



SPANISH · CATALAN / MADRID MODERN · SIGNATURE HOUSE · SAUCE ·
CONDIMENT · TAPAS FINISHING

Salsa Brava Negra · Squid-Ink Version

The dark cousin of the classical red salsa brava. Squid ink, smoke-infused tomato concentrate, guindilla chile, pimentón de la Vera, sherry vinegar — all folded into a glossy near-black sauce that reads first as rich-umami, then as warm-spice, then as the signature smoke-and-sea bass-note that makes plain patatas bravas impossible to go back to. Makes ~350 g sauce. Serves as the summit-tier half of the patatas bravas dual-sauce plate.

Protein None (naturally vegan — sauce only)

Serves ~350 g sauce · serves 8-10 · keeps 10 days refrigerated

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 20 min active

Total 25 min

THE STORY

The Second Sauce on Pablo's Bravas Plate

On 2026-03-08, Pablo's first hosted cook included a three-sauce bravas plate. The classical red salsa brava was one. Mojo verde was another. The third was a sauce Pablo ad-libbed on the spot: squid-ink folded into a red brava base, a move borrowed from Modern Spanish cooking where black-red dual-plating is a signature visual. Everyone at the table ate more of the black one than the red one. Pablo called it *brava negra* and said he'd write it down. This is that recipe, written down 45 days later.

The strategic move: this recipe uses the [Tier B smoke-infused tomato concentrate](#) (the one from the TM6 6-hour reduction with hour-4 chipotle + pimentón de la Vera ahumado) as the red base. That concentrate carries Basque live-fire smoke DNA

already baked in; the squid ink adds the sea-bass-note and the dramatic color; the guindilla + fresh pimentón de la Vera picante brings the brava heat level that classical bravas demands. The result is a sauce with four axes: *umami depth* (ink + concentrate), *smoke* (concentrate's hour-4 infusion), *heat* (guindilla + pimentón picante), *acid* (sherry vinegar). No one axis dominates; they all resonate.

How it serves: on the [patatas bravas](#) plate, classical red on one side, black on the other, [alioli](#) in a ramekin at the center. Guests build their own bite — rule #1 of Pablo's hosting style. The visual contrast (red + black + cream, over amber-brown crispy potato) is the plating *money shot*. But the sauce also holds on its own: on a tortilla, under a piece of seared scallop, next to a hunk of bread as a quiet-flex dipping sauce on a tapas night. Make a jar, keep it in the fridge, use it for 10 days of cooking.

AT A GLANCE

Specs

<p>YIELD</p> <p>~350 g sauce</p>	<p>BASE</p> <p>Tier B smoke-infused tomate concentrado (100 g)</p>	<p>INK DOSE</p> <p>8 g squid- ink (~2 sachets of Nortindal 4 g each)</p>	<p>DIFFICULTY</p> <p>Intermediate</p> <p>●●●○○</p>
<p>ACTIVE TIME</p> <p>20 min</p>	<p>TOTAL TIME</p> <p>25 min</p>	<p>KEEPS</p> <p>10 days refrigerated · reheats gently</p>	<p>HEAT LEVEL</p> <p>Medium- picante (adjust pimentón ratio to taste)</p>
<p>COLOR</p> <p>Glossy near- black with red-brown undertones</p>	<p>SERVICE TEMP</p> <p>Warm or room · never cold (dulls flavor)</p>		

