

Bless Hotel rooftop bar – beautiful sunsets, bebidas and bowling!

One of the major perks of being a teacher (which is my day job), has undoubtedly got to be the holidays. Let's be real... Yes, teaching is a vocation for most, but I defy anyone to shirk the idea of having two blissfully sun-soaked months off each summer. The benefit of being a part-time lady of leisure is that when I've not escaped to the coast (it's no joke that Madrid is literally an inferno come July), but on the plus side, the city feels like a veritable playground for all those left sweltering in the city.



So with all this free time, I've found myself strolling round barrios that I tend to neglect in favour of my own and as a result, I stumbled upon the holy grail of hotels that is the BLESS hotel on Calle Velázquez. From the rooftop bar slash restaurant, to the clandestine bowling alley nestled below the lobby, the hotel offers a taste of luxe living – and in my case, all within walking distance. Who doesn't love to get their steps up before sinking a G&T guilt free?

.



So let's talk terrace – Madrid has really upped its game when it comes to rooftop vistas of late and there's plenty of competitors vying for your attention, and your hard-earned cash. However, in my humble opinion, BLESS has the edge as its pleasingly buzzy, not overwhelmingly busy, and has beautifully considered decor, rather than your bog standard minimalist modern vibe that currently prevails. Most recently, my friends and I managed to snag a beaut of a booth and it wouldn't be out of place at a beach club in the south of France.



But the big draw is ultimately that the views are to die for – nab a spot for golden hour and watch the sky resemble Monet at

his best as it changes from azure blue, to blush pink, to burnt orange – all whilst sipping on a perfectly prepared cocktail of your choice. On this note, don't get me wrong, BLESS is not cheap – but what you splurge on the drinks you slightly claw back on the naughty but nice nibbles that accompany each tipple. And the service is faultless – I can attest to this given the patience and perseverance to get the perfect shot of me and my amigas for the 'gram.



So having been up top I returned to see what was down below and it didn't disappoint. Tucked under the hotel is a

speakeasy-type bar that houses... a BOWLING ALLEY! Yes, limber up and get ready to strike. We booked a lane on a Saturday night and continually cursed our lack of bowling prowess but it still made such a welcome change from the usual dinner-then-drinks drill. I bowled in vertiginous heels assuming that (like my humble megabowl back home) they'd give you those Velcro shoes that make you feel about 5 years old – anyways, they do not.



Worth bearing in mind if you're competitive and I still maintain that it was my stilettos and not my lack of technique

that hampered my score. Again, the bowling alley may be underground but bargain basement this ain't. Games cost €12 per person so whilst it's a bit of a treat, it was well worth it to be cocooned in what felt reminiscent of a prohibition-era speakeasy.



You might be getting the gist that I like the BLESS hotel and you'd be right. The vibe in Madrid is shifting, business is booming, tourists are appearing in their droves and whilst this is all economically excellent, I still like my social scene to come with a side of secrecy. BLESS is a gem in barrio Salamanca, just go wielding cash (and comfy shoes).

Bless Hotel Madrid

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- **Metro:** Velázquez

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Gracias Padre, a new Mexican restaurant you'll be very thankful for

They say that practicing an attitude of gratitude is the key to a calm and content life. I'm never quite sure who "they" are when I make reference to them in this sort of context. I guess what I'm trying to say is that gratitude continues to be a buzz word for 2018, along with self care and *lagom*. Trust me, look 'em up.

Anyways, I digress. What I'm attempting to explain is that gratitude simply means pausing and appreciating what you have and giving thanks. To this end, there's no place easier to feel grateful for than [Gracias Padre](#); an almost box-fresh Mexican restaurant that just graced Calle Ortega y Gasset with its presence a mere month ago.



It's impossible to miss. A riot of colour that wouldn't be out of place on a Holi run, the decor packs a similar punch to the frozen margaritas that are on offer. I dined on a Friday night and it was heaving. So much so that word of mouth is clearly taking hold for GP quicker than you can say "tequila, it makes me happy."



Now I love Mexican food. Like, full blown love it. I love Indian food, I love Italian food, heck, I'm even genuinely starting to like Japanese food (I can't drop the L word just yet, it's still early days). But my full-blown love affair with decent Mexican food started in Tulum three years ago and upon my return, I've spent time, money and energy on dinners where I've wound up bitterly disappointed when I've been served up a plate of a beige-looking stodge.



