

Spanish

Roots, American Kitchen



Recipes with love from

The Robot Book Club

Spanish Roots, American Kitchen

Authentic Spanish Home Cooking for the Everyday Table

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: Spanish Home Cooking.

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

— Ted Benson

Prologue

Forget the glossy postcards. Ditch the tourist traps serving up "paella" that wouldn't pass muster in any self-respecting Spanish home. This isn't that book. This is for the ones who grew up stateside, their American lives punctuated by the distinctly Spanish rhythm of garlic sizzling in olive oil, a secret language spoken only in their kitchen, a vibrant counterpoint to the suburban landscape outside. For them, "Spanish food" isn't a trend; it's a heartbeat, a memory etched in aroma and taste.

It's the taste of *abuela's* hands, long after she's gone. The quiet resilience of immigrants, from 1920s "Little Spain" tenements to sprawling modern homes, always finding a way to transform simple ingredients into profound comfort. They kept the flavors alive, often making do, often improvising. They taught their children not just recipes, but rhythms: the quick morning *desayuno*, the sustaining mid-morning *almuerzo*, the late-afternoon *merienda*, and the essential, lingering grace of *La Sobremesa*. These weren't just meals; they were chapters in a daily narrative, now adapted.

This book understands. It acknowledges the tyranny of the American workday, the scramble for ingredients that don't require an overseas flight. It doesn't ask you to ditch your local market or your standard stove. Instead, it shows you how the simple alchemy of accessible ingredients—a good pimentón, honest olive oil, a handful

of pantry staples—can summon those deep, ancestral flavors. How a properly built *sofrito* can make time stand still, even if just for a moment, in an otherwise hectic week. This is Spanish food, unvarnished and unapologetic, for the American kitchen.

Here are the recipes they actually cook. The stews that heal, the omelets that satisfy, the small plates that gather friends for *La Hora del Vermut*, and the grand Sunday meals that anchor families. No fuss, no embellishment. Just the real deal, brought home, adapted, and ready to become new memories. It's a guide to rediscovering that shared heritage, to filling your own kitchen with the unpretentious joy of Spanish roots, perfectly at home in your American life. Get cooking. The table is waiting.



Mañanas y Meriendas (The Rhythms of Morning and Afternoon)

Quick, nostalgic breakfasts and comforting after-school snacks that fill the house with the aromas of a Spanish childhood.

The Spanish morning isn't born in a sterile drive-thru; it happens at the kitchen counter, smelling of aggressively toasted bread, raw garlic, and coffee strong enough to wake the dead. It's about honest, unpretentious sustenance before the chaotic American school run. You rub a bruised tomato onto charred sourdough because that's what your grandfather did, not because it looks good on the internet.

Then comes the merienda—that sacred, late-afternoon bridge between the day's obligations and a notoriously late dinner. It's the aroma of frying dough and cinnamon pulling exhausted kids through the front door. These aren't fussy, plated affairs. They are unapologetic, necessary carbohydrates—wedges of yesterday's tortilla stuffed into crusty bread, pots of impossibly thick hot chocolate, and bowls of sweet rice pudding that taste exactly, perfectly, like home.





Pan con Tomate y Tostada con Aceite y Jamón

pahn kohn toh-mah-teh ee tohs-tah-dah kohn ah-thay-teh ee hah-mohn

THERE IS NO FAKE GLAMOUR HERE, NO COMPLICATED CHEF tweezers or inaccessible truffle oils. For the child of immigrants waking up in an Ohio suburb, this is the uncompromising smell of morning: the scent of wood-toasted bread, the sharp bite of raw garlic hitting hot crust, and the earthy, melting fat of cured ham. Born out of agrarian thrift to soften days-old loaves, it is the ultimate expression of how Spanish home cooking relies on friction and respect over complexity.

Forget

THE WATERY DICED TOMATOES OF A CHEAP BRUSCHETTA; true magic happens when you harness the heat of the toast, the ripest counter-warmed tomatoes, and a generous slick of good oil.

INGREDIENTS

4 slices	sourdough boule or ciabatta <i>cut into 3/4-inch thick pieces</i>	4 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil
1 large	garlic clove <i>peeled and halved horizontally</i>	1/4 tsp	flaky sea salt
2 med	campari or roma tomatoes <i>halved horizontally</i>	8 slices	jamón serrano or prosciutto

PREPARATION

- **Let the ham sweat.**
Pull the Jamón Serrano out of the fridge at least 15 minutes before eating. The fat must sit at room temperature so it can begin to sweat, turning translucent and releasing its complex, nutty flavors.
- **Counter-ripen your tomatoes.**
Never refrigerate your tomatoes. Leave them on the counter until they feel slightly squishy—too soft for a salad, but perfectly overripe for rendering their juices into the bread.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Toast the bread with intent.**
Heat a dry cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat and toast the bread until deeply golden brown and abrasive like sandpaper. The bread must be steaming hot for the friction of the next steps to work.

1 Scratch the hot crumb with raw garlic.

While the bread is still hot from the pan, take a halved garlic clove and lightly rub the cut side across the surface of the toast. The heat will melt a microscopic, aromatic layer of garlic oil directly into the crust.

