

Salsa Verde Basque — Flour-Emulsified Green Fish Sauce

Garlic gently infused in olive oil, thickened with flour, loosened with fish stock, greened with chopped parsley, and emulsified through pan swirling until the sauce turns jade and clings to a spoon. The Basque kitchen's answer to *beurre blanc* — richer than a jus, lighter than a butter sauce, structurally distinct from both.

Protein None (sauce only · fish goes INTO it)

Serves Sauce for 4 fish portions · makes ~350 ml

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 15 min

Total 20 min (no resting needed — serve immediately)

THE STORY

The Pan Swirl That Makes the Sauce

There is a specific motion that Basque cooks perform with a sauté pan that looks like absentminded swirling but is actually the defining technique of the sauce in it. The Spanish word is *vaivén* — back and forth — and the motion is a steady rocking of the pan in small circles that shears olive oil into the simmering stock, suspends the droplets in a starch-stabilized emulsion, and produces a silky green sauce that no whisk or blender can replicate. A whisked salsa verde breaks. A blended salsa verde is dense and heavy. A *vaivén* salsa verde stays glossy, jade, and clings to a spoon as if it had been set with cream — which it hasn't, anywhere in the recipe.

The structural ingredient is flour. One tablespoon, bloomed in the garlic-infused oil for sixty seconds before the stock goes in, functions as an emulsion stabilizer — the amylose molecules from the flour create a loose starch network that holds the oil droplets in suspension without ever fully dissolving into a béchamel texture. This is not a mother sauce in the French sense; it

is a structural cousin that Basque kitchens developed centuries earlier. It is also, once understood, one of the easiest great fish sauces in the kitchen: ten ingredients, fifteen minutes, and a repertoire of dishes it unlocks.

The classical deployment is *merluza en salsa verde* — hake poached in the sauce itself. The fish cooks for the last five minutes in the simmering green liquid, absorbing its flavor and thickening the sauce with its own gelatin. The pan is served at the table. Clams, monkfish, branzino, and cod all work; vegetables too (peas and asparagus are canonical). The sauce is a Spanish-fish-cookery foundation that deserves standalone filing, and it links back into half the corpus: grilled fish from the kamado, sous-vide salmon, seafood stews, lamb-adjacent green sauces.

AT A GLANCE

Specs

<p>YIELD</p> <p>~350 ml sauce (enough for 4 fish fillets)</p>	<p>EMULSION TYPE</p> <p>Starch- stabilized (flour-based)</p>	<p>KEY MOTION</p> <p>Vaivén — pan swirl for emulsion</p>	<p>DIFFICULTY</p> <p>Intermediate</p> <p>●●○○○</p>
<p>ACTIVE TIME</p> <p>15 min</p>	<p>TOTAL TIME</p> <p>20 min</p>	<p>HOLDS</p> <p>No — serve immediately; reheating breaks the emulsion</p>	<p>CUISINE</p> <p>Spanish Basque</p>
<p>UNLOCKS</p> <p>Merluza, almejas, monkfish, branzino, cod, peas</p>	<p>PAN</p> <p>Wide sauté pan or cazuela (20– 26 cm diameter)</p>		

What Changed & Why

Classical Basque salsa verde is made in a clay cazuela over gentle gas heat, with hake fillets cooking in the sauce for the final five minutes and served directly from the cazuela. This adaptation preserves this method exactly — there is no improvement to be made on 300 years of Basque technique. The ● tier upgrades the fish stock (a proper home-made fumet delivers visibly better sauce than bottled clam juice) and commits to a single-origin Arbequina EVOO that carries through the flour bloom into the finished sauce.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	Whisk or stir the sauce for emulsion (modern interpretation)	Vaivén — steady pan swirl in small circles for emulsion	Whisking produces a broken or heavy sauce. The pan swirl shears oil droplets gently while the starch network holds them; the motion is the technique, not an afterthought.
ADD	—	Cook fish directly in the sauce for the last 5 min	The fish releases gelatin into the sauce, thickening it naturally; the sauce carries its flavor to the fish simultaneously. One-pan dish; sauce is finished only when fish is cooked.
ELEV	Serve from the pan	Clay cazuela service — pan TO the table	Cazuela retains heat longer than metal pans, keeps the sauce at proper temperature through service, and is the traditional Basque presentation. Per UMAMI-4 #4 cazuela card.
SUB	Bottled clam juice + any flour + any parsley	● good bottled clam juice + AP flour + flat-leaf parsley · ● home-made fish fumet + OO flour + a full bunch of fresh flat-leaf parsley + Arbequina EVOO	Fish stock is the sauce's flavor spine — home-made fumet lifts the dish. Bottled clam juice is a functional substitute but produces a noticeably simpler result.

