

I went loco for Le Coco.

Picture the scene. Lashing rain. Lightning illuminating the dirty teabag coloured sky. Rumbblings of thunder so fierce that part of my apartment window collapsed (true story, that's not just for dramatic effect). Oh and have I mentioned that this is July in Madrid, not November in Blighty? So you can only imagine my level of *ganas* when it came to venturing out into a monsoon on a bleak and downright bloody freezing Thursday evening.



The reason for rallying was that my Mum was in town and I didn't fancy having to try (and realistically fail) to produce dinner from the slim pickings in my fridge. So off we waded to [Le Coco](#); a short stroll over to the neighbouring barrio of Chueca with our brollies in tow. From the outside Le Coco is dinky and unassuming, well, that's what I could make out from my rain soaked fringe at least. But upon entering, not only

was it a haven of dryness, it was a cosy one at that.



As soon as we were seated (which was immediate) we were handed a drinks menu. We happily plumped for pisco sours, which brightened both of our moods – shame the same couldn't be said for the colour of clouds that loomed ominously. Anyways, enough of my weather related whining, let's get cracking on the food because boy we did we eat our bodyweight. In our defence, as it felt like winter outside we definitely packed in enough dishes to help us with insulation.



So first there were prawn dumplings, plump, juicy and incredibly moor-ish. I ate 6 without breaking a sweat – although sweat I did, when I dragged myself to a 9am pilates class the following day to work them off. Next came tempura langoustine that rendered me speechless. Friends will confirm that this only usually happens when I'm asleep, so for a dish of something shrimpy to shut me up, well, we're talking about the unfathomable here. They were amazing. Genuinely. [Le Coco](#) is worth a visit for this reason alone.



Now some peeps might have been full after those couple of helpings, not us. Remember the rain, well it had started up again by this point, which gave us the perfect excuse to plump for tacos, a burrata the size of my fist, before ending with the crème de la crème of pasta dishes – and I've been to Puglia, I think I know my stuff. It heaved with lobster, crab and cream. I don't know what they did with these three ingredients but it was downright orgasmic. Hell, if that dish were a man, maybe I'd date it – frankly it was infinitely more delicious than the bulk of Tinder's offerings. I jest, but really, for a place that looked on first glance similar in style to many, many places in the area, the food was anything but predictable.



We wrapped the evening up with a couple of celebratory cavas for making it out of the house to battle the elements. And I left having forgotten that my red suede shoes (or my Dorothy/Wizard of Oz shoes as I liked to affectionately refer to them) are basically now akin to soggy road kill. Sometimes things don't look that pretty from the outside, Le Coco goes to prove that it's what's on the inside that counts.



Info

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
 - **Address:** Calle de Barbieri, 15
 - **Metro:** Chueca
 - **Phone:** 91 521 99 55
-

NAP, real Neapolitan pizza in the heart of Lavapiés

Ahh, pizza. The star of so many childhood memories, last minute dinners, college dorm room feasts, and drunken (or sober) declarations of love. At this point pizza is more than a food; it's a cultural emblem, no matter what country you're in.



But if you want the real deal, you'll have to go to Naples, where the original Margherita pizza was invented in 1889. And if RyanAir flights to Italy aren't quite within your budget, head to NAP—Neapolitan Authentic Pizza in Madrid.

As soon as you walk through the doors, you'll be greeted by a rainbow-hued mural by Okuda, the famed Spanish street artist. Check out the wood-fired pizza oven (essential for true Neapolitan crust) as you settle into the bright and airy space.

Obviously, the specialty here is pizza. They offer everything from the classic Margherita (tomato, mozzarella, olive oil, basil, and parmesan) to spicy salami and speck, to anchovies and eggplant, to innovative daily specials. If you want to get creative, you can add as many extra toppings as you like (for a small fee).