There's no such issue at [Gracias Padre](#) where the food was light, clean and fresh, not your typical description of Mexican fare, yet everything I ate was delicious and not overtly calorific. **Slight disclaimer, I did try a corn on the cob that was dipped in butter (and mayo) then rolled in parmesan.*

Every sublime mouthful was well worth the need for my Saturday spin class. The fish tacos had the perfect amount of crunch and flaky softness, while the *tinga de pollo* melted in your mouth.



Mexican food isn't hard to find in Madrid, with chains popping up everywhere, you can't miss an opportunity for a burrito, much like it's hard to miss a bearded bloke in Malasaña. What deserves praise however, is authentic Mexican food, cooked with love. The type of tacos that take you back to that beach in Tulum and remind you why you'd give your right arm for a

decent marg after a tough working week.



Much like online dating, finding a true gem of a place to eat is often a numbers game. You've gotta rack up the dates and sift through the duds. Fret not, no need for you to conduct your own research. In this instance I've done the hard work for you. [Gracias Padre](#) is hands down the best Mexican food I've had on this side of the pond – and I've tried a lot of tacos.

Gracias Padre

- [Facebook](#), [Website](#) & Instagram: [@gracias.padre](#)
- **Address:** Calle de José Ortega y Gasset, 55
- **Phone:** 910 66 00 85
- **Metro:** Lista

La Porcinería, get your pork on

Welcome to Madrid's first pork bistro! Situated on a quiet street on Calle Lagasca, the newly opened **La Porcinería** is a creative tribute to *cerdo* in all its culinary glory.



The decor is light and casual, with pig cartoons and quotes sprinkled all around. You're welcomed into the street-level entrance with a few high tables and an open bar. Downstairs you'll find a cozy dining room where we had dinner on a Tuesday night.



All dishes on the menu contain pork, as you can imagine, with only one exception (that we didn't try). There's a nice range of items to choose from – some Asian inspired, others more traditional, and a few surprises in the mix. Our server, Alex, recommended we start off with a bottle of red and had us sample their signature starters and mains.



First up was the Thai-style pork *bombón*, so satisfying to cut into and find tender strips of pork inside with a mix of flavors and textures.



Then came a real treat for both the eyes and tastebuds – fried artichokes with fine strips of pancetta. First Alex topped it with freshly shaved foie and then proceeded to flambé it at the table.



We also had a *lagarto ibérico* (a special cut of Iberian pork) served on top of a rich, velvety layer of yuca purée with white truffle. If you're into truffle, this is your dish.



We rounded off the savory part of our meal with the Sicilian-style Iberian burger that was topped with provolone cheese and grilled onions, and came with a side of homemade fries.

Feeling completely satisfied and not overly stuffed, we couldn't have asked for a better pork-filled experience! That is, until dessert came.



The chocolate *salami* cake with ice cream was the perfect finish – don't worry, the only nod to pork in this dish was the fun presentation. After devouring every bite, we slowly finished off the delicious bottle of red. I don't remember what type of wine it was, but it came recommended by Alex as a house special that night. So just make sure to ask your server for a suggestion!

So pork fans, La Porcinería should definitely be on your list.

Info

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Salivate at Sargo

The run-up to Christmas is undoubtedly (if you're anything like me) a social whirlwind. I'm not quite sure where the need came from to see literally *everyone that you know* before Santa arrives; it's almost as though we feel like the world might implode come December 25th.

In light of this, I often wind up feeling as though I'm over stretched having over committed. And therefore – rather than be filled with “Christmas cheer” – this quickly turns to “Christmas fear” as I realise I've spent too much time partying and not enough time purchasing (other people's gifts that is).