2 Vigorously rub the tomato into the toast.

Hold the hot bread in one hand and smash the cut side of the tomato directly into the toast. Rub aggressively in circles, forcing the juices and pulp into the nooks and crannies of the bread until you are holding nothing but the empty, wrinkled tomato skin. Discard the skin.

3 Seal the juices with olive oil and salt.

Generously drizzle—do not just sprinkle—the extra virgin olive oil over the tomato-soaked bread to seal in the juices and create a luscious texture. Finish with a pinch of flaky sea salt.

4 Crown with room-temperature ham.

Immediately drape the warm, sweating slices of Jamón Serrano over the top. The residual heat from the toast will gently warm the fat, making it translucent and deeply aromatic. Eat immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Andalusian weeknight batch method.**

If you are feeding a hungry family before work and school, rubbing individual slices takes too long. Grab a box grater, place the cut side of the tomatoes against the large holes, and grate the flesh into a bowl until only the flat skin is left in your palm. Stir a generous glug of olive oil and a pinch of salt directly into the jammy pulp, then simply spoon this mixture over your toasted, garlic-rubbed bread.



Bocadillo de Tortilla

boh-kah-DEE-yoh deh tohr-TEE-yah

IF THERE IS A SINGLE SMELL THAT INSTANTLY TRANSPORTS A Spaniard back to childhood, it is the scent of potatoes and onions slowly poaching in olive oil. To the uninitiated, stuffing a thick, custardy potato omelet into a loaf of crusty bread seems like a carbon-carb fever dream. But when done the real way—the way the grandmothers do it—it is magic. The secret is that an authentic Spanish tortilla is never dry; it is rich, juicy, and cohesive. We don't rush this; we confit the potatoes until they practically melt, soak them in beaten eggs so the starches release, and slide that golden wedge inside a baguette smeared unapologetically with good mayonnaise.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cup	extra virgin olive oil	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>
3 large	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled, halved, and sliced 1/8-inch thick</i>	1 large	rustic baguette <i>sliced horizontally</i>
1 large	yellow onion <i>halved and thinly sliced into half-moons</i>	1/4 cup	high-quality mayonnaise
5 large	eggs	2 med	Italian frying peppers <i>blistered in a pan with a pinch of salt (optional)</i>
1 large	egg yolk		

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Confit the potatoes and onions in olive oil over medium-low heat.**
Place a large skillet over medium-low heat, pour in the olive oil, and add the potatoes and onions. You are not frying them; the oil should bubble very gently for 20 to 25 minutes until the potatoes are incredibly tender and the onions are sweet and translucent.
- 2 Drain the potato mixture and reserve the oil.**
Pour the potatoes and onions into a large colander set over a heat-proof bowl. Let them cool for a minute or two, saving that beautifully flavored oil in a jar for future use.
- 3 Fold the hot potatoes into the beaten eggs and walk away for ten minutes.**
In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, extra yolk, and 1 teaspoon of the salt until frothy. Gently fold in the hot potato mixture and let it rest undisturbed for 5 to 10 minutes; the heat will temper the eggs and release the starches to create a thick, cohesive batter.

1 Pour the batter into a hot skillet and shape the edges.

Heat a smaller, 8-to-9-inch non-stick skillet over medium-high heat with 1 teaspoon of the reserved oil. Pour in the mixture, swirling the pan gently and using a rubber spatula to tuck the edges inward until the bottom is lightly golden but the top is still wet, about 2 minutes.

2 Confidently flip the tortilla using a flat plate.

Place a flat plate upside down over the skillet, put your hand firmly on the plate, and in one quick, confident motion, invert the pan so the tortilla drops onto the plate.

3 Slide the tortilla back into the pan to finish cooking off the heat.

Return the skillet to the stove, reduce the heat to low, and gently slide the tortilla off the plate to cook the wet side. Use your spatula to round the edges, then turn the heat off entirely and let the residual heat finish it for 1 to 2 minutes so the inside remains juicy and soft.

4 Assemble the sandwich with generous amounts of mayonnaise and the warm tortilla.

Smear a heavy layer of mayonnaise on both sides of the sliced baguette to prevent a dry sandwich. Cut a thick wedge of the warm tortilla, place it on the bread, top with blistered peppers if using, and press down slightly so the savory juices meld into the crumb.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **Use the right potato.**

American Russets will disintegrate into mush and reds are far too waxy; the Yukon Gold perfectly mimics Spain's preferred Monalisa variety for the proper starchy-yet-creamy bind.

- **The extra yolk is crucial.**

Adding one extra yolk to the egg mixture increases the fat content, ensuring the deeply authentic, juicy interior required to properly lubricate the sandwich bread.



La Hora del Vermut (The Weekend Prelude)

The quintessential Spanish ritual of opening the appetite translated into an effortless weekend gathering.

In Spain, the weekend noon hour isn't a time on the clock; it's an institution. La hora del vermut is that golden, lazy window before the heavy lifting of lunch begins—a sacred, unapologetic ritual of whetting the appetite. You don't really cook for this; you assemble. It is about the sharp, briny smack of a good olive, the acidic bite of a pickled pepper, and the rattle of ice in a glass of dark, aromatic vermouth.