The pizza is made in the true Neapolitan style: a thin, doughy, and bubbly crust composed of nothing but flour, yeast, water, and salt, topped with tantalizingly fresh ingredients. Each one is enough to fill up one very hungry diner—but if you're like me you'll want to save some for lunch (or breakfast) tomorrow. At 6-10 euros per pie, it's affordable either way.



Marinara pizza: tomato, garlic, olive oil, oregano, and basil

There's plenty more on the menu, too. Don't miss the

bruschetta, burrata, and baked eggplant, plus tiramisu for dessert. If you're going for the full experience, have a limoncello digestif, and then sit back and enjoy the satisfaction that only pizza can impart.



Eggplant bruschetta, one of the four varieties offered

Pizza may be beautiful in all its various forms (deep dish, frozen, square-shaped cafeteria style...) but if you ask me, nothing beats the original. Give me a charred and slightly sour crust with a thin layer of sweet ripe tomatoes, and I'm sold.

NAP provides just that: pizza in its simplest, truest, and freshest form. Forget Telepizza, get off your couch, and make the trek to Lavapiés—it's not Naples, but it might just be the next best thing.

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Calle Ave María, 19
- **Metro:** Lavapiés & Tirso de Molina
- **Phone:** 932 46 26 15

(Pro tip: NAP also has two locations in Barcelona; Madrid is the latest addition.)

Somos Restaurant & Garra Bar, the Jewel in Barceló Torre's Crown

Sometimes hotels are just a place to lay your head before an obscenely early flight – I mean, why else would you ever willingly opt to stay in a Holiday Inn? Then on other occasions, they're the scene of pure indulgence and relaxation (that's where [Mr and Mrs Smith](#) properties come into the equation). But more often than not, hotel restaurants remain unloved and overlooked in favour of their rooftop pools or swanky spas. The poor relation of the hotel bar as it were.

However, just last Tuesday, instead of dismissing Somos, the restaurant located inside the achingly chic Barceló Torre Hotel. I made myself a reso and headed towards the always vibrant Plaza de España to discover that Somos is very much

the jewel in this hotel's crown.



Not just a place to rest your weary self after a day pounding the city's pavements, Barceló Torre can be surmised as a luxury designer hotel, located in one of the most iconic buildings in Madrid. At first this felt like a bold claim from their PR team, but one that I can attest to having enjoyed nothing short of 5-star treatment; something that I could easily get used to.

First things first, the concept of the restaurant is actually genius – when you eat out as much as I do it's easy to get jaded by the standard gastronomical offerings, but not at Somos restaurant. Madrid is a city with a differing day and night scene which Somos sought to encapsulate through its very different menus.

I'm a sucker for attention to detail, but Somos has elevated this into an art form – let me explain. Somos is actually the first dual restaurant that evolves with the city. Everything

from your plates (which I was quite tempted to shove in my handbag), to the menu, to the breathtakingly beautiful skyline that Somos looks out onto, changes over the course of the day.

Case in point: the evening menu looks like a CD – for those of you who've spent much time in my beloved Madders, you'll know that Madrileños don't shy away from a fiesta, or a dancefloor for that matter. So this felt like a very fitting touch.





Back to the skyline, it's worth noting the setting is nothing short of being truly stunning. Each table faces outwards, so should you be tired of looking at your companions chops over your delicious dinner, you can cast your gaze over the city which never fails to impress.

If you've read one of my previous restaurant reviews (cheers Mum and Dad) you'll know that interiors are my porn. I mean it, I get giddy over a well upholstered chair like no other, therefore it's necessary to note that Somos has been decorated by the prestigious designer Jaime Hayón; an international icon of contemporary design and considered by *Time Magazine* as one of the top 100 important creators of our time. They weren't messing about with the dreamy decor.



What I ate basically reads like a roll call of my version of a last supper: cherry gazpacho, ceviche, marinated tuna with a delectable avocado hummus (yes, that's a thing), a perfectly seared ribeye fillet, finally rounded off with two puds as I sat and watched the sunset over Gran Via, Madrid's answer to Broadway.





