



SPANISH · CATALAN · APPETIZER · TAPA · SIDE · BASE (FOR COCA, EMPANADA, TARTINES)

# Escalivada Catalana

Eggplant, red pepper, and yellow onion roasted whole in a 220 °C oven until the skins blister and blacken, then steamed in a covered bowl for twenty minutes so the skins slip off in sheets. Peeled, hand-torn into strips, dressed with Arbequina, sherry vinegar, and flaky salt. Eaten cool with anchovy, jamón, or simply on pan amb tomàquet. The vegetable dish that taught me what a vegetable can be.

Protein Vegetarian (becomes omnivore with anchovy / jamón / fig service)

Serves 6 as tapa · 4 as side · base for 8 portions of coca de recapte

Difficulty Beginner

Active 15 min (10 min peel + dress · 5 min plate)

Total 1 h 35 min (1 h roast · 20 min steam-rest · 15 min peel/dress)

## THE STORY

### The Catalan Fire Doctrine — When a Vegetable Is the Point

The word *escalivar* in old Catalan means 'to cook in the ashes.' It is the same root as the Spanish *cautivar* — to capture, to hold captive. Escalivada is therefore, by etymology, a vegetable taken captive by fire. Roasted whole in hot ashes until the skin blisters and the flesh inside collapses into a smoky, silky, sweet concentrate. The technique is pre-industrial — it predates ovens, it predates sauté pans, it predates even cookware. Cavemen discovered escalivada when they dropped eggplants in a fire and fished them out the next morning.

What you are making in a Bosch convection oven at 220 °C is the domestic version of this ancestral technique. It will not have the full smokiness of vegetables pulled from living charcoal — that version is made in a kamado, and it's better, and it's recipe #2 below in the Kamado-Finished variant. But the oven version is the weeknight version, the make-ahead version, the "I am having 12 people over Saturday and need base product Wednesday" version. And it is 80 percent of the way there.

What matters is that the vegetables are roasted *whole*. Not sliced, not cubed, not prepped. Whole eggplants, whole red peppers, whole onions — skin on, stem on, oiled and salted, laid on a sheet pan, in a hot oven for an hour. The skins become the insulation; the flesh inside steams in its own moisture while absorbing a subtle char from the blistering skin. When you pull them out and cover with a towel for twenty minutes, the residual steam finishes the cook and loosens the skins from the flesh. Peel, tear, dress, done.

This is a make-ahead dish. The flavor deepens over 24 hours. Escalivada made Thursday for a Saturday dinner party is *better* than escalivada made Saturday afternoon. The smoky sweetness compounds in the fridge.

## Specs

<p>PORTIONS</p> <p><b>Yields ~600 g escalivada · 6 tapa / 4 side / base for 8 coca portions</b></p>	<p>KEY TECHNIQUE</p> <p><b>Whole-vegetable high-heat roast + steam-rest</b></p>	<p>OVEN TEMP</p> <p><b>220 °C convection, 60 min</b></p>	<p>STEAM REST</p> <p><b>20 min under a covered bowl (trap residual steam)</b></p>
<p>DIFFICULTY</p> <p><b>Beginner</b></p> <p>●●○○○</p>	<p>ACTIVE TIME</p> <p><b>15 min (peel + dress)</b></p>	<p>VESSEL</p> <p><b>Large sheet pan (38 × 28 cm) or two medium pans</b></p>	<p>CUISINE</p> <p><b>Spanish Catalan</b></p>
<p>PAIRING</p> <p><b>Anchovy fillet + bread + EVOO · OR Cava · OR Vi Novell (young Catalan red)</b></p>	<p>KEEPS</p> <p><b>4 days refrigerated · improves day 1 → day 3 · freeze 3 months</b></p>	<p>RULE</p> <p><b>Roast whole, steam under cover, peel by hand, never wash under water.</b></p>	

### UMAMI ADAPTATION

## What Changed & Why

**Two tiers, one doctrine.** The everyday version uses supermarket Italian eggplant, red bell pepper, and yellow onion — reliable, consistent, foolproof. The No Limits version goes to the farmers market for long thin Catalan-style graffiti eggplants, jarred piquillo peppers for the finish, and Vidalia or a real Valencian sweet onion. Both versions benefit dramatically from being made ahead — this is a dish where patience is a direct flavor input.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI	VERSION	WHY
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INGREDIENTS

