

Coca de Recapte — Catalan Flatbread with Escalivada

A thin, oblong Catalan flatbread — half pizza, half focaccia, entirely its own thing. Topped with escalivada (oil-slick eggplant, pepper, and onion charred whole and peeled), anchovies, and olive oil. Baked on the kamado at 230 °C until the edges blister and the base crackles.

Protein Anchovies (light) · vegetable-centric

Serves 4 as main · 8 as tapa (one 30 × 40 cm coca)

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 45 min active + 30 min passive (vegetables and dough overlap)

Total 24 h cold-ferment dough + 45 min active build + 15 min bake = ~26 h total, 2 h day-of

THE STORY

Half Pizza, Half Focaccia, Entirely Catalan

A coca is not a pizza, and every Catalan will tell you this within the first thirty seconds of conversation. A pizza is round; a coca is oblong. A pizza is a Neapolitan export that conquered the world; a coca is a Catalan holdout that most of the world has never heard of. A pizza sits on tomato; a coca sits on whatever the region happened to have that week — escalivada in most of Catalonia, sardines in the coastal villages, spinach and pine nuts in the Pyrenees, cinnamon sugar for the sweet Sant Joan variant. The base is closer to focaccia than pizza — slightly enriched with olive oil, flat and crisp rather than blistered and puffy — but the toppings are lighter and the whole thing eats as something between a flatbread and a tart.

Coca de recapte (*recapte* = 'ingredients on hand') is the most common savory version. Escalivada is the heart: eggplant, red pepper, and yellow onion, charred whole over live fire (this is where the kamado earns its keep) until the skins are black and the flesh inside is silky,

then peeled, torn into long strips, and dressed with Arbequina and sherry vinegar. The escalivada is the star and the bread is the vehicle. Anchovies go on top for salt and umami; sometimes a few black olives. That is the entire composition. No mozzarella, no tomato sauce, no last-minute basil. The coca is the Catalan argument that you do not need to pile ingredients onto a flatbread to make it great — you need to pile the right ingredients.

The kamado is essential here. The 230 °C target temperature and the live-fire smoke produce a base that is crispy-bottomed, slightly leopard-spotted at the edges, with a hint of oak or cherry coming through. A conventional oven at 230 °C produces a perfectly good coca; a kamado at 230 °C produces one that tastes like it came from the Pyrenean village where you'd expect to find it. The escalivada benefits similarly from fire — supermarket roasted peppers from a jar would work, but peppers charred whole on the kamado have a depth of caramelized sugar and smoke that no oven-roasted version can match.

AT A GLANCE

Specs

FORMAT 30 × 40 cm oblong coca (one large)	BASE Cold-fermented olive oil enriched dough	KEY TEMP 230 °C kamado or oven • 12–15 min bake	TOPPING Escalivada (eggplant + pepper + onion) + anchovies + EVOO
DIFFICULTY Intermediate ●●○○○	ACTIVE TIME 45 min (vegetables + build)	COLD FERMENT 24 h in fridge (non-negotiable for flavor)	SERVES 4 main / 8 tapa
CUISINE Spanish Catalan	UNLOCKS Any escalivada plate, sardine coca variant, sweet Sant Joan coca		

What Changed & Why

The classical Catalan village coca is made with the flour and ingredients on hand, baked in a village wood oven, and served room-temperature with wine. This adaptation preserves the philosophy (simple, vegetable-forward, regional) while leveraging two things the village oven doesn't have: 24-hour cold dough fermentation (produces a markedly deeper, more complex base) and a precision-controlled kamado for the vegetable char. The ● tier upgrades to 00 flour + single-origin Arbequina for the dough, adds a sherry-vinegar-cured anchovy layer, and includes a black garlic purée under the escalivada as a modern Catalan flavor bridge.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	Mix dough day-of, rise 1–2 h, bake	24 h cold-ferment in the fridge	Long cold ferment produces markedly deeper flavor (enzymes break down flour proteins into amino acids; yeast produces more complex aromatic byproducts). Same 5 min of work, dramatically better base.
ADD	Oven-roasted vegetables for escalivada	Kamado-charred whole vegetables (230 °C direct fire)	Direct-fire charring produces Maillard + pyrolysis products (the 'smoke' flavor) that oven roasting cannot match. This is the instrument Pablo has; use it where it makes a meaningful difference.
ELEV	Cold sheet pan, dough rolled directly	Preheated baking steel or stone on the kamado grate	Preheated thermal mass drives heat into the base from below, crisping the bottom while the top bakes at 230 °C ambient. Produces a genuinely crispy base rather than a soft one.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
SUB	All-purpose flour + generic EVOO + grocery anchovies	● bread flour + standard EVOO + good-quality tinned anchovies · ● 00 flour (Caputo) + Arbequina single-estate + Ortiz Cantabrian anchovies + black garlic purée under escalivada	The ● tier commits to the four components that differentiate a village coca from a remarkable one: flour, oil, anchovies, and one modern flavor bridge (black garlic).

