

# Proper Sound Cafe: Toma Cafe's newest venue combines local DJs with natural wines

Are you familiar with Toma Cafe? It's a craft coffee shop that has made quite the buzz with locals and expats alike, and has been [featured in Naked Madrid](#) more than once for its quality coffee and hip vibes. But Santiago, the owner of Toma Cafe, has a new venture in Toma's very own *tostador*. The coffee shop has partnered up with local DJs to bring you [Proper Sound Cafe](#).

Proper Sound Cafe (also considered Toma Cafe 3) is quite new, opening its doors in July, though the idea—if the Instagram is an indication—was conceived pre-Covid days. Open only a few days a week as of now (get there Thursday-Saturday from 20-24), the *tostador* is small and intimate.



Photo from [Proper Sound Cafe's IG](#)

Wooden benches line the sides with extra stools in place for seating. In the back you can see the high-quality espresso machine used for making their infamous lattes, and of course the machines used to make their own beans. Then, there's the DJ booth, framed by rows of vinyls and bottles of their wine selection.

"I wanted to bring people together with good coffee, good wine, good cheeses, good music," Santiago said when asked about the conception of Proper Sound Cafe as he sipped from a glass of *tinto*.

And he's not wrong. Besides being able to enjoy live music again (a missed form of communion amid the pandemic), this is

complemented by their menu of artisanal beer and natural wines.

Natural wines are a traditional way of making wine, fermented, and with less additives. Having gone a few times now, I've tried all 3 of their offerings: white, red, and orange. And all three have surprised me with their depth of flavor and range. The waiters (or are they still considered baristas?) are knowledgeable about their wine menu. Just tell them if you want something *suave* or *fuerte* or what flavors you enjoy, and they'll point you in the right direction. It led me to one of my favorites, Gilda from the Tiago Teles winery in Lisbon, Portugal, that was a mix of three types of grapes. Don't forget to try their cheese board or their fresh hummus served with crackers.

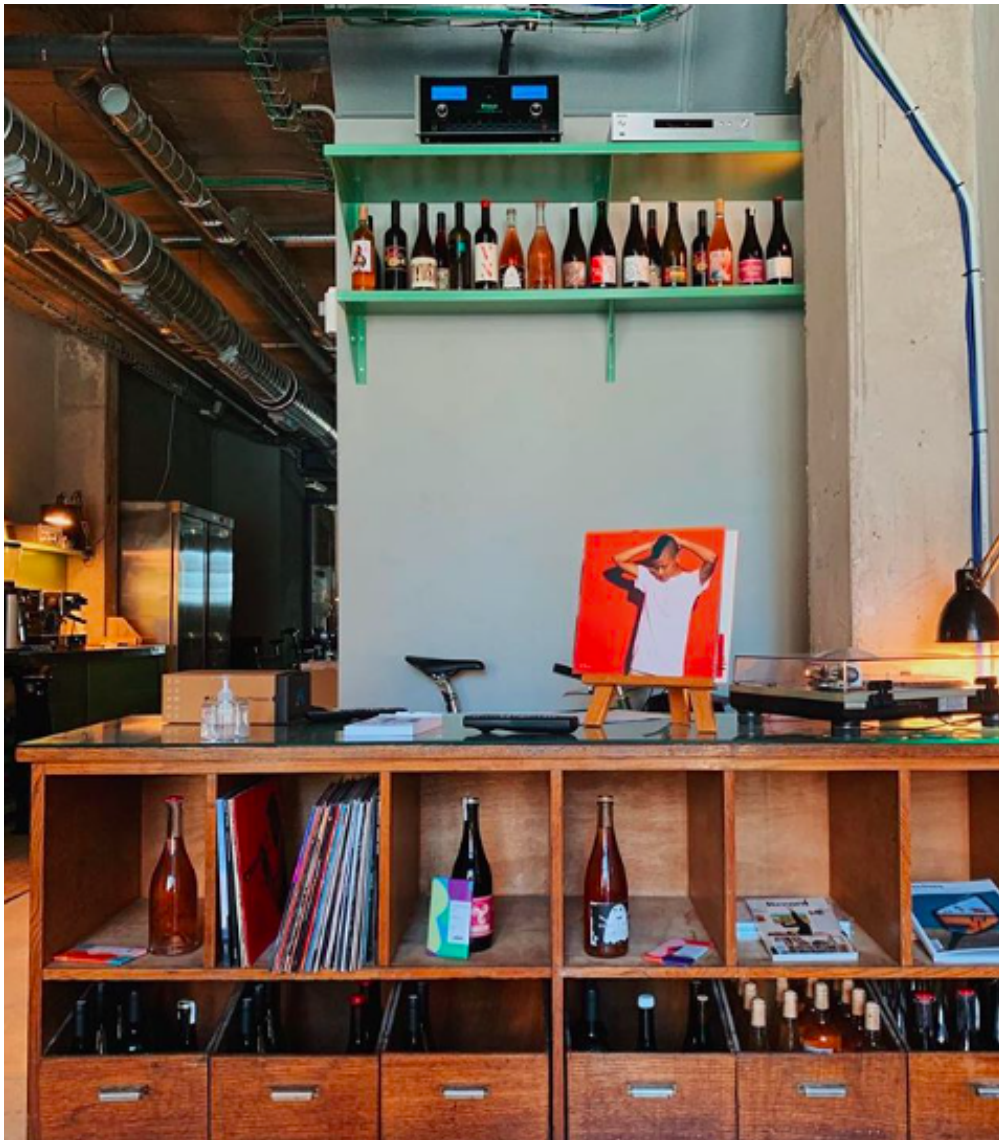


Photo from [Proper Sound Cafe's IG](#)

