

Mercadillo Lisboa: A fun Portuguese snack bar in Mercado San Fernando

Brand-new Portuguese eatery Mercadillo Lisboa was waiting for the right moment to join the *mercado* scene until, six weeks ago, just in time for Tapapiés, it finally opened up in the best spot in [Mercado San Fernando](#). Enter through the main doors, head straight to the middle and turn right – they're there next to the fun bar Sondelata, which sells blue wine and carrot cava.

Mercadillo Lisboa is owned and run by three pals – two from Lisbon and one from the Canary Islands. Only two of them are in this photo because the other is camera-shy – he hid around the corner.

This is a great place to get authentic Portuguese food, from a variety of quiches and the classic *Pastéis de Belém*, to *empanadas*, *arancini* and everything *bacalao*. Here are a few photos of their snack food, very proudly displayed by the jolliest of the three musketeers:



Vegetarian spinach quiche



There are lots of quiches here



Empanadas and cod croquettes



Arancini



Strawberry cheesecake (wow)

You can also buy a selection of Portuguese beers and wines (including *vinho verde*), plus an almond liqueur (*licor de amêndoa*) specially driven over from Portugal by the guy on the right. I bought their last bottle a couple of weeks ago and with it came this story – suddenly €12 seemed like an absolute steal. You'll be glad to know that they've since been back to Portugal and brought another few bottles for us, but get it while you can – or I will!



Lots of Portuguese wines and liqueurs



A selection of Portuguese beers

Pull up a chair at Mercadillo Lisboa or mingle in its sphere of influence with a *vinho verde* and a *bocadillo de bacalao*. And just so you know, you'll probably bump into me.

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- **Address:** C/ Embajadores, 41
- **Metro:** Lavapiés/Embajadores

Opening hours:

- *Mon: Fri: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm – midnight*
- *Sat: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm*
- *Sun: 11:00 am – 5:00 pm*

Taco Maya: A brand-new no-frills taco joint

José Manuel – a well-known chef in the Madrid taco scene – has just opened a brand new, no-frills taco joint in Madrid with his partner, Joe. This colourful and fun eatery is located in a beautiful old building just a five-minute walk from barrio Lavapiés, and has a lovely chilled terrace plus a cosy dining area inside.



Taco Maya's cosy, minimalist dining area

It's possible that you may have stumbled across José Manuel before: he used to own [Taquería Maya](#) in Huertas, where José met Joe! With a new team member and a more relaxed location, [Taco Maya](#) has a winning formula, and dare I say the best Mexican food I've had in Madrid?

THE FOOD

Everything is made from scratch by José himself, from the nachos to the tacos and every ingredient is bought in fresh that morning. It's for this reason that the menu sometimes varies depending on what order comes in that day, and there's an array of tacos, quesadillas and nachos to try.



The menu – full of options for all!

This is what we had:



Lemon and Strawberry Margaritas

First of all, the Lemon and Strawberry Margaritas are incredible – like nothing you’ve ever had before, I promise! The strong kick of tequila was also a great start to the evening.



The Nachos

We had three types of nachos: Courgette and corn from the cob (vegan), Guacamole and coriander (also vegan), and beef. All were absolutely delicious, and the guacamole was like something I'd make at home in secret so that I could put in as much coriander and fresh red onion as I wanted.



The Beef Tacos



2 x Cheese Tacos and 2 x Lamb Tacos

The beef and guacamole tacos were juicy and moreish, and that extra squeeze of lime cut through all that tender meat perfectly. The veggie options included cheese and guacamole quesadillas, but pictured above we have courgette tacos and two tacos with a creamy vegetable and corn mix and plenty of fresh coriander on top. Having said all that, the tacos themselves were so fresh and you could really decipher their flavour.



Tequila!

To end the evening, José Manuel offered us a wonderfully smooth tequila. He also gave us a salt-sugar-chilli mix for the usual tequila ritual, and now I'll never be able to have just salt again.



José Manuel himself!

The tacos are great and the terrace is a real treat. This humble eatery has a bright future – check it out and be a part of it.

Info

- **Address:** Paseo de Santa María de la Cabeza, 60
- **Metro:** Embajadores
- [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
- Phone number: 911 733 374 / 642 194 285

Also check out:

- [Tacos, tamales and tequila: Madrid's best Mexican joints!](#)

Casa Jaguar: a jungle paradise in central Madrid

After a long, hot summer, Madrid is starting to wake up again as people slowly trickle back from their holidays. If you've recently returned and the thought of going back to work or school is getting you down, then do not despair! There's a fabulous new restaurant in town called [Casa Jaguar](#) and it's the perfect antidote to those post-holiday blues.



