Sauces / Spain

Romesco

The brick-red sauce of Catalonia — sweet roasted red peppers and rehydrated ñora chiles pounded with charred tomato, toasted almonds, and fried bread, then loosened with fruity olive oil and sharpened with sherry vinegar into a rustic, nutty, smoky paste that clings to grilled calçots, fish, or roasted vegetables.

Time 60 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 parts Red bell peppers (roasted, peeled, seeded)
- ☐ 12 parts Ñora chiles (dried, soaked, flesh scraped)
- ☐ 45 parts Ripe tomatoes (fire-roasted)
- ☐ 30 parts Blanched almonds (toasted)
- ☐ 18 parts Day-old country bread (fried in olive oil)
- ☐ 8 parts Garlic cloves (fried with the bread)
- ☐ 50 parts Extra-virgin olive oil
- ☐ 8 parts Sherry vinegar (Jerez)
- ☐ 2 parts Flaky sea salt

Let's make it.

01 Roast the bell peppers over a flame or under a hot broiler until the skins blacken and blister all over, then steam them in a covered bowl for 10 minutes and slip off the skins; discard stems and seeds. Roast the whole tomatoes the same way until collapsed and charred. Meanwhile, stem and seed the ñora chiles, cover with hot water, and soak 20 minutes until soft; scrape the softened flesh from the skins with a spoon and discard the papery skins.

02 Toast the blanched almonds in a dry pan over medium heat, shaking constantly, until golden and fragrant, 4–6 minutes; tip out and reserve. In the same pan, warm a third of the olive oil and fry the bread slice and whole garlic cloves until both are deep golden and the garlic is soft, about 3 minutes per side. The bread will thicken the sauce; the fried garlic gives mellow sweetness without raw bite.

03 Traditionally done in a large mortar: pound the toasted almonds, fried garlic, and a pinch of salt to a coarse meal, then work in the fried bread, the ñora flesh, the roasted peppers, and the charred tomato, pounding until you have a thick, textured paste. A food processor works too — pulse the nuts and bread first, then add the rest and pulse, keeping some grit. You want texture, not a smooth purée.

04 With the mortar or processor running, drizzle in the remaining olive oil in a slow stream so it emulsifies into the paste, thickening it to a loose, glossy sauce. Sharpen with the sherry vinegar, then taste and adjust salt and vinegar — romesco should taste sweet, nutty, and faintly smoky with a bright acidic lift. Let it rest 30 minutes before serving so the flavors marry.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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