

A vibrant still life of Peruvian food. In the center is a large bowl of yellow soup with a white cream swirl and a green herb garnish. Surrounding it are several smaller bowls: one with yellow corn kernels, one with black olives, one with sliced hard-boiled eggs, and one with yellow potatoes. A glass of bright pink juice sits to the right. In the background, there are ears of corn, some purple and some red, and a bunch of fresh green cilantro. The entire scene is set on a colorful, patterned textile, possibly a shawl or poncho, with a silver spoon resting in the foreground. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with greenery and sunlight filtering through.

The
Peruvian
Family Kitchen

Recipes with love from
The Robot Book Club

The Peruvian Family Kitchen

*Authentic Recipes and Traditions 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 smell, often the first memory. Not the rarefied air of a high-end kitchen, but the unapologetic, earthy perfume of garlic and onion hitting hot oil, spiced by *ají panca*. It's the aroma of home, even when "home" is thousands of miles and a generation removed from the bustling markets of Lima or the quiet corners of the Andes.

This isn't a book for tourists. It's for the inheritors, the first-generation, who know the true religion of a Peruvian *almuerzo* but contend with the tyranny of the American workday. It understands that recreating a childhood dish often means adapting, not sacrificing. It's the practical magic: how a humble can of evaporated milk turns a simple broth into a luxurious *Sopa a la Minuta*, or how last night's rice finds new life as a crispy *Tacu Tacu*.

Here, the sprawling midday feasts of the homeland are distilled, reframed for the dinner hour. The cherished ritual of *El Lonche* becomes a weeknight comfort, a moment of pause. The communal sizzle of a weekend *pollada* moves from a fundraising street party to a backyard barbecue, flavor uncompromised. The very soul of Peruvian cooking, from the vibrant quickness of *Ceviche Clásico* to the deep, slow satisfaction of *Seco de Carne*, finds its way onto your table, using ingredients you can actually find.

Forget the esoteric. This is about genuine, unpretentious flavor, sourced from the supermarket or the corner Latin market, brought to life with purpose and practicality. This is how heritage endures: one honest, delicious plate at a time, keeping the fire alive in kitchens across new landscapes. The stories are in these dishes. Let's get to work.



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

A BAD TUESDAY, A SUDDEN CHILL, OR A BRUISED EGO demands Sopa a la Minuta. Born in early Lima lunch counters to feed hungry patrons fast, this deeply savory, smoky broth tastes like an all-day affair but comes together in minutes. The secret lies in the aderezo, the foundational Peruvian flavor base, and the deep, sweet smoke of aji panca paste readily found in local Latin markets. It is rustic, kinetic, and entirely pragmatic weeknight cooking. Ground beef browns fast, angel hair cooks in seconds, and evaporated milk provides a luxurious finish that will not curdle. Just do not skip the final, critical technique:

RUB THE DRIED OREGANO FIERCELY BETWEEN YOUR PALMS directly over the steaming pot to release the volatile oils that smell exactly like an Andean grandmother's kitchen.

INGREDIENTS

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

PREPARATION

- **Mise en place is absolutely critical.**

Because the final steps of this minute soup move extraordinarily fast, ensure your eggs are beaten, your pasta is broken, and your milk is measured before the broth finishes simmering.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Build the aderezo patiently.**

Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat, then cook the red onion with a pinch of salt until completely soft and translucent, about 6 to 8 minutes, before adding the garlic for one final minute.

1 Fry the aji panca.

Push the aromatics to the edges, add the aji panca and tomato paste to the center, and fry for 2 to 3 minutes until the chili paste darkens slightly and separates from the oil to cook out its raw bitterness.

2 Brown the beef and build the fond.

Increase the heat to medium-high, add the ground beef, season with salt and pepper, and break it apart into very fine crumbles until fully browned and sticking slightly to the pot.

3 Simmer the broth.

Pour in the beef broth, scraping up all the browned bits from the bottom, then add the bay leaf and diced potato, bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer covered for 10 minutes.

4 Cook the pasta.

Uncover the pot, return the broth to a lively simmer, and drop in the broken angel hair, stirring occasionally until al dente, about 3 to 4 minutes.

5 Create the egg ribbons.

Lower the heat so the soup barely simmers, stir the broth in a slow circular motion, and slowly pour the beaten eggs in a thin, steady stream, letting it cook undisturbed for 30 seconds.

6 Apply the grandmother's finish.

Turn off the heat entirely, stir in the evaporated milk, then hold the dried oregano directly over the steaming pot and rub your palms together forcefully to crush the herb and release its essential oils before serving.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not substitute the evaporated milk.**

Regular dairy milk lacks the stable protein structure of evaporated milk and will likely curdle when introduced to the acidic, hot tomato broth.

- **Keep it distinct from Sopa Criolla.**

Sopa a la Minuta is defined by ground beef and eggs dropped directly into the broth; avoid the temptation to use cubed steak, fry a separate egg, or add bread, which transforms it into a different, more labor-intensive dish.