Tucked away on a side street near Ópera, Casa Jaguar opened just before the summer. It's owned by four business partners, one of whom is also the owner of [Camoatí](#) (another of my favourite restaurants in Madrid, you must try it if you haven't already!). Walk through the door and you feel like you

could be in another country. The huge Rousseau-inspired jungle mural, wicker chairs, wooden tables and palette of browns and greens blend perfectly to create an ambience that is both exotic and cosy.



The large, wooden-topped bar is the perfect place to sit and have a drink whilst chatting to the lovely Fabian (another of the owners). He'll whip you up a delicious cocktail, or you can choose from the large variety of Latin American beers and carefully curated wine list.



And that's before I even get started on the food. My goodness, the food! I've visited Casa Jaguar for both lunch and dinner, and everything I've tried has been exquisite. From Tuesday to Friday they offer a *menú del día* for the bargainous price of 12 euros, which includes a starter, a choice of two mains (one is always a veggie option) and dessert or coffee. Best of all, the menu changes every day so there's never a chance to get bored!



I went for dinner the other evening with a couple of friends and the food was even tastier. We ordered a starter of roasted potato and yucca wedges with guacamole and a Peruvian spicy cheese sauce, which we managed to polish off in about 30 seconds.



For my main course, I decided to stick with the vegetarian theme and ordered beetroot and sweetcorn risotto with spinach, sun-dried tomatoes and goat's cheese – absolutely divine.



Cat (a die-hard carnivore) opted for the beer and honey braised pork with sweet potato mash. This got a big thumbs-up from her.



Ella went for the tropical shrimp with pineapple, coconut milk and rum, with coriander rice on crunchy green banana. As delicious as it sounds (so delicious that she snaffled a piece of pineapple before I could take a photo!).



The whole menu is awash with delicious Latin American ingredients and flavours. The desserts looked amazing too, although we were all too full to try them! Everything is very reasonably priced and the service is fantastic. Jaguar you? After my visits to Casa Jaguar, very happy!



Info

- Casa Jaguar [Website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
- Address: Calle de los Caños del Peral 9
- Metro: Ópera, Callao, Santo Domingo
- Telephone: 910 245 712
- Opening hours: Tuesday-Thursday 13h-16:30h, 21h-00h, Friday-Saturday 13h-16:30h, 21h-01h, Closed Sunday and Monday (*Currently closed for lunch in August but full opening hours resuming 6th Sept onwards*)

(First photo courtesy of Casa Jaguar's [Facebook](#) page)

Abrásame, delicious Caribbean food in Malasaña

Situated just off Calle Pez, [Abrásame](#) is a fantastic restaurant specializing in traditional Caribbean and Latin American cuisine such as grilled chicken, arepas and tostones, at great prices.

I went with James on a Friday night and we were quickly greeted by Carmen, one of the owners, who guided us through the menu. Their specialty is **pollo a la brasa (charcoal-grilled chicken)**, made with love and marinated in a secret sauce (she did let out there's ginger in it).



We also couldn't resist ordering the ribs marinated in orange and honey, so we shared half portions of each. Both were

packed with flavor, incredibly tender and not too greasy at all, something I much appreciate.



Their **arepas** are also musts according to Carmen. I had the delicious **reina** with chicken and avocado, and James ordered the **carne mechada** which was truly unbelievable (€4.40 each). They came with two homemade sauces: **Abrásame Piri Piri** (spicy) and **Guasacaca** (mojo verde), a traditional Venezuelan sauce made with avocado and parsley that I loved and slathered over everything. I'll be dreaming about these till I go back for more.



To top it off, we heeded Carmen's advice once again and ordered the **quesillo**, which to my surprise has no cheese in it! It's similar to flan but oh so much better. It was seriously to die for – if you're going to share it, a battle will surely go down to get the last bite.



After wiping our plates clean and finishing off our beers, we got the chance to chat with both the owners, Carmen (from Extremadura) and Ronald (from Venezuela). Both have called Madrid home for over 15 years, having lived in Malasaña since they first arrived. They decided to open Abrásame six months ago because they noticed Madrid lacked authentic and well-made ***pollo a la brasa***.

