

The Story of the Rastro's Radical Flower Market

Every Sunday, one of the most authentic experiences in Madrid takes form. With little evidence of commercialization, the Rastro, Madrid's infamous flea market, continues to draw locals, exchange students and tourists. The charm of the market oozes the Spanish ambiance that many are searching for in between the ever-growing number of chain restaurants and carbon copy stores. It's been around for over 400 years and has survived two dictatorships and countless wars, so it's safe to say that it will be around for some time.

The Rastro extends from La Latina to Ronda de Toledo, but the best finds are in the winding streets in between. Many start by getting out at the La Latina metro station and then walking to Plaza de Cascorro, considered by many as the start of the Rastro. The contrasting smell of burning incense sticks and the sight of people rummaging through second-hand Levi's reminds you that this is a market that caters for all.

As you battle your way through the crowds on Calle de la Ribera de Curtidores, and past the statue of soldier Eloy Gonzalo, the market livens up to the soundtrack of African drummers and eccentric jazz musicians. Now is a good time to sit and enjoy the first caña of the day and engross yourself in the busyness of the Rastro.

Further up is Calle Carlos Arniches where you can browse through old books. Or perhaps you may want to get lost in the expensive antiques of Plaza General Vara del Rey. Towards the

end of the Rastro is Plaza de Campillo del Mundo Nuevo where children go with their fathers, who went before them, to swap football stickers. This plaza is full of old magazines, comic books and music to suit all ages.



Yet, one of the most curious areas is the political flower market. Instead of getting out of the La Latina metro station head for Tirso De Molina. As you enter the plaza from the metro station it looks no different to any of the other sections of the market. Most people don't give the stalls a second look as they see an assortment of flags, books and black t-shirts with rebellious slogans printed on them. However, upon closer inspection you can see that this is the most radical area of the Rastro.



In the square, next to the terraces full of people taking a rest from the busy city on a Sunday morning, sits the flower market. In between the flower stalls, the flags of political movements, and the short-lived second republic, wave in the wind above the foldable tables.



Many different political factions from Spain congregate here to sell their wares and show off their propaganda. The Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), an anarcho-syndicalist trade union, are based close to here and they are easily identified by their black and red flag. The CNT are the main political Spanish presence here, and then there are various collective groups that pop up from time to time, the most intriguing being the Friends of North Korea (easily identifiable by their red and blue flag next to the entrance of the metro). There are also ecology groups, feminist groups and many stalls selling all assortments of t-shirts and badges.



This is also a place for activist groups to come and campaign and gain signatures for petitions. I've seen groups fighting gentrification in Lavapies to euthanasia campaigners, with the latter group getting their cause in front of the Spanish parliament. Proving that where there is a cause, there is someone fighting for it. Whether that is on a stall in the Rastro or down the road in parliament. That said, you are not likely to see Partido Popular campaigning for lower taxes here, this area is very much on the progressive left side of politics. In fact, it was once called Plaza del Progreso in the 18th century. Later it was renamed after Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina, whose real name was Gabriel Téllez. He was a monk who lived in a monastery which was on the site in the 17th century. However, he didn't write about god, he wrote erotically charged plays. As you can see the area has links to rebellious people.



The various groups, despite their differences on political theory, get along and many have been coming here for years. Busts of Lenin, purple feminist t-shirts and literature on the ecological state of the planet can all be brought here along with a bunch of daffodils. So why are old revolutionists and feminists sat with flower sellers?



During the time of the dictator Francisco Franco they banned all political parties. However, many people were resistant to his regime throughout the 35 years that he ruled over Spain. The Spanish Communist Party became a focal point, as the Spanish Socialist Party amongst others went into exile during the dictatorship. Even people that weren't sympathetic to the communist cause joined the party in secret. These people were more anti-Franco rather than pro-communist. There were also several other smaller groups spread out over Spain.

These various factions worked with foreign political forces from outside Spain, or Spaniards that had gone into exile. They would coordinate amongst themselves to make sure that Franco's regime never had an easy life. Their goal was to transition the country back to a state of democracy after the dictator's death. An example of this underground resistance

was the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco. He was installed as Prime Minister by Franco before his death, and many thought that he would continue the dictatorship after Franco had gone. A group put a bomb under his car and set it off as he was leaving mass.



Plaza Tirso de Molina was where these groups used to exchange political messages. They used the flower market as cover so that they could exchange political messages. The people that gather here today amongst the different coloured roses and bouquets continue to respect this tradition and meet here every Sunday. This is the story of the Rastro's radical flower market.

By Alan McGuire

Alan McGuire is a British writer living in Madrid. He is currently working on a book about Spanish society and a YouTube channel about modern Spanish history. You can follow him on Twitter [here](#).

