

Verbena Bar Review

Madrid (and more specifically) Malasaña is choc-a-bloc with cute looking bars, so much so that it's often nigh on impossible, to pick from the myriad of options. However, should you find yourself Saturday strolling around the vintage shops that pepper Calle Velarde, Verbena is the perfect choice. Not a case of style over substance, Verbena is the perfect mid-shopping pit stop, as well as the ideal place for tapas time.



Like similar bars in the area, its decor is pleasing to the eye, as is its proximity to the perennially popular Plaza Dos De Mayo. It offers more than your simple caña/vino combo; I was particularly impressed with its **gin selection**, which could rival a far swankier locale. I plumped for a Nordes (which

hails from Galicia in the north of Spain) – it came expertly served in a Copa de Balon and was quite the snip at 8 euros – I've spent obscene amounts on a G&T so this felt relatively bargainous.



My fellow bar hoppers enjoyed a crisp **Albariño** and an **Estrella Damn** – I was assured that they were both suitably pleasing to the palate and purse (an entire round came to less than a sarnie would in a city such as London or Paris).



The staff were friendly and knowledgeable (particularly when questioned about their own gin faves). Furthermore, Verbena boasts a simple menu that offers all the classics that you'd come to expect from Madrid – tortilla de patata, croquetas, complete breakfasts and the like.



Verbena is the equivalent of a trusty pair of jeans – a comfy option that requires minimal effort. Smack bang in the city centre, it'd be a crime to walk on by.

3.5 stars out of 5

Info

Address: Calle Velarde, 24

Bosco de Lobos – a casual-chic restaurant in Chueca

Last month I reviewed the sexy, swish [Ana La Santa](#). If we were to talk in terms of siblings, whilst Ana La Santa may be the mature older brother in the dining out stakes, this means that Bosco de Lobos may be the cuter, younger sister. Smaller in size and with a less obvious position within the city (it's tucked away between Calle Fuencarral and Hortaleza) sort of straddling Malasaña and Chueca if you will, it's the ideal place for a simple lunch on their sun-kissed terraza or for a casual date night that won't break the bank.

The atmosphere was (on a Friday night) buzzing to say the least; packed with punters all gagging to sample their take on eclectic European fare, ranging from wood-fired pizzas, to steak tartare, to heaving pasta dishes. They do a little bit of everything and instead of this being to their detriment (like that friend you have who spreads themselves too thinly) it's all lip-smackingly good.



Like most, I enjoy dining out (ok, perhaps more than most) but I like to do so in places that lack pretention and that do simple things with style. Bosco de Lobos ticks both boxes. Special mention has to go our waitress, Iryna, who was a fountain of knowledge on the wine front, recommending the perfect Rioja to be paired with my steak. We rounded off the evening with a couple of puds and a G&T thrown in for good measure.

Speaking of round, that's exactly how my midriff felt after eating like a Queen. It doesn't hurt that the setting is as tasty as the food, lots of sultry low lighting and artfully dishevelled bookshelves, making the whole place feel cosily lived in rather than sterile Scandi in tone.

Unlike La Musa, they do take reso's so I implore you to make one – you can thank me later.

All photos from [Bosco de Lobos](#)

Bosco de Lobos

- [Facebook](#) & Instagram: [@boscodelobosmadrid](#)
 - **Address:** COAM, Calle de Hortaleza, 63
 - **Phone:** [915 24 94 64](#)
 - **Metro:** Alonso Martínez, Chueca & Tribunal
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El Andariego, Your Argentinian Corner Bar in Madrid

A few years ago I went out with friends to see a play at a small theater in downtown Madrid. I don't remember where we went (we took a taxi there and back, and I just followed along), but I do remember the street was lined with independent theaters and arts spaces, and afterwards we went to a **sweet corner bar** that I instantly fell in love with. I'd always wondered where that bar was...