As for the music, Santiago goes with local DJs, some of them even close friends. The music ranges from classics to trip-hop to jazz (classic and future), and everything in between. The night that I went, [@Giansta](#) was playing. I sipped on my Gilda with my friend enjoying her wine choice as D'Angelo's 'Feel Like Makin' Love' and Billie Holiday's 'You Go to My Head' echoed from the overhead speakers.

The *discotecas* may be closed, but here at Proper Sound Cafe, I caught sight of a few people dancing when the music shifted towards disco and hip hop, with Beyonce's 'Drunk in Love' playing among the mix.



I spoke with Daniel, one of the baristas at Toma Cafe, on one of my first visits here, and asked him what their plans were. They hoped to expand towards daytime hours (which it seems they may be starting according to their Instagram), which is a great idea. I can only see this venue becoming more popular as time goes by and the cafe itself is quite intimate.

Check out their Instagram where they post updates on type of music to expect for the upcoming weekend, the names of the DJs, and any change in hours.

## Proper Sound Cafe:

- Instagram: [@propersoundcafe](#)
- Address: Calle de Raimundo Lulio, 16, 28010, Madrid
- Metro: Line 2 (Iglesias)
- Schedule: Thurs–Sat: 8pm–12am

## By Jessica Ramos

*Jessica is an LA-native freelance writer and teacher currently based in Madrid, Spain. When she's not busy writing, she's taking photos, watching horror films, and searching for rock bars around the city. Visit Jessica's [website](#) and follow her on instagram: [@artistandthecity](#)*

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# Living Room Concerts: Fighting for Madrid's artists with virtual concerts, small gatherings and more

Madrid music artists need your help! The five-year-old concert experience project [Living Room Concerts](#) had to cancel their entire spring season of in-person live concerts and did a reboot to online interactive virtual concerts. They have refocused their aim to focus on independent singer-songwriters, bands, composers and musicians who make their living mainly or solely from their music and who are now struggling.

The struggle is very real with the entire arts and entertainment industry for these performers to pay rent, bills and buy food. Living Room Concerts (LRC) made a full pivot to online concerts but we will begin having small concerts in open-air spaces this summer. To ensure the safety of those who would like to attend, we will follow strict protocol in regards to gatherings.

In the beginning of the pandemic, LRC took two months off to develop an online model that allows for live-streamed performances while keeping the key aspect of the experience—bringing people together to socialize and meet new friends. Another important aspect that was incorporated was to make it a ticketed event that would both support the artists and give people a private virtual space to interact with other people in an intimate and relaxed atmosphere.

**Many music artists were and still are giving their art away for free online, and this is a battle [Living Room Concerts](#) has been fighting on behalf of music artists for five years now...**

LRC strives to educate the public in understanding that making and performing music is a job, and that job should be compensated, not just in promotion, but with money—just like anyone else with a job. They have always priced their concert experiences very reasonably to make them as accessible and affordable as possible to all.

LRC is committed to highlighting music performers and entertainers in Madrid (or who have once lived in Madrid) in their regular concerts in-person and online. Concerts will be held all through June and into July. August is not yet decided, but in September they will return to a full programmed fall schedule, beginning the sixth series of the project. Concerts will be a mix of small in-person gatherings and virtual live streaming as needed.

Karla, LRC virtual concert attendee, says:

*This was one of the most fun experiences I've had in a long time. Who knew a livestream could be so much fun... I loved the intimacy, the collaborations, the stories. The (virtual) hugs!!! #mustdoagain*

# Upcoming show with Feroza Cayetano

This Saturday, talented singer-songwriter, entertainer and performer [Feroza Cayetano is performing a full virtual concert](#). In her music you will find strength, peace, love, beauty, an appreciation of self and the world, shelter from the storm. You can watch a [video of Feroza performing here](#).

[Feroza Cayetano](#) is a singer-songwriter whose roots are in Central America. Originally from Belize by way of Honduras and Guatemala, she has spent much of her life living as a foreigner in foreign lands—Jamaica, the US, Brazil, Trinidad & Tobago and now Spain. Her experiences of “otherness” had a deep emotional impact, and it was through song and melody that she learned to understand and harness her emotions.

With her guitar as her main medium, she write songs that come from the depths of her soul—songs of healing, light and darkness. Feroza writes about her personal truths and struggles with the hope that she is not alone in her feelings. Feroza believes in creating space for introspection and healing, and she encourages listeners to encounter their own emotions through hers.