Arroz Tapado

IF THERE IS ONE DISH THAT DROPS A FIRST-GENERATION Peruvian American straight back into their childhood kitchen on a random Tuesday, it is Arroz Tapado. Born in the coastal north as a quick fix for unexpected guests, it is a masterclass in pragmatic domestic cooking. You take a humble pound of ground beef and stretch it into a feast, sandwiching a sweet and briny matrix of raisins, Kalamata olives, and aji panca between tight layers of garlic rice. This is not fussy restaurant food. It is an unpretentious, highly functional architectural marvel that relies on the slow, deliberate frying of a proper red onion aderezo to taste exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp	vegetable oil	1/2 tsp	ground cumin
2 clove	garlic <i>finely minced</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper
2 cup	long-grain white rice <i>rinsed well</i>	1 tsp	fine sea salt
2 1/4 cup	water	1/4 cup	water or beef broth
1 tsp	fine sea salt	1/4 cup	raisins <i>soaked in warm water for 10 minutes, then drained</i>
2 tbsp	vegetable oil	1/4 cup	Kalamata olives <i>pitted and roughly chopped</i>
1 large	red onion <i>very finely diced</i>	2 large	eggs <i>hard-boiled, peeled, and chopped into small cubes</i>
3 clove	garlic <i>finely minced</i>	2 tbsp	fresh parsley <i>finely chopped</i>
2 tbsp	ají panca paste	2 large	ripe plantains <i>peeled and sliced diagonally</i>
1 tbsp	tomato paste	4 large	eggs
1 lb	80/20 ground chuck	2 tbsp	vegetable oil
1 tsp	dried oregano <i>rubbed between palms</i>		

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Cook the foundational garlic rice.

In a medium saucepan, heat two tablespoons of oil over medium heat and briefly toast the minced garlic until fragrant but not browned. Stir in the rinsed rice to coat the grains, pour in the water and salt, and bring to a rolling boil. Immediately reduce the heat to the lowest setting, cover tightly, and simmer for twenty minutes before fluffing with a fork.

1 Build the quintessential Peruvian aderezo.

While the rice simmers, heat another two tablespoons of oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the finely diced red onion and cook slowly until translucent and deeply softened, about seven minutes. Stir in the minced garlic, ají panca, and tomato paste, cooking continuously until the pastes darken and smell deeply fragrant—do not rush this step, as it is the absolute soul of the dish.

2 Brown and season the ground beef.

Increase the heat to medium-high, add the ground beef to the skillet, and break it apart with a wooden spoon. Season with the oregano, cumin, black pepper, and salt, cooking until the meat is fully browned and integrated with the aderezo.

3 Hydrate the filling and fold in the sweet and briny accents.

Pour the water or beef broth into the skillet to scrape up any browned bits and ensure the filling is slightly juicy, not dry. Turn off the heat and gently fold in the plumped raisins, chopped olives, hard-boiled eggs, and parsley, taking care not to mash the yolks into a paste.

4 Fry the plantains and eggs to complete the classic a lo pobre garnish.

In a separate skillet, heat a thin layer of oil over medium heat and fry the plantain slices until deeply caramelized and golden on both sides. Remove them to a paper towel, then fry the remaining four eggs to your liking, ideally keeping the yolks runny so they can sauce the rice.

1 Mold the rice and meat into a freestanding dome.

Lightly brush the inside of a small bowl or wide mug with a drop of oil. Pack the bottom third tightly with the warm garlic rice, add a generous one-inch layer of the beef filling, and top with more rice, pressing down firmly to ensure the structure holds.

2 Invert and serve immediately.

Place your serving plate upside down over the bowl, hold them tightly together, and flip. Gently lift the bowl away to reveal the layered dome, crown it with a fried egg, and nestle the caramelized plantains right alongside.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **The weekend upgrade.**

If you have an extra fifteen minutes, swap the ground beef for a pound of sirloin steak chopped by hand into tiny quarter-inch cubes. This is the hyper-traditional grandmother's secret that provides a rustic, incredibly satisfying texture to the filling.

• **Do not skip the ají panca.**

This dark red, sun-dried pepper paste offers a complex, smoky flavor with almost no heat. It is non-negotiable for an authentic Peruvian aderezo and can easily be found in the international aisle of most supermarkets or any Latin market.



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.