What You Need

Everyday

The Sauce Base

- 150 ml EVOO (Spanish extra virgin; a decent mid-tier is fine here)
- 6 cloves garlic, thinly sliced (about 2 mm — matters for the infusion)
- 1 tbsp AP flour (15 g)
- 200 ml fish stock OR bottled clam juice
- 1 large bunch flat-leaf parsley, leaves and thin stems finely chopped (~50 g chopped)
- 100 g fresh or frozen green peas (optional — traditional in some Basque versions)
- 1 tsp kosher salt (to taste — stock may be salty)
- Pinch of white pepper (black works but white is traditional)

The Fish (If Cooking Fish In The Sauce)

- 4 × 150 g white fish fillets, skinless — hake is canonical, cod or halibut work well, branzino is Miami-friendly
- Pinch of salt per fillet

Substitution Notes

- *No fish stock?* Bottled clam juice (Bar Harbor brand is widely available) is a good proxy. A homemade vegetable stock with 1 tbsp dashi-seaweed simmered 10 min also works. Never use chicken stock — wrong flavor register.
- *No fresh parsley?* The dish needs fresh parsley; dried does not work (parsley dried loses the chlorophyll green and most of its character). Cilantro is not a substitute; flavor is completely different.
- *Gluten-free?* Replace the 1 tbsp flour with 1 tsp cornstarch dispersed in 1 tbsp cold water. Add cornstarch slurry after the stock is warm. Emulsion will be slightly less stable than the flour version but still functional.

No Limits

The Sauce Base — Upgraded

- 150 ml **Arbequina EVOO** (Pablo has ✓) — single-estate, the oil flavor carries through
- 6 cloves **Las Pedroñeras purple garlic** (La Tienda)
- 1 tbsp **Italian 00 flour** (Caputo — finer grind, cleaner roux)
- 200 ml **home-made fish fumet** — from fish frames, shrimp shells, kombu, onion, leek, celery, bay, white wine. Simmered 25 min, strained. Freezes in cubes for future salsa verde batches.
- 1 large bunch flat-leaf parsley — preferably Italian flat-leaf from a Mediterranean grocer
- 100 g fresh spring peas (March–May Miami season) or frozen petits pois (out of season)
- Flaky Maldon salt to taste
- Pinch of white pepper (telicherry milled just before use)

The Fish — Premium

- **Tier 1:** 4 × 150 g fresh hake (merluza) — the canonical Basque fish, imported from Spain via Despaña or Mercado Little Spain
- **Tier 2 (Miami fresh):** 4 × 150 g Gulf or Atlantic cod or black sea bass from Casablanca Seafood or Captain Jim's
- **Tier 3 (Miami whole fish):** 2 × 600 g whole branzino, cleaned, scaled, filleted by the fishmonger — butterflied fillets work brilliantly in this sauce

The Shellfish Variant (Almejas en Salsa Verde)

- 500 g fresh Manila or littleneck clams, purged in salt water 30 min before cooking
- Skip the fish; clams open directly in the sauce during the final 5 min cook, releasing their liquor which further enriches the sauce

EQUIPMENT

Your Kit

Wide sauté pan OR clay cazuela (20–26 cm diameter, low sides)

Wooden spoon

Sharp paring knife (for thinly slicing garlic)

Chef's knife (for chopping parsley)

Small measuring cup (for stock)

Kitchen scale

MISE EN PLACE

Before You Start

Garlic sliced thin (2 mm) — thickness matters; thin slices infuse and then crisp slightly without dissolving.