She has been featured at the Belize International Yoga Festival 2017, the New Fire Festival 2018 and has performed on many platforms across the Caribbean. Two weeks ago, [Feroza was interviewed on live TV for the Open Your Eyes morning show in Belize](#), her homeland, talking about her latest single, “Prayer Song”, her Garifuna roots, her creative process during the lockdown in Spain, and the process of working on her upcoming album.

Feroza and the organizers at [Living Room Concerts](#) understand that everyone is itching to be outside after so many days inside, so they have three viewing options for attendees to help them support the project and the artist to keep both going.

## Viewing options:

### 1. Full Immersion

- *Join the livestream, participate in the online chat or organize a small watchparty with friends in-person in accordance with Madrid's rules on gatherings.*

### 2. Just Listening

- *Watch the livestream only. The same as above but skip the online chat either at home or wherever you go with your mobile device.*

### 3. Watch Later

- *See the live recording of the concert later at your convenience.*

All you need to do is to [click the ticket link in the Facebook event](#) to join concert-goers from all over the world online and [support this incredible independent music artist](#) by attending her live broadcast livestream show this Saturday.



# A history of the live concert series and new horizons

[Living Room Concerts](#) began as a members-only music group on Meetup of 2000+ members and hail from all different walks of life in Madrid, connected by our love and desire for indie singer-songwriters creating and performing their own original compositions for us. They ask unknown, little known, emerging, up-and-coming artists to come perform acoustic unplugged intimate concerts in private homes and unique spaces with attendance maximums of 20–50 people, depending on the size of the host's space.

[The LRC Meetup group](#) was started in June 2015 with three purposes in mind. The first is to discover new original music. The second is to remove the stage and have a more direct interaction and connection between performer and audience. The third is to create a space where concert-goers can meet new people and form genuine connections.

Over a year later they created a [Facebook page](#), [Instagram](#) account, and brought the option of attending to AirBnB Experiences. They were one of the first three music experiences in Madrid to appear on the AirBnB platform for the region.

And now that Living Room Concerts has moved their unique experience to the virtual world, they continue to bring the same intimate experience that made the unique experience so special and loved in the first place. Also, [Living Room Concerts](#) has some other offshoot branches with city- or country-specific focus on its roster for 2020: Tiny Kitchen

Concerts, Living Room Concerts NYC, Living Room Concerts Dubai, Living Room Concerts Amsterdam and Living Room Concerts Turkey.

