

COOKERY

Spanish Cookery

Sofrito, saffron and pimentón, paella's undisturbed rice, tortilla española, gazpacho and salmorejo, croquetas, cocido and fabada, and alioli and romesco — closing with a capstone tapas spread, a genuine fifth structural model for this Subject.

10 Chapters

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CHAPTER 1: FOUNDATIONS & THE SPANISH PANTRY

Spanish Cookery

Chapter 1 · Foundations & the Spanish Pantry

Eighth course in this Cookery Subject, and built around a genuinely different pantry from any of the seven before it — olive oil used as both cooking fat and finishing oil, a smoked pepper with its own Protected Designation of Origin, the single most expensive spice in the world by weight, and a wine vinegar aged on the same tiered system as sherry itself.

Olive Oil: The Foundation

Spain is the world's largest olive oil producer by a wide margin — roughly 45% of the global supply comes from Spanish groves, more than the next several producing countries combined. Extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) — cold-pressed, unrefined, carrying real fruit and pepper notes — is the everyday cooking fat throughout this course, used the way Italian Cookery uses its own EVOO and French Cookery uses butter.

A cheaper, more neutral "olive oil" (refined, blended with a small amount of virgin oil for flavour) is worth keeping alongside it for higher-heat frying, where EVOO's own fruitier notes can scorch and turn bitter before the food itself is done. Chapter 5's confit-style potato technique and Chapter 7's frying chapter both lean on this distinction directly.

Pimentón: A Preview

TYPE	CHARACTER
Dulce (sweet)	Mild, no real heat — the everyday jar
Agridulce (bittersweet)	A moderate, rounded heat between dulce and picante
Picante (hot)	Real, noticeable heat, used more sparingly

All three varieties can also come **smoked** — most famously as Pimentón de la Vera, a Protected Designation of Origin from the La Vera valley in Extremadura. The peppers are dried over slow-burning oak fires in traditional smoking huts for two to four weeks, turned by hand daily so the

smoke penetrates evenly, then stone-ground into the deep red powder sold in the jar. No other wood is permitted if the paprika is to carry the genuine Pimentón de la Vera name.

A REAL BLOOM-TECHNIQUE CONTRAST, COMING IN CHAPTER 3

Pimentón's own sugar content means it scorches easily — a real, narrow window Chapter 3 covers in full, contrasted directly against Hungarian Cookery's own paprika chapter (which uses the exact same unsmoked-sweet-vs-hot spice family, quenched off the heat within seconds) and Indian Cookery's own tempering technique (a fast, few-second fat-bloom for a completely different spice family). Pimentón sits somewhere between the two: it needs real fat contact to release its colour and flavour, but far less aggressively than Hungarian paprika's own hard scorch-and-quench rule.

Saffron: A Preview

Saffron — the dried stigmas of the *Crocus sativus* flower, grown most famously in Spain's own La Mancha region — is genuinely the most expensive spice in the world by weight. Roughly 160,000 hand-picked strands go into a single kilogram, and retail prices for high-quality La Mancha saffron commonly run from around €3,000 up to €10,000 per kilo — which is exactly why real recipes call for it by the pinch, not the spoonful.

Chapter 3 covers saffron's own real technique in full: unlike pimentón's fat-bloom, saffron is steeped slowly in a warm liquid rather than fried, a genuinely different — and genuinely slower — blooming method from anything covered earlier in this Subject.

Sherry Vinegar: The Defining Acid

Where Mexican Cookery leans on lime, French Cookery on wine, and Hungarian Cookery on sour cream's own tang, Spanish cooking's defining acid is **Vinagre de Jerez** — sherry vinegar, itself a real Protected Designation of Origin product aged in wood on a tiered system directly borrowed from sherry production:

TIER	MINIMUM WOOD AGEING
Vinagre de Jerez	6 months

TIER	MINIMUM WOOD AGEING
Reserva	2 years
Gran Reserva	10 years

Longer ageing means a rounder, less sharply acidic, more complex vinegar — a real, direct trade-off this course's own sauces (Chapter 9) and vinaigrette-style dressings rely on.

Jamón & Cheese: A Quick Note

Cured pork and cheese show up throughout Spanish cooking as flavouring and as food in their own right, even though neither gets a dedicated technique chapter in this course. Two real, worth-knowing tiers of jamón:

JAMÓN	PIG & DIET	CURING TIME
Jamón Serrano	White pig breeds, grain-fed	Roughly 12–18 months
Jamón Ibérico de Bellota	Iberian pig, acorn-fed during the autumn <i>montanera</i> season	Up to around 4 years

Chorizo and morcilla (a cured, paprika-spiced sausage and a blood sausage respectively) reappear in Chapter 8's own stews as real flavour builders, and a wedge of Manchego — Spain's best-known sheep's milk cheese — is a fixture of the tapas spread this course closes with in Chapter 10.

Garlic

Garlic runs through this course from beginning to end — the base of Chapter 2's own sofrito, and the entire point of Chapter 9's alioli, where garlic and olive oil alone (no egg, in the traditional version) are pounded into a real, stable emulsion.

Equipment

ESSENTIAL

- A wide, heavy skillet or frying pan (a real paellera — a shallow, two-handled pan — is worth it for Chapter 4, but any wide pan works)
- A mortar and pestle, for Chapter 9's alioli — a food processor is a workable substitute, though the texture and traditional method differ

NICE TO HAVE

- An earthenware cazuela, for Chapter 8's own slow-simmered stews — any heavy pot works as a substitute

SKIP FOR NOW

- A dedicated paellera bought before you've made a single paella — Chapter 4 covers a practical wide-pan substitute in full

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Taste a good Spanish extra virgin olive oil next to a neutral cooking oil, plain, on a small piece of bread, and compare the real flavour difference.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Compare pimentón dulce and pimentón picante — smell each one, taste a tiny pinch on its own if you're comfortable, and note the real difference between "mild and sweet" and "genuinely hot."

