

OFFICIAL FREE READER GIFT • U.S. SUPERMARKET EDITION

DOÑA ELENA'S 8-PAGE PERUVIAN KITCHEN STARTER KIT

3 COMPLETE ICONIC DISHES • 1 CLASSIC DESSERT • ZERO EXOTIC BODEGAS • 100% REGULAR GROCERY INGREDIENTS



#1 CEVICHE CLÁSICO (PÁG. 5)



#2 LOMO SALTADO (PÁG. 6)



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YOUR 8-PAGE ROADMAP TO PERUVIAN FLAVOR MASTERY IN AMERICA

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DOÑA ELENA VARGAS

25 Years of American Grocery Mastery • Lima • Arequipa • U.S. Kitchens

TESTED IN KROGER, WALMART, H-E-B & WHOLE FOODS

Pure Food Chemistry • Zero Guesswork • 100% Authentic Flavor

The 3 Golden Countertop Rules & Seafood Protocol

Master these three immutable physics & chemistry laws before touching your stove or knives.

RULE #1 • THE 3-MINUTE CEVICHE FLASH-CURE AT 38°F (60% LIME PRESS LAW)

CHEMICAL LAW

Ceviche is a cold flash-toss, not an acid pickle! Citric acid denatures surface actin and myosin proteins in exactly **180 seconds**, turning the exterior silky white while keeping the core sweet and translucent like sashimi. *Never squeeze limes past 60%!* The white spongy pith (albedo) contains bitter limonoid glucosides and harsh rind oils that ruin juice within 12 minutes. Press gently by hand just until the juice flows freely.

RULE #2 • THE 450°F CAST-IRON SEAR & ½ LB (200G) BATCH LIMIT

THERMAL LAW

Why does home Lomo Saltado turn into gray, boiled beef? Standard residential gas and electric ranges produce only 7,000–12,000 BTUs (restaurant wok burners blast 100,000+ BTUs). When you dump more than ½ lb (200g) of cold meat into the skillet, the surface temperature plummets from 450°F to 212°F, steam gets trapped, and the beef boils in its own juices. **Sear in two rapid batches for 90 seconds each** to lock in authentic wok hei flavor!

RULE #3 • THE TRIPLE-EMULSION HUANCAÍNA WITH SALTINE BINDING

EMULSION LAW

High-speed blender friction generates heat, melting the delicate butterfats in queso fresco and splitting your sauce into watery yellow oil and grainy curds. **Elena's Triple Protocol:** Blend sautéed chiles and evaporated milk cold first, add crumbled cheese on pulse, and add 6 Nabisco Saltine crackers 2 at a time. The wheat starch physically traps the fat droplets into a velvet, spoon-coating emulsion that never breaks.

U.S. SEAFOOD COUNTER MATRIX • FDA FOOD SAFETY GUIDE

TIER 1: BEST U.S. CATCH

- **Wild Corvina / Sea Bass:** Exact Lima match; firm, sweet flesh holds 3/4" cubes.
- **Fluke (Summer Flounder):** Pristine white meat; superb for tiraditos.

TIER 2: RELIABLE BACKUPS

- **Pacific Halibut / Snapper:** Clean sweet flake; ask for center-cut loins.
- **Fresh Cod Loin / Mahi:** Salt 10 mins before curing to firm cell walls.

BANNED FISH (NEVER USE)

- **Farmed Tilapia & Swai:** Muddy taste, tears into mush in lime acid.
- **Warm Pre-Cooked Shrimp:** Rubbery, water-logged; dilutes Leche de Tigre.

Top 4 U.S. Supermarket Flavor Swaps & The Ester Law

Cook 100% authentic Peruvian flavors using ingredients found in every regular American grocery store.

NATIVE CHILE / HERB	TIER 1: COMMERCIAL JAR	TIER 2: 100% FRESH GROCERY SWAP	CULINARY FUNCTION
Aji Amarillo 30k–50k SHU	Jarred paste (Goya / Inca's Food) in Latino aisle.	2 Yellow Bell Peppers blistered 4 mins in hot oil + ½ fresh Habanero pureed smooth.	Fruity, sunny heart of Huancaína, Causa, Ají de Gallina, and Golden Aderezos.
Aji Panca 1k–1.5k SHU	Doña Isabel or Inca's Food red panca paste.	Dried Ancho Chile stemmed, seeded, steeped in hot water 15 mins, and pureed with 1 tbsp oil.	Deep sun-dried raisin, smoke & dark cacao notes for Adobo, Anticuchos, and beef braises.
Rocoto 50k–100k SHU	Jarred Rocoto paste (very spicy!).	Chile Manzano (exact 1:1 botanical identical match, <i>C. pubescens</i> , with black seeds) in produce section.	Crisp, thick-walled juicy fire for Rocoto Relleno, spicy table salsas, and meat cures.
Huacatay & Chicha Herbs & Brews	Bottled black mint paste & corn beer.	60% Mint + 30% Basil + 10% Tarragon for Huacatay; Lager + Apple Cider Vinegar + pinch brown sugar for Chicha.	Earthy volcanic aromatics for Ocopa; fermented malty acidity for Seco de Res and Adobo.

