



SPANISH · FRENCH-COMPOUND-BUTTER TECHNIQUE · PANTRY FOUNDATION ·
CONDIMENT · COMPOUND BUTTER · FINISHING

Mantequilla de Pimentón · Three Variants (Dulce, Picante, Ahumado)

Three compound butters from one pound of European butter — sweet pimentón, hot pimentón, smoked pimentón. Fifteen minutes of work, three stick-shaped logs wrapped in parchment, frozen. One log lives at the back of the fridge; another ages in the freezer for the next three months. Every steak, every piece of fish, every roasted vegetable gets a one-inch disc at service that melts into the plate. The three-minute upgrade that turns a simple plate into a finished one.

Protein None (dairy + spice)

Serves 3 logs × 120 g = 360 g total · each log: 1.5 - 2.0 portions

Difficulty Beginner

Active 15 min active

Total 15 min + 2 h firm-set in fridge = 2 h 15 min

THE STORY

The Three-Minute Upgrade on Every Plate

Compound butter is one of the most leveraged techniques in classical French cooking. A single European-butter log, enriched with an aromatic + a technique-set (herb, spice, miso, anchovy, roasted garlic), freezes, lives in the kitchen forever, and turns any simple protein into a restaurant-plated one. A disc of chive butter on a grilled pork

chop. A disc of miso-yuzu butter on seared scallops. A disc of lemon-thyme butter on roasted carrots. Three minutes of service work on a Tuesday weeknight becomes a three-minute upgrade.

This recipe produces three variants from one pound (450 g) of butter. All three lean on pimentón de la Vera — the Spanish smoked paprika that is the single most under-used spice in US kitchens, and the single spice that most elevates a pantry with minimal effort.

Dulce (sweet): Pimentón de la Vera Dulce + 1 clove garlic + pinch of Maldon. The universal finishing butter. Works on every red meat, every seafood, every vegetable. Closest to classical French beurre maître d'hôtel but with Spanish pimentón instead of parsley.

Picante (hot): Pimentón de la Vera Picante + 1 clove garlic + chile flakes + pinch of Maldon. For guests who want some heat. A disc melts into a plate of gambas + alioli and becomes a warm-chile butter finish. Also the correct compound butter for entraña a la plancha (upcoming UMAMI-4 slate item) and other grilled red meats.

Ahumado (smoked): Pimentón de la Vera Ahumado + 1 clove garlic + pinch of Maldon + splash of sherry vinegar. The one with the strongest brand identity — wood-smoke + dairy + Jerez acidity + garlic. Pairs with everything Kamado-cooked. A disc on [brisket-kamado](#) (Basque live-fire) adds a second layer of smoke; on [iberico-secreto-kamado](#), it resonates with the Ibérico fat.

Three pimentóns. Three butters. Same base technique. Three logs. Three months. An enormous return on 15 minutes.

Specs

<p>YIELD</p> <p>3 logs × 120 g = ~360 g total</p>	<p>BASE</p> <p>Unsalted European butter (82% butterfat min), room temp</p>	<p>RATIO PER LOG</p> <p>120 g butter + 3 g (1 tsp) pimentón + aromatics</p>	<p>DIFFICULTY</p> <p>Beginner</p> <p>●○○○○</p>
<p>ACTIVE TIME</p> <p>15 min</p>	<p>FIRM-SET</p> <p>2 h refrigerated</p>	<p>KEEPS</p> <p>1 month refrigerated (wrapped) · 3 months frozen</p>	<p>SERVICE PORTION</p> <p>1/2-inch disc (~6 g) per plate · 15-20 portions per log</p>
<p>SERVE TEMP</p> <p>Refrigerator-cold disc placed on HOT food — melts at service</p>	<p>KEY RULE</p> <p>Butter must be room temp (pliable, not melted) for even incorporation</p>		