Somos is the most recent offering from [Grupo Le Cocó](#) and with

there being whisperings of a new locale opening this September in Chamberí; it looks as though they're set to become quite the foodie tour de force. The entire experience from top to toe felt like an ode to the city that I've come to call home.

Call me sappy, but a trip to Somos made me fall in love with this city all over again. Admittedly this happens fairly often but make no mistake, dinner at Somos isn't an invitation – it's an obligation.

All images from Somos Restaurant

Somos Restaurant

- [Facebook](#) & Instagram: [@somosgarra](#)
- **Located in:** [Barceló Torre de Madrid](#)
- **Address:** Plaza de España, 18

La Musa Malasaña, the restaurant equivalent of a little black dress

According to Yves Saint Laurent, “Fashions fade, style is eternal.” And in my humble opinion he's absolutely spot on. Trends come and go, new restaurants pop up more often than I get my roots done (you heard it here first, no I'm not a natural blonde) and seemingly zeitgeist bars can often sink without trace.



However, some places become perennial favourites that barely need an introduction. Part of the fabric of the city, they become the kind of places so comfortable to visit, that they really are the foodie equivalent of popping on your favourite little black dress, you know, the one that makes you look hot to trot but requires minimal effort.



When struggling for dinner inspiration or in times of when you simply can't be bothered to cook (it happens, let's be honest) I head to [La Musa](#) – partly out of sheer convenience (it's about a 3 and half minute stroll from my flat, yes that's a personal best in stilettos) but trust me when I say it's nigh on impossible to ever spend more 20 euros on dinner AND drinks. Wine ordered, check. An abundance of tapas that's never swimming in grease and is both pleasing to the eye and not just the tum, double check.



Having recently gone an understated renovation, [La Musa Malasaña](#) is looking lovelier than ever – you know a bit like a friend having gone through a recent break up and has hit the gym, hard. My friend and I ordered a few small plates including one of their most infamous dishes called a ‘bomba’ – I still don’t quite understand what it is, but I will divulge that it’s carby (yes that’s a word) meaty and downright delish, so be sure to opt for one, if not two.



I always come away from La Musa with my appetite satiated and my purse (although feeling lighter) not depressingly so. They don't take reservations so I suggest you pop on your LBD, get in line with your twenty euro note in tow and enjoy.

Info

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

I lucked out at Luzi Bombon

I am a country girl by birth and now a bona-fide city girl by choice. However, the downside of living in Madrid means that I now rarely see greenery on a daily basis (unless you count the succulents that I 'try' to keep alive in my humble abode). But on the flipside, being an urban dweller gives me access to some of the fanciest places to eat, with the best part being that they're often right on my doorstep.



Whilst I love a Netflix binge like most millennials, I still relish any given opportunity to don my glad rags and go out for a proper slap up dinn. So dress up I did when I headed to Luzi Bombon with a suitably stylish friend in town, and wowzers did we enjoy a veritable feast from beginning to end.

Luzi Bombon isn't located in an area of Madrid that I often frequent, i.e. it's not within walking distance of my apartment. I had to treat myself to a taxi (partly due to the vertiginous heels that I was tottering about in) but it's undoubtedly central enough to appeal to both locals and out-of-towners alike.



What struck me first were the wall-to-wall photogenic diners – you won't just be salivating over the menu if the evening I visited was anything to go by. The clientele was as upscale as the perfectly mixed G&T that I was sipping on within minutes of arriving – a G'Vine in case you're interested.

It's a sexy venue; possibly the slinkiest of all the [Madrid-based Grupo Tragaluz](#) (which also runs [Bar Tomate](#)) offerings with low lighting casting an Insta-worthy filter over my dining companion. Now until recent years I'm not ashamed to admit that I had relatively simple tastes – but due to external influencers in the form of more adventurous friends, I'm starting to pride myself of never saying never and giving anything a go. In that spirit, I sampled as much as was humanly possible whilst wearing leather and not wanting to be forklifted out of the venue.



