

Tuna Tartare — Sherry-Soy Dressing with Pimentón Oil

Sashimi-grade yellowfin cut into 8 mm cubes, dressed at the last second in a sherry-vinegar-soy-honey-ginger vinaigrette, plated on smashed avocado with warm pimentón oil, crispy garlic chips, and black sesame. Japanese-dressed raw fish with a Spanish soul — sherry instead of rice vinegar, Arbequina instead of neutral oil.

Protein Tuna (yellowfin, sashimi-grade)

Serves 4 as starter · 2 as light main

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 25 min

Total 40 min (including chilling plates and crispy garlic prep)

THE STORY

Japanese Technique, Spanish Identity

The technique is Japanese crudo, unchanged. Sashimi-grade fish, hand-diced at the last minute, dressed thirty seconds before plating so the acid doesn't start curing the fish on the way to the table. The ingredient swaps are Spanish: sherry vinegar replaces rice vinegar, Arbequina EVOO replaces neutral oil, pimentón de la Vera bloomed in warm oil replaces chili oil, crispy garlic chips replace fried shallots. The Japanese structure holds; the pantry changes. The result tastes like a tartare that a Spanish cook would serve to a Japanese cook as a small tribute, not a tribute-act.

The dish has four distinct texture-temperature elements that must coexist on one spoon: cold diced tuna, cool creamy avocado, warm pimentón oil, and shatteringly crisp garlic chips. Each contributes something the others cannot. The tuna provides protein and clean-fish flavor. The avocado provides fat and smooth texture that binds the bite together. The pimentón oil (hot

when poured, 60 °C) wakes up the tuna's aromatics as it makes contact. The garlic chips are the textural counterpoint that separates this dish from a standard tartare — without them, the bite reads as soft; with them, it has a contrast that guests remember.

The Umami two-tier treatment of this recipe is a retrofit: the original Pablo-specific version was filed as markdown before the CDR-35 template existed. This shipping preserves the dish exactly as Pablo has made it (sherry-soy-honey-ginger dressing, smashed avocado base, pimentón oil, crispy garlic) while adding the ● grocery-accessible tier and the ● premium tier (Honolulu Fish Co ultra-grade tuna, Arbequina EVOO, Vinagre de Jerez Reserva, Maldon finish).

AT A GLANCE


Specs

FISH Sashimi-grade yellowfin tuna, 8 mm cubes	DRESSING Sherry vinegar + soy + honey + ginger + sesame oil	BASE Smashed avocado with lime	FINISH Warm pimentón oil + crispy garlic chips + black sesame
KEY RULE Dress at the last second · avoid curing	DIFFICULTY Intermediate ●●○○○	ACTIVE TIME 25 min	SERVES 4 starter / 2 main
CUISINE Spanish-Japanese bridge	PAIRING Fino sherry OR junmai sake		

What Changed & Why

The recipe bridges Japanese crudo technique with Spanish ingredient identity. This adaptation preserves both traditions simultaneously — Japanese hand-dicing + last-second dressing + temperature discipline, Spanish sherry + pimentón + Arbequina + crispy garlic. Retrofit of the original Pablo markdown version to CDR-35 template format with full ●/● tier structure.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	Single-tier recipe with premium-only ingredients	Two-tier structure: accessible grocery version + premium source version	Retrofit per MEMORY.md recipe rule: every recipe must have ● Everyday + ● No Limits tiers. The technique is identical across tiers; only the sourcing changes.
ADD	—	Pre-chilled plates + chilled dressing + chilled fish	Temperature discipline is central to crudo: everything that touches the fish stays cold. Pre-chilling plates extends the prime-eating window by 10 to 15 minutes (per UMAMI-2 #4 Aguachile §Cold Dish Platter card).
ELEV	Dice fish ahead of time	Dice fish at the last possible moment, dress 30 seconds before plating	Sherry vinegar + soy mix begins curing the fish on contact. To maintain raw-fish texture, dress within 30 seconds of plating. Earlier dressing produces a semi-cured fish — still good but a different dish.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
SUB	Grocery sashimi-grade tuna + standard ingredients	 Whole Foods sushi-counter yellowfin + standard pantry ·  Honolulu Fish Co Blue Fin Grade yellowfin + Arbequina EVOO + Vinagre de Jerez Reserva + Pimentón de la Vera DO + Maldon + nori garnish	Raw fish preparations expose fish quality directly. The  sourcing is worth the premium for a small-portion crudo.