However, there are some dates in the old diary that are no hardship to keep. In this case, it was dinner at the recently

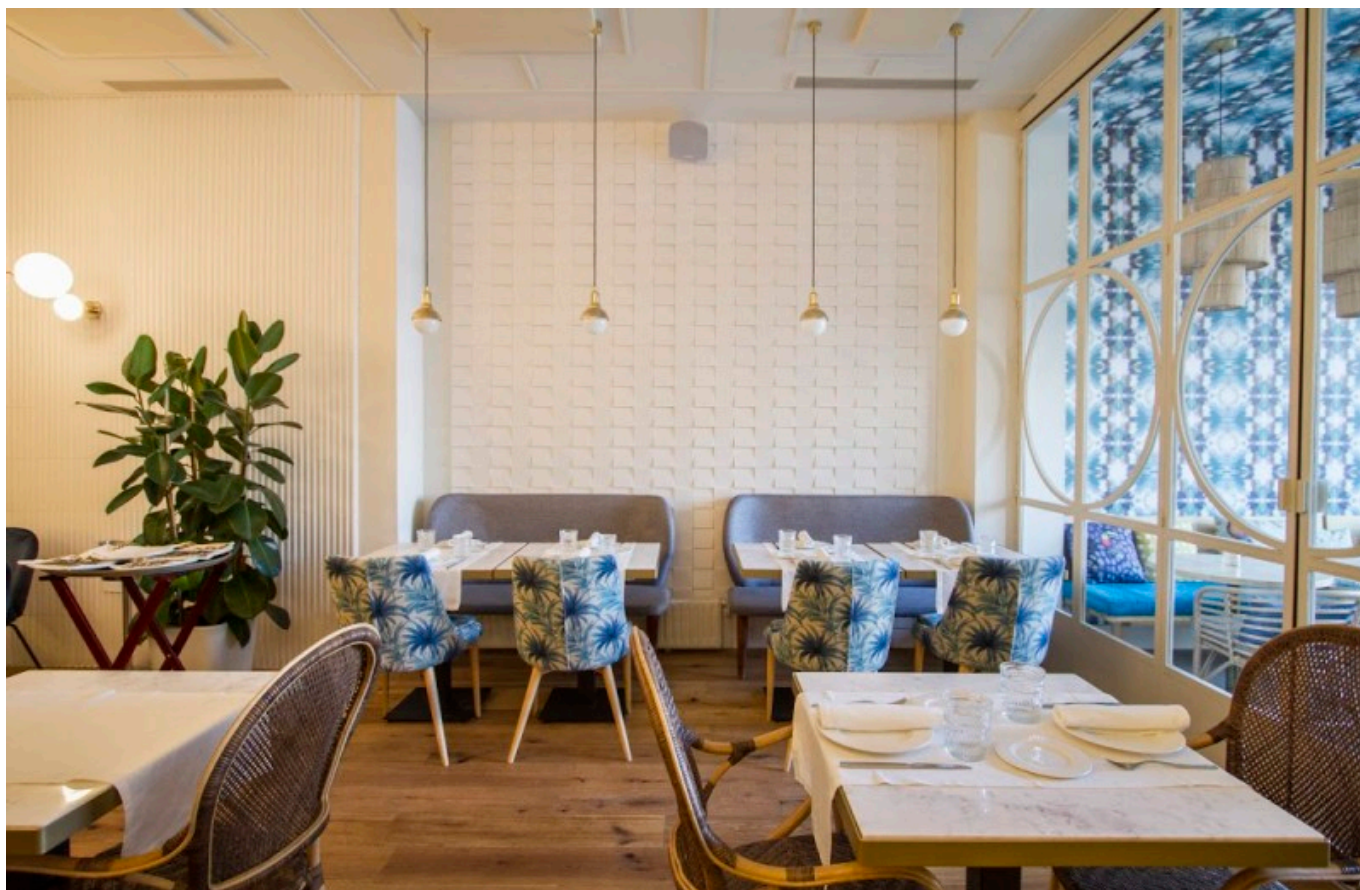
opened [Sargo](#). Located in Barrio Salamanca – not my usual stomping ground, but in an area that I do aspire to spend more time in and around – Sargo felt like the sophisticated older sister to many of the [restaurants that I tend to frequent](#).



I met my friend at the bar for a sparkly start (some gin-based fizz) and began to peruse the menu. It quickly transpired that whilst there were definite crowd pleasers to be found, innovation was the buzz word at Sargo with plenty of inventive options, of which I'll elaborate on later.



For me, I'm all about the "three S's" when I go out for dinner, so let me explain. Style, service and (lip) smackingly good food. It wasn't wasted on me that the decor at [Sargo](#) was Pinterest worthy in terms of its prettiness and if I'm going to be sat still for hours, then I want something nice to look at.



