

DIRECT · EASY

Grilled provolone on the kamado with tomato, oregano and olive oil, in a cast-iron skillet

Argentine-style provoleta over direct heat: a wheel of provolone in a cast-iron skillet at 230°C until you get a golden crust and a molten centre. Tomato, oregano, olive oil and bread. A starter in 12 minutes. Serves 4.



PREP

10 min

COOK

12 min

SERVINGS

4

TEMPERATURE

230 °C

Ingredients

400 g aged provolone in a wheel 1.5-2 cm thick (provoleta-style)

2 cdl dried oregano (to scatter while hot)

1 pzca chilli flakes or paprika (optional)

1 ud loaf of rustic bread to toast and dip

1 puñado fresh oregano or parsley leaves to finish (optional)

2 ud small ripe tomatoes, deseeded and chopped (concassé)

4 cda extra-virgin olive oil (raw, to finish)

1 pzca freshly ground black pepper

2 ud small olive-wood chunks (for the veil of smoke)

Method

1 STABILISE THE KAMADO DIRECT AT 230°C

Light the charcoal and set the kamado direct, no deflector: here we want radiant heat from the coals to brown the base of the cheese. Open the vents and stabilise the chamber at 230°C; it takes about 15-20 minutes to settle. Don't start until the temperature holds steady, because provoleta is a matter of minutes and won't forgive a cold kamado.

2 PREHEAT THE CAST-IRON SKILLET EMPTY

Put the empty cast-iron skillet in the centre of the grate and preheat it with the lid closed for five minutes. It needs to be properly hot before the cheese goes in: that thermal mass is what sears the base of the provolone on contact and forms the crust. Add the cheese to a cold skillet and it sticks and melts without browning underneath.

3 LAY THE PROVOLONE WHEEL IN

Without greasing (provolone releases plenty of fat), lay the cheese wheel in the centre of the hot skillet. You'll hear an instant sizzle: that's the base searing. Don't move it or prod it for the first few minutes; it needs to sit in contact so the golden crust that holds it together forms before you pull it.

4 MELT WITH THE LID CLOSED AND ADD THE OLIVE WOOD

Close the lid so the enveloping heat melts the centre from above while the skillet browns from below. At 5-6 minutes, when the cheese starts to soften, toss the two olive-wood chunks on the coals and close again: the mild smoke settles in the final minutes. Don't open the lid out of curiosity—you lose heat and smoke at once.

5 CATCH THE POINT: GOLDEN CRUST, WOBBLY CENTRE

At 8-10 minutes, check: the surface should be bubbling and glossy, and when you tilt the skillet with gloves the cheese wobbles like a custard but holds its shape. Lift one edge with a spatula: the base should be golden, not black. That's the point. Wait for it to spread out completely and you've gone from provoleta to a puddle of cheese and split oil.

6 DRESS AND SERVE IN THE SKILLET

Pull the skillet with gloves and, without transferring, crown the cheese straight away with the chopped tomato, scatter the dried oregano while hot so it releases its aroma, drizzle with raw olive oil and add chilli and pepper. Take the skillet straight to the table with the toasted rustic bread alongside. Eat it at once, dipping bread into the molten cheese and the aromatic oil before it sets.

Editor's tips

- The pull point is everything. A perfect provoleta comes out while it wobbles like a custard and the base is golden, not once it has melted completely. Past that point the cheese fat splits, the provolone loses its structure and you end up with an oily puddle instead of a creamy wheel that holds together. Better one degree short: the cast iron's residual heat keeps melting it on the way to the table, so pull it while it still holds its shape.
- Pick the right cheese: aged provolone, not fresh. Argentine provoleta uses a matured provolone, drier and firmer than fresh Italian provolone, which is why it takes the heat without spreading: it melts inside but keeps an outer wall. If all you find is young or very wet provolone, chill it good and firm beforehand and give it less time, because it releases more water and breaks down sooner. A good stand-in is a wheel of semi-cured provolone-style cheese or even a scamorza, which also crust up.
- With dairy, little smoke and mild. Provolone soaks up smoke like a sponge, so olive goes in at a minimal dose —two small chunks— and only in the final minutes. Forget the strong woods: hickory, mesquite or holm oak leave a phenolic bitterness that buries the cheese and turns it acrid. Olive, apple or cherry are the sweet woods that accompany dairy without fighting it. When in doubt, go short: a veil you can just sense always beats a provoleta that tastes of ash.

Gear for this recipe

Petromax FP20 Cast Iron Skillet 20 cm with Handle

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/petromax-skillet-fp20-mango

Big Green Egg Large

mikamado.es/en/kamados/big-green-egg-large

Smokey Olive Wood Olive Wood Chunks 1.5 kg

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/smokey-olive-wood-olive-chunks-1-5kg

Full recipe at: mikamado.es/en/recetas/provolone-a-la-brasa-kamado

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