

# Breaking it to your parents that you're not going home (yet)

This is the time of year when many of us are forced to ask ourselves daunting questions such as: *Who am I? Where am I going? What am I doing with my life? Should I stay or should I go? Can I be this happy anywhere else? Am I happy now? Should I continue my education? Should I start my career? Should I be closer to my family?*

More often than not, we opt to *mañana mañana* these questions until this time next year by renewing our contracts as teaching assistants, switching Auxiliar programs, or continuing to hustle however we hustle and upholding the status quo of tapas, terrazas, low rent, and budget-friendly hedonism.



It is often difficult to break the news of your decision to stay abroad to your parents, especially if they believe with conviction that the *American Dream* is not only feasible, but that the pursuit of it is the only respectable way to live.

## What your parents might expect of you:

While success is subjective across generations and cultures, for many American parents the epitome of success for their offspring can entail any of the following:

- Acquiring a fancy masters degree and/or PhD
- Commitment to an uphill career path, working 65-80 hours per week
- Marriage to another real adult with ambition and drive

so that you can be a power couple

- Owning a house and a fondue set for entertaining guests
- Being able to do your own taxes and paperwork
- Assorted antiquated concepts of normalcy that you are critical of after growing accustomed to a simpler life that is lived on your own terms.



Some families want to have, or feel that they deserve, a say in the decision-making process of their progeny to steer them away from a life of permanent squalor. Understandably their patience for the *mañana mañana* mindset will inevitably run thin. With each additional year that their beloved child spends teaching abroad, earning a wage that would be considered below poverty-level in the United States, parents will inevitably go through the stages of grief for their child's futures as they were once envisioned.

Disclaimer: I'm well aware that there is no one-size-fits-all relationship between parents and kin. Just as there are parents who do not attempt to sway their offspring in any direction, there are kin who do not care whether or not their parents approve of their lifestyle.

# What your parents might say and how to respond:

Below are some predicted comments from your parents that will indicate what stage of grief they are in, accompanied by an advisable response to help them manage their expectations.

## Denial: “This is just a phase, you’ll outgrow it.”

- With Hemingway-esque detail, explain in depth your passion for your adopted city
- Perhaps Madrid stimulates you creatively in a way that is unmatched anywhere else
- Maybe your heart was stolen by a person, or the cuisine
- Teaching English is fulfilling (or at least more tolerable than any alternative)
- Once you leave, the neighboring European countries will never again be this accessible

## Anger: “You’re out of touch with reality. TEFLing is not a Real Job™.”

- You are constantly learning via exposure to other languages, cultures and ways of life
- You have either achieved bilingual status or are making progress towards it
- Your overworked friends back home often send you envious messages
- You are still nurturing valuable resume skills in your teaching jobs:
  - the ability to speak publicly, projecting your voice without fear
  - generating clients and operating your own brand with *clases particulares*
  - often adapting to changing circumstances



- Ask them to elaborate on what a real job entails and why having one is so important, seeing as it is common for elderly folks on their deathbeds to voice regretting the amount of time that they spent at the office
- Side effects of chasing the American dream include delusion, anxiety, and alienation



**Bargaining: “You can live at home with us while you get back on your feet, use the car and eat our food. We’ll keep the kitchen stocked with bagels.”**

- Express gratitude but don’t waver in the face of temptation



**Depression: “We had such high hopes for you.”**

- When faced with their disappointment, remind them that you have your own hopes and dreams, albeit unconventional ones.
- Reiterate that you love and appreciate them despite not seeing eye-to-eye on these matters
- Stress that while their approval is important to you, it would be a necessary sacrifice if weighed against the life abroad that you have created

**Acceptance: “Ok, make your own choices. We trust your judgment.”**

- At this stage thank them for their council throughout your decision-making process.

Although I’m certain that we collectively do not want Donald Trump to rise to the presidency, it would at least make a non-issue of the *Should I stay or Should I go* debate. Please feel free to share your own experiences breaking the news to your

parents in the comment section!

## You may also like:

- [Where to take your mom in Madrid](#)
  - [The quest for good bagels in Madrid](#)
  - [A window into the life of a Senegalese migrant in Lavapiés](#)
  - [Jewish culture in Madrid](#)
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## Chiringuito de El Señor Martín, top quality beach bar in Sol

The landlocked city of Madrid is supposedly home to the country's best quality fish and seafood. Why? Because Madrileños say so! Opinion aside, it's true that fresh fish from all coasts of Spain are shipped to the capital on a daily basis and one restaurant in Sol has taken full advantage: [Chirignuito de El Señor Martín](#), located on Calle Mayor.



***Chiringuito*** means 'beach bar' in Spanish, hence the restaurant's beach-chic feel and menu featuring a variety of fish and seafood platters. During summer, this *chiringuito* gets even breezier when it opens its glass doors onto Calle Mayor and becomes one with the sidewalk. During winter, the restaurant also expands its menu to include heartier seafood stews and rice dishes.





James and I had the pleasure of having lunch here on Wednesday. When you walk in, you see the fresh fish on display, which comes straight from [El Señor Martín](#), a high-quality fish market inside **Mercado de San Miguel** (and where the restaurant gets the other half of its name).





You can see right into the kitchen, where you'll find the tattoo-covered chef, Beltrán Alonso. He and the waiter kindly explained each menu item to us, as well as the innovative cooking techniques they use and the origin of their ingredients. So without further ado, here's what we had...