UMAMI ADAPTATION

What Changed & Why

Two variables: butter quality and pimentón quality. Technique is identical across tiers and across the three variants. The ● Tier A (Everyday) uses Kerrygold unsalted + La Chinata or Carmencita pimentón from Whole Foods/Publix Spanish section. Produces restaurant-quality compound butter. The ● Tier B (No-Limits) uses Vermont Creamery Cultured or Échiré AOP butter + Las Hermanas de la Vera DOP pimentón (via Market

Hall Foods) — the three DOP pimentóns (dulce, picante, ahumado) from the single producer. The butter difference is perceptible (cultured butter adds fermented-lactic complexity); the pimentón difference is large (DOP Las Hermanas has depth, sweetness, and smoke character that generic pimentón does not match). Tier B is the elevated signature version; Tier A is the weeknight workhorse. Make Tier A for routine, Tier B for a dinner where the butter is a centerpiece.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	Single compound butter recipe, use whatever aromatic is on hand	Three variants in parallel: dulce (sweet, universal), picante (hot, chile-register), ahumado (smoked, fire-register)	Different proteins want different pimentón registers. Dulce is universal-everything; picante pairs with grilled red meat and gambas; ahumado pairs with anything Kamado-cooked. Making all three in one 15-minute session lets you pick the right register at service. One log of each in the fridge gives you three distinct sauce-finishes ready to drop on any plate.
TECH	Cold butter beaten in a stand mixer with the aromatics	Butter ROOM TEMPERATURE (pliable-but-not-melted), mashed with a fork in a bowl with the aromatic; no mixer needed	Room-temp butter (60-65°F / 16-18°C) takes aromatic incorporation in 60 seconds with a fork. Cold butter requires more force and often breaks (splits into butterfat + water); fully-melted butter re-solidifies with visible layers. Room-temp pliability is the mechanical sweet spot. For a home kitchen a mixer is overkill — a bowl + fork is faster + cleaner.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
ADD	—	1 clove garlic per log (finely grated on Microplane, never chopped)	Microplane-grated garlic becomes a paste that distributes perfectly evenly through the butter. Chopped garlic creates rough clumps in the finished log. The clove quantity (1 per 120 g log) is balanced for everyday use; increase to 2 for the Picante log if you like heat + garlic together.
ADD	—	Splash (2 g) of sherry vinegar in the Ahumado log only	The smoked pimentón variant benefits from a tiny acid note to balance the wood-smoke intensity + dairy richness. Sherry vinegar is the correct Spanish acid. Classical beurre maître d'hôtel uses lemon juice for the same reason; this is its Spanish translation. 2 g only — any more and the butter becomes visibly broken during service.
ELEV	Form into logs with plastic wrap	Form into logs with parchment paper (not plastic) + optional twine twist at the ends	Plastic wrap leaches microplastics into the butter over weeks of freezer storage + is aesthetically cheap when you unwrap at service. Parchment is food-safe, comes off cleanly, and looks restaurant-grade when the log is sliced into discs tableside. Wrap in a single sheet, roll, twist ends like a candy wrapper.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
SKIP	Salting the butter directly + mixing	Use unsalted butter and salt the final food at service, not the butter itself	Salted butter varies in salt content by brand (1.2-1.8% by weight), making the finished log inconsistent. Unsalted butter + external Maldon at service gives consistent results and lets you dial salt to the specific plate. A restaurant-kitchen discipline. The exception is a purposeful salt-forward variant where the butter is the primary seasoning — not the case here.

What You Need

● Everyday

The Butter Base (makes 3 logs)

- 450 g (1 lb, or 2 sticks = ~230 g) **unsalted European butter, 82% butterfat minimum** — **Kerrygold** (Whole Foods / Publix, the US chef default) or **President**. Do NOT use standard American butter (~80% butterfat with higher water content).
- Butter at room temperature for 1-2 hours before starting (or 20 sec microwave in short bursts to soften without melting).

