge for at least 30 minutes, or ideally overnight if time allows.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Preheat the oven and assemble the roasting rig.**

Heat the oven to 425°F and line a rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil for easy cleanup, setting a wire roasting rack directly on top.

2. **Roast the chicken high and fast.**

Place the spatchcocked chicken on the rack, skin-side up with the wing tips tucked under, and roast for 40 to 45 minutes until the thigh registers 165°F.

3. **Give it the pollería finish.**

If the skin hasn't achieved that deep, blistered mahogany color, switch the oven to broil for the final 2 to 3 minutes, watching it like a hawk to prevent burning.

4. **Sauté the green sauce aromatics.**

While the chicken cooks, heat the vegetable oil in a skillet over medium-high heat and sauté the red onion, smashed garlic, and ají amarillo paste for 4 to 5 minutes until softened and slightly charred at the edges.

5. **Emulsify the ají de pollería.**

Transfer the slightly cooled onion mixture to a blender along with the evaporated milk, soda crackers, huacatay paste, mayonnaise, yellow mustard, 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano, and 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, blending on high until silky and pale green.

6. **Rest the chicken before carving.**

Pull the bird from the oven and let it rest on the rack for 10 minutes so the juices can redistribute before you hack it apart and serve it with the green sauce.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **MSG is entirely non-negotiable.**

Forget the outdated American stigma; Ajinomoto is the heart of Peruvian restaurant cooking and the sole reason you can achieve that addictive, savory bite at home.

- **Spatchcocking is the ultimate weeknight equalizer.**

Removing the backbone lets the bird lay flat, exposing all the skin to high ambient heat. This mimics the rotation of a commercial spit and guarantees juicy meat in half the usual roasting time.

- **Do not skip the sofrito for the sauce.**

Sautéing the red onion and ají amarillo before blending mellows their raw bite, creating the rich, savory sweetness that separates an authentic Peruvian green sauce from a cheap jalapeño dip.



Anticuchos de Corazón

an-tee-koo-chos de co-ra-son

Originating centuries ago when Afro-Peruvian cooks transformed discarded beef hearts with a bath of smoky chili, garlic, and vinegar, anticuchos are the undisputed king of Peruvian street food. It is a masterclass in making something beautiful out of necessity. For a first-generation kid growing up in the States, eating beef heart might have seemed wild to your school friends, but you knew the truth: when cleaned properly and kissed by the fire of a charcoal grill, it eats like the most tender filet mignon imaginable.

INGREDIENTS

2 lb	beef heart <i>cleaned of all fat, veins, and silverskin, cut into 1.5-inch cubes</i>	3 med	green corn husks <i>tied together at the top to form a brush</i>
1/2 cup	ají panca paste	3 large	russet potatoes <i>boiled in their skins until tender, peeled, and cut into thick rounds</i>
1/2 cup	red wine vinegar	2 large	choclo <i>boiled and cut into thick rounds</i>
3/4 cup	vegetable oil <i>divided</i>	2 med	red jalapeños <i>seeds and veins removed</i>
1 tbsp	garlic paste	1/2 med	red onion <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 tbsp	ground cumin	1 small	garlic
1 tbsp	dried oregano	clove	
1 tsp	black pepper	1 tbsp	white vinegar
2 1/2 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>	1/4 cup	scallions <i>finely chopped</i>
2 tbsp	dark beer		

PREPARATION

- **Clean and butcher the beef heart.**

Lay the heart flat, butterfly it open, and surgically remove all hard white fat, thick veins, and shiny silverskin until only pure, lean muscle remains, then cut it into one-and-a-half-inch cubes.

- **Fashion the authentic basting brush.**

Real anticucheras don't use silicone brushes; tie three or four green husks from an ear of corn together at the top to form a makeshift brush that will impart a whisper of toasted corn aroma to the meat.

- **Soak the wooden skewers.**

Submerge twelve to fourteen wooden or bamboo skewers in water for at least thirty minutes prior to grilling to prevent them from incinerating over the coals.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Crush the toasted oregano.**

In a dry skillet, lightly toast the dried oregano for 30 seconds until fragrant, then dump it into your palms and rub them together over a large bowl to crush the herb into a fine powder.

2. **Mix the adobo marinade.**

To the bowl with the oregano, add the aji panca paste, red wine vinegar, one-quarter cup of vegetable oil, garlic paste, cumin, black pepper, one and a half teaspoons of salt, and dark beer, whisking until you have a smooth, dark red sauce.

3. **Reserve the basting liquid.**

Scoop out three generous tablespoons of this marinade and mix it in a separate small bowl with another quarter cup of oil; this is your basting liquid for the grill.

4. **Marinate the beef heart overnight.**

Drop the cubed meat into the large bowl with the remaining marinade, massaging it with your hands so every piece is coated, then cover tightly and refrigerate overnight to let the vinegar break down the tough muscle fibers.

5. **Skewer the meat.**

Pull the meat from the fridge 30 minutes before grilling, and thread three to four pieces onto each soaked wooden skewer, leaving a tiny bit of breathing room between the cubes so the fire can lick the edges.

6. **Fire up the grill.**

Prepare your grill for high, direct heat, ideally using charcoal to capture that true street-cart flavor.

7. **Grill and baste with the corn-husk brush.**

Lay the skewers on the hottest part of the grill, immediately dipping your makeshift corn-husk brush into the reserved basting liquid and aggressively slapping the meat to lubricate the lean muscle.

1. Sear quickly and flip.

Grill for exactly two to three minutes on the first side until a dark char forms, then flip, baste heavily one more time, and cook for another two minutes until medium-rare.

2. Char the potatoes.

Toss the boiled potato slices onto the grates for a minute or two to absorb the dripping meat juices and build a smoky crust.

3. Blend the ají carretillero.

Sauté the jalapeños, red onion, and whole garlic clove in a splash of oil until softened, then blend with the white vinegar, a pinch of salt, and a quarter cup of oil until emulsified, folding in the scallions by hand at the end.

4. Serve blazing hot.

Serve the skewers straight from the fire, laid over the grilled potatoes and a side of boiled corn, with the spicy sauce for dipping.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The weeknight butcher's pivot.**

Yes, beef heart is incredible, but if you're intimidated or just can't find it, buy a flat iron steak or sirloin tip; they share a similar dense grain and the marinade works the exact same magic.

