

Gin and on it at Le Cocó

Sundays (if you let them) can frankly be a little bit rubbish. And in the winter – even worse. Chances are you're nursing a mild to moderate hangover. There's life admin to smash. And then the potential doom that often comes when you spy the return to work on the horizon.

This often means that Sundays don't have that carefree Friday feeling. They're the waiting room for the working week. However, as I discovered last Sunday, it definitely doesn't have to be that way and Sunday Funday most certainly doesn't have to remain as some intangible insta friendly phrase – especially not in this city.



[Le Cocó](#), the cosy little Chueca spot that I [reviewed](#) back in the summer, is now playing host to '**Gin and Cookie**' **afternoons**. You show up, you drink gin, you eat cookies. There's not much not to love. Between 5-8pm on both Saturdays and Sundays, there's a DJ on the decks helping you to keep

your party pants on until your alarm pretty much goes off on a Monday morn.



In my [previous Le Cocó post](#) I mentioned just how how lovely the decor is and now that winter is really starting to bite, it's the perfect place to bunker down for an afternoon and enjoy some copas in good company.



It goes without saying that each bite of the cookies was well worth the calories. The red velvet ones in particular deserve a mention as I could've happily munched the lot – but clearly needed to leave some room for the perfectly mixed G&Ts.



Seagram's 7
The American

Isabeli Fontana
CON TUZ / FOTOGRAFIA

NZÁLEZ
EJOR MOMEN
U VIDA

ZINE

ABRIC
ESPE
ROJO

So if like me, you're keen to eek out the dregs of the weekend until the bitter end, make a date at Le Cocó. Remember, the weekend isn't over until the fat lady sings. Or in this case, you've eaten all the cookies.

Info

- [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) & [Website](#)
 - **Address:** C/ Calle de Barbieri, 15
 - **Metro:** Chueca
 - **Phone:** 915 21 99 55
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Cubanismo, a tropical escape in Malasaña

In the warmer months, Madrid becomes inundated with talk of rooftop terraces: which one is the coolest, where's the best view, who has the best drinks? There are the perennial favorites, the ones that always crop up on tourism sites and lists of local secrets. **And then there's Cubanismo.**

On the third floor of the massive concept store and multipurpose complex that is [El Paracaidista](#), **this Cuban-inspired cocktail bar** offers a hidden escape from the busy streets of Malasaña. To enter the building, you'll need to sign in at the front desk, and then journey through displays of chic clothing and artsy accessories to reach the bar itself. It may not actually be on the building's roof... but it makes up for this technicality with an incredible atmosphere.



Once you arrive, you'll be instantly transported back to 20th-century Cuba, or at least a romanticized idea of it. A small indoor area features sofas, mirrors, and old wooden furniture, plus a marble bartop staffed by white-shirted waiters.



The terrace is roomy but still small enough to feel intimate. It features wooden chairs with brightly colored cushions, red umbrellas, and a view of the surrounding rooftops. This isn't the place to go for a panoramic view of the city, but it's cozy and charming in its own way. At night, flickering candles make it especially romantic.



The drink menu is creative and complete, with something for everyone. For the full experience it's essential to order a mojito, which comes in a tall glass with crushed ice, fresh mint leaves, a preserved lime slice, and a touch of Angostura bitters. Other drinks include aperitivos that put an original twist on classics like the Negroni and Bloody Mary. The menu offers various rum drinks, among them the intriguing *Cavalibre* (rum, lime juice, cava, cola syrup, and Angostura) and the *Made in Cuba*, with hints of cucumber and absinthe.

Gin lovers will also find several tempting options, flavored with things like **blackberry liqueur, apricot brandy, and passion fruit purée**. While cocktails are definitely the specialty here, they also offer wine, beer, sangría, and even non-alcoholic takes on classic drinks. If you're hungry, order a snack like guacamole, hummus, *jamón ibérico*, a cheese board, or ice cream for dessert.



Although the prices are slightly above average, they're by no means unreasonable. And **for the entire month of October, 2017, all cocktails and mixed drinks are 2 for 1 during happy hour** (5:00 to 8:00 pm, Tuesday through Friday). This deal also applies to Parq, the full-service restaurant on the floor above—but if I were you, I'd skip the pricey entrées and stick to Cubanismo's drinks and snacks. After spending a couple of hours here, you might never want to leave.