Mercado de Vallehermoso – Madrid's perfect neighbourhood food market

One of the first things I fell in love with about Spain was the abundance of fresh produce and local independent shops. Although the big supermarket chains have undoubtedly made their mark, food markets all over Madrid are still thriving. This is partly because they are so much more than just somewhere to pick up the weekly shop. You can enjoy a quick *caña*, stop for tapas, or stay for a whole meal.

Each *barrio* has its own market with something different to offer. Here's what I love about my local, Mercado de Vallehermoso.



Photo from [Mercado de Vallehermoso](#)

Built in the 1930s, until relatively recently the market had been largely abandoned and forgotten, with two thirds of its stalls shut in 2015. After being rescued from disrepair by a change in management and support from the *Ayuntamiento*, it's now bustling, with all 62 stalls occupied.

At Mercado de Vallehermoso you'll find everything from the traditional baker's, butcher's and fishmonger's stalls to restaurants, wine bars, craft beer, and **Spain's only permanent farmer's market**. As well as Spanish food, you can eat Mexican, Italian, Japanese, Korean, and more. In the Mercado de Productores (farmers market) all the producers are from Madrid, or less than 120 km away, and many of the products are handmade.

Restaurants at Mercado de

Vallehermoso

Washoku Sushi



Washoku Sushi, photo from [Mercado de Vallehermoso](#)

For fast, fresh Japanese food at a very reasonable price, Washoku is perfect. They buy their fish from one of their neighbours at the market, Hermanos Abad, so it's always good quality. Choose from sushi and sashimi selections, Japanese curries and rice, or udon noodle dishes. They also have delicious appetizers, including my favourite *Takoyaki* (similar to a fried dumpling, filled with octopus).

Craft 19



Photo from [Craft 19 Madrid](#)

Hands down the most delicious sandwiches in Madrid! The pastrami sandwich is famous, and rightly so, but the pulled pork and grilled cheese are equally indulgent. You can wash down your mega sandwich (be warned, in true American style, the portions are enormous) with a cool craft beer. There is a good selection of beers on tap, which change continuously, giving you the chance to sample beers from different international breweries.

Sandwiches and beer, what more could one want in life?

Drakkar



Photo from [Drakkar Cervecería](#)

If you're still thirsty for craft beers, Drakkar has a great selection. Unlike some of the craft beer bars and breweries that have opened recently in Madrid, it's great value. Grab a seat at the bar and chat to the friendly staff, who are always happy to give you a recommendation if you feel intimidated when there's more choice than Mahou or Estrella Galicia.

La Virgen



Photo from [Cervezas La Virgen](#)

Continuing the beer route through the market, Madrid brewers La Virgen also have a stall. With a [brewery in Las Rozas](#) and bars across the capital, it's probably the most well-known independent brewery in Madrid. Their spot in Mercado de Vallehermoso is a relaxed place to try some of their beers, to accompany some tasty treats from the market.

[Di Buono](#)



Photo from [Mercado de Vallehermoso](#)

Famous for its *porchetta*, Di Buono is a great deli serving the most delicious products imported from Italy. Sip on an Aperol spritz and try the delicious selection of Italian cheeses and charcuterie. They serve a great selection of wines from small producers in different regions all over Italy.

[Kitchen 154](#)



Photo from [Kitchen 154](#)

If you try one dish at Kitchen 125, make it **the Korean BBQ ribs**. Specialising in Asian fusion dishes with a kick, the

stall is always busy, and everything is cooked as you order. They have a small menu, but everything is cooked perfectly, from curries, to dumplings to crispy chicken wings.

*[Kitchen 154](#) also has a restaurant location on Calle Ruiz 20 in Malasaña.

[Güey Cocina Chingona](#)



Photo from [Güey](#)

Ever wondered what ants or grasshoppers taste like? Güey have

some seriously adventurous dishes on their menu, plus daily specials. Not feeling quite so intrepid when I ate there, I can only tell you that the *tacos al pastor* and guacamole were good (a very vanilla order, I know).

Mercado de Productores

Most of the food stalls on the upper floor have their own tables, where you can only eat food from that establishment, apart from Güey and Washoku, which have a few shared tables. However, if you come in a group and everyone wants to order from different places, you can find a shared seating area on the lower level of the market in the *mercado de productores*. Here you can eat anything from the restaurants on the upper level or the stalls in the farmer's market.

[EGGO](#)



Photo from [EGGO](#)

This is the only place I know of in Madrid you can buy a scotch egg! And if you don't know what a scotch egg is, all the more reason to go to EGG0 because you have been missing out on one of the most delicious snacks. As you can probably guess from the name, EGG0 sells fresh eggs and a few egg dishes (including delicious tortilla), all from free-range chickens from their farm in Ávila.