What You Need

● Everyday

The Fish

- 450 g (1 lb) sashimi-grade yellowfin tuna — from Whole Foods sushi counter or a trusted fishmonger. Flesh should be deep ruby-red, firm, no brown edges. NEVER from the standard fish case.

The Dressing

- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp sherry vinegar (Vinagre de Jerez)
- 1 tsp raw honey
- 1 tsp sesame oil (toasted)
- 1 tsp fresh ginger, microplaned
- 1/2 tsp yuzu or lime zest (optional)

The Base

- 2 ripe avocados, smashed with 1 tbsp lime juice + pinch of salt

The Pimentón Oil

- 60 ml EVOO
- 1/2 tsp Pimentón de la Vera dulce (bloomed — see method)
- Optional: pinch of picante pimentón for heat

The Crispy Garlic

- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced (1 mm)
- 60 ml neutral oil (for shallow frying)
- Pinch of salt

To Serve

- 1 tbsp black sesame seeds (toasted)
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced green parts only
- Flaky Maldon salt

Substitution Notes

- *No sashimi-grade tuna?* Do NOT substitute standard tuna — food-safety issue. Alternative raw fish: sashimi-grade salmon, sea bass, or fluke all work with the same technique.

- *No sherry vinegar?* Rice vinegar (the Japanese default) works but loses the Spanish identity that makes this dish distinctive.

No Limits

The Fish — Premium

- 450 g **Honolulu Fish Co Blue Fin Grade yellowfin tuna** (honolulufish.com — Pablo's verified supplier ✓) OR Regiis Ova (regiisova.com)
- Premium tiers are worth the upgrade on a raw preparation

The Spanish Pantry — Upgraded

- **Arbequina EVOO** (Pablo has ✓)
- **Vinagre de Jerez Reserva** (aged sherry vinegar, Pablo has ✓)
- **Pimentón de la Vera dulce DO** (Pablo priority per MEMORY.md)
- Maldon salt for finish
- Artisan shoyu (Yamaroku or Kishu) instead of standard soy

Upgraded Garnish

- Toasted black sesame seeds
- Micro-shiso leaves instead of scallion (if sourceable)
- A single strip of nori toasted over flame and crumbled for umami depth

EQUIPMENT

Your Kit

- Sharp knife — the most important tool (a dull knife tears the fish rather than cutting clean edges)
 - Clean cutting board (preferably dedicated to raw fish)
 - Microplane for ginger
 - Small saucepan (for pimentón oil + crispy garlic)
 - Slotted spoon (for lifting garlic chips)
 - Paper towels (draining)
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- 3 small bowls (dressing, pimentón oil, crispy garlic)

- Mixing bowl for dressing the tuna

- Ring mold or cookie cutter (optional — for clean tartare mound)

- Cold serving plates (chill 15 min before plating)

MISE EN PLACE

Before You Start

- Chill 4 serving plates in the freezer 20 min before plating.

- Tuna kept on ice in the fridge until the last moment; do NOT pre-dice.

- Make pimentón oil: warm 60 ml EVOO in a small pan over medium–low heat. Remove from heat. Stir in 1/2 tsp pimentón. Let infuse 10 min. Strain if you want clean oil, or keep the pimentón particles for visual.