Parsley chopped fine — leaves and thin stems both, stems add depth. Target ~50 g finished chopped weight.

Fish stock warmed in a small separate pan (cold stock hitting hot oil + flour produces lumps). Target warm not hot — 40 to 50 °C.

Peas measured (if using) — frozen peas can go in directly from freezer, no need to thaw.

Fish portions seasoned lightly with salt, resting at room temperature if cooking fish in the sauce.

Pan on stove, heat off. All ingredients within arm's reach.

MAKE-AHEAD

Timeline

● **T=0 — Cold-start garlic**

EVOO + sliced garlic into cold pan. Medium-low heat. Oil gently warms with garlic infusing.

● **T+3 min — Garlic golden, flour in**

Garlic is pale golden. Add 1 tbsp flour. Stir continuously 60 sec — mini-roux forms, nutty aroma.

● **T+4 min — Gradual stock addition**

Add warm fish stock in 3 additions, stirring between. Sauce thickens slightly into a loose velouté.

● **T+6 min — Parsley + peas**

Add chopped parsley + peas. Turn heat to low. Begin the vaivén pan swirl — steady small circles.

● **T+8 min – Emulsion sets**

After 2 min of swirling, sauce turns silky and jade-green. Coats a spoon. Salt to taste.

● **T+10 min – Fish in**

Nestle seasoned fish fillets into the sauce, skin-side down if skin-on, spaced apart. Cover with lid or parchment cartouche.

● **T+15 min – Fish done**

Fish is opaque and flaky. Fillets have released a small amount of gelatin into the sauce, enriching it. Test with a fork — flakes cleanly.

● **T+16 min – Serve**

Pan to the table. Spoon sauce around the fish. Crusty bread in reach. Eat immediately.

METHOD

The Cook

1 Cold-Start Garlic Infusion

1. Place the cold sauté pan or cazuela on the stove. Add 150 ml EV00 and the 6 cloves thinly sliced garlic to the COLD pan.
2. Turn the burner to medium-low. The oil will slowly warm with the garlic in it, producing a gradual infusion.
3. After 2 to 3 minutes: garlic slices will be pale golden — ivory-to-straw color, **NOT brown**. Oil is fragrant with garlic.
4. **Do NOT brown the garlic.** Brown garlic is bitter and will dominate the delicate sauce. If garlic starts to color beyond pale gold, immediately proceed to the next step.
5. This is the same cold-start technique used in UMAMI-4 #4 Gambas al Ajillo. The principle is universal: aromatics in cold oil, gradual warm-up, never-brown endpoint.

WHY THIS WORKS

See UMAMI-4 #4 technique card on Cold-Start Oil Infusion for the full mechanism. Brief version: allicin and other sulfur compounds transform into sweet diallyl compounds at 60 to 140 Celsius; above 160 they caramelize and produce bitter pyrazines. Cold-start keeps the oil in the sweet spot. Reference: UMAMI-4 #4 §Cold-Start Oil Infusion; Stovetop and Pan §Ajillo.

2 Flour Bloom — The Mini-Roux

1. Add 1 tbsp (15 g) AP flour directly to the garlic oil.
2. Stir continuously for 60 seconds with a wooden spoon. The flour will absorb the oil and form a loose paste — effectively a miniature roux (flour cooked in fat).
3. Target: the flour goes from raw-white to a light-blonde tan color. Smell shifts from raw flour to mildly nutty — this is the indicator that the starch granules have hydrated in the hot fat and are ready to thicken.
4. Do NOT let the flour brown past light-blonde. Deeper roux would deepen the sauce color and add a toasted note that is wrong for this preparation — the sauce must stay green.

WHY THIS WORKS

A roux is fat + flour cooked together to produce a thickening base. The fat coats the flour's starch granules and allows them to disperse evenly in the liquid that follows, preventing lumping. For salsa verde, the roux is brief — 60 seconds — because the goal is starch-network formation for emulsion stabilization, not thickening to a béchamel consistency. A light-blonde endpoint balances cooked-flour flavor with maximum thickening power (over-cooked roux loses thickening capacity). Reference: Sauces and Condiments §Roux; Food Science Core §Starch Gelatinization.