● **Sourcing ají panca.**

You can find jarred ají panca paste in the international aisle of most supermarkets, but blending two rehydrated dried Mexican ancho chiles with a splash of water and a pinch of smoked paprika is an excellent substitute.



El Trío de Cremas

el tree-oh deh kreh-mahs

When the weekend hits and the smell of fried chicken fills the house, these three sauces are the undisputed kings of the table. In the backyards of Lima and the homes of first-generation Americans alike, a pollada without its creams is just a plate of dry bird. Forget the mayonnaise-heavy, jalapeño-laden sauces you see on trendy blogs. These are the real, unvarnished recipes—a holy trinity of Ají Amarillo, Rocoto, and Huacatay smoothed out with evaporated milk, saltines, and fresh cheese. The secret isn't magic; it's a quick sauté of the aromatics to kill the raw bite, and a steady hand with the blender.

INGREDIENTS

3/4 cup	vegetable oil <i>divided</i>	3/4 cup	evaporated milk <i>divided</i>
1 small	red onion <i>roughly chopped and divided</i>	1 cup	Mexican queso fresco <i>crumbled and divided</i>
4 med clove	garlic <i>peeled, smashed, and divided</i>	10 med	saltine crackers <i>divided</i>
1/3 cup	jarred aji amarillo paste <i>plus 1 tbsp</i>	1 tsp	standard yellow mustard
2 tbsp	jarred rocoto paste	1/2 tsp	dried oregano
2 tbsp	jarred huacatay paste <i>plus 1 tsp</i>	1 pinch	salt <i>to taste</i>

PREPARATION

- **Make them ahead of time.**

These sauces hold up beautifully in the fridge and actually taste better the next day; blend them up to five days before your pollada and store them in airtight glass jars.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the sofrito base for the yellow sauce.**

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a small skillet over medium heat, tossing in half the chopped onion and two smashed garlic cloves to cook for 5 to 7 minutes until the harsh raw bite cooks out, then remove from heat and let it cool completely.

- 2. Emulsify the Ají de Pollería.**

Transfer the cooled sofrito to a blender along with 1/3 cup of the ají amarillo paste, 1/4 cup of evaporated milk, 5 saltines, the mustard, oregano, and 1 teaspoon of the huacatay paste, blending on high until perfectly smooth before streaming in 1/4 cup of oil until it thickens like mayonnaise.

1. Sauté the base for the red sauce.

In that same skillet, heat another tablespoon of oil and cook the remaining onion and one smashed clove of garlic for 3 to 4 minutes until soft, removing from heat to cool completely.

2. Emulsify the Crema de Rocoto.

Toss the cooled aromatics into a clean blender with the rocoto paste, 1/2 cup of crumbled queso fresco, and 1/4 cup of evaporated milk, blending until smooth and finishing with a slow stream of 2 tablespoons of oil to tighten the emulsion.

3. Blend the raw base for the green sauce.

For the Ají de Huacatay, skip the skillet entirely to keep the sharp bite of raw garlic; add the remaining 2 tablespoons of huacatay paste, 1 tablespoon of ají amarillo paste, the last 1/2 cup of queso fresco, one raw garlic clove, 4 saltines, and 1/4 cup of evaporated milk to a clean blender.

4. Emulsify the Ají de Huacatay.

Blast the mixture on high until it becomes a bright, speckled green paste, then keep the motor running while slowly streaming in the final 1/4 cup of oil, seasoning with salt to taste.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Respect the blender emulsion.**

The most common failure point is a watery sauce, so always let your sautéed aromatics cool before blending—hot oil will break a dairy emulsion in seconds.

● **Sourcing your heat.**

Don't kill yourself looking for fresh Andean peppers; jarred pastes from the international aisle or frozen whole peppers from a local Latin market are exactly what diaspora grandmas use.



Papas Doradas y Choclo Anticuchero

pah-pahs doh-rah-dahs ee choh-kloh ahn-tee-koo-cheh-roh

In Peru, a weekend pollada is an event of smoke, loud music, and blistered meat hitting hot coals. While the skewered hearts or chicken get the glory, the true unsung heroes are the sides designed to sponge up all that earthy, garlic-heavy ají panca magic. The secret is knowing how to treat them: boiling the dense Yukon Golds before searing them in the meat's residual fat, and coaxing the giant starchy choclo to life with a grandmother's trick of anise, sugar, and a squeeze of lemon. It's the definitive taste of a Lima weekend, perfectly adapted for a Tuesday night in Ohio.

INGREDIENTS

2 large	frozen Peruvian choclo ears	1 tbsp	unsalted butter
1 tbsp	white sugar	4 tbsp	ají panca paste
1 tbsp	anise seeds	1 1/2 tbsp	red wine vinegar
1/2 med	lemon <i>juiced</i>	1 tbsp	garlic paste
1 tbsp	kosher salt	1 tsp	ground cumin
1 1/2 lb	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>scrubbed clean and left unpeeled</i>	1 tsp	dried oregano <i>rubbed between palms to release oils</i>
4 tbsp	neutral oil <i>divided</i>	1 tsp	soy sauce
		1/2 tsp	black pepper

PREPARATION

- **Protect your equipment.**

Ají panca is notoriously vibrant and will permanently stain plastic. Use glass or metal mixing bowls when preparing your marinade.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix the salsa anticuchera.**

Whisk together the ají panca paste, red wine vinegar, 2 tablespoons of the neutral oil, garlic paste, cumin, oregano, soy sauce, and black pepper. Let it sit on the counter while you prep the rest so the vinegar can tame the raw garlic.

- 2. Boil the potatoes until tender.**

Drop the whole, unpeeled Yukon Gold potatoes into a pot of salted boiling water. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes until easily pierced with a fork but not falling apart, then drain, let cool slightly, and cut into thick wedges.

1. Boil the choclo with anise, sugar, and citrus.

In a separate pot of boiling water, add the sugar, anise seeds, lemon juice, and the kosher salt. Drop in the frozen choclo and boil for 10 to 15 minutes until tender. The lemon keeps the kernels bright white, while the anise and sugar coax out the corn's subtle natural flavor. Drain and cut into 2-inch thick rounds.

2. Baste and char the choclo.

Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Generously brush the boiled choclo rounds with the salsa anticuchera, place them in the hot pan, and sear for 2 to 3 minutes per side until the marinade caramelizes and the edges blister.