Peruvian Tea Sandwich

sahn-weech tree-pleh clah-see-koh

BETWEEN FIVE AND SEVEN-THIRTY IN THE EVENING, PERU stops for el lonche. It is a sacred window, a cultural echo of British tea time where the undisputed king of the table is the Sándwich Triple. The magic of this unassuming stack lies entirely in its structural engineering: mashed egg, dry tomato, and lime-laced avocado insulated between impossibly soft, crustless white bread. For a first-generation kid in an Ohio suburb, a bite of a perfectly built, tart, mayonnaise-sealed Triple is a direct flight back to the family table.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup commercial mayonnaise

1 1/2	fresh lime juice	4 large	eggs <i>hard-boiled and peeled</i>
tbsp		2 med	Roma tomatoes
1/2 tsp	yellow mustard	2 large	Hass avocados <i>halved, pitted, and sliced into thin half-moons</i>
1/4 tsp	fine sea salt	1 tbsp	fresh lime juice
1/4 tsp	white pepper	1/4 tsp	kosher salt
16 slices	soft white sandwich bread		

PREPARATION

- **Peel and deseed the tomatoes.**

A watery tomato will destroy the delicate bread of a Triple. Core the tomatoes, score an 'X' on the bottom, and blanch them in boiling water for thirty seconds so the skins slip off easily. Cut them in half and scoop out all the seeds and locular gel before slicing the firm flesh paper-thin.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Whisk together the lime mayonnaise.

In a small bowl, aggressively whisk the commercial mayonnaise, one and a half tablespoons of lime juice, mustard, sea salt, and white pepper. This highly acidic spread serves as a lipid barrier to waterproof the delicate bread.

2 Mix the egg mortar.

Finely chop the hard-boiled eggs and mix them with one to two tablespoons of the lime mayonnaise, seasoning with salt and pepper. Mashing the egg creates a structural mortar so it will not tumble out onto your lap upon first bite.

1 Season the avocado.

Drizzle the thin avocado half-moons lightly with the remaining lime juice and a pinch of kosher salt to halt oxidation and amplify their rich flavor.

2 Assemble the foundation.

Lay out four slices of bread to serve as the bases for your sandwiches. Spread a thin, edge-to-edge layer of the lime mayonnaise on one side of each, then shingle the avocado slices evenly across them.

3 Build the middle and top layers.

Spread mayonnaise thinly on both sides of four more slices of bread and press them gently over the avocado layers, then top evenly with the mashed egg. Add four more slices, again coated in mayonnaise on both sides, and arrange the dry tomato slices in a single layer.

4 Cap and trim the sandwiches.

Cap each stack with a final slice of bread, mayonnaise side down, and press very gently to set the architecture. Using a sharp serrated knife, meticulously trim the crusts off all four sides of each sandwich, then cut diagonally twice to create sixteen elegant triangles.

5 Protect the crumb with a damp cloth.

Because the crusts are removed, the bread will dry out in minutes. As you finish cutting, arrange the triangles on a platter and immediately cover them with a slightly damp, clean paper towel to maintain that impossibly soft crumb until you serve.



Sánduche de Pollo con Ají Amarillo (Lima-Style Chicken Sandwich)

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

IN LIMA, THE WINDOW BETWEEN FIVE AND SEVEN-THIRTY IN the evening is sacred. It is El Lonche—the essential bridge between lunch and a late dinner, and the undisputed king of this hour is the Sánduche de Pollo. Forget heavy, sweet American deli salads; here, poached chicken is shredded into fine threads, tossed in a bright emulsion of lime, mustard, and fruity, fiery ají amarillo, then packed into a crusty roll. The real secret, the thing that makes it undeniably

PERUVIAN, IS THE MASSIVE HANDFUL OF CRISPY SHOESTRING potato sticks stuffed right inside the bun. It is a masterpiece of textural contrast that you can pull off on a Tuesday night.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	boneless skinless chicken breast	1/2 med	lime <i>juiced</i>
1 med	celery stalk <i>roughly chopped</i>	1 med	celery stalk <i>very finely minced</i>
1 small	carrot <i>roughly chopped</i>	to taste	kosher salt and black pepper
1 tsp	kosher salt	4 med	bolillo rolls <i>sliced in half and lightly toasted</i>
1/2 cup	high-quality mayonnaise	1 cup	shoestring potato sticks
3 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	4 large	green leaf lettuce <i>leaves separated</i>
1 tsp	yellow mustard	1 med	Roma tomato <i>thinly sliced</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Poach the chicken with aromatic vegetables.**
Place the chicken breast, roughly chopped celery, carrot, and salt in a medium pot, cover with an inch of water, and simmer gently over low heat for 20 to 25 minutes until cooked through.
- 2 Shred the chicken while it is still warm.**
Transfer the hot chicken to a large bowl and use an electric hand mixer on low speed to shred the meat into fine threads in seconds, then let it cool slightly.

1 Build the ají amarillo emulsion.

Whisk the mayonnaise, ají amarillo paste, mustard, and lime juice together until smooth and golden, then stir in the finely minced celery and season with salt and pepper.

2 Dress the shredded chicken.

Fold the spicy mayonnaise mixture into the chicken until everything is thoroughly coated and creamy.