Translated to an American front porch, the spirit remains fiercely intact. These are the salty, sizzling, garlic-slicked bites meant to be eaten standing up, armed with nothing but toothpicks and a crumpled napkin. From the effortless geometry of a Gilda to the molten reward of a proper croqueta, this is how you prime the engine. Let the afternoon wait.





The Perfect Vermouth Pour

el behr-moot preh-pah-rah-doh

IN SPAIN, VERMOUTH ISN'T A DUSTY BOTTLE RELEGATED TO the back of the liquor cabinet for an occasional Manhattan; it's a way of life. The magic of La Hora del Vermut—the sacred weekend prelude before a late lunch—is perfectly captured in the Marianito, a northern Spanish tradition that spikes sweet, spiced red vermouth with a stiff, bitter backbone. This weeknight-friendly technique utilizes a pre-mixed fortifier of gin and Campari, meaning a flawless, deeply complex glass of home is only ever three seconds and a handful of good ice away.

INGREDIENTS

1 oz	London Dry gin	3 large	large solid ice cubes
1 oz	Campari	1 med	orange peel strip <i>cut into a 2-inch strip</i>
1/4 tsp	Angostura bitters	2 med	anchovy-stuffed green olives <i>skewered on a toothpick</i>
3 oz	sweet red vermouth <i>chilled</i>		

PREPARATION

- **Mix the fortifier.**

Combine the gin, Campari, and Angostura bitters in a small jar or dasher bottle. This master batch lives in your pantry indefinitely, ready to deploy a quarter-ounce at a time.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Prepare the glass.**

Fill a short, wide rocks glass to the brim with large, solid ice cubes to chill the liquid rapidly without watering down the delicate balance of the wine.

- 2 Pour the vermouth.**

Pour the sweet red vermouth directly over the ice.

- 3 Fortify and stir.**

Add a heavy splash—about a quarter ounce—of your pre-mixed fortifier to the glass, then give the drink one gentle, lazy stir with a spoon.

1 Express the citrus oils.

Hold the orange peel skin-side down over the glass, give it a firm twist to spray the invisible aromatic oils across the surface, and drop the peel into the drink.

2 Garnish with the savory anchor.

Submerge the skewered olives into the liquid, allowing their salty umami to slowly contrast the bittersweet vermouth.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Keep your vermouth in the refrigerator.**

Vermouth is a fortified wine, meaning it will rapidly oxidize and turn to vinegar if left on the kitchen counter.

- **Never drink this naked.**

The true tavern experience demands salty accompaniments; serve alongside thick-cut potato chips and high-quality tinned seafood like mussels or cockles.

- **Use what you can find.**

Spanish vermouths like Yzaguirre or Lustau are ideal, but standard Italian sweet vermouths like Cinzano Rosso or Martini & Rossi work brilliantly in a pinch.



Las Gildas

lahs HEEL-dahs

IF THERE IS A SINGLE BITE THAT DEFINES THE SOUL OF Basque food culture, it is the Gilda. Invented in a San Sebastián bar in the 1940s and named after a scandalous Rita Hayworth character, this simple skewer is an exercise in pure ingredient synergy—green, salty, and a little spicy. There is no cooking here, only the careful marriage of the olive’s buttery fat, the pickled pepper’s sharp crunch, and the deep, funky umami of a proper salt-cured anchovy. It takes ten minutes to assemble, requires zero heat, and tastes exactly like a Friday night in Spain. Pour a cold vermouth and eat it in one single, unapologetic bite.

INGREDIENTS

12	Cantabrian anchovy fillets in olive oil <i>drained of excess oil</i>	24	pitted green Manzanilla or Gordal olives <i>drained</i>
24	pickled Basque piparra peppers or mild pepperoncini <i>stems snipped off</i>	1 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil
		12	wooden toothpicks

PREPARATION

- **Set up an assembly station.**

Drain your olives and peppers, snip any long pepper stems, and carefully lift your anchovy fillets from their tin so you can build the skewers quickly and cleanly.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Thread the base olive onto a wooden skewer.**
Push one green olive down near the bottom of the stick to form a stable foundation.
- 2 Add the first pepper.**
Thread on a pickled pepper. If your piparras or pepperoncini are long, fold them in half so they form a neat curve on the stick.
- 3 Crown with the anchovy.**
Take an anchovy fillet, fold it over itself like a little ribbon, and thread it right above the pepper.
- 4 Finish the stack.**
Add another folded pepper, and cap the top of the skewer with a second green olive so the anchovy is nestled securely in the middle.

1 Drizzle with olive oil and serve.

Arrange the assembled skewers on a platter. Right before your guests reach for them, drizzle generously with your best extra-virgin olive oil.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Eat it in a single bite.**

Do not nibble. The Gilda is designed to be pulled off the stick and eaten whole so the olive's fat, the pepper's acid, and the anchovy's salt explode together on the palate.

- **Mind the temperature.**

If making ahead, you can keep them covered in the fridge for up to four hours, but you must pull them out fifteen minutes before serving. If served ice cold, you won't taste the rich fat of the anchovy.

- **Ingredient quality is everything.**

Avoid cheap, mushy pizza anchovies or fiercely spicy jalapeños. The magic lies in the synergy of premium Spanish anchovies and mild, tangy peppers.