Info

- [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) & [website](#)
- **Phone:** 914 45 19 13
- **Address:** Calle de la Palma, 10
- **Metro:** Tribunal

Killer Cocktails at NH Collection Madrid Eurobuilding

I haven't always been able to call **Malasaña** home. In fact, since decamping to Madrid almost eight years ago, there have been a plethora of places that I have indeed called 'home', if only for a short time. There was the awful place on Calle Barco (complete with a landlord who just used to rock up unannounced and sit in his dressing gown on the sofa, true story). There was the hovel in Iglesia where running water was frequently considered a luxury. There was even a place near Moncloa where mould featured heavily as part of the interior design.

However, in the midst of all of this, I found a lovely little place to call mine near Cuzco. Since migrating south to **Malasaña** and having become a fully fledged member of the barrio, I rarely find myself back up north as it were, but given that it's August and the city feels like your own private playground (due to the lack of folk in the sweltering oven that is Madrid), I decided to spread my wings, as it were and make a pilgrimage to my old hood.



The reason for making it to the **Eurobuilding Hotel** was that I'd heard whisperings about their killer cocktails. Having just got back from three weeks in Vietnam, where drinking beer felt like a national past time, I figured my bikini bod (or current lack thereof) would thank me for laying off the hops. We're also not talking any old cocktails here either; the menu (which changes annually) was created by cocktail maestro, **Diego Cabrera**.



So I went hopeful that the tipples would trump the kind of ropey offerings served up during a happy hour in your bog standard beach bar. Given the heat and the thirst that I'd worked up thanks to the mercury melting temps, I sampled three delights (as well as a sneaky bit of tapas to ensure that I could remember the journey home – tempura prawns and a veal-stuffed potato, both equally delish and devoured within seconds). Whilst they offer all the classics, the specially curated menu is unique to say the least. Pairings of flavours are quirky and presentation is paramount. Being a huge fan of

Pisco (sadly at the moment it's the closest I'll get to Peru), I tried a **Sherbert Shurb Punch**. The recipe for which was to be found niftily on the back of my coaster, a nice touch.



The outdoor terrace was also the perfect spot to people watch and watch we did as the Real Madrid team bus sailed by en route to the nearby **Bernabeu**. So if you'd struggle to sell the place to your man friend there's definitely something for the boys on offer; its close proximity to the stadium makes it the ideal place to enjoy a celebratory tipple. Which given Los Blancos' current form, could be happening more often than not.

Info

- [Website](#)
 - **Metro:** Cuzco
 - **Address:** Padre Damian 23
 - **Phone:** 913537337
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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
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1862 Dry Bar – Perfection Served in a Glass