On that note, next comes the service. It didn't go unnoticed on myself or my dining companion that our waiter was incredibly attentive and essentially, he could've been plucked from the beaches of Rio. Pau was everything you'd want in a server, knowledgeable but not pushy. Friendly but not overbearing. Gorgeous but not so distractingly so that our food would go cold.



So onto the food, it passed the “S” test and then some. As I went with a veggie friend (we cover all food group bases) and tried A LOT of different things – what can I tell you, we were warming up for Christmas.



The standout dish for me was the *sashimi de atún rojo*, which was a work of art – quite literally, it was served upon a *pintoresco*. The concept of the menu is undoubtedly unique though – split into easy-to-read groups such as “*de machete*” – perfect for meat lovers and “*de cuchara*” which is ideal for those seeking comfort – which to be honest in these tiresome temps, who isn’t?





We bid the team at [Sargo](#) farewell having tackled the menu as a tag team and safe in the knowledge that we'd given their marvellously Mediterranean menu a good old bash.

If you're looking for a spot that definitely isn't style over substance, give Sargo more than just a glance. Set to become a darling of the Salamanca scene, set up camp now before the hordes arrive.

Info

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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

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 - Phone: 917 02 27 36
 - Metro: Rubén Darío
-

Arts Club Madrid – Binge, don't purge

I pride myself on revelling in all things indulgent. My mantra is generally something along the lines *'Money – well you can't take it with you'* – which come rent day can be a problem. However, if there are treats to be had/bought/sniffed out, then I'm the girl to find them. Upon recently discovering the [Arts Club](#), I quickly realized that it was the kind of place where I'd happily blow my monthly food budget and then spend the remainder of the month wistfully eating beans on toast.

It is glam.



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

The food

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

Date night



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

Being nestled in the heart of Barrio Salamanca helps it to retain its air of exclusivity but its laidback luxury is coincidentally part of its charm. Whilst it may be swish and swanky it's not intimidatingly so. I suggest, scarp that, I *insist* that you don your gladrags and spend an evening with the pretty peeps of Madrid.

Photo credit: [Arts Club – Madrid](#)

Info

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-

Fonty, Lovely Brunch in Barrio Salamanca

Brunch is all the rage in Madrid right now. Restaurants big and small are offering full-on Saturday and Sunday brunch menus featuring the works: mimosas, eggs Benedict, hash browns, you name it. We've already written about a few of [our favorite brunch spots](#) in hip neighborhoods like Malasaña and Chueca. Yet the craze is now also hitting Madrid's more upscale neighborhood of Barrio Salamanca, thanks to [Fonty](#).



