

Retrogusto Bar: My best-kept Madrid secret

I never thought I'd share this place with the world, but the time has come. Retrogusto is a little Italian bar and kitchen located near Plaza Mayor and Opera, right in the city center. Yet it doesn't feel that way. It feels more like you're in a small town, as it's situated in a quiet plaza with tables set out under a beautiful tree that provides warmth and shade.

I've been living in Madrid for over 12 years now, and this is by far one of my favorite spots in the city. One of the main reasons is that big tree! Another reason is because it's so simple and down to earth.



The restaurant has two terraces: one in the plaza; and the other under a residential building. The indoor area is small and cute, decorated with mis-matching vintage furniture and nicknacks.



You can sit anywhere and enjoy your time here. But that tree is something special; I've spent many wonderful evenings under its canopy...



James and I first stumbled upon Retrogusto when we were living near Sol a few years ago, and it quickly became our oasis. We'd always find a table under the tree on weeknights and order several glasses of wine or beer—each round would come with delicious olives, Italian cheese or a surprise *aperitivo* that was always good. For dinner, James would get the meatballs and I'd go for the piadina or eggplant parmesan.



But last time we went, the menu had changed so we tried something new. James got the pasta special with zucchini cream sauce that he's still dreaming about, no joke. I went for the Caprese salad—light and fresh.



We didn't get a spot under the tree last time either, because we went on the weekend for a change and it was full. Instead, we grabbed a seat in the other outdoor area, and now we know where all the owners' friends and regulars hang out!



Before leaving we asked the owner, Silvana, if she could tell us a bit about her story. She's originally from Sardinia, Italy, and came to Madrid 12 years ago, after living in Ireland and working in accounting. She wanted a change and decided that Spain was pretty similar to Italy, without it being Italy (if that makes sense).



Silvana started out working at a bar in La Latina. Her friends owned Retrogusto at the time, and she would come to hang out and help them. When they decided to leave Spain, she naturally took over and has been running it for seven years now. Her brother works in the kitchen and she's out front. "I don't cook," she says.

Our conversation went on for quite a while, covering the new laws restricting Madrid restaurants and business owners, to the lives of freelancers. I won't get into the details but I will say that she treated us to a round of shots by the end of our meal. Grazie!

Before leaving I asked Silvana what her favorite thing about the bar is: "Its simplicity. It's like being with your family

in a small town.”

I couldn't agree with her more. Although the secret's out, let's make sure it stays that way.

Retrogusto Bar:

- [Facebook](#) & IG: [@retrogustobar](#)
- Address: Plaza del Biombo
- Metro: Opera or Sol

Note: Because of the restricted closing hours for bars and restaurants right now (11pm) she's opening a little earlier lately, around 7:30pm.