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Build a Spanish pantry starter list — check what you already have against this chapter's own core staples (olive oil, pimentón, saffron if your budget allows, sherry vinegar, garlic) and note what still needs buying before Chapter 2.

[→ Solution](#)**QUICK REFERENCE — FOUNDATIONS & THE SPANISH PANTRY**

- Extra virgin olive oil for cooking and finishing; a more neutral olive oil for higher heat
- Pimentón: dulce (sweet), agridulce (bittersweet), picante (hot) — any of the three can also be smoked (Pimentón de la Vera)
- Saffron: the world's most expensive spice by weight, steeped slowly in liquid rather than fried — full technique in Chapter 3
- Sherry vinegar (Vinagre de Jerez): the defining acid, aged on a tiered system — longer ageing means a rounder, less sharp vinegar
- Jamón serrano (grain-fed white pig, ~12–18 months) vs. jamón ibérico de bellota (acorn-fed Iberian pig, up to ~4 years)
- Garlic runs through the whole course, from Chapter 2's sofrito to Chapter 9's alioli

Next — Chapter 2: Sofrito — Spain's Own Aromatic Base

A tomato-forward, slow-reduced base that extends this Subject's own running aromatic-base comparison table to a sixth entry.

CHAPTER 2: SOFRITO: SPAIN'S OWN AROMATIC BASE

Spanish Cookery

Chapter 2 · Sofrito: Spain's Own Aromatic Base

Every course in this Subject has its own aromatic base. Spanish cooking's own version is tomato-forward and slow-reduced, cooked deliberately past the point most of this Subject's own earlier bases stop — all the way to a deep, rust-red paste rather than a soft, pale one.

Six Aromatic Bases, One More Added

Hungarian Cookery's own onion chapter already extended this Subject's running comparison to five real traditions. Spanish cooking adds a sixth:

COURSE	BASE	REAL CHARACTER
Italian Cookery	Soffritto — onion, carrot, celery	Soft and sweet — never browned
French Cookery	Mirepoix	Raw into a white stock, or roasted for a brown one
Chinese Cookery	The holy trinity	Fragrant within seconds
Indian Cookery	Bhuna — onion, ginger, garlic, spices	Deeply browned, oil visibly separates
Hungarian Cookery	Onion, cooked low and slow	Soft and melting, minimal colour, but in far greater proportion than most
Spanish Cookery	Sofrito — onion, garlic, tomato	Reduced until the tomato itself darkens to a deep rust-red and the oil separates

A DONENESS SIGNAL BORROWED FROM AN UNRELATED COURSE

Sofrito's own real finishing point — the oil visibly separating and pooling at the edges of the pan — is exactly the same signal Indian Cookery's own bhuna chapter uses, even though the two bases share no ingredients in common beyond onion and garlic. Two

genuinely different aromatic traditions, arriving at the same practical "it's done" test from two completely different directions.

Onion & Garlic First, Tomato Last

Sofrito builds in a deliberate order. Onion goes in first and is cooked gently until soft and lightly golden — much closer to Italian Cookery's own soffritto at this early stage than to Hungarian Cookery's own much larger volume of onion. Garlic follows briefly, just long enough to turn fragrant without browning, since burnt garlic (as several earlier courses in this Subject already warn) can't be rescued.

Only once the onion and garlic are ready does the tomato go in — grated or crushed, skin left behind if grating, and this is where sofrito genuinely parts ways with every base above it.

The Technique

1 Cook onion gently in olive oil

Finely diced, over medium-low heat, until soft and translucent with at most a light golden colour — roughly 10-15 minutes.

2 Add garlic, briefly

Finely chopped or minced, cooked just until fragrant — under a minute — before the tomato goes in.

3 Add the tomato and reduce it slowly

Grated or crushed fresh tomato (or good tinned tomato, well drained), cooked over low heat, stirred occasionally, for 30-45 minutes or more.

4 Watch for the real finishing signals

The raw, acidic tomato smell should fully disappear, the colour should deepen from bright red to a much darker rust-red, and the oil should visibly separate and pool at

the edges of the pan — the same signal Indian Cookery's own bhuna uses, reached here by an entirely different route.

A PINCH OF PIMENTÓN, TIMED CAREFULLY

Some real sofritos include a small pinch of pimentón stirred in near the very end. Chapter 3 covers exactly why that timing matters — pimentón's own real sugar content means it scorches easily, and stirring it into a pan this hot, this late, needs the same care Chapter 3 teaches from scratch.

Where Sofrito Goes Next

Sofrito isn't a finished dish on its own — it's the base this course keeps returning to. Paella (Chapter 4) starts with a version of it built directly in the paellera itself, and Chapter 8's own braises and stews lean on a fuller batch cooked ahead of time.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Build a full sofrito from scratch — onion, garlic, and grated or crushed tomato, reduced slowly until the colour deepens to a rust-red and the oil visibly separates.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Pull one spoonful of sofrito out early — after only 10 minutes of tomato reduction, while it's still bright red — and taste it side by side against the fully reduced batch once it's done. Compare raw acidity against depth of flavour.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Make a double batch and freeze half in an ice cube tray, so a portion of ready sofrito is on hand for Chapter 8 without needing to build it again from scratch.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — SOFRITO

- Onion first (soft, lightly golden), then garlic (briefly, no browning), then tomato (reduced slowly)
- Real finishing signals: raw tomato smell gone, deep rust-red colour, oil visibly separates — the same signal Indian Cookery's bhuna uses
- A pinch of pimentón is sometimes added near the end — Chapter 3 covers the real timing this needs
- Sofrito feeds directly into Chapter 4's paella and Chapter 8's braises and stews

Next — Chapter 3: Saffron & Pimentón — Spain's Defining Spices

Saffron's slow steep-in-liquid bloom, contrasted directly against pimentón's own narrow scorch window.

CHAPTER 3: SAFFRON & PIMENTÓN: SPAIN'S DEFINING SPICES

Spanish Cookery

Chapter 3 · Saffron & Pimentón: Spain's Defining Spices

Chapter 1 introduced both spices in passing. This chapter covers their own real technique in full — saffron's slow steep in warm liquid, and pimentón's two genuinely different uses, one cooked and one never touched by heat at all.