What Changed & Why

Two variables matter: the tomato base and the squid ink. Technique is identical. The ● Tier A (Everyday) uses the plain [tomate-concentrado-tm6](#) (unsmoked) + grocery Nortindal cuttlefish ink sachets + regular pimentón de la Vera from Las Hermanas — produces a legitimate brava negra, visually dramatic, flavor-distinct from red brava. The ● Tier B (No-Limits) uses the Tier B smoke-infused concentrate (that optional hour-4 smoke pass in the TM6 recipe) + Nortindal 500g bulk ink pouch + Las Hermanas Pimentón de la Vera Ahumado DOP — adds a second layer of smoke that makes this a dinner-party-flagship sauce. Tier A is correct for a Tuesday tapas; Tier B is correct for a Sunday hosting. Both versions ship with the same recipe structure; only the base and ink change.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	Squid ink added cold to a room-temp salsa brava at the end	Squid ink stirred into the hot tomate concentrado early in the simmer, then simmered 8-10 min to fully bind	Cold-added ink sits on top of the sauce as a dark film; it looks black but the sauce beneath is still red. Heat-bound ink integrates into the sauce matrix through emulsification — the ink's proteins denature and the melanin disperses evenly, producing a deeply black-red color that's uniform throughout. The difference is visible and the flavor integration is markedly better.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
ADD	—	Uses the Tier B smoke-infused tomato-concentrado-tm6 as the red base	The smoke infusion (chipotle morita + pimentón de la Vera ahumado pulled deep into the tomato's oil phase during the hour-4 TM6 reduction) gives the sauce a background smoke note that complements the squid ink's sea-bass-note. Two layered umami-smoke signatures. Essentially impossible to reproduce by adding smoke to a finished sauce. The concentrate and the brava negra are designed to work together.
ADD	—	Guindilla de Ibarra (Basque pickled green chile, 2 whole finely diced) + pimentón de la Vera picante (2 g)	Classical salsa brava uses only pimentón (sweet or smoked). The brava negra layers fresh chile heat from guindilla with dried smoke heat from pimentón — two heat registers, one sauce. Guindilla also brings a slight acidic-pickled note that brightens the heavy tomato-ink base. Madrid-modern bravas kitchens use this combination; it's what gives their brava the brightness classical bravas lacks.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
ELEV	Final sauce served as-is	Optional finish with 5 g toasted cumin + 1 tsp finishing EVOO stirred in off-heat	Toasted cumin (dry-toasted in a small pan 90 seconds until aromatic, then ground fresh) adds a warm earth-note that bridges the squid-ink sea-note to the land-side ingredients (tomato, garlic). Finishing EVOO adds a glossy richness that the simmer slightly diminishes. Both are classical Spanish-Modern finishing moves.
SKIP	Thickening with cornstarch slurry to achieve brava-sauce viscosity	Rely on the tomate concentrado's pre-reduced thickness + the ink's natural viscosity	Cornstarch produces a gummy, gel-like texture incompatible with the velvet the sauce wants. The concentrate is already pre-reduced to 4× concentration; combined with ink (naturally viscous) and a brief 8-10 min simmer, the sauce lands at perfect drizzle-or-spoon consistency naturally. Classical bravas in Madrid do NOT use cornstarch.

What You Need

● Everyday

The Tomato Base

- 100 g **tomate concentrado (plain, not smoke-infused)** — one jar from [tomate-concentrado-tm6](#). If you haven't made it yet: substitute 100 g **Mutti Doppio Concentrato di Pomodoro** (Whole Foods) — the closest commercial analog. Not ideal but acceptable for everyday service.

The Ink

- 8 g **cuttlefish ink** (2 sachets Goya 4 g each, or 1 sachet Nortindal 8 g) — Whole Foods Spanish section, or Publix Sabor. Shake sachets well before opening; ink separates. *Most US 'squid ink' is actually cuttlefish ink; they work identically.*

The Aromatics

- 4 cloves **garlic**, crushed and finely minced — local grocery Las Pedroñeras garlic (see [sourcing/08-produce-vegetables](#)).
- 2 whole **guindilla de Ibarra** (pickled Basque green chile), finely diced — [Despaña](#) or La Jamoteca in Coral Gables.
- 2 g **pimentón de la Vera picante** — **Las Hermanas Pimentón de la Vera Picante DOP** (Whole Foods Spanish section, or Market Hall Foods). Mandatory; not regular chile powder.

The Sharpness + Finish

- 20 g **Vinagre de Jerez** (DO-certified sherry vinegar) — **Ñapalos or Gran Capirete Reserva**. Essential for the brightness that prevents this heavy sauce from becoming muddy.
- 30 g **Spanish Arbequina EVOO** — **California Olive Ranch Arbequina**.
- 3 g (~1/2 tsp) **fine sea salt**.
- ~50 g water — for consistency adjustment during simmer.

