

Juanita Cruz – The Perfect Date Destination (ditch the movie and just do dinner!)

For someone who spends pretty much every waking (non-working hour) flitting back and forth between Chueca and Malasaña, I disappointingly don't actually live in either barrio *luckily this is soon to be rectified and therefore watch out for a spike in Gin sales along Calle Espiritu Santo.

Therefore, it's always beyond exciting when I discover, or in this case I'm introduced to, a little gem in my barrio which is way up North in the Castellana neck of the woods. I've sampled brunch at my local, Pipa & Co on more than one occasion and it's never failed to please but I'd never noticed what lurked below; [Juanita Cruz](#). Discreetly hidden under a little arch is a bar/restaurant which can only be described as feeling half like a speakeasy and half like the kind of refurbished warehouse bar, that most of East London is made of. On entrance I basically wondered why I'd never been there before upon spying a place that is right up my street in terms of décor and drinks.



The night that I first went was perfect in terms of both company and the cosy vibe that was largely created by the amazing singer who was warming up her vocal chords quite happily in the corner. Turned out we'd stumbled across an open mic night, which completed the laid back and low key atmosphere perfectly. Cocooned on the kind of battered old sofa that I wouldn't mind for my new flat, it was the perfect place to while away a few weeknight hours (although I've also been told that it gets pretty lively come the weekends when the Spaniards really let their hair down, obvs).

The food menu is definitely worth more than a glance with treats that won't break the bank but they may have you booking in a spinning class the following day; provolone, carpaccio and the like were all delish.



It's a clandestine feeling gaff with echoes of post-civil war Spain (according to the blurb on their website) but what I do know is that they sell [G'Vine](#), they played good tunes and as far as a **first date venue** goes, it wasn't too shabby for me.

Save pennies for a cab, take a trip up North. Oh and pack your dancing shoes, come Friday and Saturday it's time to show off your moves.

Info

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Paseo de la Habana, 105

Phone: 914 51 17 76

Metro: Cuzco & Colombia

Photos from Facebook

Also check out:

[Gin O'clock – Time for Madrid's finest G&T's](#)

[El Patio del Fisgón – Feel like You're in Narnia](#)

[1862 Dry Bar – Perfection Served in a Glass](#)

[Best Date Ideas in Madrid – 3-part series](#)

El Patio De Fisgon – Feel like you've discovered Narnia

My blog posts would imply that I pretty much do nothing but eat in Madrid but I assure you that's not the case. Also ranking high on my to-do's are drinking, tanning, exercising (this is a new found passion that's surprised me more than most) and just general all round gallivanting... But it has to be said that going out for dins is one of my very favourite pastimes and I never need much encourage to ditch home cooking in favour of being waited on. To this end, I am constantly on the prowl for somewhere that will satiate my appetite and not break the bank.

This leads me onto my current fave, [El Patio De Fisgon](#). Not an obvious choice for lovers of Malasaña/Chueca as it tucked away on a swanky side street just off of Calle Ortega y Gasset (but it's most definitely worth the 5 or so euros in a cab) to find yourself in what felt like something out of The Secret Garden. *All twinkly lights, scented candles and the like – you can

picture the scene.



The quest for somewhere simple yet swanky came about upon realising that I was hostessing three rather glam PR gals for the weekend, whose tastes are definitely more Balthazar than Burger King. Suffice to say El Patio impressed on all counts. Gorgeous food (and hefty portions), attentive staff (but not claustrophobic-ally so), wine in abundance (and cheap at that) ensured that my crown as a Madrid aficionado remained intact. We ate, drank and were merry for the grand total of 70 euros; coming from London where a soggy sarnie can set you back a fiver this was beyond bargainous. Post dinner drinks followed

at the similarly gorgeous Punk Back which is sadly not quite as purse friendly – but equally swish. We're not talking the need to remortgage a casa for a copa but it's definitely at the higher end of the scale price for Madrid. Saying that, if you like to sip your gins surrounded by the beautiful people then it's worth letting your wallet take a hit.





El Patio wise, I recommend requesting a table out on the terrazza to fully enjoy the 'see and be seen vibe' and let's face it, we all look that little bit better when illuminated by the soft focus glow of a fairy light. So what's been one of my best kept secrets looks set to be no more. I suggest you book a table and for the record, the rollitos artesanos de pato are worth every gluttonous cal.