Saffron: The Bloom Technique

1 Measure a small pinch

Roughly 10-15 threads is enough for a dish serving two to four — saffron's own real cost from Chapter 1 makes over-measuring a genuinely expensive mistake.

2 Crush the threads lightly

Between your fingers, or with a mortar and pestle, to help release their colour and aroma faster.

3 Steep in warm liquid, not boiling

Add the crushed threads to 2-3 tablespoons of warm water, broth, or wine — around 50-60°C, warm to the touch but well short of a simmer.

4 Wait for the colour to turn deep gold

10-20 minutes of steeping is enough. Stir the bloomed liquid — threads and all — directly into the dish it's meant for.

BOILING WATER IS A REAL, AVOIDABLE MISTAKE

Saffron's own aroma compound, safranal, is volatile — genuinely easy to cook off with too much heat. Steeping in liquid that's actually boiling doesn't bloom saffron faster; it damages the exact aroma you're paying for.

Three Spices, Three Speeds

Saffron's own slow, liquid-based bloom sits at the opposite end of a real timing spectrum from two spice techniques already covered elsewhere in this Subject:

COURSE	SPICE TECHNIQUE	REAL TIMING
Indian Cookery	Tempering whole spices in hot fat	A few seconds
Hungarian Cookery	Paprika, quenched with liquid off the heat	Seconds — pulled the moment it's added
Spanish Cookery	Saffron, steeped in warm liquid	10-20 minutes

All three are genuinely about the same underlying goal — releasing a spice's own colour and aroma as fully as possible — but saffron gets there by patient diffusion in a warm liquid rather than a fast burst of heat in fat.

Pimentón: Two Techniques, Not One

Pimentón shares its own real scorch risk with Hungarian paprika — both are ground from dried peppers, both carry real sugar content, and both burn bitter if left in hot fat too long. Used this way, pimentón is stirred briefly into hot oil or a hot sofrito and followed quickly by liquid, exactly the same off-heat discipline Hungarian Cookery's own paprika chapter teaches.

But Spanish cooking also uses pimentón a second way that never touches direct heat at all. Pulpo a la gallega — Galicia's own signature boiled-octopus dish — is dressed after cooking: coarse salt, a sprinkle of pimentón (usually dulce, sometimes with a pinch of picante), and a generous stream of extra virgin olive oil poured directly over the warm, already-cooked octopus. The pimentón itself is never fried or heated on its own — it's a raw, finishing garnish, with the dish's own residual warmth and the olive oil doing all the work of releasing its aroma.

A GENUINELY DIFFERENT USE, NOT A SHORTCUT

This isn't a lazier version of the cooked-in technique — it's a real, deliberate second use for the exact same spice. Boiled potatoes, grilled seafood, and simple tapas all take this

same raw pimentón-plus-olive-oil finish well, with none of the scorching risk that comes from cooking it.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Bloom a small pinch of saffron in warm water, following the technique above, and watch the liquid's own colour deepen over the full 10-20 minutes.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Deliberately steep a second pinch in boiling water instead of warm, and compare its colour and aroma against the properly warm-bloomed batch from Kitchen Practice 1.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Boil a few small potatoes, and dress them warm with coarse salt, a sprinkle of pimentón, and a generous drizzle of extra virgin olive oil — pimentón's own raw, finishing-garnish use, with no heat contact for the spice at all.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — SAFFRON & PIMENTÓN

- Saffron: crush lightly, steep 10-20 minutes in warm (not boiling) liquid until deep gold
- Boiling water damages saffron's own volatile aroma compound rather than blooming it faster
- Three spice speeds compared: Indian tempering (seconds in hot fat), Hungarian paprika (seconds, quenched off heat), saffron (10-20 minutes, warm liquid)

- Pimentón, cooked in: stirred briefly into hot oil, followed quickly by liquid — the same discipline as Hungarian paprika
- Pimentón, raw: sprinkled over already-cooked food with olive oil (pulpo a la gallega) — no heat contact at all

Next — Chapter 4: Rice Technique — Paella

Undisturbed cooking, a deliberate inversion of Italian Cookery's own constant-stirring risotto method.

CHAPTER 4: RICE TECHNIQUE: PAELLA

Spanish Cookery

Chapter 4 · Rice Technique: Paella

This course's own headline technique — and the one most likely to trip up anyone who has already learned risotto. Paella's real rule is almost the exact opposite: touch the rice once, briefly, then leave it completely alone.

The Rice: Bomba

Bomba (also called Valencia rice) is the real traditional choice for paella — a short-grain rice grown in wetlands south of Valencia, harvested since the 14th century, and genuinely slower-growing than most other rice varieties. That slow maturation produces an unusually dehydrated, absorbent grain: bomba can take on roughly three times its own volume in cooking liquid without falling apart, expanding in width rather than length as it cooks, which keeps every grain distinct rather than sticky or fused together.

Unlike Italian Cookery's own risotto rice, bomba is **not rinsed** before cooking — the starch left on the grain's surface actually matters here too, just for a completely different reason than in risotto, covered next.

Toast, Then Never Stir Again

Rice goes into the pan on top of the sofrito from Chapter 2 and gets one real stir — coating each grain in oil and toasting it briefly, the same *tostatura*-style step Italian Cookery's own risotto chapter and Indian Cookery's own pilau variation both use. This is the one and only moment paella rice is ever deliberately stirred.

The moment saffron-infused broth (Chapter 3's own bloomed liquid) goes into the pan, stirring stops completely — for the rest of the cook. That's a direct, deliberate inversion of Italian Cookery's own risotto, which needs near-constant stirring from the very first ladle of stock to the last.

