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Spanish Garlic Shrimp Recipe (Gambas al Ajillo) - Spain's Favorite Tapas



If you love Spanish food, then you have to try **Gambas al Ajillo**, also known as **Spanish Garlic Shrimp**. This dish is one of Spain's most favorite tapas, and for a good reason. It's packed with deliciousness, infused with smoky chili, and cooked in a luscious garlic butter sauce. It's quick, easy, and incredibly flavorful!

We first discovered **Gambas al Ajillo** at **Cúrate**, a well-known Spanish tapas restaurant in Asheville, NC. The moment we took our first bite, we knew we had to recreate it at home. Their version featured succulent shrimp, sizzling in a rich garlic-infused buttery sauce with a touch of sherry, a hint of spice from chilies, and finished with fresh parsley. It was simply perfection!

Now, we're sharing our gambas al ajillo recipe (**Cúrate-inspired**) so you can enjoy this Spanish classic in your own kitchen. It is one of the best and the easiest Spanish Garlic Shrimp you'll make!



Gambas al Ajillo (pronounced GAHM-bahs ahl ah-HEE-yoh), also known as Camarones al Ajillo, is a beloved Spanish tapas dish. The name translates to “garlic shrimp,” and it truly delivers on that promise! Juicy shrimp are cooked in a rich, garlicky buttery sauce, infused with chili and sherry, making every bite incredibly flavorful. This dish is best enjoyed with a crusty loaf of bread to soak up the delicious sauce!

The names “gambas” and “camarones” are often used interchangeably, with gambas referring to prawns and camarones meaning shrimp. However, since shrimp are more widely available, they are commonly used in this dish. Regardless of which you choose, the result is always mouthwatering!

Why You’ll Love This Spanish Garlic Shrimp Recipe

- **Authentic Spanish flavors** - Just like the ones you’d get in Spain!
- **Quick & easy** - Ready in under 20 minutes, making it perfect for a fast meal or appetizer.
- **Perfect for tapas night** - Serve with crusty bread and enjoy with wine or sherry.

How to make Authentic Spanish Garlic Shrimp - Spain's Favorite Tapas at Home:

Ingredients (Serves 2-4)

- **1 lb large shrimp** (fresh or frozen, peeled, and deveined)
- **Kosher salt & black pepper**, to taste
- **½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **4 tbsp butter**
- **10 garlic cloves** (4 chopped or lightly crushed, 6 thinly sliced)
- **1 guajillo chili**, chopped (adjust for spice level)
- **2 whole dried red chilies** (such as dried arbol chilies)
- **2 tbsp dry sherry** (or dry white wine)
- **Juice of ½ lemon**
- 1 Bay Leaf
- **½ cup fresh parsley**, chopped







Instructions:

1. **Prepare the Shrimp:** Thaw shrimp under cold water for ~10 minutes if using frozen. Pat dry with paper towels and season lightly with salt and black pepper.
2. Chopped and sliced garlic, parsley and guajillo chili.
3. **Infuse the Oil:** Heat butter in a large pan over medium-low heat. Once the butter melts, add olive oil.
4. Add the chopped garlic then sauté until fragrant and golden (about 2 minutes). Be careful not to burn the garlic.
5. **Add the Chilies:** Stir in the chopped guajillo chili, bay leaf and whole dried red chilies. Cook for another minute, allowing the flavors to infuse.
6. Then, add the sliced garlic and stir for an additional 30-60 seconds. Pour in the sherry and lemon juice, Increase heat to medium-high and cook until the liquid begins to thicken.
7. **Cook the Shrimp:** Add shrimp in a single layer. Let cook for 1-2 minutes, until pink on one side. Flip and cook for another minute.
8. Add parsley and simmer for about 30 seconds.
9. **Finish & Serve:** Remove from heat, Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.
10. **Enjoy Immediately:** Serve sizzling hot with crusty bread for dipping into the flavorful sauce.





Pro Tips for the Best Gambas al Ajillo:

This **Spanish-style garlic shrimp** comes together in just 15 to 20 minutes and revolves around two key components: tender shrimp and a deeply flavorful sauce.

- Should You Peel the Shrimp?

I usually go for **peeled and deveined shrimp**—they're easier to eat and let you soak up every drop of the garlicky sauce without any waste. That said, in some places like Barcelona, it's common to serve shrimp with the shell on for extra flavor and texture. It's totally your call!

- Don't Overcook the Shrimp

Shrimp cook quickly, even the larger ones. As soon as they turn pink and opaque, they're ready. Keep in mind they'll continue to cook slightly in the hot sauce, even after you take them off the heat. Overcooking can make them tough and rubbery, so avoid overcooking to keep them tender and juicy.

- It's All About the Sauce

The sauce is really the heart of this dish—bold, garlicky, a little spicy, and rich in the best way. Start with **fresh garlic** (at least 10 good-sized cloves!), and skip the garlic press. Pressed garlic can be too intense and is more likely to burn. A good, fine chop with your knife gives better texture and control. When cooking the garlic, keep the heat at medium and watch carefully—it should turn lightly golden, not brown. Burnt garlic will make the whole sauce taste bitter, so timing and temperature matter.

- Adjust the spice

If you like it milder, reduce the chilies or remove their seeds.

- Good quality olive oil is key

Since this dish is oil-based, use a high-quality extra-virgin olive oil.

- Pair with Spanish wine

A glass of fino sherry or albariño white wine complements this dish perfectly.

What to Serve with Gambas al Ajillo

- **Crusty bread** - To soak up the garlicky, spicy sauce.
- **Patatas Bravas** - Classic Spanish crispy potatoes with spicy tomato sauce.
- **Pan con Tomate** - Toasted bread rubbed with tomato and olive oil.
- **Spanish Rice** - A simple side to make it a full meal.

Storage & Reheating

While best enjoyed fresh, you can store leftovers in an airtight container for up to **2 days**. To reheat, warm gently in a pan over low heat—avoid microwaving, as shrimp can become rubbery.

WATCH THE VIDEO HOW TO MAKE THIS GARLIC SHRIM RECIPE:

About Us



Hello and Welcome to our FOOD BLOGGING, TRAVEL AND COOKING site. We are family of 4 who love to cook, travel and eat spicy foods! My name is Erwina (Er-wee-na), originally from Indonesia-Asia, husband is from England and we recently moved to America. I grew up with spicy/Indonesian food, and I want my boys to have spice tolerance. On this site we will be sharing our experience with EXOTIC FOODS, and you will see a lot of spicy foods including recipes for delicious street foods, take out & restaurant style foods that you can easily make at home, from Asian cuisines (Indonesian, Thai, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese) to Western cuisine (American and British Foods). Welcome to our site - we're sure you'll find something delicious to make! Erwina is also A REALTOR in North Carolina, USA. Follow her: INSTAGRAM: @ErwinaAndTheboys Or @RealCoastalLife XOXO BEAN (Benoa, Erwina, Arthur, Nigel)

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