Slight disclaimer alert Having recently gone back for a second visit, I have to red flag that the 8.30pm dinner sitting results in your being kicked off your table (rather

unceremoniously) by 10pm so defo book a later dins if you can...

Info

[Facebook](#)

Address: *Calle de Don Ramón de la Cruz, 26, 28006 Madrid*

Phone: 915 77 63 74

Maria's: Sensational Sweets on Calle Zurbano

I heard from a few friends that a [recent New York Times article](#) had rated **Calle Zurbano** one of the writers' "favorite streets in Europe." I remembered Zurbano; I had stayed in a hotel on the north side as my introduction to both Madrid and my teaching program. While the people I met and the things I learned on Zurbano were of the highest quality, the street itself did not surprise or amaze me eight months ago. Nevertheless, my friend and I committed to revisiting Zurbano and seeing if anything inspired us. We stumbled upon inspiration. Hidden in the article's recommendations sits a tiny bakery hiding between ritzy hotels, bustling banks, and mainstream restaurants: **María's Bakery**.



The New York Times
Favourite Streets
in 12 European
Cities



Favourite Streets
in 12 European
Cities

by
Celia Zorbas
The New York Times
Favourite Streets
in 12 European
Cities

The New York Times
Favourite Streets
in 12 European
Cities



The New York Times
Favourite Streets
in 12 European
Cities

Maria's
Desayunos
2³⁰ Café
con leche
3³⁰ Café
plancha
3³⁰ Café
3³⁰ Café

María's looks like it crashed onto **Calle Zurbano** straight out of your Pinterest news feed. The place oozes chic hipness—grey wood panels lead to off-white walls, chalkboard paint menus, reclaimed benches with homemade cushions, and wooden card tables covered in doilies and faux-70s tablecloths. Like your Staten Island grandmother got a hold of a Paula Dean magazine.



The bakery's eponymous María is apparently famous around these parts. **Locals pop into her ten square meters of space just to say hi**, read her newspapers, drink her coffee, and grab a baguette or a pastry to-go. Even the other staff know visitors by name, asking about babies or job lay-offs or who won the Real-Juventus match.

And, of course, there's the food. María and company arise before the sun to proof, knead, and bake the day's glutinous goods. *Pistolas*, *artisanas*, croissants, cookies – all things line María's stuffed shelves. **The cake selection includes dozens of decadent decisions:** "Muerte por chocolate," "mousse

de Bailey's," "tarta de queso con salsa de mora," even the oft-elusive "red velvet."



Maria's Bakery in Zurbano

As you get a high from the smell of bubbling yeast and caramelizing sugars, take a look at **María's eclectic selection of international sweets**, like *bonbones*, *alfajores*, tarts, *pasteles de Belén*, *dulces de leche*, macarons, and much more.

However, a proper critic has to judge any bakery by the Spanish classic: *pan con aceite*, with a coffee. Luckily, María's does not disappoint, masterfully toasting its 8-cereal brown bread, complimenting its nutty savoriness with peppery Andalusia olive oil and ground rock salt. Washed down with frothy milk and brewed beans, it makes for a **great breakfast deal around €2**.



Stick around long enough and you'll get to try some of **María's** newest experiments. While we crunched and munched our *pan*, we also were brought small plates of other samples, new treats that the bakery's working on right now. This season, María's is toying with **nut and oat hard crackers**, thin biscotti to market as "light" for snacking clients. To go with the recent holiday, we also tried María's ***rosquillas de San Isidro***, the *listas* covered in orange and lemon glaze, the *tontas* smacking of anis and cloves.



As we got *napolitanas* and *medias lunas* filled with *dulce de leche* to go, Erika told us from behind the cash register that we weren't the first Americans to visit; the **New York Time's** "favorite streets in Europe" gave the bakery a steady drop of international attention. Since then, Anglos amble around Zurbano, waltzing into María's and placing their orders with a combination of gestures, grunts, and broken English. While we laughed, I taught the staff how to say "home made," hoping it would help guide our more linguistically ignorant compatriots.

