UMAMI

SPANISH · BASQUE · MAIN · LARGE-FORMAT PROTEIN · SIGNATURE

Chuletón a la Parrilla — Oven Reverse Sear to Kamado

One enormous aged bone-in ribeye, 60 mm thick, roasted low in the oven to 48 °C internal, then finished over screaming coals for 90 seconds per side. Sliced thick, dressed with flaky salt. The Basque asador signature, scaled to Pablo's backyard.

Protein Beef — Bone-In Ribeye (dry-aged)

Serves 4–6 (1.2–1.5 kg steak, sliced thick)

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 20 min (temper + sear + carve)

Total 24 h dry brine + 45 min oven + 10 min rest + 3 min sear + 10 min rest ≈ 25 h total, 70

THE STORY

One Steak, Two Fires, Zero Compromise

In the Basque country there is a gospel about beef. It goes like this: take one impossibly aged bone-in ribeye from a cow that has done nothing but eat grass for ten years. Salt it. Grill it over wood embers until the outside is black and the inside is violently red. Slice it across the grain into generous slabs. Put it on a wooden board. Serve it with nothing but flaky salt and a bottle of something Spanish. This is *chuletón a la parrilla*, and it is the most-respected preparation in a country that takes beef seriously.

The classical method asks for a 400 kg wood-burning grill, a cook who has tended fire for twenty years, and a steak that is objectively better than any steak you can buy at an American grocery store. Pablo has none of those things. What he has is an oven that can hold 120 °C

exactly, a kamado that hits 315 °C+, and access to snowstorm-grade American Wagyu Black or SRF Gold tier ribeyes. These tools, applied correctly, produce a result that is 90 % of the Basque ideal — and for most guests, indistinguishable.

The method is the reverse sear, but scaled up. The oven replaces the wood-fired *brasas* for the gentle low phase, bringing the interior to 48 °C without a gradient. Then the kamado, at the hottest it can run, replaces the *parrilla* for the crust phase — 90 seconds per side, no more. The bone stays in because it provides thermal mass, slows cooking at the center, and carries the steak to the table looking the way a chuletón should look. And one enormous steak — not six individual ribeyes — because in the Basque tradition this is a *shared* cut, carved at the table and plated with flaky salt and piparras (pickled Basque peppers) and crusty bread. The communal slice is part of the dish.

AT A GLANCE

Specs

CUT	OVEN PHASE	KAMADO PHASE	TARGET INTERNAL
Bone-in ribeye, 60 mm thick, 1.2–1.5 kg	`120 °C convection → 48 °C internal (~40 min)`	`315 °C+ direct · 90 sec per side`	55 °C at serve (medium-rare)
DIFFICULTY	**ACTIVE TIME**	**TOTAL TIME**	**SERVES**
Intermediate ●●●○○	20 min total	24 h dry brine + 70 min day-of	4–6 (shared, sliced thick at table)
TRADITION	**CARVE**		
Basque parrilla, home-scale	Across grain, 10–12 mm slabs		

UMAMI ADAPTATION

What Changed & Why

A classical Basque chuletón is grilled over live oak embers for 15–20 minutes, flipped once, and served immediately. The fire handles the interior temperature rise and the exterior crust at the same time. This is extremely hard to do at home because (a) home kamados run hotter and smaller than Basque parrillas, and (b) the temperature gradient between center and edge ends up too wide, producing a gray band under the crust. The adaptation solves this by decoupling the phases — oven for the gentle interior climb, kamado for the aggressive exterior sear. Both phases get dedicated equipment optimized for the task. The 🔴 tier upgrades to proper dry-aged American Wagyu and adds aged beef-tallow basting + piparra garnish for the full service experience.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	15–20 min live-ember grill, flip once	Oven 120 °C to 48 °C internal, then kamado 315 °C+ for 90 sec per side	Decoupling interior (oven) from exterior (kamado) eliminates the gray band. Oven holds exact temp — home burners and bonfires cannot.
ADD	Salt only, at time of grilling	Dry brine 24 h in advance, uncovered on rack in fridge	Surface drying is the #1 crust-quality lever. 24 h uncovered drops surface moisture dramatically. Salt penetrates and drives seasoning deep.
ELEV	Flip once on the grill	Baste with warmed beef tallow + rosemary during the 90 sec sear	Tallow baste adds a rendering layer to the crust, picks up rosemary aromatics, and protects against over-charring on extreme heat.
SUB	Commercial Spanish rubia gallega or vaca vieja	🟢 grocery bone-in ribeye (60 mm) · 🔴 SRF Gold or SRF Black bone-in ribeye, 60-day dry-aged	True Basque chuletón cattle (10+ year old dairy retirees from Galicia) are unavailable in the US. Dry-aged American Wagyu is the closest available match — different flavor profile, equal or better tenderness.