At first they were going to open a take-away place but because preparing this dish requires a big grill with a large ventilation system, they ended up creating a full-on restaurant that seats around 35 people. The space is very welcoming and well-designed. They also have a comfy couch you can wait on if you decide to order to go. One of their main sources of business is takeaway and home delivery.

So, folks, with such delicious food at [prices](#) this good, I

wouldn't think twice about getting your home-cooked Caribbean-Latin American flavor fix here!

Info

[Website](#) & [Facebook](#)

Address: Andrés Borrego, 16, Malasaña.

Metro: Noviciado

Go Crazy for Cannibal.

New restaurant openings (or in fact any kind of opening) within Madrid are pretty much ten a penny. When strolling round any of the barrios, you'd be hard pressed to not spy an exposed brick or a jam jar cocktail vying for your attention, in what's becoming an increasingly crammed marketplace.

However, there are some new spots that feel no need for fanfare and know full well that the masses are going to flock in their droves. [Cannibal](#) holds this covetable spot. The restaurant equivalent of someone tall, dark and handsome – Cannibal is poised to become the darling of the Madrid restaurant scene and you won't just need to take my word for it; you could ask anyone who was there last Saturday (when it was packed to the rafters).



Madrid non-newbies will remember that the site of Cannibal once housed the infamous brunch spot 'Cafe Oliver' and when it closed its doors, many mourned the loss. So imagine my excitement whilst on my daily walk to work when I spied renovations.



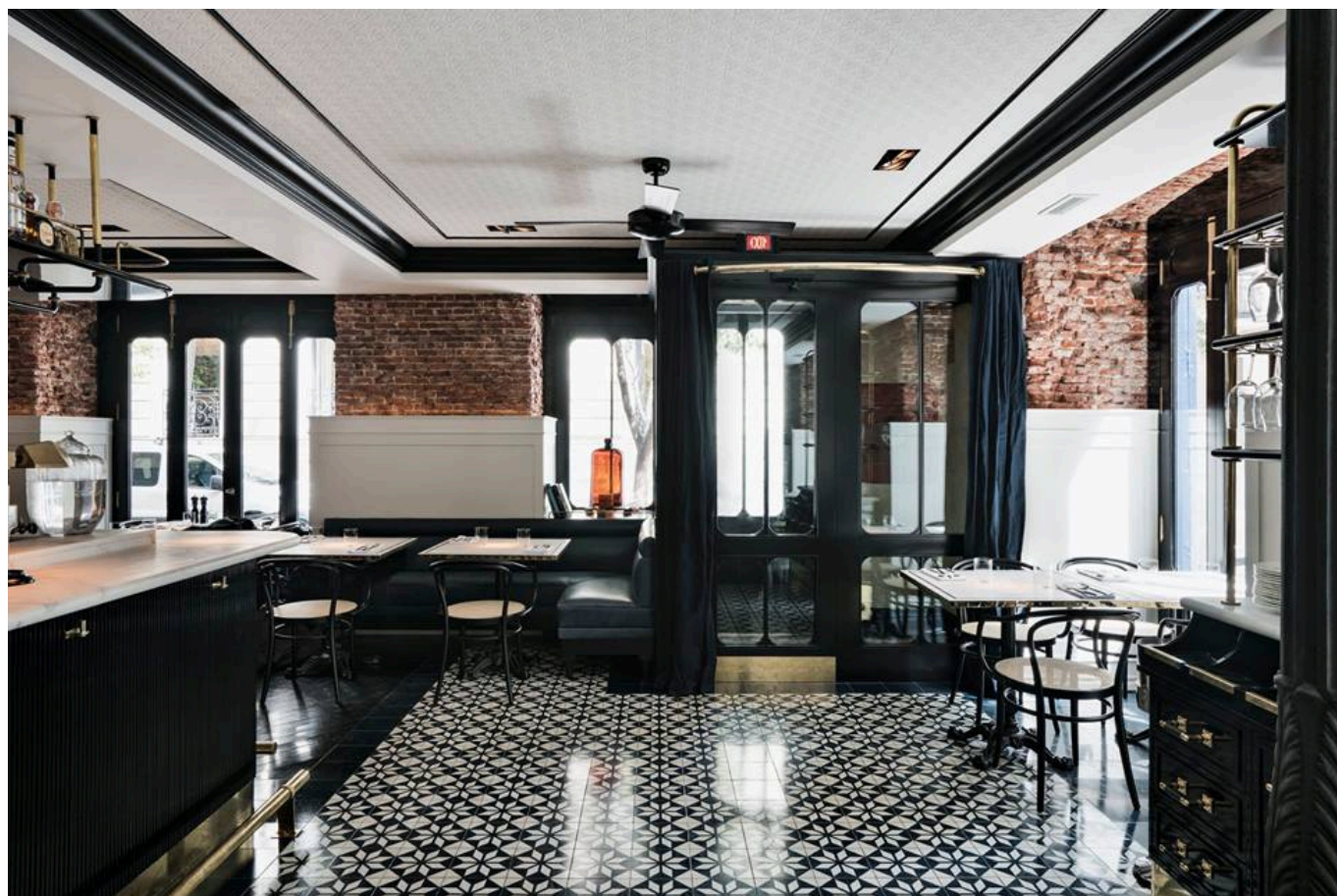
Now painted in an inky blue hue, the newly opened Cannibal is hard to miss. The name alludes to what's on offer dinner wise. The raw stuff. Tartare. Ceviche. Carpaccio. But don't despair if you're not a fan of the cold stuff, the menu offers a mean hamburger and THE most delish Peruvian Pork dish that was inhaled within mere minutes.