What You Need

● Everyday

The Dough (makes one 30 × 40 cm coca)

- 300 g bread flour (or all-purpose flour, though bread flour gives better chew)
- 195 g water (at 25–28 °C — slightly warm)
- 25 g EVOO
- 6 g kosher salt
- 1 g instant dry yeast (about 1/3 tsp)

The Escalivada (The Heart)

- 1 large eggplant (~500 g) — Italian or globe, skin-on
- 2 large red bell peppers, whole — stems on
- 1 large yellow onion — skin-on, halved through the root
- 2 tbsp EVOO
- 1 tbsp sherry vinegar (Vinagre de Jerez — Pablo has ✓)
- Kosher salt

The Finish

- 8–10 anchovy fillets (good-quality tinned — Ortiz if possible, otherwise any cured-in-oil)
- 2 tbsp EVOO (for drizzle)
- A few black olives, pitted and halved (optional)
- Flaky sea salt
- Fresh thyme or rosemary leaves (optional — 1 tsp)

Substitution Notes

- *No kamado?* A conventional oven at 250 °C (maximum for most home ovens) produces a very respectable coca. Place a baking steel or stone on the middle rack, preheat 45 min. Broil for the final 2 min for top char.
- *No bread flour?* All-purpose flour works. Chew will be slightly softer, not a quality problem.
- *Anchovy-averse?* Substitute thinly sliced cured chorizo or jamón. Less traditional but delicious. Or omit entirely for a vegetable-only coca.

No Limits

The Dough

- 300 g **Caputo 00 flour** (pizzeria — the blue bag) — finer grind, higher gluten development, silkier crust
- 195 g filtered water at 25–28 °C
- 25 g **Arbequina EVOO** (Pablo has ✓) — single-estate, for the flavor in the dough itself
- 6 g Maldon salt
- 1 g instant dry yeast

The Escalivada — Fire-Charred

- 1 large eggplant from the farmers market (Homestead organic if available at Pinecrest Saturday market)
- 2 large red bell peppers — Holland-grown or local in season
- 1 large Spanish yellow onion
- 2 tbsp **Picual EVOO** (more robust than Arbequina, holds up to the charred vegetables)
- 1 tbsp **Vinagre de Jerez Reserva** (Pablo has ✓)
- Maldon salt

Modern Flavor Bridge

- **30 g black garlic purée** (3–4 cloves, mashed smooth with 1 tsp EVOO) — under the escalivada, adds sweet-Maillard umami depth that's invisible but profound
- Sources: The Black Garlic Co, Regalis, or DIY (see Fermentation §Black Garlic)

The Finish — Cantabrian Salt

- **10 Ortiz Cantabrian anchovy fillets** — the gold standard, cured 12+ months in salt, larger and cleaner than standard anchovies
- 3 tbsp Arbequina EVOO for finish drizzle
- **6 Kalamata or Aragón olives**, pitted and halved
- Flaky Maldon
- Fresh thyme sprigs from a single plant

Infrastructure

- **Baking steel or pizza stone** (35 × 35 cm minimum) — preheated on the kamado grate for 45 min
- **Pizza peel** (semolina-dusted) for loading/unloading
- Kamado with lump charcoal + 1–2 oak chunks for the bake phase
- IR thermometer for stone surface verification (target 230 °C)

