



SPANISH · MOTHER BASE · BASE / PANTRY STAPLE

# Sofrito (Thermomix TM6)

Onion, tomato, garlic, olive oil — cooked until the oil separates. The invisible foundation of Spanish cuisine, built hands-off in the TM6.

Protein None

Serves Makes 4-6 × 200 g portions

Difficulty Beginner

Active 5 min (setup + end)

Total 57 min (hands-off in TM6)

## THE STORY

### The Invisible Foundation

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Every great Spanish dish has sofrito in it somewhere. Paella. Fideuà. Arroz caldoso. Fabada. Lentejas. Braised rabbit. Shakshuka's Spanish cousin. The slow-cooked base of onion, tomato, garlic, and olive oil is to Spanish cooking what dashi is to Japanese and mirepoix is to French — the unseen layer that makes everything taste like it comes from somewhere.

The stovetop version takes ninety minutes of periodic stirring. The TM6 version takes five minutes of active work and fifty-seven minutes of ignoring the machine. The temperature control prevents burning. The gentle reverse-rotation blades mimic occasional stirring. You set it, you walk away, you come back to what your abuela would have spent Saturday morning making.

The magic is not in the ingredients — they're identical across every Spanish kitchen. The magic is in the *sofrit moment*: when the tomato water has fully evaporated, the sugars have concentrated, the Maillard reaction has kicked in on the residual sugars, and the oil visibly separates from the solids and pools on the surface. That separation is the signal. The sofrito is done. Everything else you cook for the next six months will taste better because of it.

AT A GLANCE

# Specs

<b>YIELD</b> 800–1200 g (4–6 portions)	<b>BASE</b> Onion + Tomato + Garlic + EVOO	<b>KEY TEMP</b> 100 °C → Varoma	<b>DIFFICULTY</b> Beginner ●○○○○
<b>ACTIVE TIME</b> 5 min	<b>PASSIVE TIME</b> 57 min (hands-off)	<b>MAKE-AHEAD</b> Yes — freezes 6 months	<b>CUISINE</b> Spanish
<b>UNLOCKS</b> Paella, fabada, lentejas, arroz, guisos	<b>STORAGE</b> Vacuum-seal 200 g portions		

UMAMI ADAPTATION

## What Changed & Why

The classical stovetop sofrito requires 90 minutes and periodic attention. The Umami TM6 adaptation delivers the same result with zero supervision — precise temperature control prevents burning, reverse rotation mimics gentle stirring, and the integrated scale lets you weigh ingredients directly into the bowl. The ● tier upgrades the tomato and oil sources and adds a pimentón bloom for deeper Spanish character.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
<b>TECH</b>	90 min stovetop with stirring	57 min TM6 hands-off (30 min onion sweat + 2 min garlic + 25 min tomato)	Temperature-locked cooking prevents scorching; reverse rotation provides just-enough agitation
<b>ELEV</b>	One-time batch	Double batch → vacuum-seal 200 g portions → freeze 6 months	Pablo has vacuum sealer ✓ — once per quarter, sofrito always available

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
ADD	—	Pimentón de la Vera dulce bloomed in oil (No Limits)	30-sec bloom extracts fat-soluble capsanthin — deeper color and Spanish identity
SUB	Any olive oil	Arbequina EVOO for finishing / generic EVOO for cooking	Arbequina's sweetness complements the Maillard onion; saves the premium oil for where it's tasted

## INGREDIENTS

# What You Need

### Everyday

#### The Base


- 3 large yellow onions (~600 g), peeled and quartered
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled
- 6 large ripe tomatoes, grated on box grater (~800 g pulp) — OR 1 × 800 g can San Marzano, hand-crushed
- 150 ml extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 1 tsp sugar (optional — only if tomatoes are very acidic)

#### Substitution Notes

- *No fresh tomatoes in winter?* Canned San Marzano DOP is the right move. Out-of-season fresh tomatoes are strictly worse than good canned tomatoes for sofrito.
- *White vs yellow onion?* Both work. Yellow is sweeter and more common in Spanish tradition. Avoid red onion — too sharp, wrong sugar profile.
- *No TM6?* Follow the stovetop method in Sauces & Condiments §4. TM6 just saves attention; the final product is the same.