3. Sear the potatoes in the residual marinade.

Remove the corn to a platter and leave the leftover ají panca drippings in the skillet. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons of neutral oil and the butter, then lay the potato wedges down in a single layer. Let them sit undisturbed for 3 to 4 minutes to develop a serious golden crust before flipping to brown the other side.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing the staples.**

Don't bother trying to rehydrate dried chilies on a weeknight. Jarred pasta de ají panca and frozen choclo are staples at local Latin markets and perfectly replicate the authentic flavor profile.

● **The meat drippings shortcut.**

If you are serving these alongside grilled chicken or beef skewers, cook the meat first and sear your potatoes directly in the pan drippings for an unparalleled savory depth.



Chaufa Parrillero

There is a distinct, intoxicating smell to a Peruvian weekend pollada—fat hitting coals, smoke hanging heavy in the backyard air. Chaufa parrillero is the Tuesday-night, indoor answer to that craving, marrying the intense, high-heat stir-fry of the traditional chifa wok with the deeply rendered, smoky pork fat of the Latin barbecue. It is unpretentious, incredibly fast, and relies entirely on one uncompromising rule: you must use yesterday's cold rice to ensure every grain fries up distinct, charred, and unapologetically savory.

INGREDIENTS

- | | | | |
|--------------|---|---------------|--|
| 4 cup | long-grain white rice
<i>cooked the day before, refrigerated, and broken up with wet fingers</i> | 2 tbsp | neutral cooking oil |
| | | 3 | large eggs
<i>lightly beaten with a pinch of salt</i> |

3	thick-cut bacon <i>chopped</i>	1 bunch	scallions <i>thinly sliced, white and green parts separated</i>
2	Latin-style chorizo <i>sliced into half-moons</i>	1/2 med	red bell pepper <i>finely diced</i>
1/2 lb	boneless skinless chicken thighs <i>cut into small bite-sized cubes</i>	3 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	fresh ginger <i>peeled and finely grated</i>	1 tbsp	oyster sauce
1 tbsp	garlic <i>minced</i>	1/2 tsp	Chinese five-spice powder
		1/2 tsp	sugar
		1 tsp	toasted sesame oil

PREPARATION

- **Cook your rice a day in advance.**

Fresh, warm rice will turn into a sticky mush the second it hits the pan. The starches need a night in the fridge to firm up and separate.

- **Prep your station entirely before you begin cooking.**

Chaufa moves lightning-fast once the heat is on, and leaving the stove to chop an ingredient will result in burnt garlic or soggy rice.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the sauces and spices together in a small bowl.**

Combine the soy sauce, oyster sauce, five-spice powder, and sugar so the mixture is ready to pour when the pan is screaming hot.

- 2. Fry the beaten eggs into a thin omelet.**

Heat a large cast-iron skillet or flat-bottomed wok over medium-high heat with half of the neutral oil, pour in the eggs, swirl to coat the pan, and flip once the bottom is set. Remove the omelet to a board, chop it into small squares, and set aside.

- 1. Render the bacon and chorizo until crispy and deeply browned.**
Return the skillet to medium-high heat, drop in the meats, and let them sizzle for 3 to 4 minutes. Remove the meats with a slotted spoon, leaving the smoky, rendered fat in the pan.
- 2. Sear the cubed chicken in the rendered pork fat.**
Turn the heat to high, drop the chicken in a single layer, and let it sear untouched for 2 minutes to build a crust before tossing to cook through. Remove and set aside with the chorizo.
- 3. Fry the ginger, garlic, bell pepper, and the white parts of the scallions.**
Drop the aromatics into the hot fat, adding the remaining neutral oil if the pan looks dry, and stir constantly for 30 to 45 seconds until wildly fragrant, taking care not to burn the garlic.
- 4. Add the cold rice and press it flat against the hot pan to toast.**
Toss the rice in the aromatic oil, then let it sit for 30 seconds to slightly char before tossing again, repeating this process for about 3 minutes until heated through.
- 5. Return the meats and eggs to the pan, then pour the sauce around the hot edges.**
Pouring the sauce on the hot rim of the pan sears the soy sauce, mimicking the signature breath of the wok. Toss everything vigorously until the rice is uniformly dark.
- 6. Remove from the heat, drizzle with sesame oil, and fold in the dark green scallion tops.**
The residual heat will wilt the scallions perfectly while keeping their fresh crunch; serve immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Seek out coarse Latin-style chorizo.**
Look for Argentine, Uruguayan, or Colombian sausage at a local market; if unavailable, a mild, sweet Italian pork sausage is the best standard supermarket substitute.

- **Do not overcrowd the pan.**

Standard American stoves lack the heat output of a Lima street cart, so using a wide, heavy flat-bottomed skillet instead of a round wok is crucial to maintain heat and achieve a proper sear.



Ensalada Fresca de Pollería

en-sah-lah-dah fres-kah deh poh-yeh-ree-ah

For years, food blogs have tried to sell the lie that Peruvian rotisserie chicken is served with a green cilantro dressing on the salad. It isn't. The true pollería salad is dressed with a pale, aggressively tangy vinagreta—a brilliant emulsion of mustard, vinegar, dried oregano, and one crucial local secret: a physical chunk of fresh cucumber blended right into the mix. It provides a hydrating freshness that cuts perfectly through the heavy chicken and fries. To make this work on a standard Tuesday night, skip the hour-long process of boiling raw beets and grab a pack of vacuum-sealed ones from the produce aisle.

INGREDIENTS

1 large	egg <i>room temperature</i>	3/4 cup	neutral oil
1 small	fresh cucumber <i>peeled and seeds removed</i>	1 head	Iceberg lettuce <i>washed, completely dried, and chopped into bite-sized pieces</i>
1 small clove	garlic <i>smashed</i>	2 med	Roma tomatoes <i>sliced into thin rounds</i>
1 tbsp	yellow mustard	1/2 med	English cucumber <i>thinly sliced into rounds</i>
3 tbsp	distilled white vinegar	1 med	carrot <i>peeled and grated</i>
1 tbsp	lime juice	8 oz	pre-cooked beets <i>sliced into thin rounds</i>
1 1/2 tsp	dried oregano	1 large	Hass avocado <i>peeled, pitted, and sliced into wedges</i>
1/2 tsp	kosher salt		
1/4 tsp	black pepper		

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pulverize the base ingredients for the vinagreta.

In a standard blender or a tall cup with an immersion blender, combine the egg, the fresh cucumber chunk, garlic, mustard, white vinegar, lime juice, dried oregano, salt, and pepper. Blend on medium speed for about 10 seconds until the cucumber is completely obliterated and the mixture is frothy.