INGREDIENTS

What You Need

🟢 Everyday

The Steak

- **1 × 1.2–1.5 kg bone-in ribeye, 60 mm thick** — ask the butcher specifically for a thick cut. Standard grocery ribeye is 25–30 mm; that's too thin. Whole Foods or Publix butcher counter can typically cut to order.

The Dry Brine (T-24 h)

- 15 g kosher salt (≈ 1 % of meat weight, exclusive of bone)
- 5 g coarse-cracked black pepper (optional at this stage — many Basque cooks add only salt at this phase and pepper just before sear)

The Baste (at Sear)

- 3 tbsp beef tallow (or unsalted butter if tallow isn't available)
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 1 clove garlic, lightly crushed

To Serve

- Flaky sea salt (Maldon)
- Coarse-cracked black pepper
- Optional: piparras (pickled Basque peppers — see 🔴 tier) or a small dish of pickled guindilla chiles
- Crusty bread (pa amb tomàquet from UMAMI-10 #3 is ideal)

Substitution Notes

- *Can't get a 60 mm thick ribeye?* 45 mm works with reduced oven time (30 min instead of 40). Do NOT use a 25–30 mm grocery-standard steak — the SV → direct kamado method (UMAMI-3 #1) is better for those; this recipe's advantage is thickness.
- *Tallow unavailable?* Unsalted butter works; add a pinch of salt. Or use the fat cap trimmed from the steak edge, rendered in a small pan — zero-waste and more authentic.
- *No kamado?* A screaming-hot cast iron on a gas burner + blowtorch is a viable substitute for the sear phase. You lose the smoke dimension entirely but preserve the crust.

🔴 No Limits

The Steak — SRF or Dry-Aged Prime

- **1 × 1.2–1.5 kg SRF Gold or SRF Black bone-in ribeye**, 60 mm thick — Pablo has bought from SRF ✓ (tomahawks, ribeyes, strips on March 15). Gold for fearless marbling, Black for a more classic ribeye balance.
- Alternative: **60-day dry-aged prime bone-in ribeye** from a specialty butcher (DeBragga, Pat LaFrieda, or local specialty — Meat N' Bone delivers in Miami)
- Spec the butcher: bone-in, 60 mm minimum thickness, fat cap preserved, silverskin trimmed.

The Dry Brine — Mineral Salt

- 15 g **Maldon or Halen Môn** coarse sea salt
- 5 g **Tellicherry or Kampot** peppercorns, freshly coarse-cracked (apply at the end of the oven phase, not the start — matches Spanish asador tradition)

The Tallow Baste

- 3 tbsp **dry-aged beef tallow** — rendered from the trimmings of the steak itself, OR Japanese wagyu tallow (available from SRF or Crowd Cow)
- 2 sprigs rosemary from a single branch
- 1 clove **Las Pedroñeras purple garlic**, lightly crushed

Garnish

- **Piparras** (pickled Basque guindilla peppers) — traditional chuletón garnish, available from La Tienda, Despaña, or Whole Foods Spanish section
- Flaky Maldon for final finish
- Lemon wedges (some Basque cooks object; Pablo can decide at the table)

Infrastructure

- **Oven with true convection** (Pablo ✓ — Bosch convection, Spanish UI)
- **Instant-read probe thermometer** (Thermapen) — verify 48 °C at end of oven phase, 55 °C at plate
- **Wire rack over sheet pan** — critical for both the 24 h dry brine AND the oven phase
- **Kamado with lump charcoal**, fully ashed-over for the sear (wood chunks optional — oak or cherry only if used)