- Make crispy garlic chips: heat 60 ml neutral oil in small pan over medium heat to 160 °C. Add 1 mm garlic slices. Fry 60–90 sec until golden (watch carefully — burns fast). Remove with slotted spoon to paper towels. Season with salt. Save the garlic oil for vinaigrettes.

- Mix dressing: whisk 2 tbsp soy + 1 tbsp sherry vinegar + 1 tsp honey + 1 tsp sesame oil + grated ginger + optional zest. Keep cold.

- Smash avocado: fork–mash avocados with 1 tbsp lime juice + pinch of salt. Keep covered (plastic wrap pressed to surface to prevent browning).

MAKE-AHEAD

Timeline

- T-45 min – Plates to freezer**
Chill plates 20+ minutes.

- T-30 min – Pimentón oil + crispy garlic**
Make both. Garlic chips cool on paper towel; oil infuses 10 min.

● **T-15 min – Dressing + avocado base**

Whisk dressing, keep cold. Smash avocado with lime + salt, cover with plastic wrap.

● **T-2 min – Dice tuna**

Remove tuna from ice. Dice into uniform 8 mm cubes. Work quickly.

● **T-30 sec – Dress tuna**

Pour cold dressing over diced tuna. Fold gently with a spoon to coat — no more than 4 folds to prevent maceration. Move to plating immediately.

● **T=0 – Plate**

On each chilled plate: 2–3 tbsp smashed avocado as base; ring mold or spoon to shape tuna into a mound on top. Pour warm pimentón oil around and over (NOT hot — 60 °C max). Top with crispy garlic chips + black sesame + scallion. Finish with Maldon.

● **T+2 min – Serve**

Bring to table immediately. Best eaten within 5 minutes of plating.

METHOD

The Cook

1 Pre-Service Mise

1. Chill 4 white serving plates in the freezer for 20 minutes before plating.
2. Warm 60 ml EVOO in a small pan to about 60 °C (warm, not hot). Remove from heat. Stir in 1/2 tsp pimentón de la Vera dulce. Let infuse 10 min. The oil should be deep red-orange. Optional: strain through a fine sieve for clean oil, or keep the pimentón particles for a rustic visual.
3. Separate pan: 60 ml neutral oil to 160 °C over medium. Add 1 mm garlic slices. Fry 60 to 90 seconds — they go from pale to golden FAST. Watch constantly. Remove with slotted spoon to paper towel; salt immediately. The garlic continues to crisp as it cools.
4. Make the dressing: 2 tbsp soy + 1 tbsp sherry vinegar + 1 tsp honey + 1 tsp sesame oil + 1 tsp microplaned ginger. Whisk smooth. Refrigerate in a small bowl.
5. Smash 2 ripe avocados with 1 tbsp lime juice + pinch of salt. Cover the surface with plastic wrap (direct contact) to prevent browning. Refrigerate until plating.

WHY THIS WORKS

Each component is prepared with temperature discipline: pimentón oil at 60 °C (warm enough to extract capsanthin, cool enough not to cook the tuna on contact), garlic chips fried to 160 °C then drained (any residual hot fat in the crispy garlic will pre-cook the tuna if they touch). The plates are chilled because cold surfaces slow the dressed tuna's transition toward curing. This temperature architecture is what distinguishes the Umami version from a casual tartare — every element is placed with thought. Reference: UMAMI-2 #4 Aguachile §Cold Dish Platter; Food Science Core §Temperature Architecture.

2 Hand-Dice the Tuna

1. Remove the tuna from the fridge at the last possible moment. **The tuna must stay cold throughout dicing.**
2. On a clean cutting board: slice the tuna against the grain into 8 mm strips. Then rotate and slice the strips into 8 mm cubes.
3. **Dice carefully:** each cube should be uniform, clean-edged (a dull knife mashes the fish). Aim for 6 to 8 mm cubes — small enough to eat cleanly on a spoon, large enough to preserve a distinct bite.
4. Do NOT pre-dice hours ahead. Even refrigerated, diced tuna begins to oxidize and lose color within 30 minutes. Dice within 5 minutes of service.
5. Transfer diced tuna to a chilled mixing bowl.