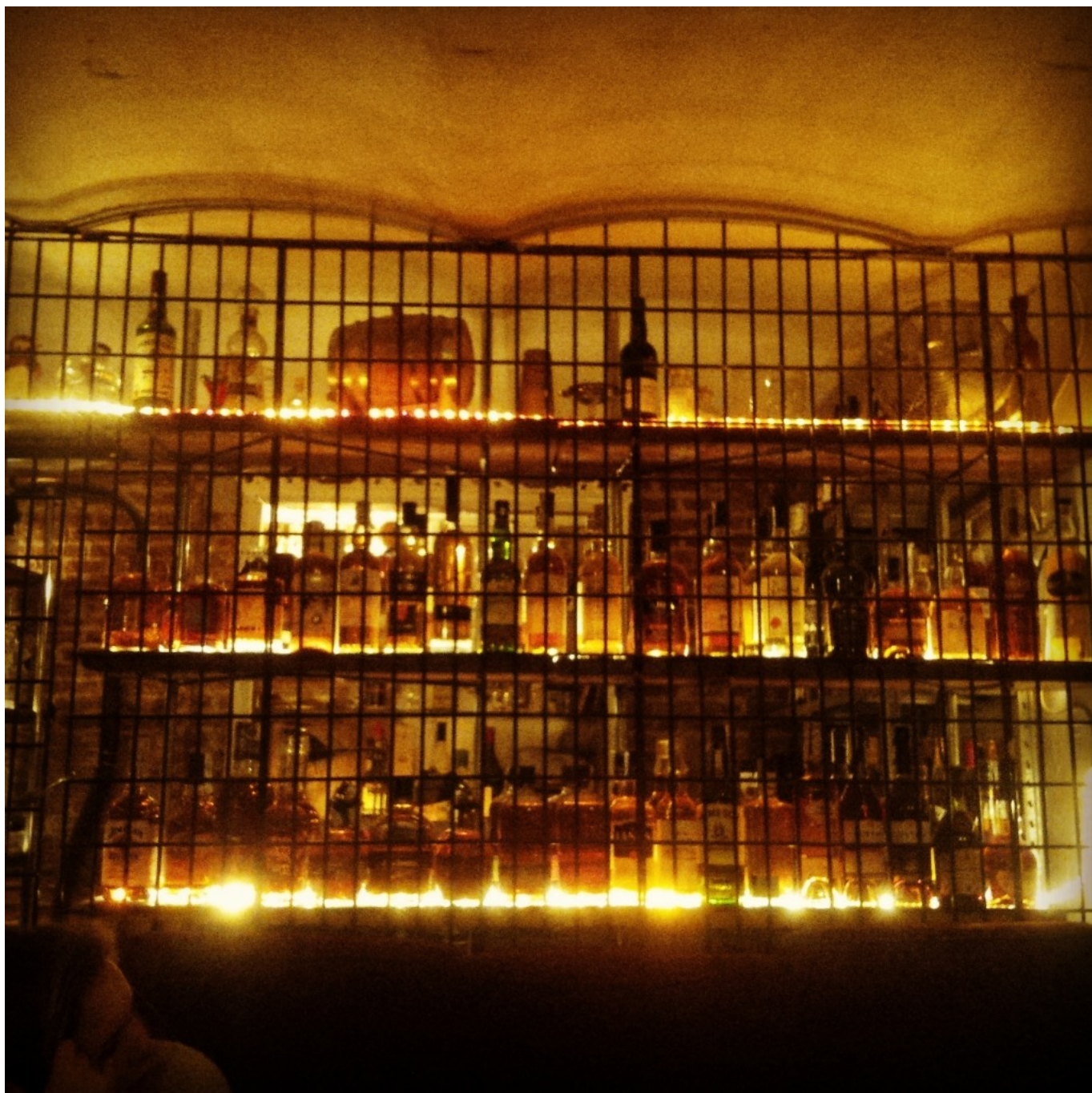
Looking for a perfectly crafted cocktail? Do you prefer the classics, or something a little more adventurous? No matter your taste, there is a spot for you at [1862 Dry Bar](#), located in the heart of Malasaña.

If you need structure, snag a table on the street level, with tables peppering the perimeter of the room, and the bar as the center of attention. For those looking to lounge and drop into a comfortable sofa, head to the dimly lit basement, and find yourself losing all concept of time.

The cocktail menu is comprehensive – running the gamut from Old Fashioned to Cosmopolitan; you name it, they serve it. Don't miss out on the house specials on the backside of the menu, with intricate mixes that you didn't know you wanted until you saw it on the menu.



If you are indecisive like I tend to be, simply ask for a recommendation-the service is friendly and can help you craft your drink based on your likes and dislikes without a second thought. Each careful creation is fairly priced at **8€**.



The basement displays quite literally a cage of alcohol, decoratively illuminated in case you still aren't sure what you're in the mood for.

If you are able to climb out of your comfortable seat on the couch, look beyond the curved archway in the basement that gives way to a smaller bar counter, with old fashioned photos, exposed brick walls, and hanging stemware.



[1862 Dry Bar](#) has all you could ask for-aesthetic appeal in a comfortable setting, affable, knowledgeable employees, and expertly crafted cocktails. But don't take my word for it-start tasting your way through the menu and decide for yourself if you're more of the traditional type, or if you can handle something a little different.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Where: Calle del Pez, 27

Metro: Noviciado

Looking for more on Madrid's bar scene?
Check out:

[Madrid's Best Cocktail Bars](#)

[Madrid's Best Craft Beer Bars](#)

[Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars](#)

Flowers are nice (but this First Date is better) Part 1



The moment: Check your phone or ditch all together

I get nervous and will probably continue to get nervous when planning a first date. It's not easy. It can even be daunting. You might have just met the girl/boy on a drunken Saturday night and you find yourself trying to come up with a way to

entertain, show off, and come across as interesting and intelligent all at once. So I'm back to getting nervous and with little idea of what might or might now work.

Topics of interest can be hard to find but I believe that the location of the date should tie into the conversation. So rather than the usual routine of restaurant then drinks, this is a bit more dynamic and Madrileño (known for going to lots of places on one night).