EQUIPMENT

Your Kit

- Large mixing bowl (3 L minimum)

- Kitchen scale

- Airtight container or covered bowl (for 24 h cold ferment)

- Baking steel or pizza stone

- Pizza peel (wood or metal, 35 cm+)

- Kamado with lump charcoal (or conventional oven at 250 °C)

- IR thermometer (optional — for stone-surface verification)

- Tongs for charring vegetables

- Sheet pan (for catching charred vegetables after they come off)

- Paper bags or plastic bag (for steaming charred peppers)

- Sharp knife for peeling and slicing vegetables

- Pastry brush (for EVOO on dough)

MISE EN PLACE

Before You Start

- T-24 h: Dough. Mix all ingredients. 10 min autolyse. 10 min develop. Bulk ferment 1 h on counter. Fridge 24 h.

 - T=0 (cook day): Escalivada first. Light kamado, load with lump charcoal, target 230 °C. Add 1–2 oak or cherry wood chunks just before vegetables go on.

 - Vegetables whole, skin on. Onto kamado direct heat. Rotate every 5–6 min. Total char time: 25–35 min depending on size. Skins should be uniformly black.

 - Once charred: pepper into a paper bag (sealed, 15 min — steam loosens skin). Eggplant + onion onto a sheet pan to cool 10 min.
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Peel everything. Tear peppers into 1 cm strips, eggplant into similar strips, onion into petals. Dress with Picual EVOO + sherry vinegar + salt. Rest at room temp.

Dough out of fridge 60 min before bake to temper. Baking steel/stone onto kamado grate to preheat 45 min at 230 °C.

Shape, top, load, bake.

MAKE-AHEAD

Timeline

- T-24 h – Mix + ferment dough**
Dough components combined, 10 min autolyse, 10 min kneading, 1 h bulk rise, 24 h cold retard in fridge.
- T=0 – Light kamado for escalivada**
Lump charcoal lit. Target 230 °C for vegetable char. Toss wood chunks on embers.
- T+0:30 – Vegetables on kamado**
Eggplant + peppers + onion halves directly on grate. Skin-on. Rotate every 5–6 min.
- T+1:00 – Vegetables off**
Skins uniformly black. Peppers into paper bag. Eggplant + onion to sheet pan. Cool 10 min.
- T+1:10 – Peel + dress escalivada**
Peel, tear into strips, dress with EVOO + sherry vinegar + salt. Rest at room temp.
- T+1:30 – Dough to counter**
Remove from fridge. Let temper 60 min. Place baking steel on kamado, preheat 45 min at 230 °C.
- T+2:15 – Shape the coca**
Dough onto floured surface. Stretch and press into oblong 30 × 40 cm. Thin — about 5 mm.
- T+2:20 – Top + load**
Brush dough with EVOO. (●) smear black garlic purée. Distribute escalivada in strips across surface. Arrange anchovies. Add olives.

● **T+2:25 – Bake 12–15 min**

Slide coca onto preheated steel via peel. Close kamado lid. Check at 10 min. Pull when edges are blistered gold and base is crisp.

● **T+2:40 – Finish + rest**

Off kamado. Drizzle fresh EVOO. Flaky salt. Thyme leaves scattered. Rest 5 min before slicing.

● **T+2:45 – Slice + serve**

Cut into 8–10 rectangular pieces with a pizza wheel. Plate on wooden board. Eat with hands, standing up, with a glass of vermut or cava.

METHOD

The Cook

1 Dough — 24-Hour Cold Ferment

1. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together 300 g flour + 6 g salt + 1 g yeast until uniform.
2. Pour in 195 g warm water (25–28 °C) + 25 g EV00. Mix with a wooden spoon or silicone spatula until a shaggy mass forms — about 60 seconds. No smooth dough yet; that's expected.
3. Cover the bowl and rest 10 minutes. This is the autolyse — gluten begins to develop passively, hydration equilibrates.
4. After 10 min: with wet hands, stretch and fold the dough 8 times inside the bowl — reach under the dough at one edge, lift, stretch up, fold over the top, rotate the bowl. This develops gluten without aggressive kneading.
5. Cover again, rest 10 min. Stretch and fold 8 more times.
6. Rest on counter at room temp for **1 hour bulk ferment**. Dough should nearly double — first rise, loose and airy.
7. Punch down gently. Transfer to an airtight container (or keep in covered bowl).
8. **Refrigerate 24 hours**. The cold slows the yeast dramatically but enzymes continue working, breaking flour proteins into amino acids and producing complex aromatic byproducts.

