

Michelle's Recipe Notes & More

Cooking tips for Tortilla Española / Tortilla de Patates

I've included the recipe I first found in the early 2000s. It came from the January 2000 Gourmet Magazine and can be found on Epicurious.com:

<https://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/tortilla-espanola-102944>.

I tried to be faithful to the original recipe, but over the years I've made some shortcuts:

1. A cup of oil is usually more than enough and I often use less, but that is a good starting point so that you are not wasting so much oil when you drain the cooked potatoes and onions.
2. To save time, I often cut both the onions and the potatoes with a hand held mandolin. Use the hand guard if you value your fingertips.
3. I have never been able to get that classic, rounded look on both the top and bottom and so gave up on flipping the tortilla onto a plate and sliding it back into the pan uncooked side down to cook the top. If you have a broiler, there's no use risking half your tortilla landing on the floor. Once the bottom is set and not sticking to the pan, just stick the entire tortilla under a broiler until the eggs are firm and golden (watch it--it doesn't take more than a minute). Then, you only have to turn the tortilla onto a plate, once, to serve it.

On the Beginnings of this Dish

There are different origin stories about this dish but this one is my favorite. It is said that the Tortilla Espanola or tortilla de patates was a dish born of necessity. Legend has it that a general made an impromptu visit to a humble household in Navarre during the First Carlist war and the lady of the house was hard-pressed to find something to feed the great man. I'm sure the irony of having to feed someone whose army was probably eating up the entire countryside like a plague of locusts was not lost on her. She came up with a simple dish made of potatoes, onions and eggs. Oil and salt elevate these simple ingredients into a dish that you can eat three meals a day—which is often the case in my household, and I've read it is common in Spanish homes to have it out all day as a snack.

Being of Basque, Andalusian, and Southern Italian descent, I was more familiar growing up with the Italian frittata—a tortilla or omelet by another name. Something was clearly lost at Ellis Island by my Spanish grandparents, but this dish was comfortingly familiar at every Spanish restaurant and Tapas bar that I ever walked into and something I began to make when trying to get my young daughter to eat eggs and onions. To this day, it is the only dish in which she eagerly eats both ingredients together. In fact, I bribed her into filming this video by promising she could eat the result.

More about the origin of the dish can be found [here](#).

Book Resources

Enjoy this recipe and experiment with others. Jeff Koehler's cookbook, [Spain](#), has a variation on this recipe and others made with artichokes and eggs (tortilla de alcachoefas) and a salt cod tortilla called Tortilla de Bacalao that are next on my list.

Happy Eating!

Michelle from the Mission Valley Branch Library