	RISOTTO (ITALIAN COOKERY)	PAELLA (SPANISH COOKERY)
Stirring	Near-constant, from first ladle to last	One brief toast, then none at all once liquid is added
What the starch does	Released into the liquid by stirring, building a creamy sauce	Stays on the grain's own surface, undisturbed
Real result	A creamy, cohesive dish	Separate grains, plus a caramelized crust at the very bottom

SAME STARCH, OPPOSITE JOB

Bomba's own surface starch isn't irrelevant just because paella skips risotto's constant stirring — it's doing a genuinely different job. Left undisturbed against the hot pan, that same starch is exactly what lets the bottom layer of rice caramelize into socarrat, rather than dissolving into a sauce the way stirred-out starch does in risotto.

Socarrat: The Crust, Not a Mistake

Socarrat takes its name from *socarrar*, "to scorch." It's the thin, caramelized, slightly crunchy layer of rice that forms directly against the hot pan at the very bottom of a finished paella — genuinely the most concentrated, prized part of the whole dish, not a sign anything went wrong.

1 Let the rice cook undisturbed

Simmer without stirring until most of the visible liquid has been absorbed and small holes start appearing across the surface.

2 Raise the heat for the final 30-40 seconds

Increase to medium-high right at the end, listening carefully rather than watching — the socarrat is forming underneath, out of sight.

3 Listen for a fine crackling sound

A soft, steady crackle from the bottom of the pan is the real signal the rice is toasting, not burning.

4 Pull it the moment you smell nutty, not burnt

A toasted, nutty aroma means it's ready. A sharp, acrid smell means it's gone too far — remove immediately either way, then let the pan rest a few minutes off the heat before serving.

THE SAME PRINCIPLE AS CHAPTER 3'S SAFFRON, ONE STEP LATER

Just as boiling saffron damages the very aroma it's meant to release, pushing socarrat too far turns a genuinely desirable toasted crust into a bitter, burnt one. In both cases, the line between "properly developed" and "ruined" is a matter of smell and timing, not a fixed number of minutes.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Cook a basic saffron rice in a wide pan — sofrito, bomba rice toasted briefly, saffron-infused broth added, then genuinely undisturbed for the rest of the cook.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Cook a second, small test batch the wrong way — stirring it occasionally the way risotto is stirred — and compare its texture directly against the undisturbed batch from Kitchen Practice 1.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Deliberately attempt socarrat on a fresh batch, raising the heat at the end and listening for the crackle, then check the bottom layer once rested.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — PAELLA

- Bomba rice: absorbs roughly 3x its volume in liquid, expands in width not length, stays separate — not rinsed before cooking
- Rice is stirred once, briefly, to toast it in the sofrito — then never stirred again once broth is added
- Risotto stirs constantly to release starch into a creamy sauce; paella leaves the starch on the grain to build socarrat instead
- Socarrat: raise heat for the last 30-40 seconds, listen for a fine crackle, pull it the moment the smell turns nutty rather than burnt

Next — Chapter 5: Egg Techniques — Tortilla Española

Slow olive-oil potato confit and the plate-flip technique, contrasted against French Cookery's own rolled omelette.

CHAPTER 5: EGG TECHNIQUES: TORTILLA ESPAÑOLA

Spanish Cookery

Chapter 5 · Egg Techniques: Tortilla Española

Where French Cookery's own rolled omelette is a quick, eggs-only dish finished in a minute or two, tortilla española is built the opposite way — a large, slow-cooked volume of potato that eggs are added to bind, not the other way around.

The Potatoes: Confit, Not Fried

Sliced or diced potato (and, for most home cooks and the majority of Spaniards themselves, onion too — more on that below) goes into a pan with enough olive oil to come roughly halfway up the vegetables, over medium-low heat. This isn't frying in the usual sense — it's a genuine confit, the potato poaching gently in the oil rather than browning in it.

1 Slice the potato thinly and the onion finely

Even, thin slices cook through more evenly during the slow confit stage.

2 Add oil to come roughly halfway up the vegetables

A genuinely generous amount — this is closer to shallow poaching than shallow frying.

3 Cook gently, turning occasionally, for 20-25 minutes

Medium-low heat throughout. The potato should turn completely tender — soft enough to yield under gentle pressure — without ever browning or crisping.

4 Drain well, reserving the oil

Lift the potato and onion out with a slotted spoon, letting the excess oil drain back into the pan — that reserved oil goes right back in for the next stage.

Eggs as a Binder, Not the Point

Beat the eggs in a bowl large enough to hold the drained potato and onion too, then fold the warm potato and onion directly into the beaten egg and let the mixture sit for a few minutes. The residual heat from the potato gently seasons the raw egg, and the starchy potato surface helps the mixture bind together once it hits the pan.

The Flip

1 Cook in a small amount of the reserved oil

Pour the egg-and-potato mixture into a smaller, well-seasoned or nonstick pan over medium heat.

2 Wait until the edges and bottom are set

Loosen the edges with a spatula and gently jiggle the pan — the tortilla should move as one piece, not stick anywhere, once it's roughly 70-80% cooked through.

3 Cover with a large plate and flip confidently

Set a plate over the pan, then flip the pan and plate together in one quick, decisive motion so the tortilla lands on the plate, cooked side up.

4 Slide it back into the pan

Add a little more of the reserved oil if needed, then slide the tortilla back in, uncooked side down, and cook a further 3-5 minutes until the second side is set and lightly browned.

A ROUNDER EDGE, NOT A PERFECT ONE

If the tortilla loses its round shape slightly during the flip, a spatula can gently tuck the edges back in once it's back in the pan — a small correction, not a sign the flip failed.

Two Real, Unresolved Debates

Two genuine arguments run through Spanish kitchens over this exact dish, neither one settled:

DEBATE	THE TWO SIDES
Jugosa vs. cuajada	Should the centre stay slightly runny and custard-like (jugosa), or be fully set all the way through (cuajada)? Both have real, passionate defenders.
Con cebolla vs. sin cebolla	With onion, or potato and egg alone? Real polling in Spain has found roughly three-quarters favouring onion — but the argument itself is far from over.