## No Limits

### The Base — Spanish Premium

- 3 large yellow onions (~600 g) — Pablo's normal sourcing is fine here; onions are a commodity ingredient
- 4 cloves garlic, preferably Spanish (Las Pedroñeras purple garlic if available — nuttier, less sharp)
- 6 large vine-ripe tomatoes in season (**summer Miami**) — grated · OR 1 × 800 g can **Mutti** or **Bianco DiNapoli** for winter (Bianco is the US gold standard for canned)
- 150 ml **Arbequina EVOO** (Pablo has ✓) — single-estate for finishing; use a separate less-premium EVOO if making double batch to save the good oil
- 1 tsp Maldon salt (Pablo has ✓)
- 1 tsp sugar (only if tomatoes are acidic)
- **1 tsp Pimentón de la Vera dulce DO** — bloomed in oil at the end (see  technique card)

### Infrastructure (Pablo-Specific)

- **Vacuum sealer + bags** — portion 200 g per bag for single paella (serves 4)
- **Freezer-Tetris labels** — date + weight + cook note (e.g., "2026-04 · 200 g · summer Miami tomato")
- **Quarterly rotation plan** — make 1.2 kg batch once per quarter → 6 portions → covers a full season of Spanish cooking

## EQUIPMENT

### Your Kit

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- Thermomix TM6 (Pablo ✓)

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- Box grater (for tomatoes — Catalan method, no blanching needed)

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- Vacuum sealer + bags (for long-term storage)

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- Kitchen scale — TM6 has built-in, use it

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- Small airtight jar (for short-term fridge storage if not vacuum-sealing all)

## MISE EN PLACE

# Before You Start

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- Onions peeled and quartered (TM6 will chop them — no pre-chopping needed)

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- Garlic peeled (leave whole or halved — TM6 will disperse them)

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- Tomatoes grated on box grater, skins discarded (Catalan method) OR can of San Marzano opened and hand-crushed

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- Measuring cup (CUP) ready for 'slightly ajar' positioning during cooking

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- Vacuum bags labeled ahead of time with date + weight

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- Ice bath ready if you plan to cool rapidly before portioning

## MAKE-AHEAD

# Timeline

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- T-5 min — Prep**  
Peel onions + garlic. Grate tomatoes (or open/crush can). Measure oil.
  
- T+0:00 — Chop onions**  
Onions + garlic into TM6 bowl. Sp 5 / 5 sec. Scrape down. Result: fine dice texture.
  
- T+0:30 — Start the sweat**  
Add EVOO + salt. 100 °C / Sp 1 / 30 min. Measuring cup SLIGHTLY AJAR (critical — lets steam escape).
  
- T+30:30 — Check onions**  
Onions should be translucent → golden → jammy. NO browning. If browning, next time drop to 90 °C.
  
- T+30:30 — Add tomato**  
Grated tomato (or crushed canned) through the measuring cup hole. Varoma / Sp 1 / 25 min. Cup ajar.

● T+55:30 – The **sofrit** moment

Open the lid. Tomato should be brick-red, thick, and OIL SEPARATED on the surface. That's the signal.

● T+56:30 – ● Pimentón bloom

(No Limits) Add 1 tsp pimentón de la Vera. Varoma / Sp 1 / 30 sec. Oil carries the pigment; color deepens noticeably.

● T+57:00 – Portion + store

Weigh 200 g portions into vacuum bags. Seal. Freeze (lay flat for fast thaw + efficient stacking).

## METHOD

# The Cook

### 1 Chop the Base

1. Peel 3 large yellow onions and 4 garlic cloves. Quarter the onions (TM6 will finish the chop — no need to dice by hand).
2. Add onions + garlic to the TM6 bowl.
3. **Sp 5 / 5 sec.** Scrape down the sides with a spatula.
4. Check the texture — you want *uniform fine dice* (3–5 mm). If chunky, pulse one more time at Sp 5 for 2–3 seconds. Do not over-chop — the TM6 can purée onions in 10 seconds. Stop before purée.

#### WHY THIS WORKS

Fine, uniform dice is the target because sofrito cooks by surface-area-driven water evaporation. Smaller dice = more surface area = faster water loss = faster caramelization. But too fine (purée) releases too much water too fast and turns gluey instead of jammy. The 3–5 mm target balances evaporation rate with textural integrity. Reference: Produce & Vegetables §3 (Alliums).

