



SPANISH · GALICIAN (SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA / RÍA DE AROUSA) ·  
MAIN · TAPA · PARTY · PICNIC · NEXT-DAY BREAKFAST

# Empanada Gallega de Atún

A Galician-style pie with a thin, oily, paprika-tinted dough enclosing a slow-cooked sofrito of onion, pepper, tomato, and olive-oil-poached tuna. Baked at 200 °C until the top is mahogany and the smell has filled the entire house. Cut into squares. Eaten with hands, standing, at a party, with a glass of Albariño in the other one.

Protein Oil-poached tuna (bonito del norte ideal) · 350 g drained

Serves 8 - 10 as tapa · 4 - 6 as main · keeps 3 days refrigerated, reheats

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 60 min (30 min dough + 30 min filling, mostly passive)

Total 3 h 45 min (30 min dough + 45 min dough rest + 60 min filli

## THE STORY

### The Galician Truth — Empanada Is Not a Turnover, It Is a Pie

There is a great deal of bad empanada in the world. Argentine beef turnovers. Chilean pino pockets. Miami's Cuban-style croquettes-masquerading-as-empanadas. All of these are fine in their own right and share a name with the Galician dish we are making here, but they are a *completely different food*. The Galician empanada is a pie. A large, flat, sealed, two-crust, baked-in-a-pan, cut-into-squares *pie*. It is not a handheld turnover. It does not get fried. It is the size of a manhole cover and the crown jewel of Galician home cooking.

The Galician empanada has been made in some form since the middle ages — there are medieval references to empanadas filled with everything from lamprey to pigeon to saffron-saffroned onions. The modern version, as pulled out of any Santiago de Compostela kitchen today, is an oily, slightly-tinted-with-paprika dough wrapped around a filling whose exact composition varies by household. The two unbreakable rules: the dough is thin, oily, and stretches; the filling is cold and thoroughly cooked before it goes in.

Atún is the most traditional filling — specifically, good-quality canned bonito del norte packed in olive oil, mixed into a slow-cooked sofrito. Bacalao is the lenten alternative. Pulpo is the festival version. Zorza (cured pork) is the northern variant. Each household has a recipe and each recipe is the correct one. This is the atún version: the one most Galicians grew up eating on Sunday nights and the one that travels best to dinner parties, picnics, and next-morning breakfast.

Pablo, this is a dish that earns its real glory the next day. Make it for Saturday dinner; eat the rest Sunday morning with coffee. Cold empanada with cold Albariño is one of the great underrated breakfasts of the Spanish canon.

# Specs

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|--|---|---|--|
| <p>PORTIONS</p> <p><b>Full sheet pan (38 × 28 cm) · 8-10 squares tapa · 4-6 main</b></p> | <p>KEY TECHNIQUE</p> <p><b>Two-crust oil-dough pie · filling COLD before wrap</b></p> | <p>DOUGH REST</p> <p>45 min<br/>room temp<br/>(not fridge – the oil dough is pliable at warm)</p> | <p>FILLING COOK</p> <p>60 min on low, sofrito-style</p>  |
| <p>OVEN PHASE</p> <p>200 °C<br/>static bake<br/>(no convection) ·<br/>45 - 50 min</p>    | <p>DIFFICULTY</p> <p><b>Intermediate</b><br/>●●●○○</p>                                | <p>ACTIVE TIME</p> <p><b>60 min (dough + filling, mostly passive)</b></p>                         | <p>VESSEL</p> <p><b>Half-sheet pan 38 × 28 cm, rimmed</b></p>                                      |
| <p>CUISINE</p> <p><b>Spanish Galician</b></p>  | <p>PAIRING</p> <p><b>Albariño (chilled) · OR if picnic, hard cider</b></p>            | <p>KEEPS</p> <p><b>3 days refrigerated · improves after day 1</b></p>                             | <p>RULE</p> <p><b>Filling MUST be cold before wrap. Hot filling melts the dough structure.</b></p> |

UMAMI ADAPTATION

## What Changed & Why

**Two tiers, same empanada structure.** The everyday version uses good-quality supermarket canned tuna in olive oil + regular yellow onions + canned tomatoes + a grocery store red pepper. The No Limits version uses Spanish bonito del norte (Ortiz or Don Bocarte — actually world-class canned fish), Las Pedroñeras garlic, slow-cooked



## No Limits

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## EQUIPMENT

### Your Kit

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- Bosch oven — static bake (no convection for this)

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- Large half-sheet pan (38 × 28 cm, rimmed)