[La Cabezuela](#)



Photo from [Quesería La Cabezuela](#)

La Cabezuela make award-winning handmade cheeses in El Escorial. They offer a range of weird and wonderful flavours, including *la Cervezuela*, made with beer from *La Virgen* brewery. Order a *tabla de quesos* (cheese plate) for 7 euros

and you can try all the ones that catch your eye.

[Randall Coffee Roasters](#)



image by [Randall Coffee](#)

Fed up of the burnt, bitter brews at your local Spanish bar? At Randall Coffee Roasters you can get a delicious cup of coffee or buy beans to brew at home. More like a coffee shop you would see in New York or London, **they roast speciality beans on site. They also serve iced lattes and cold brew,** perfect for the hot summer months. If you fancy a sweet treat

with your coffee, try one of the chocolate, pistachio and sea salt cookies!

Mercado de Vallehermoso has the perfect mix



One of the unique things about Madrid as a capital city has been its ability to embrace and enjoy new influences, while preserving its traditions and “Spanishness.” Mercado de Vallehermoso, like all of Madrid’s many markets, is a great example of this, where you’ll find the perfect mix of traditional and modern; Spanish and international; young and old.

There are so many different stalls in the market, you couldn’t fit everything in one article. These are just a few of the one’s I’ve tried and loved. So, go ahead and explore them all, and let me know what you think!

Mercado de Vallehermoso info

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & Instagram: [@mercadovallehermoso](#)
- **Address:** C/ Vallehermoso 36
- **Metro:** Quevedo

By **Ellen** **Fouweather**
(*Instagram:* [@efouwee](#))

Also read Ellen's article on: [Madrid's 10 best vintage and second-hand shops](#)

10 Great Second-hand and Vintage Shops in Madrid

Fed up of queues in Primark, everyone having the same dress from Zara, and the unsustainable waste produced by fast fashion? Ditch the high-street chains and get ready to rummage! From cheap and cheerful thrift shops to high-end boutiques, there's something for everyone when it comes to second-hand and vintage shops in Madrid.

1. Vintalogy



- [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Website](#)
- Address: Calle de Atocha, 10
- Opening Hours: 11am-10pm every day

A good place to start is Vintalogy, Europe's largest vintage store, set up by the team behind the [Mercado de Motores](#). Forget delving into bargain bins; think of Vintalogy as a vintage department store. They make the most of the huge floor space and high ceilings with great merchandising, making it easy to find what you're looking for. The clothes are divided neatly into sections, and sizes are easy to find. If you fancy a splurge, there is also a separate room for luxury and designer clothing, all in mint condition and, like the rest of the store, beautifully presented.

The shop building is emblematic. Vintalogy replaced the historic cloth shop Sobrino de J. Martí Prats and the original signage has been preserved, in keeping with the philosophy of repurposing, reusing, and rediscovering gems from past eras.

As you might have guessed from the late opening hours, they often host events and DJs.

2. La Mona Checa Vintage Market and Art



- [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Website](#)
- Address: Calle Velarde, 2
- Opening Hours: 11:30am-9pm Mon-Sat; 11:30am-3pm/4pm-9pm Sun

La Mona Checa is a cute boutique (with an equally cute name) on Calle Velarde, a mecca for vintage shoppers in Madrid. Thanks to its bright sign and distinctive monkey logo, you can't miss it walking past. Once inside, you could be at the circus, thanks to the quirky red-and-white, striped, fabric that decorates the ceiling, like the inside of a tent. They have a great selection of brightly-patterned shirts for men

and women, some great party dresses, and sunglasses of all shapes and sizes (I even managed to find a pair to fit my tiny head).

3. Malasaña Vintage Outlet

- Address: Calle San Vicente Ferrer, 39
- Opening Hours: 12pm-3pm/5pm-8pm Mon-Sat

If you're looking for a bargain, this is your place. This outlet stocks clothes from La Mona Checa and Biba Vintage, all at up to 70% off. It's a true, no-frills, thrift shop experience, with no changing rooms and clothes racks full of stock. But it's not hard to find something you'll like. I walked out with two shirts and a skirt for under €10.

4. Magpie



- [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Website](#)
- Address: Calle Velarde, 3 and Calle Manuela Malasaña, 19
- Opening Hours: 11:30am-9pm Mon-Sat; 12pm-9pm Sun

With a cavernous space on Calle Velarde and a small, newly-opened shop on Calle Manuela de Malasaña, Magpie Vintage has all the clothes you could wish for. There is an extensive range of both men's and women's clothing, everything from jeans and sportswear to sequinned mini-dresses and floor-length evening gowns. I also love the range of accessories and jewellery. The prices are more than reasonable, with most items a bit less than they would be in your average high-street shop.

