

Ajoblanco

From Nelson's Kitchen
Print

We start in Malaga in the very South of Spain, just Northeast to Gibraltar with a very traditional Ajoblanco de Malaga, which is also known as a Spanish White Gazpacho. It is a creamy cold white soup. The most prominent flavours in Ajoblanco are almonds, olive oil, and garlic. The traditional recipe features raw garlic which would give a prominent assertive garlic flavour. I cannot tolerate that flavour. Thus my adaptation is to roast the garlic gently in olive oil to achieve a much milder and sweeter garlic flavour — citizens of Malaga would likely protest this change, but this is my Brazilian heritage in action.

Ingredients:

- 6 slices hearty white sandwich bread, crusts removed
- 4 cups water
- 2 1/2 cups (8 3/4 ounces) plus 1/3 cup sliced blanched almonds
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled
- 3 tablespoons of sherry vinegar
- Kosher salt and pepper
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1/8 teaspoon almond extract
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 6 ounces seedless green grapes, sliced thin (1 cup)

Procedure:

1. Roast the Garlic

- Put two tablespoons of the olive oil into your smallest saucepan.
- Slice the cloves of garlic on half and add to the saucepan.
- Put over a slow simmer and roast until garlic turns a pale blond colour.
- Immediately pour the garlic and garlic cloves into a cold small dish and reserve.

2. Soak the Bread

- Combine bread and water in bowl and let soak for 5 minutes.

3. Process Almonds and Bread

- Process 2 1/2 cups almonds in food processor until finely ground, about 30 seconds, scraping down sides of processor as needed.
- Using your hands, remove bread from water, squeeze it lightly, and transfer to food processor with almonds. Reserve the water.
- Add roasted garlic with its oil, vinegar, 1 1/4 teaspoons salt, and cayenne to blender and process until mixture has consistency of cake batter, 30 to 45 seconds.

4. Add Olive Oil

- With processor running, add olive oil in thin, steady stream, about 30 seconds.
- Add reserved soaking water and process for 1 minute.
- Season with salt and pepper to taste.

5. Strain the Soup

- Strain soup through fine-mesh strainer set in bowl, pressing on solids to extract liquid.
- Discard solids.

6. Adding Almond Extract

- Measure 1 tablespoon of soup into second bowl and stir in almond extract.
- Return 1 teaspoon of extract mixture to soup; discard remainder.
- Chill for at least 3 hours or up to 24 hours.

7. Toast Almonds

- Warm oven to 300 F.
- Mix remaining 1/3 cup of sliced almonds with the vegetable oil and spread on a light-coloured baking sheet.
- Toast almonds, stirring from time to time, until they are lightly toasted.
- Remove and let it cool off.

8. Serve the Soup

- Ladle soup into shallow bowls.
- Mound an equal amount of grapes in center of each bowl.
- Sprinkle cooled almonds over soup and drizzle with extra olive oil. Serve immediately.