Forasteros, a Madrid-based swing, gypsy-jazz and folk band

As a hub for artists and creative are types from all over the world, Madrid's local live-music scene is energetic and diverse. As always, your friends at Naked Madrid are here to provide you with the best options as how to maximize the potential of your nights out. **The first local musicians to be featured in this series are the swing, gypsy-jazz, folk group Forasteros**.



They have an interesting backstory because their members had all met by chance. The band was formed when its founder, lyricist and guitarist, **Tom Buzz Cox** from London, crossed

paths with **Tara** during a Vaughan System teacher training course. Swing instructor **Julia Hampson**, also from London, was brought onboard as the violinist after an encounter busking the streets in Lavapies.

Tom recruited **Hinata Myojin**, a bassist from Japan, through another band in the community. Clarinettist **Ricardo Vasquez** from Texas/Mexico was discovered upon his response to an advertisement. They are unclear on how drummer **Fernando Iglesias** from Madrid entered the fold, strongly implying that he materialized out of thin air.



They write in Spanish, English, French and even Japanese. Ricardo and Julia have a classical background and are well-versed in swing and Jazz. Overall the group combines aspects of **gypsy-jazz, folk and swing** while also being open to anything that takes their fancy: twisted Latin rhythms, funk, DnB hints.

Their ambition is to make people laugh, dance and feel while also “talking about difficult shit.” says **Tara Lowe**, their singer and lyricist, who I have known for the greater part of the year as two of my close friends were her flatmates. Lowe, a long-term expat from Cardiff enjoys writing songs about everyday life that are “**cheeky, honest and indulgent.”**



Forasteros’ songs have addressed some of the more **relatable aspects of living in Madrid** with their songs “Landlord from Hell, title self-explanatory, as well as “Banks of June” which focuses on lust and broken hearts. Their track “Springtime Shuffle” centers on opportune new beginnings while “Cuando” is just about dancing.

Forasteros performs a lot in Lavapies in the venues of Gato Verde, Taberna Alabanda, La Tortuga, La Tabacalera and Centro de Creacion y Investigation. Their First EP, “Hello you!” was

recorded at The Treehouse Madrid Studios on the label of Vestizo Azul Records. **It is available free on Bandcamp.** Check out their video of "**Devil in the Trees**" from their new EP.



Info

Follow them on **Facebook** & **their Bandcamp page** and be sure to see them perform live! Their EP *Hello You* launches **on the 12th November at Intruso Bar** – with supporting artist **Taiacore**. Tickets can be purchased at **Giglon**. The first 50 people to arrive will get a free EP and poster.

Little Bites of Tapapies 2015

Tapapies, the multicultural tapas route in barrio Lavapies, is my favorite Madrid festivity. The winding streets are even more lively than usual, filled with musical performances and happy crowds of people drinking and eating. **Local businesses within the barrio can thrive** by making themselves approachable to outsiders while simultaneously deconstructing the rampant **misconception that Lavapies is unsafe**.

From October 15th -25th the participating bars in Lavapies are serving a ***botellin*** of Estrella Damm and a unique tapa representing the cuisines of various countries & the regions of Spain. The abundance of tapa options in the pamphlet can be overwhelming, making it difficult to decide which locations to select. **Readers be warned, the portions are quite small and the bars can get incredibly crowde**d so it is advised that you navigate this path strategically.

After two nights of field research, **I have compiled a list of noteworthy samples worthy for your barhopping endeavors**. This is an ongoing investigation and any leads from readers would be appreciated!

1. #37 La Amparito – C/ Amparo 88



The **Berenjena *Ay! Amparo***, a tapa consisting of mozzarella cheese wrapped in thinly sliced aubergine with a pesto sauce. As the first tapa that I managed to sample, it set the expectations for the bars to follow very high. This cozy bar is one that I would return to under regular circumstances because I enjoyed their selection of swing music.

2. #44 La Fantastica de Lavapies C/Embajadores 42



Tartar con Helado de Wasabi is exactly what it translates to in English, an ambitious combination of little bits of smoked salmon and wasabi ice cream.

3. #91 Tribuexete – C/ Tribulete 23



I've written about Tribuexete in a [previous post](), the location that served the winning tapa during last year's festivities. I applaud their gastronomic sponge-like tapa ***Maite*** this year for it's presentation, texture and combination of flavors. The

origin of this tapa is Donostia, San Sebastian. I frequent this establishment and it fuels my longing to visit the Basque Country myself some day.

4. #74 Portomarin- C/Valencia 4 (Next to the Carrefour)



This location's tapa, ***Vini-Cola***, was a sizeable portion of bull's tail with bordelaise sauce.