# What You Need

## ● Everyday

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## No Limits

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## EQUIPMENT

### Your Kit

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- Bosch oven with convection (Pablo ✓)
  - Large sheet pan (38 × 28 cm), rimmed
  - Parchment paper (optional — cleanup aid only; not structural)
  - Large heatproof mixing bowl (6 L+) — for steam-rest
  - Plate or lid that covers the bowl (traps the steam)
  - Sharp paring knife
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- Clean kitchen towel (for hand-peeling)
- Serving platter — wide and shallow for the final arrangement
- Small ramekin for the dressing

#### MISE EN PLACE

## Before You Start

- Pre-heat oven to 220 °C convection.
- Wash the vegetables, pat dry. Leave stems on, skin on. Do NOT cut anything.
- Prick each eggplant 4-5 times with a fork or paring knife tip — this lets steam escape during roast and prevents blowouts.
- Place all vegetables on the sheet pan with space between them (overlap = uneven roast).
- Drizzle with 60 ml EVOO, sprinkle with 2 tsp kosher salt, roll the vegetables to coat.
- Have the steam-rest bowl ready — large enough to hold all the vegetables with a plate-lid on top.

#### MAKE-AHEAD

## Timeline

- 1 h 35 min  
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- 1 h 30 min  
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- 40 min  
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- 30 min  
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+ 0 : 0 2  
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+ 0 : 2 2  
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+ 0 : 4 5  
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## METHOD

# The Cook

### 1 Phase 1 — High-Heat Whole Roast (60 min)

1. Oven at 220 °C convection.
2. On a large sheet pan, lay out whole eggplants, whole red peppers, whole onions (skin on), and whole tomatoes if using. Drizzle with 60 ml EVOO. Sprinkle with 2 tsp kosher salt. Roll to coat evenly.
3. Roast 60 minutes, rotating the pan front-to-back at the 20-min mark for even char.
4. Target: skins of peppers and eggplants should be **blackened and blistered** over most of the surface. Eggplants should feel completely collapsed when pressed with tongs — they should sag under their own weight. Onions should have deep caramel-colored patches through the outer skin.
5. Peppers often finish before eggplants (thinner wall) — pull them early if fully charred, return the rest to finish.
6. Tomatoes, if using, will soften and char. Pull when skin splits.

### 2 Phase 2 — Steam Rest (20 min) — Critical

1. Transfer the hot vegetables to a large heatproof bowl. Cover with a plate or tight-fitting lid. Let sit **20 minutes undisturbed**.
2. This step does two things: (1) the retained steam finishes the cook, especially on the interior of onions and any thicker vegetables, and (2) the steam loosens the skin from the flesh, so peeling by hand becomes trivial.
3. DO NOT skip this or rush it. Vegetables that are peeled immediately out of the oven require a knife (damaging flesh) or rinsing under water (wet flavor dilution). Steam-rested vegetables peel with fingers and a towel.
4. After 20 minutes, the vegetables should be warm, the bowl slightly damp with steam, and the skins visibly loose from the flesh.

### 3 Phase 3 — Peel, Tear, Dress

1. Work over a bowl or the same sheet pan (catching juices — you want these in the final dish).
2. **Eggplant:** pinch the stem-end skin between thumb and forefinger and pull. Whole skin sheets off in one or two strips. Discard stem and most of the skin. Tear the flesh into rough 1 cm wide strips with your fingers, NOT a knife. The torn edge is the Catalan cue. Flesh should be ivory-brown and meltingly soft.
3. **Peppers:** remove the stem (it pulls out with the seed core). Split the pepper open, scrape out remaining seeds with a thumb. Peel off the blackened skin — it should slip off in large sheets. Tear the flesh into 2 cm wide strips.
4. **Onions:** peel off the papery/blackened outer layers. Cut the root end off. Slice the onion vertically into thick wedges (1 cm). The layers separate beautifully. Don't worry about perfect cuts — rustic is correct.
5. **Tomatoes (if used):** peel, discard skin, squeeze out seeds, tear flesh.
6. Pile the torn vegetables loosely on a serving platter.
7. **NEVER wash the vegetables under running water.** That is the only way to ruin escalivada — water dilutes the concentrated flavor that the roast built up. If there are small flecks of black skin stuck to the flesh, they stay. They add flavor, not visual flaws.