WHY THIS WORKS

Hand-dicing preserves the fish's texture integrity; a food processor shreds the fish and releases proteins that would then cure unevenly in the vinegar-soy dressing. The 8 mm cube is the Goldilocks size — smaller and the individual pieces lose identity; larger and each bite dominates the other components. Against-the-grain slicing ensures no individual cube contains long parallel muscle fibers that would chew tough. Reference: Knife Skills §Against-the-Grain; Protein Encyclopedia §Tuna Cuts.

3 Dress + Plate Immediately

1. **The critical step.** Pour the cold dressing over the diced tuna.
2. Fold gently with a spoon — NO MORE than 4 folds. Each fold distributes the dressing without over-mixing.
3. **Work fast from this point.** Sherry vinegar + soy begins curing the fish on contact. Target: on the plate within 30 seconds of dressing.
4. Build each plate:
5. — 2 to 3 tablespoons smashed avocado as a base (use a ring mold for clean edges or just a spoon).
6. — Diced dressed tuna as a mound on top (ring mold optional for height).
7. — Pour 1 to 2 tablespoons of warm pimentón oil around the tuna mound (not hot — 60 °C max).
8. — Scatter crispy garlic chips across the top.
9. — Sprinkle black sesame seeds + thinly-sliced scallion green parts.
10. — Finish with flaky Maldon salt.
11. Serve immediately. Ideal eating window: 5 minutes.

WHY THIS WORKS

The 30-second rule is the most important technique in the dish. Sherry vinegar + soy + honey contains enough acid (plus salt) to begin protein denaturation on the tuna's cut surfaces within minutes. After 2 minutes the fish has partially cured and reads as 'tataki-adjacent' rather than raw. After 5 minutes the texture has shifted toward semi-cured. For a true raw-tuna tartare, dress and plate within 30 seconds and eat within 5 minutes. The reward is a dish that tastes freshly raw rather than mildly cured. Reference: Food Science Core §Acid Denaturation; UMAMI-2 #4 Aguachile §Acid Denaturation — The Cold Cure Mechanism.

QUICK REFERENCE

Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Chill plates in freezer	T-45 • 1 min active	Plates cold to the touch
Pimentón oil + crispy garlic	T-30 • 10 min	Oil deep red; garlic golden + crispy

STEP	TIME	CUE
Dressing + avocado base	T-15 · 5 min	Dressing smooth; avocado covered
Dice tuna	T-2 · 2 min	Uniform 8 mm cubes; clean edges
Dress + 4 gentle folds	T-0:30 · 30 sec	Coated but not macerated
Plate all 4 (quickly)	T=0 · 90 sec	Base → tuna → oil → garnish → salt
Serve	T+2 · immediate	Eating window: 5 min

TROUBLESHOOTING

Emergency Protocols

TUNA LOOKS GRAY/BROWN INSTEAD OF RUBY-RED

Fish is oxidized or not actually sashimi-grade. Do NOT serve raw — the safety and quality margin has been crossed. Cook into tuna poke bowls (briefly sear + soy glaze), or discard.

DRESSING IS TOO ACIDIC / SHARP

Add 1/2 tsp more honey + 1/2 tsp water; whisk again. Taste before dressing the tuna.

GARLIC CHIPS BURNED DURING FRY

Discard; oil is acrid. Start over with fresh garlic and oil. Drop fry temperature to 150 °C next time and watch constantly for 60–90 seconds only.

AVOCADO HAS BROWNE

Scrape off the brown layer; the avocado underneath is fine. Next batch: cover with plastic wrap in direct contact with the surface, add a squeeze of lime to the plastic wrap before pressing.

PIMENTÓN OIL IS SMOKING

Too hot. Remove from heat; cool to 60 °C before adding pimentón. If you already added pimentón and it's smoking: strain and restart — the oil has acrid notes.