Compared to French Cookery's Rolled Omelette

	FRENCH ROLLED OMELETTE	TORTILLA ESPAÑOLA
Main ingredient	Eggs, alone	Potato (and usually onion) — eggs are a binder
Technique	Constant motion, folded into a roll	Left mostly still, flipped whole as one flat disc
Cook time	A minute or two	25-30+ minutes, including the potato confit
Browning	None at all — French Cookery treats any colour as a mistake	A light golden colour on the outside is normal and expected

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Confit a batch of potato and onion in olive oil, testing for doneness by pressing a slice gently — it should yield completely without ever having browned.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Build and flip a full tortilla española using the confited potato and onion from Kitchen Practice 1, following the plate-flip technique in full.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Cook a small French-style rolled omelette alongside a small tortilla-style wedge, using eggs alone for the French version, and compare the two techniques and textures directly.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — TORTILLA ESPAÑOLA

- Potatoes (and usually onion) are confited in olive oil at medium-low heat, 20-25 minutes, until tender but never browned
- Drained potato and onion are folded into beaten egg, which acts as a binder for the dish rather than the main event
- The flip: loosen the edges, cover with a plate, flip in one confident motion, slide back in to finish the second side
- Two genuine, unresolved debates: jugosa (runny centre) vs. cuajada (fully set), and con cebolla vs. sin cebolla
- A world apart from French Cookery's rolled omelette: potato-forward and slow vs. eggs-alone and fast, some browning expected vs. none at all

Next — Chapter 6: Cold Soups — Gazpacho & Salmorejo

Raw, blended vegetable soups that "cook" through emulsion and chilling rather than heat.

CHAPTER 6: COLD SOUPS: GAZPACHO & SALMOREJO

Spanish Cookery

Chapter 6 · Cold Soups: Gazpacho & Salmorejo

Nothing in this chapter ever sees a stove. Both soups are raw vegetables, blended smooth and chilled — but the real technique worth learning is how olive oil, which naturally wants to float on top of a watery blend, gets coaxed into a genuine emulsion instead.

Gazpacho: The Everyday Version

Traditional gazpacho andaluz is built from ripe tomato, cucumber, green pepper, onion, garlic, soaked stale bread, sherry vinegar (Chapter 1's own defining acid), and a generous stream of olive oil, thinned with water to a genuinely drinkable consistency — thin enough to serve in a glass, not just a bowl.

Salmorejo: Córdoba's Thicker Cousin

Salmorejo, from Córdoba, strips the ingredient list right down — tomato, garlic, bread, olive oil, and vinegar, with no cucumber or pepper at all — but uses a far higher ratio of bread to liquid, producing a soup thick enough to eat with a spoon rather than drink. It's traditionally garnished with diced jamón (Chapter 1's own cured ham) and chopped hard-boiled egg on top.

	GAZPACHO	SALMOREJO
Vegetables	Tomato, cucumber, green pepper, onion, garlic	Tomato and garlic only
Bread ratio	Moderate — for body, not thickness	Much higher — bread is a defining ingredient
Texture	Thin, drinkable	Thick, spoonable
Garnish	Often none, or a few diced raw vegetables	Diced jamón and chopped hard-boiled egg

Emulsifying Cold, Not Cooking

Olive oil doesn't naturally combine with a watery vegetable blend — left alone, it separates and floats. Getting it to emulsify instead takes a deliberate technique, and bread plays a real, active role in it: the starch in the soaked bread helps bind the oil into tiny, suspended droplets rather than letting it pool on the surface.

1 Blend the vegetables, bread, and vinegar first

Get the base fully smooth before oil ever goes in.

2 Add the olive oil in a slow, steady stream

With the blender running continuously, pour the oil in gradually rather than all at once.

3 Watch for the colour to turn pale and creamy

A properly emulsified batch visibly lightens in colour and takes on a silky, cohesive body — a real, visible sign the oil has actually combined rather than just being blended small.

A PREVIEW OF CHAPTER 9'S OWN TECHNIQUE

The traditional, older version of this method — pounding garlic in a mortar with salt and breadcrumbs, then adding oil drop by drop until it thickens — is the exact same principle Chapter 9's alioli is built on, just applied here to a much larger, wetter batch. Gazpacho's own emulsion is a real preview of a technique this course returns to properly later.

A Genuinely Different Mechanism From Ceviche

It's tempting to file gazpacho alongside Mexican Cookery's own ceviche as another "cooking without heat" dish, but the two work in genuinely different ways. Ceviche's citrus acid actually denatures the fish's own proteins — a real chemical change to the ingredient itself, structurally similar to what heat does. Gazpacho and salmorejo involve no such transformation: the tomatoes, cucumber, and bread are just as raw after blending as before it. What changes is

texture (blended smooth, emulsified with oil) and flavour (melded and rounded out by chilling), not the vegetables' own chemistry.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Make a full gazpacho, blending the vegetables, bread, and vinegar first, then streaming in the olive oil slowly with the blender running until the colour turns pale and creamy.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Make a thick salmorejo — tomato, garlic, a generous amount of bread, oil, and vinegar only — and garnish with diced jamón and chopped hard-boiled egg.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Make a second small batch of gazpacho, but dump all the oil in at once instead of streaming it in slowly, and compare the result directly against the properly emulsified batch from Kitchen Practice 1.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — GAZPACHO & SALMOREJO

- Gazpacho: tomato, cucumber, pepper, onion, garlic, bread, sherry vinegar, olive oil — thin and drinkable
- Salmorejo: tomato and garlic only, much more bread, thick and spoonable, garnished with jamón and hard-boiled egg

- Oil is streamed in slowly with the blender running; bread's own starch helps hold it in suspension rather than floating
- The same drop-by-drop emulsion principle, at a larger scale — Chapter 9's alioli covers the technique properly
- Genuinely different from ceviche: no protein-denaturing chemical change here, just texture and flavour transformed by blending, emulsifying, and chilling

Next — Chapter 7: Frying & Croquetas

A chilled, breaded, fried béchamel paste — a direct callback to French Cookery's own mother sauce, cooled into a completely different form.