EQUIPMENT

Your Kit

- [ ] Oven with convection (Pablo ✓ — Bosch)
- [ ] Wire rack + rimmed sheet pan (for 24 h dry brine AND oven cook)
- [ ] Instant-read probe thermometer
- [ ] Kamado + lump charcoal (full fire load — this cook needs max heat)
- [ ] Long tongs (≥ 40 cm)
- [ ] Large cutting board (grooved, warmed if possible)
- [ ] Sharp carving knife (25+ cm slicer)
- [ ] Small cast-iron pan or saucepan (for warming the tallow baste)
- [ ] Basting brush or large spoon
- [ ] Foil (loose tent, not seal)

MISE EN PLACE

Before You Start

- [ ] T-24 h: Pat steak dry. Apply 15 g salt to all surfaces. Rest on wire rack over sheet pan, uncovered in fridge. Surface dries, salt penetrates.
- [ ] T-90 min: Remove steak from fridge. Let temper on counter covered loosely with foil. Cold steak on hot fire = uneven cook.
- [ ] T-75 min: Preheat oven to 120 °C convection.
- [ ] T-60 min: Steak into oven on the same wire rack over sheet pan. Probe inserted into thickest part, not touching bone.
- [ ] T-25 min: Light kamado. Full load of lump charcoal. Bottom vent 100% open, top vent 100% open, lid open to rip.

- [ ] T-10 min: Warm tallow + garlic + rosemary in small pan on low burner. Just to 60 °C — infusing, not cooking. Set aside.
- [ ] T-5 min: Check oven probe. Target 48 °C internal. If not there: 5 more minutes. If past: pull NOW.
- [ ] T-3 min: Verify kamado dome is 315 °C+ with IR thermometer if available. Visual: coals glowing white beneath thin ash, no flame.
- [ ] T=0: Steak straight from oven to kamado grate. No resting between phases (this is the critical timing).
- [ ] T+3 min: Flip, baste, pull. See method.

MAKE-AHEAD

Timeline

T-24 h — Dry brine
Salt all surfaces. Uncovered on rack in fridge. 24 h. Surface transitions from wet to slightly tacky — the pellicle state.

T-90 min — Temper
Pull from fridge. Loose foil tent on counter. Cold center + hot sear = uneven cook.

T-75 min — Preheat oven
120 °C convection. True convection not just bake (fan-forced air).

T-60 min — Oven start
Steak on wire rack over sheet pan. Probe in thickest part, avoiding bone.

T-25 min — Light kamado
Full charcoal load, all vents wide. Target 315 °C+ dome in 20 min.

T-10 min — Warm baste
Tallow + garlic + rosemary in small pan. 60 °C. Set aside off heat.

T-5 min — Probe check
48 °C internal target. Oven probe should confirm.

T-3 min — Verify kamado
Dome 315 °C+, coals glowing white, ash-dusted, no flame.

T=0 — Steak to kamado

Straight from oven to grate, fat-cap edge down if possible. No pan in between.

T+0:00–1:30 — First sear

Fat side down. 90 sec. Do not move. Baste the up-facing side 2× during this phase.

T+1:30 — Flip

Tongs only. Meat-side down. 90 sec. Baste the fat side.

T+3:00 — Probe + pull

Target 55 °C internal at center. If under: 30 sec more. NEVER past 58 °C.

T+3:30 — Rest on board

Loose foil tent. 10 min. Internal equalizes. Surface drops from 200 °C to ~80 °C.

T+13:30 — Carve + serve

Remove bone (save for broth). Slice across grain, 10–12 mm slabs. Shingle on warm board. Maldon + pepper over top. Piparras on the side.

METHOD

The Cook

1 The 24-Hour Dry Brine (Surface Dehydration)

1. Pat the steak aggressively dry with paper towels. Both sides, the fat cap, around the bone. Any liquid here becomes a liability.
2. Sprinkle `15 g kosher salt` evenly across all surfaces. Press gently so it adheres. Do not rub — let the salt sit on top.
3. Place on a wire rack set over a rimmed sheet pan. Rack is essential — the bottom of the steak must be exposed to air, not sitting in any rendered liquid.
4. Uncovered in the fridge. 24 hours.
5. At the 24 h mark: the surface should look dry and slightly darker. This is the 'pellicle' state — proteins on the surface have partially denatured. This surface will sear to a deep mahogany crust in a fraction of the time wet meat takes.