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- Parchment paper (to line the pan)

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- Stand mixer with dough hook (Pablo ✓ KitchenAid) — optional, dough can be kneaded by hand

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- Large mixing bowl for dough (3 L)

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- Large heavy sauté pan or Dutch oven (for the sofrito) — All-Clad or Le Creuset

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- Wooden spoon

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- Rolling pin

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- Bench scraper

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- Sharp knife (for cutting dough + finished empanada)

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- Pastry brush (for egg wash)

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- Small sauce pan for hard-boiling eggs

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- Wire cooling rack

#### MISE EN PLACE

## Before You Start

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- Start the dough FIRST — it needs 45 min rest. Combine warm liquid + yeast + oil in a small bowl. Let foam 5 min.

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- Combine flour + salt + pimentón in the mixer bowl. Pour in the yeast mixture. Knead 5 min (stand mixer low) until smooth and elastic. Cover and rest 45 min at room temp.

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- Hard-boil the eggs: drop into boiling water, 9 min, ice bath, peel, slice into 5 mm rounds. Set aside.

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- Dice the onions, red pepper, slice the garlic. Drain the canned tomatoes and crush by hand (rustic texture).

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- Drain the tuna, RESERVING the oil. The oil goes into the sofrito.

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- Pre-heat oven to 200 °C STATIC bake (turn off convection fan if your oven defaults to convection). Static heat gives better bottom crust on a pie like this.

MAKE-AHEAD

# Timeline



## METHOD

# The Cook

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### 1 Phase 1 — The Oil Dough

1. Combine 180 ml warm water (38-40 °C) with 7 g yeast and 100 ml olive oil. Stir and let sit 5 minutes until foamy. If no foam forms, your yeast is dead — start over with fresh yeast.
2. In the stand mixer, combine 500 g flour, 1 tsp fine salt, and 1/2 tsp pimentón dulce. Mix to distribute.
3. With the mixer on low, pour in the yeast mixture. Knead on low-medium for 5 minutes. The dough should come together, be slightly tacky, and pull cleanly off the sides of the bowl. If it's sticking badly, add 1 tbsp flour at a time. If it's too dry, 1 tbsp water.
4. Transfer to a lightly oiled bowl, cover with a damp towel or plastic wrap. Rest 45 minutes at room temperature. Do not put in the fridge — oil dough needs warm to become pliable. The dough will rise slightly — it's not a big doubling, just a relaxation.
5. While the dough rests, start the filling.

## 2 Phase 2 — The Sofrito Filling (Cold)

1. In a large heavy pan, heat the EVOO + reserved tuna oil over medium-low heat.
2. Add diced onions and a pinch of salt. Cook very slowly, stirring every few minutes, for 15-20 minutes until onions are soft, golden, and sweet. **Do not rush this step.** Caramelized onion is the flavor foundation.
3. Add diced red pepper. Cook 10 more minutes, stirring occasionally, until pepper is soft and the vegetables have melded.
4. Add sliced garlic. Cook 2 minutes until fragrant but not browned.
5. Stir in pimentón dulce, pimentón picante, and bay leaves. Cook 30 seconds — the paprika blooms in the oil and turns the sofrito deep orange-red. Do NOT burn the paprika; it becomes bitter instantly.
6. Add crushed tomatoes. Stir. Cook 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until most of the liquid has evaporated and the sofrito is thick, glossy, and holds together when mounded on a spoon. Season with salt.
7. **Remove from heat. Cool completely.** This is the most important step. Hot filling will melt the dough structure and make the bottom crust soggy. Spread on a sheet pan to accelerate cooling, or refrigerate 30-45 minutes.
8. When fully cooled, gently fold in the drained tuna. **Do not pulverize** — the tuna should remain in large flakes.

### 3 Phase 3 — Assembly

1. Divide the rested dough into two portions: 60% for the bottom, 40% for the top. The bottom is bigger because it needs to come up the sides.
2. On a lightly floured surface, roll the larger piece into a rectangle slightly larger than your sheet pan (about 42 × 32 cm). The dough should be 3-4 mm thick.
3. Line the sheet pan with parchment paper. Transfer the rolled dough to the pan, letting it drape over the edges by 2-3 cm.
4. Spread the COLD sofrito-tuna filling evenly over the dough, leaving a 2 cm border around the edge.
5. Layer the sliced hard-boiled eggs evenly over the filling.
6. Roll the smaller dough piece to 38 × 28 cm (just fitting the pan).
7. Brush the exposed bottom-dough border with water. Drape the top dough over the filling.
8. Press and roll the overhanging bottom dough up over the top dough edge, sealing in a traditional rolled crimp — the Galician signature. Use your fingers to pinch the rolled edge at 3 cm intervals for decorative texture.
9. Cut 3-4 steam vents in the top. Slits, not holes.
10. Brush the entire top with the egg yolk wash.