No Limits

The Tomato Base (Tier B)

- 100 g **Tier B smoke-infused tomate concentrado** — the hour-4 smoke-infused jar from your [tomate-concentrado-tm6](#) batch (with chipotle morita + Las Hermanas ahumado). This carries Basque live-fire DNA at the ingredient level.

The Ink (Tier B)

- 8 g **Nortindal bulk cuttlefish ink** from a 500 g pouch (via [Despaña](#)) — denser, darker, cleaner-flavored than grocery sachet ink. For maximum authenticity: harvest fresh ink from a whole cuttlefish purchased at Captain's Tavern or Casablanca Seafood, used within 24 h. Fresh ink has a brighter sea-note than preserved.

The Aromatics (Tier B)

- 4 cloves **Las Pedroñeras DOP purple garlic** (La Jamoteca, sometimes Whole Foods in winter).
- 2 whole **guindilla de Ibarra DOP** from a fresh-opened Basque jar (Ibarra cooperative import via Despaña or La Tienda).
- 2 g **Las Hermanas Pimentón de la Vera DOP Picante** — via [markethallfoods.com](#).
- 5 g **freshly toasted + ground cumin** — toast whole cumin seed (Burlap & Barrel single-origin) in dry pan 90 sec, grind fresh. Optional but recommended.

The Sharpness + Finish (Tier B)

- 20 g **Páez Morilla Vinagre de Jerez VORS 30 años** — aged sherry vinegar (via Despaña). The age brings oxidation-complex notes that transform this sauce.
- 30 g **Rincón de la Subbética summit EVOO** — the Spanish EVOO summit (see [sourcing/11-oils-vinegars](#)).
- 3 g **Sal de Ibiza** (fine Balearic sea salt).
- 1 tsp **finishing EVOO** (held back from the 30 g) — stirred in off-heat at the end for gloss.

EQUIPMENT

Your Kit

- Heavy-bottom small saucepan (1-quart)
 - Digital scale — for exact ratios (tomato base, ink, vinegar)
-

- Wooden spoon or heat-resistant silicone spatula
- Fine-mesh strainer — optional, for silk-smooth finish
- Small glass jar for storage
- Small dry pan + mortar (Tier B) — for toasting + grinding cumin fresh

MISE EN PLACE

Before You Start

- Tomato concentrado measured (100 g) — warm to room temp if refrigerated.
- Squid ink sachets ready — open carefully, stains everything.
- Garlic minced, guindilla diced, pimentón measured, cumin (Tier B) toasted and ground.
- Vinegar + EVOO + salt + water measured in separate small cups.
- Small glass jar for storage, lid ready.
- Apron + old kitchen towel (ink stains).

MAKE-AHEAD

Timeline

- undefined
undefined
- undefined
undefined
- undefined
undefined
- undefined
undefined

- undefined
undefined
- undefined
undefined
- undefined
undefined
- undefined
undefined
- undefined
undefined
- undefined
undefined

METHOD

The Cook

1 Phase 1 · Garlic + Spice Bloom — 90 seconds

1. Heat 30 g EVOO in a heavy-bottom saucepan over medium-low heat (3-4 on 10-scale).
2. When oil shimmers (not smoking), add minced garlic. Stir continuously; do NOT let it brown (bitter).
3. After 60 seconds, garlic is soft and aromatic but still pale gold. Add diced guindilla + 2 g pimentón de la Vera picante.
4. Stir 30 seconds — the pimentón will release its color into the oil (deep red). Do NOT let it burn — pimentón burns in seconds and turns acrid-bitter. If you see any brown specks, reduce heat immediately.

WHY THIS WORKS

Pimentón contains fat-soluble carotenoids and capsaicinoids. Gentle heat in EVOO (60-80 °C) extracts them into the oil, building a concentrated chile-oil base that will be the flavor backbone of the sauce. High heat destroys these compounds and produces bitter polyphenols. The 30-second bloom at controlled temperature is the difference between bright-chile sauce and acrid-chile sauce.