3 Stock Addition + Velouté Stage

1. Slowly add the **warm** fish stock (200 ml) in three portions, stirring continuously between additions.
2. First addition (60 ml): the stock hits the roux, bubbles vigorously, and absorbs into a thick paste. Stir smooth.
3. Second addition (70 ml): the paste loosens into a thick sauce. Continue stirring.
4. Third addition (remaining ~70 ml): the sauce reaches a loose velouté consistency — thick enough to coat a spoon but pourable.
5. **Key:** the stock must be warm. Cold stock on hot roux produces lumps that cannot be smoothed out after formation.
6. At this point the sauce is pale tan–yellow. The greening happens in the next phase.

WHY THIS WORKS

Gradual liquid incorporation into a hot roux is the fundamental technique of the mother sauces (béchamel, velouté, espagnole). Adding liquid slowly lets the starch gelatinize uniformly, producing a smooth thickening; adding liquid fast produces lumping because the outer starch layer gelatinizes before the inner layer has hydrated. The warm (not cold, not boiling) stock temperature is the middle ground that avoids temperature shock to the roux. Reference: Sauces and Condiments §Mother Sauce Method.

4

Green, Swirl, Emulsify (The Vaivén Moment)

1. Turn heat to LOW.
2. Add the chopped parsley (~50 g) and the peas (100 g, if using) directly to the pan.
3. **Begin the vaivén:** hold the pan handle, lift slightly off the burner, and rock it in small steady circles for the next 2 minutes. The motion is a gentle back-and-forth + circular motion simultaneously.
4. Watch the sauce transform: the pale tan turns jade-green as the parsley's chlorophyll disperses. The oil that was previously sitting on top of the liquid shears into droplets and suspends in the starch matrix. The sauce develops a visible silky texture.
5. Target consistency: **coats a wooden spoon, runs off slowly**, leaves a visible trace when a finger is drawn across the back. Not thick. Not thin. Clinging.
6. If sauce is too thick: add 1 to 2 tbsp warm stock or warm water and continue swirling.
7. If sauce looks oily or broken: it was likely heated too hot. Reduce heat and continue the swirl gently — emulsion often recovers.



WHY THIS WORKS

The vaivén pan swirl is a gentle mechanical shearing action. The rocking motion creates small shear forces across the sauce that break oil into droplets without the violent mixing a whisk or blender would impose. The starch network from the flour-bloom holds the droplets in suspension (think of it as a loose scaffolding). Parsley adds chlorophyll-containing cells that disperse in the aqueous phase, turning the sauce green. The emulsion produced is delicate — stable at low heat for 10 to 15 minutes, but broken by vigorous stirring or high heat. The technique is specific to this sauce family (salsa verde, pilpil) and is structurally different from whisked emulsions (hollandaise) or blender emulsions (mayonnaise). Reference: Sauces and Condiments §Starch-Stabilized Emulsions; Food Science Core §Emulsion Types.

5 Cook Fish In The Sauce + Serve

1. Season the fish fillets lightly with salt.
2. Nestle each fillet into the simmering sauce, spaced apart (don't overlap). The sauce should come roughly halfway up the fish — if less, add a small amount of warm stock.
3. Cover the pan with a lid OR a parchment-paper cartouche (more traditional, lets steam escape gently).
4. Reduce heat to very low. Cook 5 to 7 minutes depending on fish thickness — hake and cod need 6 to 7 min for a 150 g portion; branzino fillets need 5 min.
5. **Doneness test:** insert a paring knife into the thickest part — the flesh should flake cleanly. Internal temperature 55 to 60 Celsius for delicate white fish.
6. During the fish cook, the sauce further develops: the fish releases small amounts of gelatin that enrich the sauce; the sauce transfers flavor and moisture to the fish. This reciprocal finishing is why the technique works.
7. Turn off heat. Transport the pan directly to the table on a trivet or folded towel (pan will be hot).
8. Serve one fillet per plate, generously spooning sauce around and over. Crusty bread on the side for scraping the pan — the last pass of bread across the sauce is the best bite.