## 2 Sweat the Onions (30 min)

1. Add 150 ml EV00 and 1 tsp salt to the chopped onions.
2. Set: 100 °C / Sp 1 / 30 min.
3. **CRITICAL:** Place the measuring cup in the lid position SLIGHTLY AJAR — wedged at an angle so steam can escape. If the cup is fully seated, steam trapped inside condenses back and the onions boil rather than sweat.
4. Walk away. Do not open the lid during these 30 minutes. The TM6 is doing its thing.
5. At T+30 min: the onions should be translucent-to-golden, visibly reduced in volume (by ~60%), with oil clearly separated around them. NO browning. If browned, your TM6's 100 °C is running hot — next time drop to 95 °C.

### WHY THIS WORKS

The 30-minute sweat at 100 °C does two things: (1) breaks down onion cell walls, releasing sugars (fructose, glucose) and water, (2) allows the released water to evaporate, concentrating the sugars. At this point, Maillard reactions haven't started yet (surface temperature is held at 100 °C by the still-wet onion surface, below the 140 °C Maillard threshold). The slight ajar cup is essential — a sealed TM6 bowl acts like a steamer, which prevents the concentration step. Reference: Food Science Core §4 (Maillard Threshold); Produce & Vegetables §3 (Onion Stages).

### 3 Add Tomato, Concentrate (25 min)

1. Through the measuring cup hole: add 800 g grated fresh tomato (summer) or 1 × 800 g can San Marzano, hand-crushed (winter).
2. Set: **Varoma / Sp 1 / 25 min**. Cup slightly ajar.
3. *Why Varoma temperature (≈120 °C)?* Higher than 100 °C drives water evaporation faster — sofrito needs the tomato to concentrate, not simmer indefinitely. The Varoma setting is TM6-specific for this "high heat reduction" phase.
4. Walk away again. Do not lift the lid.
5. At T+25 min: open the lid and look for **the sofrit moment**. The tomato has darkened from red to deep brick-red. The texture is thick, jammy, paste-like. Most critically: **oil has separated and pools visibly on the surface**. That oil separation is the signal that the water is gone.

#### WHY THIS WORKS

Tomato is ~95% water. Concentrating it to a paste-like sofrito requires evaporating 70–80% of that water. Fresh tomato contains ~250 mg glutamate per 100 g. After a proper sofrito cook, concentration doubles to 500+ mg per 100 g — the umami load is literally doubled. The oil separation is a mechanical signal: as water evaporates, the oil-water emulsion (held together loosely by tomato pectin) breaks. When the oil pools on the surface, you have paste, not sauce. Reference: Produce & Vegetables §2 (Cell Walls and Pectin); Sauces & Condiments §4 (Sofrito Science).

### 4 Finish + Portion

1. Taste. Adjust salt. If tomatoes were acidic: add 1 tsp sugar, Sp 1 / 10 sec to incorporate.
2. (●) Add 1 tsp pimentón de la Vera dulce D0. Varoma / Sp 1 / 30 sec — see the ● technique card for full method.
3. Let cool in the bowl for 10 minutes (or transfer to a bowl in ice bath for rapid cooling).
4. **Portion into 200 g bags**. Vacuum seal. Lay flat on a sheet pan in the freezer for initial 2-hour freeze (keeps bags flat for Tetris storage), then transfer to freezer bin.
5. Label each bag: YYYY-MM · 200 g · [tomato source note]. Example: 2026-04 · 200 g · summer Miami tomato.

## QUICK REFERENCE

# Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Peel + prep	3 min	Onions quartered, garlic peeled, tomatoes grated/can opened
Chop onions + garlic	5 sec + scrape	Uniform 3–5 mm dice, not puréed
Sweat at 100 °C	30 min hands- off	Cup SLIGHTLY AJAR — non-negotiable
Check onions	10 sec	Translucent-to-golden, no browning, volume reduced ~60%
Add tomato	10 sec	Through measuring cup hole
Concentrate at Varoma	25 min hands- off	Cup ajar, no peeking
Check for sofrit moment	10 sec	Brick-red, jammy, OIL SEPARATED on surface
Optional pimentón bloom (🔴)	30 sec	Color deepens noticeably, oil turns red-orange
Cool + portion	10-15 min	Vacuum-seal 200 g bags, lay flat, freeze

## TROUBLESHOOTING

# Emergency Protocols

### 🔴 ONIONS ARE BROWNEO / PARTIALLY BURNT AFTER THE 30-MIN SWEAT

Your TM6's 100 °C setting is running hot — it happens with older units. Next batch: use 95 °C instead. For now: scrape the browned bits out (they're bitter), proceed with tomato phase. Sofrito will still work but will be darker than ideal.