Now I could wax lyrical about just how good the food was – because it truly was. We're talking last meal type claims (if like me burrata and steak carpaccio is your idea of food heaven). But it wasn't just the food that had my company and

me swooning; it was the service.

In a country where asking for the bill is usually met with a grunt, the team at Cannibal couldn't have been more charming or attentive – much to the glee of my dinner companions. They happily talked through the menu with genuine interest, they were knowledgeable about ingredients and at no point were our glasses empty. I know this kind of vibe is to be expected in a country like the states, but in the land of jamon this is rare.



It goes without saying that the decor satiated my interiors porn thirst and it didn't hurt to have a window seat on a balmy evening, where you would people watch over your dulce de leche pud.



Like all restaurants reviews, I'm always torn between spreading the word and keeping schtum for fear of a place becoming busier than the Bernabeu on a match day, but the secret's out.



Embrace your inner cannibal and happy feasting. Who cares if it's bikini season with food that good? That's what kaftan's are for.

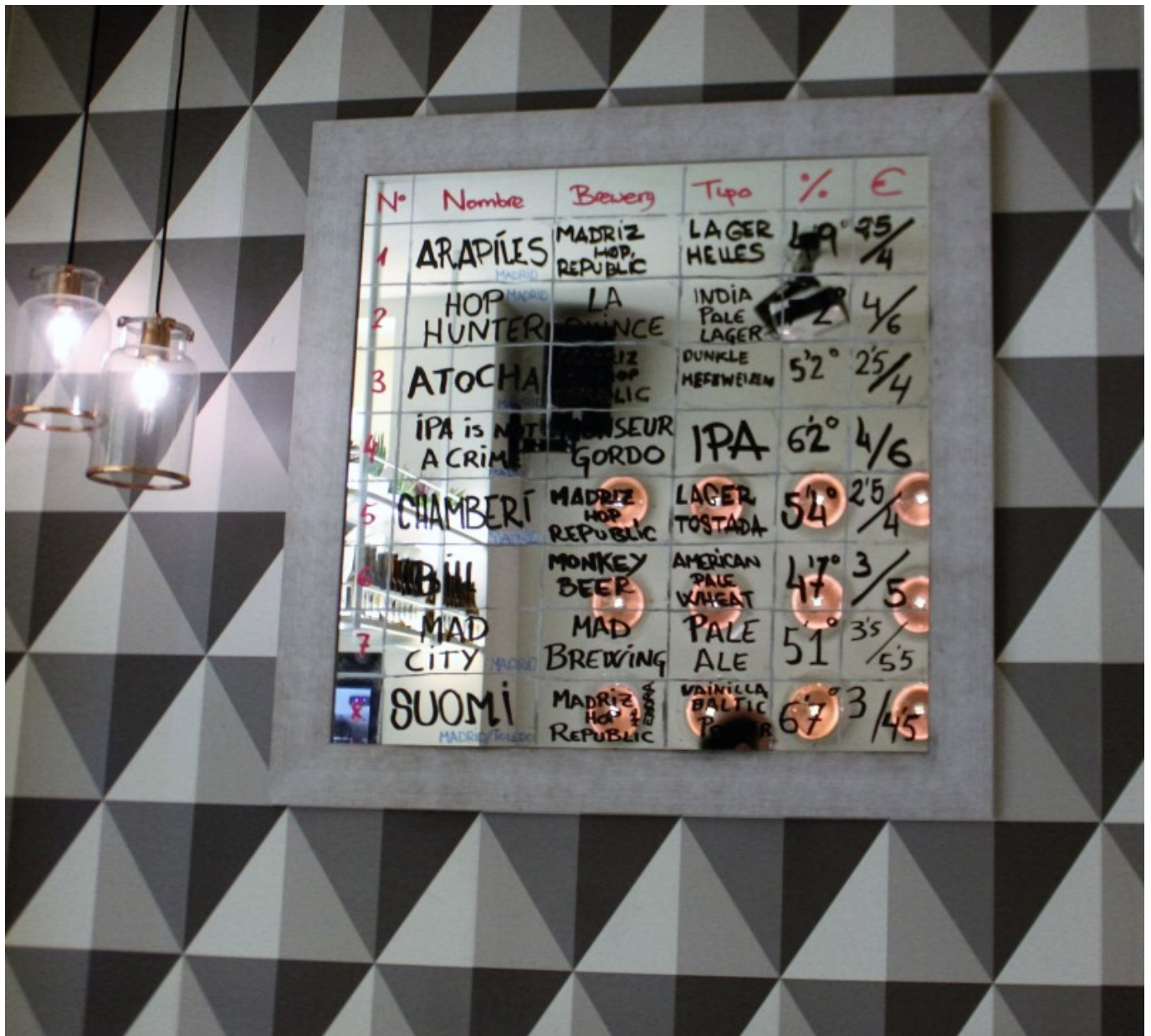
**All photos are from [Cannibal Raw Bar Madrid's FB page](#) & [Instagram](#)*