THE ESTER LAW: WHY JALAPEÑOS & SERRANOS RUIN PERUVIAN COOKING

Many American recipes mistakenly suggest jalapeños or serranos as substitutes. **Never use jalapeños in Peruvian cooking!** Jalapeños belong to the species *Capsicum annuum*, dominated by green pyrazine compounds that taste grassy, vegetal, and astringent. Peruvian native chiles belong to *Capsicum baccatum* and *pubescens*, packed with sweet fruity esters (peach, passionfruit, and apricot notes). Blistering sweet yellow bell peppers with a touch of habanero replicates this authentic ester profile without any grassy bitterness.

Cilantro vs. Culantro Note: When recipes call for "culantro", standard U.S. bunched cilantro works beautifully. **Key chef secret:** Always use both the tender leaves AND the stems! The stems contain over **65% of the fragrant aldehyde oils** that give Seco de Res and Arroz con Pollo their signature emerald richness.

The 3 Master Flavor Foundations

Master these three foundational pillars and you can execute over 80% of classic Peruvian gastronomy.



BASE MAESTRA #1

El Aderezo Base Dorado

Golden Onion-Garlic-Aji Foundation

Ratio: 2 finely minced red onions + 1.5 tbsp garlic paste + 3 tbsp aji amarillo paste + 2 tbsp oil.

Cooking Key: Cook on medium-low for 15 full minutes until onions turn amber and oil separates from edges.

UNLOCKS: ARROZ CON POLLO, SECO, AJÍ DE GALLINA



SALSA MAESTRA #2

Salsa Huancaína en 10 Min

Creamy Golden Cheese Emulsion

Ratio: 4 tbsp aji amarillo + ½ cup queso fresco + ¼ cup evaporated milk + 6 Saltines + 2 tbsp oil.

Cooking Key: Sauté chiles in oil, blend with milk & cheese first; pulse crackers 2 at a time until velvet spoon-coating texture.

UNLOCKS: PAPA A LA HUANCAÍNA, CAUSA, YUCA FRITA



BASE CRUJIENTE #3

Salsa Criolla en Hielo

Crispy Iced Lime & Red Onion Relish

Ratio: 1 large red onion in feather slices + 1 aji amarillo julienned + 3 Key limes + 2 tbsp cilantro.

Cooking Key: Submerge sliced onion in salted ice water for 10 minutes to eliminate harsh sulfur and produce extreme crunch.

UNLOCKS: TAMALES, PAN CON CHICHARRÓN, SECO

THE OIL SEPARATION PHENOMENON (PHASE 3 OF ADEREZO COOKING)

How do you know an aderezo is truly done? Look for tiny pools of clear golden oil bubbling cleanly at the edges of the paste. As intracellular moisture boils off, onion fructose undergoes Maillard caramelization with the chile amino acids. When the oil beads away cleanly, raw sulfur is gone and pure umami remains. **Batch prep secret:** Store in a glass jar in the fridge for up to 7 days, or freeze in silicone ice-cube trays for 3 months!

Ceviche Clásico Limeño

The 3-Minute Cold Flash-Cure Protocol • Pristine Ocean Fish with Leche de Tigre

PREP: 15 MIN

CURE: 3 MIN

SERVES: 4

FDA SAFE



INGREDIENTS (BASE RECIPE • 4 SERVINGS)

- 1 lb (450g) skinless Corvina, Fluke or Halibut fillet, cut into pristine ¾" cubes.
- 1 medium red onion, sliced paper-thin into half-moons, rinsed in ice water.
- 8–10 fresh Key limes, hand-squeezed to 60% only (≈ ½ cup fresh juice).
- 1 fresh aji limo (or ½ habanero), seeded and finely minced.
- 1 garlic clove cut in half + 2 ice cubes (for temperature control).
- 1 tbsp finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves (leaves only).
- 1 tsp fine sea salt + pinch white pepper.
- To serve: 1 boiled sweet potato (camote), 1 ear boiled choclo, ½ cup canchita.