> 🔬 **WHY THIS WORKS**
>
> The 24 h uncovered rest achieves three things simultaneously: (1) surface dehydration, which means the kamado's radiant energy goes immediately into Maillard chemistry rather than evaporating surface water, (2) salt penetration into the muscle, which seasons the meat throughout and improves water-holding capacity, and (3) enzymatic tenderization — 24 h is enough time for endogenous enzymes to begin breaking down connective tissue without any measurable dry-aging flavor development. This is the single highest-leverage step in a great-crust steak cook. Reference: Protein Encyclopedia §Dry Brining; Food Science Core §Maillard Threshold.

2 Temper + Oven Phase (Interior to 48 °C)

1. 90 minutes before dinner: remove the steak from the fridge. Loose foil tent on the counter. This lets the core temperature rise from ~4 °C to ~15 °C — which shaves oven time and narrows the interior gradient.
2. 75 minutes before dinner: preheat the oven to **120 °C convection**. True convection (fan-forced) not just bake — the moving air accelerates heat transfer and improves uniformity.
3. 60 minutes before dinner: place the steak on the wire rack over the sheet pan (same setup as the dry brine). Insert a probe thermometer into the thickest part of the eye muscle, avoiding the bone.
4. Oven door closed. Walk away for ~35 minutes. Do NOT open the oven — every open costs 2–3 minutes of recovery.
5. At 35 minutes: check the probe without opening the oven if possible. Target **48 °C internal**. If at 44 °C: 5 more minutes. If at 50 °C: pull NOW.
6. At 48 °C: pull the whole sheet pan onto a cooling rack on the counter. Leave the steak on its rack. Rest 5 min while the kamado finishes heating. Internal will carry-over by 1–2 °C to about 50 °C.

> 🔬 **WHY THIS WORKS**
>
> 120 °C oven is the Goldilocks temperature for the reverse sear's first phase. Low enough that the surface temperature stays below the 140 °C Maillard threshold — so no premature crust forms, preserving the crust potential for the kamado finish. High enough that the interior climbs at a reasonable rate (~12 °C per 15 min on a 60 mm steak). Convection is critical because the moving air keeps the surface heat transfer uniform across the steak's varied thickness. Pulling at 48 °C (not 55 °C) leaves exactly the right amount of 'temperature budget' for the kamado sear to contribute without overshooting. Reference: Cross-Technique Workflows §Reverse Sear; Food Science Core §Carryover Cook.

3 Kamado Firing (While Steak is in Oven)

1. 25 min before the steak comes out of the oven: light the kamado.
2. Full load of lump charcoal — more than for a typical sear. You want a deep, glowing bed that will not drop temperature when the steak hits it.
3. Bottom vent 100%, top vent 100%, lid open for 5 min to establish the flame. Then lid closed, vents still wide.
4. Target dome temperature: **315 °C+**. Verify with the kamado's built-in thermometer and, if available, an IR thermometer pointed at the grate itself (the grate should read 260 °C+).
5. When ready: coals glowing white-orange under a very thin ash layer, no visible flame (flame = wasted heat going up, not into the steak), and the grate radiating unholy heat when you hover a hand 20 cm above.
6. Optional: 1–2 oak or cherry wood chunks on the embers just before the steak hits. But this is optional — the pure-lump fire is the classical choice for chuletón, and wood smoke in a 3-minute sear is ambient at most. Do not use hickory or mesquite — both dominate the meat.

> 🔬 **WHY THIS WORKS**
>
> 315 °C+ is above the Maillard threshold by nearly 180 °C, which means browning starts instantly on contact. The goal for this phase is a very short, very hot sear that creates crust without raising the interior by more than 3–4 °C. Excessive grate temperature is actually counterproductive past 370 °C — at those temperatures the surface begins to char and produce acrid bitter compounds before the crust chemistry fully develops. The 315–340 °C window is the sweet spot. Reference: Kamado Mastery §Temperature Control; Fire and Smoke §Reverse Sear.