 **MIXTURE IS WATERY AFTER 25-MIN TOMATO PHASE (NO OIL SEPARATION)**

Tomatoes had too much water for the Varoma time. Continue at Varoma / Sp 1 for another 10 minutes. If still watery, uncover the machine entirely (no measuring cup) and run Varoma / Sp 1 / 10 more min. Water will evaporate off. Oil will eventually separate.

 **SOFRITO TASTES FLAT / ONE-DIMENSIONAL**


Three possible fixes in order: (1) Salt — most soffrito is under-salted. Add 1/4 tsp at a time until it "pops." (2) Acid — a teaspoon of sherry vinegar at the end brightens the whole base. (3) Umami — for a richer base, stir in 1 tsp tomato paste during the tomato phase (concentrated glutamate boost).

 **BITTER / BURNT TASTE**

Either the onions caramelized too aggressively (browned) or the tomatoes scorched on the bottom. A small bitter undertone can be masked with 1 tsp sugar + 1 tsp butter stirred in at the end. Severe bitterness: start over. Bitter soffrito ruins every dish it enters.

 **GARLIC IS RAW-TASTING / TOO SHARP**

Garlic wasn't in the TM6 long enough with heat. Add the minced/chopped garlic to the onion phase from the start (not after) — it's more forgiving in a 30-min slow cook than in a 2-min quick add. Alternative: mince the garlic finer (Sp 5 / 10 sec alone before adding onions).

 **SOFRITO STUCK TO BOWL / HARD TO CLEAN**

Fill bowl with water + 2 drops dish soap, run Sp 10 / 30 sec at 60 °C. TM6 cleans itself. Dry thoroughly before next cook.

## Technique Notes

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### ● The Sofrito Moment (Visual Doneness Signal)

SENSORY · SPANISH COOKING · UNIVERSAL

Every sofrito — stovetop, TM6, oven, anywhere — finishes the same way: with oil visibly separating from the tomato solids and pooling on the surface. Before this moment, you have tomato sauce. After this moment, you have sofrito. The signal is mechanical: as water evaporates and the tomato's pectin structure breaks down enough, the oil can no longer stay emulsified in the remaining solids. It floats free. This is not about time (25 min, 30 min, 35 min — varies by tomato water content) but about observation. When you see oil on the surface, you're done. If you're not seeing it at 25 min, cook longer. Reference: Sauces & Condiments §4; Produce & Vegetables §2.

### ● The Slightly-Ajar Measuring Cup

TM6 TECHNIQUE · UNIVERSAL

For any TM6 cook where you want water evaporation — sofrito, risotto, reductions — the measuring cup in the lid must be SLIGHTLY AJAR, wedged at an angle. A fully seated cup creates a steam-proof seal and the bowl acts like a pressure cooker: water doesn't evaporate, flavors don't concentrate, texture stays watery. A completely absent cup loses heat too fast (TM6 struggles to maintain Varoma). The angled-wedge position gives you 80% seal + 20% steam vent — the exact compromise sofrito wants. Test fit: the cup should be resting at a 15–30° angle, visibly not seated. Reference: Thermomix TM6 §2 (Basic Technique Rules).

### ● Grated Tomato (Catalan Method)

PREP TECHNIQUE · MEDITERRANEAN · UNIVERSAL

Instead of blanching, peeling, seeding, and dicing tomatoes, cut them in half and grate on a box grater, cut-side against the coarse holes. The flesh grates into a smooth pulp; the skin stays in your hand (and gets discarded). This is the Catalan method — used for sofrito, gazpacho, and pa amb tomàquet. Advantages: (1) no blanching needed — 30 seconds per tomato vs 5 minutes, (2) no knife skill required, (3) skins discarded (they're bitter in long cooks), (4) pulp is the exact texture sofrito wants. Only skip this if using canned — the Catalan method requires ripe tomatoes to work. Reference: Produce & Vegetables §4 (Tomatoes).