To drink, we started off with two glasses of champagne, which came with a tapa of **camarones**, baby shrimp that are caught using sustainable fishing methods.





Our first sarter was ***ensaladilla rusa***, a traditional homemade potato salad with baby shrimp and fish roe. This is on their permanent menu and it wouldn't be a real Spanish fish restaurant without it!



Our second starter was very innovative: **gambas con dos cocciones y ajo morado de las Pedroñeras**, twice-cooked shrimp with black garlic. It's important to note that the black garlic they use is the best in Spain (if not the world, according to our waiter). The flavor of the shrimp was completely distinct and absolutely delicious.





Our third starter was our favorite: **calamares**. This is one of the most typical dishes in Andalucía and here, it's not only good quality (fresh from **El Señor Martín** market) but also prepared in extra virgin olive oil, like everything else on the menu. It was so fresh, light and satisfying. You have to get this when you go here no matter what.





For our main dish, we had **arroz meloso con corvina salvaje** (rice cooked in broth with wild sea bass), accompanied by two glasses of **albariño** (Galician white wine). I really loved this dish. The sea bass was cooked to perfection and the rice had a delicious flavor to it. I couldn't have been happier. To top it all off, we had cheesecake!



If you're in Sol and looking for some of the freshest fish in the city, as well as a mini-trip to the beach, this is your place!

## Info

- [Web](#) & [Facebook](#)
  - **Address:** Calle Mayor 31
  - **Metro:** Sol
-



# Fonty, Lovely Brunch in Barrio Salamanca

Brunch is all the rage in Madrid right now. Restaurants big and small are offering full-on Saturday and Sunday brunch menus featuring the works: mimosas, eggs Benedict, hash browns, you name it. We've already written about a few of [our favorite brunch spots](#) in hip neighborhoods like Malasaña and Chueca. Yet the craze is now also hitting Madrid's more upscale neighborhood of Barrio Salamanca, thanks to [Fonty](#).



**Fonty** began serving brunch on Sundays at its first location on **Calle Castelló 12** a few years ago. Due to popular demand, the restaurant quickly started offering it on Saturdays as well. And now, you can also enjoy a weekend brunch at their second

location, newly opened and just a 15 minute walk away on **Calle Juan Bravo, 41**, where James and I went on Sunday. The decor is modern yet cozy, and they're planning on opening up a terrace which will surely be nice come summer. Sipping on your cappuccino in the sun sounds pretty perfect to me!



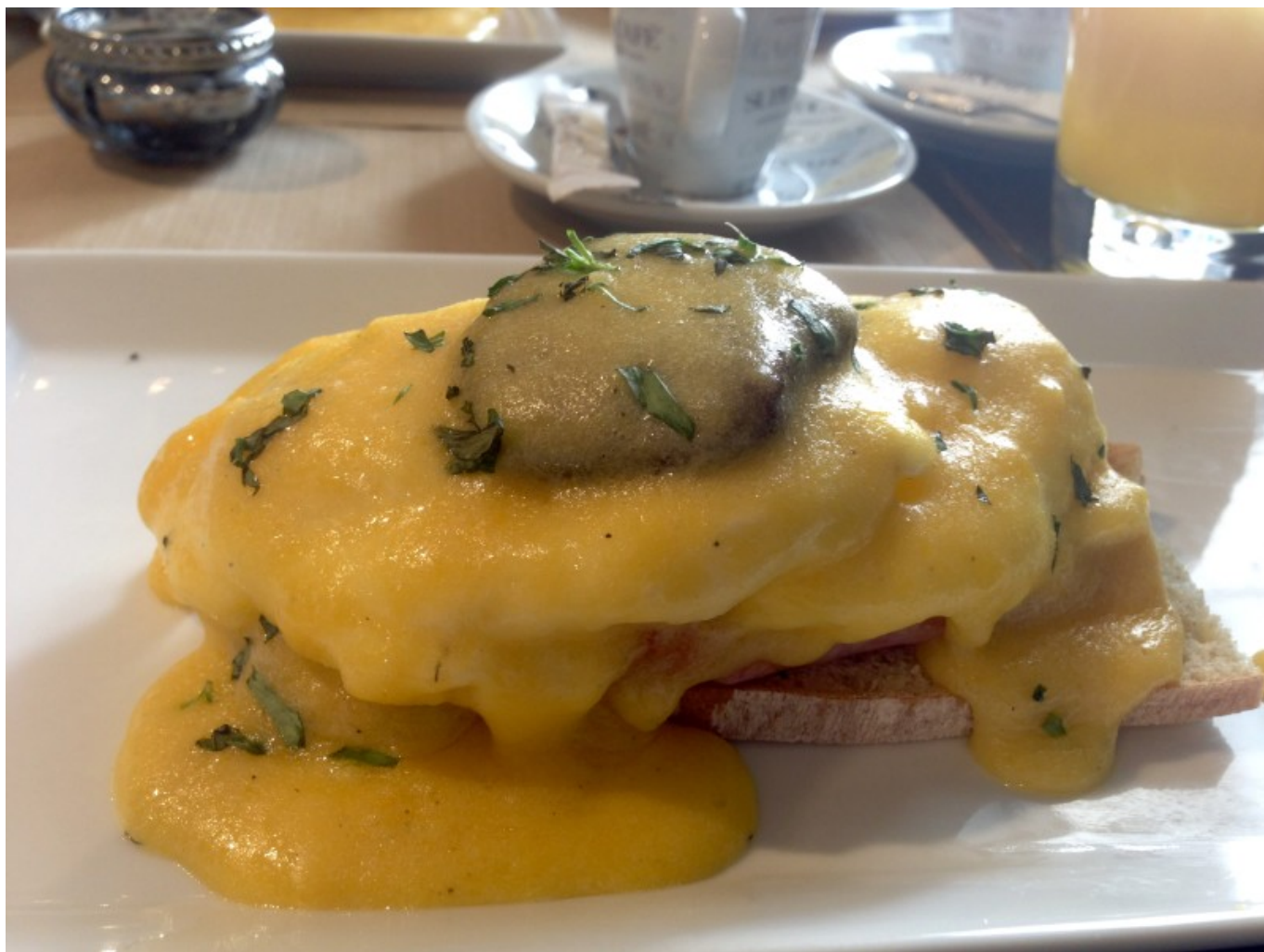
One of the owners, Marie, told James and I that she originally wanted to open up a pastry shop, yet decided to open a restaurant to cater to Madrid's sit-down culture. Many of their first customers still come in regularly for their homemade cakes and pastries. In addition to sweets and brunch, **Fonty** also serve a complete *menu del día* for €13, using fresh ingredients; they never fry anything. So Fonty is a great place to go to if you're in the neighborhood and looking for something lighter than what you might find next door.