### 4 Phase 4 — Dress + Rest + Serve

1. Whisk together: 120 ml EVOO + 2 tbsp sherry vinegar + 2 cloves very finely minced garlic + 1/2 tsp flaky salt + pepper.
2. Pour the dressing over the arranged vegetables on the platter. Do not toss vigorously — gentle folding only. Some vegetables can stay separate (peppers visible, eggplant visible) rather than blended into a mass.
3. **Rest 15 minutes** at room temperature before serving. This lets the dressing soak in and the flavors marry.
4. Service options:
5. - As tapa: drape an anchovy fillet across each portion, serve with toasted bread
6. - As base for coca de recapte or empanada: chill and use as filling
7. - As side: plate simply next to grilled fish or meat
8. - With jamón: arrange a few slices of jamón ibérico alongside the escalivada, let guests combine bites themselves
9. Garnish with a final scatter of flaky salt and fresh chopped parsley just before serving.

QUICK REFERENCE

# Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
undefined	- 1 h 3 5 min	undefined
undefined	- 1 h 3 0 min	undefined
undefined	- 4 0 min	undefined
undefined	- 3 0 min	undefined
undefined	0 : 0 0	undefined
undefined	+ 0 : 0 2	undefined
undefined	+ 0 : 2 2	undefined
undefined	+ 0 : 3 0	undefined
undefined	+ 0 : 4 5	undefined

TROUBLESHOOTING

## Emergency Protocols

 UNDEFINED

Return to 220 °C oven for 10-15 more minutes. Truly done escalivada eggplant offers NO resistance when pressed. If firm inside, it's undercooked.

 UNDEFINED

You didn't steam-rest long enough, or the bowl wasn't sealed. Return to a covered bowl for another 15 minutes and try again.

 UNDEFINED

Let rest longer — the oil soaks in. Drain excess oil off the platter just before service. Save the runoff — it's gold for toasting bread.

 UNDEFINED

Normal. Scrape the tomato flesh off the pan and stir into the dressing. The liquid is concentrated tomato sweetness and enhances everything.

 UNDEFINED

Standard escalivada eggplant is brown-ivory, not white. If it looks gray-black, it was overcooked. Still edible, just uglier. Hide under the red peppers on the platter.

 UNDEFINED

Unrecoverable — flavor is diluted. Compensate by reducing 100 ml of the dressing in a pan with 1 tsp sherry vinegar for 1 minute to intensify, then use the reduction.

 UNDEFINED

Refrigerate undressed vegetables in an airtight container for up to 4 days. Dress only what you'll eat that day. Can also freeze (undressed) 3 months — texture softens but flavor holds.

## DEEP DIVES

# Technique Notes

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### PAIRING

## What to Drink

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### **Wine — Traditional Catalan**

Cava Reserva or Cava Gran Reserva — Gramona Imperial, Recaredo Brut de Brut, or Agustí Torelló Mata

*Catalan sparkler with Catalan vegetable. Bone-dry Cava cuts through the oil-heavy escalivada, and the bottle-aged lees complexity mirrors the smoky depth of the roasted vegetables. Serve 8-10 °C. Glasses full. This is the classical local pairing.*

### **Wine — Catalan Red**

Montsant or young Priorat — Celler Joan d'Anguera, Capçanes Cabrida, or an affordable Cims de Porrera

*If the escalivada is going on a substantial platter with anchovies and jamón: young Montsant or Priorat brings garnacha-based dark-fruit grip that holds up. Serve 16 °C (slightly chilled).*

### **Wine — Rosé**

Navarra garnacha rosado or Provençal dry rosé — Gramona La Cuvee Especial or Chateau Simone

*If summer and outdoors: dry rosé with good acid mirrors the escalivada's sweet-acid balance. Catalan picnic in a bottle.*

## CONTEXT

# Menu Ideas

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### **This as Tapa Base**

The foundation of a Catalan tapa spread. Arrange on a wooden board with anchovy + jamón + pa amb tomàquet. Guests build their own bites. 2-hour leisurely opening.

### **Opener to Main**

Escalivada + anchovy + pan as the starter, followed by a grilled whole fish (lubina-a-la-sal or whole-fish-kamado) as the main. The smoky vegetables prime the palate for the fish.

### **Base for Other Recipes**

Escalivada IS the topping for coca de recapte (UMAMI-10). Make a double batch: tapa Saturday, coca Sunday with the leftovers. Zero-waste Catalan meal planning.

### Side (Roast Night)

Alongside chuletón a la parrilla (UMAMI-6) or cordero lechal asado (UMAMI-7) — the smoky-sweet vegetables cut the richness of the roasted meat and pair in the same Catalan-Castilian continuum.

### Make-Ahead Convenience

Made Thursday, used Friday night as tapa, base for Saturday's coca, leftover in the fridge Sunday with eggs for breakfast. 4 meals from one hour of active work.

#### YOUR NOTES

## Cook Log

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### 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.