The standout star of the show was the giant ‘fruits de mer’ platter that caused the table to groan under its sheer weight. Recommended by the waitress who clearly knew her stuff, it was a-ma-zing and has turned me into a complete crab convert. Obviously it’s not the kind of thing that I’m whipping up at home, which gave the whole meal an even greater sense of occasion. Even as a novice foodie, I have told every man and his dog about that platter and now I’m urging you to hotfoot to Luzi Bombon and do the same.

Dinner doesn’t come cheap but if you’re looking to impress, aka maybe bag a second date with the object of your affection, Luzi Bombon is a fab place to pull out all of the stops. As someone who’s rarely lured out of her barrio, Luzi Bombon is well worth the cab ride and gym class that you’ll undoubtedly need to do the following day (in order to burn off every savoured calorie). If seafood platters and pretty peeps are your jam, Luzi Bombon is the (meal) ticket for you.

Luzi Bombon

- **Facebook & Instagram:** [@luzibombon](#)
 - **Address:** Paseo de la Castellana 35
 - **Phone:** 917 02 27 36
 - **Metro:** Rubén Darío
-

Yatai Market: Asian Street Food in the City Center

Move over San Miguel and San Antón—there's a new kind of market in town.

Let the buzzing neon signs and colorful lights lure you in to the latest addition to Madrid's foodie scene, the new mecca of an increasingly trendy culinary genre: Asian street food.

Located just off Plaza de Tirso de Molina, Cortezo Yatai Market unites several different vendors under one roof, letting diners sample all the greatest hits of East Asian *comida callejera*. It preserves the essence of the street food experience, with an atmosphere that's both casual and chaotic, laidback and lively. Its creative concept combines the shareable dishes, miniature portions, and social atmosphere of Spanish tapas culture with the **flavorful flair of Asian fusion cuisine**.



Various vendors are arranged around the perimeter of a large room, with high top tables and stools in the center. There's a bar in the back offering beer, wine, and cocktails—but if you want something a little more exotic, try a can of tamarind soda or coconut water.



Once you've got a drink in your hand, take a few minutes to wander around and explore your options (there are plenty). At HOTBAO you can take your pick from a variety of stuffed bao buns and several kinds of dimsum.



Right next door, Funky Chen offers pad Thai, noodles, and rice topped with everything from veggies to duck to soft-shell crab.

On the other side of the room, colorful curries tempt customers to the counter of Asia Cañi. Don't forget to try one of their rolls, with creative fillings like *ceviche de chicharrones* and *cocido madrileño* (yes, you read that right).



To the right of Asia Cañi you'll find Le Japonais, offering sushi, nigiri, maki, and poke bowls. To the left, there's Ramen Suk, with steaming noodles that are a far cry from the powdered soup you might be picturing.

Before you make any decisions, don't forget to check out Smok Mok, tucked away in the market's smaller and quieter back room. It may be set apart from the main area, but with everything from vegan options to smoked Japanese BBQ meatballs—and the only dessert on offer at the market—you definitely don't want to miss it.



The best thing about Yatai Market? **It's got something for everyone.** Whether you're looking for a hearty bowl of curry to warm the soul or you want to sample several smaller dishes, you can design your dinner (or lunch) experience to match your mood.



Pad Thai from Funky Chen

Not to mention the fact that prices are more than reasonable: you can get a roll or dimsum for as little as €1 or a bao for €4. Larger dishes range from €6 to €14. Asia Cañi even offers combo meals that include 2 rolls, curry, rice, and a drink for just €9.



Veggie fried rice

If you're in the mood for something different than the same old neighborhood bar or quiet café, this is the place for you. With the spirit of a classic Madrid market, the hipster vibes of a Malasaña pop-up, and the exotic flavors of a faraway continent, Yatai Market should be at the top of your list.