CHAPTER 7: FRYING & CROQUETAS

Spanish Cookery

Chapter 7 · Frying & Croquetas

Croquetas start with the exact same sauce French Cookery already taught — béchamel — pushed far past its usual thickness, chilled solid, breaded, and fried, until almost nothing about it resembles a sauce anymore except the fact that it still melts.

A Béchamel Built to Set, Not Coat

French Cookery's own béchamel is built for coating — a roux of roughly equal butter and flour, whisked with milk to a pourable, spoon-coating consistency. Croqueta béchamel starts from the exact same roux technique but at a genuinely different ratio, adding far more flour relative to the milk than a coating sauce ever would:

VERSION	ROUX PER CUP OF MILK	REAL RESULT
Coating béchamel (French Cookery)	~1-2 tbsp butter, ~1-2 tbsp flour	Pourable, coats a spoon
Croqueta béchamel	~3 tbsp butter, ~3 tbsp flour	A firm, spreadable paste once cooled

1 Build the roux

Butter (often with a little olive oil) and finely diced onion cooked together, then flour stirred in to form a paste.

2 Add milk gradually, whisking constantly

Little by little at first, to avoid lumps, then in larger additions as the mixture smooths out.

3 Cook until very thick

Several minutes of stirring, until the mixture pulls away from the sides of the pan rather than pouring — genuinely thicker than any sauce this course has made so far.

4 **Fold in the filling**

Finely diced jamón, shredded chicken, or another filling of your choice, stirred through while the béchamel is still warm and workable.

Chilling Twice, Not Once

1 **First chill: overnight, or at least 3 hours**

Spread the béchamel-and-filling mixture into a shallow dish, press plastic wrap directly onto the surface (to stop a skin forming), and refrigerate until genuinely stiff — soft, unset béchamel can't be shaped at all.

2 **Shape into small cylinders or ovals**

Scoop and roll with lightly floured or damp hands.

3 **Bread in three stages**

Flour, then beaten egg, then breadcrumbs — coating each croqueta completely. A second pass through egg and breadcrumbs gives extra insurance against the filling breaking through while frying.

4 **Second chill: 30-60 minutes**

A shorter rest after breading helps the coating set and the croquetas hold their shape once they hit the hot oil.

Frying: A Narrow Temperature Window

Fry fully submerged in oil at 175-180°C, in small batches of 4-5 at a time so the oil's own temperature doesn't drop, until golden and crisp all over — usually 3-4 minutes. Drain on

paper towels.

TWO REAL FAILURE MODES, IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS

Oil that's too cold soaks into the croqueta before a crust can form, leaving it greasy and soggy. Oil that's too hot shocks the coating before the interior has warmed through, and the steam building up inside can crack the shell open — a croqueta genuinely bursting apart in the fryer. Keep a thermometer on the oil rather than guessing, and never overcrowd the pan, both to protect the temperature and to avoid hot oil splashing from a crowded pan.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Make a full batch of croquetas — a thick jamón or chicken béchamel, chilled overnight, shaped, breaded in three stages, chilled again briefly, then fried at 175-180°C.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Shape and bread a croqueta from béchamel chilled for only 30 minutes, and compare how well it holds its shape against one made from the fully-chilled batch in Kitchen Practice 1.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Fry one croqueta at a properly moderate 175-180°C and a second at a noticeably hotter temperature (with sensible safety precautions — stand back, use tongs, don't overcrowd the pan), and compare the two results directly.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — CROQUETAS

- Croqueta béchamel roughly triples the roux of a coating béchamel, cooked until it pulls away from the pan rather than pours
- Chilled twice: overnight (or 3+ hours) before shaping, then 30-60 minutes after breading
- Breaded in three stages — flour, egg, breadcrumbs — with a double pass for extra insurance
- Fried fully submerged at 175-180°C, in small batches, 3-4 minutes until golden
- Too-cold oil makes them soggy; too-hot oil can make them burst open — both are real, opposite failure modes

Next — Chapter 8: Braises & Stews — Cocido & Fabada

Slow-simmered legume stews built on Chapter 2's own sofrito, served in courses — broth first, then meat and vegetables.

CHAPTER 8: BRAISES & STEWS: COCIDO & FABADA

Spanish Cookery

Chapter 8 · Braises & Stews: Cocido & Fabada

Two legume stews, two genuinely different techniques. One skips this course's own aromatic base entirely; the other returns to it directly, alongside a real, cooked-in use of Chapter 3's pimentón.

Cocido Madrileño: A Simple Simmer, No Sofrito At All

Cocido madrileño is built from chickpeas, beef, chicken, chorizo, morcilla, and pork belly, along with cabbage, carrots, and potatoes — but it starts nothing like Chapter 2's own sofrito. Meats, bones, and chickpeas go straight into cold water, brought slowly to a boil so any impurities can rise to the surface as foam and be skimmed off, then simmered gently for three hours or more until everything is tender. No onion, garlic, or tomato is cooked down first at all.

A GENUINE EXCEPTION IN THIS COURSE

Almost every dish so far in this Subject starts with some kind of aromatic base cooked in fat. Cocido is a real, deliberate exception — its own flavour comes entirely from the meats, bones, and long simmering time, not from anything sautéed first.

Tres Vuelcos: One Pot, Three Courses

Traditionally, cocido is served in three separate courses from the same single pot — *los tres vuelcos*, "the three turns":

1 First: the broth

Strained from the pot and often cooked with thin noodles, served as its own soup course.

2 Second: the chickpeas and vegetables

Chickpeas, cabbage, carrots, and potatoes, served together as the next course.

3 **Third: the meats**

Beef, chorizo, morcilla, and pork belly, served last as the richest, final course.

One real, historically suggested explanation for this three-course structure ties it to Sephardic Jewish slow-cooking traditions — a single pot prepared ahead and eaten in stages, said to help avoid kitchen work on the Sabbath. It's a suggested historical link, not a settled fact, but a genuinely interesting one behind an otherwise unusual way to serve a single stew.