If you're walking down Zurbano and trying to see what all the fuss is about, give María's a try. It's small, it's strange, it's out of place – and it's adorable.

Info

Web

Facebook

Address: Calle Zurbano, 15

Metro: Alonso Martínez

Phone: 91 702 63 02

Also check out:

Mama Campo – a restaurant/market of organic delights in Plaza Olavide

Harina – for something sweet or savoury

Pan Comido – a French bakery where our bread will most certainly be eaten all up

4 Coziest Cafes in Chamberí

Maya, a cozy Taqueria & Mexican product store in Huertas

[Maya](#) is a new Mexican establishment, situated on C/Echegaray in Huertas. The owner & chef, Jose Manuel, hails from Mexico City. Jose previously worked in [the hidden burrito shop in Lavapies](#), notably wearing a customized chef's hat. We met during his tenure there and became fast friends due to his approachable nature. After having not seen him in several months, I was taking a stroll through Huertas with a friend and we both noticed a Taqueria. She and I pondered whether it was new or had always been there. Jose surfaced and summoned us to the bar, inviting us to a drink in order to catch up and show us his new business endeavor. Jose's grand ambition is to make **quality Mexican products** more accessible to consumers in Madrid.







Knowing that Americans are always on the prowl for new places to satisfy their taco cravings, I took it upon myself to do my community a service and sample a handful of Jose's creations in order to share my findings.

First I sampled the *taco de pastor*, cilantro and onion with green lime.



The second specimen was *Cochinita de Pibil* with achiote.



The last taco was *Fajitas Alambre de ternera*



All of these treats were followed by a Tamale served on a plantain leaf.



They were all yummy, my favorite being the *taco de pastor*. I found everything about the establishment quite familiar. Their regular, a pipe-smoking elderly writer, took pride in presenting me with a poetry anthology that had his face on the back cover. This location is young, and thus the experience is quite personalized. For those of you who are seeking a venue for your taco Tuesdays, or a place to find unique Mexican ingredients to be used in your culinary endeavors at home, I strongly recommend this establishment.

Info

[Facebook](#)

Where: Calle Echegaray 29

Metro: Anton Martin

Contact: 600 68 73 51

Also check out:

Best Mexican Joints in Madrid

Perdizione – a hidden hole-in-the-wall burrito bar in Lavapiés

Festival of San Isidro: All You Need to Know

What is the Festival of San Isidro?

San Isidro is a citywide festival, pure and simple, but unlike San Fermín in Pamplona or Las Fallas in Valencia, it isn't really a great source of local pride or identity for the city of Madrid. Many residents take advantage of the three-day weekend to travel elsewhere—often back to their hometowns—or to get a bit of Spring cleaning done in the spare time off work. This should come as little surprise. Madrid is the great Spanish melting pot, a cultural and economic center that pulls people in from across the country but never fully instills in them the type of local identity that underpins the more famous Spanish festivals.

If anything, Gay Pride is the better candidate for Madrid's primary festival. It certainly draws more visitors and press

to the capital, and seems to adequately reflect the anarchic, welcoming nature of the city—one that shrugs off regional Spanish identity to embrace anyone who's down to party.

But San Isidro does have its supporters. They're mostly residents with deep family roots in Madrid, proud Madrileños who dress up in traditional garb to eat the classic food and dance the chotis in parties scattered throughout the central barrios. The festival has some of the cultural posturing of the “castecismo madrileño,” the Madrid castizo identity that's proudly Spanish, built on the rejection of the bourgeois French affectations of the elite, and the feeling still stands.

I have a special affinity for San Isidro myself, partly because of the contradictions in it—a festival that both represents the soul of Madrid and couldn't be further from it. The strong passion and utter indifference toward the holiday reflect the multiple layers of Madrid's identity, at once a city and a collection of barrios, provincially Spanish and globally connected.

Or maybe we all just like beers in the park.

Great. Who the hell is San Isidro?

Good question. Legend has it that one day, in the Moorish town of *Mayrit* (present-day Madrid), a day laborer named Isidro was ploughing his lord's field when he miraculously caused a spring to gush forth from the earth, like a teenager hitting a sprinkler head with the lawnmower.

In another instance, Isidro saved his son from a deep well by praying to raise the water level, thus bringing the child floating back to the top.

