

Tiptop tapas

Create a diverse menu at home with a variety of small-portion Spanish-inspired hot or cold dishes

by LAURA LANGSTON



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COSTCO CONNECTION

Ingredients for tapas can be found in Costco warehouses. Groceries are available for delivery through Costco Grocery at Costco.com.

Tapas—small portions of food—are ubiquitous in Spanish bars and restaurants, where they've been served and enjoyed for centuries. There are as many theories about their origins as there are tapas themselves.

In Spanish, *tapa* means a cover or lid, and some say the term evolved when barkeepers began covering their customers' glasses with sliced bread, cheese or ham to stop flies from getting in. Others suggest it was inspired by King Alfonso X, who became ill and needed snacks with wine to strengthen his constitution. After recovering, the king proclaimed that alcohol couldn't be served without food or tapas.

Regardless of their origins, tapas are now so popular that tapas-style restaurants can be found around the world. But if you'd rather eat them at home, it's easy to create delicious tapas in your kitchen.

Plan on a mix of both hot and cold dishes for contrast. Start with a Spanish charcuterie board. Lay out spicy chorizo,

cured ham and manchego or Ibérico cheese. Add olives, salted almonds and something sweet, like a little fig jam or dried apricots. Don't forget to include bread or savory crackers.

For small hot dishes, the classic *gambas al ajillo* (garlic shrimp) cooks up minutes before serving. Pair it with crusty bread to sop up the last bits of garlicky olive oil. Offer a vegetable dish or two: roasted carrots or delectable *patatas bravas* (spicy potatoes). Another favorite that's always well received is the traditional *tortilla Española* (an egg and potato omelet).

Plan on two or three tapas dishes per person, not counting your charcuterie platter. If you're serving more than four people, it's best to duplicate multiple tapas dishes to ensure there's enough of each so everyone can have a taste. When in doubt, cook a little bit extra. Leftover tapas are always in demand. ■

Laura Langston lives and writes in the Pacific Northwest, where she enjoys tapas at home.

Tortilla Española

6 medium gold potatoes
1 large onion
2 cups extra-virgin olive oil
Sea salt to taste
10 eggs

Peel the potatoes; cut into 1/8-inch-thick slices, then quarter the slices. Peel the onion; cut into 1/8-inch-thick slices, then halve the slices.

In a very large skillet over medium heat, fry the potatoes in olive oil for about 10 minutes, turning them over after about 5 minutes. Add the onion and fry another 8 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender, but not crispy. With a slotted spoon, transfer the mixture to a bowl. Season with salt.

In a separate large bowl, beat the eggs. Add the potato mixture; let rest for 3 to 4 minutes.

Heat 1 Tbsp of the olive oil in an 8-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat, swirling to evenly distribute it. Pour half the egg and potato mixture into the skillet, lower the heat to medium-low and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, until the edges start to wrinkle.

Place an inverted plate that is about 1 inch wider than the skillet, over the skillet. With a steady hand on the plate and the other on the skillet handle, quickly flip it. Lift the pan, place it back on the stove and slide the omelet, uncooked side down, back into the skillet. Shake the pan gently to evenly distribute the mixture. Cook for 2 minutes, rounding the edges with a spatula. Slide the omelet onto a clean plate; repeat the process.

To serve, cut the omelets into squares or divide into wedges. Makes 10 servings.

Recipes and images courtesy of Natacha Sanz-Caballero (natachasanzcaballero.com)



Olivada

2 cups Kalamata olives, pitted
1 Tbsp capers
2 garlic cloves
1 Tbsp lemon juice, freshly squeezed
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1/4 tsp red pepper flakes
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 baguette, sliced and toasted

Finely chop the olives, capers and garlic together by hand on a cutting board or with a food processor, pulsing intermittently until the ingredients are combined.

Place the mixture in a bowl and add the lemon juice, pepper and red pepper flakes. Mix well with a spoon or spatula. Slowly drizzle the olive oil into the mixture in a continuous drip, stirring to incorporate.

To serve, place the olivada in a small serving bowl alongside thin slices of toasted baguette. Makes 20 servings.

Note: You can substitute black olives for Kalamata olives. If so, add 1/4 tsp salt.