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	COOK	SERVINGS	TEMPERATURE
10 min	12 min	4	230 °C

Ingredients

- **400 g** aged provolone in a wheel 1.5-2 cm thick (provoleta-style)
- **2 cdita** dried oregano (to scatter while hot)
- **1 pizca** 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 pizca** 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

Big Green Egg Large

The kamado is what makes this provoleta special: direct at 230°C the ceramic returns an intense radiant heat that browns the skillet base in minutes, while the closed lid melts the cheese centre by convection without it spreading out. The Large has just the room for the skillet and the bread toasting at once, and it stabilises the temperature without swinging, which is key in a recipe cooked in twelve minutes that won't forgive an unstable fire.

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

Smokey Olive Wood Olive Wood Chunks 1.5 kg

Olive-wood chunks are the ideal sweet wood for cheese: a mild, Mediterranean smoke, clean, that settles in the background without turning the dairy bitter. This provoleta only needs two small chunks at the end of the cook, so a 1.5 kg bag lasts for countless starters. It's the Costa Blanca touch that turns a griddle provoleta into a kamado one, with an olive aroma no kitchen oven can replicate.

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

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TODOBRASA Premium Marabú Charcoal 10 kg

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/todobrasa-marabu-premium-10kg

Petromax FP20 Cast Iron Skillet 20 cm with Handle

The 20 cm cast-iron skillet is the perfect mould for an individual provoleta: its thermal mass sears the base of the provolone on contact and forms the golden Maillard crust that holds the wheel together. Preheated empty at 230°C, it browns from below while the kamado's heat melts from above, and its long handle lets you carry it from fire to table without transferring the cheese, eaten freshly melted in the skillet itself.

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

Lodge L8SK3: pre-seasoned cast iron skillet, 26 cm

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/lodge-sarten-hierro-fundido-26cm

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

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