Here comes the crazy part. Last month I moved to **Calle Ercilla, near Embajadores**. As I was walking down my new street one day, I started seeing theater after theater... It all looked too familiar, so I kept on walking and low and behold, there it was! The bar I had gone to all those years ago is called [El Andariego](#), and it's just how I remembered it.



It turns out **El Andariego** is a neighborhood favorite and pretty well known throughout Madrid. It specializes in Argentinian dishes, the star being the “**entrañas**” (entrails) which are out of this world, and other **grilled meat dishes** (€12.50).



Then of course they have a selection of **homemade empanadas** (€2.50-3.50). We tried the spinach and criolla ones which both hit the spot.





We also ordered an off-the-charts **quiche made with spinach, squash and pumpkin seeds**; plus the **provoleta**, melted provolone cheese (€6 each and delicious).





El Andariego also offers **vegan options like baba ganoush and hummus**, plus a selection of **Mexican dishes**. As I was watching other plates land on patrons' tables, I spotted an impressive mountain of quesadillas that I'll have to try next time.

So far I've eaten here twice and each time the bill came out to a total of just **22 euros for 2**, including a glass of red wine each. Granted we shared everything but still, it's very affordable.

So I can say the food, drinks and prices are all great. The only downside? It can get a bit cramped but that's pretty typical of Madrid bars, especially the good ones. Everybody wants in!

Info

- [Facebook](#)
 - **Address:** Calle del Labrador, 12 (corner with Calle Ercilla)
 - **Metro:** Embajadores
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1862 Dry Bar, staggeringly chic cocktail bar on Calle Pez

They say that Madrid has more bars per square mile than any other Spanish city (some even go as far as to boast, in Europe). Whilst I'm not sure of the exact bar tally, not that I'm all that concerned, what I do know is that you only need to step foot out of your house to see that Madrid is certainly not lacking in places to get a drink. If there's one thing that Spaniards enjoy (aside from the stereotypical siesta) it's a tipple or two.

However, bars in Madrid tend to generally fall into one of two distinct camps; the ones with the unmissable glow of strip lighting and scattered napkins, that generally tend to be frequented by a more aging population. And those that cater to fans of an exposed brick interior, shabby chic furniture and a drink served in a jam jar. This is what makes [1862 Dry Bar](#) so unique. It falls into neither category and I'm all the more pleased for it. A staggeringly chic cocktail bar perched on the perennially popular Calle Pez, it may look discreet from

the roadside, but upon stepping inside, you could quite easily be transported into the prohibition-era bars that are more likely to be found stateside, than in Spain.



The affable owner, Alberto, is a fountain of knowledge on the cocktail front, in other words, what he doesn't know about all things shaken or stirred isn't worth knowing. The building (an old hardware store I believe) manages to effortlessly straddle being airy and cosy simultaneously. The downstairs is particularly sumptuous, with plenty of nooks for a clandestine date or an intimate chat, whilst sipping on your expertly made pisco sour.



What I

particularly loved about 1862 Dry Bar, was the clearly knowledgeable and creative bar staff. The menu has all the classics in place, but also offers up some truly unique cocktails made by guest mixologists ranging from Trailer Happiness (hailing from Hoxton), with another one being from The Ritz Madrid.

The furniture, the staff and ultimately the delectable drinks, make Dry Bar 1862 the perfect watering hole for a date night or a glamorous venue for a gaggle of friends. The cocktails are potent and pack a punch, however, the jewel in the crown is Alberto, whose passion for a decent drink prevails in a city that is often lacking.

Info

- [Facebook](#)
 - **Address:** Calle del Pez, 27
 - **Metro:** Noviciado
 - **Phone:** [609 53 11 51](#)
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Leave El Barrio for El Imparcial, in Tirso de Molina

I've started jokingly referring to Gran Via as my Madrid version of the River Thames. Should you know London, you'll know that when it comes to being a dweller of the affectionately nicknamed 'smog', you very much fall either the North or South camp thanks to the watery divide; and to this end I feel that the same can be said for Madders. If you're Fuencarral side of Gran Via you tend to spend your free time hot footing it around the streets of Malasaña and Chueca.

