

## Two Pastes That Make the Sauces

AjÍ amarillo (yellow chile) and huacatay (an herb that's often called black mint) add spark and depth to many of the sauces that accompany pollo a la brasa. Vibrant ajÍ amarillo gives off fruity, habanero-like vibes with moderate heat. Huacatay, on the other hand, is evocative of vegetables and freshly cut grass with menthol undertones. Both can be hard to find fresh in the United States and are typically sold as jarred pastes.



**AJÍ AMARILLO PASTE** **HUACATAY PASTE**  
Big flavor in small jars

## Awesome Sauces

Zippy ajÍ sauces are mandatory with pollo a la brasa, but they're not just for the chicken: Peruvians also drizzle them onto the salad and fries that share the plate. There are lots of local variations, but most are mayonnaise-based, and all are packed with gutsy seasonings such as garlic, lime, and herbs. After whipping up yellow (ajÍ amarillo) and green (jalapeño) versions—make both if you can swing it—I devoured pollo a la brasa, right in my own backyard.

### POLLO A LA BRASA (PERUVIAN GRILL-ROASTED CHICKEN)

SERVES 4

TOTAL TIME: 2½ HOURS, PLUS 24 HOURS MARINATING

Our gas grill instructions are for a three-burner grill. If using a two-burner grill, turn both burners to high and place the wood chips on the primary burner while the grill heats. When the grill is hot, turn the primary burner to medium and turn the secondary burner off; stand the chicken on the cooler side of the grill, about 4 inches from the primary burner, and proceed with the recipe, adjusting the primary burner as needed to maintain 350 to 375 degrees. A rasp-style grater makes quick work of grating the garlic. Inexpensive beer is fine; avoid those with strong hoppy or bitter flavors. Do not use a 16-ounce can because its height will make the chicken less stable. Serve with french fries and salad and one or both sauces (see “Sauces That Go on Everything”).

- 1 (12-ounce) can beer, divided
- 2 tablespoons finely grated garlic
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons table salt
- 2 teaspoons yellow mustard
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 (4- to 4½-pound) whole chicken, giblets discarded
- 1 cup wood chips
- 1 (13 by 9-inch) disposable aluminum roasting pan

1. Whisk ½ cup beer, garlic, lime juice, soy sauce, salt, mustard, pepper, thyme, and cumin together in liquid measuring cup. Refrigerate remaining beer, still in can, until ready to grill. Using your fingers or handle of wooden spoon, gently loosen



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skin covering chicken breast and leg quarters. Using paring knife, poke 10 to 15 holes in fat deposits on skin of back. Tuck wingtips underneath chicken.

2. Place chicken in bowl with cavity end facing up. Slowly pour marinade between skin and meat and rub marinade inside cavity, outside skin, and under skin to distribute. Cover and refrigerate for 24 hours, turning chicken halfway through marinating.

3. Using large piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil, wrap wood chips in 8 by 4½-inch foil packet. (Make sure chips do not poke holes in packet.) Cut 2 evenly spaced 2-inch slits in top of packet.

4. Place beer can in large, shallow bowl. Spray can all over with vegetable oil spray. Slide chicken over can so drumsticks reach down to bottom of can and chicken stands upright; set aside at room temperature while preparing grill.

**5A. FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL:** Open bottom vent fully and place disposable pan in center of grill. Light large chimney starter two-thirds filled with charcoal briquettes (4 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour into 2 even piles on either side of disposable pan. Place wood chip packet on 1 pile of coals. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent fully. Heat grill until hot and wood chips are smoking, about 5 minutes.

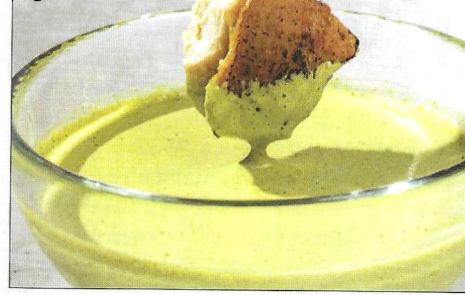
**5B. FOR A GAS GRILL:** Remove cooking grate and place wood chip packet directly on one of outside burners. Set grate in place; turn all burners to high; cover; and heat grill until hot and wood chips are smoking, about 15 minutes. Turn 2 outside burners to medium and turn off center burner. (Adjust outside burners as needed to maintain grill temperature between 350 and 375 degrees.)

6. Scrape cooking grate clean with grill brush. Transfer chicken with can to center of cooking grate with wings facing piles of coals (or outer burners on gas grill) at 3 and 9 o'clock (ends of drumsticks should rest on grate to help steady bird). Cover grill (with top vent open for charcoal grill) and cook for 15 minutes. Using tongs and wad of paper towels, rotate chicken 90 degrees so wings are at 6 and 12 o'clock. Continue cooking and turning chicken at 15-minute intervals until thickest part of thigh registers 170 to 175 degrees, 1 hour to 1¼ hours longer.

7. With large wad of paper towels in each hand, transfer chicken and can to clean bowl, keeping can upright; let rest for 15 minutes (do not discard paper towels). Using wads of paper towels, carefully lift chicken off can and onto cutting board. Discard can. Carve chicken, transfer to platter, and serve.

## Sauces That Go on Everything

In addition to dousing chicken and fries with spicy ajÍ (chile) sauces, Peruvians love to drizzle the creamy-tangy-spicy mayonnaise-based mixtures onto fried yuca. But don't stop there: Keep the flavor-packed mayos on hand for perking up grilled meats and seafood, tacos, burritos, eggs, and grain bowls.



### AJÍ VERDE (PERUVIAN GREEN CHILE SAUCE)

MAKES ABOUT ¼ CUP TOTAL TIME: 10 MINUTES

Huacatay is a Peruvian herb sometimes called black mint. You can find it jarred in supermarkets or online. If it's unavailable, increase the cilantro to 5 tablespoons.

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 jalapeño chile, stemmed, seeded, and chopped coarse
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro
- 2 tablespoons grated cotija cheese
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 tablespoon jarred huacatay paste
- 1 garlic clove, minced

Combine all ingredients in blender and process until smooth, about 1 minute. (Sauce can be refrigerated for up to 1 week.)

### AJÍ AMARILLO (PERUVIAN YELLOW CHILE SAUCE)

MAKES ABOUT ¼ CUP TOTAL TIME: 10 MINUTES

AjÍ amarillo paste, made from yellow Peruvian chiles, is available in supermarkets or online. If huacatay paste is unavailable, it can be omitted.

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons ajÍ amarillo paste
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 teaspoon jarred huacatay paste

Combine all ingredients in blender and process until smooth, about 1 minute. (Sauce can be refrigerated for up to 1 week.)