3 Assemble the sandwiches with a heavy hand of potato sticks.

Layer the bottom halves of the bolillo rolls with lettuce and seasoned tomato slices, pile on the chicken salad, crown generously with shoestring potato sticks, and firmly press the top buns down to secure it all.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **Doctor up store-bought mayonnaise to save time.**

Making raw-egg mayo on a weeknight is unnecessary when you can achieve the exact Lima sanguchería flavor by spiking a good commercial brand with lime, mustard, and ají amarillo.

• **Rely on the hand mixer trick for authentic texture.**

Shredding chicken with two forks is tedious, but hitting the warm breast with a hand mixer yields perfectly fine, uniform threads in literal seconds.

• **Do not serve the potato sticks on the side.**

The papitas al hilo provide the essential textural contrast that defines this sandwich; they must be packed directly inside the bun.



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.





Ají de Gallina (The Ultimate Comfort Stew)

ah-HEE deh gah-YEE-nah

THIS IS THE DISH THAT DEFINES THE PERUVIAN MEANING OF home. Born from a medieval Spanish dessert, indigenous cooks brilliantly hijacked the recipe centuries ago, swapping imported almonds and sugar for native ají amarillo and pecans. The result is a creamy, deeply vibrant chicken stew. The secret to making it taste exactly like Lima in an American suburb? Sweat the onions with agonizing patience, use canned evaporated milk, and cook the chili paste until the oil practically breaks. No shortcuts.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	boneless skinless chicken breasts	1/2 cup	ají amarillo paste
		1 tsp	ají panca paste
3 cup	water	1/4 tsp	ground turmeric
1 med	celery stalk <i>roughly chopped</i>	1/3 cup	pecans <i>finely ground</i>
1 med	carrot <i>roughly chopped</i>	1/4 cup	parmesan cheese <i>grated</i>
1 tsp	salt	1/4 tsp	white pepper
4 large	white sandwich bread <i>crusts removed and roughly torn</i>	2 cup	white rice <i>steamed</i>
1 cup	evaporated milk	2 med	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>boiled and sliced into thick rounds</i>
3 tbsp	vegetable oil	2 large	eggs <i>hard-boiled and halved</i>
1 large	red onion <i>very finely diced</i>	1/4 cup	Kalamata or black olives
3 small	garlic <i>minced</i>		

PREPARATION

- **Boil the accompaniments.**

Start your rice, boil your potatoes, and hard-boil your eggs before you begin the stew. Having these ready makes the final plating seamless.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 **Poach and shred the chicken.**

Bring the water, salt, celery, and carrot to a boil in a medium pot. Drop in the chicken breasts, lower the heat, and poach gently for 15 minutes until just cooked through. Pull the chicken out, let it cool, and shred it by hand into robust strips. Strain and reserve the broth; you will need it for the sauce.

2 **Blend the thickener.**

Tear the crustless bread into a blender. Pour in the evaporated milk and a half-cup of your reserved warm chicken broth. Let it sit for a minute to soften, then blast it until it forms a completely smooth, silky liquid.

3 **Sweat the onions.**

In a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven or large pan, heat the oil over medium-low. Add the red onion and cook slowly, stirring often, for about 10 minutes until completely translucent and sweet. Do not let them brown. Stir in the garlic and cook for 2 more minutes.

4 **Cook the chili paste until the oil separates.**

This is the defining technique of the dish. Add the ají amarillo paste, ají panca, and turmeric. Increase the heat to medium and stir constantly for 5 to 7 minutes until you achieve what Peruvians call 'hasta que se corte'—the magical moment when little pools of oil separate from the caramelized chili solids.

1 Build the stew.

Pour the blended bread mixture into the chili base. Stir constantly as it heats and thickens into a beautiful, vibrant yellow cream. Fold in the shredded chicken to coat. If the stew feels too stiff, splash in a little more reserved chicken broth until it mimics the texture of a rich risotto.

2 Add the final flourishes.

Lower the heat to a gentle simmer. Stir in the ground pecans and parmesan cheese, letting it bubble for two minutes so the flavors fully meld. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and white pepper.

3 Plate the Peruvian way.

Presentation here is non-negotiable. Place a mound of white rice on a plate beside a few slices of warm, boiled potato. Generously ladle the creamy stew completely over the potatoes, and garnish the top with a hard-boiled egg half and a black olive.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **The weeknight shortcut.**

If you don't have time to poach, tear up a store-bought rotisserie chicken and use half a cup of standard boxed chicken stock for the blender. It's an authentic, practical pivot used in busy households everywhere.

• **A note on the thickener.**

If you're out of white bread, 10 to 12 plain soda crackers (galletas de soda) are an entirely traditional substitute that works perfectly.