STEP-BY-STEP COLD EXECUTION PROTOCOL

- The Garlic-Chile Rub:** Rub the interior of a chilled stainless steel bowl with the cut garlic clove and a slice of aji limo. Discard the solids. Place the chilled cubed fish directly in the bowl.
- The 30-Second Sea Salt Massage:** Sprinkle 1 tsp fine sea salt over the fish. Gently toss with a spoon for 30 seconds. The salt tightens surface myosin proteins and draws out natural marine umami.
- The Citrus Flash Toss (180 Seconds):** Drop 2 ice cubes into the bowl. Pour in the freshly squeezed lime juice. Toss continuously for exactly 3 minutes. The exterior turns milky-white, creating the Leche de Tigre.
- The Aromatic Fold:** Remove the ice cubes. Fold in the drained sliced red onion, minced aji limo, and chopped cilantro. Toss gently twice. Taste and adjust salt.
- Immediate Service:** Plate immediately on chilled plates beside thick rounds of sweet potato, boiled choclo corn kernels, and crispy toasted canchita. Serve within 10 minutes!

EXACT GUEST SCALING MATRIX • ZERO GUESSWORK RATIOS

Servings	Fish Fillet	Key Limes (60% Press)	Red Onion	Sea Salt	Choclo & Camote
2 Guests	½ lb (225g)	5 limes (¼ cup)	½ onion	½ tsp (3g)	1 small camote + ½ choclo
4 Guests	1.0 lb (450g)	8–10 limes (½ cup)	1 medium onion	1 tsp (6g)	1 large camote + 1 choclo
6 Guests	1.5 lbs (680g)	12–14 limes (¾ cup)	1.5 onions	1.5 tsp (9g)	2 camotes + 2 choclos
8 Guests	2.0 lbs (900g)	16–18 limes (1 cup)	2 large onions	2 tsp (12g)	3 camotes + 2 choclos

Lomo Saltado en Hierro Fundido

The 450°F Home Cast-Iron Method • Smokey Wok Hei Glaze without Boiling Meat

PREP: 20 MIN

COOK: 6 MIN

SERVES: 4

450°F SEAR



INGREDIENTS (BASE RECIPE • 4 SERVINGS)

- 1.25 lbs (550g) beef tenderloin or top sirloin, cut into 2" x ½" thick batons.
- 1 large red onion, cut into ½" thick wedges (petals separated).
- 2 firm plum/roma tomatoes, seeded and cut into ½" wedges.
- 1 yellow bell pepper (or ají amarillo), seeded and julienned.
- 2 scallions, cut into 1.5" batons + 2 garlic cloves, minced.
- 3 tbsp high smoke-point oil (avocado or peanut oil).
- 2 tbsp dark soy sauce (sillao) + 1 tbsp light soy sauce.
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar + 1 tsp oyster sauce (chifa secret glaze).
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves.
- To serve: Crispy hand-cut french fries & hot garlic white rice.

BLAZING CAST-IRON EXECUTION PROTOCOL

- Preheat Skillet to 450°F:** Heat a heavy 12-inch cast iron skillet on high heat for 8 full minutes until faint wisps of white smoke rise from the surface.
- Batch #1 Beef Sear (90s):** Add 1 tbsp oil. Drop ½ of the beef batons in a single layer. *Do not touch for 60 seconds* to form a deep caramelized crust. Flip for 30s. Transfer beef to a warm plate.
- Batch #2 Beef Sear (90s):** Add 1 tbsp oil and sear the second half of beef identically. Transfer to the plate. (Total sear time: 3 mins).
- Flash-Sear Vegetables (60s):** Add 1 tbsp oil. Toss in the onion wedges and yellow peppers. Stir-fry for 60 seconds over max heat until edges are charred but crunchy. Add garlic and tomato wedges for 30s.
- The Chifa Deglaze & Smoke Glaze:** Pour the vinegar, soy sauces, and oyster sauce around the roaring hot perimeter of the skillet. The liquids flash-boil and vaporize, creating instant wok hei aroma!
- The Final Toss:** Return beef and all resting juices to the skillet. Fold in scallions and cilantro for 20 seconds. Serve immediately over crispy fries with garlic rice.

CRITICAL HOME STOVE RULE: NEVER CROWD THE SKILLET!

Cooking more than ½ lb (200g) of beef at once drops skillet temperature below boiling (212°F), turning your stir-fry into watery gray stew. Searing in two batches guarantees restaurant crunch and flavor.