2 Phase 2 · Tomato Base Integration — 2 min

1. Add 100 g tomate concentrado to the pan. Stir — the dense paste will initially resist, then begin dissolving into the chile-oil.
2. Add ~50 g water (start with 30 g, add more if needed). Stir to loosen the paste into a pourable sauce consistency.
3. Raise heat to medium (5-6 on 10-scale). Sauce begins to bubble gently.
4. Continue stirring — the color at this stage is deep red-brown (from the tomato base + pimentón + garlic). The sauce should be thick but flowing, not stiff.

WHY THIS WORKS

The tomate concentrado is pre-reduced to 4× concentration. Adding water rehydrates it back to a standard sauce consistency while preserving the flavor concentration. The gentle simmer re-activates pectin (which had set during storage) so the sauce flows properly.

3 Phase 3 · The Ink Addition (Critical) — 90 seconds

1. Open squid-ink sachets carefully (they stain). Pour 8 g total ink directly into the simmering sauce.
2. Stir IMMEDIATELY and vigorously — do not pause, do not let the ink sit on the surface. You want it emulsified into the sauce body within 30 seconds.
3. Color transforms: deep red-brown → purple-black → glossy near-black. The transformation is dramatic; watch it happen.
4. Continue stirring 30-60 more seconds until the color is completely uniform. No visible pockets of red or black alone.

WHY THIS WORKS

Squid/cuttlefish ink is primarily melanin (the black pigment) suspended in a protein matrix. When introduced to hot sauce, two things happen: (1) the protein matrix denatures and releases the melanin, which disperses uniformly in the fat phase, and (2) the glutamate compounds in the ink bind with the tomato's existing glutamates, amplifying umami perception. Heat is essential for BOTH effects. Cold-mixing ink produces surface-film-only; hot-mixing produces integrated black-red sauce body.

4 Phase 4 · Vinegar + Simmer Bind — 8 min

1. Add 20 g sherry vinegar. Sauce bubbles slightly from the acid hitting heat.
2. Reduce to low heat (3 on 10-scale). Gentle simmer only — NOT rolling boil.
3. Simmer 8 min, stirring occasionally every 60-90 sec. The sauce thickens slightly as water evaporates.
4. Taste at 5 min. Check heat level (should be warm, not sharp), acid level (should be present but not dominant), umami (should be deeply rich).
5. Adjust: if too acidic, extend simmer 2 more min (acid mellows with heat); if too thick, add 5-10 g water; if not spicy enough, pinch more pimentón picante off-heat at end.



WHY THIS WORKS

The 8-minute simmer allows the acid from the sherry vinegar to integrate into the sauce (acetic acid molecules bind with sugar, tomato pectin, and glutamate). Too short: acid hits the tongue first, unpleasantly sharp. Too long: acid mellows too much, sauce becomes one-note rich. 8 minutes is the balance point.

5 Phase 5 · Finish, Strain, Jar

1. Off heat. Add 3 g fine sea salt. Stir.
2. Stir in 1 tsp finishing EVOO (held back from the initial 30 g) — this adds gloss lost during simmer.
3. TIER B: Stir in 5 g fresh-toasted ground cumin — adds a warm earth-note.
4. Taste final. Adjust: pinch more salt if needed, drop of vinegar for brightness, drop of water for consistency.
5. OPTIONAL STRAIN: Pass through fine-mesh sieve for silk-smooth finish (removes guindilla pieces + garlic flecks). For rustic finish, skip the strain.
6. Transfer to glass jar or squeeze bottle. Cool to room temp (~15 min on counter).
7. Refrigerate. Keeps 10 days. Reheat gently before service (microwave 15 sec on medium or warm in saucepan 30 sec).



WHY THIS WORKS

Off-heat salt addition prevents the salt from accelerating moisture loss during cooking. Finishing EVOO stays intact (doesn't cook out) and adds surface gloss. Straining removes insoluble solids that would separate in storage; optional because rustic texture is aesthetic preference.

