

Amargo, the city's best veggie burger (and much more)

The title says it all.

On a cozy corner in Malasaña, [Amargo Place To Be](#) lures you in with its fairytale facade, enveloped with ivy and illuminated by twinkle lights.

Inside, the vibe is both industrial and homey. Friendly faces will greet you (not always a given in the city) and you'll be overwhelmed by a menu **so international** you'll forget where you are.

Nigiris, Mexican nachos, giant *croquetas*, dim sum, lasagna with wonton pasta and pine nuts, duck magret over hummus and a raspberry coulis...

But as we're all biased—especially when it comes to food—what I wanna sell you on is their veggie burger.

I can't even bring myself to try anything else from the impressively diverse and delicious menu, because when I come to Amargo, I only have one thing on my mind: that thick and savory soy burger piled high with zucchini in tempura, a fried egg, a thick slab of goat cheese, green shoots, caramelized onion, crispy onion crunch, and the special house sauce.



Go starving—just half of this monstrous burger fills me up.

They're open for breakfast, lunch and dinner (from 9am-2am every day!), have a fantastic *menú del día* (€11.90 M-F and €13.50 on weekends and holidays), and boast a lengthy drink list that includes signature cocktails and organic wine (!!!).

But wait, there's more.

If you venture downstairs (follow the 19th-century painting in which a stoic aristocrat dons some fly ass Nikes), you'll find the seating area where diners become audience members.



Since last year, **Amargo** has hosted **concerts** throughout the week. If you're dining in (make sure to make a reservation—it fills up!), it's just €2 to enjoy anything from flamenco to soul to acoustic while you eat. When I went, I was treated to [Chisara Agor](#)'s achingly soulful voice.

Check out this month's programming on Amargo's [website](#).



The mindblowingly talented Chisara Agor and the amazing Christian García-Fonseca Secher on cajón.

If you're somehow not yet experiencing sensory overload, the lower level also functions as a revolving art gallery. The current artwork is by local visual and urban artist [Misterpiro](#).



Just some pals having a very candid laugh.

In a hurry? Amargo also does **speedy-quick orders to go**.

You have no excuse.

Info

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
 - Instagram: @amargoplacetobe
 - Address: Calle Pez, 2
 - Phone: 910 84 79 90
 - Metro: Callao, Noviciado, Tribunal
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Keyaan's: A Taste of the Dominican Republic in Madrid

When it comes to restaurant reviews, the word “authentic” gets thrown around a lot. It’s become a buzzword for people seeking out genuine food and unique eating experiences, but all too often it’s used as a catchall adjective that doesn’t really mean much, a vague and perhaps inaccurate way to lure in customers looking for “the real deal.”

This is not the case at Keyaan's. If there were ever an establishment that deserved the label of authenticity, it would be this place. Specializing in Dominican empanadas, traditional sides, and homemade desserts, the colorful café brings a true taste of the D.R. to the streets of Chamberí. After opening its doors only two months ago, it’s already accumulated a loyal clientele—and it only takes one bite to understand why.



The story of Keyaan's began with a simple craving. Around two years ago, just after her son Ilias was born, Zakiya Ramirez had a powerful longing for a good empanada. Her husband Aderly, who hails from the Dominican Republic, called up his mom and asked for her recipe. After a bit of tweaking and improvisation, he cooked up his very first batch of empanadas using nothing but a hot plate. Zakiya was floored; it seemed her husband had a hidden natural talent that not even he was aware of.



Zakiya, Aderly, and Ilias Keyaan Ramirez

In the years since, Aderly's recipe gradually evolved and improved until the couple decided it was time to share his skills with the world. They opened Keyaan's in November, christening it with their son's middle name, and it's already gained a considerable—and well-deserved—reputation.

I recently dropped by to sample some of their signature offerings, with my friend and trusty taste-tester Sophia by my side. We were presented with dish after dish of Dominican delicacies, hitting as many of the menu's high spots as possible before falling into a full-on food coma.



First up: the empanadas. Aderly's specialty is front and center at Keyaan's, making up the bulk of the menu. You can choose from several fillings (beef, chicken, cheese, vegetables, tuna, and even pepperoni, in a variety of combinations) and two sizes (just one of the big ones will fill you up, but the mini empanadas are too cute to resist). Unlike some versions, these are chock full of the good stuff, meaning you won't be biting into a pocket of air. The dough is made fresh each day, and every single empanada is hand-formed and fried to order. The result is crispy on the outside, soft on the inside, and juicy without being greasy; a difficult balance to strike.