Fabada Asturiana: Where Sofrito Returns

Fabada, from Asturias in northern Spain, uses fabes — large, specific white beans, soaked overnight before cooking — with lacón (cured pork shoulder), morcilla, chorizo, and panceta. Unlike cocido, fabada genuinely does start with a real sofrito: onion cooked gently in olive oil until soft, then pimentón stirred in briefly before the whole mixture goes into the pot with the beans.

TWO REAL CALLBACKS IN ONE POT

That sofrito-plus-pimentón step is Chapter 2's own technique put to direct use, and the pimentón itself is handled exactly the way Chapter 3 teaches — added briefly to hot oil, then diluted quickly once it joins the beans and their cooking liquid, rather than left to scorch. Saffron is often added later in the cook, though many fabada recipes add it directly to the simmering pot rather than pre-blooming it in warm liquid the way Chapter 3's own technique describes — a simpler, if less controlled, real alternative.

Unlike cocido, fabada is served as a single, unified dish — beans and meats together in one bowl, not split across separate courses.

	COCIDO MADRILEÑO	FABADA ASTURIANA
Legume	Chickpeas	Fabes (large white beans), soaked overnight

	COCIDO MADRILEÑO	FABADA ASTURIANA
Aromatic base	None — a simple simmer	A real sofrito, with pimentón stirred in
Served as	Three separate courses (tres vuelcos)	One combined dish

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Make a simplified cocido — chickpeas and a mix of meats simmered gently in cold water, skimmed of foam, and cooked for several hours — then serve the strained broth on its own as a first course, exactly as tres vuelcos describes.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Make a fabada, building a real sofrito with onion and pimentón first, stirring it into soaked beans and cured meats, and serving the finished dish as one combined bowl.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Serve your full cocido as all three vuelcos — broth, then chickpeas and vegetables, then meats, as three genuinely separate courses — and notice how the same pot tastes different depending on which course it's eaten as.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — COCIDO & FABADA

- Cocido madrileño: chickpeas and meats simmered from cold water with no sofrito at all, 3+ hours
- Served as tres vuelcos — broth first, then chickpeas and vegetables, then meats — possibly linked to Sephardic Jewish slow-cooking tradition
- Fabada asturiana: fabes (soaked overnight), lacón, morcilla, chorizo, and panceta, genuinely built on a real sofrito with pimentón
- Fabada is served as one unified dish, not split into courses like cocido

Next — Chapter 9: Sauces — Alioli & Romesco

A traditionally egg-free pounded garlic-oil emulsion, and a nut-and-roasted-pepper sauce thickened by neither roux nor emulsification.

CHAPTER 9: SAUCES: ALIOLI & ROMESCO

Spanish Cookery

Chapter 9 · Sauces: Alioli & Romesco

Two more sauces, two more genuinely different building logics — one an emulsion held together without egg at all, the other thickened by neither an emulsion nor a roux, but by ground nuts and bread.

Alioli: Garlic and Oil, Nothing Else

The name itself — *all i oli*, Catalan and Valencian for "garlic and oil" — says exactly what traditional alioli is: garlic, olive oil, and a little salt, with no egg at all. Every bit of the emulsion's own stability comes from the garlic itself, worked patiently into the oil.

1 Pound garlic and salt into a fine paste

In a mortar, working the pestle until there's no trace of a distinct garlic piece left.

2 Add olive oil drop by drop

Genuinely drop by drop at first, working each addition fully into the paste with a smooth, circular motion before adding the next.

3 Add slightly more oil at a time as it stabilizes

Once the mixture visibly thickens and holds together, larger additions of oil become safer to add without breaking the emulsion.

GENUINELY FINICKY, ON PURPOSE

Traditional alioli has a real reputation for being difficult — room-temperature ingredients and patient, even motions genuinely help, but even then it can split. That difficulty is the direct cost of skipping egg, not a sign anything was done badly.

A Real Contrast With French Cookery's Own Emulsions

	HOLLANDAISE (FRENCH COOKERY)	TRADITIONAL ALIOLI
Emulsifier	Egg yolk lecithin — reliable, well understood	Garlic's own compounds alone — genuinely less predictable
Real difficulty	Needs heat control to avoid scrambling the yolk	Needs patience and slow, careful oil addition throughout

Worth knowing honestly: much of the "aioli" served today, especially outside Spain, does include egg yolk — closer to a garlic-forward mayonnaise than the traditional egg-free version this chapter teaches. Both are real, legitimate versions of the same idea; they just trade off difficulty against reliability in opposite directions.

Romesco: Thickened by Neither Roux Nor Emulsion

Romesco, from the Tarragona region of Catalonia, builds its body a third, completely different way — from roasted nyora peppers (a small, round, dried Spanish pepper — a substitute like dried ancho or roasted red pepper works if nyoras aren't available), roasted tomato and garlic, toasted almonds and/or hazelnuts, bread, olive oil, and sherry vinegar (Chapter 1's own defining acid, once again).

Everything is blended or pounded together until smooth. The sauce's own real thickness comes from the ground nuts and bread — genuine solid bulk, not an emulsion holding oil in suspension the way alioli does, and not a starch-based roux the way Chapter 7's croqueta béchamel does.

A CLOSE RELATIVE, NOT QUITE THE SAME DISH

Romesco is closely related to — and sometimes used interchangeably with — salsa de calçots, the specific dipping sauce traditionally served with grilled calçots (a Catalan spring onion) at a calçotada. The two share almost the same ingredients and technique, even if they aren't strictly identical in every kitchen.

