

Homemade Spanish-Style Mackerel: A Slow-Simmered Seafood Masterpiece

There is something incredibly nostalgic and comforting about



TIME
20 min

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INGREDIENTS

- 1 kilogram mackerel fish (fresh is best!)
- 2 tbsp salt and water (for the brine)
- 1 medium carrot (sliced into rounds)
- 1 medium onion (sliced)
- 1 red bell pepper (sliced into strips)
- 1 head of garlic (cloves peeled and slightly smashed)
- 3-4 dried bay leaves
- 2 long green chilies
- 8 dried red chilies (adjust based on your heat preference)
- 1 cup olive oil (canola or vegetable oil works, but olive oil is traditional)
- 500ml water
- 1/3 cup vinegar (white vinegar or apple cider vinegar)
- 2 tbsp liquid seasoning (like Maggi or Bragg's)
- 1 tbsp whole peppercorns
- Salt to taste
- 1-2 cups additional water (to maintain moisture during the long simmer)

DIRECTIONS

- 1.** The Brining Process: Start by cutting the mackerel into serving-sized pieces. Wash them thoroughly under cold water. In a large bowl, create a brine with the salt and water. Soak the fish for 20 minutes. This step is crucial-it seasons the fish to the bone and helps firm up the flesh so it doesn't fall apart during the long simmer. After 20 minutes, drain and pat the fish dry.
- 2.** Layering the Flavors: Grab a heavy-bottomed saucepan or a Dutch oven. Place half of the aromatics from Set B (carrots, onions, peppers, garlic, and bay leaves) at the bottom. This creates a "rack" for the fish to sit on, preventing it from sticking to the pan.
- 3.** Place the fish pieces over the vegetables in a single layer if possible, then top with the remaining half of Set B.
- 4.** The Long Simmer: Add all the ingredients from Set C-the oils, vinegar, chilies, peppercorns, and water. Cover the pan and bring it to a gentle simmer. Once it's bubbling, turn the heat down to medium-low. Let it simmer for 1 hour. Do not stir! You want the fish to remain intact.
- 5.** The Final Braise: After the first hour, add the additional 1-2 cups of water from Set D. Continue cooking for another 45 minutes. This extended time ensures the carrots are buttery soft and the fish is perfectly tender.

SWAPS & NOTES

The Fish: If you can't find mackerel, this method works beautifully with sardines or even milkfish (Bangus).

The Oil: While I recommend olive oil for that authentic "Spanish" taste, a neutral oil like canola will still yield a delicious result if you prefer a lighter flavor.

Heat Level: Eight dried chilies provide a medium kick.

If you love spice, give them a little squeeze before dropping them in to release the seeds.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Don't Rush: The long cooking time is what allows the vinegar to soften the small bones of the mackerel.

Use a Wide Pan: Using a wider saucepan rather than a deep pot allows you to layer the fish without stacking it too high, which helps keep the pieces whole.

Let it Rest: If you can wait, let the dish cool and sit in the fridge for 24 hours.

The flavors intensify significantly.

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