## **Tiny Kitchen Concerts:** **baking and music combined**

### ORANGE ROSE BUD TART

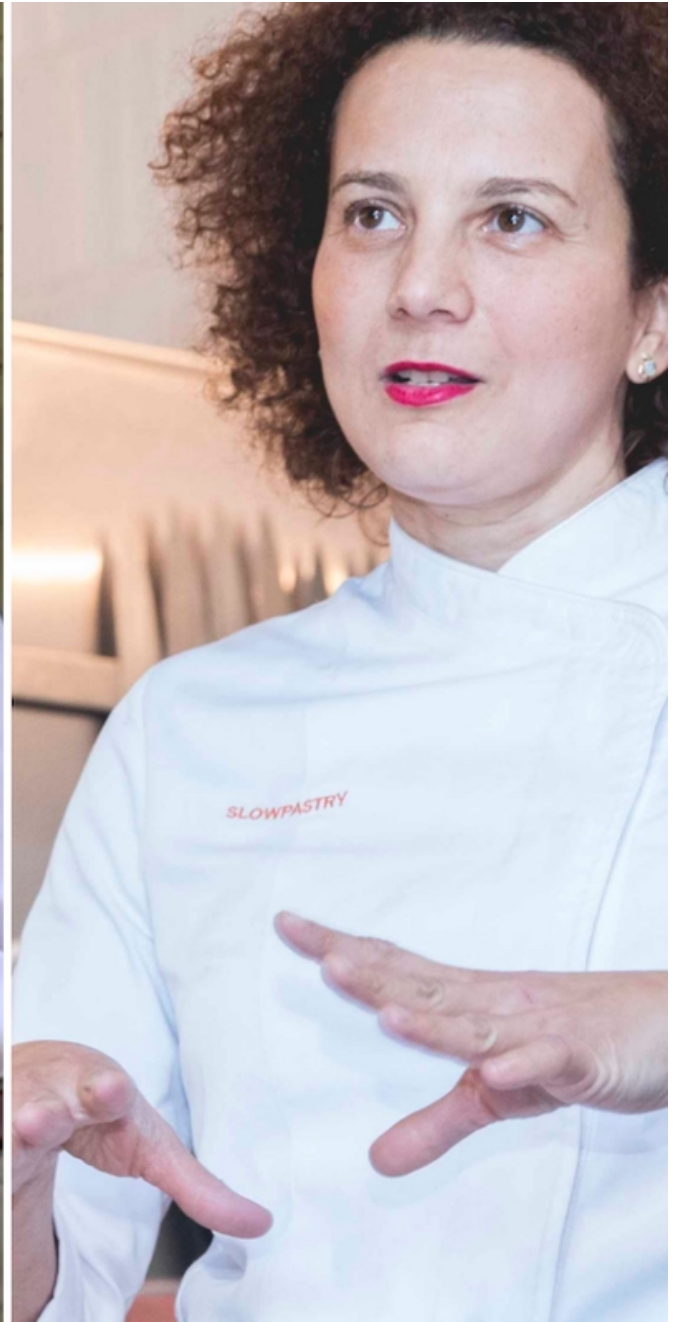


[The first Tiny Kitchen Concert](#) scheduled is to happen this Sunday at 6pm Madrid-time and is open to the international online backing and music-loving community. [Living Room Concerts](#) has teamed up with three other collaborators to offer a new international virtual experience of an integrated baking class and music concert, combined. Here's the event link on Facebook: [Baking an Orange Rose Bud Tart // Tiny Kitchen Concert LIVestream](#)

The experience takes those bits of time to rest, chill in the fridge or baking in the oven and fills those moments in with a

live music performance and opportunities for conversation with other people in the class. Attendees can get to know people who share their same passions—music, baking and more. With this first offering, the dish is an original recipe of an [Orange Rose Bud Tart](#) created by chef [Florence Elisabeth](#) of [Slowpastry](#), and the original music of singer-songwriter [Spencer Ayscue](#) of the Americana band [Migrant Birds](#) who will be streaming and playing live direct from his kitchen in Winston-Salem North Carolina.

**What do an entertainer from North Carolina (US) and a French pastry chef have in common?**



Spencer, who once lived in Madrid, and was a part of the emerging singer-songwriter music scene, performed for [Living Room Concerts](#) in 2015 and 2016 and was one of the first six concerts that helped LRC become what it is today. Chef [Florence Elizabeth](#) is a French pastry chef who lives here in Madrid and is a member of [Valentina Ruffoni](#)'s group [Eat In Madrid](#) to which [Nichole Hastings](#) of [Living Room Concerts](#) also belongs.

Singer-songwriter Spencer says:

*Some songs are enjoyable because of a catchy melody, and some because of good beat or riff, but it seems like the songs that really stick with you, the ones that come to you in the quiet moments or the raw moments, are the ones whose lyrics mean something, that tell a story or strike that emotional chord.*

Chef Florence says:

*My goal is to transmit my passion for high-quality pastry and demonstrate its power to create connections!*

The organizing team of [Tiny Kitchen Concerts](#) believe that food and music bring people together, create connections, and those moments mean everything ... their memories stay with you like the last note of a song hanging in the air which lingers like a delicious flavor on your tongue.

For those who want a next-level virtual experience where you get the benefit of learning to bake a French pastry dish from a French pastry chef, hear some new and original music, and meet interesting people from all over the world, need only to [visit the website to see the full description of the experience and register](#).



# Living Room Concerts around the world



The other four offshoot branches—Living Room Concerts NYC, Living Room Concerts Dubai, and Living Room Concerts Turkey, Living Room Concerts Amsterdam—are currently in development, with a focus on jazz music with artists who have been out of work since the beginning of lockdowns due to the pandemic crisis, and will be releasing virtual concert experiences soon.

A live virtual festival, *Yalla Festival* will kick off the concert series in Dubai on July 10th and 11th. Announcements for all of these will be made on the [LRC's website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Stay tuned, follow them on social media, Bookmark their website or [sign up for an experience today!](#)

## LRC press coverage:

- <https://youtu.be/IB2goUiRWxE>
- [http://cadenaser.com/programa/2018/01/10/fuego\\_y\\_chinche\\_tas/1515601425\\_343482.html](http://cadenaser.com/programa/2018/01/10/fuego_y_chinche_tas/1515601425_343482.html)
- <http://www.nakedmadrid.com/2018/01/23/weekend-planazo-living-room-concerts/>
- [https://www.instagram.com/p/BgWgHqFj0\\_W/?taken-by=localeur](https://www.instagram.com/p/BgWgHqFj0_W/?taken-by=localeur)

## LRC social media & websites:

- Meetup – [www.meetup.com/living-room-concerts-official](http://www.meetup.com/living-room-concerts-official)
- Website – [www.stylemylife.us/livingroomconcerts/](http://www.stylemylife.us/livingroomconcerts/)
- Facebook – [www.facebook.com/pg/livingroomconcerts/](http://www.facebook.com/pg/livingroomconcerts/)
- Instagram – [www.instagram.com/livingroomconcerts/](http://www.instagram.com/livingroomconcerts/)
- Youtube – [youtu.be/Vg6A0FZmhG0](https://youtu.be/Vg6A0FZmhG0)

## By Nichole Hastings

*You can connect with Nichole on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) & [Twitter](#). Here's Nichole's [website](#) (her ceramic artist page).*

*Feature image by @TillyMayPhotography: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) & [Website](#)*

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# Madrid Artist Showcase: Local Composer and Violinist Santiago Vokram

Madrid's vibrant music scene is full of gems and untold stories. Despite winter taking hold, there are many upcoming gigs with emerging artists and performers. For each of these, there is an untold story waiting to be showcased. [Santiago Vokram](#) is a local performing artist who wields a violin to serenade his audiences. I have had the good fortune to witness him in action and interview him about his life and creative journey.