WHY THIS WORKS

Cold fermentation at 4 to 6 degrees Celsius reduces yeast activity to roughly 5 percent of room-temperature rates. But flour's native enzymes (amylases, proteases) continue working at near-full rate. Over 24 hours this produces significantly more free amino acids (umami) and simple sugars (Maillard precursors) in the dough than a 1 to 2 hour room-temperature rise. The result is a base with markedly deeper flavor and better browning during the bake. The same 5 minutes of mix-and-knead work; the 24 extra hours happen passively in the fridge. Reference: Bread and Baking §Cold Fermentation; Food Science Core §Enzymatic Hydrolysis.

2 Kamado Fire for Escalivada

1. On cook day, light the kamado. Lump charcoal pyramid, fire starters. Full open vents to establish flame.
2. Once coals ashed over: vents to 50 percent bottom / 50 percent top. Target dome temperature **230 °C**. Takes 15–20 minutes.
3. When approaching target: toss 1–2 oak or cherry wood chunks directly on the coals. Smoke should be thin blue, not white.
4. **Do not preheat the baking steel yet.** The steel goes on later. Right now the kamado is set up for direct-fire vegetable char at grate level.

3 Charring the Vegetables — The Escalivada Phase

1. Place the whole eggplant, whole red peppers, and halved onion (skin on, cut side up) directly on the kamado grate.
2. Close the lid. Turn every 5–6 minutes using tongs — the skins should be uniformly blackening on each side as you rotate.
3. Total time by vegetable: peppers 20–25 min (skin blackens, flesh collapses), eggplant 25–35 min (skin wrinkles and blackens, flesh fully tender — probe with a skewer: resistance-free), onion 20–25 min (outer layers charred, interior softened).
4. **The vegetables are done when:** pepper skins are entirely black and the pepper collapses when pressed; eggplant is entirely soft throughout with a charred-paper skin; onion halves have black-burnt outer rings but tender translucent interiors.
5. Pull each vegetable as it finishes. Pepper: into a paper bag, seal top, **steam 15 min** (this loosens the skin for easy peeling). Eggplant + onion: onto a sheet pan to cool 10 min at room temp.

WHY THIS WORKS

Whole-vegetable direct-fire charring does two things simultaneously: (1) Maillard browning of the skin creates deep flavor compounds that penetrate the outer layer, (2) steam trapped inside the intact vegetable gently cooks the interior without drying it. The skin becomes the sacrificial seasoning layer that gets peeled away, and the protected interior is silky and smoke-flavored throughout. Oven-roasted peeled vegetables cannot replicate this because the peeled interior is exposed to dry heat and loses moisture. The paper-bag steam for the pepper is not optional — pepper skins are thin and heat-adhered to the flesh; steam loosens them. Reference: Produce and Vegetables §Fire-Charring; Kamado Mastery §Vegetable Program.

4 Peel, Dress, Rest

1. **Pepper:** pull from bag after 15 min. The skin will slip off with gentle rubbing. Discard stem and seeds. Tear into 1 cm-wide strips lengthwise.
2. **Eggplant:** cut in half lengthwise. Scoop the soft flesh out with a spoon, discarding the skin. Tear into long strips.
3. **Onion:** peel off the charred outer layers (discard). Separate the soft inner layers into long petals.
4. Combine all three vegetables in a wide bowl. Dress with 2 tbsp EVOO + 1 tbsp sherry vinegar + 1/2 tsp kosher salt. Toss gently with a wooden spoon — not vigorously, to preserve the strip structure.
5. Taste. Adjust — sherry vinegar if flat, salt if under-seasoned, more EVOO if dry. The flavor target: smoky-sweet, lightly acidic, unctuous from the EVOO. This is escalivada — already a complete tapa on its own, but here it's the coca topping.
6. Rest at room temperature at least 20 minutes. This lets the flavors integrate and the sherry vinegar penetrate the vegetable strips.