4 The 90-Second-Per-Side Sear

1. Warm the tallow baste: `3 tbsp tallow + 1 crushed garlic + 2 rosemary sprigs` in a small pan on low heat, just to 60 °C (warm, not cooking). Set aside.
2. Transport steak directly from oven rack to kamado grate — no intermediate pan, no extra handling. The less time in between, the less interior temperature drop.
3. Place the steak on the grate **fat-cap side DOWN first**. Fat renders and self-bastes the bottom during the first 90 sec.
4. **90 seconds. Do not move the steak.** Baste the upper surface twice during this time with the warm tallow.
5. At 90 sec: flip with long tongs. Meat-side down. 90 seconds more. Baste the fat side.
6. At 3:00 total: probe the thickest part of the eye. Target **55 °C**. If 53–55 °C: pull NOW. If < 53 °C: 20 sec more per side. If 56–57 °C: pull NOW — you are at the absolute top of medium-rare.
7. **NEVER exceed 58 °C.** Past this, the steak crosses from 'medium-rare with great crust' to 'medium with great crust' — still good but no longer a chuletón.

> 🔬 **WHY THIS WORKS**
>
> The 90-sec-per-side sear is the minimum time to develop proper crust color at 315 °C and the maximum time before the interior starts to over-cook. The tallow baste does two things: (1) adds a layer of rendering fat that amplifies Maillard products and carries rosemary aromatics onto the crust, and (2) acts as a thermal buffer — the tallow's specific heat absorbs some radiant energy at the surface, preventing charring while allowing browning to proceed. The fat-side-down first is traditional and functional — the rendered fat flavors the subsequent sear surface and protects the fat cap from over-blackening. Reference: Fire and Smoke §Reverse Sear; Stovetop and Pan §Baste Physics.

5 Rest + Carve + Service

1. Transfer the steak to a grooved cutting board. The grooves collect the juice that will inevitably release.
2. **Loose foil tent, 10 minutes.** Not sealed — sealed foil steams the crust. Tented just enough to slow heat loss and keep the air above the steak warm.
3. At 10 min: internal temperature has equalized from the 55 °C center / 200 °C surface gradient to a more uniform 55–57 °C throughout. Juices have redistributed. Surface has dropped to ~80 °C — handleable and at serving temperature.
4. Cut the bone off first: slice close to the bone, separating the eye from it in one long cut. Reserve the bone for stock (there's 4 hours of great beef broth hidden in that bone).
5. Turn the boneless steak so the grain (the visible fiber direction) runs horizontally in front of you. Slice vertically — perpendicular to the grain.
6. Slices should be **10–12 mm thick**. Thicker than a typical ribeye slice because this is meant to be eaten as slabs, not strips. In Basque tradition the slices are even thicker (15 mm); 10–12 mm is the dinner-party compromise.
7. Shingle the slices on a warmed board or platter. Sprinkle flaky Maldon across the top. Cracked pepper if not added earlier. Piparras in a separate bowl.
8. Serve immediately. Chuletón does not improve with time on the board — every minute after carving costs temperature. The board comes out, it gets eaten.

> 🔬 **WHY THIS WORKS**
>
> The 10-minute rest is the longest rest in any direct-heat steak method, and it's warranted because the kamado sear deposits an enormous amount of heat in the outermost 5 mm of the steak. Without rest, that surface heat continues to migrate inward during carving, producing a gray band. With 10 min rest, the gradient equalizes to less than 4 °C from surface to center, producing the defining feature of a great chuletón: pink from edge to edge with only a thin mahogany crust. Carving across the grain is the most important decision at the plate level — get this wrong and the steak is chewy even when perfectly cooked. Reference: Knife Skills §Carving; Protein Encyclopedia §Ribeye; Food Science Core §Resting.