Lomo Saltado (The Wok-Fire Express)

IF YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES AND BREATHE IN THE VIOLENT sizzle of soy sauce, vinegar, and searing beef hitting a screaming-hot pan, you're instantly transported to the bustling chifas of Lima—or maybe your parents' kitchen in Ohio on a Tuesday night. Born from 19th-century Chinese immigrants who introduced the wok to Peru, this dish marries Cantonese stir-fry technique with Andean potatoes and the bright, fruity heat of ají amarillo. To make this work without losing your mind on a weeknight, we skip the traditional double-fry

AND DEPLOY HIGH-QUALITY FROZEN FRENCH FRIES, LETTING you focus entirely on ripping high heat and achieving that glorious, smoky sear on the beef.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	top sirloin or beef tenderloin <i>fat trimmed, cut into 1/2-inch thick strips against the grain</i>	1/4 cup	fresh cilantro <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 lb	frozen French fries <i>thick cut or standard straight-cut</i>	1/4 cup	low-sodium soy sauce
2 cup	cooked white rice <i>kept warm</i>	3 tbsp	red wine vinegar
3 tbsp	neutral oil	1 tbsp	oyster sauce
1 large	red onion <i>cut into thick wedges, tight inner core discarded</i>	1 tbsp	ají amarillo paste
2 large	plum tomatoes <i>cored, deseeded, and cut into thick wedges</i>	3 med cloves	garlic <i>minced</i>
2 med	scallions <i>green parts only, sliced into 2-inch pieces</i>	1 tsp	fresh ginger <i>grated</i>
		1/4 cup	beef broth

PREPARATION

- **Bake the French fries until exceptionally crispy.**

Get your oven or air-fryer going according to the package directions while you prep the rest of the ingredients.

- **Mix the master sauce.**

In a small jar, vigorously whisk the soy sauce, red wine vinegar, oyster sauce, ají amarillo paste, and beef broth, then set it right next to the stove so you aren't scrambling later.

- **Quickly marinate the beef.**

Toss the sliced beef with the minced garlic, grated ginger, and exactly 1 tbsp of your master sauce, letting it sit for 5 to 10 minutes while you prep the vegetables.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Sear the beef hard and fast in a smoking-hot pan.

Turn on your kitchen exhaust fan. Heat a wok or a heavy 12-inch cast-iron skillet over maximum heat until smoking, add 1 1/2 tbsp of the neutral oil, and lay the beef down in a single layer. Don't touch it for 60 seconds to build an aggressive crust, toss for another 60 seconds, then immediately remove the beef and its juices to a clean plate.

2 Blister the vegetables without losing their crunch.

Add the remaining 1 1/2 tbsp of oil to the same smoking pan, toss in the red onion wedges, and stir-fry for exactly 1 minute before adding the tomatoes for a final 30 seconds.

3 Deglaze and marry the flavors.

Pour the master sauce mixture into the screaming hot pan so it instantly hisses and reduces, then dump the beef, resting juices, scallions, and half the cilantro back in. Toss violently for 30 to 45 seconds until the sauce thickens into a glossy glaze, then immediately kill the heat.

4 Plate the meat alongside the carbs.

Serve a bed of ultra-crispy fries next to a mound of white rice, spooning the heavy, savory juices of the lomo directly over the potatoes and garnishing with the remaining cilantro.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Respect the batch size.**

If your pan is small, sear the meat in two batches. Overcrowding drops the temperature and steams the beef, robbing you of that essential smoky crust.

- **Don't skip the oyster sauce.**

It bridges the gap between the savory beef and the acidic vinegar, providing the deep, umami-rich backbone that defines true Chinese-Peruvian cooking.



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

IN THE BUSTLING, CHAOTIC LIMA OF THE LATE EIGHTIES, closing down a street to fry chicken wasn't just a party—it was a grassroots survival mechanism. The pollada was born as a neighborhood fundraiser, an act of communal solidarity that eventually followed the diaspora to American suburbs. This adaptation honors the uncompromising depth of aji panca and dark beer, but trades the massive vats of street-side oil for a grandmother's sweat-and-fry trick, ensuring perfectly juicy meat and aggressively crispy skin without turning your kitchen into a commercial fryer.

INGREDIENTS

4 large	bone-in skin-on chicken leg quarters <i>pierced all over with a fork</i>	1 tsp	ground cumin
4 tbsp	ají panca paste	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
6 med	garlic cloves <i>finely grated to a mush</i>	1 tbsp	kosher salt
2 tbsp	soy sauce	1/2 small	green cabbage <i>shredded incredibly thin</i>
2 tbsp	red wine vinegar	1 large	carrot <i>peeled and coarsely grated</i>
1/2 cup	dark beer	3 med	limes <i>juiced</i>
1 tbsp	yellow mustard	2 cup	neutral cooking oil <i>divided</i>
1 tsp	dried oregano <i>rubbed between palms</i>	4 med	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>boiled in salted water until tender and sliced into thick rounds</i>

PREPARATION

- **Prepare the Crema de Huacatay up to three days in advance.**
Blend 1/2 cup jarred huacatay paste, 1 smashed garlic clove, 1/4 chopped red onion, 2 tbsp ají amarillo paste, 1 cup queso fresco, 1/4 cup evaporated milk, and 4 saltines, then emulsify with 2 tbsp neutral oil and salt to taste.
- **Boil the rocoto peppers before blending to tame the unbearable heat for the Crema de Rocoto.**
Boil 2 halved, deseeded rocoto peppers for 5 minutes. Blend with 1/4 red onion, 1 garlic clove, 1 cup queso fresco, 1/4 cup evaporated milk, and 4 saltines, then drizzle in 2 tbsp neutral oil and season with salt.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Whisk the aji panca, garlic, soy sauce, vinegar, dark beer, mustard, oregano, cumin, pepper, and salt in a large bowl.**

Submerge the chicken, massaging the aderezo deeply into the skin and the pierced holes. Cover tightly and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, or ideally overnight.

