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DIVAS ON A DIME

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PHOTO CREDIT: www.JasonCoblentz.com

PHOTO CAPTION: Rich, smoky romesco brings a taste of Spain to the table with roasted peppers, tomatoes, almonds, garlic and olive oil.



Spain's Best-Kept Kitchen Secret

Every country seems to have one sauce its cooks can't live without. Americans reach for ketchup, ranch dressing or barbecue sauce.

The Spanish have romesco.

Pronounced "roh-MESS-koh," romesco is one of Spain's most loved culinary secrets.

Rich, silky and smoky, romesco combines roasted red peppers, tomatoes, toasted almonds, garlic and olive oil into a sauce that's savory, a little tangy and just nutty enough to make everyday, ordinary chicken, fish or vegetables taste like they came from a neighborhood cafe overlooking the Mediterranean.

Romesco comes from Catalonia, in northeastern Spain, where it has been enjoyed for generations. Like many beloved traditional recipes, romesco grew out of everyday cooking using inexpensive pantry ingredients and whatever was available.

The ingredients are wonderfully humble. Some roasted red peppers, a handful of almonds, a few cloves of garlic, a splash of vinegar and some olive oil come together in minutes. It's the kind of recipe that tastes like you spent all afternoon cooking when, in reality, your food processor did most of the work.

Ask three Spanish cooks for a romesco recipe and you'll probably get three different answers. Some include tomatoes while others don't. Some use almonds, others prefer hazelnuts. The vinegar and spices

vary from kitchen to kitchen, but roasted peppers, garlic, olive oil and nuts remain the heart of nearly every version.

Purists and penny-pinchers (like me) will roast their own peppers and tomatoes, but good quality jarred roasted peppers and canned fire-roasted tomatoes work beautifully and save enough time to make romesco a realistic weeknight recipe. If sherry vinegar isn't available, red wine vinegar works beautifully.

To Roast Your Own Peppers and Tomatoes:

Preheat the broiler and line a baking sheet with foil. Arrange 3 to 4 medium whole tomatoes and two large red bell peppers on the baking sheet. Broil 2 to 4 minutes per side, turning as needed, until the skins are blackened and blistered all over. Transfer to a bowl and cover, or place in a covered container, for 10 minutes to steam. When cool enough to handle, peel away the skins. Remove the stems, cores and seeds from the peppers, and the cores from the tomatoes before using.



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EASY ROMESCO SAUCE

Yield: about 2 cups

Total Time: 25 mins.

2-3 garlic cloves, chopped

1 cup raw almonds, toasted

2 thick slices (roughly 2 ounces)

baguette or country-style bread, lightly toasted

1/4 cup flat leaf parsley, packed

1 teaspoon kosher salt, more to taste

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

1/2 to 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes, to taste, optional

1 (12 ounce) jar roasted red peppers, drained

1 (14 ounce) can fire-roasted tomatoes, well drained

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

Juice and zest of half a lemon

1 1/2 tablespoons sherry vinegar or red wine vinegar

Using a food processor fitted with the steel blade, give the garlic cloves a good chop, stop the machine and scrape down the sides. Next add the toasted almonds, bread, parsley, salt and smoked paprika and pepper flakes to the bowl and process into a paste.

Scrape down the sides of the bowl and add the roasted peppers and tomatoes. Process until smooth. With the machine running, slowly drizzle in the olive oil and vinegar, then add the lemon juice and zest. Process until smooth, adding more olive oil if needed to reach your desired consistency. Taste and adjust seasoning to your liking. Scrape into a bowl and serve.

Keep a batch of romesco in the refrigerator, and suddenly ordinary chicken, vegetables, eggs and sandwiches become anything but ordinary.

Lifestyle expert Patti Diamond is the penny-pinching, party-planning, recipe developer and content creator of the website Divas On A Dime — Where Frugal, Meets Fabulous! Visit Patti at www.divasonadime.com and join the conversation on Facebook at [DivasOnADimeDotCom](https://www.facebook.com/DivasOnADimeDotCom). Email Patti at divapatti@divasonadime.com

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