As tempting as it may be to gorge yourself on nothing but empanadas, it would be a crime to leave without sampling the sides. The *fritos* (flattened and fried plantains, similar to *tostones*) and *bollos de yuca* (fried balls of yuca stuffed with melty gouda cheese) also achieve an ideal equilibrium, indulgent and rich without being too heavy.



Not to mention the *quipes*—fried balls of bulgur wheat dough stuffed with chicken, beef, or cheese—a classic dish that arrived in the Dominican Republic by way of the Arab world (you might have tried its Middle-Eastern cousin, *kibbeh*).



Upon biting into one, Sophia's first words were "I just wanna dive into it." In fact, she named it her favorite of all the dishes she tried, which is certainly saying something. According to Zakiya, it's a customer favorite as well; almost every Dominican who comes to Keyaan's orders empanadas with a side of *quipes*, and they're far from disappointed. One regular swore that their empanadas are even better than those of the most famous restaurant in Santo Domingo. Needless to say, authentic is an understatement.



If you've managed to make it through the savory stuff without getting too full, you won't be disappointed by dessert. There's a wide selection of *batidos* in flavors ranging from the classics to irresistibly creative inventions. The fruitier options (strawberry, papaya, coconut, and mango) are made the Dominican way, with evaporated milk, while the richer varieties (chocolate, vanilla, Oreo, Kinder Bueno, Ferrero Rocher, *galleta Biscoff*, and *magdalena*) are made with ice cream for a more American-style milkshake. They're served in enormous glasses and topped with whipped cream, ideal for sharing (or not). Not too sweet, perfectly rich, and deliciously creamy. You might be surprised at how fast you can finish one.



Galleta Biscoff batido: "Like drinking a cookie"

Still hungry? Try one of the sweet empanadas, dreamed up as a way to combine Aderly's talents with Zakiya's passion for baking. The same perfectly fried dough, stuffed with apple pie, *dulce de leche*, nutella cheesecake, Oreo, white chocolate, strawberries, or pineapple... it's clearly a match made in heaven.

All of the desserts are made entirely from scratch, and rumor has it that Zakiya's cheesecake is the best in all of Spain. If you want to taste it in all its glory, you can order it by the slice as well as in empanada form. For something a bit more traditional, try the *majarete* or *habichuelas con dulce*, classic Dominican desserts made from corn and beans,

respectively.