As for brunch, you'll find four different options that range from €20-26. We went with the second option that included a brunch special (from egg dishes to pancakes), plus a pastry, orange juice, coffee and yogurt with fruit and granola, which cost €20 each. When we go back, we'll have to try the first option which came with a burger.





As for our brunch specials, I got the ***tosta de la casa*** which came with roasted tomato, ham, portobello mushrooms, poached egg and hollandaise sauce. James got the **eggs Benedict with bacon**. The quality was incredible. The sauce was so rich yet velvety smooth. The yogurt and freshly squeezed orange juice gave us that feeling of being healthy, and the pastry was the perfect touch of sweetness. Then the coffee topped it all off.



So, if you're in Barrio Salamanca and craving a **good brunch** or **menú del día**, you've got not one but two locations to choose from!

## Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Web](#)
- **Address:** Calle Castelló 12 (metro Príncipe de Vergara or Velázquez) & Calle Juan Bravo 41 (metro Diego de León or Núñez de Balboa)

## You may also like

- [Best brunch on a budget in Madrid](#)
- [Federal Café, hipster in a very good way](#)
- [Little Big Café, my big little pick-me-up](#)



- [6 best café-bookshops in Madrid](#)

## YOKA LOKA

Squeezed between aisles of fruit vendors and meat merchants in the lively Mercado Antón Martín, you can find [Yoka Loka](#), a sushi restaurant worth your euros.



Their hours may not jive with the Spanish schedule of eating dinner around nine or ten p.m., (since the market in which the restaurant is located closes its doors at nine), but you may want to consider eating out earlier than usual to get a taste of the **maki** and **nigiri** rolling out of the kitchen. Or perhaps,

it may be better suited for a lunch out on the town.

Happening upon this locale is delightful in itself. It is unexpected to find a sushi stall in the midst of the traditional market products. The restaurant is tiny; a small counter to place your order, a small matchbox kitchen, and a dining room that is comparable in size to a train car. Flanking the small dining area and kitchen are narrow bar areas set up to accommodate a few extra diners. If seated here, you can peek into the kitchen to see what the chefs are up to.





Prices aren't outrageous. For example, eleven euros will buy you **the Yoka Loka sampler box** with between nine and thirteen



pieces depending. Yoka Loka offers some of the truest-to-form sushi in Madrid. Rolls are not sullied by sugary rice or tasteless fish as some sushi establishments in the city are prone to do. Here, quality comes out of the kitchen and is presented beautifully to boot.



Order a bottle of Japanese beer to round out the meal and savor the taste of something different than Mahou.



## Info

- [Web](#) & [Facebook](#)
  - Address: Calle Santa Isabel, 5 Planta Baja
  - Phone: +34 610 602 722
  - E-mail: [hola@yokaloka.com](mailto:hola@yokaloka.com)
-

# Urso Hotel & Spa, Take a holiday (from a 'holiday')

When you tell people that you live abroad the general response is usually something along the lines of **'Oh you must feel like you're on holiday all the time!'** or 'Think of all the sun and sangria!' to 'You must be perma-tanned!' Admittedly, whilst there is a lot of sun and I do feel like I'm on 'holiday' when I look up at all the pretty balconies in Malasaña, La Latina and the like, I'm most certainly not perma-tanned (without the help of something I purchased from Space NK) and life's mundane tasks have a way of finding you wherever you live \*read/washing/ironing/cleaning/taking the bins out.

So no matter whether you're fortunate enough to live in a sunny clime (in this case the marvelous Madders) there comes a time when you fancy a holiday within the city; if true indulgence floats your boat then look no further than the **exquisitely elegant and seriously stylish**, [Hotel Urso](#).





Nestled on Calle Mejia Lequerica, Hotel Urso is a relatively small but perfectly formed boutique hotel. Discovered through the [Mr and Mrs Smith website](#) (which I cannot recommend enough) it's the kind of hotel you'll never want to leave. Fluffy white robes adorn the bathroom door, there for the taking when the spa takes your fancy. Pillows so soft, that lifting your head up from one feels like a chore (or maybe that was partly due to too much gin the night before). But still, it felt like having a glimpse into how the other half live – all **freshly brewed coffee, sumptuous soft furnishings and complimentary**



welcome fizz at the hotel bar.