SAUCE	WHAT GIVES IT BODY
Croqueta béchamel (Ch. 7)	A roux — flour cooked into fat, then thickened with milk
Alioli	An emulsion — oil suspended in tiny droplets, held by garlic alone
Romesco	Ground nuts and bread — real solid bulk, not an emulsion or a roux

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Make a traditional, egg-free alioli using a mortar and pestle, pounding garlic and salt to a paste first, then adding olive oil drop by drop until a stable emulsion forms.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Make a romesco sauce from roasted peppers, tomato, garlic, toasted nuts, and bread, blended smooth, and taste it against a plain grilled vegetable.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Deliberately break a second alioli by adding the oil too quickly, and compare its split, separated texture directly against the properly emulsified batch from Kitchen Practice 1.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — ALIOLI & ROMESCO

- Traditional alioli: garlic, olive oil, and salt only — pounded and slowly emulsified, no egg

- Genuinely trickier than French Cookery's egg-based hollandaise, since garlic alone is a less reliable emulsifier than lecithin
- Modern "aioli" often adds egg yolk for reliability — a legitimate, but different, version of the same idea
- Romesco: roasted nyora peppers, tomato, garlic, toasted nuts, bread, olive oil, sherry vinegar — thickened by ground solids, not an emulsion or a roux
- This course's own three sauce logics side by side: roux (Ch.7), emulsion (aioli), ground nuts and bread (romesco)

Next — Chapter 10: Capstone — A Tapas Spread

A fifth structural meal-model for this Subject — many small shared dishes, timed to land together.

CHAPTER 10: CAPSTONE — A TAPAS SPREAD

Spanish Cookery

Chapter 10 · Capstone: A Tapas Spread

Every technique this course taught converges here — not into one composed dish, and not into courses served one after another, but into several small dishes brought to the table together, each one drawing on a different chapter.

A Real Fifth Structural Model

COURSE	CAPSTONE STRUCTURE
Japanese Cookery	One balanced meal, already composed — ichiju-sansai
Italian Cookery	Sequential courses, each already composed
French Cookery	Sequential courses, each already composed
Chinese Cookery	Several already-composed dishes, shared for the table
Indian Cookery	A thali — several small already-composed dishes on one plate
Hungarian Cookery	Sequential courses, each already composed
Mexican Cookery	Shared, uncomposed components — each diner builds their own portion
Spanish Cookery	Several small, already-composed dishes, all served at once and shared freely around the table

CLOSEST TO CHINESE COOKERY'S OWN MODEL, WITH ONE REAL DIFFERENCE

A tapas spread shares Chinese Cookery's own "everything arrives together, shared for the table" logic — but where a Chinese family-style meal is built around a small number of larger dishes meant to accompany rice, tapas are genuinely small by design, meant to be eaten in a bite or two each, with many more distinct dishes on the table at once.

The Menu

- **Patatas bravas** — fried potato cubes tossed in a spicy tomato-pimentón sauce, finished with a drizzle of alioli
- **Tortilla española** — cut into small wedges
- **Croquetas de jamón**
- **Gazpacho shooters** — served in small glasses
- **Pan con romesco** — grilled or toasted bread with romesco sauce
- **Jamón, Manchego, and olives** — no cooking required

TWO REAL DISHES, DELIBERATELY LEFT OFF THIS MENU

Paella (Chapter 4) and cocido or fabada (Chapter 8) don't appear here, for the same real reason Italian Cookery's own capstone left pizza off its menu — both are substantial, communal main events in their own right, meant to be the centre of a meal rather than one small bite among many. Scaling either down to tapas size would lose exactly what makes it what it is.

Working Backward From the Slowest Element

Croquetas need the longest lead time of anything on this menu — Chapter 7's own overnight chill means the béchamel has to be made the day before. Planning the rest of the spread means working backward from that single longest step.

1 The day before: béchamel, gazpacho, and romesco

Make the croqueta béchamel and chill it overnight. Gazpacho and romesco both keep well and genuinely improve after resting a day in the fridge.

2 A few hours before: shape and bread the croquetas

Shape, bread in three stages, and give them their second, shorter chill.

3 Just before serving: everything that has to be fresh

Confit and flip the tortilla, fry the potatoes and croquetas, toast the bread, and pour the chilled gazpacho into glasses — all in the final stretch before guests sit down.

Serving

Bring everything to the table at roughly the same time, in small portions, and let everyone help themselves freely and repeatedly — the real point of a tapas spread is grazing across several dishes over the course of a meal, not finishing one plate before another appears.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Plan and serve the full tapas spread, working backward from the croquetas' own overnight lead time so every dish is ready within a short window of the others.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Serve the same dishes a second way — plated individually per person, rather than shared freely around the table. Reflect on what's genuinely different about the shared, help-yourself experience versus the individually plated one.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Time yourself preparing the "just before serving" stage from Kitchen Practice 1, and note whether everything genuinely landed together or whether one dish held the others up — adjust the plan for next time based on what you find.

→ Solution

Where Every Piece Came From

MENU ITEM	CHAPTERS IT DRAWS FROM
Patatas bravas	2 (sofrito), 3 (pimentón), 9 (alioli)
Tortilla española	1 (olive oil), 5 (potato confit & the flip)
Croquetas de jamón	1 (jamón), 7 (béchamel & frying)
Gazpacho shooters	1 (sherry vinegar), 6 (emulsifying cold)
Pan con romesco	1 (sherry vinegar), 9 (romesco)
Jamón, Manchego & olives	1 (pantry)

A real, honest note on scope: this course doesn't cover several other genuine Spanish dishes — pulpo a la gallega itself (only its raw pimentón garnish technique made it into Chapter 3), pisto, seafood dishes like gambas al ajillo, or the specific regional Basque pintxo tradition. Any of these would make a genuine future companion to this course.

QUICK REFERENCE — A TAPAS SPREAD

- A genuine fifth structural model for this Subject — many small, already-composed dishes, all served together and shared freely
- Paella and this course's own stews are deliberately left off the menu — both are substantial main events, not tapas-sized by design
- Work backward from the slowest element (croquetas' overnight chill) to plan the rest of the timeline
- Everything lands together, in small portions, meant for grazing rather than one course at a time

Course Complete

This closes Spanish Cookery's own 10 chapters — sofrito, saffron and pimentón, paella's undisturbed rice, tortilla española, gazpacho and salmorejo, croquetas, cocido and fabada, alioli

and romesco, and a capstone that gathers every technique into a genuinely different kind of shared meal.