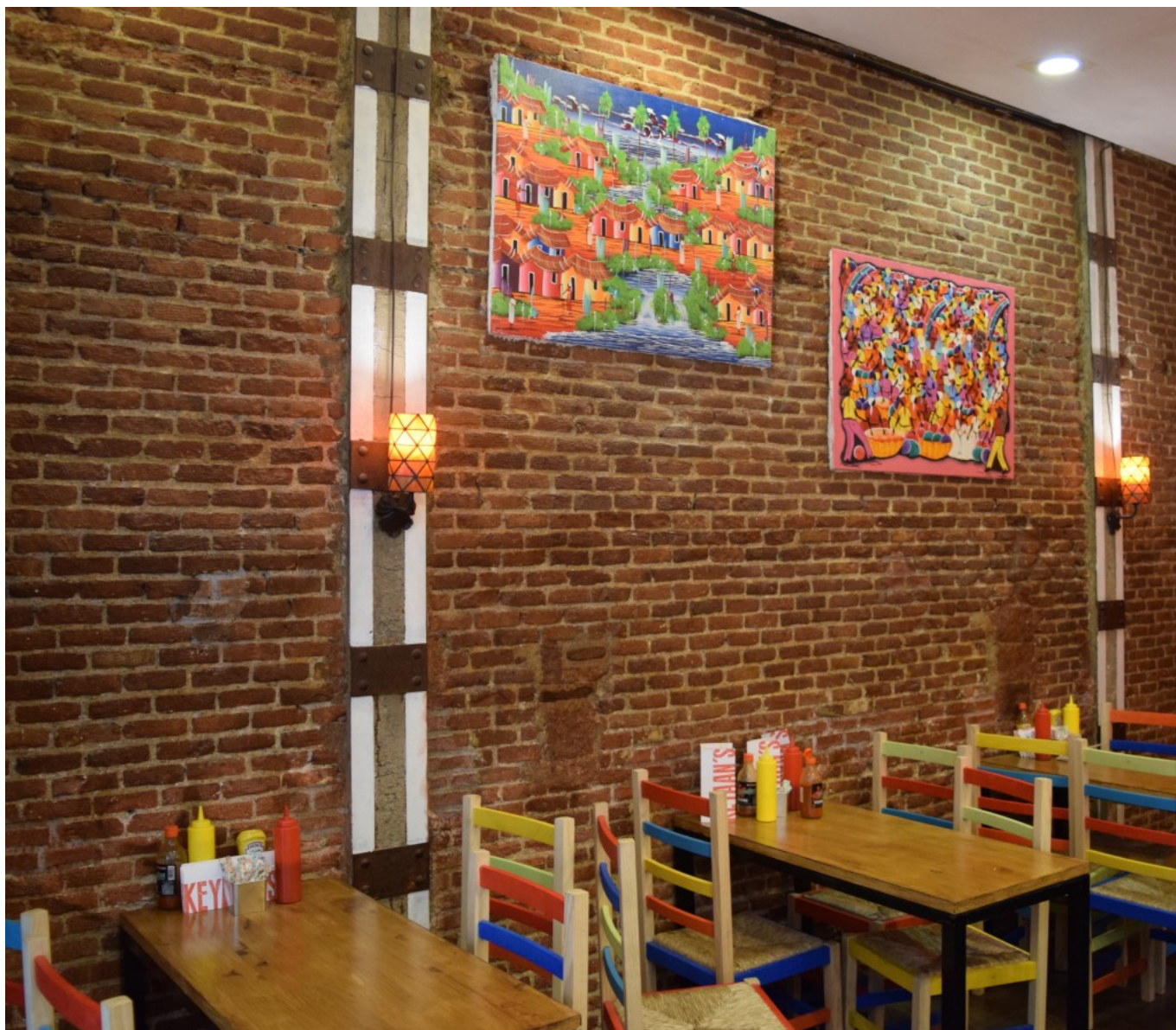


White chocolate caramel cheesecake

To wash it all down, you can choose from a variety of espresso drinks made with Dominican Café Santo Domingo (“Even the coffee is amazing,” according to Sophia), including bulletproof coffee and *affogato*. Or give into temptation and go for Zakiya’s signature Nutella hot chocolate, or the Dominican specialty *morir soñando* (orange or passion fruit juice mixed with evaporated milk). If you want something a bit lighter, there are also several kinds of natural juices.



Keyaan's offers weekly specials and events that draw a crowd of expats and locals alike. If you want to sample as many empanada flavors as possible, you'll appreciate Lunes de Locura, when mini empanadas are available for just €1 each (and larger ones for €2.50). There are also monthly language exchanges, giveaways, and much more on the horizon. Zakiya has big dreams for Keyaan's, hoping to one day turn it into an international chain with locations in London, Santo Domingo, and the United States. Her customers are already begging her to expand, so they can feed their newly formed empanada addictions no matter where in the world they may be.



For now, though, we'll have to be satisfied with this cozy café and its incredible power to transport us from the center of Madrid to the middle of the Caribbean. Keyaan's is unquestionably authentic, but it's so much more than that: it's a place where real homemade food takes center stage, giving us a taste not only of Dominican culture but also of the genuine tradition, dedication, and love that's folded into each and every empanada. No wonder we keep coming back for more.



Professional taste-tester Sophia enjoying Keyaan's specialties

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- **Address:** Calle Blasco de Garay, 10
- **Metro:** Argüelles and San Bernardo
- **Phone:** 915 99 38 76

Arts Club Madrid – Binge, don't purge

I pride myself on revelling in all things indulgent. My mantra is generally something along the lines 'Money – well you can't

take it with you' – which come rent day can be a problem. However, if there are treats to be had/bought/sniffed out, then I'm the girl to find them. Upon recently discovering the [Arts Club](#), I quickly realized that it was the kind of place where I'd happily blow my monthly food budget and then spend the remainder of the month wistfully eating beans on toast.

It is glam.



We're talking full on 'feels like you're on Sex and the City/channelling your inner Carrie Bradshaw' glam – which is a bit of a rare find in a city that prides itself on a lack of pretensions. In fact, walk into the [Arts Club](#) and it feels as though Carrie Bradshaw's name is written all over it – not literally, but you know what I mean. It's the kind of place that you need to pop your heels on for, unless you fancy looking like the proverbial fish out of water.