2. Slowly emulsify the oil into the dressing.

Keep simple things simple: the only secret to mayonnaise is patience during the pour. With the blender running on medium-low, pour the neutral oil in a very slow, hair-thin stream. The sound of the blender will deepen as the liquid thickens into a beautiful, pale, creamy emulsion speckled with green oregano. Taste and adjust salt if necessary.

1. Build the salad on a wide serving platter.

The hallmark of a pollería salad is a rustic, layered presentation. Arrange the completely dry chopped lettuce on a wide platter. Scatter the grated carrots evenly over the greens, then layer the tomato, cucumber, and beet slices around the platter. Gently crown the entire thing with the avocado wedges.

2. Dress the salad at the exact moment you sit down to eat.

Do not pre-dress this salad, or the acidity of the vinagreta will immediately wilt the lettuce and bleed the red color from the beets into a muddy mess. Generously drizzle the dressing over the vegetables right at the table, serving the rest in a small bowl on the side.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Moisture ruins the dressing.**

Ensure your lettuce is spun completely dry. If the greens are wet, the creamy vinagreta will slide right off the leaves and pool into a watery mess at the bottom of the plate.

● **Skip the raw egg if you prefer.**

If you are uncomfortable using a raw egg, you can achieve a nearly identical texture by substituting it with 1/4 cup of whole milk or evaporated milk. The oil will emulsify with the proteins in the milk exactly the same way.

● **The optional pollería secret.**

If you want the exact, slightly addictive restaurant flavor, add a tiny pinch of MSG into the blender with the base ingredients before emulsifying the oil.



Champiñones Anticucheros

cham-peen-YOH-nes an-tee-koo-CHAIR-os

The smell of ají panca hitting hot charcoal is the unmistakable scent of a Lima weekend. Traditionally, anticuchos mean beef heart—a masterpiece born of Afro-Peruvian ingenuity that demands hours of marination. But on a busy Tuesday in Ohio, we need that unapologetic, smoky-tangy punch without the wait. Big, porous mushrooms soak up this canonical marinade in minutes. The real secret isn't just the ají panca; it's the street cart technique of holding back a little oily marinade to baste the mushrooms right in the hot skillet, building a sticky, caramelized glaze that tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup	ají panca paste	1 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1/4 cup	red wine vinegar	1 tsp	kosher salt
3 tbsp	neutral oil <i>divided</i>	1 1/2 lb	cremini or portobello mushrooms <i>wiped clean and cut into 1.5-inch chunks</i>
4 large	garlic cloves <i>minced or mashed into a paste</i>	2 large	russet or yukon gold potatoes <i>boiled, thickly sliced, and lightly pan- fried</i>
1 tbsp	ground cumin	1 bag	frozen choclo or sweet corn <i>boiled</i>
1 tbsp	dried oregano <i>rubbed between palms to release oils</i>		

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Mix the aderezo.

Whisk the ají panca paste, red wine vinegar, 1 tablespoon of the neutral oil, garlic, cumin, oregano, black pepper, and kosher salt in a bowl until it forms a thick, fragrant paste.

2. Reserve the baste.

This is the street vendor trick that separates decent food from the real thing. Transfer a quarter cup of the marinade into a small bowl and whisk in the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil to use for basting later.

3. Marinate the mushrooms.

Toss the thick mushroom chunks into the main bowl of oil-free marinade until every piece is heavily coated. They are sponges, so give them ten to fifteen minutes to drink it in.

4. Sear hard and fast.

Get a large cast-iron skillet smoking hot over medium-high heat. Drop the mushrooms in a single layer without crowding the pan; do it in batches if you have to, because you want a hard sear, not a sad steam.

1. Baste and glaze.

After two or three minutes of undisturbed searing, flip them. Hit them generously with the reserved oily baste using a pastry brush. The oil will smoke and caramelize the ají panca, so give them another few minutes until they shrink slightly and develop a dark, sticky crust.

2. Plate it up.

Get them off the heat immediately and serve piping hot alongside the pan-fried potatoes and choclo.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Ají panca paste is non-negotiable.**

It provides a deep, smoky, berry-like mild heat that forms the absolute soul of this dish. You can easily find jars of it in local Latin markets.



Para Picar y Empezar (The Front Porch Snacks & Starters)

Complex, cold appetizers that wake up the palate while the main course takes its time.

Before the heavy pots hit the stove, there is the waiting. In Lima, the wait is half the point. This is the realm of the front porch and the bustling deli counter—sharp, cold, unapologetic bites meant to wake up the palate while the main course takes its sweet time. A sweating bottle of beer, the aggressive snap of

fresh lime juice curing the day's catch, and the bright, uncompromising hum of ají amarillo pureed with fresh cheese. These aren't just snacks; they are the architectural foundation of the Peruvian home table. Served cold and prepped hours before the first guest walks through the door, they do the heavy lifting so the cook can actually step out of the kitchen, grab a drink, and join the life happening around them.





Causa Limeña de Atún

cow-sah lee-men-yah deh ah-toon

If you want to understand Peruvian home cooking, look no further than the potato. To the Incas, 'kausay' meant life. Born from wartime necessity and perfected over generations, this chilled potato and tuna terrine is the ultimate front-porch starter. It's built in strata—a vibrant dough of mashed potatoes, sharp citrus, and ají amarillo, stuffed with creamy tuna and avocado. The secret to recreating that authentic, buttery Lima texture in an American kitchen is simple but absolutely non-negotiable: boil Yukon Golds in their jackets, and mash them while they are blistering hot. Let them cool first, and they turn to glue.

INGREDIENTS

2 lb	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>unpeeled and scrubbed clean</i>	1/4 cup	red onion <i>minced very finely</i>
4 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	1 tbsp	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>
1/4 cup	neutral vegetable oil	1 tsp	Key lime juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>
1/4 cup	Key lime juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>	1 large	Hass avocado <i>pitted, peeled, and sliced into 1/4-inch strips</i>
1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt	2 large	large eggs <i>hard-boiled, peeled, and quartered</i>
1/4 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	1/4 cup	Kalamata or Peruvian Botija black olives <i>pitted and halved</i>
10 oz	canned tuna <i>thoroughly drained and flaked</i>		
1/2 cup	mayonnaise		

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Boil the potatoes whole in their jackets.

Place the unpeeled potatoes in a large pot and cover them with cold water. Add a heavy pinch of salt, bring to a boil over medium-high heat, and simmer until a knife easily pierces the center, about 25 to 30 minutes.