Technique Notes

● Dress-At-Last-Second for Raw-Fish Preparations

CRUDO TECHNIQUE · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO TARTARES, TIRADITO, SEVICHE-ADJACENT

When any acid-containing dressing (vinegar, citrus, soy) meets raw fish, protein denaturation begins immediately. For a true raw-fish preparation, this curing effect must be minimized — dress within 30 seconds of plating, eat within 5 minutes. Over 5 minutes, raw tartare becomes semi-cured tataki; over 30 minutes it becomes full ceviche. All three are valid dishes but are different from each other. This recipe targets the raw tartare register — dressing is last, eating is first. Applies across crudo, tartare, tiradito; different than aguachile (UMAMI-2 #4) which deliberately targets the 3-minute semi-cure window. Reference: Food Science Core §Acid Denaturation; UMAMI-2 #4 Aguachile §Acid Denaturation.

● Hand-Dice vs Food Processor for Raw Fish

KNIFE TECHNIQUE · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL TARTARES AND CRUDO

Raw fish preparations require hand-dicing, not food-processor chopping. The mechanism: food processors shred fish fibers rather than cutting them cleanly, releasing myosin proteins that trap water and produce a pasty, over-mushy texture after dressing. Hand-dicing with a sharp knife produces clean-edged cubes that maintain their shape in the dressing and on the palate. The 8 mm cube is the canonical size — smaller cubes lose identity in the mouth, larger cubes dominate other components. Against-the-grain slicing first (1 cm strips), then rotation and re-slicing into cubes, ensures no long parallel fibers. Reference: Knife Skills §Against-the-Grain; Protein Encyclopedia §Tuna Preparation.

● Temperature Architecture in Multi-Component Plates

COOKING PHILOSOPHY • UNIVERSAL • APPLIES TO DISHES WITH HOT-COLD CONTRASTS

This tartare has four temperature registers: cold tuna, cool avocado, warm pimentón oil (60 °C), room-temp crispy garlic. Each registers differently on the palate and contributes something specific. The warm oil wakes up aromatics on contact with the cold tuna (aromatics release more at warm temperatures); the cold tuna preserves raw-fish texture; the cool avocado binds the bite; the crispy garlic provides textural contrast. Constructing a dish with intentional temperature architecture — not just flavor architecture — is a modern-kaiseki / modernist-cooking move that works across many preparations: chawanmushi with cold uni (UMAMI-5 #5), aguachile on chilled platters (UMAMI-2 #4), warm pan sauces over rested meats (UMAMI-6 #4 Lamb Leg). Reference: Sensory Calibration §Temperature Perception; Dinner Party Orchestration §Multi-Temperature Service.

● No Limits: Honolulu Fish Co Blue Fin Grade (Substitutes Tuna Source)

INGREDIENT QUALITY • SUBSTITUTES PROTEIN BASE

For raw-fish preparations, the fish source is the most important variable. Commodity grocery sushi-counter tuna is acceptable but variable. Honolulu Fish Co Blue Fin Grade is Pablo's established premium source (verified supplier per MEMORY.md). The tuna arrives overnight from Hawaii, cut same-day, with parasite-controlled processing. The flavor difference over grocery tuna is substantial — cleaner ocean note, firmer texture, deeper ruby color. For a dinner-party tartare where the dish IS the tuna, this upgrade is worth the premium. Cost: roughly 2× grocery per pound; delivered frozen-fresh or fresh depending on ordering. Reference: Protein Encyclopedia §Tuna Grades; Pantry and Staples §Fish Sourcing.