Whereas if you veer down towards Sol, you can usually be found whiling away time between La Latina and Lavapiés. Either way, had I not crossed the 'symbolic' gulf provided by our very own Oxford Street equivalent, I may never have found [El Imparcial](#).



Inconspicuous and almost completely nondescript from the exterior, [El Imparcial](#) is quite the find upon entering. On the right hand side you're greeted by a pocket-sized bar where you can grab a coffee or a cana. However, make your way up the impressively sized staircases and you enter into an Aladdin's Cave of all round prettiness. I'm loathe to bandy around this term liberally, but the high ceilings and beautifully restored décor can almost be described as '*breath taking*' – close one eye and squint with the other and it does have a touch of the old Palace De Versailles about it.



Part concept store, part restaurant, El Imparcial straddles a line where you literally want **everything** that you see. Cocktails, they've got them in spades. Food, well there are morsels so delicious that it wouldn't be uncommon to not want to share your starter *apologies to my fam as I inhaled the bao buns without as much as a thought of 'did you want to try one?!'



Last but not least are the Wallpaper magazine worthy purchases waiting to adorn your casa. El Imparcial stocks a carefully (and I'd hazard a guess, lovingly) curated range of stationary, magazines and books – apt really considering the building once housed a newspaper.



Food wise they offer a complete smorgasbord of delights. We wolfed down (amongst other treats) Roasted black cod with miso edamame beans, oxtail croquettes and a lip smackingly good buttifara pizza with scamorza. Our lunch lasted for hours, dinner...even longer. It really is one of those places that seems to draw you in and make you not want to leave (or maybe after the array of cocktails placing one foot in front of other could've been tricky and partly to blame for the desire not to budge).

Did I mention just how pretty it is? *and that's just the staff. Book well ahead or find yourself lingering outside, nose pressed against the glass wanting to get in.

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Web](#)
 - **Address:** Calle Duque de Alba, 4, 28012 Madrid
 - **Metro:** Tirso de Molina
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Harina, for something sweet or savoury

The temperature inside [Harina](#) is usually cranked well above the temperature of the street, thereby increasing the coziness factor. Within the walls of this white, bright, and charming locale lies one of the most satisfying menús in the city.



Available for both lunch and dinner, the menú begins with a luscious green salad dressed with sweet balsamic vinegar. The whole bowl of greens, a mealtime rarity when eating out in Spain, is like a pot of nutritious gold. Eating the salad, however, is just a warmup exercise for diving into a sprawling

slab of pizza.



Keep gulping wine and it may feel as though the pizza has a magnetic force. The glowing light of the interior only becomes softer the less wine remaining in your glass. Thin crust, thick pieces of bacon, a runny fried egg perched in the

middle—need I say more? Cut a piece away from the pie and cheese strings out like a game of cat's cradle.



Other menu options do exist, but this one consistently pleases. Dessert is not included in the menu, rather a pot of tea or a cup of coffee seals the meal. Baked goods can wait for another day—maybe when an entire pizza is not taking up stomach real estate.



Harina is a merienda dream come true. Whatever sweet tooth whimsy you may harbor, sugary goodness awaits behind the glass cases. The meringues have rock hard shells, but they shatter into smithereens, and what is left is a sugary marshmallow pillow.



Other desserts can be hit or miss depending on how freshly they were baked. The carrot cake was dry on a recent visit, but Harina gets brownie points for presentation and a mediocre cake can be forgiven.



Multiple locations around the city, prices vary.

Here's their [Facebook page](#) and [web](#).

You'll find one of their nicest locations inside **Plaza de la Independencia**, right next to **Puerta de Alcalá** and a hop skip away from **Plaza de Cibeles**.

After a trip to a nearby museum, you may want to pop into Harina for a coffee or snack. Here's an article on [Madrid's known and not-so-known art institutions](#), many of which are located near Harina.