2. Peel and mash the potatoes while steaming hot.

This is the single most important rule of causa. Using a clean kitchen towel to protect your hands, slip the skins off the hot potatoes and immediately pass them through a potato ricer or mash them until completely smooth. Spread them out slightly in the bowl and let them sit for 15 minutes to release excess steam and cool.

3. Mix the tuna filling.

While the potatoes cool, combine the flaked tuna, mayonnaise, red onion, cilantro, and 1 teaspoon of lime juice in a bowl. Mix until well combined and creamy, then season to taste with salt and pepper.

1. Knead the potato masa.

Once the mashed potatoes have cooled to room temperature, add the ají amarillo paste, vegetable oil, 1/4 cup Key lime juice, kosher salt, and black pepper. Dive in with clean hands and knead the mixture like a soft dough until it is smooth, pliable, and bright yellow.

2. Assemble the causa in layers.

Lightly oil a 3-inch pastry ring or line a small loaf pan with plastic wrap. Press half of the potato dough firmly into the bottom. Arrange the avocado slices in an even layer and sprinkle lightly with salt. Spread the tuna mixture smoothly over the avocado, then cap with the remaining potato dough, pressing down gently to compact the layers.

3. Chill thoroughly before serving.

Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 to 2 hours. This resting time allows the starches to set and the citrus and chili flavors to marry. Carefully unmold onto a serving platter, garnish with the quartered hard-boiled eggs and black olives, and serve chilled.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing Ají Amarillo.**

Ají Amarillo is the soul of Lima's cuisine. You can easily find jars of the bright yellow paste in the international aisle of standard US supermarkets or local Latin grocers.

● **Limes matter.**

The native Peruvian limón sutil is much more acidic than a standard Persian lime. Use Key limes to get the authentically sharp, aromatic punch this dish requires.



Ceviche Clásico

Forget the rubbery, over-marinated fish of bad resort towns. Real coastal Peruvian ceviche is a fleeting, electric thing. The secret, guarded by grandmothers and the best local *cevicherías*, is the *leche de tigre*—a punchy, ice-cold emulsion of fish scraps, key lime juice, and aromatics blended to a milky finish. You hit pristine, freezing cold fish with this magic elixir for exactly ten minutes, toss it with some habanero and red onion, and eat it immediately. It's practical, perfectly balanced, and tastes exactly like a Sunday afternoon in Lima.

INGREDIENTS

- | | | | |
|-------------|--|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 lb | firm white fish (halibut, sea bass, or mahi-mahi)
<i>cut into 1/2-inch cubes, reserving 1/4 cup of uneven scraps for the marinade</i> | 1/2 med | red onion
<i>sliced paper-thin</i> |
|-------------|--|----------------|---------------------------------------|

1/2 med	habanero pepper <i>seeds and ribs removed, finely minced</i>	1 small sliver	habanero pepper
1 tbsp	cilantro leaves <i>finely chopped</i>	4 large	ice cubes
3/4 cup	key lime juice <i>gently hand-squeezed halfway to avoid bitter skin oils</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>
1 small	garlic clove <i>peeled</i>	1 large	sweet potato <i>boiled until tender, peeled, and sliced into 1/2-inch thick rounds</i>
1 small piece	fresh ginger <i>peeled, about 1/4-inch thick</i>	1 cup	frozen Peruvian choclo or sweet corn <i>boiled and drained</i>
1 small piece	celery <i>about 1-inch long</i>	1/2 cup	cancha serrana <i>toasted in a skillet with a drop of oil and salt</i>
4 small	cilantro stems	4 large	Bibb or Butter lettuce leaves <i>washed and dried</i>

PREPARATION

- **Prepare the garnishes days in advance.**

To make this feasible on a weeknight, boil the sweet potato and frozen choclo up to two days ahead and keep them in the refrigerator. Toast the cancha in a large batch; it keeps in an airtight container for weeks.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Soak the sliced red onion in a bowl of ice-cold water with a heavy pinch of salt.**
This non-negotiable trick removes the harsh sulfuric bite, leaving the onion crisp and sweet. Let it sit for at least ten minutes, then drain well before using.
- 2. Season and chill the fish cubes.**
Place the uniform half-inch fish cubes in a glass or stainless-steel mixing bowl. Season generously with kosher salt, toss gently, and place the bowl in the refrigerator so the fish remains ice-cold while you work.

1. Blend the leche de tigre.

In a blender, combine the reserved fish scraps, key lime juice, garlic, ginger, celery, cilantro stems, habanero sliver, ice cubes, and a half-teaspoon of salt. Blend on high for thirty to forty-five seconds until it becomes a milky, opaque liquid.

2. Strain the marinade to remove fibrous solids.

Pass the blended liquid through a fine-mesh strainer into a small bowl, discarding the remaining solids left in the strainer. You now have authentic tiger's milk.

3. Cure the fish in the acidic bath for exactly five to ten minutes.

Pull the salted fish from the fridge and pour the strained leche de tigre over it. Add the minced habanero and chopped cilantro, stirring gently. Do not let it sit longer than ten minutes; the edges will turn white and firm up while the center remains beautifully tender.

4. Toss with the onions and plate immediately.

Add the drained red onions to the bowl and give it one final, gentle toss. Serve over a leaf of lettuce, spooning generous amounts of the curing juices over the top, and garnish the plate with the sweet potato, choclo, and cancha.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Squeeze your limes gently.**

When extracting juice for ceviche, never squeeze the limes all the way dry. The pith and skin contain bitter essential oils that will ruin the delicate flavor of your leche de tigre. Squeeze them just halfway.

● **Keep everything freezing cold.**

Temperature is just as crucial as acidity. Blending ice cubes into the marinade and keeping the fish chilled ensures the protein stays firm and pristine instead of turning mushy.



Choros a la Chalaca

CHOH-rohs ah lah chah-LAH-kah

If you ask anyone from Peru's main port of Callao what tastes most like the ocean breeze, they won't hand you ceviche. They will point to Choros a la Chalaca. This is the ultimate coastal party starter—a half-shell balanced in one hand, an ice-cold beer in the other. It is built on a few uncompromising grandmother's secrets: massaging the red onions in cold saltwater to kill the harsh bite, and whisking a splash of the mussel's own briny cooking broth back into the lime salsa. We are trading the giant imported Peruvian mussels and fiery rocoto peppers for supermarket green-lipped mussels and Fresno chilies, but the soul of the dish remains beautifully, unmistakably intact.