5. Heritage and Rare

- [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Website](#)
- Address: Calle del Pez, 36
- Opening Hours: 11am-3pm/5pm-9pm Mon-Sat; 12pm-2pm Sun

One for the vintage purists, Heritage and Rare stands out for its beautiful, authentic, and well-cared-for vintage pieces. All items carry a label specifying the country and decade they were made in. From delicate Italian lingerie to heavy wool coats, everything is in perfect condition and shows no signs of use. A lot of the stock has never been used, having been rescued after shop closures. The shop is small but manages to squeeze in a good selection of men's and women's clothes, including shoes and bags.

6. Alphaville



- [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#)
- Address: Calle Velarde, 7 y 16 and Calle del León, 29
- Opening Hours: 11am-9pm every day

Alphaville has several locations, with two shops on Calle Velarde and another on Calle del Leon. On Calle Velarde, one shop is dedicated solely to vintage sportswear and the other has a bit of everything. Good for winter coats and shoes, my favourite of the three is the shop on Calle del Leon. With its cosy atmosphere and retro furniture, I sometimes feel like I'm shopping in someone's living room.

7. Humana, Malasaña

- [Website](#)
- Address: Calle de la Corredera Baja de San Pablo, 23
- Opening Hours: 10am-pm every day

Bear with me on this one... With shops across the country, Humana is the biggest second-hand chain in Spain, but it doesn't have a reputation for being the most stylish. Think Humana and you're more likely to be picturing frumpy

throwaways than quirky vintage finds.

However, the Malasaña branch, on Calle de la Corredera Baja de San Pablo, has a carefully selected collection. There is a mix of good-quality, on-trend, high-street items, and vintage stock. It's well worth a browse, whether you want to pick up some of last season's fashion at a fraction of the price or a more individual vintage piece. They get new stock regularly, **as the best items from the other branches are brought here.** The last time I went, there was even a vintage wedding dress!

8. El Rincón de Tía Jo





- [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Website](#)
- Address: Calle Velarde, 4
- Opening Hours: 12pm-3pm/4pm-9pm Mon-Thurs; 12pm-9pm Fri-Sat; 1pm-9pm Sun

El Rincón de Tía Jo is my favourite second-hand shop on Calle Velarde. It seems like a little, narrow shop but is much bigger once you get inside. With a distinctly less hipster vibe than the other shops on this street, the best vintage stock tends to be in the room right at the back. In another small room, they have vintage furniture and knick-knacks. The selection of coats is great; I bought my beloved, black, fake-fur jacket here. Most importantly, the staff are friendly, helpful, and always give good advice about what suits you.

9. The Loop



- [Facebook](#), [Website](#)
- Address: Calle Velarde, 1
- Opening Hours: 11:30am-9pm Mon-Sat; 11:30am-3pm/4pm-8:30 Sun

Banish thoughts of rifling through musty cast-offs. The Loop's tagline is "Fresh Vintage for Fresh People." Though "Fresh Vintage" is a bit of an oxymoron, I think they mean that all their vintage clothes are on trend, in good condition, and clean. The stock is well selected, with well-known brands like Moschino, Armani, Valentino, Calvin Klein, and Levi's. The shop is bright, modern, and feels more like a quirky designer boutique than a thrift store.

10. Johnny and Velvet



- [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#)
- Address: Calle Embajadores, 42
- Opening Hours: 11am-2pm/5:30pm-9pm Tues-Sat; 11am-4pm Sun

Johnny and Velvet, named after the owner's two greyhounds, is perfect if you want to pick up some €20 Levi's jeans. It's a bit away from the main hub of vintage shops in Madrid, located south of the centre on Calle Embajadores, making it a good choice if you don't feel like facing the bustle of Malasaña. The clothes are quirky, original, and reasonably priced.

By Ellen
Fouweather (*Instagram: [@efouwee](#)*)

Know any other great second-hand and vintage shops in Madrid? If so, let us know!

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 HOTBAG 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
-

YOKA LOKA

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



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

Happening upon this locale is delightful in itself. It is unexpected to find a sushi stall in the midst of the traditional market products. The restaurant is tiny; a small counter to place your order, a small matchbox kitchen, and a

dining room that is comparable in size to a train car. Flanking the small dining area and kitchen are narrow bar areas set up to accommodate a few extra diners. If seated here, you can peek into the kitchen to see what the chefs are up to.



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

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



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



Info

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

La Nodriza, Madrid's loveliest health food store!

Around Christmastime I got an email from Terry and Charlotte who run [Desperate Literature](#), an international bookstore that's just a street up from Opera. Here's what they wrote: "We came across a local health and organic food store that we fell in love with. The owner is great... and it's a crying shame that locals and health-conscious expats don't know about the place. It only has [Facebook](#), but voila, now we've done our part and spread the good news," inferring it was Naked Madrid's turn to do the same!