My first impression of him was that his attire and unique sense of style reflected that **he is a person who breathes in creative energy**. He can take the sound to areas I didn't think violins were capable.

So without further ado, here's his story and upcoming dates so you, too, can experience his music.

## Santiago Vokram's musical story and style

Hailing from Mexico City, Santiago began his career as a musician there in Rock-Celtic fusion band *La Agonia de Leonara* at 13. He devoted himself fully to practicing the violin, and growing as a performer, citing it as an escape from the empty spaces of life. He would go on to study music at Mexico's elite *Escuela Nacional de Musica*.

Santi reminisced on how in his youth he was inspired by the

Spanish band *Mago de Oz* and when he learned that the group had split, he relocated to Madrid to join José Andrëa & *Uróoboros*, the next project of original *Mago de Oz* members.

Santi remained modest when describing his ascension to **dreaming of meeting his heroes and then having the opportunity to create alongside them** in his newly adopted country. He became deeply embedded in Madrid's thriving creative scene and began performing alongside other revered local artists such as [Ataca Paca](#), and on the international circuit with renowned Gypsy musician [Robby Lakatos](#).

## Where he is now



Santi's current band, which reflects his personal expression, is *La Sonrisa de Cibeles*. This trio seeks to create something unprecedented as a cross-over fusion of world-classical and pop music. Its members are **Santi on Violin, Benja Bravo on Double Bass and Germán Nuñez on Guitar**. Their goal is to help a younger audience expand their perception of "classical"

music and to disrupt the local music scene by introducing sounds with less precedent.

Santi's style as a performer ranges from classical to unconventional. The violin is an essential part of traditional mariachi groups and can be weaved into classical jazz, rock, folk and other improvisational contexts. In addition to his solo-acts and collaboration with other artists, Santi performs at upscale events and in luxury hotels seeking to provide a stylized ambiance. Notably, **Netflix has utilized Santiago as a creative asset** in the mariachi ensemble featured in *Narcos Mexico*.

## Our connection

What Santiago and I share is that both of us have collaborated on creative projects with the versatile public relations strategist, programmer, event planner, and art instructor Vesta Rounsaville. Vesta manages Santi's social media presence and coordinates his routine concerts in Madrid's venues. With her help, he has managed to expand his circle of collaborators to Madrid's international community of musicians, comedians, and actors. Additionally, his concerts have raised funds for [Madrid for Refugees](#), a prominent volunteer group.

Santi confided in me that as his visibility increased, he became exposed to uglier elements of the music scene noting that "adoration can become insanity or envy." He went on to say that **"If you have a vision, you need to improve it little by little."**

Despite a lack of a conventional road map to follow, coupled with at times a lack of financial security, **Santi never wavered in his pursuits** despite sometimes deeply missing his parents in Mexico, or his loved ones whenever he'd tour for prolonged periods.



## Upcoming shows

You can be captivated by Santiago's stage personality and violin prowess at Teatro-Bar Hipócritas (La Latina) this Saturday the 23rd at 22:00 where La Sonrisa de Cibeles will enchant their audience.

You can also catch them at [Microteatro Por Dinero](#)'s mini-concert festival Microsound in December (Malasaña/Gran Vía). Tickets for the concert in Teatro-Bar Hipócritas can be purchased via [Entradium](#).

# Santiago Vokram y La Sorrisa de Cibeles

POP jazz fusión Latina clásica

3 + 10 + 17 diciembre



microteatro

# Contact

If you would like for Santiago Vokram to perform at an event, or to utilize his work for branded content, contact [Vesta Rounsaville](#).

*If you know of any other Madrid-based artists that you'd like to showcase on Naked Madrid, don't hesitate to [get in touch with us to submit a post](#).*

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## Café Viralata – craft beer, delicious sandwiches, and live music

Jay (Dominican) and Selvi (Italian) are a music-loving couple who decided to put their passion for art and craft beer to good use: in June 2018, they opened Café Viralata in Lavapiés.

While it may be a new bar (with killer decor), it has nothing to do with the wave of pricey hipster joints that has flooded the neighborhood in recent years. No, señor, this place has some very simple raisons d'être: **good music, good food, and good vibes** at more-than-reasonable prices.

The facade piques the interest of passersby with some sassy paintings of doggos (thanks to [@ramon\\_amoros\\_ilustrador](#)) and a blackboard announcing the bar's upcoming events (more on that later).





Once inside, we start with what's important: beer! You've got everything **from your classic Estrella Galicia to impressive local IPAs**. They've been working closely with the local brewer community, specifically the guys at Abeerzing, to learn more about "el mundo cervecero." So the beer list is constantly growing and changing.

Café Viralata is also the first bar in Madrid to serve Beertag, a brand new beer from La Rioja brewed by Slezia Albino, one of Jay's oldest friends in Madrid from film school.