Service wise, Hotel Urso couldn't be faulted. In a country that often leaves a lot to be desired on that front (why do I have to beg for a bill?!) nothing was too much trouble. We forgot our toothbrushes – two new ones appeared by magic. My mum on arrival managed to fall up the stairs – turns out marble floors, heels and mimosas don't mix (but cue an ice pack appearing at lightning speed) – I can only stress here that apples don't fall far from the tree and that making an

entrance must run in the family!

When check out time swung round (which wasn't until 12; a Mr and Mrs Smith perk might I add) neither of us wanted to leave – or part with the 400 thread count Egyptian cotton sheets.

It's worth noting that if splurging on a night away isn't an option – unless money starts growing on trees (as a deluxe room wasn't cheap) they have jazz nights every Thursday and the pop up restaurant '[The Table By](#)' which are well worth a visit, with a different chef dominating in the kitchen each month.

I left Sunday morning plotting how many private classes I'd have to teach so that I can return, and soon. Should I be lucky enough to do so, my mum will be wearing flats.

## Info

- [Web](#) & [Facebook](#)
  - Address: Calle Mejia Lequerica 8
  - Phone: [+34 914 444 458](#)
  - E-mail: [info@hotelurso.com](mailto:info@hotelurso.com)
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## Marisqueria las Chalanas, Asturian Cider and Seafood in Plaza España

Despite its absence of an ocean, delicious and affordable seafood can be found in Madrid for those who seek it. My friend Jacqui brought the existence of [Marisquería las Chalanas](#) to my attention, praising it for its attentive staff



and the quality of the portions. With my interest piqued, Jacqui brought myself and our companion Nanor to this location on a **Saturday night in order to nibble on sea critters and drink Asturian cider.**

We arrived early and perched ourselves at a table in the bar area and later received lingering glances from standing patrons keen to usurp it from us. For this reason **it's pivotal to arrive before the crowd**; deshellng shrimp and crabs without an adequate surface to rest the plate is an uphill battle.

The bar area offers specials where **generous *raciones* of seafood cost 5€ with 6 glasses of cider included.** We ordered two of these, the first being **1/4 kilo of cold shrimp** and the second being a dignified **king crab**, to share between the three of us.







Our alert server kept our cider glasses full and was empathetic to Jacqui's needs as a **celiac**; he was proactive and double-checked with the chef that none of our plates were exposed to gluten. In addition to these portions we also ordered **garlic prawns** and **Mussels a la marinara** off of the restaurant menu.







By the end of our meal we were indulgently full and content, all of the food pictured here cost 34€ in total. As we adjusted our coats and scarves to leave, the vultures pounced to claim our little table as their own. I recommend this establishment for celebratory occasions, [parent visits](#) or for [private rendezvous](#) for those entangled illicit trysts because the likelihood of crossing paths with anyone you know here is low.



# Info

- [Facebook](#)
  - [Website](#)
  - **Metro:** Plaza de España
  - **Address:** C/San Leonardo 12
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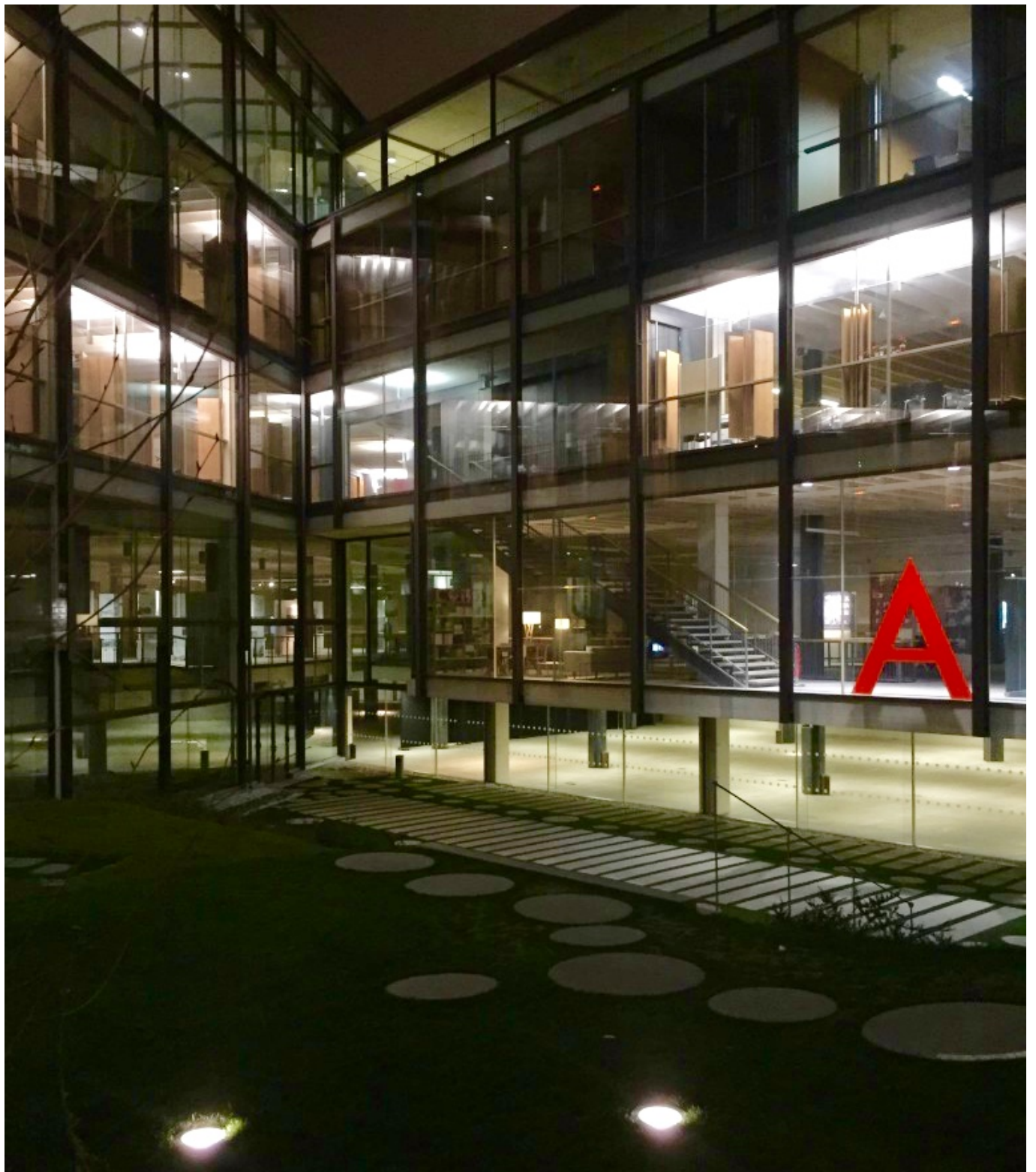
## Bosco de Lobos – dine in a secret garden in good company