Thank you, Terry and Charlotte, for sending me that email! I finally made it to [La Nodriza](#) today and I have to agree – how had I not known about it earlier? It's just a few steps from plaza Opera and lovingly run by a woman named Lucía, who handpicks each item with careful consideration to customers' requests and also speaks English. Originally from Spain, Lucía has lived all over the world, having spent years in England, Sweden (she speaks Swedish, too), Chile and even Kuwait and Oman. Long story short, she's got a lot of stories. Eventually she decided to follow her passion and study nutrition, which led her to **open [La Nodriza](#) two years ago, "her dream come true."**



Although La Nodriza is small, it offers an impressive selection of handmade and organic products, ranging from cosmetics and olive oil to fresh produce and yogurt. You can even get a weekly order of local fruits and vegetables. Chances are you'll find that hard-to-find item here, or you can ask Lucía to order it for you! Not to mention, **La Nodriza is also a great place to find a gift for someone back home** (like locally produced olive oil or raw honey), **or even for someone in town** (like Burt's Bees products).



What I bought

What caught my eye the most was her wide selection of raw honeys. She has two large containers of honey from local producers that you can purchase by the kilo: one is made with lavender (*lavanda*), and the other with heather (*brezo*). Lucía let us taste both of them, which were so pure and delicious. **I bought a kilo of the heather honey (€10.50) because it was darker and richer, which is the kind I prefer, and I also got to pour it myself.**



The next thing I bought was **organic peanut butter** by a brand called **Monki**. Although it wasn't cheap (€7.20) and there was another less expensive option, Lucía assured me this one's quality was well worth it. As I sit here with my Monki peanut butter on toast, all I can say is I second her opinion.

While browsing, Lucía gave us both a piece of **dark chocolate with chilli peppers** because, "it's something different." As we were leaving, she popped two bite-size **red apples** into our bag. "They're small," she said, "but totally fresh and pack in a lot of flavor." And they do, indeed.

So, people of Madrid, if you're looking for a place to get your supply of organic, fresh and local products in the heart of the city, you've found it. These products may be more expensive than what you'll find at Mercadona, but they're oh so worth it!

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- **Hours:** Open Tues-Sunday from 12pm-10pm
- **Phone:** +34 912 50 29 65
- **Address:** Calle Caños del Peral, 5

You may also like:

- [Best Gifts from Madrid](#)
- [Desperate Literature, for book lovers in Brooklyn, Santorini and now Madrid!](#)
- [Where to take your Mom in Madrid](#)

La Latina's 'seafood party' in Mercado de La Cebada: The place to see and be seen!

Mercados are the heart and soul of any Spanish city. If you want to get under the skin of the place you're visiting, make a beeline for the city's biggest food market. Wander around each section (meat, vegetables, fish, etc.) and you will instantly see what the region's all about. Then make your way to the *mercado's* busiest bar, order what everyone else is drinking and demand your rightful complimentary *tapa*. If it's something you've never clapped eyes on, even better.



La Latina's [Mercado de la Cebada](#) is no exception. The place encapsulates Spanish culture to almost cliché levels: the heart and soul of Madrid is right here.



Every weekday, [Mercado de la Cebada](#) will sell you fresh **produce from all over Spain**. There's also a good selection of local bars in the labyrinth of alleys both upstairs and downstairs, and even a few clothes stalls, toyshops and cobblers for some of the market's more devout punters.



But then, every Saturday at lunchtime, [Mercado de la Cebada](#) transforms into what I will describe as nothing less than a **seafood party**.





The atmosphere is electric; iced molluscs and pulpo are flowing, and groups of friends doing what they do best: sharing food and belly-laughing, plastic cup of valdepeñas in one hand, half-eaten shrimp in the other.





Grab a few friends and get there **no later than 2:30pm**. Find one of the aproned chaps hovering in front of his stall, affectionately touching everyone with his fishy hands, and place your order per *ración* or by weight.



Before you take your polystyrene plates to the nearest paper-covered stack of crates, don't forget to pick up your **complimentary bottle of wine or cans of beer. Yeah... COMPLIMENTARY!** Due to licensing rules, these shops can't sell drinks. I imagine there's a slight markup on the prices of seafood but, having said that, **the prices are some of the lowest I've seen in Madrid, and the quality is some of the best.**

There are cups, serviettes, toothpicks and mussel 'spives' (spoon-knives) strategically strewn around the stalls – a seafood spectacular with no frills, and all the better for it.

Info

[Web](#) – [Facebook](#)

Address: Plaza de la Cebada, La Latina, 28005

Metro: La Latina (right outside)

Opening hours: Mon – Fri 9am-2pm / 5-8:30pm; Sat 9am-3pm

Another soulful neighbourhood market, not too far away, is [Mercado de San Fernando in Lavapiés](#)

Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars – Round 4

With temperatures reaching well over 100 °F (38 °C), there are only two places you should be in Madrid right now: either in a swimming pool (in the [city](#) or the [mountains](#)) or on a rooftop bar. If you're stuck with the latter, not to worry—Madrid has plenty of rooftop bars for you to escape to. To help you find them, Naked Madrid came out with a 3-part series on [Madrid's best rooftop bars](#) last summer, and we've been meaning to come out with **part 4** ever since. And it's finally here! All the rooftop bars in this article are located in the center of Madrid, yet each one offers something completely different. Hope you enjoy them all!