As for wine, they of course offer Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Verdejo, and Albariño, but they also recommend wines from Madrid, Alicante, Catalunya, Portugal, and Italy, and **their “tinto de verano” is actually made with an Australian wine.** As Jay says, if you’re a purist, you’ve really gotta keep an open mind here.

Once you’ve got your drink, you’ll probably want something to snack on (if you give a mouse a cookie...). Café Viralata goes way beyond your typical tortilla and olives.



Get started with appetizers like the hummus plate and the avocado toast, and if you're looking for something more substantial, go for one of their sandwiches, **which are made with love on fresh sourdough bread** from the folks at bakery [Madre Hizo Pan](#).

A house favorite is "La Piernotta," a Dominican-Italian version of the typical Dominican "*sandwich de pierna*" with *porchetta* (Italian, roasted, oven-baked pork) with smoked *scamorza* cheese, green peppers, and red onions.

And yes, **they also have fabulous vegetarian and vegan options.**

Lastly, if you have a sweet tooth like me, you can't leave without trying the homemade tiramisu, lovingly crafted by [@lacucinadicarlo](#) (who also provide their pastrami).





Once you've got your food and drink sorted, head to the back of the bar to check out what makes this place truly special: an intimate venue, complete with a piano (that Selvi's mom sent them from Italy!), guitars, a projector, two rows of chairs (I said intimate!), and lots of vinyl records to thumb through.

This space offers anything from **live acoustic concerts** to independent film screenings, theater, micro-theater, poetry readings, spoken word, stand-up comedy, magic shows...





**It just doesn't get much better than that.**

Oh, and if you're wondering what "viralata" means, this is what Jay had to say about it:

*In the Dominican Republic, and also in Portuguese-speaking countries such as Brazil, a 'VIRALATA' is what a stray dog and/or any animal or person of mixed race is called. 'VIRAR' means 'TO TURN' and 'LATA' means 'CAN', a reference to the way that strays 'turn cans' while searching for food; in our café, though, we're strippin' away any negative aspect that surviving and struggling through life may have in our modern society. The struggle is real and it makes us better people! So turn cans, dear viralatas, turn those freakin' cans!*

Me apunto.

PS: Stay tuned for Café Viralata's grand opening party...

## Info

- [Instagram](#) & [Facebook](#)
  - **Address:** Calle Olivar, 17
  - **Metro:** Tirso de Molina, Antón Martín, or Lavapiés
  - **Phone:** +34 912 96 88 26
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## Living Room Concerts – Weekend “Planazo” in Madrid

In Madrid there are hundreds, if not thousands of things to do on any given weekend. Doing a quick Google search for live music, for example, will show you multiple Top Ten lists of the most well-known spots. However, you won't find a live music venue more intimate than that of [Living Room Concerts](#). It's just like it sounds: concerts held in people's living rooms and you're invited.



Born in, yes, a living room, it was Nichole Hastings' idea to bring emerging and little known artists and their original music into the spotlight. In nomadic spirit, [LRC](#) moves around Madrid to different pre-approved flats in all barrios spreading new independent music around the city to as many guests as the particular living room (and guest list) can hold.





LRC has even put down roots in one fixed location in Malasaña, a cultural community center called [el Salón del Artista](#). On arrival, be prepared to be ushered in with a warm welcome from the owner of the flat and then find a seat so you can comfortably listen to the original music and stories behind the songs from, often bilingual, artists.



Once inside, it's easy to see that the diverse crowd has arrived expecting to meet new people and listen to original music that they couldn't hear anywhere else.





During any given concert you could hear independent Spanish artists singing in English or a multicultural group singing in some combination of languages. Because of this, the concerts feel inclusive and not limited to any particular group or musical taste.



If you're in Madrid alone or with friends, LRC will sit you within feet of an independent artist and among members of the Living Room Concerts' community in Madrid.

## Info

- Follow LRC on [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- To attend, the reservations work on the honor system but you do have to sign up through their [Facebook](#) page or their [MeetUp.com](#) page.
- Price: The event has a very reasonable cover which can

be turned into a “cover + open bar” for 3 euros more. Towards the end of the concert you can make a donation which goes right to the artists you’ve just met.

• **Links to artists** who’ve recently performed: [Taiacore](#), [BeMyFiasco](#), [David Roma](#)

**By Caitlin Mackenzie**

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# **Tapapiés: a guide to everyone’s favorite food and culture festival in Lavapiés**

It’s that time of year again. The air is turning chilly, the leaves are starting to change, and the millennial obsession with all things autumn is taking over social media. But here in Madrid, there’s a whole different reason to be excited. With October comes [Tapapiés](#), the annual festival that inundates the streets of the [Lavapiés neighborhood](#) with delicious food, cheap drinks, and live music.