5. #12 Bierzo Alto-C/Sombrereria, 6



A small cup of shrimp and crab chowder was served at this location.

Inside Mercado de San Fernando

The noteworthy samples below can be found at the unnumbered locations in **Mercado San Fernando**, **also written about in a previous post**. The Mercado is an excellent location to enjoy **Tapapies** due to the numerous stalls serving tapas within close proximity.

6. Exargia



Bekri Meze, representing Greek cuisine, consisted of little bits of pork loin with rice, feta cheese and a white wine tomato sauce.

7. El Saja



Agasaja – two small crackers with **homemade jams** & Picón Bejes-Tresviso, a blue cheese typical of Cantabria.

8. Washoku



Cerviche Nikkei – the Japanese stall in the Mercado served a **Ceviche of salmon & whitefish**.

Which Tapapies tapa is your favorite?

The Rogues Gallery part 1: 4 Recurring creepers you may encounter in Madrid

The **Auxiliares de Conversacion en Madrid** group on facebook is a hub where the 10,000+ (of past, present and future) members of the expatriate community congregate online to share advice, refer clients to one another, or collaborate on creative

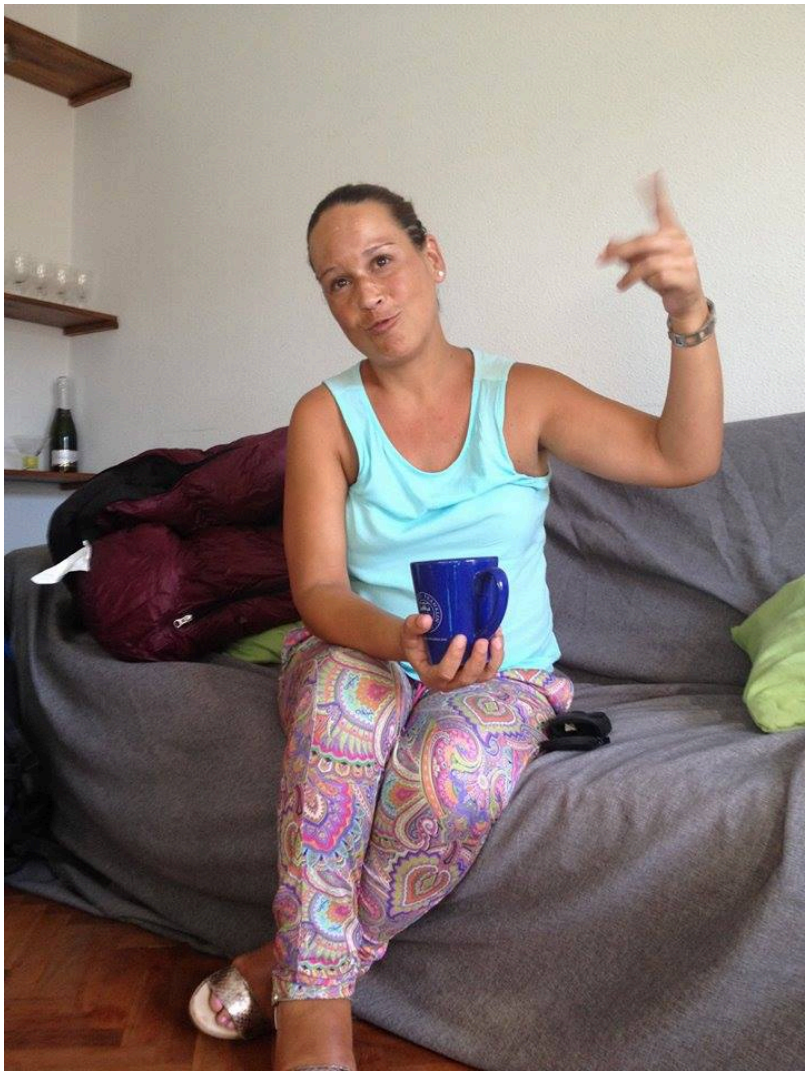
projects. It’s not uncommon to see the occasional rant about the failings of Spanish bureaucracy, nor is it uncommon to read a thread of comments stemming from ruckus caused by provocative trolls. Community members can recommend establishments that they hold dear, or warn each other about the programs, academies and individuals that they’ve deemed exploitative an untrustworthy. Group members have shared their experiences with some of Madrid’s more noticeably **curious characters.**

Below is information that I have gathered about these usual Madrid suspects.