QUICK REFERENCE

Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Garlic + oil cold start	T=0 · 3 min	Pale gold, never brown
Flour bloom (mini-roux)	T+3 · 60 sec	Light-blonde, nutty aroma
Warm stock in 3 additions	T+4 · 2 min	Smooth each time before next addition
Parsley + peas in, heat low	T+6 · 30 sec	Chlorophyll begins to green the sauce
Vaivén swirl emulsion	T+6 to T+8 · 2 min	Jade-green, coats spoon, silky
Fish in, covered	T+8 · 5-7 min	Cartouche or lid; flake test
Serve in the pan	T+15 · immediate	Pan to table on trivet

Emergency Protocols

SAUCE BROKE – VISIBLE OIL LAYER FLOATING ON TOP

Heat was too high during the swirl phase. Turn burner off. Add 2 tbsp cold water and swirl gently – the thermal shock + continued shearing usually recovers the emulsion within 30 seconds. If the break is severe (distinct oil layer, no recovery): pour everything into a blender, blend 10 seconds, return to the pan – you'll lose some silkiness but save the flavor. Next cook: keep heat strictly low during the swirl; the emulsion is delicate.

SAUCE IS GLUEY / PASTE-LIKE, NOT CLINGING-BUT-POURABLE

Too much flour was used, or the stock addition was insufficient. Add warm stock 1 tbsp at a time, swirling, until the consistency loosens to coating-a-spoon-but-pourable. Next batch: measure the flour precisely at 15 g (not a heaping tablespoon) and err toward more stock than less.

SAUCE IS BROWN OR GRAY, NOT GREEN

Parsley was added too early, or the pan was too hot during the vaivén phase – chlorophyll degrades under heat and oxidation. For this batch: add another handful of fresh chopped parsley at the last minute before plating. Next batch: parsley goes in ONLY after the heat is dropped to low; do not add to a boiling sauce.

FISH IS OVERCOOKED / DRY

Likely cooked past 60 Celsius internal. Not recoverable. Serve with extra sauce to moisten. Next cook: reduce heat to very low during the fish phase (sauce should be at 80 Celsius max, not simmering), and pull at 55 Celsius internal – carryover brings it to 58 to 60.

GARLIC BROWNEED DURING THE INFUSION

Strain the oil to remove the burnt garlic. Add fresh thinly-sliced garlic to the strained oil and proceed from the flour-bloom step. This adds 2 min to the total cook but saves the sauce.

SAUCE SEPARATING IN THE PAN WHEN HELD FOR PLATING

Salsa verde does not hold. The moment it comes off heat, the emulsion begins to destabilize. Solution: plate within 2 minutes of heat-off. If holding is unavoidable, keep the pan on VERY low heat (below 70 °C) and continue gentle swirling every 30 seconds.

Technique Notes

● Starch-Stabilized Emulsions — The Vaivén Family

SAUCE SCIENCE · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO SALSA VERDE, PILPIL, SOME CURRIES

Most classical sauce emulsions rely on an egg or dairy emulsifier: hollandaise uses egg yolk lecithin; beurre blanc uses milk proteins from butter; mayonnaise uses egg yolk plus mustard. Starch-stabilized emulsions work differently: a loose network of gelatinized starch molecules in the aqueous phase holds oil droplets in suspension through physical entrapment rather than molecular bonding. The result is an emulsion that is lighter than an egg-based one, greener or cleaner-colored (no yolk), and structurally distinct. Two Spanish sauces use this mechanism: salsa verde Basque (flour) and pilpil (fish gelatin from hake skin, which is a protein-starch hybrid). Both are finished with a gentle pan swirl rather than whisking — the motion matters because aggressive shearing breaks the delicate starch network. This is a flavor and texture register unreachable by the French mother-sauce canon. Reference: Sauces and Condiments §Starch-Stabilized Emulsions; Food Science Core §Emulsion Types.