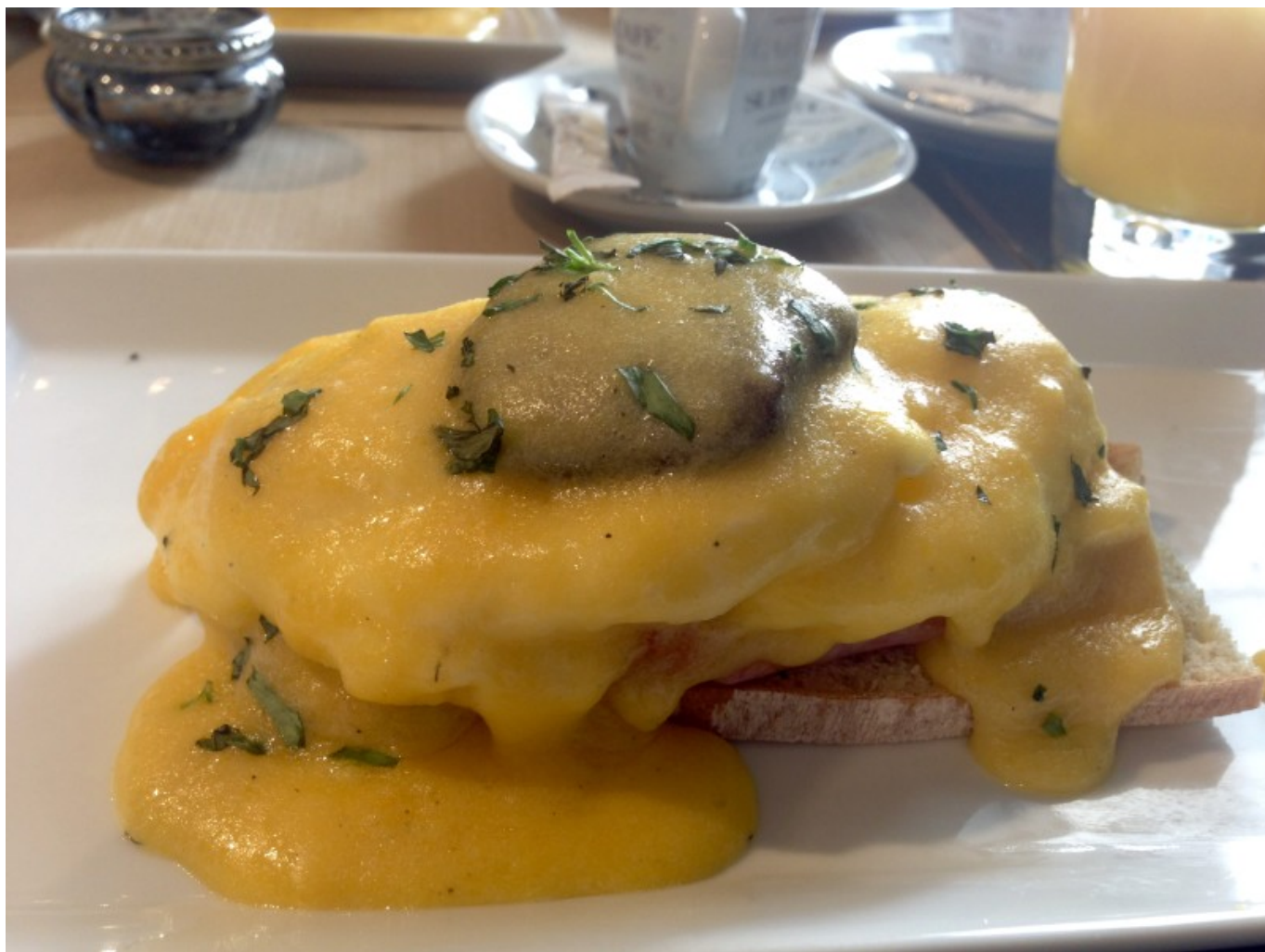
Fonty began serving brunch on Sundays at its first location on **Calle Castelló 12** a few years ago. Due to popular demand, the restaurant quickly started offering it on Saturdays as well. And now, you can also enjoy a weekend brunch at their second location, newly opened and just a 15 minute walk away on **Calle Juan Bravo, 41**, where James and I went on Sunday. The decor is modern yet cozy, and they're planning on opening up a terrace which will surely be nice come summer. Sipping on your cappuccino in the sun sounds pretty perfect to me!



One of the owners, Marie, told James and I that she originally wanted to open up a pastry shop, yet decided to open a restaurant to cater to Madrid's sit-down culture. Many of their first customers still come in regularly for their homemade cakes and pastries. In addition to sweets and brunch, **Fonty** also serve a complete *menu del día* for €13, using fresh ingredients; they never fry anything. So Fonty is a great place to go to if you're in the neighborhood and looking for something lighter than what you might find next door.



As for brunch, you'll find four different options that range from €20-26. We went with the second option that included a brunch special (from egg dishes to pancakes), plus a pastry, orange juice, coffee and yogurt with fruit and granola, which cost €20 each. When we go back, we'll have to try the first option which came with a burger.



As for our brunch specials, I got the ***tosta de la casa*** which came with roasted tomato, ham, portobello mushrooms, poached egg and hollandaise sauce. James got the **eggs Benedict with bacon**. The quality was incredible. The sauce was so rich yet velvety smooth. The yogurt and freshly squeezed orange juice gave us that feeling of being healthy, and the pastry was the perfect touch of sweetness. Then the coffee topped it all off.



So, if you're in Barrio Salamanca and craving a **good brunch** or **menú del día**, you've got not one but two locations to choose from!