## ● No Limits: Pimentón de la Vera Bloom

FLAVOR · SPANISH IDENTITY · EXTENDS FINISH PHASE

After the sofrit moment, add 1 tsp pimentón de la Vera dulce DO to the finished sofrito. Run Varoma / Sp 1 / 30 seconds. The oil carries the fat-soluble pigment (capsanthin) and aromatic compounds out of the pimentón, infusing throughout the sofrito. Visible signal: the sofrito's color shifts from brick-red to deeper red-orange with a subtle smoky undertone. Taste signal: the Spanish identity of the sofrito becomes assertive rather than implicit. Pimentón added raw to the final dish (paella, braise) doesn't bloom fully — its capsanthin stays locked in the powder matrix. Blooming in hot oil at the sofrito stage solves this permanently. Every dish made with this sofrito inherits the pimentón bloom. Why ● only: Pimentón de la Vera DO at \$10–15 per tin is a specialty purchase (Pablo needs upgrade from McCormick smoked paprika — noted in MEMORY.md). Everyday tier makes sofrito without pimentón; adds it at the dish level if needed. Reference: Pantry & Staples §6 (Spices — Bloom in Fat).

## ● No Limits: The Freezer Bank Infrastructure

DINNER PARTY · PANTRY INFRASTRUCTURE · EXTENDS PORTION + STORE

Once per quarter: make a DOUBLE batch (1.2 kg finished sofrito). Portion into 6 × 200 g vacuum bags. Freeze flat on sheet pan, then transfer to a labeled freezer bin. Label each bag: date + weight + tomato source note (e.g., "2026-04 · 200 g · summer Miami tomato"). Result: 90 minutes of work buys you a season of Spanish cooking. Every paella, fideuà, fabada, lentejas, arroz caldoso starts by pulling a bag from the freezer, thawing in warm water for 5 minutes, and starting the dish. The 57-minute foundation cook becomes a 5-minute step. This is why infra matters — the TM6 is great but the freezer bank is what actually unlocks daily Spanish cooking. Reference: Sauces & Condiments §4 (Storage + Uses).

## No Limits: Tomato Sourcing Calendar

SEASONALITY · INGREDIENT SOURCING · REFINES TOMATO INPUT

Tomato quality is the single biggest lever on sofrito quality. Sourcing rule by season: May–October (peak Miami/Florida): Fresh vine-ripe tomatoes, farmer's market or good grocer. Grate fresh. November–April (off-season): Canned San Marzano DOP (Mutti, Bianco DiNapoli for US, La Valle, Cento Certified San Marzano). Bianco DiNapoli is the US gold standard. A January tomato is a lie — canned is strictly better. Out-of-season fresh tomatoes have ~3 mg/100 g glutamate vs ripe fresh at 250+ mg/100 g — a 100× difference in umami. Using bad tomatoes in sofrito doesn't just waste the cook; it produces sofrito that makes EVERY subsequent dish worse. Reference: Seasonality/Miami-Local.md; Pantry & Staples §9 (Canned and Preserved).

### PAIRING

## What to Drink

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### Wine — Not Applicable

Sofrito is a base, not a course

*No pairing needed — sofrito becomes part of dishes that are paired. See the Menu Context section for the downstream pairings.*

### Cooking Companion

Fino or Manzanilla sherry (for cook-while-you-drink ritual)

*The 57 minutes of hands-off cooking is long enough to earn a glass of something. Fino sherry, salted almonds, a good podcast. Sofrito is a meditation, not a task.*

## CONTEXT

# Menu Ideas

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### Downstream Dish #1 — Paella

Standard paella for 4: 200 g sofrito (one bag) + 300 g Bomba rice + 1.2 L hot seafood stock + saffron + protein. The sofrito provides 30% of the flavor foundation. Reference: UMAMI-11 (Grains) — Paella Master Recipe when filed.

### Downstream Dish #2 — Fabada Asturiana

Spanish bean stew for 6: 200 g sofrito + 500 g faba asturiana beans (soaked overnight) + chorizo + morcilla + lacón + saffron. Sofrito provides base. 90 min gentle simmer. "Frighten the beans" twice. Reference: UMAMI-11 when filed.

### Downstream Dish #3 — Lentejas Estofadas

Weeknight Spanish lentil stew for 4: 200 g sofrito + 300 g pardina lentils + diced chorizo + bay leaf + pimentón + water to cover. 40 min simmer. End with sherry vinegar. The easiest dinner-for-four Pablo can make once sofrito is in the freezer.

### Downstream Dish #4 — Huevos Rotos

Tapa: warm 100 g sofrito in pan, crack 2 eggs into it, cover to soft-set yolks, season, top with sobrasada + honey (Pablo's signature fearless-fusion move). 8-minute breakfast or late-night dish.

## 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.*