La Comida Hecha Rápida (The Weeknight Heart)

Hearty, traditional Spanish midday meals stripped down and adapted for the reality of a busy American weeknight.

In Spain, the midday comida is sacred—a heavy, sleep-inducing anchor of stews and unapologetic caloric joy meant to carry a working stiff through the rest of the day. But transplant that reality to a 7:00 PM Tuesday in an American suburb, and the mechanics change. You don't have three hours to simmer a pot of garbanzos while the

sun beats down on the plaza. You have a single skillet, a frantic schedule, and whatever you managed to grab from the local supermarket before the doors locked.

This is about survival without surrender. It's the soul of the Iberian peninsula—the smoky hit of chorizo, the healing funk of a proper chicken broth, the peasant brilliance of pisto—stripped down for the reality of the modern weeknight. These aren't the sanitized, small-plate tapas of a tourist trap. They are the honest, deeply nourishing bowls of comfort that keep the diaspora sane, cooked fast, eaten late, and uncompromising in their identity.





Lentejas Rápidas con Chorizo (The Weeknight Anchor)

len-TEH-has RAH-pee-das kon cho-REE-tho

IN SPAIN, A BUBBLING POT OF LENTILS ISN'T A WEEKEND project; it's a Tuesday night anchor. This is the unapologetic, working-class soul of Spanish comfort food, built entirely on a deeply caramelized vegetable sofrito and the starchy magic of cracked potatoes. It's an unpretentious, profoundly smoky stew that uses the red, rendered fat of cured chorizo to transform humble brown lentils into a dish that tastes exactly like a grandmother's kitchen.

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil	1 tsp	sweet smoked paprika
6 oz	Spanish dry-cured chorizo <i>cut into 1/4-inch coins</i>	1/4 cup	crushed tomatoes
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1 1/2 cup	brown lentils <i>rinsed and picked over</i>
1 med	green bell pepper <i>finely diced</i>	1 med	Yukon Gold potato <i>peeled</i>
2 med	carrots <i>peeled and finely diced</i>	1 large	bay leaf
3 med	garlic	5 cup	low-sodium chicken broth
clove	<i>minced</i>	to taste	kosher salt
		to taste	black pepper

PREPARATION

- **Prep your aromatics before you start cooking.**

Because the paprika burns quickly, you need your crushed tomatoes standing by and your vegetables already diced.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Render the chorizo in the olive oil to extract its vibrantly red, smoky fat.**

Place a large pot over medium heat, add the oil and chorizo, and cook for 2 to 3 minutes per side until the edges crisp up. Remove the meat with a slotted spoon, leaving that beautiful rendered fat behind.
- 2 Build the sofrito by slowly frying the onion, bell pepper, and carrots in the residual chorizo fat.**

Reduce the heat to medium-low and let the vegetables sweat and caramelize for 8 to 10 minutes until they are soft, jammy, and sweet.

- 1 Bloom the aromatics and arrest the cooking with the tomatoes.**
Add the garlic and smoked paprika, stirring continuously for exactly 30 seconds so it doesn't turn bitter. Immediately pour in the crushed tomatoes to stop the frying, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot.
- 2 Add the lentils, bay leaf, and employ the chascado technique on the potato.**
Instead of slicing the potato cleanly, cut a half-inch into the flesh with a paring knife and twist the blade to snap the chunk off. Toss these jagged, starch-releasing chunks into the pot.
- 3 Cover with broth, bring to a gentle boil, and simmer until tender.**
Reduce the heat to low, partially cover, and simmer gently for 30 to 35 minutes. Do not let it boil violently, or the lentils will shed their skins and turn to mush.
- 4 Reintegrate the chorizo and let the stew rest before serving.**
Stir the reserved chorizo back into the pot, turn off the heat, and cover completely. Let it sit undisturbed for 5 minutes so the released starches can naturally thicken the broth into a rich stew.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Mind your chorizo.**
It is absolutely critical that you buy firm, dry-cured Spanish chorizo from the deli or specialty cheese section (like Palacios). Do not buy raw, crumbly Mexican chorizo in the plastic tube—it will disintegrate and turn the dish into an acidic, greasy soup.

- **The 15-Minute Abuela Cheat Code.**

If you're pressed for time, swap the dried lentils for two 15-oz cans of high-quality cooked brown lentils (rinsed) and skip the raw potato. Make the sofrito and chorizo as written, add the canned lentils with just 1 1/2 cups of broth, and simmer for 10 minutes. It's a completely authentic Spanish shortcut.

- **Pimentón matters.**

Use Pimentón de la Vera (sweet smoked paprika). Standard, unsmoked Hungarian paprika lacks the campfire aroma that gives this stew its backbone.