For 11 days at the end of October (this year’s 7th edition lasts from October 19–29), dozens of restaurants and bars in Lavapiés offer a very special deal. Each one develops their own **signature tapa**, and offers it to the public for just **€1.50**. For an extra euro, you can also get a *botellín* (a 250 ml bottle of beer) to wash it down. The [event](#) is sponsored by Barcelona’s Estrella Damm, and at most places you can choose between a regular beer or Damm Lemon (beer and lemon soda).





A bar advertises its participation in Tapapiés with the festival's official poster.

**Lavapiés is known for its incredible cultural diversity**, with large immigrant populations from all over Africa, South America, the Middle East, and Central Asia. As a result, it's full of [international eateries](#) offering everything from [Senegalese thieboudienne](#) to Syrian sweets. A good number of these establishments participate in [Tapapiés](#), which means that in one night you can practically eat your way around the world, just by exploring the neighborhood's sloping streets.



The delicious “Crepioca” tapa from Saboor Tapioca

In other words, **this [festival](#) is every adventurous foodie’s dream come true.** There are various strategies for tackling the overwhelming amount of options (**122 tapas in total**) and chaotic crowds. You can simply wander around, dropping into whatever bars you come across and trying your luck. Each one usually advertises a photograph of their tapa with a huge poster out front, so you’ll know more or less what to expect. Don’t forget to stop by [Mercado de San Fernando](#) and Mercado Antón Martín, where several vendors also participate.



A tray of tapas at Toscanaccio Italian bakery: marinated eggplant, walnuts, goat cheese, and sun-dried tomato pesto on spelt bread

If you're (A) a picky/allergy-prone eater or (B) determined to try as many different tapas as possible, you might want to consider a more organized strategy. Ask for a brochure at any of the participating places—you'll get a **pocket-sized booklet that contains a list of every single tapa being offered**, as well as a color photograph and a detailed ingredients list for each. They're all plotted on a numbered map, so you can plan out your ideal route. Be warned, though: it's hard to stick to a set plan when there are so many tempting options around every corner.





Dishing out the special tapa at Maloka Bar Brasileiro: yuca in a coconut milk sauce with peanut pesto

My advice? Grab a group of friends who aren't afraid to elbow their way through some crowds and try as many new things as possible. This is not an activity for those who would rather settle in at a cozy restaurant for a relaxed dinner.

Expect to eat standing up while balancing a beer in one hand a a tapa in the other, and shouting at each other just to be heard. **It's messy, it's crazy, it's loud—and it's totally worth it.** The frenetic and colorful spirit of the neighborhood is never more alive than on a night of [Tapapiés](#).





“Carrillada melosa” from Maldito Querer: braised beef cheeks in a sauce of caramelized onion, garlic, herbs, and Pedro Ximénez reduction

To complete the experience, it’s essential to attend one of the [various outdoor performances](#) by local musicians, dancers, and entertainers that take place throughout the event. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons and evenings, you can catch live music and shows at nine different designated spots (a full schedule is included in the brochure). There’s also the simultaneous **Chollopiés** festival, which **spotlights the neighborhood’s local businesses** by offering [special discounts](#) on certain products.



Maybe you live in Lavapiés and want to get to know your *barrio* better. Maybe you've never been and want to see what all the hype is about. Or maybe you're just hungry, thirsty, and low on cash. Whatever the case, [Tapapiés](#) is bound to become one of your favorite events in Madrid. If you go into it with **the right mindset, a healthy appetite, and a handful of coins**, I guarantee that come next October, there'll only be one thing on your mind. Who needs pumpkin spice lattes, anyway?

## Info

- [Facebook](#)
- [Website](#)
- [Instagram](#)

Check out our roundup of [Tapapiés' offerings last year!](#)

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## El Sombrero Azul – pupusas, yuca, enchiladas and more

It's not uncommon for even the most veteran *madrileños* to stumble upon tucked-away eateries they've never noticed. That's exactly what happened to me when I was strolling along the surprisingly calm **Calle de las Hileras** near Plaza Mayor. The spicy smells stopped me in my tracks, but what brought me inside was the *menú del día* written on the window in puff paint.

Monday through Friday, [El Sombrero Azul](#) offers a *menú salvadoreño-mexicano* that includes a *bebida* (Coke products, beer, sangria, or wine) with a starter big enough to fill you up (like the *pupusas* shown below), a **cocktail** (margaritas, mojitos, you name it) along with a delicious main entree. And for dessert, you can choose from coffee/tea, cheesecake, *bizcocho de tres leches*, and more. **All for 12€.**





## What's a *pupusa*, you may ask?

Most countries have their own version of a warm, breaded 'sandwich' filled with meat, cheese, and/or veggies. Food pockets, if you will. **Pupusas are the food pockets of El Salvador**, and El Sombrero Azul has them down to a science. Shown above are two veggie versions, one with zucchini and the other with *frijoles* and cheese (my favorite).



Admittedly, I was a little disappointed in the main entree options, but only because I'm vegetarian. Meat lovers will feel right at home here among the ***pastelitos de carne, cazuela de cochinita pibil, tacos flauta, and the plato de carne.*** However, the accommodating staff offered me some pretty good alternatives, like fresh yuca (above) or ***huevos rancheros.***







If you have room after the first two courses, kick back with a fresh cocktail. Pictured is a delicious **blackberry margarita**, but they also have mojitos and micheladas, as well as fresh Mexican fruit juices and horchata (although those aren't part of the menú).