The Three Pimentóns

- 3 g (~1 tsp) **Pimentón de la Vera Dulce** — **La Chinata Dulce** or **Carmencita Pimentón Dulce** (Whole Foods Spanish section; see [sourcing/12-salts-spices-seasonings](#)). Do NOT substitute American paprika — different species, different flavor.
- 3 g (~1 tsp) **Pimentón de la Vera Picante** — La Chinata Picante, same sourcing path.
- 3 g (~1 tsp) **Pimentón de la Vera Ahumado** — La Chinata Ahumado, same path.

The Aromatics (per log)

- 1 clove **garlic** per log × 3 logs = 3 cloves total. Microplane-grated into a paste.
- 2 g (~1/4 tsp) **Maldon flaky salt** per log.
- Picante log: 1 g (~1/4 tsp) **crushed red pepper flakes**.
- Ahumado log: 2 g (~1/2 tsp) **sherry vinegar (Ñapalos Vinagre de Jerez Reserva)**.

No Limits

The Butter Base (Tier B)

- 450 g **cultured European butter** — **Vermont Creamery Cultured Butter** (Whole Foods) or **Échiré AOP** (via Murray's Cheese or specialty Italian importers). Cultured butter has been inoculated with lactic-acid bacteria before churning, developing tangy-complex notes that standard butter doesn't have. The aromatic carry is noticeably deeper.

The Three Pimentóns (Tier B)

- 3 g **Las Hermanas de la Vera DOP Dulce** (markethallfoods.com) — DOP-certified Extremadura.
- 3 g **Las Hermanas de la Vera DOP Picante** (same source).
- 3 g **Las Hermanas de la Vera DOP Ahumado** (same source) — the summit-tier smoked paprika; the flavor depth is substantial over grocery alternatives.

The Aromatics (Tier B)

- 3 cloves **Las Pedroñeras DOP purple garlic** — via La Jamoteca in Coral Gables when in stock (see sourcing/08-produce-vegetables).
- 6 g **Sal de Ibiza flaky salt** (2 g per log) — mineral-complex Balearic salt.
- Ahumado log: 2 g **Páez Morilla VORS 30-año sherry vinegar** — aged acid.

EQUIPMENT

Your Kit

- Kitchen scale — for exact weights (pimentón ratio is critical)

- Medium mixing bowl

- Fork or flexible silicone spatula — for mashing butter with aromatics

- Microplane grater — for garlic (do not substitute chopped)

- Parchment paper — 3 sheets, 12 × 8 inches each

- Plastic wrap OR kitchen twine — to secure the parchment ends (parchment preferred; plastic only for freezer)

- Three small bowls — for pre-mixing each variant's aromatics before adding to butter

- Freezer space — for 2-hour firm-set (or overnight)

MISE EN PLACE

Before You Start

- Butter at room temperature 1-2 hours before start. Pliable, not melted. Test: a fork should dent it without resistance but not sink through.

- Three 150-g portions of butter weighed into three separate small bowls.

- Three pimentóns measured (3 g each) in three tiny pre-mix bowls.

- Three cloves garlic Microplane-grated; 1 per bowl.

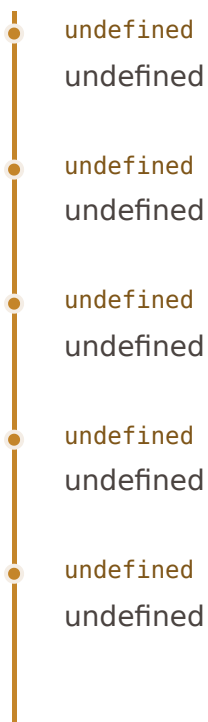
- 6 g Maldon in three 2 g portions.

- Picante mix-in: 1 g chile flakes. Ahumado mix-in: 2 g sherry vinegar.

- Three parchment sheets ready, 12 × 8 in.

MAKE-AHEAD

Timeline



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METHOD

The Cook

1 Phase 1 · Butter Prep — 5 min

1. Remove butter from fridge 1-2 hours before start. Room-temp is critical.
2. Divide 450 g butter into three equal 150 g portions. Place each in a separate small bowl.
3. For each bowl: fork-mash butter to a smooth, slightly glossy consistency (about 20 seconds of mashing). The texture should be pliable — not liquid, not firm. Like a thick cream cheese.