QUICK REFERENCE

Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Dry brine on rack	T-24 h · 3 min active	Surface looks tacky-dry, not wet, after 24 h
Temper on counter	T-90 min · 1 min	Core rises from 4 °C to ~15 °C
Oven preheat	T-75 min · 1 min	120 °C true convection
Oven cook	T-60 min · 35–45 min passive	Probe pull at 48 °C internal
Light kamado	T-25 min · 5 min active	Target 315 °C+ dome in 20 min
Warm tallow baste	T-10 min · 5 min passive	60 °C, infused not cooking
Steak from oven to kamado	T=0 · 30 sec	Straight across, no intermediate pan
Sear fat-down	T+0 · 90 sec	Baste top 2×, do not move steak
Flip meat-down	T+1:30 · 90 sec	Baste fat side, do not move
Probe + pull at 55 °C	T+3 · 10 sec	Never exceed 58 °C internal
Rest tented on board	T+3:30 · 10 min	Foil loose, not sealed
Carve across grain 10–12 mm	T+13:30 · 5 min	Bone off first, reserve for stock

TROUBLESHOOTING

Emergency Protocols

🚨 OVEN PROBE READS 55 °C BEFORE 35 MIN IS UP

The oven is running hot or the temper time was too long. Pull the steak immediately. Skip the kamado sear phase — the interior is already at target, so searing will push it into medium/well. Instead: hit the steak with a blowtorch for 30 sec per side, OR sear in screaming cast iron for 45 sec per side (less heat than kamado). Next cook: verify oven with a second thermometer; many ovens run 10–15 °C hot at the 120 °C setpoint.

🚨 STEAK AT 48 °C INTERNAL BUT KAMADO ISN'T READY

Move the steak to a warm spot (low-heat burner on a flat pan, or back into the oven at 90 °C) and hold for up to 10 min. Above that, quality drops. Meanwhile, open both kamado vents fully and open the lid for 60 sec to accelerate. Next cook: start the kamado earlier (30 min before steak-out-of-oven, not 25). A slow kamado is the most common timing failure on this recipe.

🚨 CRUST LOOKS GREAT BUT INTERIOR IS GRAY-RINGED WHEN CARVED

Either the sear was too long (more than 90 sec per side) or the rest was too short. Not recoverable for this steak, but the slices are still delicious — the gray band is cosmetic, not a flavor issue. Serve and move on. Next cook: stopwatch the sear strictly, and do not cut before 10 min of rest regardless of how hungry everyone is.

🚨 STEAK TASTES SALTY

Dry brine ratio was too high or the steak was under 1 kg trimmed. For this steak: serve with a squeeze of lemon and unsalted accompaniments (no more flaky salt at the table, plain bread, unsalted butter). Next batch: calculate salt strictly at 1 % of the trimmed, bone-in weight minus an estimate for the bone (bone is ~20 % of total weight).

🚨 KAMADO IS ONLY AT 260 °C WHEN THE STEAK ARRIVES

Sear time adjusts: 2 min per side instead of 90 sec. Probe at 3:30 total, not 3:00. You will lose some crust quality but the interior will still be correct. Next cook: 30 min kamado prep time; never rush the fire.

🚨 STEAK IS UNEVENLY THICK — ONE END 60 MM, OTHER END 40 MM

Split the difference: oven time 35 min (for the thicker end), then during the sear keep the thin end closer to the cooler edge of the grate. The thick end will be 55 °C; the thin end will be 57–58 °C (medium). Carve with this in mind: plate the thin-end slices first for guests who prefer medium, thick-end slices for medium-rare preference. Next purchase: ask the butcher to cut from the middle of the primal where thickness is more uniform.

DEEP DIVES

Technique Notes

🟡 The Reverse Sear — Why It Beats Direct Grilling for Thick Cuts

CROSS-TECHNIQUE WORKFLOW · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL CUTS OVER 40 MM

The physics problem with grilling a 60 mm steak directly: by the time radiant heat has penetrated 30 mm to the center, the outer 5 mm has been cooking for 15 minutes at 315 °C. That outer ring overshoots into medium-well before the center arrives at medium-rare. The reverse sear flips the sequence. The oven phase is a slow climb where every part of the steak heats together — when the center reads 48 °C, the edges also read 48 °C. Only then does the kamado apply the crust, and the sear is short enough (3 min total) that the outer ring only rises by 3–4 °C. Result: the crust forms on already-hot meat, and the interior is uniform from edge to edge. This is the correct method for any steak over 40 mm thick. Below that, the direct-heat gradient is small enough that a single-phase cook works. Reference: Cross-Technique Workflows §Reverse Sear; Food Science Core §Heat Penetration.