INGREDIENTS

2 lb	fresh blue mussels or frozen green-lipped mussels <i>scrubbed and debearded</i>	3/4 cup	frozen choclo kernels <i>thawed, boiled for 3 minutes, and cooled</i>
1 cup	water	1 med	red Fresno chili <i>seeds and ribs removed, minced as finely as possible</i>
1/4 cup	dry white wine	3 tbsp	fresh parsley <i>finely chopped</i>
1/2 med	yellow onion <i>peeled</i>	1 tbsp	olive oil
2 clove	garlic <i>smashed</i>	5 med	Key limes <i>juiced</i>
1 med	red onion <i>cut into a very fine dice</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
2 med	Roma tomatoes <i>peeled, cored, seeded, and cut into a very fine dice</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>

PREPARATION

- **Tame the red onion in cold saltwater.**

Place the finely diced red onion into a bowl of cold water with a generous pinch of salt and massage them with your hands for thirty seconds to release their bitter, sulfurous enzymes. Drain in a fine-mesh strainer, rinse under cold water, and shake as dry as possible.

- **Meticulously seed the tomatoes.**

The tomatoes must be peeled and have their wet, seedy cores entirely removed before dicing, otherwise your salsa chalaca will become a watery, unappealing mess.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Steam the mussels briefly with aromatics.**

In a large pot, bring the water, wine, yellow onion half, and smashed garlic to a rapid simmer. Drop in the mussels, cover tightly, and remove them to an ice bath the exact moment they pop open so they do not overcook.

2. **Concentrate and reserve the mussel broth.**

Once all the mussels are removed, boil the remaining cooking liquid for two minutes to concentrate its flavor. Turn off the heat and reserve exactly two tablespoons of this briny broth.

3. **Purify the mussel meat and arrange the shells.**

Pull the cooled mussel meat from the shells, gently pinching off and discarding the dark, sack-like stomach vein on the edge to remove any grit. Place the cleaned meat back onto the bottom half of each shell and arrange them on a platter.

4. **Combine the salsa ingredients and let them macerate.**

In a bowl, combine the washed red onions, choclo, tomatoes, chili, and parsley. Pour in the lime juice, olive oil, and the reserved mussel broth, seasoning aggressively with salt and pepper, then let it rest for ten minutes to cure the onions.

5. **Top the mussels with the rested salsa.**

Spoon a generous mound of the juicy salsa directly over the meat of each waiting mussel, making sure a bit of the acidic broth gets into each shell. Serve immediately cold, or chill for up to two hours.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not use American sweet corn.**

Choclo is an ancient Andean corn with a starchy, chewy texture, completely lacking the sugar of American sweet corn. If you cannot find frozen choclo at your local Latin market, simply omit it rather than ruining the savory balance of the dish.

- **Mimicking the rocoto pepper.**

Authentic recipes use rocoto, a deceptively hot pepper with thick, fruity flesh. To approximate this profile using supermarket ingredients, mix half of your minced Fresno chili with a tablespoon of finely minced sweet red bell pepper.



Ocopa Arequipeña

oh-KOH-pah ah-reh-kee-PEHN-yah

For anyone raised in a Peruvian household, the scent is an immediate, visceral tether to the motherland: the earthy, unmistakable aroma of huacatay hitting hot oil. Ocopa is the moody, complex, southern cousin to Papa a la Huancaína, tracing its lineage straight back to the Incan chasquis. The secret to recreating this Arequipan classic on a Midwestern weeknight isn't a heavy stone batán, but rather blooming jarred imported chili pastes in a hot skillet, and trusting your grandmother's ultimate thickening hack: a handful of sweet animal crackers to brilliantly tame the bitter herbs.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>scrubbed and left unpeeled</i>	1/2 cup	unsalted roasted peanuts
1 tbsp	kosher salt	1 cup	queso fresco <i>roughly crumbled</i>
3 tbsp	neutral oil	3/4 cup	evaporated milk
1 small	red onion <i>roughly chopped</i>	10 small	animal crackers
3 large cloves	garlic <i>smashed</i>	1/4 tsp	black pepper
3 tbsp	ají mirasol paste	1 med head	Boston Bibb lettuce <i>leaves separated, washed, and dried</i>
1 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	3 large	eggs <i>hard-boiled, peeled, and quartered</i>
3 tbsp	huacatay paste	6 med	Botija olives <i>pitted</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prepare the canvas.

Place the unpeeled potatoes in a large pot, cover with cold water, and add the kosher salt. Boil over medium-high heat until fork-tender, about 20 to 25 minutes, then cool, peel with your fingers, and cut into thick half-inch slices.

2. Build the heritage sofrito.

Heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high. Sauté the chopped onion and smashed garlic until softened and golden brown, about 5 to 7 minutes, then lower the heat, add the peanuts, and toss for one minute.

3. Bloom the flavor pastes.

Add the ají mirasol, ají amarillo, and huacatay pastes directly to the hot skillet, stirring continuously for two minutes to resurrect their dormant volatile oils before removing from the heat.

1. Blend with restraint.

Scrape the skillet's entire contents into a blender alongside the crumbled queso fresco, animal crackers, and evaporated milk. Pulse on medium speed until you reach a dense, unctuous cream that still holds micro-specks of peanuts and herbs, being careful not to over-blend into a watery puree.

2. Plate and garnish.

Line a platter with crisp lettuce leaves and arrange the potato slices in a slightly overlapping layer. Generously drape the green sauce over everything, garnishing with the quartered eggs and olives before serving at room temperature.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Source the right jars.**

If finding dried ají mirasol and fresh huacatay in an American suburb proves impossible, rely on high-quality jarred pastes imported from Peru, easily found at local Latin markets or online.

- **Do not skip the animal crackers.**

Standard soda crackers will flatten the dish. The subtle vanilla sweetness of animal crackers is the authentic grandmother's secret to balancing the bitter huacatay and smoky chilies without turning the sauce into a dessert.