In the middle of Chueca, deep in the courtyard/garden of the Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid, you'll find a glass house that feels more LA than Madrid, and inside that glass house, you'll find [Bosco de Lobos](#). Bosco de Lobos is part of **En Compañía de Lobos**, a restaurant group that has Ana La Santa in Madrid as well as four restaurants in Barcelona and another in Mexico City. It calls itself a restaurant, bar, garden, and a place for work and meetings. And indeed it is a great place to meet, especially for groups. After hearing nothing but great things about it from my friend Carla, and seeing a picture of Blanca Suárez devouring spaghetti on Instagram, it was abundantly clear that I needed to get there.

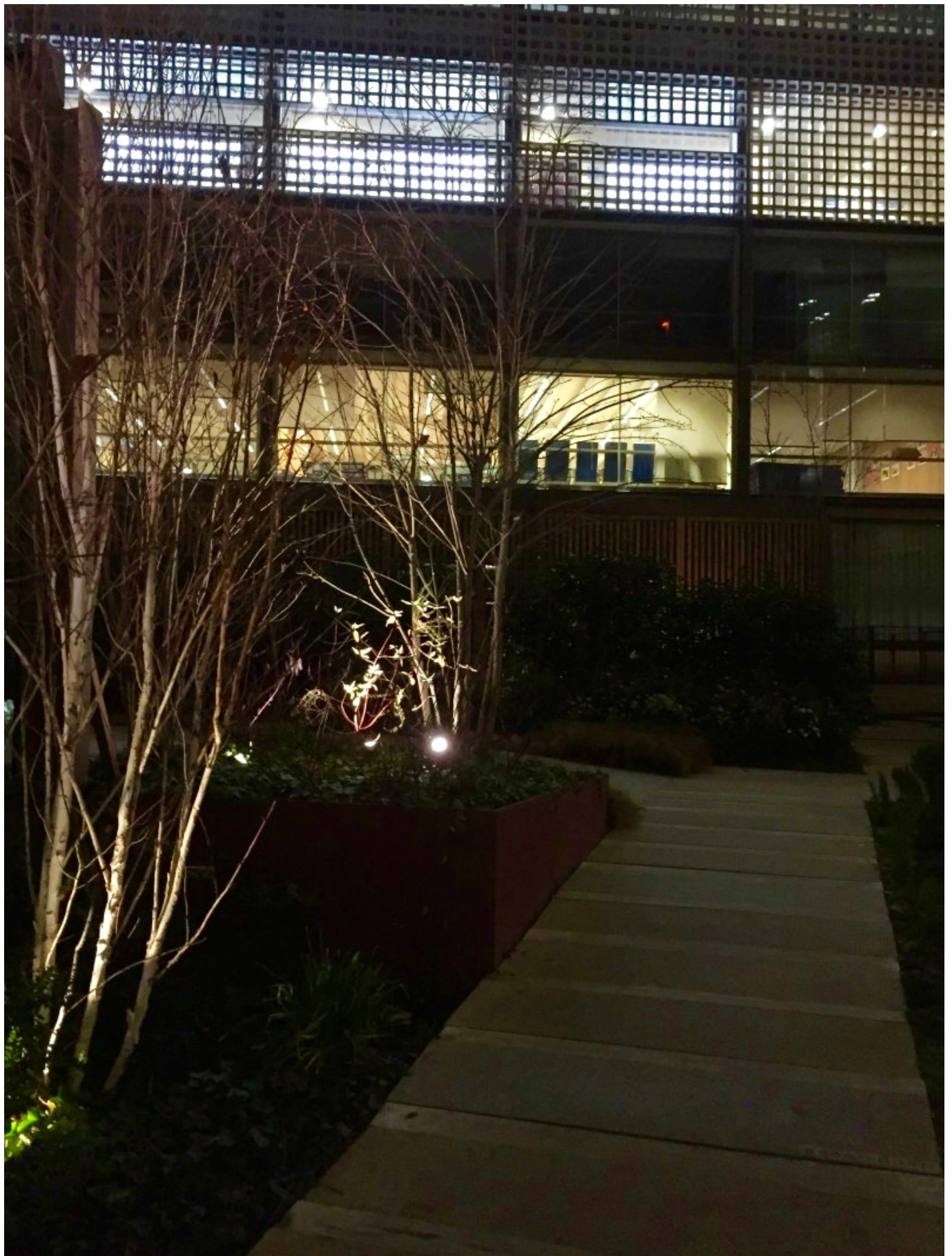
And so one Wednesday night, my group from my first trimester of grad school got together for a reunion dinner in this wonderful place. While you may get lost the first time you get there, you just go to the back of the Colegio de Arquitectos, and you will find it hidden behind the entrance.