5 Dough Temper + Steel Preheat

1. Remove the dough from the fridge 60 minutes before bake time. Dough must temper to roughly 18–20 °C for proper stretching and oven spring. Cold dough straight from the fridge tears rather than stretches.
2. Place the baking steel or pizza stone on the kamado grate. Adjust vents to maintain 230 °C with the steel on top.
3. **Preheat the steel 45 minutes at 230 °C.** The stone/steel must be thermally saturated — its interior must reach target temperature, not just its surface. 45 min is non-negotiable; skipping this produces a soft-bottomed coca.

6 Shape, Top, Bake

1. Tip the tempered dough onto a generously floured work surface.
2. Press down with your palms to deflate. Then, working from the center outward, stretch the dough into a rectangle roughly **30 × 40 cm**. Target thickness: about 5 mm — thinner than pizza, thicker than cracker. Use the heels of your palms and your fingertips to coax it; avoid a rolling pin, which compresses the bubbles you want in the final bake.
3. Transfer the shaped dough to a semolina-dusted pizza peel.
4. Brush the dough with **2 tbsp EVOO**.
5. (● **only**): spread 30 g black garlic purée thinly across the dough with an offset spatula. This adds a sweet-umami undercurrent invisible to guests.
6. Distribute the escalivada in loose strips across the dough, leaving a 1 cm border around the edges. Strip orientation is aesthetic — either parallel to the long axis or randomly scattered.
7. Arrange 8–10 anchovy fillets in a pattern — a St Andrew's cross, parallel lines, or random scatter. Olives dotted between.
8. **Immediate load**: slide the coca onto the preheated steel with a confident horizontal-plus-backward motion of the peel. Close the kamado lid immediately.

7 The Bake

1. Lid closed. Target bake time **12–15 minutes**.
2. Check at 10 min: lift lid briefly (costs 20–30 °C in dome temp but is worth it to assess). The edges should be blistering and starting to deepen in color; the base should be firm (not doughy); the toppings should be sizzling at the edges.
3. **Pull when:** edges are blistered, gold-to-deep-amber at their peaks, with some darker spots where the char is pronounced. Base: crisp when tapped with a finger. Anchovies: glistening but not shriveled.
4. Slide the peel under the coca. Transfer to a cooling rack — NOT a cutting board. A cooling rack lets the base breathe and stay crisp; a board traps steam and softens the bottom.
5. Drizzle immediately with fresh EVOO (1–2 tbsp), a light scatter of flaky salt, and a few fresh thyme leaves if using.
6. **Rest 5 minutes before slicing.** The melted anchovies and residual steam need a moment to settle or the first slice will release a flood of EVOO.

WHY THIS WORKS

At 230 °C on a preheated steel, the coca's base crisps within the first 3–4 minutes as contact with the hot metal drives out remaining moisture. The top, meanwhile, bakes at 230 °C ambient which hits the Maillard threshold (140 °C) immediately but develops more slowly on the exposed crust. The 12–15 minute window aligns bottom-crisp with top-char without over-baking either. The brief lid-lift at 10 min to check is a professional pizza technique — the thermal loss is small, the information gain is significant. Reference: Bread and Baking §Pizza Physics; Food Science Core §Maillard Threshold.

8 Slice + Serve

1. Transfer rested coca to a large wooden board.
2. Cut into 8–10 rectangular pieces with a pizza wheel or sharp chef's knife. Traditional Catalan portioning is rectangular, not triangular.
3. Serve immediately while still hot. The coca is meant to be eaten with hands — tapa-style, standing up, with a glass of vermut or cava.
4. Leftover coca keeps on the counter covered loosely for 24 h. Re-crisp at 200 °C for 3 min before eating.