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
 - **Address:** Calle Doctor Cortezo, 10
 - **Metro:** Tirso de Molina and Sol
-

Bar Tomate – modest minimalism at its best

Eight years ago I took the plunge and upped sticks to move to Madrid (or Madders as I now affectionately refer to it). The city was in the midst of a financial crisis so bleak, that people went out for a solitary caña rather than cañas – or so it seemed and so I was told.

Fast forward to 2017 and the city feels as though it's booming once again. Not a week passes by without a new opening, a Mercado of some sort throwing back its doors and the now oh-so-popular weekly After Brunch events.

So in such a crowded marketplace how do you stand out? Well, having the kudos of being part of the Grupo Tragaluz alumni doesn't hurt, which is why Bar Tomate has proven to be one of my fail-safe favourites over the years.



Located in the increasingly well-heeled and chic neighbourhood of Chamberí, which coincidentally is one of my favourite Madrid *barrios*, Bar Tomate ticks all the boxes offering breakfast, lunch, dinner *a rare find in a city where *siesta* culture can result in a complete shutdown during certain hours – never ideal if you're prone to getting hungry!

The vibe is rustic and Mediterranean with the emphasis on simple, fresh ingredients and classics cooked well.



I went along for dinner on a Friday night and chowed down like a Queen – decisive isn't my strong point so what was sampled read like an A-Z of deliciousness; ranging from breaded asparagus, chicken tacos, jalapeño spiced shrimp and a burrata the size of my head because, quite frankly, what meal isn't improved with the addition of cheese! This was naturally all chased down with an array of cocktails that made for an interesting walk home.

If simplicity is your thing I can't recommend Bar Tomate

enough. From the minimalist décor to the unfussiness and ease of the service, Bar Tomate's strongpoint comes in its lack of pretentiousness when in reality, it has everything to shout about.

Ditch the flats for an evening, as when the DJ appears (as he does on both a Friday and Saturday night) you're gonna want to get your groove on. Guys, I'll leave that up to you.

All photos from Bar Tomate

Bar Tomate

- [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- **Address:** Fernando El Santo, 26
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- **Metro:** Colon

Buns & Bones: mouthwatering baos & Asian fusion near Malasaña

If you're not yet hip to the 'bao' trend that's winning the hearts of foodies everywhere, we'll give you the scoop: a bao is a super-soft steamed bun with various fillings ranging from meat to veggies. If Tom Haverford were to describe it, he'd likely call it a mouth pillow. Sometimes they're sealed at the

top like a dumpling, sometimes they're flattened out and served like a thick taco, but one thing remains the same: **they are always fire.**



Pictured: three baos, the vegan (eggplant, hummus, walnuts, & sundried tomato), the veggie (tofu tempura with pisto), & the Tonkatsu (Iberian pork, coleslaw, & tonkatsu sauce).

Restaurants in Madrid are quickly jumping on the bandwagon ('baowagon,' if you will), but one stands out for its prices, location, decor, varied menu, and incredible flavors: [Buns & Bones](#), a streetfood oasis on near Plaza España and Gran Vía.



This place has much more than baos, though. **Their menu is broken down into three sections:** 'buns' (baos), 'bones' (meat and fish dishes), and 'ni buns ni bones' (other options), which includes alluring and modern Asian dishes such as yellowtail sashimi with ponzu sauce and jalapeño, mint hanoi spring rolls, charcoal-grilled octopus, or the farmer's market vegetable tempura.



We started with some delicious edamame and veggie tempura (both vegetarian options).

As you can see, **there's something for everyone here:** the vegans and the meat lovers, the healthy and the indulgent, the daring and the traditional...



Go starving if you're planning on ordering the BBQ spareribs. They are bigger than my face.



'Poke,' another foodie trend sweeping the nation, is a Hawaiian salmon and veggie rice dish with chili threads. Healthy and bursting with flavor.