● The Vaivén Pan Swirl — Motion as Technique

SAUCE-BUILDING TECHNIQUE · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO DELICATE EMULSIONS

The vaivén motion — a steady rocking of the pan in small circles, handle held slightly off the burner — is the correct technique for building and maintaining starch-stabilized emulsions, pilpil, risotto's final mantecatura butter-mount, and some delicate butter sauces at service. The mechanism: the motion creates gentle shear forces throughout the liquid, sufficient to shear oil into droplets and distribute them evenly, without the violent mixing a whisk or spoon would impose. A whisk breaks delicate emulsions; a blender over-emulsifies (producing a paste rather than a silky sauce). The vaivén is the Goldilocks motion. Practice: pan empty, water only, try the motion until it feels natural — the whole pan should rock as one unit, with liquid moving in a steady orbit. Once natural, it becomes the default for any low-heat delicate sauce finish. Reference: Grains Starches and Legumes §Mantecatura; Sauces and Condiments §Delicate Finishes.

● Cook Protein In The Sauce — One-Pan Reciprocal Finishing

COOKING PHILOSOPHY · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO FISH STEWS, BRAISES, SIMMERED MAINS

In many traditional cuisines the main protein cooks in the sauce for its final cook phase rather than being cooked separately and sauced at plating. The reciprocal exchange matters: the protein releases flavor, fat, and gelatin into the sauce, thickening and enriching it; the sauce transfers flavor and moisture back into the protein, seasoning it throughout and preventing dryness. The technique shows up across regional canons: Basque salsa verde with hake, French bourride with monkfish, Italian cacciucco, Indian curries, Mexican moles, Chinese red-cooked dishes. The Anglo-American plating tradition separates protein and sauce, which produces pretty plates but misses the deeper integration. For salsa verde specifically: cooking the hake in the sauce for its last 5 min is what makes the dish great. Reference: Dinner Party Orchestration §One-Pan Service; Protein Encyclopedia §Fish Simmering.

● No Limits: Home-Made Fish Fumet (Substitutes Stock)

INGREDIENT QUALITY · SUBSTITUTES FLAVOR SPINE

Bottled clam juice and commercial fish stocks work. Home-made fumet is better by a measurable margin — the sauce's flavor spine comes directly from the stock, and a fumet made fresh from fish frames, shrimp shells, kombu, and aromatics produces a cleaner, deeper, more oceanic base than anything commercial. Method: 500 g fish frames (head, bones, tail — ask the fishmonger for these free or cheap with a whole-fish purchase), 100 g shrimp shells (saved from other preparations, frozen), 1 leek, 1 onion halved, 2 celery stalks, 1 piece kombu (10 × 10 cm), 1 bay leaf, 200 ml white wine, 1.5 L cold water. Combine cold, bring to gentle simmer, skim, simmer 25 min (NOT longer — fish stock turns bitter past 30 min), strain through a fine sieve. Makes ~1.2 L. Freeze in cube trays and in 200 ml portions. One batch serves ~6 salsa verde cooks. The fumet is the ● upgrade that has the largest flavor impact in the entire recipe. Reference: Pantry and Staples §Stocks; Protein Encyclopedia §Fish Frames.

● No Limits: Almejas en Salsa Verde — The Shellfish Variant (Substitutes Fish)

VARIANT DISH · SUBSTITUTES PROTEIN BASE

Salsa verde works brilliantly with clams. Purge 500 g fresh Manila or littleneck clams in cold salted water (30 min, they spit out sand). Rinse. Make the sauce through the vaivén stage as written. Add clams directly to the sauce, cover with lid, cook 3 to 5 minutes over medium–low heat. Clams open one by one as they cook — pull them with tongs as they open and place on a warm plate; return the lid and continue for laggards. Any clam that fails to open after 7 minutes: discard (unsafe). Once all clams are opened: add the reserved clams back to the pan; the liquor they've released into the sauce has enriched it beautifully. Serve in shallow bowls with crusty bread. The dish is called almejas en salsa verde in Spain and is one of the great shellfish–and–sauce combinations. Choose this variant for a tapas–style service; choose the fish variant for a proper main course. Reference: Protein Encyclopedia §Clams; Sauces and Condiments §Salsa Verde Variants.