These are several of his many miracles that would end up

lifting this humble and devout Madrileño to prominence and eventual sainthood—a move spearheaded by the Spanish monarchs who had a particular interest in the miracle worker. King Phillip II himself was supposedly cured of a grave ailment by drinking the water that flowed from a spring that San Isidro found. San Isidro's most famous miracles took place in Madrid and had to do with water, making this diviner, well-digger, and rainmaker the patron saint of both Spanish farmers and the city of Madrid.



San Isidro doing his thing.

Today, in what we now know as the Pradera de San Isidro (a park in the Carabanchel neighborhood south of the center-metro Marqués de Vadillo) his miraculous springs still flow. A hermitage dedicated to the saint was erected in the area during the 14th century, then rebuilt in 1725 near one of Isidro's famed springs, and believers still pay their respects and collect the healing water during the May festival thrown in his honor.

Uh-huh. So how should we celebrate it?

While the festival historically takes place in the Pradera de San Isidro (a meadow in Carabanchel), it has since spread throughout the entire city. Activities sputter to a start during the week but officially kick off with the commencement speech (pregón) on Friday at 8pm in the Plaza de la Villa, attended by city officials and an invited celebrity—2016's is the musician Santiago Auserón, a staple of the Movida Madrileña. The celebrations will last until Monday evening.

Top 10 things to do (2016):

1. Grab a guide and find what you like: [The official San Isidro guide](#) is the one true resource, praise be upon it.

2. Go to a free open-air concert: *(Everywhere throughout the long weekend)* There are many free open-air concerts throughout Madrid during San Isidro, including in the Plaza Mayor, Las Vistillas and Plaza de la Villa. On several nights at 9pm, for example, live classical music is played next to Templo De Dubod as the sun goes down. It's worth seeing. Again, [the official guide](#) is your best source here.

3. Have yourself a class picnic in the Pradera *(Sunday 15th is the big day – Pradera de San Isidro, though there are also events on Saturday and Monday)* This is the most emblematic part of the festival. In fact, the picnicking tradition here has purportedly been around since the 1600s, and by the time Goya used it as the subject of some paintings in the late 1700s the tradition was already widely referenced. The pradera area has many stands with food and drink of all sorts, so you can bring your own or buy food down there. It's an all-around good time.



Picnicking in the Pradera. I took this with a scratched-up iPhone 3GS!

Warning: last year there were about 12 toilets stationed for the thousands of people at the Pradera, so be prepared to do the festival's traditional holding-it-in dance.

4. Party on the street "Paseo de 15 de Mayo" (Primarily Sunday, the 15th, to a lesser extent Saturday and Monday / next to metro stop Marqués de Vadillo) The San Isidro Festival has a very prominent "barrio" feel to it, and the neighborhood next to the Pradera de San Isidro (Marqués de Vadillo Metro) reigns supreme. They even named the major

street that cuts through it after the date of the celebration, May 15th. Go here to drink wine and beer from the bars that set up stands along the street, then head onward to the Pradera for your picnic.

5. Check out the tacky/amazing carnival (Saturday, Sunday, Monday / Pradera de San Isidro): Like all carnivals, it has rides of questionable safety and hordes of roaming teenagers, but it's a good time nonetheless. Last year I enjoyed playing the childhood favorite, "shoot the single-serving alcohol bottle off a shelf with a cork gun." There's also a ferris wheel that offers a good view of the city.



Everyone's favorite childhood fair game, "shoot the

single-shot liquor bottles with a cork gun!" This was San Isidro a few years back. I won!

6. Party in Las Vistillas (*Friday, Sat, Sunday, Monday near Puerta de Toledo, Jardin de Las Vistillas*) This little park in La Latina plays annual host to another of the city's "verbenas" (local parties), together with the Plaza Mayor and the Plaza de La Villa. The scenic gardens fill up with food stands, music, and people dancing the chotis. It's usually one of the first things that comes to locals' minds if you ask them about the holiday. (For acts taking place here, check the guide).

7. Drink Wine Under Fireworks/ Music in Retiro (*Saturday and Sunday, 8:30pm/dusk*): Bring a bottle of wine and a blanket, lay back and enjoy.