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Web](#)
- **Address:** Calle Castelló 12 (metro Príncipe de Vergara or Velázquez) & Calle Juan Bravo 41 (metro Diego de León or Núñez de Balboa)

You may also like

- [Best brunch on a budget in Madrid](#)
- [Federal Café, hipster in a very good way](#)
- [Little Big Café, my big little pick-me-up](#)

- [6 best café-bookshops in Madrid](#)
-

Rave Market: Hanger exchange party & charity market

[Rave Market](#) is sponsoring a special edition charity event called “**Cambio de Percha**” (‘hanger exchange’) this weekend at Truss Market, inside Barclaycard Center in Barrio Salamanca.

The [event](#) will take place on **Sat, Dec 12 (5pm-9pm)** and **Sun, Dec 13 (11am-3pm)**. Free entrance for all!

Expect numerous stands selling second-hand and independent designer items. There’ll also be **live music** spun by the hands of RaveMarket Djs and **free cocktails** thanks to Torres15.

And one more thing: **10% of all earnings during the event will go towards charity organizations** and projects within Barrio Salamanca.

Don’t miss it!

La Jefa Home Bar, a Chic Restaurant near Recoletos

Located near Paseo de Recoletos and Retiro, [La Jefa](#) is a restaurant that makes you feel at home. With a chic and Colonial-style décor, La Jefa serves Mediterranean and fusion

cuisine, with a kitchen that opens all day long, offering breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner menus.



Photo from [La Jefa FB page](#)

On my most recent visit to [La Jefa](#), my friend and I found it difficult to order from **all the delicious options** we had to choose from! For starters, we ordered “**Papitas canarias con ajo cristal**” (Canarian-style potatoes with garlic) “**huevos rotos la jefa**” (La Jefa-style eggs), and “**gambones wanton**” (wanton prawns).







For the main course, I chose “**Solomillo de ternera**” (veal **tenderloin**) and it tasted absolutely amazing! It had a mix of different flavors, enhanced with pepper and a special sauce; plus the meat was cooked to perfection.



My friend chose **“pez mantequilla con tabulé”** (butter fish with **tabbouleh**) with an extraordinary adobo spice, mixed with garlic quinoa tabbouleh. It was so soft that it melted in my mouth.



As far as I'm concerned, wine is absolutely essential for any dinner or lunch. At La Jefa, we decided to enjoy our meal with **a special wine label, named "Juan Gil"**. We made a great choice; it was the perfect compliment to our meal.

All in all, I highly recommend this restaurant for a wonderful meal at a good price, no less. The ambience, food and neighborhood make it a great choice for any occasion!

Info

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- Phone: +34 916 217 674
- Reservations advised.

El Patio De Fisgon – Feel like you've discovered Narnia

My blog posts would imply that I pretty much do nothing but eat in Madrid but I assure you that's not the case. Also ranking high on my to-do's are drinking, tanning, exercising (this is a new found passion that's surprised me more than most) and just general all round gallivanting... But it has to be said that going out for dins is one of my very favourite pastimes and I never need much encourage to ditch home cooking in favour of being waited on. To this end, I am constantly on the prowl for somewhere that will satiate my appetite and not break the bank.

