

AJO BLANCO WITH SLOW-ROASTED GRAPES AND EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

Ajo blanco is a white version of the Spanish gazpacho. If a smoother soup is desired, soak the blanched almonds in milk before blending; the texture will be smoother and richer.

Yield: 24 portions

Ingredients	Amounts
Almonds, blanched and peeled	¾ cup
Baguette slices, stale	4 ea.
Garlic cloves, crushed	3 ea.
Water	3 cups
Extra virgin olive oil	6 Tbsp.
Sherry vinegar	2 Tbsp.
Kosher salt	½ tsp.
Green grape bunch	½ lb.
Sea salt and cayenne pepper	to taste
Red grapes for garnish, sliced	

Method

1. *To make the soup:* Put the bread in a bowl and add 1 cup of the water to cover. Let soak for 5 minutes until softened.
2. Meanwhile, place the almonds and garlic in a blender and pulse until almonds are finely ground.
3. Squeeze out the water from the bread and add to the blender; pulse a few times. Add the bread and blend to a smooth paste. Add enough of the remaining 2 cups of water to make a nice smooth texture for the chilled soup.
4. With the motor running, add the olive oil in a slow stream, then the vinegar and salt.
5. Thin the ingredients with ½ cup of water to the desired consistency. Chill until serving time.
6. *For the roasted grapes:* Preheat the oven to 325°F. Toss the grape bunch with enough extra virgin olive oil to coat, season with sea salt and pepper, and roast on a baking sheet for 30 to 40 minutes, or until the grapes are just starting to pop and are releasing their juices; remove and discard the stems and cool. Place the roasted grapes into a mixing bowl and add the juices from the roasting pan; toss to combine.
7. Stir before serving into bowls. Garnish with roasted grapes, slice red grapes, and drizzles of extra virgin olive oil.