Fireworks in Retiro, a photo I stole from the internet because cell camera is incapable of this.

8. Check out the bullfights: (*Afternoons in Las Ventas*) San Isidro is traditionally the beginning of bullfighting season in Madrid, and it's actually the biggest bullfighting festival in the world. There are 24 afternoons of bullfights, including one specific day in which they all don Goyesco costumes, an event reasonably called La corrida goyesca. You can [find schedules online and tickets](#) for as low as 8 euros to some events. Others are quite popular and pricy, so get on those tickets ASAP if you're into the bloodsport.

9. Watch the little Parade of Big-heads and Giants (*Friday 13th at 6pm –Route: Plaza de Santo Domingo – Plaza de Callao – Puerta del Sol – Mercado de San Miguel – Plaza de la Villa*): This strange little parade has origins in the 16th century but was rediscovered in the 1800s—it marches larger-than-life figures down the main streets of the center of Madrid. The giants are four pairs of monarchs who represent Europe, Asia, Africa and America. (Author's note: I've never actually been to this, but it looks moderately interesting, very grammable.)



the parade (source: www.madrid.es)

10. Hit Up the Castizo Swing Festival in the Matadero (Saturday, May 14th, all day, The Matadero) The endlessly hip Matadero can do no wrong. There will be dancing, singing and general rabble-rousing throughout the day and into the night on Friday, with live musical acts. [Check their website](#) for more details about the event.

10.1. Stroll by the Feria de Cacharrerías (Sunday Afternoon, Plaza Comendadoras in Conde Duque / Malasaña) Go get yourself a nice clay pot or something. You deserve it. [Here's a good lowdown.](#)

Thanks for the tips! So what's typical of the festival?

Traditional Dance: El Chotis

The history of the chotis dance is surprisingly recent,

arriving to the Spanish capital only around 1850 from Vienna, but it's now considered a cultural hallmark of Madrid. You'll see people dancing it on stages or in groups, particularly in The Pradera, the Plaza Mayor, or in Las Vistillas park. The men traditionally don't move much at all, and it's said you can dance it on a single tile.

In terms of music, my person favorite chotis song, and perhaps the best known, is [Madrid! Madrid! Madrid!](#) I once saw an old man singing this passionately at a now-defunct karaoke bar off the Plaza Mayor. It was pure magic.

Traditional Clothing: *El Chulapo*

The spirit of Goya's Madrid is alive and well in San Isidro with some revelers dressing up like the 18th-century subjects of the famous Madrileño painter's artwork, in a style fittingly known as "*Goyesco*."

You've probably seen little children running around these days in their traditional chulapo/ chulapa outfits. Kids and adults alike dress up in this 19th-century outfit and go to the major festival grounds around the city. They're all adorable. If you're anyone, you might consider buying yourself the traditional *palpusa* hat. I certainly might.



Chulapos y Chulapas (source: www.barullo.com)

Traditional Food:

Rosquillas: Little doughnuts, sold mainly during the festival, usually made with olive oil and a slight anise flavor. There are different names for each type.

Las Listas: rosquillas with powdered sugar on top.

Las Tontas: rosquillas without powdered sugar on top.

Las de Santa Clara: rosquillas with glazed sugar on top.

Las Francesas: rosquillas with glazed sugar and almonds on top.



Traditional food is sold throughout the pradera. Here are some olives I spotted.

Fritura de gallinejas y entresijos: fried hen innards (A festival favorite of tons of people!)

Barquillos: little cylindrical wafers, similar to an ice cream cone. The seller, known as a barquillero, dresses up in a chulapo outfit and plays a type of roulette on something that looks like a portable oxygen tank. If you win, you get two barquillos!

Cocido Madrileño: the typical dish that comes out any time Madrid is feeling local pride.

Encurtidos: skewers of peppers, olives, cocktail onions, etc.

Vino en bota: a sac of wine. Like normal wine, but in a sack.

Clara con limón: Beer mixed with a carbonated lemon beverage.