### 4 Phase 4 — Bake + Rest

1. Bake at 200 °C static (non-convection) for 45-50 minutes. The top should be a deep mahogany, not just golden. Pale tops mean underdone dough.
2. At the 30-min mark, check the bottom by lifting the parchment with the empanada briefly — the bottom should be tanning. If pale, move to the bottom rack for the remaining time.
3. When the top is mahogany and the bottom is firm-crisp, remove from oven.
4. Transfer to a wire rack (still on parchment). **Rest 20 minutes.** Do not cut while hot — the filling will ooze and the crust will be soggy.
5. After resting, cut into 9-12 squares with a sharp knife. Serve at room temperature or slightly warm.
6. Traditional Galician service: **cut into squares, served cold or room-temp with Albariño**, NOT straight from the oven. Empanada is party food, not dinner-theater food.

# Timing Cheat Sheet

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TROUBLESHOOTING

## Emergency Protocols



**UNDEFINED**

Dust generously with flour and roll on flour-dusted parchment. If truly unworkable, knead in 2-3 tbsp more flour and rest 15 min before rolling.



**UNDEFINED**

Patch with a small piece of reserved dough, press edges to seal. No one will notice once baked. Egg-wash over the patch.

 UNDEFINED

Spread filling THIN on a sheet pan and refrigerate 30 min minimum. Warm filling WILL melt the bottom crust and make it soggy. No shortcut exists here.

 UNDEFINED

Diagnosis: filling was too warm or too wet. Serve anyway, but plate the slices cut-side up so the soggy bottom isn't the visible surface. Next time: thicker sofrito (longer reduction), colder filling.

 UNDEFINED

Extend 5-10 min OR finish with broil for 2 min (watch closely, burns in 30 sec). The egg wash browns first; continue until deep amber.

 UNDEFINED

Cosmetic — the filling contains tuna, which has moisture. Small cracks are normal. Large splits usually mean too little venting or overfilling.

 UNDEFINED

Also cosmetic. The leaked filling crisps on the parchment and is actually delicious. Serve as-is.

## DEEP DIVES

# Technique Notes

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## PAIRING

# What to Drink

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### **Wine — Traditional**

Albariño from Rías Baixas — Do Ferreiro Cepas Vellas, Pazo Señoráns Colección, or Adega Galegas

*The only correct wine. Albariño and empanada grew up in the same Galician villages. Saline-mineral, bright citric acid, slightly aromatic — it cuts through the oil dough and the rich sofrito without overpowering either. Serve 9-10 °C. Pour generously; this is a Sunday-afternoon wine that people drink in volume.*

### **Wine — Alternate**

Txakoli de Bizkaia or Txakoli de Alava (not Getaria — slightly fuller-bodied Txakolis)

*Basque alternative to Albariño with similar saline-bright character. More fuller-bodied Txakolis stand up to the rich tuna sofrito better than the lighter Getaria versions.*

### **Non-wine — Traditional**

Sidra Natural Asturiana — Trabanco, Herminio, or Viuda de Angelón

*The cider alternative. Dry, funky, slightly acetic hard cider poured from height into a wide glass (Asturian escanciado). Works beautifully with empanada, especially as a picnic/outdoor pairing.*

## CONTEXT

# Menu Ideas

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### **This as Tapa Centerpiece**

Galician dinner party built around the empanada. Cut into squares, set on a wooden board in the middle of the table, let guests help themselves over 2 hours with Albariño flowing. No plating, no service — this is communal food.

### Opener (Galician seafood)

Percebes (gooseneck barnacles — if you can source) or a plate of simply-grilled sardines with flaky salt and lemon. Sets the Galician coastal mood.

### Pair — Picnic configuration

Cold empanada + cold Albariño + good bread + Manchego + Marcona almonds + jamón. Pack into a basket, go to the beach. This is the Galician Sunday.

### Downstream — Next-day breakfast

Seriously. Cold empanada + espresso + ripe peach. One of the great underrated Spanish breakfasts. Often better the next day as the flavors settle.

### Downstream — Dessert

Queso de tetilla (the soft Galician cow's-milk cheese) with quince paste + walnuts. Or tarta de Santiago (almond tart) if continuing the Galician theme.

#### 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.*