- 2 Heat a large pot over medium heat with a drizzle of oil and add the chicken along with all the residual marinade.**

Cover tightly and let the chicken sweat in its own juices for 15 to 20 minutes, flipping once, until fully cooked through. Remove to a plate and pat slightly dry to prevent splattering later.

- 3 Toss the shredded cabbage and grated carrot with the lime juice, one tablespoon of oil, salt, and pepper.**

Let the salad sit while you finish the chicken so the acid can slightly soften the raw cabbage.

- 4 Heat a half-inch of neutral oil in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering.**

Carefully lower the cooked chicken pieces into the oil. Fry for 4 to 5 minutes per side until the skin develops a dark, caramelized, and aggressively crispy crust, then remove to a paper towel-lined plate.

- 5 Serve the blistering hot chicken alongside thick slices of boiled potato and a towering mound of acidic cabbage salad to cut through the richness.**

Top the potatoes generously with homemade crema de rocoto or huacatay.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not skip the resting time for the marinade.**

The dark beer and vinegar need time to tenderize the meat, and the dense aderezo requires hours to penetrate the bone.

- **A pinch of MSG is the traditional grandmother's secret.**

While optional, a half teaspoon of Ajinomoto stirred into the marinade is a staple in Peruvian home kitchens for authentic savory depth.



Pollo a la Brasa "Al Toque" (Quick-Fire Home Rotisserie Chicken)

GROWING UP IN THE MIDWEST, REAL POLLO A LA BRASA WAS A holy grail of nostalgia—a ghost of roasting chicken fat and smoky ají panca that usually demanded a pilgrimage to a restaurant two towns over. The secret to that intoxicating, lacquered bird isn't a commercial rotisserie oven; it's the brutal efficiency of flattening the chicken and a deeply savory, Chifa-influenced marinade. We cheat time by spatchcocking, mimicking the intense, even heat of the pollería coals in a standard home oven and slashing the roasting time in half. Armed

WITH DARK BEER, SOY SAUCE, AND A FEW ESSENTIAL Peruvian pastes from your local Latin market, this is the exact, lip-smacking taste of home, achievable on a Tuesday night.

INGREDIENTS

4 lb	whole chicken <i>backbone removed and flattened (spatchcocked)</i>	1 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1 tbsp	vegetable oil	1 tsp	kosher salt
1/3 cup	dark beer	1/4 tsp	Chinese five-spice powder
3 tbsp	soy sauce	1 pinch	MSG
2 tbsp	red wine vinegar	1/2 cup	mayonnaise
2 tbsp	ají panca paste	1/4 cup	fresh cilantro <i>packed, leaves and tender stems</i>
1 tbsp	ají amarillo paste	2 tbsp	ají amarillo paste
5 med clove	garlic <i>grated into a fine paste</i>	1 tbsp	huacatay paste
1 tbsp	ground cumin	1 med clove	garlic <i>smashed</i>
1 tbsp	dried oregano <i>rubbed between palms to release oils</i>	1 tsp	yellow mustard
1 tsp	dried rosemary <i>finely crushed</i>	1 tsp	white vinegar
		1 pinch	fine sea salt

PREPARATION

- **Spatchcock the chicken to ensure an even, high-heat roast.**

Place the chicken breast-side down on a cutting board. Using heavy-duty kitchen shears, cut along both sides of the backbone from tail to neck and remove it. Flip the bird over, press down hard with the heel of your hand on the breastbone until you hear a crack, and lay it flat. Pat the skin aggressively dry with paper towels; moisture is the enemy of crispy skin.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 **Build the aderezo mágico.**

In a medium bowl, whisk together the dark beer, soy sauce, red wine vinegar, ají panca paste, 1 tablespoon of the ají amarillo paste, grated garlic, cumin, oregano, rosemary, black pepper, kosher salt, five-spice powder, and MSG. Gently loosen the skin over the chicken breasts and thighs with your fingers, massaging a third of the marinade directly onto the meat under the skin, then rub the rest into every crevice on the outside. Let it sit at room temperature for 30 to 45 minutes while the oven preheats.