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Website](#) & [Instagram](#)
 - **Address:** Calle Almirante., 12, 28004 Madrid
 - **Phone:** 910 26 87 94
 - **Metro:** Chueca, Colón, Banco de España
-

Cervezas Madriz: Craft beer with Vietnamese treats in Chamberí

There is no doubt that Madrid has a long-standing relationship with beer, but the city's newly thriving craft beer scene is revitalizing the bars of its diverse neighborhoods. [Cervezas Madriz Hop Republic](#) attracts those in search of a damn good craft beer and does not disappoint. Each week, their eight taps rotate to include their own artisanal beers as well as a selection of other local and craft beers.



[Cervezas Madriz](#) exemplifies the balance-and-blend authenticity of Madrid from the heart of Chamberí on Calle Cardenal Cisneros. The chic bar draws inspiration from the city itself by naming its craft beers after barrios (including their very own Chamberí) while adding a unique spin to the menu by featuring Vietnamese-inspired tapas. The cat, symbol of Madrid residents, can be seen throughout the bar on every label and menu.



It was Thursday night; my friend Annette and I were seated on the last pair of bar stools except for those in the back corner. The lively atmosphere was amplified by the sounds of chatter and laughter while the bartender, Javi, gave us an overview of the beer list and suggested we try a tasting flight of some of the most popular.

And so we did.



Bar-goers are invited to educate themselves while they enjoy themselves at [Cervezas Madriz](#). The menus feature profiles on selected brews and enumerate the proper way to taste beer.



Following the steps, Annette and I tried the four beers on our flights. While my favorite was the Chamberí and hers was the blonde Arapíles, they all were perfectly paired with our tapas of dumplings and spring rolls.

Find your new favorite artisanal brew? Not to worry, Cervezas Madriz can bottle it for you take bring home.

Madriz offers a fresh, new atmosphere where craft beer connoisseurs can taste the spirit of Madrid.

Info

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

Address: Calle Cardinal Cisneros 21

Leave El Barrio for El Imparcial, in Tirso de Molina

I've started jokingly referring to Gran Via as my Madrid version of the River Thames. Should you know London, you'll know that when it comes to being a dweller of the affectionately nicknamed 'smog', you very much fall either the North or South camp thanks to the watery divide; and to this end I feel that the same can be said for Madders. If you're Fuencarral side of Gran Via you tend to spend your free time hot footing it around the streets of Malasaña and Chueca. Whereas if you veer down towards Sol, you can usually be found whiling away time between La Latina and Lavapiés. Either way, had I not crossed the 'symbolic' gulf provided by our very own Oxford Street equivalent, I may never have found [El Imparcial](#).



