

Sofrito

By Von Diaz

YIELD About 2 1/4 cups

TIME 5 minutes

Sofrito — a blend of garlic, onions, peppers and recao (culantro) — is the backbone of Puerto Rican flavor. Also referred to as recaito, it's typically sautéed in oil as the foundation for sauces, braises, beans, stews and rice dishes. It's also adaptable, and can yield a lighter, more verdant flavor if sautéed for 2 to 3 minutes, and a richer flavor if sautéed for 7 to 10 minutes and combined with tomato sauce. This recipe yields about 3 cups, which is probably more than you'll use for any recipe, but it keeps well. My grandmother often kept sofrito in the freezer stored in a repurposed plastic margarine container, or frozen into cubes and saved in plastic zip-top bags. If kept in the refrigerator, it's best if used within a week, but can be frozen for up to six months. You can also put it into a pan with hot oil straight from the freezer, though it may sputter a smidge.

INGREDIENTS

1 medium red bell pepper, seeded and cut into quarters

3 ají dulce or amarillo peppers (or mini bell peppers), seeded and coarsely chopped (see Notes)

6 large garlic cloves

1 large yellow onion, coarsely chopped

6 fresh culantro leaves and tender stems, coarsely chopped (see Notes)

6 fresh cilantro stems, coarsely chopped

PREPARATION

Step 1

In a large food processor or blender, blend the peppers and garlic until smooth.

Step 2

Add the onion and blend until smooth, then add the culantro and cilantro, and blend until smooth. The sofrito will keep covered in the fridge for up to 1 week, or in the freezer for up to 3 months.

Tips

If you can't find ají dulce or amarillo peppers, it's OK to use more red, orange or yellow bell pepper.

Culantro, also called sawtooth herb or wild coriander, has long leaves with jagged edges and a stronger, earthier flavor than cilantro. You can find it in the produce section of most Latino markets, as well as many Asian markets.

PRIVATE NOTES

Leave a Private Note on this recipe and see it here.