The food

The menu is a super tempting mix of Asian fusion (a cliché sounding genre I know but the food was anything but lame).

Date night



The Arts Club is coincidentally how to do a date night. This luxurious spot boasts an impressive beer, wine, and cocktail list; the chicest interior design *and* should someone else be paying (and can therefore stretch to the most sumptuous experience they have to offer) you can bag yourself a table/area for when the dinner part stops and the dancing part kicks in.

Being nestled in the heart of Barrio Salamanca helps it to retain its air of exclusivity but its laidback luxury is coincidentally part of its charm. Whilst it may be swish and swanky it's not intimidatingly so. I suggest, scarp that, I

insist that you don your gladrags and spend an evening with the pretty peeps of Madrid.

Photo credit: [Arts Club – Madrid](#)

Info

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
 - **Address:** Calle de Velázquez, 96
 - **Metro:** Núñez de Balboa
 - **Phone:** [648 96 58 39](#)
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Bosco de Lobos – a casual-chic restaurant in Chueca

Last month I reviewed the sexy, swish [Ana La Santa](#). If we were to talk in terms of siblings, whilst Ana La Santa may be the mature older brother in the dining out stakes, this means that Bosco de Lobos may be the cuter, younger sister. Smaller in size and with a less obvious position within the city (it's tucked away between Calle Fuencarral and Hortaleza) sort of straddling Malasaña and Chueca if you will, it's the ideal place for a simple lunch on their sun-kissed terraza or for a casual date night that won't break the bank.

The atmosphere was (on a Friday night) buzzing to say the least; packed with punters all gagging to sample their take on eclectic European fare, ranging from wood-fired pizzas, to steak tartare, to heaving pasta dishes. They do a little bit of everything and instead of this being to their detriment (like that friend you have who spreads themselves too thinly) it's all lip-smackingly good.



Like most, I enjoy dining out (ok, perhaps more than most) but I like to do so in places that lack pretention and that do simple things with style. Bosco de Lobos ticks both boxes. Special mention has to go our waitress, Iryna, who was a fountain of knowledge on the wine front, recommending the perfect Rioja to be paired with my steak. We rounded off the evening with a couple of puds and a G&T thrown in for good measure.

Speaking of round, that's exactly how my midriff felt after eating like a Queen. It doesn't hurt that the setting is as tasty as the food, lots of sultry low lighting and artfully dishevelled bookshelves, making the whole place feel cosily lived in rather than sterile Scandi in tone.

Unlike La Musa, they do take reso's so I implore you to make one – you can thank me later.

All photos from [Bosco de Lobos](#)

Bosco de Lobos

- [Facebook](#) & Instagram: [@boscodelobosmadrid](#)
 - **Address:** COAM, Calle de Hortaleza, 63
 - **Phone:** [915 24 94 64](#)
 - **Metro:** Alonso Martínez, Chueca & Tribunal
-

Oysteronomy: Think Outside the Shell

The world is your oyster!

That's the very appropriate slogan of Oysteronomy, a project dreamed up by a diverse team of culinary innovators who are dedicated to making dinner more than just another meal. The concept is both uniquely complex and deceptively simple. At its heart, it's an effort to bring the very best marine delicacies (caviar, king crab, sea urchins, and—of course—oysters) from the sea to your table.

More specifically, it's a Spanish brand that operates in various forms, adapting to the needs of restaurants, events, and individuals seeking a one-of-a-kind dining opportunity. It's a collaboration between various entities, including **Pop Secret** (a brand specializing in creative culinary and artistic events) and [Pol García](#), the celebrated Basque chef who's worked everywhere from London to Shanghai. But it's so much more than that.

Oysteronomy is a gastronomic experiment in combining preparation, presentation, and consumption to create a multisensory culinary experience.

So what exactly does that look like?

A few weeks ago I got to find out. I was lucky enough to attend the event that officially marked Oysteronomy's arrival in Madrid, a sold-out dinner held at the Cambridge Soho Club in Plaza de España. At the designated hour, twenty-four lucky guests were led beyond the elegant bar area to a private room decked out in marine decor and deep blue lighting, where the magic was set to take place.