🟡 The 24-Hour Uncovered Dry Brine

SURFACE PREPARATION · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL DRY-BRINED MEATS

Salting a steak 24 hours ahead and leaving it uncovered on a rack in the fridge is the highest-leverage thing a home cook can do for crust quality. Three mechanisms: (1) salt penetrates the muscle, seasoning throughout rather than just the surface, (2) surface moisture evaporates rapidly under the fridge's cold dry air flow, producing a tacky 'pellicle' that sears to mahogany far faster than wet meat, (3) endogenous enzymes begin tenderizing connective tissue without producing any dry-aged funk. The uncovered part is non-negotiable. Covered — or worse, wrapped — the surface stays wet and the brine becomes a seasoning only. The rack is non-negotiable too: if the bottom of the steak sits on a plate it cannot dry. This technique applies equally well to pork chops, duck breasts, whole birds, and any roast over 500 g. Reference: Protein Encyclopedia §Dry Brining.

🟡 Across-the-Grain Slicing — The Non-Negotiable

KNIFE TECHNIQUE · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL MUSCLE-FIBER CUTS

The direction of the muscle fibers is visible to the eye on a rested steak — look for the parallel striations in the meat. Cutting parallel to them produces long fibers in every bite that have to be chewed through. Cutting perpendicular produces short fiber segments that separate on the tongue. On a bone-in ribeye there are two major muscles (the eye and the cap), and their grains run in slightly different directions. The eye's fibers run roughly parallel to the bone axis; the cap's run at a 20–30 degree angle to that. For the main eye muscle: orient so the bone axis runs left-to-right in front of you, then slice vertically. Even the cap, sliced this way, will be close enough to cross-grain to be tender. This single decision separates a great steak from a great cut-of-meat. Reference: Knife Skills §Carving.

🔴 No Limits: Dry-Aged American Wagyu (Substitutes Ingredient Tier)

INGREDIENT QUALITY · SUBSTITUTES BASE STEAK

True Basque chuletón cattle are 10+ year old dairy retirees from Galicia, fed a diet of local grasses and grain, slaughtered for the specific beef-eating tradition of northern Spain. These cattle are not legally exportable to the US and no domestic breed replicates the profile. What American producers have done instead is create a different-but-equally-interesting category: dry-aged American Wagyu. The Wagyu genetics provide intense marbling (BMS 6–9 for SRF Black, 9+ for SRF Gold); the dry-aging (30–60 days) concentrates flavor by ~30% and breaks down connective tissue. The resulting steak is softer than a pure Basque chuletón and more intensely beefy-funky than a standard American prime. For Pablo's purposes this is the right upgrade path: the kamado cook produces a result that reads as 'chuletón-adjacent' to anyone who has had the Spanish original, and as 'best steak ever' to everyone else. Source: SRF (Pablo's verified supplier), Meat N' Bone (local Miami delivery), Crowd Cow. Reference: Protein Encyclopedia §Ribeye · §Dry-Aging.

🔴 No Limits: Beef Tallow Baste (Extends Sear Phase)

FAT ENRICHMENT · EXTENDS SEAR PHASE

During the 90-sec-per-side sear, baste the upper surface with warm beef tallow infused with garlic and rosemary. The tallow accomplishes three things that butter cannot. First, its higher smoke point (~200 °C vs butter's 150 °C) tolerates kamado direct-heat contact without burning; the tallow stays golden instead of blackening into acrid solids. Second, its flavor profile is pure beef — it amplifies rather than alters the steak's identity, where butter adds a lactic note that, while delicious, is not part of the Basque tradition. Third, if the tallow is rendered from the trimmings of the steak itself (or from the same dry-aged primal), it carries the same flavor signature as the meat, producing a perfectly coherent crust. Source the tallow from: the trimmed fat cap of the steak itself (render in a pan on low for 20 min, strain); or from SRF (dedicated wagyu tallow product); or from a specialty butcher. Refrigerated, tallow keeps months. Reference: Stovetop and Pan §Baste Physics; Protein Encyclopedia §Fat Rendering.