● No Limits: Clay Cazuela Service (Extends Plating)

SERVICE VESSEL · EXTENDS SERVICE PHASE

Per the canonical Spanish–tapa doctrine (see UMAMI–4 #4 Gambas al Ajillo technique card), clay cazuelas retain heat roughly three times longer than metal pans. For salsa verde, this matters: the sauce's emulsion holds at temperature longer in a cazuela, extending the prime–eating window from 3 to 5 minutes (metal pan) to 10 minutes (cazuela). The cazuela also retains the rustic visual register that is correct for this dish — a pristine white ceramic plate or stainless pan reads as wrong for this preparation. Sourcing: La Tienda (latienda.com) sells 24 cm Spanish–made cazuelas; Williams Sonoma carries them in–store. Important: season a new cazuela before first use — soak 12 h in water, rub with garlic and oil, heat gently once. Then it lasts decades. One cazuela services both gambas al ajillo and salsa verde (and huevos rotos, champiñones al ajillo, chorizo al vino, and many others). Reference: UMAMI–4 #4 §Clay Cazuela Principle; Dinner Party Orchestration §Service Vessels.

PAIRING

What to Drink

Wine — Classical

Albariño from Rías Baixas — Martín Códax, Pazo de Señoráns, or Do Ferreiro Cepas Vellas

Albariño and salsa verde are the canonical Basque-Galician pairing (neighboring regions, similar fish register). The wine's saline minerality, high acidity, and moderate alcohol cut the sauce's richness while mirroring the fish's ocean note. Serve cold (8 to 10 Celsius). A good bottle-aged Albariño (3 to 5 years old) has the depth to match a proper home-made fumet; a younger bottle suits the everyday version.

Wine — Adventurous

Txakoli de Getaria (Basque sparkling) OR a young Godello from Valdeorras

Txakoli is the Basque coastal white — slightly spritzing, 11 percent alcohol, bone-dry, aggressively mineral. The spritz refreshes between rich bites of sauce. Godello is the richer, more complex Galician alternative — think of it as Albariño with more body and texture. Both serve cold.

After-Dinner

Orujo de hierbas (Galician herbal digestif)

The Galician take on digestifs — clear orujo infused with herbs (mint, chamomile, anise, pennyroyal). Serves as a palate-cleansing end to a fish-sauce meal in the classical Basque-Galician way. A 30 ml pour in a small glass, very cold. Orujo blanco (unflavored) is the drier alternative.

Menu Ideas


This as Main Course

The traditional deployment. Merluza en salsa verde with a side of boiled new potatoes drizzled in the sauce + crusty bread + Albariño. A complete Basque fish dinner in 25 minutes of active work.

Downstream — As Sauce for Other Fish

The sauce works on any mild white fish. Prepare the sauce to the vaivén stage, then cook the alternative fish in it: cod (7 min), halibut (6 min), branzino fillet (5 min), whole snapper scored (8 min). Use Miami local sourcing from Casablanca Seafood or Captain Jim's.

Downstream — Almejas en Salsa Verde (Tapa)

The shellfish variant. Substitute 500 g purged Manila clams for the fish. Cook 3–5 min in the sauce until clams open. Serve as a tapa in a clay cazuela with crusty bread — one of Spain's great shellfish presentations. Per  technique card.

Downstream — With Kamado-Grilled Fish (Fusion)

Grill a whole branzino on the kamado (UMAMI-6 #2) to 85 percent done. Finish the last 2 minutes by sliding the fish into a pre-made salsa verde to pick up the sauce's greening. Serves as a bridge between fire cookery (kamado) and Basque-fish tradition (salsa verde). Reference: UMAMI-6 #2 Whole Fish Kamado.

Dinner Party Arc

Opener: gambas al ajillo (UMAMI-4 #4) — same cazuela cleaned between courses. Main: salsa verde with hake in the same cazuela. Side: simple escarole salad with sherry vinaigrette. Dessert: crema catalana or tarta de Santiago. Wine: Albariño throughout. Cooking time: 40 minutes total across all courses.

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.