Inconspicuous and almost completely nondescript from the exterior, [El Imparcial](#) is quite the find upon entering. On the right hand side you are greeted by a pocket-sized bar where you can grab a coffee or a cana. However, make your way up the impressively sized staircases and you enter into an Aladdin's Cave of all round prettiness. I'm loathe to bandy around this term liberally, but the high ceilings and beautifully restored décor can almost be described as '*breath taking*' – close one eye and squint with the other and it does have a touch of the old Palace De Versailles about it.



Part concept store, part restaurant, El Imparcial straddles a line where you literally want **everything** that you see. Cocktails, they've got them in spades. Food, well there are morsels so delicious that it wouldn't be uncommon to not want to share your starter *apologies to my fam as I inhaled the bao buns without as much as a thought of 'did you want to try one?!'



Last but not least are the Wallpaper magazine worthy purchases waiting to adorn your casa. El Imparcial stocks a carefully (and I'd hazard a guess, lovingly) curated range of stationary, magazines and books – apt really considering the building once housed a newspaper.



Food wise they offer a complete smorgasbord of delights. We wolfed down (amongst other treats) Roasted black cod with miso edamame beans, oxtail croquettes and a lip smackingly good buttifara pizza with scamorza. Our lunch lasted for hours, dinner...even longer. It really is one of those places that seems to draw you in and make you not want to leave (or maybe after the array of cocktails placing one foot in front of other could've been tricky and partly to blame for the desire not to budge).

Did I mention just how pretty it is? *and that's just the staff. Book well ahead or find yourself lingering outside, nose pressed against the glass wanting to get in.

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Web](#)
 - **Address:** Calle Duque de Alba, 4, 28012 Madrid
 - **Metro:** Tirso de Molina
-

New Cucos, a family-style restaurant in Arturo Soria

Sometimes when I go out to have lunch or dinner I can't help but think that an important part of customer service is missing. So when I had dinner at New Cucos with my friend, when we went outside afterwards, we could only say how well we were treated and what a wonderful dinner we had.

New Cucos is a family-style restaurant in the neighborhood of Arturo Soria. This closeness and warmth can be seen in the way Juan (the owner) treats everyone who works there, as well as all the customers who are having dinner or lunch.

The restaurant is located on the quiet street of Arturo Soria. It is a large space with a perfect covered terrace for more intimate dinners or larger celebrations. The terrace provides a very cozy place where you can talk quietly without being bothered by the next table, and then there's also a smaller and equally cozy interior. The first day we decided to sit in inside, as Real Madrid was playing and we wanted to see the match. The second day we sat in the covered terrace, great decision.

The Food

New Cucos has a simple and traditional menu with very good quality ingredients. **The portions are generous, in fact, the most popular dishes on the menu are large sharing platters;** these can be great among a group of friends, or even just for two.

First we went for the warm burrata salad with cherry tomatoes. It was simply delicious. Great quality, never tried the burrata and I have to say I totally loved it.



Burrata Salad

Then we decided to try the spring rolls with vegetables and prawns – a highly recommended and delicious dish as well.



Spring rolls

By the time we had to eat our third dish, we were already full, but how can you say no to a plate of ravioli? These were filled with pumpkin and cheese sauce – simply spectacular and very rich. In fact the second time we went we couldn't help but order them again.



Ravioli

The second day we also ordered a delicious mixed salad. For me, nothing beats a well-prepared mixed salad.



Salad

As for the rest of the menu, in addition to the dishes to share, they have a small selection of fish and meat dishes. I have to say the South African ostrich burger looks delicious.

Prices are very reasonable. The first day we had three dishes, three glasses of wine and two beers for 47 euros. The second day our bill came out to 33 euros.

I'd also like to highlight once again that we received fantastic service both times we went; the staff was attentive, asking if everything was fine, and very importantly, without putting any pressure on us to leave. That sort of thing is very noticeable and makes your dinner even better.

Nothing else to add, **New Cucos** points out on Twitter: *"eat and drink in an oasis"* And I couldn't agree more.

So, *"Mucha mierda"* (or "break a leg") to Juan and the rest of his family. I'm sure we'll see each other again soon!