Macarrones con Chorizo de la Abuela

IF YOU ASK ANYONE RAISED IN A SPANISH HOUSEHOLD WHAT dish defines their childhood, the answer is almost always Macarrones con Chorizo. It is the ultimate weeknight comfort food, filling the house with the intoxicating, smoky aroma of pimentón and slow-simmered tomatoes. Forget the multi-hour, complex stews; this is the real, unpretentious pulse of the Spanish home kitchen. The magic is not in a fancy ingredient, but in the technique: slowly frying dry-cured Spanish chorizo to release its vibrant crimson oil—la grasita—and using it to build a deeply meaty, satisfying sauce that clings to every

RIDGE OF THE PASTA. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR AND SOURCE real dry-cured Spanish chorizo; use the raw Mexican variety, and you will end up with an oily, unrecognizable mess.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	penne rigate or ziti pasta	1/2 tsp	sugar
1 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil	1/2 tsp	dried oregano
6 oz	Spanish dry-cured chorizo <i>casing removed and diced into small bite-sized cubes</i>	to taste	kosher salt
1 large	yellow onion <i>very finely diced</i>	to taste	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
2 med	garlic cloves <i>minced</i>	1 cup	low-moisture mozzarella or mild cheddar cheese <i>grated</i>
1/4 cup	dry white wine	1/4 cup	Parmesan or Grana Padano cheese <i>grated</i>
28 oz	crushed tomatoes		

PREPARATION

- **Preheat the broiler.**

Position a rack in the upper third of your oven and preheat the broiler so it is ready for the final gratin step.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 **Render the golden fat.**

Place a large, deep skillet or Dutch oven over medium-low heat and add the olive oil and diced chorizo. Cook slowly, stirring occasionally, until the chorizo becomes slightly crispy at the edges and releases a pool of bright red, paprika-infused oil into the pan, about 5 to 7 minutes. Do not rush this over high heat, or the paprika will burn and turn intensely bitter.

2 **Build the sofrito directly in the fat.**

Leaving the chorizo and all its glorious red fat in the pan, add the finely diced onion. Sauté until deeply softened, translucent, and stained a beautiful orange-red, about 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in the minced garlic and cook for 1 minute more until fragrant. If using the white wine, pour it in now, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom, and let it simmer until the smell of alcohol is completely gone.

3 **Simmer the sauce.**

Pour in the crushed tomatoes, then add the sugar, dried oregano, a generous pinch of kosher salt, and a few grinds of black pepper. Stir well to combine. Reduce the heat to low, partially cover the skillet, and let the sauce simmer gently for 15 to 20 minutes so it thickens, darkens, and the flavors meld.

1 Boil the pasta al dente.

While the sauce simmers, bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a rolling boil. Add the pasta and cook according to the package directions, draining it 1 to 2 minutes early so it retains a slight bite. Reserve a half-cup of the starchy pasta water before draining.

2 Marry the pasta and the sauce.

Add the drained pasta directly into the simmering chorizo-tomato sauce. Toss vigorously, ensuring every tube is heavily coated in the red sauce, splashing in a little of the reserved pasta water to loosen it into a glossy coating if needed.

3 Gratiné under the broiler.

If your skillet is oven-safe, keep it there; otherwise, transfer the pasta to a baking dish. Sprinkle the top evenly with the melting cheese and the Parmesan. Place under the broiler for 3 to 5 minutes, watching carefully, until the cheese is melted, bubbling, and golden brown in spots. Serve immediately, straight from the pan.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **The Chorizo Conundrum.**

The single biggest mistake you can make is confusing dry-cured Spanish chorizo with raw Mexican chorizo. Look for brands like Palacios, Fermín, or Boar's Head Spanish-Style Chorizo in the deli or cheese section. Mexican chorizo will disintegrate into an oily chili and ruin the delicate smokiness of the dish.

- **Do not skip the sugar.**

The half-teaspoon of sugar is not there to make the sauce sweet; it is a non-negotiable abuela trick to neutralize the harsh, metallic acidity that often plagues American canned crushed tomatoes.

- **The One-Pot Express Trick.**

Want to save washing a pot? Once your tomato sauce is bubbling, add the dry pasta right into the skillet. Pour in just enough boiling water to barely cover the pasta, turn the heat to medium-low, cover, and let simmer for 12 to 15 minutes. The pasta absorbs the chorizo flavor directly into its core, and the starches thicken the sauce beautifully.



La Cena Ligera (The Gentle Evening)

Solutions for exhausted weeknights, inspired by the late, light Spanish dinners.

The evening meal is rarely a grand production. By the time ten o'clock rolls around, the day has already extracted its toll. La cena is less about culinary ambition and more about grace—a quiet, pragmatic winding down. It's the gentle thud of a knife slicing embutidos on a wooden board, the alchemy of stale bread revived in a garlic broth, or the sacred geometry of a perfectly flipped tortilla.

These aren't the towering paellas trotted out for Sunday crowds; this is the quiet food of survival, elevated by generations of collective habit.

It's the beauty of eating well when everyone is simply too damn tired to cook. The trick isn't found in complex technique, but in the instinctual knowledge of how to treat an egg, a potato, and whatever odds and ends happen to be lingering in the fridge. What follows is the true evening rhythm of the Spanish home—unfussy, unpretentious, and exactly what is required at the end of a long, bruising day.