Oh and you should also know that **part 5** is already on its way... so stay tuned!

1) The Hat (Sol/Plaza Mayor)



You've never seen a hostel like this before; the word 'hipster' does not even begin to describe it. High ceilings, art-scrawled walls and an international crowd are what you'll find here. The Hat's rooftop bar is open all year round, serving up cocktails and delicious *tostas* (my favorite is with goat cheese and caramelized onions, and comes with a shot of salmorejo and potato chips), quiche, and some pretty damn good *tortilla de patata*. [Here's a full post on The Hat for more info.](#)

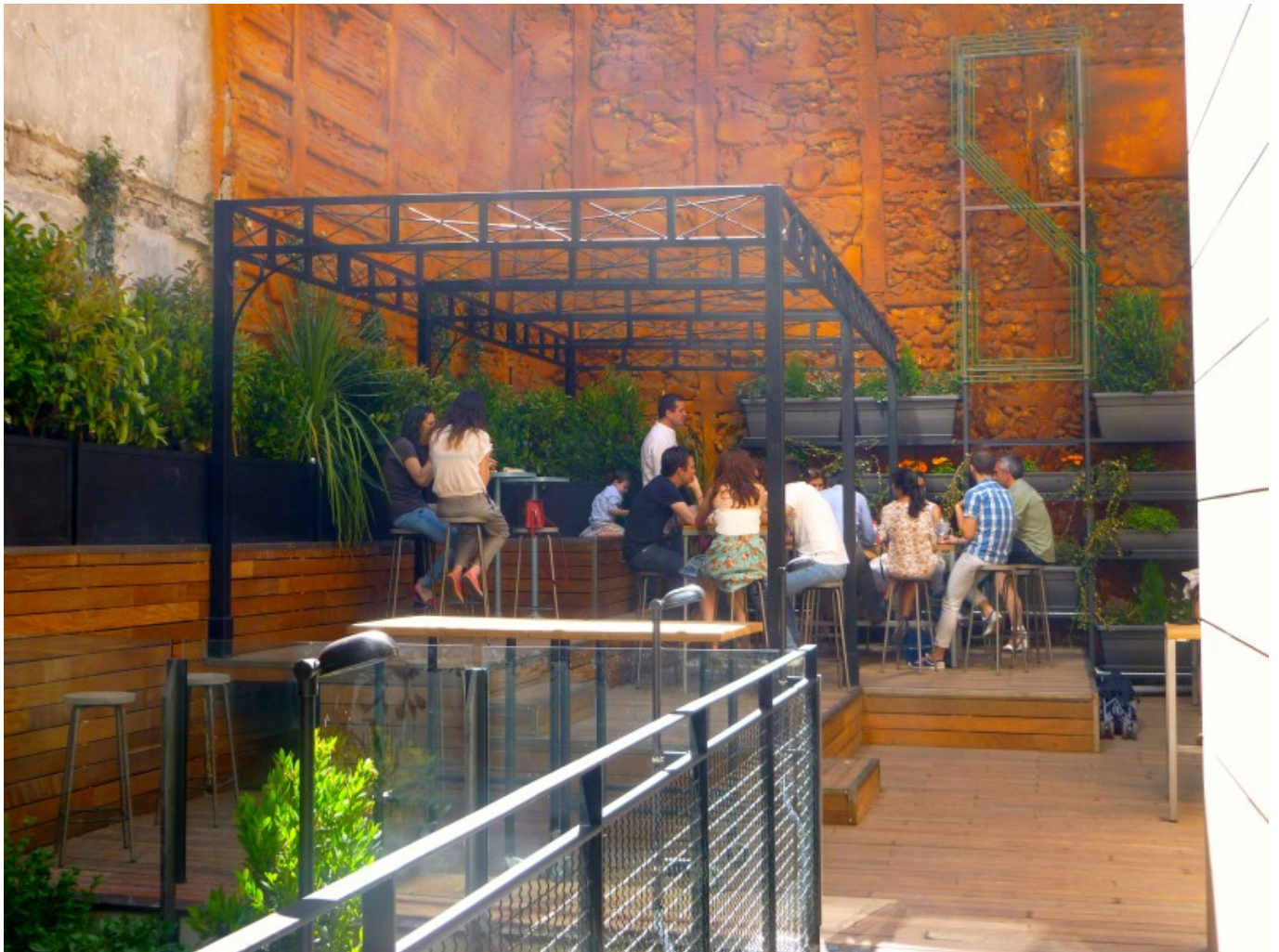
Web

Address: Calle Imperial 9

Metro: La Latina, Sol, Opera

Phone: 917 72 85 72

2) Mercado del San Ildefonso (Malasaña)