QUICK REFERENCE

Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Mix + bulk ferment + fridge	T-24 h · 15 min active	Dough doubles room-temp, then cold-retards 24 h
Light kamado for escalivada	T=0 · 5 min active	Target 230 °C dome, wood chunks added
Char vegetables on grate	T+0:30 · 25-35 min passive	Skins uniformly black, eggplant fully soft
Steam pepper, cool eggplant + onion	T+1:00 · 15 min passive	Pepper in paper bag for skin loosening
Peel + tear + dress escalivada	T+1:15 · 10 min	Strips dressed with EVOO + sherry vinegar + salt
Dough tempers + steel preheats	T+1:30 · 45 min passive	Dough 18-20 °C, steel thermally saturated
Shape coca + top	T+2:15 · 10 min	30 × 40 cm, 5 mm thick, on semolina peel
Bake	T+2:25 · 12-15 min passive	Check at 10 min; pull when edges blistered gold
Finish + rest + slice	T+2:40 · 10 min	EVOO drizzle, flaky salt, 5 min rest

Emergency Protocols

DOUGH TEARS OR WON'T STRETCH TO FULL SIZE

Under-tempered (still too cold) or over-fermented (gluten broken down). For under-tempered: return to a warm spot for 30 more minutes. For over-fermented (dough feels slack, pillow-soft, and doesn't spring back): shape thicker and smaller (25 × 35 cm instead of 30 × 40), expect the coca to be more focaccia-like. Next batch: reduce cold ferment to 18 h.

BASE IS SOGGY UNDER THE TOPPINGS

Three possible causes. Top one: escalivada was too wet — next time drain the dressed vegetables in a strainer 5 min before topping. Second: baking steel wasn't preheated enough — 45 min minimum, verify with IR thermometer (should read 230 °C+ on the surface). Third: too much EVOO brushed on the dough; use 2 tbsp max, evenly distributed. For this coca: return to kamado for 3 min more bake, directly on the steel.

EDGES BURNED BEFORE THE MIDDLE COOKED

Kamado was running too hot (above 250 °C) or the coca was too close to the dome/flame zone. Pull immediately. For next bake: drop target to 220 °C and add 2 min to bake time. Burnt edges can be cut off at slicing — the remaining coca is still usable.

PEPPER SKIN WON'T PEEL OFF

Pepper wasn't charred enough OR wasn't steamed long enough. For this pepper: return to oven at 200 °C for 8 min more, then back into paper bag 20 min. If still stubborn, peel what you can and use the unpeeled portions for a different dish (soup, puree). Next batch: char until the skin is entirely blistered and black, and steam for full 15 min.

EGGPLANT TASTES BITTER OR SPONGY

Likely an old or over-seeded eggplant. The bitter compounds (solanine glycosides) concentrate in older fruit. For this batch: salt the eggplant flesh heavily after peeling, rest 10 min, rinse + pat dry before dressing — pulls out bitterness. Next purchase: choose eggplants that feel heavy for their size, with taut glossy skin, and avoid storage over 4 days.

COCA BASE IS CRISPY BUT NOT TASTY – FLAVOR IS FLAT

The dough's cold ferment was skipped or shortened. A same-day dough is always flatter than a 24 h cold ferment. Not recoverable for this coca. Next batch: commit to 24 h. The 5 minutes of mix + knead is identical either way; the 24 extra hours are free and transformative.

DEEP DIVES

Technique Notes

The 24-Hour Cold Ferment — Why It Transforms Flavor

DOUGH SCIENCE · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL YEASTED BREADS

Cold fermentation at 4 to 6 degrees Celsius slows yeast activity dramatically while leaving flour's native enzymes nearly fully active. Proteases break wheat proteins into free amino acids (umami, browning precursors) and amylases break starch into simple sugars (sweetness, browning precursors). Over 24 hours this accumulates into a markedly more complex base flavor than any same-day dough can achieve. The key insight: yeast doesn't make bread taste good; enzymes do. Yeast makes bread rise. The cold ferment decouples the two processes and lets the flavor chemistry run full-speed while the rising proceeds at a manageable trickle. Works for pizza, focaccia, coca, ciabatta, and baguette. Does not work for enriched doughs (brioche, challah) where fat inhibits both processes. Does not apply to sourdough (different chemistry entirely). Reference: Bread and Baking §Cold Fermentation; Food Science Core §Enzymatic Hydrolysis.