Tortilla Española Clásica (The National Treasure)

tor-TEE-yah deh pah-TAH-tahs

IF THERE IS A SINGLE DISH THAT DEFINES THE SOUL OF A Spanish home, it is the Tortilla de Patatas. In America, we frequently mistake it for a dense, overcooked frittata, but a true Spanish tortilla is a revelation of texture—impossibly creamy, deeply savory, and lush. The secret to recreating that exact Madrid tapas bar magic in an Ohio kitchen requires no special equipment, just absolute respect for two techniques. You must gently poach, not fry, your potatoes in olive oil,

AND YOU MUST LET THOSE HOT POTATOES SOAK IN THE beaten eggs for a full fifteen minutes before cooking to guarantee a juicy, melt-in-your-mouth interior.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cup	extra virgin olive oil	1 med	sweet yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>
1 1/2 lb	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled and cut into irregular 1/8-inch slices</i>	6 large	eggs
		1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>

PREPARATION

- **Embrace the irregular cut.**

When prepping the potatoes, do not aim for machine-perfect uniform slices. A rustic, slightly uneven cut allows different textures to form as they cook, providing the authentic homestyle bite.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Poach the potatoes and onions in olive oil.**

Place a wide skillet over medium-low heat and pour in the oil, potatoes, and onion with 1 teaspoon of salt. Maintain a gentle, lazy simmer—never a roaring fry—for 15 to 20 minutes until the potatoes yield easily to a wooden spoon and the onions are golden.

- 2 Drain the oil completely.**

Carefully pour the mixture through a large mesh strainer set over a heat-proof bowl. Save that drained, flavor-infused olive oil for tomorrow's cooking.

1 Soak the hot potatoes in the beaten eggs.

Crack the eggs into a large bowl, add the remaining 1/2 teaspoon of salt, and beat gently with a spoon just until combined. Dump the hot, drained potatoes and onions into the eggs, stir gently, and walk away for 10 to 15 minutes so the potatoes can drink in the egg.

2 Sear the tortilla in a smaller pan.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the reserved oil in an 8-inch non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Pour in the rested mixture, quickly press it into an even layer, and let it cook undisturbed for 1 minute before lowering the heat to medium-low to cook for 3 to 4 minutes more.

3 Execute the flip.

Place a flat plate upside down over the skillet, hold it firmly with a flat hand, and invert the pan and plate together in one swift, confident motion.

4 Seal the bottom.

Slide the raw side of the tortilla off the plate back into the skillet, tucking the edges inward with a rubber spatula to form a rounded puck. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes more for a traditional, slightly runny center, then flip onto a serving plate and let rest for 10 minutes.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **Respect the pan geometry.**

Do not attempt this in a massive 12-inch skillet. A smaller 8-inch pan forces the mixture upward, creating the characteristic thick, creamy structure found in Spain.

- **Do not substitute the potatoes.**

Russets will disintegrate into a greasy mush. Yukon Golds are the mandatory American substitute for Spain's waxy Monalisa potatoes.



Ensalada Mixta (The Everyday Salad)

en-sah-lah-dah meeks-tah

THERE IS A PERVERSIVE AMERICAN MYTH THAT ALL GREAT food requires sweat and toil, but the Spanish know better. Ensalada Mixta is the unpretentious, undeniable king of the weeknight dinner—a masterful collision of crisp garden vegetables and Spain's revered, olive-oil-packed canned preserves. This isn't a delicate little side salad you eat in a personal bowl; it is a communal centerpiece, built on a sprawling platter and dressed aggressively at the table. The true genius lies not in a complicated emulsified vinaigrette, but in the strict, chronological application of salt, then vinegar, and finally, oil.

INGREDIENTS

1 med	head of Romaine or Iceberg lettuce <i>washed, dried completely, and torn by hand</i>	14 oz	canned white asparagus <i>drained</i>
2 large	Beefsteak or vine-ripe tomatoes <i>cored and cut into thick wedges</i>	1/2 cup	canned sweet corn <i>rinsed and drained</i>
1/2 med	red or sweet Vidalia onion <i>sliced into very thin half-moons</i>	1/2 cup	Spanish Manzanilla olives <i>drained</i>
1 med	carrot <i>peeled and finely grated</i>	2 large	eggs <i>hard-boiled, peeled, and quartered lengthwise</i>
10 oz	tuna packed in olive oil <i>drained and gently flaked</i>	1/2 tsp	fine sea salt
		2 tbsp	Sherry vinegar
		4 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil

PREPARATION

- **Assemble the platter ahead of time if needed.**

All ingredients can be chopped and arranged on the platter hours in advance and kept in the fridge covered with a damp paper towel. Crucially, do not apply the salt, vinegar, and oil until the exact moment it hits the dinner table, or the lettuce will wilt into a tragic, soggy mess.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Boil the eggs and prep the pantry preserves.**
Bring a small saucepan of water to a boil, add the eggs, and cook for exactly 10 to 12 minutes before plunging them into an ice bath to prevent gray rings. While they cool, drain your tuna, asparagus, and corn, leaving the tuna in relatively large flakes.

1 Wash and tear the fresh vegetables.

Dry the lettuce meticulously to ensure the dressing clings, tearing the leaves by hand to prevent bruising. Slice the tomatoes into wedges, shred the carrot, and cut the onion into paper-thin half-moons.

2 Construct the salad on a wide, shallow serving platter.

This is built in layers, not tossed in a bowl. Lay down the lettuce as a base, scatter the tomatoes and onions, then sprinkle with the grated carrot and corn. Artfully arrange the flaked tuna, whole white asparagus spears, and quartered eggs across the top, finishing with a scattering of green olives.