1) The Birthday Boy

The modus operandi of the Birthday Boy is neither creative nor is it subtle. This **shadowy figure** prowls tusclasesparticulares.com in search of English and Italian lessons. Upon contacting female teachers he insists on having the class at night and on his birthday after confiding in them that he is a new arrival to Madrid and is responsible for taking care of his sick father. The **Birthday Boy** claims to be lonely as he has no friends to celebrate his birthday with. He calls the women he preys on at unseemly hours, fixated on arranging the class at the rendezvous point of the *Estatua del Oso y Madroño* in Sol. **Countless women have come forward on the Auxiliares group to warn our community about his unnerving behavior.** What remains baffling to me is that the Birthday Boy continues to use the same story and schtick despite it being what makes him immediately recognizable. One can only speculate about his motivations and backstory. Perhaps he truly is cripplingly lonely, has a sick father, and was magically frozen in time to believe that each day is the anniversary of his birth.

2) Marta the blotchy-faced bandit



Marta, a **parasitic criminal** who can be identified by a blotchy mark on her face, responds to apartment listings on idealista in order to subtly **steal** whatever she can upon the viewing. She has been active for years and clearly makes a living this way. **This woman has been reported to the police** countless times and is apparently well known to them as a career criminal. Upon hearing her description I initially theorized that the blotch pattern that is the defining feature of her face was applied with stage make-up, in order to make it harder for the authorities to identify her. I gave her too much credit, my theory was disproven when one of her victims

encountered her in the street months after the crime, and unless she was coming directly from a job, her face is indeed her face. Whether the pattern is a birthmark or battle scar is yet to be revealed. It appalls me that she continues to elude capture despite being both easily recognizable and a known threat. A member of our community, who is the real MVP, managed to take her picture when she entered his home upon realizing who she was. If she attempts to enter your home under the guise of a flat-viewing my advice is to slam the door in her face and tell her “ya sé quien eres.”

3) The Note Man



The Note Man is a **quirky** absurdity. He operates out of **Malasaña**, but has been sighted in all parts of the city. He can be recognized by his Dumbledoresque beard and tattered clothing. He is known to approach people and present them with hand-written notes. Although I have never engaged him myself I have observed him perform his gimmick from a distance in **Plaza dos de Mayo** and have taken a picture of him in action. My friends Diana and Sean once wandered into the Note Man’s path

and he shadily handed them a menacing note that said **“DON’T RUN”.** His origins and motivations are an enigma. It is unknown if he simply prefers nonverbal communication or if he is incapable of speech. **Approach with caution.**

4) La Cabra de Plaza Mayor



The “goat” of Plaza Mayor startled me when I first visited Madrid as a tourist in 2008. I was not surprised to see that it remained active when I returned in 2012. I can’t imagine **Plaza Mayor** without this shiny-bodied, wooden-faced, goat creature. The cabra is a **parasite** that envelopes a human host. It screeches to attract attention to itself in the hopes that passersby will give it their loose change . What does this goat-human creature spend its money on? What becomes of its host? Does it produce shiny cheese? How does it reproduce? These valid questions to be answered upon further research.

Any other people to beware of in Madrid?

La Barraca, an upscale Valencian restaurant in downtown Madrid

It is easy to be skeptical about the quality of the seafood in Madrid due to its severe lack of an ocean; I would write off most locations that serve paella as tourist traps while advising visitors to seek out their paella in Valencia or elsewhere. However, after sampling the ***arroz negre*** at **La Barraca** I am more optimistic about the state of paella affairs in Madrid and strongly recommend this stellar location.



My first time visiting Madrid was in August of 2008. This excursion with my grandmother, “Safta” Lucy, was a present for my acceptance to college. At that time I never would have fathomed that shortly after finishing my undergraduate degree I would go on to call Madrid my home. Back then I was not nearly as adventurous of an eater as I am now – I have ***verguenza*** that I had an aversion to seafood when Safta Lucy originally brought me to **La Barraca, an upscale location in Madrid devoted to seafood and rice dishes.**

In the present day, 7 years later, Safta Lucy and her friend Semita were passing through Madrid together as a stop on their journey between Mexico and Israel. Lucy made a reservation for us once again at **La Barraca**, which my stomach now had the refined maturity to appreciate. The walls of this establishment are decorated with **tasteful ceramic art** as well as photos of the **famous clientele**.



Our starters consisted of ***gambas al ajillo, gallos a la madrileña,*** **and** ***mejillones relleñadas.*** **Garlic prawns** are my favorite ***marisco*** and I jump at any opportunity to eat them during visits to coastal cities. The **gallos** were hearty and filling while the **mussels** were both meaty and delicate in texture.





For the main course we shared ***arroz negre***, a paella dish served with squids with the rice blackened by their ink. The ink is a delicacy that contributes positively to the flavor and texture of the rice.