Info

- *Where: Calle Arturo Soria 84*
 - *Metro: Arturo Soria*
 - *Tf: 913774039*
 - [Twitter](#)
 - *Monday to Saturday 11 to 1.*
-

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](#).



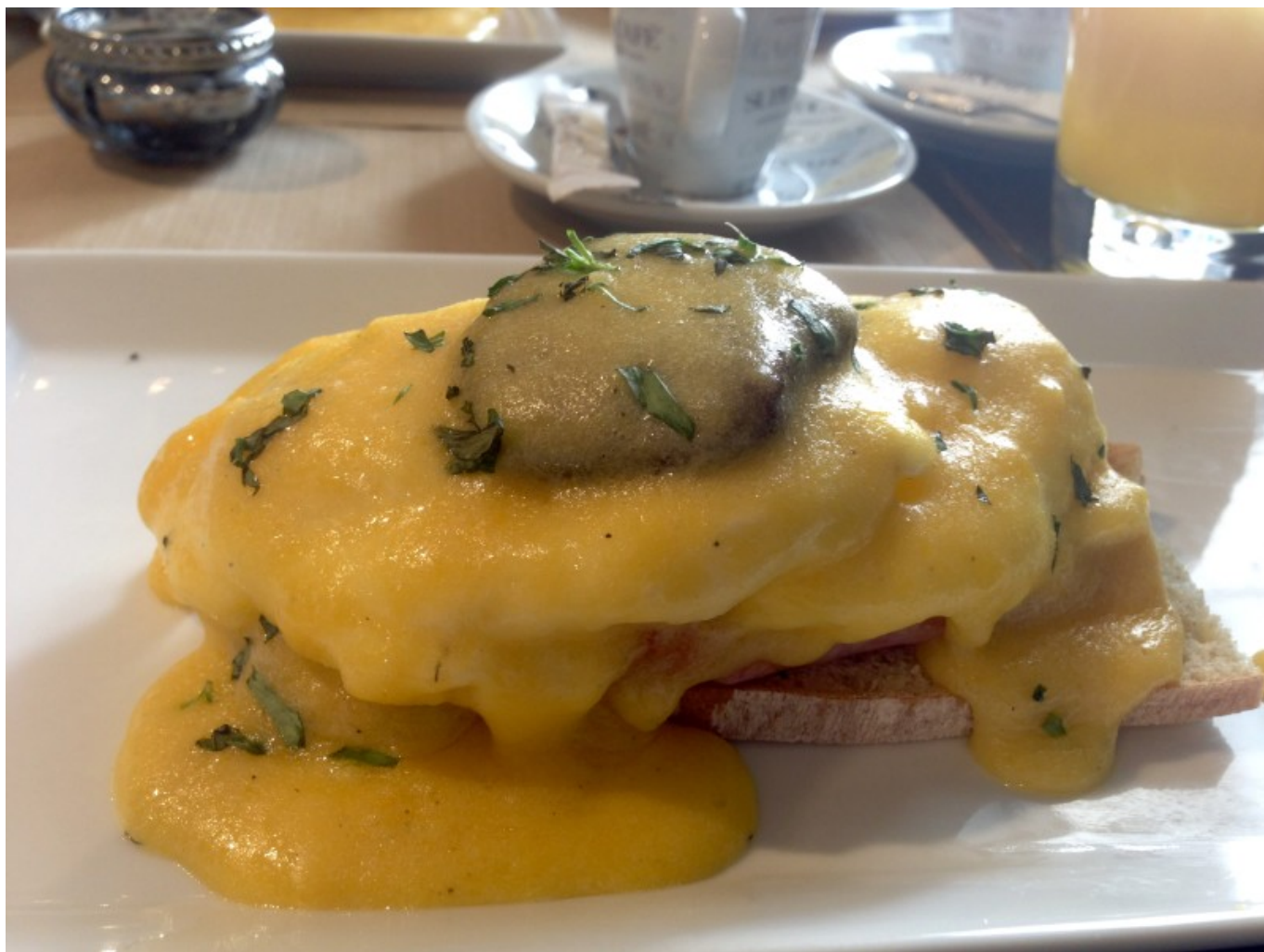
Fonty began serving brunch on Sundays at its first location on **Calle Castelló 12** a few years ago. Due to popular demand, the restaurant quickly started offering it on Saturdays as well. And now, you can also enjoy a weekend brunch at their second location, newly opened and just a 15 minute walk away 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

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- E-mail: hola@yokaloka.com