Traditional Pilgrimage: Hermita de San Isidro

This isn't much of a "pilgrimage" considering it's right next to the Pradera where you'll be hanging out, but if you're of a religious inclination and fancy stumbling over to pay homage to Madrid's patron saint, be prepared to wait in an excruciatingly long line of mainly elderly Madrileños and devout Catholics at the Hermita de San Isidro. Bring a botijo to collect some of the healing water and memorize this traditional prayer to say when kissing the box containing his relics:

*"San Isidro hermoso,
patrón de Madrid,
que el agua del risco
hiciste salir"*



Hermita de San Isidro, the time of Goya and the time of Google Street View screenshots.

I want to whip out some interesting San Isidro facts while I sip a beer!

You do? Are you sure that's wise?

You can start by listing all the *rosquilla* varieties, that's fun. Make sure to not stop, even as people begin wandering away from you. You could also half-heartedly suggest a visit to the San Isidro museum, which occupies—in what seems to be a bit of a historical 6-degrees-from-Kevin-Bacon—a 17th-century house built on the spot of an even older house that once pertained to the Vargas family, who were the lords of the miraculous day-laborer.

If anyone accepts your offer to go, feign appendicitis and stumble away.

I need even more fun facts, I plan on partying the whole day!

Alright, settle down.

- The actual remains of San Isidro are kept in a prominent position behind the alter in the Almudena Cathedral, just in front of the Royal Palace in Madrid.

"Cool!"

- One of San Isidro's miracles involves feeding pigeons from a bag of grain that miraculously replenished itself.

"Say whaaaa?"

- One of his miracles was getting an angel to plow the field for him while he just sat around praying.

"Clever!"

His wife is known as Maria La Cabeza (the head) because her head was kept as a relic after her death, paraded around by believers to bring rain to the dry countryside.

"Quaint!"

- Someone in Queen Isabel's court bit off one of his mummified toes in a religious fervor.

"Understandable!"

- Francisco Goya has painted several wildly different takes on the San Isidro pilgrimage and festival, including one in the grotesque style of his "Black Paintings" collection.

"Educational!"



See? Look how much fun they're having!

- The "Puente de Toledo" bridge (also known as the "Puente de Praga" due to its resemblance to the Charles bridge in Prague) has a statue of San Isidro performing the miracle of saving

his son from the well. His son later died of other, non well-related causes.

“huh.”

That church visible from the Plaza Mayor as you walk down toward La Latina is called San Isidro church.



San Isidro church

“How about we talk about something–”

“Rosquillas” is how they translate “donuts” in the Castilian version of the Simpsons, and, Dunkin’ Donuts is known as Dunkin’ Coffee in Spain, all because “Donut” was already a registered trademark in the country.

“Listen, I gotta go...”

I want some key vocabulary.

Verbena: a festival for a patron saint, usually with traditional dress and dancing. *"This verbena rocks!"*

Romería: a Catholic festival based on a pilgrimage to a hermitage or sanctuary. *"This Romeria rocks!"*

Botijo: clay jug-like thing to collect water from the sacred springs. *"Whoa, sick botijo. Botijos rock!"*

Chulapo/a: the name of both the people and the traditional costumes for San Isidro. *"Hey, those chulapos rock!"*

Chotis: The traditional dance. *"Chotis rocks!"*

Goyesco: Goya-esque. *"This all feels very goyesco, which rocks!"*

Rosquillas (la tonta, la lista, etc...): typical doughnuts. *"These rosquillas are fine, I guess."*

Bota de vino: a wine recipient. *"I shouldn't have drunk that rockin' bota de vino all by myself. How goyesco of me."*

Where to find it on a map – "Pradera de San Isidro"

<M> Marqués de Vadillo (line 5)

[googlemaps

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/embed?mid=zGCIXzIDPGqs.kBmVv5oWRpGg&w=640&h=480>]

Tuk Tuk – An Asian-Inspired Street Food Restaurant in Madrid

Opened by two British men, Alan and Rick, [Tuk Tuk](#) is a low-key restaurant with two locations near Bilbao and Chueca. All their dishes are based on Asian street food recipes, particularly from Bangkok, Hong Kong and Saigon. With an international wait staff (many of whom are native English speakers) and a range of flavor-packed dishes (plentiful and affordable to boot), it's no wonder why [Tuk Tuk](#) has become so popular among the city's expat community and Madrileños alike.