The night began with wine and mingling, allowing the guests to get to know one another as they snacked on hors d'oeuvres. An expert team of bartenders and servers attended to the guests and made sure that no one's glass was ever empty.



In an interesting twist, the first oysters of the night were paired with top-quality sakes from the gourmet importer [Salvioni&Alomar](#). Expert Pablo Alomar explained the elaboration and advantages of sake, an underappreciated but up-and-coming beverage in the Spanish gastronomic scene, and invited the guests to sample a few choice varieties.





Not long after, Chef García emerged with the second round of oysters. These were accompanied by a swirling fog of liquid nitrogen and several gourmet toppings—eggplant, caviar, and *leche de tigre*, to name a few—some of which were injected directly into the oysters with a plastic syringe. Quite a spectacle, indeed.



The guests were then seated around tables set with seashells and sprinkled with salt, primed and ready for the main event.



The first course of the night consisted of—you guessed it—an oyster, this time still hidden inside its shell. The diners were instructed to tap it with their forks, allowing them to lift the lid and discover the flavors of cucumber and spicy mustard with which it had been infused.



Next came the final oyster of the night, served on a bed of salt and swimming in a creamy and indulgent sauce. This was followed by a salad of caviar and crab, served in miniscule glass jars with tiny spoons to match.



Each course was accompanied by a detailed explanation of its

composition, origin, and flavor profile, delivered to the diners by the chef along with Emma Hidalgo and Julieta Arévalo, the organizers of the event. A DJ provided mood music, varying the soundtrack as each new dish was served. The wine, of course, continued to flow.





And then, just when it seemed like the night might be winding down, the real show began. A tray of king crab legs was placed atop a podium at the front of the room. As a hush fell over the diners, Chef García produced a pan of flaming liquid, which he then poured directly onto the crab, touching it up with a small handheld torch as needed. You heard it here first: flambéed crab legs just might be the newest—and hottest—definition of dinner and a show.







The final savory course was a surprise departure from the marine theme of the event: *carne de vaca brava de lidia*, served juicy and rare (in more ways than one). This unique variety of beef comes from free-range bulls raised for the increasingly controversial tradition of *toreo* (bullfighting). What could be more quintessentially Spanish than that?



Photo courtesy of Oysteronomy

Just in case anyone had yet to be impressed, the meal was wrapped up with a dessert that looked more like modern art than your average ice cream; an abstract spread of frozen sugary creations atop an edible tablecloth, accompanied by smoky tendrils of liquid nitrogen.



Photo courtesy of Oysteronomy



A round of masterfully prepared cocktails closed out the evening, giving the guests time to sit back, relax, and reflect on a night that was full of surprises.

From the first glass of wine to the last grain of salt, Oysteronomy's first event in Madrid was masterfully executed, beautifully designed, and altogether unique. I have little doubt that everyone in attendance will be talking about it for weeks to come. The team behind Oysteronomy has announced their presence in the capital city—and they've certainly made a splash.

Who knew oysters could be so photogenic?