1 Roast the chicken hard and fast.

Preheat your oven to 425°F. Line a heavy rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil, set a lightly oiled wire rack on top, and place the chicken on the rack, breast-side up, tucking the wing tips behind the shoulders. Roast for 40 to 45 minutes, basting halfway through with any residual marinade or pan drippings, until the skin is deeply mahogany, slightly charred at the edges, and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh registers 165°F.

2 Blend the Ají de Pollería while the bird roasts.

In a blender or food processor, combine the mayonnaise, cilantro, the remaining 2 tablespoons of ají amarillo paste, huacatay paste, smashed garlic clove, mustard, and white vinegar. Blend until perfectly smooth and vibrant green, adjusting with sea salt to taste, then refrigerate to allow the flavors to amplify.

3 Rest the meat, carve, and serve.

Remove the chicken from the oven and let it rest undisturbed for 10 minutes; this allows the juices to redistribute and the skin to crisp up as residual moisture evaporates. Carve into quarters and serve immediately alongside a mountain of thick-cut French fries, a simple tossed salad, and a generous bowl of the green sauce.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Holy Trinity of Peruvian Pastes.**

Ají panca, ají amarillo, and huacatay are non-negotiable. They are inexpensive, shelf-stable, and increasingly easy to find at your local Latin market. Buying these three jars unlocks the authentic soul of this cuisine and saves you from relying on pale imitations.

- **Embrace the MSG.**

A pinch of Ajinomoto is the Grandmother's secret, tracing back to Peru's rich Chifa (Chinese) immigration history. It bridges the gap between a 'good home roast' and the undeniable, lip-smacking savory reality of a true Lima pollería.

- **The Science of the Skin.**

The complex sugars in the malted dark beer and the amino acids in the soy sauce accelerate the Maillard reaction. Combined with the 425°F oven, this guarantees the skin develops that iconic lacquered, blistered appearance without needing a spit.



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.





Chilled Yellow Potato and Tuna Causa

kow-sah lee-men-nyah de ah-toon

IN PERU, THE POTATO IS SUSTENANCE, HISTORY, AND LIFE itself. The Causa Limeña traces its name to the 19th-century War of the Pacific, when local women smashed native yellow potatoes with chili and lime to sell to troops, rallying with the cry, "¡Para la causa!" Today, this chilled, savory cask of vibrant potato dough, layered with creamy tuna salad and rich avocado, is a cornerstone of Peruvian home cooking. It is a masterclass in taking simple pantry staples and engineering them into something deeply nostalgic and undeniably elegant.

INGREDIENTS

2 lb	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>scrubbed clean, unpeeled</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	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</i>	1/2 cup	cherry tomatoes <i>diced</i>
1/2 cup	mayonnaise		

PREPARATION

- **Keep the jackets on.**

Do not peel or chop the potatoes before boiling. Boiling them whole with the skin intact keeps the water out, preserving the dry, buttery texture you need to build the perfect dough.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Boil the potatoes.**

Place the whole, unpeeled potatoes in a large pot, cover with cold water, and add a heavy pinch of salt. Simmer over medium-high heat for 25 to 30 minutes until a knife easily pierces the center.

1 Peel and hot-mash the potatoes.

Drain the potatoes. Working as quickly as possible while they are steaming hot (use a clean kitchen towel to protect your hands), slip off the skins. Immediately press the hot potatoes through a ricer or mash thoroughly, then let the mash sit for 15 minutes to cool and release excess steam.

2 Prepare the tuna filling.

Flake the drained tuna with a fork in a medium bowl. Mix in the mayonnaise, minced red onion, cilantro, and 1 teaspoon of lime juice until creamy. Season with salt and pepper, then stash it in the refrigerator.

3 Knead the cooled potato masa.

Once the mash hits room temperature, add the *ají amarillo* paste, vegetable oil, 1/4 cup lime juice, salt, and pepper. Dive in with clean hands and knead it like a soft dough until smooth, bright, and slightly citrusy.

4 Layer the causa.

Lightly oil a mold, a 3-inch pastry ring, or line a loaf pan with plastic wrap. Press half the potato dough firmly into the bottom. Arrange an even layer of salted avocado slices, spread the tuna mixture over it, and cap it tightly with the remaining potato dough.

5 Chill, unmold, and garnish.

Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least an hour to let the starches set and flavors marry. Carefully unmold onto a platter and garnish with quartered hard-boiled eggs, black olives, and diced tomatoes before serving.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The hot mash is absolutely non-negotiable.**

This is the ultimate grandmother's secret to a proper causa. If you let the potatoes cool before mashing, the starches seize up and turn to glue. Mash them while they are steaming hot, then let them cool before you add the flavors.