QUICK REFERENCE

Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Mise + tomato concentrado out	T- 2 5 m	All ingredients weighed · warm concentrado to room temp
Toast + grind cumin (Tier B)	T- 2 2 m	Dry pan 90 sec · grind immediately
Bloom garlic in EVOO	T- 2 0 m	Medium-low heat · 60 sec · pale gold only
Add guindilla + pimentón	T- 1 8 m	30 sec bloom · do NOT burn pimentón
Add concentrado + water	T- 1 7 m	Stir to dissolve · pourable thickness
Add squid ink (vigorously stir)	T- 1 5 m	Instant black transformation · 30-60 sec emulsify
Add sherry vinegar	T- 1 3 m	Low heat · gentle simmer
Simmer + bind	T- 1 0 m to T- 2 m	8 min · taste at 5 min · adjust
Finish: salt + EVOO + cumin (Tier B)	T- 2 m	Off heat · stir in · taste final
Optional strain + jar + cool	T+ 0 m to T+ 1 5 m	Fine mesh (silk) OR skip (rustic) · jar · cool 15 min · refrigerate

TROUBLESHOOTING

Emergency Protocols

 UNDEFINED

undefined

 UNDEFINED

undefined

 UNDEFINED

undefined

 UNDEFINED

undefined

 UNDEFINED

undefined

 UNDEFINED

undefined

 UNDEFINED

undefined

DEEP DIVES

Technique Notes

Universal: Pimentón Bloom (Never-Burn Rule)

SPANISH SAUCE FOUNDATION

Pimentón de la Vera (smoked or unsmoked, sweet or picante) is a fat-soluble flavor — it must bloom in hot oil to release its compounds. The technique: hot oil 60-80 °C (NOT smoking), pimentón added, stir 30 seconds max, then add the next ingredient (water-based). Pimentón burns within 15 seconds above 100 °C and produces acrid bitter compounds — the dish is unrecoverable. This is the #1 Spanish-cooking failure mode. Temperature control is everything.

● **Universal: Ink Emulsification (Heat-Binding Not Cold-Mixing)**

MEDITERRANEAN SAUCE · SQUID-INK TECHNIQUE

Squid or cuttlefish ink **MUST** be added to a hot sauce and stirred vigorously for 30-60 seconds immediately. Cold-added ink sits on the surface as a film; hot-added ink emulsifies into the sauce matrix permanently. The mechanism: ink's protein matrix denatures in heat, releasing the melanin pigment to disperse uniformly. Recipes that fail this produce red sauce with a black film on top; recipes that succeed produce deeply black-red uniform sauce. Universal across arròs negre, chipirones en su tinta, squid-ink pasta, brava negra.

● **Spanish Foundation: The Four-Axis Brava Structure**

SALSA BRAVA · FLAVOR ARCHITECTURE

Classical salsa brava has four flavor axes that must all be present and none must dominate: (1) umami depth (tomato concentrate + optional ink), (2) heat (pimentón picante + optional guindilla), (3) acid (sherry vinegar), (4) fat gloss (EVOO finish). Missing one and the sauce is unbalanced. Brava negra adds a fifth axis — sea-note from ink + smoke from the Tier B tomato base — while maintaining the four classical axes.

● **No Limits: Fresh Ink Harvest**

SQUID-INK TECHNIQUE · TIER B SOURCING

For a true-summit sauce, harvest ink fresh from a whole cuttlefish (sepia) purchased at Captain's Tavern or Casablanca Seafood 24 hours before service. Process: carefully remove the ink sac from the cuttlefish's mantle cavity (requires practice — search 'cleaning cuttlefish harvest ink' tutorials), transfer ink to a small container, refrigerate, use within 24 hours. The body of the cuttlefish can be used for chipirones en su tinta or arròs negre (not wasted). Fresh ink has a brighter, more distinctly oceanic sea-note than preserved ink (sachet or bulk) — noticeable side-by-side.