Solterito Arequipeño

sol-teh-ree-toh ah-reh-kee-pen-yoh

In Arequipa, they call this the 'little single man'—a bright, vegetable-forward punch of a salad historically meant to keep courting bachelors light on their feet. The soul of this dish isn't born from complex technique, but from the brutal uniformity of the chop and one brilliant grandmother's trick: boiling the giant starchy choclo with a pinch of anise and sugar. It gives the corn an aromatic depth that offsets the sharp, bruising acidity of the vinaigrette. If you can't find fresh fava beans, don't panic. Frozen lima beans and frozen choclo from the local Latin market will get you exactly where you need to be on a Tuesday night.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cup	frozen choclo	1/2 cup	black olives <i>pitted and sliced</i>
1 1/2 cup	frozen fava beans or lima beans <i>thawed</i>	1/4 cup	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>finely chopped</i>
1 tsp	granulated sugar	1 tbsp	rocoto pepper or jalapeño <i>very finely minced, seeds and white veins removed</i>
1/2 tsp	whole anise seeds	3 tbsp	red wine vinegar
1 med	red onion <i>finely diced</i>	3 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil
2 med	Roma tomatoes <i>cored, seeded, and finely diced</i>	1 tsp	salt
8 oz	queso fresco <i>cut into small, uniform cubes</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Aromatize and boil the starches.

Bring a medium pot of water to a boil with the sugar and anise seeds. Drop in the frozen choclo and boil for about 5 minutes until tender but chewy, then remove it with a slotted spoon to cool. Blanch the frozen beans in the same water for 3 minutes, drain, and run them under cold water.

2. Master the art of the chop.

The visual and textural secret of a true Solterito is uniformity. Take your time to dice the red onion, deseeded tomatoes, cheese, and olives into small cubes roughly the same size as the choclo kernels.

3. Toss the salad gently.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the cooled choclo, beans, red onion, tomatoes, cheese, olives, parsley, and minced pepper. Toss lightly from the bottom to ensure the delicate cubes of queso fresco remain completely intact.

1. Dress and exercise patience.

Drizzle the red wine vinegar and olive oil over the bowl, and season generously with salt and pepper. Give it one final fold, then let the salad sit untouched on the counter for at least five minutes so the porous corn and cheese can absorb the sharp vinaigrette before serving.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Finding the right corn is non-negotiable.**

Do not attempt to make this with American sweet corn; it completely ruins the savory profile of the dish. If frozen Peruvian choclo is unavailable, thoroughly rinsed canned white hominy provides a decent starchy substitute.



Palta Rellena con Pollo

pahl-tah reh-yeh-nah kohn poy-yo

Ask any first-generation Peruvian kid what dish pulls them right back to their mother's kitchen on a warm spring afternoon, and they'll point to Palta Rellena. It looks deceptively simple—a chicken salad stuffed into a ripe avocado—but the soul of the dish lies in the grandmother's technique. True Peruvian matriarchs never settle for plain leftover chicken; they simmer fresh breast with aromatics to build a rich, golden broth that gets cleverly repurposed to cook the vegetables. It's a masterclass in turning everyday supermarket staples into something profoundly nostalgic and deeply flavorful on a regular Tuesday night.

INGREDIENTS

3/4 lb	boneless skinless chicken breast	1/2 cup	frozen green peas
1 med	celery stalk <i>roughly chopped</i>	1/2 cup	frozen Peruvian choclo or sweet corn
1/2 med	yellow onion <i>roughly chopped</i>	1/3 cup	mayonnaise
1 med	carrot <i>roughly chopped</i>	2 med	limes <i>juiced</i>
2 large cloves	garlic <i>smashed</i>	2 large	Hass avocados <i>halved, pitted, and peeled just before serving</i>
1 tsp	kosher salt	1/4 cup	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>
1 med	Yukon Gold potato <i>peeled and diced into very small uniform cubes</i>	4 large	Bibb lettuce leaves
1 large	carrot <i>peeled and diced into very small uniform cubes</i>	1 med	hard-boiled egg <i>sliced</i>

PREPARATION

- **Take the time to execute a proper brunoise.**

The potatoes and carrots must be diced into small, uniform cubes roughly the size of the peas so the filling mixes seamlessly and stays cohesive when stuffed inside the avocado.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the flavor base by gently poaching the chicken in aromatics.**

Combine the chicken, celery, onion, the roughly chopped medium carrot, garlic, and salt in a saucepan with cold water to cover, simmering gently over low heat for 25 minutes until cooked through.

1. Shred the cooked chicken into fine strings by hand.

Remove the chicken to a cutting board to cool, discard the mushy aromatics, and strain the golden broth back into the pot. Use two forks to pull the meat into fine, textured strings that will properly catch and hold the mayonnaise.

2. Cook the diced vegetables directly in the reserved chicken broth.

Return the strained broth to a boil and cook the diced potato and large carrot for 8 to 10 minutes. Toss in the peas and corn for the final two minutes, then drain the vegetables thoroughly and let them cool completely.

3. Fold the ingredients together into a cohesive salpicón.

In a large bowl, gently mix the shredded chicken, cooled vegetables, mayonnaise, half the lime juice, and cilantro, seasoning generously with salt and pepper to taste.

4. Prepare the avocados using the leveling cut.

Shave a paper-thin slice off the rounded bottoms of the avocado halves so they sit perfectly flat on a plate, then immediately rub the exposed flesh with the remaining lime juice, salt, and pepper to prevent browning.

5. Stuff the avocados and serve immediately.

Nestle each avocado half onto a crisp lettuce leaf, mound the chicken salad generously into the center cavities, and garnish with a slice of hard-boiled egg.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Awaken the choclo.**

If you managed to score authentic frozen Peruvian choclo, give it the traditional matriarch's treatment. Boil it separately in a small pot with a half teaspoon of sugar and a pinch of anise seeds to bring out its sweet, floral Andean flavor before mixing it into the salad.



Tiradito Nikkei de Aji Amarillo

tee-rah-dee-toh nee-kay deh ah-hee ah-mah-ree-yoh

Long before fusion became a dirty word in American fine dining, Japanese immigrants in Peru were quietly creating culinary magic in their own kitchens. They took their ancestral respect for raw fish, sliced it beautifully thin, and married it with the vibrant, spicy fire of the Andean coast. The result is Nikkei cuisine, and the tiradito is its crown jewel. Unlike ceviche, which sits and cooks in its marinade, a tiradito is dressed at the very last second. This is a fifteen-minute appetizer that looks like a high-end restaurant dish but is completely achievable on a Tuesday night. Keep your plate ice-cold, use a razor-sharp knife, and don't skimp on the aji amarillo.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	sashimi-grade white fish or tuna <i>thawed if frozen, patted dry</i>	1 small clove	garlic <i>mashed into a paste</i>
1/2 cup	lime juice <i>gently squeezed from Key limes or Persian limes</i>	1 med	sweet potato <i>boiled and sliced into rounds, or thinly sliced and fried into chips</i>
3 tbsp	aji amarillo paste	1/4 cup	cancha or choclo <i>toasted or boiled</i>
1 tbsp	soy sauce	1 handful	fresh cilantro <i>leaves picked</i>
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil	1 tbsp	toasted sesame seeds
1 tsp	fresh ginger <i>grated</i>	1 pinch	flaky sea salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Chill the canvas.