3 Dress the salad directly at the table using the chronological rule of thirds.

Do not mix the dressing in a jar. Right before serving, sprinkle the salt evenly over the vegetables to draw out their juices, followed by a drizzle of the sherry vinegar, and finally the extra virgin olive oil to seal everything in.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **Respect the can.**

In Spain, conservas like white asparagus and olive-oil-packed tuna are revered artisanal delicacies, not bottom-shelf compromises. Don't feel guilty opening cans for this salad; they are the authentic stars of the dish.

- **Tame the raw onion.**

If American red onions are too pungent, soak the slices in a bowl of ice water with a splash of vinegar for ten minutes before draining. It removes the harsh sulfurous bite while keeping the crucial crunch.

- **Eat communally.**

This salad is traditionally served in the center of the table. Guests should use large serving spoons to scoop a composed portion onto their individual plates.



El Domingo y La Sobremesa

Sacred weekend feasts, communal pans, and the lingering hours of conversation that follow.

Sunday in a Spanish household isn't a day of rest—it's a marathon. The dining table becomes a chaotic, beautiful battleground of overlapping voices, stained napkins, and heavy pans dropped dead-center. This is the domain of the Sunday paella, its edges fiercely defended for the best scrape of socarrat, and the

massive communal empanada passed down the line until hands are slick with oil. There is no precious plating in the kitchen; you eat from the source.

Then comes the sobremesa. The plates are pushed aside, but nobody stands up. This is the sacred, indefinite hour where a late lunch bleeds into the evening. Fortified by the burnt-sugar crack of a crema catalana or the dense caramel gravity of abuela's flan, the table surrenders to strong coffee and cold chupitos. It is a stubborn, glorious refusal to let the weekend end, built on the simple truth that the best parts of life happen over the ruins of a massive meal.





Fideuá Rápida de Marisco (The Sunday Paella Alternative)

fee-deh-WAH

FIDEUÁ IS PAELLA'S COASTAL, FAST-COOKING COUSIN, BORN on the fishing boats of Valencia when a clever cook realized he was out of rice. For the home cook, it is the ultimate secret weapon. While a proper Sunday paella demands specific grain, special pans, and an abundance of patience, this weeknight version utilizes toasted, broken angel hair pasta to slash the cooking time without sacrificing the deep, oceanic soul of the original. The grandmother's secret is non-

NEGOTIABLE HERE: YOU TOAST THE DRY NOODLES IN THE PAN until they are nutty and golden, allowing them to drink up the rich seafood broth and literally stand straight up in the pan when they're finished.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	large raw shrimp, shell-on <i>peeled, shells reserved</i>	1 small	red bell pepper <i>finely diced</i>
1/2 lb	cleaned squid tubes <i>sliced into 1/2-inch rings</i>	3 small clove	garlic <i>minced</i>
1/2 lb	fresh mussels <i>scrubbed and debearded</i>	2 med	Roma tomatoes <i>halved and grated on a box grater, skins discarded</i>
3 cup	seafood or fish stock	1 tsp	Spanish sweet smoked paprika
1 pinch	saffron threads	to taste	kosher salt and black pepper
8 oz	dried angel hair pasta <i>broken into 1-inch to 2-inch pieces</i>	1 med	lemon <i>cut into wedges</i>
4 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil <i>divided</i>	1/2 cup	alioli
1 small	yellow onion <i>very finely diced</i>		

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Fortify the broth with the shrimp shells.

Place the reserved shrimp shells in a small saucepan over medium heat with a drop of olive oil and sauté for 2 minutes until pink. Pour in the seafood stock, add the saffron threads, and bring to a gentle simmer, keeping it warm on the back burner.

1 Toast the broken pasta in a wide skillet.

Place a 12-inch heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat with 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the broken angel hair pasta and stir constantly for 3 to 4 minutes until deeply golden brown and nutty, then immediately remove the pasta to a bowl and leave the skillet unwashed.

2 Sear the seafood quickly to leave its flavor in the pan.

Return the skillet to medium-high heat with the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Season the peeled shrimp and squid rings with salt, then sear them in a single layer for just 1 to 2 minutes per side until barely opaque. Remove the seafood to a plate before it overcooks, leaving the flavorful drippings behind.

3 Build the sofrito slowly.

Reduce the heat to medium-low, add the onion and red bell pepper, and cook slowly for 5 to 7 minutes until soft. Stir in the minced garlic for 1 minute, then add the grated tomato pulp and let it caramelize into a dark, jam-like consistency.

4 Pull the pan off the heat to add the paprika.

Remove the skillet from the burner completely for 10 seconds before stirring in the smoked paprika. This old-school trick prevents the residual heat from burning the delicate spice and turning the whole dish bitter.

1 Combine the toasted noodles and broth without stirring.

Return the pan to medium-high heat, toss the toasted noodles into the sofrito to coat, and pour in 2 1/2 cups of the hot, saffron-infused broth through a strainer, discarding the shells. Shake the pan gently to distribute the noodles evenly, and from this point forward, absolutely do not stir.

2 Simmer rapidly until the liquid reduces.

Bring to a rapid boil, then reduce to a simmer uncovered for 6 to 8 minutes. When most of the liquid is absorbed but the pan is still slightly wet, arrange the seared shrimp, squid, and raw mussels over the top of the noodles.