WHY THIS WORKS

Compound butter is an emulsion of water-in-fat (butter itself is 82% fat + 16% water + 2% milk solids) stabilized by the fat matrix. Working it at room temperature lets the structure re-organize around added aromatics without breaking the emulsion. Cold butter requires force that can fracture the crystal structure; melted butter breaks the emulsion entirely.

2 Phase 2 · Dulce Variant — 90 seconds

1. To the first bowl of butter, add: 3 g Pimentón Dulce, 1 clove Microplane-grated garlic, 2 g Maldon.
2. Fork-mash vigorously for 60 seconds. The butter will turn a beautiful brick-orange.
3. Verify no pockets: use the fork to lift a small amount and check the cross-section. If you see white streaks, keep mashing.
4. Transfer to parchment sheet.



WHY THIS WORKS

Pimentón is a fat-soluble spice. Fat carries the spice's carotenoids (color) and oleoresin (flavor). Mashing incorporates these compounds evenly through the fat matrix. Garlic Microplane-paste distributes uniformly because it's already structurally broken; chopped garlic would create uneven flavor pockets.

3 Phase 3 · Picante Variant — 90 seconds

1. To the second bowl: 3 g Pimentón Picante, 1 clove Microplane-grated garlic, 2 g Maldon, 1 g chile flakes.
2. Mash as before. The color is a richer, more orange-red.
3. Transfer to parchment sheet.

WHY THIS WORKS

Picante pimentón has higher capsaicin content (the heat compound) plus the same carotenoid-oleoresin fat-soluble profile. The chile flakes add a second heat register with different oil-solubility + a different volatile aromatic — the two heats stack rather than duplicate.

4 Phase 4 · Ahumado Variant — 90 seconds

1. To the third bowl: 3 g Pimentón Ahumado, 1 clove Microplane-grated garlic, 2 g Maldon.
2. Add 2 g sherry vinegar LAST, after the pimentón + garlic are mixed in.
3. Mash the vinegar in quickly (30 seconds). The butter may look briefly streaky as the water from vinegar incorporates; keep mashing until uniform.
4. Transfer to parchment sheet. This log has the deepest color — amber-brown from the smoked paprika.

WHY THIS WORKS

Sherry vinegar adds a small amount of water + acetic acid + oxidation-complex notes. Too much water would break the emulsion; 2 g per 150 g butter stays below the threshold. The acid brightens + the wood-smoke notes are preserved during the cold storage because the butterfat matrix shields them from oxidation.

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Phase 5 · Log Formation + Firm-Set

1. For each variant: place parchment sheet on a flat surface. Mound the butter along the long edge (roughly 10 × 2 inches).
2. Fold the parchment over, enclosing the butter. Roll the parchment away from you, shaping the butter into a cylinder inside.
3. Twist both ends like a candy wrapper. Optional: tie the ends with kitchen twine for secure freezer storage.
4. Label each log: 'Dulce', 'Picante', 'Ahumado' + date.
5. Refrigerate 2 h for immediate use, or freeze overnight for long-term storage.
6. Once firm (2 h fridge / 30 min freezer), the log is ready for service — slice 1/2-inch discs and place directly on hot food.



WHY THIS WORKS

The 2-hour refrigerated firm-set allows the butter to re-solidify into its proper crystal structure with the aromatics locked in place. Frozen storage extends shelf life from 1 month to 3 months by slowing enzymatic oxidation of the milk solids. Vacuum-freezing extends further but isn't needed for this volume.