PLATO COMPLETO #3

PREP: 25 MIN • COOK: 20 MIN

Ají de Gallina Cremoso

Velvety shredded chicken in golden ají amarillo, pecan & Parmesan cream

Ingredients (Serves 4–6):

- 1.5 lbs chicken breast, poached & shredded into fine threads.
- 4 slices white sandwich bread (no crusts) soaked in 1 cup evaporated milk.
- ½ cup El Aderezo Base Dorado (Page 4).
- ½ cup warm chicken poaching stock.
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese + ¼ cup finely ground toasted pecans.
- *Garnish:* Boiled yellow potatoes, hard-boiled egg quarters, black botija olives.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

- 1. Puree Bread Base:** Puree soaked bread, evaporated milk, and half the aderezo in a blender until silky smooth.
- 2. Simmer Sauce:** Warm remaining aderezo in a saucepan. Pour in bread puree and ½ cup warm chicken stock. Simmer over low heat for 8 mins, stirring constantly until thick like heavy gravy.
- 3. Fold Chicken & Finish:** Fold in shredded chicken, ground pecans, and Parmesan. Stir 3 mins until cheese melts into velvet. Serve hot over sliced potatoes with eggs and olives.



POSTRE CLÁSICO #1

PREP: 15 MIN • COOK: 20 MIN

Suspiro a la Limeña

Silky golden caramel manjar topped with Port wine Italian meringue

Ingredients (Serves 6):

- *Manjar Blanco:* 1 can (14 oz) sweetened condensed milk + 1 can (12 oz) evaporated milk + 4 egg yolks + 1 tsp vanilla.
- *Port Meringue:* 3 egg whites + ¾ cup granulated sugar + ½ cup Port wine (or sweet red dessert wine).
- *Finishing:* Freshly ground cinnamon for dusting.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

- 1. Cook Manjar:** Simmer condensed and evaporated milk in a heavy saucepan on medium-low for 20 mins, stirring constantly until thick and golden. Off heat, temper in whisked yolks; cook 2 mins more. Pour into glasses; chill.
- 2. Port Syrup:** Boil Port wine and sugar in a small pot until soft-ball stage (238°F / 115°C, ≈ 5 mins).
- 3. Italian Meringue:** Whip egg whites to soft peaks; slowly stream in hot Port syrup while beating until glossy, stiff, and cool. Pipe over manjar; dust with cinnamon.

Make-Ahead Secret: Ají de Gallina tastes even richer on Day 2 as chicken absorbs the cream.

Dessert Note: Suspiro glasses can be chilled up to 24h ahead before piping meringue.

3 FATAL MISTAKES TO AVOID IN PERUVIAN COOKING

- **1. Boiling raw onions in aderezo:** If onions sizzle aggressively, heat is too high. Sweat gently for 15 mins until sulfur turns to sweet fructose.
- **2. Over-marinating ceviche past 3 mins:** Prolonged acid turns ocean fish into chalky rubber. Toss 180 seconds and serve immediately.
- **3. Adding cold, soggy potatoes to Lomo Saltado:** Always fry or roast potatoes separately until crackling crisp; toss in during the last 15 seconds.

DOÑA ELENA'S 4-COURSE SIGNATURE DINNER MENU

- **1st Course:** Ceviche Clásico Limeño & Toasted Canchita (Page 5).
- **2nd Course:** Papa a la Huancaína con Huevos y Aceitunas (Page 4).
- **3rd Course:** Lomo Saltado en Hierro Fundido o Aji de Gallina (Pages 6 & 7).
- **4th Course:** Suspiro a la Limeña & Chicha Morada Casera (Page 7).

• CUT HERE • COUNTERTOP SURVIVAL CARD & USDA/FDA CRITICAL TEMPERATURES

CRITICAL TEMPERATURES:

- **450°F–480°F (Cast Iron):** Lomo Saltado wok hei sear. Smoke threshold with avocado oil.
- **190°F (Gentle Simmer):** Dutch oven sweet spot for Aderezos, Seco & braises.
- **38°F–40°F (Frigid):** Required temperature for Ceviche fish toss (FDA safe).

TAPE INSIDE PANTRY

INSTANT PANIC RESCUES:

- **Huancaína split?** Blender overheated cheese fats. Drop 2 ice cubes + 2 Saltines. Blend high 15s.
- **Ceviche bitter?** Squeezed past 60%. Whisk in 1 tbsp cold evaporated milk immediately.
- **Lomo released water?** Remove beef with slotted spoon. Boil sauce max heat 90s to glaze; toss back.

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