● **No Limits: Cumin-Toast Aromatic Bridge**

MODERN SPANISH · SPICE BRIDGING

Freshly-toasted cumin (seeds dry-toasted 90 seconds until fragrant, ground immediately) adds an earth-warm note that bridges the squid-ink sea-note to the land-side ingredients. Without cumin, the ink feels slightly disconnected from the tomato-garlic base; with cumin, everything reads as integrated. The spice is stirred in off-heat at the end (Phase 5) — heat during the simmer would extract bitter tannins. Modern-Spanish Madrid tapas kitchens use this trick; it does not appear in most written recipes.

● **No Limits: The Three-Plate Bravas Flight**

SERVICE · DINNER-PARTY PRESENTATION

The dual-sauce bravas plate: classical red brava (from patatas-bravas recipe) on one side of the plate, brava negra on the other, a small ramekin of alioli at the center. Crispy patatas bravas in a generous mound, either sauce applied per bite. The visual (red + black + cream over amber-brown) is the money shot of a tapas plate. For maximum flex: serve a third ramekin of mojo verde from mojos-canarios — four-sauce bravas. Guests build their own bite; rule of the house.

PAIRING

What to Drink

🔥 **Application · Patatas Bravas Dual-Sauce**

Classical red brava (from the patatas-bravas recipe) + brava negra, side-by-side on the same plate. Add alioli ramekin for the classical trio.

The signature application. Red + black + cream, visual contrast, three-sauce guest-builds-their-own-bite format. Pablo's hosting signature.

Application · Tortilla Española (Spanish Fusion Plate)

Serve brava negra alongside a classical tortilla-espanola at a tapas night — a small ramekin at the side for dipping

The tortilla's gentle sweetness + egg-potato neutrality is a blank canvas for the intensity of brava negra. The contrast is why this pairing works.

Application · Seared Scallops

Sear scallops hard on cast iron (90 sec/side, 260 °C), plate 4 per person, drizzle 1 tsp brava negra underneath each scallop

Scallops' oceanic sweetness + brava negra's oceanic ink-note resonate. The sauce's heat and acid cut the scallop's richness. A 10-minute starter that punches far above weight.

Application · Roast Cauliflower / Artichokes / Cabbage

Drizzle over kamado mushrooms, over grilled alcachofas-brasa-miso, or over a kamado-charred whole cabbage half

Strong umami-spice sauces elevate plain vegetables. Brava negra + kamado char is a classical pairing. Works especially well when you want a plant-forward course that still has main-dish intensity.

Beverage — Spanish

Tier A: Ribera del Duero Crianza (~\$20) · Tier B: Pinta from Toro or a young Vega Sicilia sibling

Bold red Spanish wine with high tannin matches high-intensity sauce. Tempranillo's earthy-dark fruit notes resonate with the tomato-ink-smoke matrix. Lighter wines (young Rioja, Albariño) would be overwhelmed.

CONTEXT

Menu Ideas

Tapas Night for 6-8

Full-on bravas flight: patatas-bravas with BOTH red brava and brava negra on the plate, alioli ramekin alongside, tortilla-española as a second plate with a small brava negra dipping ramekin. Cocido Madrileño optional third course.

Summer Patio Aperitivo

gambas-al-ajillo + a small bowl of brava negra for dipping + pa-amb-tomàquet. 30-minute aperitivo prep; all Spanish.

Weeknight Depth Addition

A tablespoon of brava negra stirred into sofrito-tm6 or used as a finishing sauce over a simple rice dish transforms a Tuesday dinner into something memorable. 1-minute effort, noticeable impact.

Monthly Pantry Jar

Make one batch every 10 days (uses one Tier B smoke-infused concentrate jar) — keeps 10 days refrigerated, used across 3-5 dishes. Rotation with the red brava + alioli = three classical sauces always available in the fridge.

Gift / Trade

Jar 200 g in a Weck 342 (mini tulip) with a handwritten label as a host gift. The dark-red-black color + the name alone (brava negra) communicate effort. Pair with a bag of sourdough for a serious kitchen-gift pairing.

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.