If you somehow have room for dessert, they have some unique options—we tried the **green tea panna cotta with chocolate chips**, and it was delightfully light and not overly sugary.



Buns & Bones is open for lunch and dinner (except on Mondays) and has two other locations: in the Antón Martín market and in Chamberí. All have a super laidback atmosphere and are open late, inviting you to digest over a Corona while you admire the quirky decor (one wall reads 'reserved for Banksy').





Info:

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** C/ San Bernardo, 12
- **Metro:** Santo Domingo, Plaza de España
- **Phone:** +34 913 92 89 53

Jack Percoca: The Little

Italian Joint with Big Hearty Food

“The amount of food on the plate says a lot about the person who put it on the plate,” laughs Luca. “I serve my customers like I serve my family.”

Naples-born Luca is a professional restaurateur. For eight years, he travelled around the world opening and running game-changing restaurants before finally settling in Madrid and opening Jack Percoca Bar & Kitchen, a cosy little Italian restaurant in the heart of the city’s Conde Duque district.



The bar area



The cosy dining area with lots of natural light at lunchtime

The sheer wealth of experience Luca has picked up over the years becomes clear from the moment you walk in. A great deal of thought has gone into the style and layout: **the lighting is soft, there's no 'short-straw' table, the service is attentive, and the food is flawless.**

FOOD FOR FOUR (TO EIGHT)

To start, we ordered Burrata Tricolore, served on a bed of rocket with slices of perfectly ripe tomato and drizzled with Luca's famous basil pesto. We also ordered a bowl of "Smoking Bullets": deep-fried, cheese and ham-filled rigatoni, like an Italian take on croquettes. We loved the tomato-laden Bruschetta and, on the opposite end of all spectrums, the (intensely) Creamy Meatballs.



Smoking Bullets, Creamy Meatballs, Bruschetta and Burrata Tricolore



The Bruschetta

Feeling full yet? For mains, we had the Spaghetti Burger – a succulent home-made burger perched on a crispy basket of spaghetti – and the Steak Tartare with chunky chips. The Donna Sofia pizza is right up there with the best pizzas in Madrid, but the colossal **Truffle Mac and Cheese** was, as usual, the **star of the show.**



The Spaghetti Burger



The Truffle Mac 'n' Cheese

Despite being pretty full, we ordered the Margherita Cheesecake and the Amaretto Connection for all of us to share, because when a dessert is good enough (and you know what I'm talking about here), you'll find room for it.



The Amaretto Connection

WELCOME TO PROHIBITION-ERA NEW YORK

This excerpt from the menu sets the scene for the restaurant perfectly:

"It's the era of prohibition and the state has declared war on alcohol. Social downfall in America has reached rock bottom and liquor is squarely to blame. But New York City has been hit by a new wave of crime – the black market. The word on the street is that immoral men are brewing their own high-proof alcohol. Hip flasks of this "moonshine" are stuffed into the boots of liberated women to supply hundreds of "speakeasies". It's also the beginning of the underground jazz movement –

inspiration is thriving in these illegal alcohol-fueled parties, but only the coolest guys and dolls in town are in the know. It was here, in a speakeasy beneath the streets of New York, that Sandy met Jack..."

The infamous black market liquors of the Prohibition era echo throughout Luca's cocktails, which are **strong enough to cut through all three hearty courses and still leave you feeling merry.**



A selection of the classic cocktails

Jack Percoca Bar & Kitchen is humbly priced, but with big hearty food, strong cocktails and a charming atmosphere. This Little Italy eatery is determined to keep Madrid's restaurant

scene on its toes.

INFO

- Jack Percoca's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
 - Address: [Calle Conde Duque 14](#)
 - Call Luca to reserve: **915 13 50 44**
 - Opening hours: Mon-Sun 13.00 – 16.00 / 19.00 – 01.00
-

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 *bollitos 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

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