● No Limits: The Sherry Vinegar Identity Swap (Substitutes Acid)

INGREDIENT IDENTITY • SUBSTITUTES VINEGAR

The single ingredient swap that distinguishes this tartare from a generic Asian-style tartare is replacing rice vinegar with sherry vinegar. Rice vinegar (classical Japanese) is clean, slightly sweet, and ubiquitous. Vinagre de Jerez (aged sherry vinegar) is deeper, more complex, with aromatic-oxidative notes from cask aging. In this recipe it works because it pairs with soy (which provides the umami the rice vinegar would have brought) and with honey (which provides the sweetness). The result is a dressing that reads as Japanese-structured but Spanish-signed. Pablo's existing bottle of Vinagre de Jerez Reserva is the right tier — minimum 2-year aged, DO-certified. Reference: [Pantry and Staples §Sherry Vinegar](#); [Sauces and Condiments §Vinegar Substitutions](#).

● No Limits: Nori + Shiso Upgraded Garnish (Extends Plate)

GARNISH UPGRADE • EXTENDS PLATE PHASE

The ● tier uses scallion + black sesame + crispy garlic. The ● tier adds two refined elements: (1) a single strip of nori toasted over a flame until just crisp, then crumbled over the plate — adds umami-ocean depth. (2) Micro-shiso leaves in place of scallion — shiso's perilla aromatics complement both the tuna and the sherry-soy dressing in a way scallion does not. Both garnishes are subtle rather than dominant — the goal is a plate that reads as intentional rather than busy. Sources: nori from any Japanese grocery (Nori Premium); micro-shiso from specialty Asian produce or The Chef's Garden (if ordering). Reference: [Pantry and Staples §Japanese Garnishes](#); [Protein Encyclopedia §Raw Fish Accompaniments](#).

PAIRING

What to Drink

🍷 Wine — Japanese Bridge

Chilled junmai sake — Dassai 23, Hakkaisan, or Kubota Senju

The Japanese-soy-structured dressing pairs classically with junmai sake. Rice-derived sweetness mirrors the dish's honey; cold serving temperature matches the tartare's cold register. 60 ml pours in small ceramic cups.

Wine — Spanish Bridge

Fino sherry (Tio Pepe, La Gitana) chilled in a copita glass

For the Spanish half of the identity: Fino sherry's saline edge and bone-dry profile complement the pimentón and sherry-vinegar notes in the dish. Served very cold (6 to 8 Celsius) in a small glass. The canonical Spanish tapas pairing that happens to work beautifully with this Japanese-structured preparation.

Wine — White Alternative

Albariño from Rías Baixas or off-dry Riesling Kabinett

If neither sake nor sherry is on the table: Albariño's saline-mineral profile handles the Spanish-side of the dish; Riesling Kabinett's off-dry sweetness handles the soy-honey-ginger dressing. Both cold, both around 12 percent alcohol. Avoid heavy whites and any oaked wine.

CONTEXT

Menu Ideas

This as Opening Course

The classical deployment. Tartare as the first course of a Spanish-Japanese-fusion dinner, served on chilled plates with Fino sherry or chilled junmai sake. Follow with a Japanese or Spanish main (UMAMI-3 #4 Miso Salmon, UMAMI-7 #4 Chuletón).

Downstream — Fearless-Fusion Arc

Tartare opener → Gambas al Ajillo (UMAMI-4 #4) → Miso Salmon SV (UMAMI-3 #4) → Ensamada dessert (UMAMI-10 #5). Full Spanish-Japanese fusion dinner that plays both identities throughout the meal.

Downstream — As a Light Dinner for Two

Scale to 2 servings. Pair with simple Japanese rice and a side of lightly-dressed seaweed salad. Saturday-night couple's dinner. 25 min active work, memorable result.

Downstream — Tapa-Style

Scale down to 6 small bites (1 tbsp portions each) served on a shared platter as part of a tapas tasting. Pair with Fino sherry. Works before a substantial Spanish main like Chuletón or Fabada.

Downstream — Alternative Fish Variants

The technique works with sashimi-grade salmon (different flavor, similar structure), sea bass (cleaner, more delicate), or fluke (white-fish variant). The sherry-soy dressing + pimentón oil + crispy garlic structure is fish-agnostic.

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.