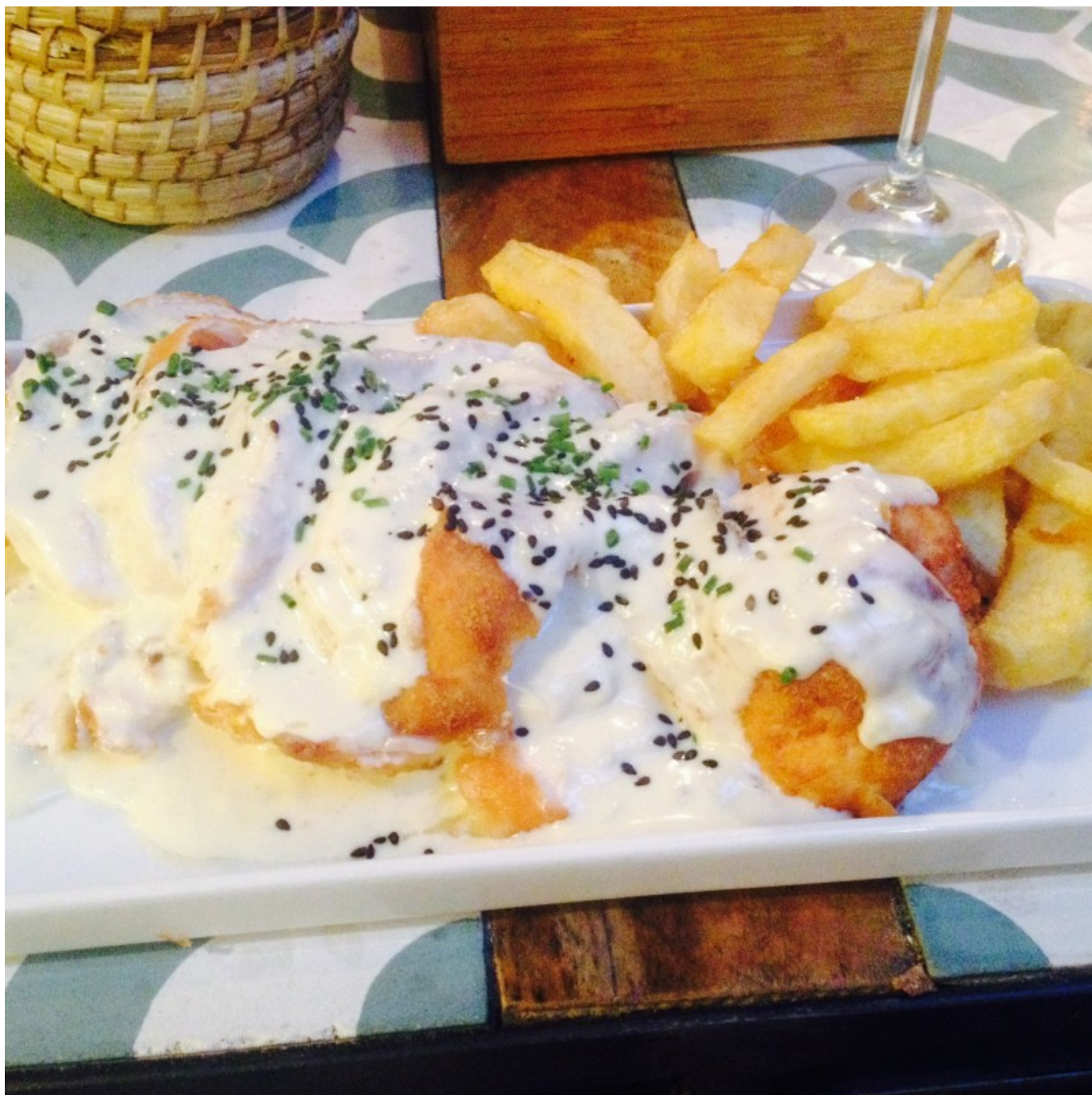
This leads me onto my current fave, [El Patio De Fisgon](#). Not an obvious choice for lovers of Malasaña/Chueca as it tucked away on a swanky side street just off of Calle Ortega y Gasset (but it's most definitely worth the 5 or so euros in a cab) to find yourself in what felt like something out of The Secret Garden. *All twinkly lights, scented candles and the like – you can picture the scene.



The quest for somewhere simple yet swanky came about upon realising that I was hostessing three rather glam PR gals for the weekend, whose tastes are definitely more Balthazar than Burger King. Suffice to say El Patio impressed on all counts. Gorgeous food (and hefty portions), attentive staff (but not claustrophobic-ally so), wine in abundance (and cheap at that) ensured that my crown as a Madrid aficionado remained intact. We ate, drank and were merry for the grand total of 70 euros; coming from London where a soggy sarnie can set you back a fiver this was beyond bargainous. Post dinner drinks followed at the similarly gorgeous Punk Back which is sadly not quite as purse friendly – but equally swish. We're not talking the

need to remortgage a casa for a copa but it's definitely at the higher end of the scale price for Madrid. Saying that, if you like to sip your gins surrounded by the beautiful people then it's worth letting your wallet take a hit.





El Patio wise, I recommend requesting a table out on the terrazza to fully enjoy the 'see and be seen vibe' and let's face it, we all look that little bit better when illuminated by the soft focus glow of a fairy light. So what's been one of my best kept secrets looks set to be no more. I suggest you book a table and for the record, the rollitos artesanos de pato are worth every gluttonous cal.

Slight disclaimer alert Having recently gone back for a second visit, I have to red flag that the 8.30pm dinner sitting results in your being kicked off your table (rather

unceremoniously) by 10pm so defo book a later dins if you can...

Info

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