Walking back to the restaurant already gives you a sense of awe, that you know you're in a beautiful place and will be transported from the rest of the city out there.







After a walk down the path to the main entrance, you're welcome at the bar and ready to be transported to dine in a



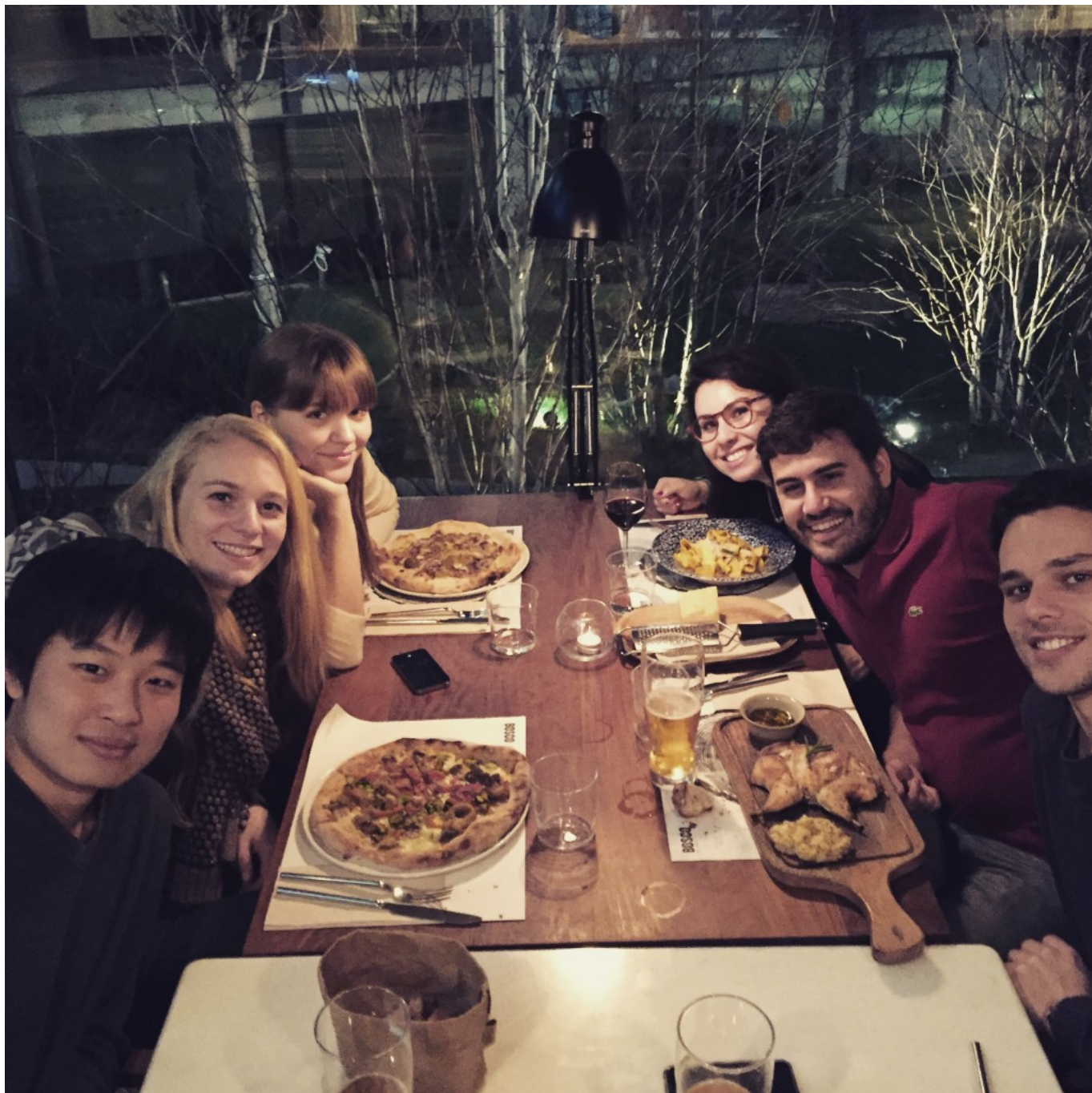
restaurant that has a comfortable feel.

Walking inside is like being welcomed into someone's house, with comfortable tables and shelves with a wide assortment of books. When the weather's warm, tables are set up outside in the garden, allowing for more space. However, we were there in January, so that gives an excuse to go back again.