Place a large serving platter and your fish fillet in the freezer for fifteen minutes. A cold plate is the ultimate secret to keeping the fish pristine, and partially freezing the flesh makes delicate slicing infinitely easier for a home cook.

2. Build the leche de tigre.

In a mixing bowl, vigorously whisk together the lime juice, aji amarillo paste, soy sauce, sesame oil, ginger, and garlic until the mixture is smooth and emulsified, then stash it in the fridge until the exact moment of serving.

3. Slice the fish with respect.

Remove your fish from the freezer, hold your sharpest knife at a forty-five-degree angle to the cutting board, and pull the blade toward you in one smooth, continuous stroke to create translucent strips about an eighth of an inch thick. Avoid sawing back and forth, which tears the delicate muscle fibers.

4. Assemble the plate.

Retrieve your ice-cold platter from the fridge and lay the slices of fish onto it, slightly overlapping them like shingles on a roof or the scales of a fish.

1. **Dress and serve immediately.**

Bring the platter to the table and, right before eating, pour the cold leche de tigre generously over the fish. Scatter your sweet potato, cancha, cilantro leaves, and sesame seeds across the top, finish with a tiny pinch of flaky sea salt, and eat immediately—a tiradito waits for no one.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Embrace the jarred paste.**

Boiling and peeling fresh aji amarillo in an American suburb is an exercise in futility. High-quality jarred paste is exactly what the diaspora uses to get that authentic, nostalgic hit of heat and sunny yellow color.

- **Sourcing your fish.**

Don't let raw fish intimidate you. 'Sashimi-grade' simply means the fish was commercially flash-frozen to kill parasites. Buy high-quality frozen portions from a trusted fishmonger or supermarket sushi counter and thaw them safely in the fridge overnight.

- **Sillao and kion.**

Don't be surprised to find soy sauce and ginger in a Peruvian recipe. The Japanese diaspora wove these ingredients—known locally as sillao and kion—into the local pantry over a century ago, providing the essential umami backbone of Nikkei cuisine.

- **The emulsion trick.**

If you want a truly restaurant-quality, velvety sauce that coats the fish rather than pooling at the bottom of the plate, toss a tiny one-inch scrap of the raw fish into a blender with your leche de tigre ingredients and blend for ten seconds. The protein acts as a binder.



Leche de Tigre en Copa

It began as the beautiful, briny runoff at the bottom of a ceviche plate—a thrifty market hack that evolved into the undisputed heavyweight champion of Peruvian hangovers. This is the real deal: an electric, milk-clouded elixir of aggressively fresh lime, sharp ginger, and the soul-reviving heat of ají. Served in a goblet and knocked back like a restorative tonic, it requires no Michelin-starred tweezers, just a handful of ice cubes in the blender to keep the raw fish singing and an unapologetic splash of evaporated milk to round off the edges.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup Key lime juice
freshly squeezed

1/2 cup cold fish or shrimp stock
chilled completely

2 oz	white fish trimmings <i>raw</i>	2 tbsp	evaporated milk
1/4 cup	red onion <i>roughly chopped</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 small	celery stalk <i>roughly chopped</i>	1/2 lb	fresh white fish <i>cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>
1 small	garlic clove <i>smashed</i>	1/4 large	red onion <i>sliced paper-thin</i>
1 small	piece fresh ginger <i>peeled</i>	2 tbsp	fresh cilantro leaves <i>finely chopped</i>
4 med	fresh cilantro stems	1/4 cup	cancha serrana <i>toasted</i>
1 tbsp	ají amarillo or rocoto paste	1/4 cup	Peruvian choclo kernels <i>boiled and cooled</i>
2 large	ice cubes		

PREPARATION

- **Make a quick seafood stock.**

If you don't have fish stock, simmer a handful of shrimp shells with a celery leaf in two cups of water for ten minutes, strain the liquid, and rapid-chill it in the freezer.

- **Remove the sulfurous bite from the garnish onion.**

Soaking the paper-thin red onion slices in ice water for five minutes guarantees crispness without the harsh, lingering aftertaste.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Steep the aromatics in the fresh lime juice.**

In a bowl, combine the cold stock, celery, garlic, ginger, cilantro stems, ají paste, and roughly chopped red onion, then pour the lime juice over the top and let it sit at room temperature for ten minutes to coax out the essential oils.

- 2. Blend the base with ice to protect the fish.**

Transfer the steeped aromatics and liquid into a high-powered blender, toss in the two ounces of fish trimmings, a pinch of salt, and the ice cubes, then blend on high for about 45 seconds until completely smooth and frothy.

1. Strain the emulsion and whisk in the dairy.

Pour the blended mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean bowl, using a spoon to press out every drop of liquid before discarding the fibrous solids, then whisk in the evaporated milk and adjust the salt until the flavor is aggressively bright.

2. Briefly cure the cubed fish in the liquid.

Lightly salt the pristine half-inch cubes of eating fish in a bowl to open their pores, pour the prepared tiger's milk over them, and let the fish sit for exactly two to three minutes so the exterior turns opaque.

3. Serve immediately in chilled goblets.

Divide the tender fish evenly among chilled glasses, pour the vibrant liquid to the brim, and crown each serving with the ice-washed red onion, chopped cilantro, crunchy cancha, and plump choclo kernels.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing the right limes is strictly non-negotiable.**

Standard Persian limes lack the necessary floral aroma and piercing acidity; seek out a bag of fresh Key limes, and never squeeze them down to the pith to avoid extracting bitter oils into your delicate tiger's milk.

● **The ice cubes are the true secret of the cevichería.**

Blender blades generate severe friction heat that will prematurely cook the raw fish, so throwing ice into the carafe keeps the temperature near freezing and guarantees a silky, uncompromised emulsion.

● **Do not let the fish over-cure.**

The strained liquid can be made a day ahead and stored in the fridge, but the diced eating fish must never sit in the acid for more than five minutes before serving, or it will seize up and turn unpleasantly rubbery.