Ceviche Clásico Carretilla Style

seh-VEE-cheh cah-rreh-tee-YEH-roh

THE GREATEST CEVICHE ISN'T SERVED ON FINE CHINA IN upscale restaurants; it's served in a plastic bowl from a Lima street cart. This is the unapologetic, loud flavor of the working class—a sharp, clean bite of cured fish heavily spiced with a cloudy elixir known as *Leche de Tigre*, accompanied by the aggressive crunch of fried squid. Replicating that exact street-corner magic on a Tuesday night in the American suburbs doesn't require air-freighting exotic fish; it demands accessible fresh tilapia, standard calamari, and an

ABSOLUTE ADHERENCE TO TECHNIQUE. WORK QUICKLY, KEEP everything ice-cold, and remember the golden rule of the cevichero: never squeeze your limes all the way.

INGREDIENTS

1 large	orange sweet potato <i>boiled until tender, peeled, and cut into thick rounds</i>	1/2 large	egg <i>lightly beaten</i>
1 cup	frozen Peruvian choclo	1/2 cup	all-purpose flour
1 tsp	anise seeds	1/2 cup	cornstarch
1 tsp	sugar	1 1/4 lb	firm white fish <i>divided into 1 lb cut into 3/4-inch cubes, and 1/4 lb reserved as rough scraps</i>
1/2 cup	cancha serrana	1/2 med	celery stalk <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 qt	vegetable oil <i>divided for toasting the corn and deep frying the calamari</i>	1 small	fresh cilantro <i>divided into 3 whole stems, and 2 tablespoons finely chopped leaves</i>
1 large	red onion <i>divided into a small quarter roughly chopped, and the rest thinly julienned</i>	1 med	habanero chile <i>divided into a small sliver, and the rest finely minced</i>
1/2 lb	calamari tubes <i>cleaned and sliced into thin strips</i>	3/4 cup	fresh lime juice <i>gently hand-squeezed yielding about 70 percent of the fruit to avoid bitter pith oils</i>
2 med	garlic clove <i>divided into 1 left whole, and 1 finely minced</i>	1/4 cup	cold water
1 small	fresh ginger <i>divided into a 1/2-inch chunk peeled, and 1/2 teaspoon grated</i>	2 tsp	kosher salt
1 tsp	yellow mustard	4 med	ice cubes
1 tsp	soy sauce	4 large	iceberg lettuce leaves <i>washed and crisped</i>

PREPARATION

- **Prepare the sweet potato and choclo.**

You can boil the sweet potato in salted water ahead of time, letting it cool before slicing it into rounds. In a separate small pot, boil the frozen choclo with the sugar and anise seeds for 5 to 7 minutes until tender, then drain and set aside.

- **Toast the cancha.**

Heat a tablespoon of oil in a skillet over medium heat, add the cancha, and toss constantly until the kernels puff up, turn golden brown, and sound like popping popcorn. Hit them with a generous pinch of salt and transfer to a paper towel.

- **Crisp the red onions.**

Soak the thinly julienned portion of the red onion in a bowl of ice water for at least ten minutes. This is a vital grandmother secret that removes the harsh sulfurous bite and leaves the onion incredibly crisp.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 **Blend the Leche de Tigre.**

In a blender, combine the rough fish scraps, celery, the roughly chopped red onion piece, the whole garlic clove, the peeled ginger chunk, the cilantro stems, the habanero sliver, cold water, lime juice, and a teaspoon of kosher salt. Blend on high for exactly 5 to 10 seconds to smash the ingredients and let the fish protein emulsify the liquid, then strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a chilled jar and discard the solids.

1 Marinate and bread the calamari.

Toss the calamari strips with the minced garlic, grated ginger, mustard, soy sauce, and beaten egg, letting it marinate for 5 minutes. In a separate wide bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour and cornstarch—this fifty-fifty split is the absolute secret to authentic street-cart crunch.

2 Fry the chicharrón de pota.

Heat 2 inches of vegetable oil to 350°F in a heavy pot. Dredge the marinated calamari heavily in the starch mixture, shaking off the excess, and fry in batches for 2 to 3 minutes until deeply golden and shatteringly crisp, then drain on a wire rack.

3 Cure the ceviche.

Working quickly in a chilled metal bowl, aggressively toss the cubed fish with a generous pinch of kosher salt for 30 seconds to open the muscle pores. Add the minced habanero, chopped cilantro leaves, and the ice cubes, which keep the temperature near freezing and prevent the fish from turning mushy.

4 Add the tiger's milk and plate immediately.

Pour the chilled Leche de Tigre over the fish and toss vigorously for 1 to 2 minutes until the fish turns opaque. Fold in the drained, ice-cold red onions, discard the ice cubes, and plate immediately on the lettuce leaves alongside the sweet potato, choclo, cancha, and a towering pile of the hot fried calamari.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Never squeeze your limes entirely.**

Use a gentle hand when juicing. Pressing the limes fully with a mechanical juicer will extract bitter essential oils from the white pith, which instantly ruins the delicate balance of the dish.

- **Time management is everything.**

Ceviche waits for no one. Have all your side accompaniments prepared, your Leche de Tigre chilled, and your calamari ready to fry before you even think about mixing the final fish.