The idea behind my method is to take your date to at least 3 different places on a given night. Each place will compliment each other and yet offer a very different component of the night. I have included a route order to help. All the places will be in walking distance from each other.

Part 1 is taking the arts and culture route. Not the Prado and its thousands of archangels, but more modern and contemporary offerings. Something more quirky to get the conversation flowing.

This in no way will guarantee you get laid on the first night. Too many factors depend on that result. However, it should reduce those awkward silent moments because you're grasping for a common topic. Quick tip for the awkward moment, just kiss him/her. There is no perfect moment. Only the courage to move your head forward 5 inches.

Act One: [Fundacion Telefonica](#) in Calle Fuencarral 3



Fundación Telefonica

We start in the Fundacion Telefonica on Fuencarral. This gallery is always free and almost always open, except Mondays. It regularly changes the collections and usually has photography showing. I am no art student but when you are confronted with space geese and watching a video of their training to fly to the moon, it makes you smile and realise we live in a great place (Moon Goose Analogue, 2011-1012, Agnes Meyer-Brandis). So quickly check out the website and see what's on, the stranger the better as you don't need to be knowledgeable. Only a sense of humour is required.

Best time: 18-20h

Metro: Gran Via

Act Two: [Aìò](#) in Corredera Baja de San Pablo, 25 (mentioned in a [previous article](#))



Now that we have started down the cultural road, we cannot go too formal with the restaurant. It needs to fit the setting but shouldn't cost too much. Aio is an Italian restaurant that offers aperitivo for dinner. Aperitivo means you just buy drinks at a slightly higher price and are able to eat from the buffet at your heart's content. The food is typical Italian with pizza, pasta and salads on offer. Aperitivo is incredibly popular in Italy since the crisis hit, as a way to entice consumers to leave their homes. You cannot reserve a table but there's always a positive atmosphere.

Best time: 20-22h

Alternative: la Mucca is an excellent restaurant. You can make reservations and also sit outside on the terrace. It is the

more high quality and expensive option.

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao

[Facebook](#)

Act Three: [Microteatro](#) por dinero in Calle de Loreto Prado y Enrique Chicote, 9



What surprise will await?

You then continue the night by going to Micro Teatro, a bar where you can watch a small theatrical performance for only €4. You can enjoy drinks upstairs and then when your number is called out, you will descend the stairs into the basement and go into the designated room. All groups are at most 15 people and you come face to face with the actors in the small room. Each little play lasts around 15 minutes, which is good because not all are great. It never fails to create another conversation and even if you only understand 50%, it will still be entertaining.

Best time: 22-24h

Alternative: [Bar Lambuzo](#): an Andalusian tavern offering Micro

Teatro every Thursday night from 9pm-11pm in their downstairs wine cellar (21h-23h if you will J!), with sessions every half hour for 4€ (more information in a [previous article](#))

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao

The Final Act: [El Perro de la parte de atras del coche](#) (or just el Perro) in Calle de La Puebla, 15,



Once you still have energy and need a club, I recommend El Perro, which is around the corner. This club is free entry before 24h, otherwise entry is €10. The music varies a lot. Not a huge dancing room means even if it is not packed will have you feeling like enough people are present.

Best time: after 24h

Alternative: Wind down with a cocktail instead of some dance moves at [1862 Dry Bar](#) in Calle Pez 27, which is open to 1.30am and until 2am on weekends. The martini like many of their cocktails is thoroughly worth it.

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao



For other great date ideas in Madrid, check out these off-the-beaten-path cultural centres, restaurants and bars!

- [El Matadero](#), a slaughterhouse turned cultural hub
- [Bar Lambuzo](#), a family-run Andalusian tavern in the centre of Madrid offering activities in their wine cellar, from wine tastings to microteatro!
- [La Paca](#), the perfect Malasaña bar & café offering movie nights, art, markets, music and Chema!
- [Mercado de Motores](#), Madrid's coolest vintage & food

market that takes over the city's old train museum once a month!

- [La Buena Cerveza](#), an international and imported beer shop in Madrid offering beer tastings, workshops and more...
- [Beer State of Mind](#), go on a route to discover Madrid's best craft beer bars, you'll love them all ☐
- [Martinis, Margaritas and More](#), where to get the best cocktails in Madrid...