QUICK REFERENCE

Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Butter to room temp	T- 1 h	Pliable, not melted, fork-dentable
Mise aromatics	T- 1 5 m	Three bowls, three pimentóns, garlic grated, salt weighed
Dulce: mash 60 sec	T- 1 2 m	Brick-orange, no white streaks
Picante: mash 60 sec	T- 1 0 m	Deeper orange-red, chile flakes visible
Ahumado: mash + vinegar 90 sec	T- 8 m	Amber-brown, vinegar added last
Form logs in parchment	T- 5 m	Candy-wrapper twist ends; label each

STEP	TIME	CUE
Refrigerate 2 h (or freeze)	T+ 0 m	Firm-set; ready for service
First service slice	T+ 2 h	1/2-inch disc, place on hot food
Refrigerated shelf life	1 month	Keep parchment-wrapped, back of fridge
Frozen shelf life	3 months	Airtight bag, label date

TROUBLESHOOTING

Emergency Protocols

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Technique Notes

● **Universal: Room-Temp Butter Is the Mechanical Sweet Spot**

CLASSICAL FRENCH · COMPOUND BUTTER FOUNDATION

Butter at 60-65°F / 16-18°C has the perfect combination of plasticity (takes aromatic incorporation) and structure (doesn't break emulsion). Too cold (straight from fridge, 40°F / 4°C) requires force that fractures the butterfat crystal matrix. Too warm (above 72°F / 22°C) starts re-melting and separates into butterfat + water. The 1-2 hour room-temp rest is the only way to reliably hit the window. Microwave-softening works in 15-second bursts with 10-second rests, but overshoot risk is real. This principle extends to shortcrust pastry (cold butter), pie dough (cold butter), croissant lamination (cold-plastic butter), and compound butter (room-temp butter) — four different techniques, four different butter-states, one butterfat physics.

● **Universal: Microplane Garlic vs Chopped**

KNIFE SKILLS · MICRO-DISTRIBUTION

Microplane-grated garlic becomes a near-puree that distributes evenly through any fat or paste in seconds. Chopped garlic creates discrete flecks that leave rough pockets in the final texture. For compound butter specifically, Microplane is the technique — the butter absorbs the garlic paste seamlessly. For caesar dressing, alioli, vinaigrette, and any emulsion: Microplane. For stir-fry, sofrito base, where garlic pieces are visible + contribute texture: chopped. The two techniques are not interchangeable.

● **Classical French: Beurre Maître d'Hôtel (The Universal Pattern)**

COMPOUND BUTTER LINEAGE

Beurre maître d'hôtel is the classical French default compound butter: softened butter + chopped parsley + lemon juice + salt + pepper. It's the prototype for every compound butter variation. This Pimentón Dulce variant is the Spanish translation (pimentón instead of parsley, sherry vinegar optional instead of lemon). Every compound butter in the library — sobrasada-honey-butter (sweet-spicy), black-garlic butter (umami-dark), this recipe (smoky-Spanish) — is a variation on maître d'hôtel. Four compound butters = four variations = one classical foundation. This recipe completes the quartet.

● **Compound Butter Pantry Strategy**

RESTAURANT-KITCHEN DISCIPLINE · MAKE-AHEAD

A professional restaurant kitchen always has 2-3 compound butters in the fridge and 1-2 more in the freezer. Each is a 15-second upgrade to any plate. Rotate the variants by week or by month based on cooking plans. Pablo's library target: 5 compound butters on rotation — sobrasada-honey ✓, kamado-mushroom-black-garlic ✓, pimentón dulce (this recipe), pimentón ahumado (this recipe), and one future seasonal variant (citrus-thyme, miso-yuzu, ramps when in season). Each log lives 1 month fridge / 3 months freezer. One Sunday morning = one month of restaurant-grade service.

● **No Limits: Parchment-Twist Storage**

RESTAURANT DISCIPLINE · STORAGE AESTHETICS

Parchment paper wrapping (vs plastic wrap) serves two purposes: (1) food-safety (no microplastic migration during long freezer storage), and (2) presentation (parchment looks intentional when sliced tableside; plastic looks like leftover wrap). For a compound butter that will be used at dinner-party service where guests might see the log before it's sliced, parchment is the correct choice. Roll the parchment around the butter like a candy wrapper and twist both ends. Optional: kitchen twine around each twisted end for maximum freezer-stability and that extra-pro-kitchen touch. This is small but separates the serious-kitchen compound butter from the casual-home version.