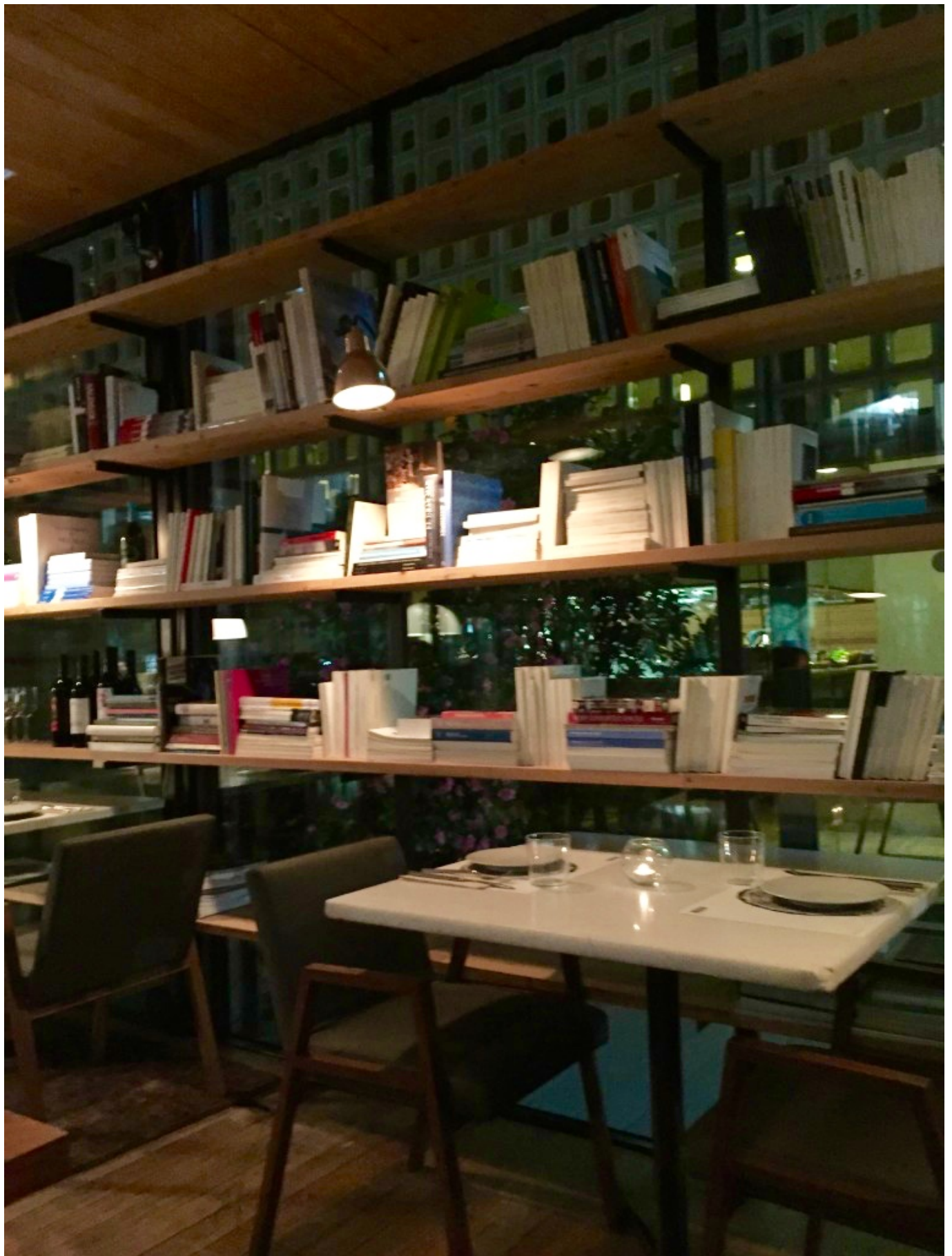
Here's a photo from their [Facebook page](#) so you can see what it looks like during the day!



We sat in an area overlooking the garden with a wide selection of books and plenty of space for the six of us to have a bonding experience.







Bosco de Lobos serves Italian cuisine, with pizza and pasta the stars of the menu, however there are meat dishes and some

tapas. Many websites laud the lasagna (and that will be what I'll have to have next time), but two of us order the roast chicken, one ordered steak, two ordered pizzas (one the whole-wheat vegetable pizza and the other the taleggio con trufa de inverno), and then I ordered the paparadelle with red-wine meat ragout.





The portion size was great, especially since I do not eat pasta very often. I was not overly stuffed, and I even had



room to try the vegetable pizza. What was nice about the sauce was that it was meat-based, while not as heavy as a bolognese, and the paparadelle was fresh and perfectly cooked. They even left me with my own block of cheese with personal grater had I been in the mood for more.

Everyone in the group was satisfied with our meal, and we spent over two hours together catching up, just like old times.

When you have a group dinner and are looking to feel right at home in the middle of a tranquil garden, then Bosco de Lobos is the place to go!

## Info

- Calle de Hortaleza, 63
  - Tel.: +34 915 249 464
  - [Facebook](#)
  - [Website](#)
  - Metro: Alonso Martínez (Lines 4, 5, and 10)
- 

## La Pecera, Affordable Fine Dining at Círculo de Bellas Artes

Fancy a decadent meal in a regal setting that doesn't burn a hole in your wallet? We found it! El Círculo de Bellas Artes is one of Madrid's most emblematic buildings and its street-level restaurant, [La Pecera](#), serves a top-quality **menú del día** every day of the week for just €15 (€17 on the terrace). It includes a starter, main course, drink and coffee or dessert,

with a variety of dishes and vegetarian options to choose from. And to top it all off, you'll be enjoying your delicious meal in a stunning dining room with beautifully painted ceilings, elegant chandeliers and excellent service.