● Whole-Vegetable Direct-Fire Charring — The Escalivada Method

FIRE COOKERY · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL SKIN-ON VEGETABLE CHARRING

Charring a whole vegetable on live fire is fundamentally different from roasting or grilling cut pieces. The intact skin serves two functions simultaneously: it becomes the Maillard seasoning layer that will be peeled and discarded, carrying the charred-caramel-smoke flavor; and it seals the interior, letting steam produced inside gently cook the flesh to silky tenderness without drying. Applies to eggplant, bell peppers, tomatoes, onions, garlic heads, whole heads of leek. Does not apply to watery soft vegetables (zucchini, summer squash) which collapse before the skin chars, or dense hard vegetables (beets, turnips) which need time longer than the skin can tolerate. Temperature target: 220 to 240 degrees Celsius. Time: 20 to 35 minutes depending on size. Rotation: every 5 to 6 min. The most useful kamado vegetable technique. Reference: Kamado Mastery §Vegetable Program; Produce and Vegetables §Fire-Charring.

● Preheated Baking Steel or Stone — Thermal Saturation Minimum 45 Minutes

BAKE INFRASTRUCTURE · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL FLATBREADS AND PIZZAS

A baking steel or pizza stone has significant thermal mass — roughly 5 to 8 kilograms of material. Reaching internal temperature equilibrium with the oven or kamado ambient takes time. Surface temperature reaches 230 Celsius within 20 minutes; interior temperature only reaches 230 after 40 to 45 minutes. A dough landing on a steel at surface temp but cold interior will cool the stone instantly and bake unevenly. The 45-minute preheat is non-negotiable for a crispy base. Steel beats stone for most applications: higher thermal conductivity drives heat into the dough faster, producing a more pronounced base crust. Steel also cannot crack from thermal shock, whereas stones can. For coca, pizza, flatbreads, and naan: steel is the instrument. For slower breads (artisan sourdough, long-bake loaves): stone works equally well. Reference: Bread and Baking §Baking Surfaces.

● No Limits: Black Garlic Purée Under the Escalivada (Extends Topping Phase)

FLAVOR BRIDGE · EXTENDS TOPPING BUILD PHASE

Black garlic is fresh garlic that has been held at 60 to 70 degrees Celsius with controlled humidity for 30 to 90 days. During this time, sugars caramelize via Maillard reactions and alliin (the sharp fresh-garlic compound) breaks down into sweet, savory, slightly fruity compounds. The final product tastes like garlic, balsamic, and molasses combined. Spread as a thin purée under the escalivada, black garlic adds a sweet-umami undercurrent that is invisible to guests but profoundly deepens the coca's flavor complexity. Guests detect that the coca tastes more sophisticated than it looks; they cannot identify why. Source: Regalis Foods (best US supplier), The Black Garlic Co, or make your own by holding garlic heads in a rice cooker on 'keep warm' for 3 weeks wrapped in foil. Apply at 30 g per coca, thinned with 1 tsp EVOO to a smearable consistency. Reference: Fermentation §Black Garlic; Sauces and Condiments §Sweet-Umami Bridges.

● No Limits: Ortiz Cantabrian Anchovies (Substitutes Base Anchovy)

INGREDIENT QUALITY · SUBSTITUTES BASE PROTEIN

Commodity tinned anchovies vary widely in quality, from flat-salty-industrial to clean-cured-excellent. Ortiz Cantabrian anchovies are the universal gold standard: cured 12 plus months in salt, hand-filleted, packed in olive oil, larger and cleaner than standard anchovies. Price is 4 to 6 times commodity. Flavor impact on coca de recapte: substantial. The anchovy is one of the dish's three headline ingredients (with escalivada and dough), so its quality is disproportionately important. A Cantabrian anchovy melts slightly on the hot coca, releasing clean salt and umami without the fishy-industrial note commodity anchovies can impart. Source: Spanish specialty importers, Whole Foods premium cheese counter, La Tienda, Amazon for the red-and-white vintage-label Ortiz tins. Storage: unopened tin keeps years in a cool dark pantry; opened tin keeps 5 days refrigerated submerged in the oil. Reference: Pantry and Staples §Spanish Conservas.