3 Listen for the crackle that forms the crust.

Cook for another 3 to 4 minutes until the mussels open and the pan sounds like it is sizzling rather than boiling, indicating the water is gone and the bottom layer is frying into a crispy crust called the socarrat. The tips of the thin noodles will curl upward and appear to stand on end.

4 Rest the fideuá before serving.

Turn off the heat, cover the pan loosely with a clean kitchen towel, and let it rest for 5 minutes so the remaining steam perfectly sets the pasta. Serve straight from the pan with lemon wedges and a generous dollop of garlic alioli.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not substitute with thick macaroni.**

While some English-language blogs suggest elbow macaroni, Spanish locals correctly insist on thin noodles. Standard angel hair pasta broken into pieces absorbs the right amount of broth, toasts quickly, and crisps perfectly at the bottom of the pan.



Empanada Rápida de Atún (The Communal Bake)

em-pah-NAH-dah RAH-pee-dah deh ah-TOON

IF THERE IS ONE SCENT THAT MEANS FAMILY IS GATHERING in a Spanish home, it is the deeply savory, paprika-laced aroma of a massive empanada baking on a sheet tray. Forget the little deep-fried hand pies you might find elsewhere; this is the majestic, communal centerpiece of Sunday afternoons. The secret here isn't hours of proofing dough—it is an ingenious, yeast-free crust hydrated with white wine and the paprika-stained oil harvested directly from the

SLOW-POACHED TUNA AND ONION FILLING. IT IS A masterpiece of home economics that tastes fiercely of the homeland and comes together on a busy weeknight.

INGREDIENTS

3/4 cup	extra virgin olive oil	2 large	hard-boiled eggs <i>peeled and chopped</i>
3 large	yellow onions <i>finely diced</i>	1/4 cup	green olives <i>pitted and sliced</i>
1 med	green bell pepper <i>finely diced</i>	4 1/4 cup	unbleached all-purpose flour
1 med	red bell pepper <i>finely diced</i>	1/2 cup	dry white wine
1 tbsp	sweet smoked paprika	1/2 cup	whole milk
1/2 cup	tomato passata	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>
15 oz	canned tuna in olive oil <i>well-drained</i>	1 large	egg <i>lightly beaten</i>

PREPARATION

- **Commit to the chop.**

You are building a jammy confit, not a stir-fry. Take the time to finely and uniformly dice the onions and peppers so they melt properly during the slow poach.

- **Hard-boil the eggs.**

Boil two eggs, cool them entirely in an ice bath, peel, and roughly chop them before you begin cooking the vegetables.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Build the zaragallada.

Heat the olive oil in a wide skillet or Dutch oven over medium-low heat, add the mountain of onions and peppers, season with a half teaspoon of salt, and slow-poach for 30 to 40 minutes until collapsed and deeply translucent.

2 Bloom the paprika and tomatoes.

Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the sweet smoked paprika, followed by the tomato passata, allowing the residual heat to meld the flavors without turning the paprika bitter.

3 Harvest the liquid gold.

Pour the entire vegetable mixture through a fine-mesh strainer set over a bowl, pressing gently with a spatula to extract exactly a half cup of the vibrant, red oil; set this oil aside to cool.

4 Finish the filling.

Transfer the drained vegetables to a mixing bowl, gently fold in the drained tuna, chopped eggs, and sliced olives, then let the mixture cool completely so it doesn't melt the raw dough later.

5 Mix the instant masa.

Preheat the oven to 400°F and line a half-sheet pan with parchment paper; in a large bowl, whisk the harvested sofrito oil, white wine, milk, and the remaining teaspoon of salt, then gradually stir in the flour until a shaggy dough forms.

1 Knead and divide the dough.

Turn the dough out onto a clean counter and knead for 5 minutes until it feels incredibly supple and smooth, then divide it into two pieces, making one slightly larger than the other.

2 Roll and assemble the bottom.

Roll the larger piece of dough paper-thin directly on the parchment paper to cover the bottom of your sheet pan, then spread the cooled tuna filling evenly over it, leaving a 1-inch border.

3 Top and crimp.

Roll out the second piece of dough to roughly the same size, drape it over the filling, and fold the bottom edge up and over the top edge, rolling and pinching tightly to seal the pie.

4 Vent, wash, and bake.

Snip a 1-inch chimney hole in the dead center of the top crust to let steam escape, brush the entire surface with the beaten egg, and bake on the middle rack for 40 to 45 minutes until deeply golden brown and crisp.

5 Cool before serving.

Let the empanada cool on a wire rack for at least 30 minutes; this communal bake is traditionally and best eaten at room temperature.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **The oil matters.**

Do not skimp on the olive oil during the initial poach. You are deliberately using excess fat so you can harvest it for the dough, which bridges the flavor of the filling and the crust.

- **Use oil-packed tuna.**

Water-packed tuna is too dry for this application and lacks the richness required for a baked pie. Use the good stuff, but drain it well so it doesn't make the bottom crust soggy.

- **Make it ahead.**

This dish is a weeknight savior if you make the filling a day or two in advance. Store the harvested oil in a jar on the counter and the tuna filling in the fridge until you are ready to mix the 15-minute dough and assemble.