And of course dessert, a **cheesecake** to end on a sweet note.



Info

Website

Address: Calle de la Reina

Phone: 915 32 71 54
Reservations advised.

You'll also like:

- La Maruca, a swanky Cantabrian restaurant in Barrio Salamanca

[Lambuzo, a family-run Andalusian restaurant in the heart of Madrid]

- [Cozy wine bars in La Latina (with gluten free options!)]

Munchies, late-night burger joint and snack bar in Huertas

My friend Natasha would often sing praises of Munchies, an American-style snack bar situated in Huertas that is open for business until 6am. Always ecstatic to have more options besides kebabs & pizzas during late-night outings in my new barrio, I sampled this location in order to share my findings with my beloved expat community. Munchies lives up to its namesake, hitting the spot during intoxicated bouts of hunger. It is a cozy and charming spot reminiscent of the American small town diners that I am ever so fond of.

-





This location provides swift and efficient service, and although I've only tasted their burgers, they also offer arepas, salads, hotdogs, homemade cakes and other sweets. Amber, the owner and culinary master of this establishment, gently applies condiments and toppings to the burgers with *cariño*. I admire her discipline, remaining awake and alert into the wee hours of the night in order to aid drunk people as they preemptively combat the next day's hangover with greasy edibles. It is for that reason that I bestow upon this establishment the Dcat Seal of Approval.





Info

Website
Facebook
Hours: *2pm to 6am*
Address: *Calle de las Huertas 25*
Metro: *Anton Martin or Sol*

Maya, a cozy Taqueria &

Mexican product store in Huertas

Maya is a new Mexican establishment, situated on C/Echegaray in Huertas. The owner & chef, Jose Manuel, hails from Mexico City. Jose previously worked in **the hidden burrito shop in Lavapies**, notably wearing a customized chef's hat. We met during his tenure there and became fast friends due to his approachable nature. After having not seen him in several months, I was taking a stroll through Huertas with a friend and we both noticed a Taqueria. She and I pondered whether it was new or had always been there. Jose surfaced and summoned us to the bar, inviting us to a drink in order to catch up and show us his new business endeavor. Jose's grand ambition is to make **quality Mexican products** more accessible to consumers in Madrid.


VIVACE


El Sabor
Rojas Rojas
Chipotles
Salsa Jalapeños
LA MOREÑA
chiladas



Knowing that Americans are always on the prowl for new places to satisfy their taco cravings, I took it upon myself to do my community a service and sample a handful of Jose's creations in order to share my findings.

First I sampled the *taco de pastor*, cilantro and onion with green lime.



The second specimen was *Cochinita de Pibil* with achiote.



The last taco was *Fajitas Alambre de ternera*



All of these treats were followed by a Tamale served on a plantain leaf.



They were all yummy, my favorite being the *taco de pastor*. I found everything about the establishment quite familiar. Their regular, a pipe-smoking elderly writer, took pride in presenting me with a poetry anthology that had his face on the back cover. This location is young, and thus the experience is quite personalized. For those of you who are seeking a venue for your taco Tuesdays, or a place to find unique Mexican ingredients to be used in your culinary endeavors at home, I strongly recommend this establishment.

Info

Facebook
Where: *Calle Echegaray 29*
Metro: *Anton Martin*
Contact: *600 68 73 51*

Also check out:

Best Mexican Joints in Madrid

Perdizione – a hidden hole-in-the-wall burrito bar in Lavapiés

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The Quest for Bagels in Madrid: 5 Locations Offering the Elusive Comfort Food

Bagels were a staple of my life back home in the outskirts of New York City–**the inaccessible status of bagels was the only demerit against Spain** in an earlier draft of my "Should I Move to Spain" pros & cons list. I've craved them badly during my time abroad, to the point where I have even asked my closest friend from home, Jake, to allow me to witness his consumption of authentic bagels via Skype. Bagels are a foreign concept here–whenever I'm describing them to Spanish folks, they can't visualize the distinction from a donut or *roscon de reyes.*

However, due to **Madrid's growing American expat population**, I held out hope that opportunist business owners would step up and fill the circular void. The ensuing investigation had me scouring the city, running down every lead and pressing on every underworld connection. These are my findings: I strongly advise purists to **manage their expectations** when sampling imitations of such an esteemed snack from the old country.

So here, my friends, is a list of Madrid's bagel joints. In true form, I've saved the best bite for last…

1) Restaurante Olsen – Calle del Prado 15 (CLOSED DOWN)

The pursuit began with a rocky start for me and my friend Julie. Although the servers at Restaurante Olsen, a Scandanavian restaurant near the Prado, were kind enough to give us their leftover "bagels" for free, they weren't at all what we were hoping for—in fact I would go as far as to call these circular bread sticks **an abomination of nature.** This restaurant, which has since closed down, established the precedent low standard to which the ensuing specimens were held.