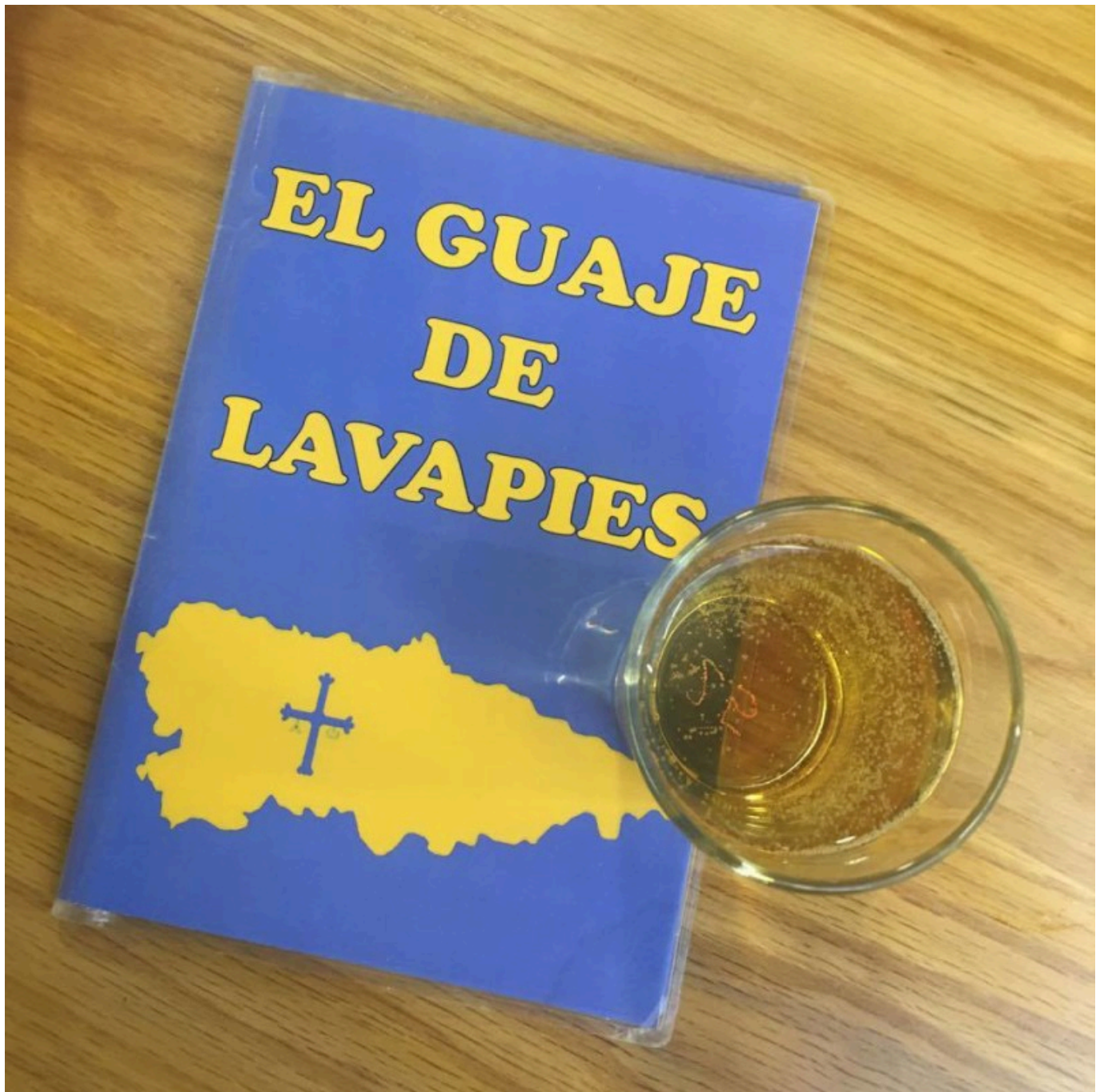
Info

For more information and upcoming events, check out Oysteronomy's [Facebook page](#) and the Pop Secret [website](#).

El Guaje de Lavapiés, an Authentic Asturian Oasis

Tucked into the [Mercado de San Fernando](#) is a tiny piece of Asturias. From the *queso gamoneu* to the blue-and-yellow flags marking their territory on every spare inch of the bar, you'll feel like you're really there.

[El Guaje de Lavapiés](#) is a *sidrería* that offers some of the most high-quality Asturian ciders, cheeses, and cured meats Madrid has to offer.



Rafael, the owner, is known around town as “[El Guaje](#),” a term used to refer to someone younger than you in Asturias. El Guaje opened up shop 10 months ago, and is happy with his success, although his dream is to open a full-size restaurant.



Is the space enormous? No. Does it have wifi? Also no. But what it does have it much better: delicious food, good prices, and no big chain of production and distribution—everything comes straight from our northern neighbors and is grown and made naturally.

Here you see El Guaje's *tosta con membrillo y cabrales*—toast with quince paste and blue cheese produced by rural dairy farmers and cured in natural caves (€3.50).



Of course, you can also buy these products in bulk to take home and enjoy later.



But if you're like me, and nothing hits the spot like a good craft beer, El Guaje's got you covered, with a selection from Caleya of pale ales, IPAs, ambers, etc., as well as your trusty Estrella and Mahou.



If you're lucky, you'll arrive in time for the show—there's an open space at the center of the market, which happens to be right in front of this bar, where they put on dancing shows, plays, and other cultural events.

iPuxa Asturias!

Information

- [Facebook](#)
- Address: C/ Embajadores, 41 inside [Mercado de San Fernando](#)
- Hours: Vary by the day, but typical market hours. Most business on weekends!

PS: Right in front of El Guaje is another one of our favorite stands, [Mercado de Lisboa](#). Check it out!