**TIP: The best time to go is during the week**, because on weekends and holidays the menú price is 15€.

Oh, and the same space hosts a totally different concept by night: it's called La Cueva de Lola, and it's all about Spanish food and flamenco shows. Post to come soon on that!

## Info

- [Facebook](#)
- Address: C/ Hileras 6
- Metro: Ópera or Sol



- Phone: 910 18 54 53

## Also check out:

- [Tacos, tamales and tequila: Madrid's best Mexican joints!](#)
  - [Sahuaro, Mexican magic in the heart of Madrid](#)
- 

# 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
-



# Café Barbieri: A 114-year-old Art Nouveau café in Lavapiés

[Café Barbieri](#) first brought modernist charm to Madrid's working class district, Lavapiés, in 1902, and although the *barrio* has evolved dramatically over the last 114 years, the interior of this elegant bar hasn't changed one bit.

Some things have changed though – Café Barbieri is owned by a charismatic chap from New Delhi and staffed with bilingual youngthings. It also now has a small terrace, but this is not why you'd come here – its appeal is truly the interior.

The whole place is lined with mirrors which back then were a symbol of wealth. These mirrors are now aging well, stained a smoky bronze colour with dots of grey rust creeping in from the edges. The ceiling is framed with grids of ornate girders that are connected to decorative cast-iron beams, typical of older buildings in Lavapiés. Although never on, there are ceiling fans too – something increasingly rare in Madrid.

At the back of the bar is a grand piano on a small raised stage. Almost every evening there's a live music session often featuring the piano, and this place does food too – typical Spanish stuff but with an edge.

The worn white marble table tops and red velvet seating lining the dining area mark this place out as opulent, but that's really not the vibe – it's chilled and cosy and attracts a spectrum of people, from the intrepid tourist who's braved it down the hill, to the unassuming local who fancies a read of one of the papers on offer.



Café Barbieri by day



Café Barbieri's beautiful ornate ceiling





The grand piano taking centre stage, and look at all those beautiful mirrors





Look at that original tiled floor!



The bar has a great selection of spirits & vermouth on tap





Café Barbieri by night

Café Barbieri is also on the same street as the Greek foodie place, [Egeo](#), so there you have it, your night is planned!

## Info

- C/Ave María 45
  - Metro: Lavapiés
  - [Website](#) [Facebook](#)
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# Zoco Comidero: Eat well and feel great at Madrid's first (and only) flexitarian restaurant

## NOW CLOSED

I don't eat meat, but one of my life rules is: **never go to a Vegetarian restaurant.**

I've been jaded by too many poorly thought-out ventures where the food is created from fear of meat rather than love of veg. Vegan and vegetarian cuisine has existed all over the world for millennia, so where did the culinary black hole come from and why has it left us in such a veg-hating dark age feeling hungry and dehydrated?

Last week, a friend of mine recommended veggie-friendly [Zoco Comidero](#) and I might just have seen **the light at the end of the tunnel.**



**Rarely do you come across a restaurant with this much respect for food.** The concept: flexitarian – a primarily vegetarian



diet which occasionally includes meat or fish. In other words, there's something for everyone.

No longer does the vegetarian friend have to eat a *racion de patatas bravas* for dinner, or the carnivorous friend have to suffer through a fish-less fillet or a tofurkey burger (a what?).

At Zoco Comidero, the menu is hugely varied and every dish is put together professionally. Everything on your plate hit the kitchen worktop raw and intact and has been **prepared freshly with no external influences.**

We kicked off Tuesday evening with a kale and kiwi smoothie, an arepa stuffed with an almond-based vegan cheese and chlorella pesto (a delicious black seaweed pesto).





Feeling healthy yet? We shared two *tostas*: one with goat's cheese and a juicy baked tomato and the other with a generous portion of beetroot-marinated raw salmon and homemade mustard. For mains we had a risotto made with kamut (an ancient large wheat grain), and prawn chop suey.







This was all underlined with a trio of deserts: an intense gooey dark chocolate brownie (the secret ingredient: avocado), quinoa 'cheesecake' and a face-twisting lemon curd.



By now the word "healthy" is in the background. **Exotic flavours, textures and presentation** of the food resonates more than anything else. I love Marbell's zen and her way of transmitting it to us urban wildlife through edible flowers and doses of colour.





This is Marbell, the brains and owner of Zoco Comidero

Zoco Comidero is just off the beaten track but in the real heart of Madrid's old town. The restaurant has an elegant interior with low lighting, good music and a bonus view of the palace. There's also a fun downstairs lounge which gets going on weekends. Every Saturday and Sunday, Marbell tries to organise a chilled bit of live music from 10:30 pm onwards **so stick around after dinner for good DJs and Venezuelan bands.**

## Info

- [Web](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Calle Moreria 11
- **Metro:** La Latina