We all know Madrid's market culture is off the hook. We've got **Mercado de San Miguel** in Sol for the tourist crowd; **Mercado de San Antón** (whose rooftop bar we also love and [mentioned in Round 1](#)) in Chueca for the cooler and more urban crowd; and **Mercado de San Fernando** in Lavapiés for the more authentic and cultural crowd, just to name a few. And now we have **Mercado de San Ildefonso**, which takes the cake for its architecture and impressive use of space. Once an average neighborhood market, San Ildefonso now boasts three stories of gourmet food stalls and two outdoor patios sandwiched between its adjacent buildings. [Here's a full article on Mercado del San Ildefonso.](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: C/ Fuencarral, 57

Metro: Tribunal

3. [El Jardín Secreto](#) (on Calle Montera, Gran Vía)



Jardín Secreto feels like a tiny rooftop garden in somebody's private home. You wouldn't expect that it's actually situated on top of an accessories store – Salvador Bachiller – and on Calle Montera, no less. Smack in the center of the city, in between metros Gran Vía and Sol, you can enter this normal-looking store, pop up to the top floor and take in the *fresher* air with a drink and a bite to eat. It might not have any views, but it sure has a unique ambience and surprise factor that's worth experiencing. [Here's a full article on Jardín Secreto for more info.](#)

[Facebook](#)

Address: Calle Montera 37

Phone: 915 31 02 60

Metro: Gran Vía or Sol

4. Innside Madrid Suecia (near Alcalá/Plaza de Cibeles)



I haven't actually been here yet but many of my friends have raved about it. Judging by its location, the new rooftop bar at **Innside Madrid Suecia Hotel** looks a bit more upscale than the others on this list – probably best for a night out of

cocktails mixed with a killer view. It's owned by the Meliá Hotel chain, which also owns the famous "[The Roof in Plaza Santa Ana, previously mentioned in Round 3](#)", and situated on a street behind Calle Alcalá and El Círculo de Bellas Artes (with yet another stunning rooftop, "[Tartan Roof](#)", [mentioned in Round 1](#)). For now, I've taken these photos off of the Hotel's [web](#), yet I plan on replacing them as soon as I get the chance to treat myself to such an experience.

[Web](#)

Address: *Calle del Marqués de Casa Riera 4*

Metro: *Banco de España and Sevilla*

5) Gourmet Experience at El Corte Inglés (Callao)





Madrid's number one department store, **El Corte Inglés**, finally decided to give itself a much needed facelift and revamp the 9th floor of its location in Callao, turning it into 'Gourmet Experience'; and it truly is an experience. With an outdoor rooftop and dozens of food stalls, one of which is [StreetX0](#), an affordable version of Madrid's famous young Michelin-starred chef, David Muñoz's DiversoX0, you'll also find stalls serving Mexican, Italian, Spanish and Japanese food, as well as cocktails, ice-cream and much more. [Here's full article on Gourmet Experience at Callao.](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Plaza Callao 2, inside El Corté Inglés, 9th floor

Metro: Callao

We're already working on Round 5 of

Madrid's top rooftop bars. Any suggestions?

In case you haven't seen rounds 1-3, here you are:

- [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 1](#)
 - [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 2](#)
 - [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 3](#)
-

Stunning Local Olive Grove Tour, in English! – Proyecto Los Aires

In 2013, biologists **Guillermo and Laura** – Spain's newest generation of **olive farmers** – took over the family business and embarked on an innovative mission: to connect the local countryside with the city of Madrid and make farming a **sustainable way of life** once again.

How it all started:

Over a century ago, in a small town in the region of Toledo,

Guillermo's great grandfather planted his first grove of around 200 olive trees, and between the evenly spaced olive saplings grew rows of sun-drenched grapevines.

A hundred odd years later, only the footprints of the old vines are visible, but the olive trees have grown beautifully gnarled and twisted, with silver miniature leaves and shiny hard fruit, ready for the annual harvest of some of the tastiest **organic extra virgin olive oil** in Spain.



The centenarian olive trees

Guillermo and Laura's story:

Olive farming has been in both of their families for generations, inspiring them to study biology at university, which is where they met. From early on, they drew sketches on scraps of paper illustrating grand ambitions to re-bond our booming capital with its rural backyard, enthusiastically telling anyone who will listen about the genius that is the organic farming ecosystem (it's genius).

By mid 2014, their dream had gathered enough steam for them to **quit their jobs** and make [Proyecto Los Aires](#) their life, and for being in the midst of an **economic depression**, it's incredible how much they've already achieved.