James and I went on a Monday for the [menú del día](#) and we're still amazed that you can get such a fine dining experience for only €15 a person. I kept thinking I wished I'd [brought my parents](#) here each time they'd come to visit. Like myself, I'm sure a lot of people walk by [La Pecera](#) with its outdoor terrace and fans in the summertime, and assume it is too exclusive to go in. Wrong! Prices are similar to what you'll find at almost all nice restaurants in Madrid. But you just can't beat this magnificent setting...

Now on to the food. For starters, I had the *arroz caldoso (rice in broth) with clams and shrimp*, and James had the *pasta with sautéed vegetables and cuttlefish*. Other starters that caught my eye were the homemade salmorejo, ham croquettes, lentils and duck magret salad... good thing I just went with the waiter's recommendation or else it would've taken me ages to order.





The **arroz caldoso** is prepared in an individual pot and with a deliciously flavored seafood sauce. The portion was generous, so I was happy my main course was also fish. James' cuttlefish pasta had a surprising Asian flavor, something he loved but didn't expect given the more traditional setting.

For the main course I had the smoked salmon with vegetables in a coconut sauce, another unexpected mix of flavors.





But I must admit that James' main course took the cake: the **Carrillada Ibérica** (Iberian beef cheeks) with apple quince jelly. The meat was so tender it melted in his mouth and the sauce was so flavorful that all James could say was, "Oh, wow."



All the desserts are homemade and included in the menú del día. James had the apple pie and I had a semi-cold yogurt with a reduced Pedro Ximénez sauce. So good.







As we were leaving, I asked the waiter if there's anything else we should try. He told us we had to come back for the **breakfast menu**, which features a range of options, from the standard toast and freshly-squeezed orange juice to a full-on British-style breakfast and [American-style brunch](#).

At night, the restaurant holds live jazz concerts and its **bar offers an impressive selection of over 400 bottles of liquor**; all to please local and foreign palates at a reasonable price, within a gorgeous space that'll make any day feel like a special occasion.





So before or after your next visit to a [museum along Paseo del Prado](#), or shopping in the center or whatever brings you and yours to Madrid, you're in for a treat!







Lastly, I can't end this article without reminding you that El Círculo de Bellas Artes has one of the [city's best rooftop bars](#), called [Tartan Roof](#). Make sure to pop up to take in the view, visit its restaurant (just book ahead of time) or enjoy a cocktail.

## Info

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Calle Alcalá 42
- **Metro:** Banco de España or Sevilla
- **Phone:** 677458448 / 913 605 400

## You may also like:

- [Where to take your mom in Madrid](#)

- [A year of Menús del Día in Madrid](#)
  - [Madrid's best rooftop bars](#)
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# Café del Rey, an unexpected restaurant behind Príncipe Pío

Situated on an unassuming street behind Príncipe Pío lies [Café del Rey](#), a modern restaurant that's totally unexpected. Although it's a five-minute walk from the train station, as well as the Royal Palace, Templo Dubod and Plaza de España, the street it's located on is quite off the beaten path.

James and I went on a Saturday night when the center was uncomfortably crowded, as per usual. Dodging pedestrians left and right, we headed down Cuesta San Vicente. Just before reaching the station, we turned right onto a quiet street called Paseo del Rey and bam! We'd completely escaped the city's hustle and bustle and could finally breathe again.

Two minutes later we arrived at the restaurant, whose stylish decor stands out among the surrounding residential buildings. What is this modern restaurant doing here? It looks like it should be in Malasaña, Chueca, or even Salamanca. That said, we were happy it wasn't located in those neighborhoods because it gave us the chance to try something new and head in a different direction.





photo from their [Facebook](#), as are all the high-quality pics below!

The front part of the venue is a casual bar, delicatessen and



shop. You'll find sandwiches on baguettes, mouthwatering cakes and other treats on display, plus a great beer selection and wine list. We went for dinner so we sat in the dining area in the back, also chic and with plenty of space to remind us we weren't in an itty bitty bar in La Latina (which we love, just sometimes we crave some leg room).



As we were eating dinner, we couldn't help but talk about how oddly situated the restaurant was. How could anyone find it if they weren't looking for it? Bottom line is you couldn't. That's kind of why we like it. While in the summer I'm sure it's always packed because of its beach-themed outdoor terrace, during the wintertime I imagine the clientele is more from the neighborhood, as well as people coming in from Principe Pio or after spending the day along Madrid's river. They also hold events like wine and beer tastings that bring in patrons.





Back to our dinner: James got a burger (which the waiter recommended) and I went with the salmon with vegetables (I'm on a bit of a health kick these days), accompanied by a few glasses of red wine.





The table next to us was having a true feast and I must say the pasta and tuna dishes they ordered looked huge. We enjoyed our meal and the price range was reasonable. For example, the burgers cost €8-11. We didn't end up trying their famous cakes which I honestly regret. That's their specialty – the red velvet and carrot cake in particular – and they looked incredible!





The wait staff were also very friendly and attentive.

Since Café del Rey serves breakfast and brunch menus too, we've got plenty of reasons to go back. I also can't wait till summer to check out their outdoor seating areas.

## Info

- [Facebook](#)
- [Website](#)
- Twitter/Instagram: @cafedelrey22