Tuk Tuk's [menu](#) features noodles, rice bowls, soups, curries and barbecued meat platters. Chock full of different types of vegetables and spices, your tastebuds get a mix of tangy, spicy, coconuty and sweet ingredients in every bite. Tuk Tuk can please any palate. And it's vegetarian friendly, too.

You'll find my favorite dish in the photo below: **Babi**

Panggang (barbecued pork with a caramel-like glaze and thick soy sauce). It came on the **Pat Pong Party Platter (€30)**, a great starter for a big group. Just look at the **four dishes** it includes:





I also like the mango and cucumber salad as an appetizer to share. As for main dishes, so far I've tried a soup, rice bowl and Thai curry. Although I don't remember their names, I'd happily eat all of them again. **My advice:** just go in, run your finger down the menu and choose whatever you land on. You can't go wrong!



Info

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Menu if you feel you need to prepare beforehand

Average price per person: €15-20

Tuk Tuk has two locations now, one near Bilbao and the other, Chueca:

<M> Bilbao: Calle del Cardenal Cisneros 6 |
Reservations: 914 45 91 80

<M> Chueca: Calle del Barquillo 26 | Reservations:
915 23 25 56

More Asian restaurants featured on Naked Madrid:

- [Ramen Kagura, Madrid's \(almost\) perfect ramen bar](#)
- [Kintaro – Oy Vey](#)
- [Sumo – This Japanese restaurant's name says it all](#)
- [Chuka Ramen Bar – Madrid's hottest ramen restaurant](#)
- [Hattori Hanzo – Japanese food, straight up. No sushi.](#)
- [Nippon 2 – top quality yet affordable sushi, finally!](#)
- [Soy Kitchen – a fusion of Asian flavors](#)
- [Karachai – A cozy and elegant Thai restaurant in Alonso Martínez](#)

Rayen Vegano – A Vegan Gem You Can't Miss Out On

This was the first vegan restaurant I've visited in Madrid and to this day it remains my favourite. Whilst the food is moderately priced, it's certainly unique. And you absolutely have to try the sharing plate of vegan cheeses!

Their menu changes daily and they offer homemade bread, cakes and, of course, fresh food.



Even their food changes daily – I’ve ordered ‘Brunchito’ twice and both times the plating was completely different, which is something I’ve never seen before, but it’s welcoming. The waitress speaks English (you can even get the English version of their menu) and the restaurant is extremely passionate about vegan ethics – it shows even through their wifi password.



Everything is cute here, from the little decorative touches on each table to the 'Happy hour para perros' sign outside with a dog bowl full of water and their mission statement – “Change the world, become a vegan.”



And the best part? All vegan and vegetarian restaurants in the area support each other. In front of [Rayen Vegano](#) you'll be able to find a bunch of business cards from other restaurants and shops along with information about meditation and yoga classes.

Info:

[Facebook](#)

Address: Calle Lope de Vega 7

Phone: 675382072

By Mandy Lutman

Stunning Local Olive Grove Tour, in English! – Proyecto Los Aires

In 2013, biologists **Guillermo and Laura** – Spain's newest generation of **olive farmers** – took over the family business and embarked on an innovative mission: to connect the local countryside with the city of Madrid and make farming a **sustainable way of life** once again.

How it all started:

Over a century ago, in a small town in the region of **Toledo**, Guillermo's great grandfather planted his first grove of around 200 olive trees, and between the evenly spaced olive saplings grew rows of sun-drenched grapevines.

A hundred odd years later, only the footprints of the old vines are visible, but the olive trees have grown beautifully gnarled and twisted, with silver miniature leaves and shiny hard fruit, ready for the annual harvest of some of the tastiest **organic extra virgin olive oil** in Spain.



The centenarian olive trees

Guillermo and Laura's story:

Olive farming has been in both of their families for generations, inspiring them to study biology at university, which is where they met. From early on, they drew sketches on scraps of paper illustrating grand ambitions to re-bond our booming capital with its rural backyard, enthusiastically telling anyone who will listen about the genius that is the organic farming ecosystem (it's genius).

By mid 2014, their dream had gathered enough steam for them to **quit their jobs** and make [Proyecto Los Aires](#) their life, and for being in the midst of an **economic depression**, it's incredible how much they've already achieved.