The tour:

On Saturday, we headed out to their stunning olive grove in **Arcicóllar**, about an hour south of Madrid. When we arrived, we met up with our fellow tour buddies and set off on our educational meander through the olive trees.

Guillermo and Laura led us around their oldest plot and explained the **process of creating olive oil**: from planting and harvesting to filtering and bottling. Their scientific angle on the entire practice is fascinating, but I won't say any more – the oohs and aahs are all part of the fun!



The walking tour begins



Taking a closer look at the trees

After the walking tour (and tanning opportunity), we sat down at a shaded table nestled idyllically among the centenarian trees. It was time for the **tasting**. This involved professionally sampling several olive oils in little blue glass cups, and learning how to tell the difference between generic **supermarket oil** and **top-quality organic oil** such as theirs.

And then came the food and wine. Through local connections and friends and family, Guillermo and Laura brought together a plethora of **Iberian foodie gems** for us to eat. A *mercado* on a table came to mind, and our tour companions' similarly delighted reactions included lots of "mmm"s and "oh my God"s

and jokey squabbles over who liked the **pumpkin *morcilla*** most. We chatted, talking about Guillermo and Laura's endeavours as well as our own, then gratefully accepted Guillermo's offer of a top-up of wine to accompany our final wander through the trees (and take a few grove-selfies). Finally, we had the opportunity to buy some of the delicious products we tasted that day.



The tasting (and eating and drinking)



The quaintest little market stall in the world

After an **eye-opening and mouth-watering experience**, we said our goodbyes to the lovely Guillermo and Laura and hopped on the bus back to Madrid, desperate to get the word out to you!

The project explained:

[Proyecto Los Aires](#) aims to **promote local agriculture** by running **educational tours & tastings** on their farm and forging a direct link between urban consumers and the rural economy. Their oil (Los Aires Extra Virgin Olive Oil) can be found in **gourmet shops** such as Oleoteca Murúa at [Mercado San Antón](#). Guillermo and Laura also regularly sell their oil in **markets across Madrid** such as [Mercado de Motores](#), [Mercado Central de Diseño](#), [Nómada Market](#) and [Gastro Market](#). Next time you're there, **go and say hello!**



Los Aires olive groves

How to get there:

The **meeting point** for the tour is the bus stop in the town of **Arcicóllar** (see location [here](#)). Regular buses (see timetable [here](#)) will get you there from Madrid's **Méndez Alvaro** bus station in **just over an hour**. If you're driving, it takes around **50 minutes** from central Madrid.

Details & Contact Info:

Tours run **year-round** on **any day of the week or weekend** and must be booked at least **48 hours in advance**.

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

The website is in English and Spanish! For more information about the tour, pricing, and to book, click [here](#).

Pasta Mito, an Italian Eatery in Mercado de Chamartín – a gem!

In [Mercado Chamartin](#), in the central aisle on the lower floor, you'll find a brand new, chic little Italian eatery called [Pasta Mito](#). All food is freshly prepared in the on-site kitchen, and the owners definitely know what they're doing. Also, the brilliant thing about eateries in neighborhood markets is that the ingredients they cook with tend to come directly from the market's food stalls, so at the same time as being **top-quality stuff**, eating there is great for local businesses too.



My fella and I sat in the cosy 3-tabled dining area and, based on enthusiastic recommendations by the owner, we had... (ima write a list):

- *Glass of the house white each*
- *Complimentary and HUGE antipasto appetiser*
- *Burrata Caprese with fine green pesto*
- *Truffle ravioli with only butter sauce and fresh parmesan sprinkled on top*
- *Tiramisu in a cup*
- *All accompanied by a fresh basket of focaccia*



The food was absolutely incredible and plenty between us – we're glad we shared! The bill came to **€26** exactly, which felt

very reasonable for the quality of food and wine and friendly service.

Whilst we were sat there, we saw lots of people ordering to take away. Great idea too, but the dining experience was way more fun.



The owners are a husband and wife duo. She's Italian, he's Spanish and speaks fluent English. We got chatting and he told us that he spent 4 years cooking under Heston Blumenthal, then worked in one of the UK's top restaurants for a few more years before coming back to Madrid.

I asked him about future plans and he said that next month, they're expanding into the veg stall just opposite, which will mean **an extra 6 or so tables**. Having only opened in September

'14, they'll be staying put in [Mercado Chamartín](#) for now as the business is going well and they seem to love what they have.

[Pasta Mito](#) is by far the best Italian food we've had in Madrid yet – it's really quite a gem.

By Leah Pattem

Info

Mercado de Chamartín: [Facebook](#) & [Web](#) (*calle Bolivia 9 <m>Chamartín*)

Pasta Mito: [Facebook](#) (*inside the Mercado de Chamartín, central aisle, lower floor*)

Another market we recommend:

[Mercado de San Fernando in Lavapiés – the real food emporium!](#)