SHEET 1 OF 2 • FRIDGE REFERENCE CHART

Master Thermal Chart: USDA Safety Floor vs. Chef Culinary Texture

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Why separate safety from culinary texture? USDA minimums guarantee instant pasteurization, but collagen-rich cuts (Ropa Vieja, Carnitas, Roast Pork) are safe at 145 °F yet chewy until 200–203 °F—while Cuban Flan curdles with sponge-like holes if pushed past 180 °F.

PROTEIN / DISH	USDA SAFETY MINIMUM	CHEF TEXTURE TARGET	SIGNATURE GUIDES
Chicken / Turkey Breast	165 °F (74 °C) instant	**158–160 °F pull + 5m rest (carryover to 165 °F)**	Arroz con Pollo, Peruvian Chicken
Dark Meat Poultry (Thighs/Legs)	165 °F (74 °C) minimum	**175–185 °F (collagen melts into velvet)**	Chicken Tinga, Teriyaki, Braises
Whole Beef Steaks & Roasts	145 °F (63 °C) + 3m rest	**130–135 °F Medium-Rare (reverse sear)**	Garlic Butter Ribeye Steak
Braising Beef (Flank / Chuck / Brisket)	145 °F (63 °C) safety floor	**200–203 °F (effortless fork-tender shred)**	Cuban Ropa Vieja, Vaca Frita, Birria
Pork Shoulder / Butt (Pernil / Carnitas)	145 °F (63 °C) + 3m rest	**198–203 °F (silky rendered gelatin)**	Cuban Roast Pork, Crispy Carnitas
Ground Beef & Pork	160 °F (71 °C) mandatory	**160 °F with hard cast-iron Maillard crust**	Smash Burgers, Meatballs, Picadillo
Fish Fillets & Shrimp	145 °F (63 °C) opaque center	**125–130 °F Salmon / 135 °F snappy Shrimp**	Baked Lemon Salmon, Gambas al Ajillo
Baked Custards & Cuban Flan	160 °F (71 °C) egg base	**175–178 °F (pore-free velvet; boils at 212 °F)**	Cuban Flan, Salted Caramel Custard
Twice-Fried Plantains & Potatoes	Keep below oil smoke point	**1st fry: 325 °F (160 °C) • 2nd: 375 °F (190 °C)**	Cuban Tostones, Crispy French Fries
Artisan Bread & Enriched Doughs	Full starch gelatinization	**205–210 °F crusty loaf / 190 °F enriched**	Sourdough Loaf, Japanese Milk Bread

SHEET 2 OF 2 • INDEPENDENT GROCERY CHEAT SHEET (ZERO PAID PLACEMENTS)

What to Buy in US Supermarkets (Walmart, Publix, Kroger, H-E-B)

12 PANTRY PICKS

100% Independent Picks: Zero paid placements. Every brand below is selected strictly for authentic starch grind, acidity, or milk-solid ratio in standard US grocery aisles.

KEY INGREDIENT	RECOMMENDED BRAND & SIZE	US STORE AISLE	RELIABLE SUBSTITUTE
Sweetened Condensed & Evaporated Milk	**Nestlé La Lechera (14 oz) / Carnation (12 oz)**	📍 **Baking Aisle or Hispanic Foods**	Goya Sweetened Condensed Milk
Cuban Bitter Orange (Naranja Agria)	**Badia or Goya Bitter Orange Marinade (20 fl oz)**	📍 **Hispanic Aisle (Marinades)**	2 parts orange juice + 1 part lime + 1 part lemon
Cuban Dry Cooking Wine (Vino Seco)	**Goya Golden Cooking Wine (25.4 fl oz)**	📍 **Hispanic Aisle / Vinegars**	Dry Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio (unsaulted)
Annatto & Cilantro Color Base	**Goya Sazón con Culantro y Achiote Packets**	📍 **Hispanic Spices Aisle**	Ground annatto (achiote) + pinch ground coriander
Pre-Cooked Arepa Cornmeal	**P.A.N. White Pre-Cooked Corn Meal (2 lb bag)**	📍 **Hispanic / Latin Flour Aisle**	Goya Masarepa (never substitute Maseca nixtamal)
Nixtamal Masa Flour (Tamales)	**Maseca Tamal Coarse Masa Harina (4 lb bag)**	📍 **Hispanic / Baking Flour Aisle**	Fresh unprepared masa from local Mexican market
Dried Mexican Chiles (Guajillo/Ancho)	**El Guapo, Badia, or Fiesta Whole Dried Chiles**	📍 **Hispanic Spice Wall (Cellophane bags)**	Choose pliable leathery pods, never brittle
White Hominy for Authentic Pozole	**Juanita's Mexican Style Hominy (29 oz / 105 oz)**	📍 **Hispanic Canned Goods**	Goya White Hominy (rinse well before simmering)
Dry Black Beans (Velvety Cuban Pot)	**Goya or Iberia Dry Black Beans (1–2 lb bag)**	📍 **Dry Beans & Rice Aisle**	Goya Canned Black Beans (keep starchy pot liquor)
Spanish Paella Short-Grain Rice	**Matiz Valenciano Bomba/Bahía Paella Rice**	📍 **International Rice Aisle**	Goya Medium Grain (avoid long-grain or parboiled)
Peruvian Yellow Pepper Paste	**Inca's Food Ají Amarillo Paste (7.5 oz jar)**	📍 **Latin / International Aisle**	Goya Ají Amarillo Paste
Authentic Mexican Melting Cheese	**Cacique Oaxaca or V&V Supremo Chihuahua**	📍 **Refrigerated Dairy / Hispanic Cheese**	Whole-milk Low-Moisture Mozzarella block