● No Limits: Three-Butter Rotation Plan

PANTRY STRATEGY · SEASONAL ROTATION

At any time, keep 3 compound butters active: one in the fridge (current-use), one in the freezer (next-month), one being pre-made (this weekend's batch). The three-slot rotation ensures no gap. Pablo's actual rotation pattern based on cooking frequency: Ongoing: sobrasada-honey (universal), pimentón dulce (universal), kamado-mushroom-black-garlic (smoke-forward). Seasonal: citrus-herb variants in winter (blood orange + thyme, lemon-chive), ramp butter in March-April if available, miso-yuzu variant in any month Japanese cooking is prominent. The 15-minute pantry install = a year of service-grade plating upgrades.

PAIRING

What to Drink

🔥 Application · Grilled Red Meat (Dulce + Picante)

1/2-inch disc on chuleton-reverse-sear, perfect-sous-vide-steak, or (upcoming) entraña a la plancha (UMAMI-4 slate)

The Spanish pimentón-butter register on red meat is classical — Plato del día across Spain. Dulce for subtle-sweet-finish; Picante for heat. Wagyu + Dulce is a less-is-more match.

🔥 Application · Kamado-Cooked Foods (Ahumado)

Disc on brisket-kamado, iberico-secreto-kamado, pimenton-porchetta, whole-fish-kamado

The smoked pimentón + Kamado wood-smoke stack two smoke registers. On Ibérico specifically, the pimentón + pork-fat resonance is the Spanish classical pairing. On brisket, the smoked butter is a second layer over the Basque live-fire primary smoke.

Application · Seafood (Dulce + Ahumado)

Disc on miso-salmon-sv, gambas-al-ajillo (melted over the garlic-prawn oil), pan-seared scallops

Pimentón + seafood is a universal Spanish pairing. Dulce for delicate white fish; Ahumado for darker fish (salmon, mackerel) or char-forward grilled seafood.

Application · Vegetables (All Three)

Disc on zanahorias-sv-miso (Batch 3), roasted cauliflower, grilled corn, baked potato. Swap the pimentón variant based on season.

Vegetables benefit from the richness-of-butter + the spice-register of pimentón — the combination elevates any simply-prepared vegetable into a dinner-party dish. A disc on a baked potato is a 3-star plate.

Application · The Signature Steak-House Plate

Plate: 12 oz ribeye or NY strip, rested + sliced. Two discs of Dulce butter atop slice. One disc of Ahumado butter on the side in a small ramekin. Maldon flakes + a streak of aceite verde (Batch 4). Full Pablo-style steak service.

Guests get the butter they pick — a pre-chosen (Dulce on steak) + a guest-choice (Ahumado ramekin). Pablo palate rule: sauces on the side.

CONTEXT

Menu Ideas

The Sunday Pantry Install

15-minute session on any Sunday morning. Three logs produced. Label + wrap + freeze one, refrigerate two for next-2-week use. Every weeknight dinner gets access to the Spanish-pimentón-butter register with zero extra work.

Dinner Party Wow (6-8 guests)

Plate the Dulce log tableside as part of the steak service — slice a disc per plate. Ahumado log at the table in a small ramekin for anyone who wants to add smoke. Picante log offered as a 'if you like heat' option.

Weeknight Protein Upgrade

3-minute service upgrade: pan-sear any protein (steak, chicken thigh, fish), rest 2 min, slice a disc of Dulce or Ahumado compound butter from the fridge, place directly on hot protein. Done. Restaurant-plate out of a Tuesday dinner.

Spanish Brunch Plate

Fried egg + thick toasted sourdough + small pool of Dulce compound butter + Maldon + single slice of Spanish chorizo. Weekend brunch, pantry-only, 15 minutes.

Gift / Trade

Three parchment-wrapped logs as a host gift — labeled + dated + with a small note describing the 3-pimentón register. A serious kitchen gift. Pair with a jar of tomate-concentrado-tm6 (Batch 1) and a bag of sourdough (Batch 1 sibling) for a pantry-gift trifecta.

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.