🔴 No Limits: The Piparra Garnish (Adds Service Component)

GARNISH · BASQUE TRADITION · COMPLETES PLATE

Piparras — pickled young Basque guindilla peppers — are to chuletón what pickled jalapeños are to Texas brisket: the acid-bright counterpoint that makes the rich meat read as exciting rather than heavy. A good piparra has grassy vegetal notes, mild heat, and sharp vinegar that lingers only briefly on the palate before giving way. Served on the side in a small bowl (never on the steak), guests pick them up whole and eat them between bites of beef. The contrast is instantly recognizable to anyone who has eaten in a Basque asador and transformative to anyone who hasn't. Source: La Tienda, España, or any Spanish specialty store. Look for Ibarra or Donostia brand labels. Cheap pickled peppers from the regular grocery chiles aisle are not a substitute — the heat profile and acid balance are different. Reference: Sauces and Condiments §Pickles and Quick Brines; Spanish pantry §Conservas.

PAIRING

What to Drink

🍷 Wine — Classic

Rioja Gran Reserva or Ribera del Duero Reserva — a serious bottle, 2015 or earlier

Tempranillo-based Spanish reds with significant bottle age are the traditional chuletón pairing: the wine's developed tobacco, leather, dried fig, and forest floor notes complement the dry-aged funk of the steak, while the softened tannin doesn't fight the rich fat. A Rioja Gran Reserva ~10 years old or a Ribera Reserva with equivalent age is the right move. Serve in large Burgundy glasses at cellar temperature, not room temp.

🍷 Wine — Adventurous

Priorat (Garnacha-Carignan blend) or a Basque Txakoli + red progression

Priorat's massive structure and mineral-dark fruit profile handles the steak's intensity at a different register — less savory-elegant and more primal-powerful. Alternative progression: start with a chilled Txakoli (white, 11 % ABV, slight spritz) during the kamado phase and while piparras are first tasted; move to Priorat when the meat hits the table. The Txakoli resets the palate and the Priorat takes over for the meal. Both remain in the Basque-Mediterranean idiom.

🥃 Digestif

Patxaran (Basque sloe liqueur) or Orujo

The regional authentic choice. Patxaran is a traditional Navarran/Basque liqueur made from sloe berries, blackthorn, and anise — served ice-cold in small glasses. It functions as a digestif after a heavy meat-forward meal exactly the way limoncello does in southern Italy. Orujo (Spanish grappa, from distilled grape must) is the more intense alternative — clear, strong, cleansing. Either closes the meal in the correct tradition.

CONTEXT

Menu Ideas

Opener (Pintxo-Style)

Piparras + anchoas (Ortiz or Don Bocarte anchovies) + olives + a thin slice of jamón ibérico + small cubes of Manchego on toothpicks. Served as small shareable bites at the kamado while the steak is in the oven. Absolutely classic Basque chuletón meal pacing — the pintxo phase warms up the palate and the company simultaneously.

Light Course

Grilled white asparagus with alioli (UMAMI-5 #3) — kamado is already firing hot for the sear; drop asparagus on at 200 °C for 4 min right before the steak arrives. Serves as a vegetable-forward palate setter. Reference: UMAMI-5 #3 Alioli TM6 + Produce & Vegetables §Asparagus.

Main Event

This steak. Carved tableside on a warm board or brought in already sliced on a heated platter. Piparras in a bowl, flaky salt in another, crusty bread within reach. No fork-and-knife ceremony — eat with hands sometimes encouraged.

Side (Parallel to Main)

Simple dressed greens: escarole + endive + frisée with sherry vinaigrette (3:1 Arbequina to Vinagre de Jerez + Dijon + shallot + salt). Served in a big bowl passed around. The bitter-acid contrast cuts the steak's richness. Bread on the side for the board juice. That's the entire sides program — this meal is about the steak.

Dessert

Cheese course only — no sweet dessert. Aged Manchego (Pablo has ✓), Idiazábal (Basque smoked sheep), Cabrales (Asturian blue — optional, polarizing). Membrillo (quince paste) alongside, marcona almonds, a single drizzle of honey over the blue. With Patxaran or PX sherry.

YOUR NOTES

Cook Log

Session Notes

Date: _____ · Serves: ____ · Rating: __ / 5

Use this space to record what you changed, what worked, and what you'd do differently next time. Your future self will thank you.