● No Limits: The Smoke Layer — 1 or 2 Oak Chunks During Bake

FIRE FINISHING · EXTENDS BAKE PHASE

During the coca's 12 to 15 minute bake at 230 Celsius, toss 1 or 2 oak or cherry wood chunks on the embers. They smolder (do not ignite) and produce a light aromatic smoke during the bake. The coca absorbs a whisper of this smoke, most concentrated on the toppings (anchovies, escalivada) rather than the base. The effect is subtle but distinctive: the coca reads as Pyrenean-village authentic, as if it had been baked in a wood-fired oven. Oak is the traditional wood for Catalan breads; cherry is softer and more fruit-forward. Avoid mesquite and hickory for coca; both dominate. Important: do not soak the chunks. Dry wood produces blue smoke (right) versus white smoke from wet wood (acidic, wrong). Reference: Fire and Smoke §Wood Selection; Kamado Mastery §Smoke Zones.

PAIRING

What to Drink

🍷 Wine — Traditional

Cava Brut Nature or a dry vermut

Coca de recapte is a tapa-hour dish; the Catalan tradition pairs it with cava (Spain's traditional-method sparkling) or vermut (sweet-bitter fortified wine served over ice with an olive). The cava's acidity and fine bubbles cut through the EVOO and anchovy salt; the vermut's bitter edge matches the char of the escalivada. Serve either chilled. Cava cleaner and more versatile; vermut more uniquely Catalan.

🍷 Wine — Still

Young Priorat white (Garnacha Blanca-based) or Rueda Verdejo

If sparkling is wrong for the occasion: a young unoaked Priorat or Terra Alta white with mineral edge and 13 percent alcohol sits beautifully next to the charred vegetables. Rueda Verdejo is a more accessible substitute with grassy citrus notes that match the sherry vinegar in the escalivada. Both served cool, not cold (10 to 12 degrees Celsius).

Alternative

Dry Fino sherry (Tio Pepe, Valdespino Inocente)

Fino sherry and anchovies are a centuries-old Spanish pairing. The saline edge of a Fino Manzanilla mirrors the anchovy's cured salt and the Arbequina's bitter-grassy EVOO finish. Served ice-cold in a small tulip glass, 60 ml pours. Classic tapa-hour move.

CONTEXT

Menu Ideas

This as Starter / Tapa

The coca is itself a tapa course. Serve sliced into 8 or 10 rectangles on a wooden board, with a bowl of olives and toothpicks alongside, as the opening course of a Catalan or Spanish dinner. Accompanied by cava or vermut. 5 to 10 minutes of grazing while the main course builds.

Downstream — Second Main (Suquet de Peix)

Catalan fish stew — monkfish, clams, potatoes, picada (almonds, garlic, parsley, chocolate, fried bread — blended into a paste that thickens the broth). A classic one-pot main that pairs with the coca's tapa-like opening. Reference: Protein Encyclopedia §Seafood Stews (when filed).

Downstream — Salad Course

Escarola amb romesco — escarole salad dressed with romesco (UMAMI-9 reference when filed) and toasted almonds. Catalan bitter-leaf salad with the nutty pepper-sauce dressing. Refreshes the palate between the coca and a heavier main.

Downstream — Dessert

Crema catalana — Catalonia's answer to crème brûlée, with lemon zest and cinnamon. Torched sugar crust cracked with a spoon. A canonical finish to any Catalan meal. Reference: Pablo has prepared this at the Smokies trip.

Casual Use — Solo Meal

The coca is also a complete meal by itself: one coca + a simple salad (escarole, sherry vinaigrette) + a bottle of cava. Serves 2 as dinner, 4 as lunch, 8 as tapa. Takes 2 hours of active work once the dough is made (and the dough is 5 minutes of work 24 hours ahead). A genuinely weeknight-capable showpiece.

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.



Stop following recipes. Start understanding food.