The tour:

On Saturday, we headed out to their stunning olive grove in **Arcicóllar**, about an hour south of Madrid. When we arrived, we

met up with our fellow tour buddies and set off on our educational meander through the olive trees.

Guillermo and Laura led us around their oldest plot and explained the **process of creating olive oil**: from planting and harvesting to filtering and bottling. Their scientific angle on the entire practice is fascinating, but I won't say any more – the oohs and aahs are all part of the fun!



The walking tour begins



Taking a closer look at the trees

After the walking tour (and tanning opportunity), we sat down at a shaded table nestled idyllically among the centenarian trees. It was time for the **tasting**. This involved professionally sampling several olive oils in little blue glass cups, and learning how to tell the difference between generic **supermarket oil** and **top-quality organic oil** such as theirs.

And then came the food and wine. Through local connections and friends and family, Guillermo and Laura brought together a plethora of **Iberian foodie gems** for us to eat. A *mercado* on a table came to mind, and our tour companions' similarly delighted reactions included lots of "mmm"s and "oh my God"s and jokey squabbles over who liked the **pumpkin morcilla** most. We chatted, talking about Guillermo and Laura's endeavours as well as our own, then gratefully accepted Guillermo's offer of

a top-up of wine to accompany our final wander through the trees (and take a few grove-selfies). Finally, we had the opportunity to buy some of the delicious products we tasted that day.



The tasting (and eating and drinking)



The quaintest little market stall in the world

After an **eye-opening and mouth-watering experience**, we said our goodbyes to the lovely Guillermo and Laura and hopped on the bus back to Madrid, desperate to get the word out to you!

The project explained:

[Proyecto Los Aires](#) aims to **promote local agriculture** by running **educational tours & tastings** on their farm and forging a direct link between urban consumers and the rural economy. Their oil (Los Aires Extra Virgin Olive Oil) can be found in **gourmet shops** such as Oleoteca Murúa at [Mercado San Antón](#). Guillermo and Laura also regularly sell their oil in **markets across Madrid** such as [Mercado de Motores](#), [Mercado Central de Diseño](#), [Nómada Market](#) and [Gastro Market](#). Next time you're there, **go and say hello!**



Los Aires olive groves

How to get there:

The **meeting point** for the tour is the bus stop in the town of **Arcicóllar** (see location [here](#)). Regular buses (see timetable [here](#)) will get you there from Madrid's **Méndez Alvaro** bus station in **just over an hour**. If you're driving, it takes around **50 minutes** from central Madrid.

Details & Contact Info:

Tours run **year-round** on **any day of the week or weekend** and must be booked at least **48 hours in advance**.

[Facebook](#) & [Web](#)

The website is in English and Spanish! For more information about the tour, pricing, and to book, click [here](#).

El Jardín Secreto de Salvador Bachiller – A Secret Rooftop Paradise on Calle Montero

Among the constant crowds along Calle Montero, there is a hidden little paradise nestled atop the rooftop of an accessories shop: [El Jardín Secreto de Salvador Bachiller](#). Access to this magical new [rooftop bar](#) is still a secret, so enjoy it before the word gets out.

At night, the shop is empty and the security guard invites you to take the elevator, which makes you feel just like you're in a James Bond movie. As you walk in, you no longer feel as though you were in the city centre but rather, in a lush and soothing garden. The place offers a romantic atmosphere with flowers everywhere and dim lighting.



The cocktail menu offers creative drinks, ranging from a **Mango Margarita** to a **Berry Mojito**, which sets them apart from more traditional bars in the area. Also, candies are served with your cocktails and a bowl of nuts with your wine.



Image from [FB](#)

As for the food, it's healthy and served with multi-grain bread. Perfect for breakfast or a *merienda* (afternoon snack). And for dessert, I highly recommend the exquisite *Coulant de Chocolate* with passion fruit.



Image from [FB](#)

The prices are rather high but the experience is unique and worth it. A terrace tax of 20% will be added to orders.

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Calle Monterera 37
- **Phone:** 915 31 02 60

Also check out:

- [Discover the Hat's Secret Rooftop Bar. You're welcome.](#)

- [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 1](#)
- [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 2](#)
- [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 3](#)