2) La Bicicleta Cafe – Plaza San Ildefonso, 9

This popular hipster cafe in Malasaña has a few bagel sandwiches under the display case by the bar. They're **a bit too dry** (and expensive) for my liking. Served with arugula and *jamon,* **this sandwich might as well be served on any other type of bread.**



3) La Libre – Calle de Argumosa, 39

This cafe/bookshop in Lavapies offers a broad variety of *tostadas*, one of which is called "El Larson." The bagels are imported from England and kept frozen, served to diners with cream cheese and lox and little bits of avocado. Due to its status as the bagel most accessible to me within my *barrio*, this is my default when the craving overwhelms me. Although not as crisp as I would like, it does the job adequately. The

added sesame seeds are indeed a pleasant touch.



4) Mür – Plaza Cristino Martos, 2

A large and comfortable brunch spot, Mür offers an 8.50€ euro “American” breakfast entailing a toasted bagel sandwich with cream cheese & lox, steak fries, and a cup of coffee. This location earns points for its product’s toasty crispness and presentation but loses points for its small size. The first bite is accompanied by the **familiar crunch sound.**



5) J&Js Books and Coffee – Calle del Espíritu Santo, 47

This popular expat bar/English language bookstore swiftly cornered the market with their vast selection of homemade bagels. **The only known establishment that manufactures bagels from scratch,** it is apparent that they have a concise understanding of both the product and the expectations held by the consumer. Their offerings are flavorful, especially when served fresh during their weekend brunch. The pictures below document the process in which their bagels are produced.







Have I missed anything in my investigation? Feel free to share the details of any other Bagel providers in the comments section!

Also check out our series on Madrid's best cafe-bookstores!

Round 1

Round 2

Los Porfiados, an inviting Argentine bistro in Lavapies

I routinely walk by **Los Porfiados** and have always been intrigued by what I could glimpse from the outside. I was thrilled when I finally had the opportunity to enter and scratch it off of my shortlist. An Argentine bistro situated on **Calle Buenavista**, this establishment radiates elegance and class. The decor and lighting are cozy and inspire diners with a sense of comfort. **Reservations are necessary in order to be seated due to its popularity.** I saw many people enter and then be turned away due to this spot being so trendy.



The staff all hail from Buenos Aires, sans one who is from Barcelona. I was told that the location is only a year and a half old, swiftly ascending to local fame. Upon being seated, the attentive waiter relayed to me my options from their **vast menu.** It was difficult to choose from their selection—they offer **Argentine empanadas** and **gourmet pizzas**, fillets of **meat** and a many **fresh salads**. To start I had a smooth **cream of broccoli soup**, accompanied by a glass of *vino tinto.*





The main course was a ***solomillo de cerdo*** **with sweet potato chips**. Absolutely excellent, the meat was savory and cooked to perfection. After using *eenie meanie minie mo* to make a decision of which of their assortment of desserts to consume, I was presented with a delicious chocolate cake. The check was slightly steeper than most of the other locations I've written about, coming out to **19€**. Keep in mind that this is a cash only business. I recommend this location to anyone who wants to be classy for a night, whether to impress a date or to celebrate a personal achievement, or to merely hone the skill of pretending to be classy.



Info

Website
Facebook
***Address**: Calle Buenavista 18*
***Metro:** Anton Martin or Lavapies*
***Contact:** 910842945*

Other restaurants we love in Lavapiés:

Los Chuchis Bar, downright good food in Lavapiés

Tribuetxe, a Basque Pintxo bar in Lavapiés

Restaurante Badila – you need this restaurant in your life

Krachai, a Cozy & Elegant Thai Restaurant in Chueca

Krachai is yet another seemingly upscale establishment that was first introduced to me by my Dad's friend, Rafael. This fantastic Thai restaurant, situated near metro Alonso Martinez, offers a satisfying 13€ *menu del dia.* My friend Diana and I have eaten here on a handful of special occasions; somehow each time it slips my mind to reserve a table. This is strongly advised due to the location's popularity, otherwise diners are condemned to wait in line. The wait was worth it today. This spot is cozy, dimly lit, and has two floors. The ambiance is calming and the servers are highly attentive and efficient.



Diana and I were well aware of what we would be ordering off of their *menu del dia* by the time we were seated. We both got the mixed appetizers which consists of the **chicken and peanut sauce skewer,** a spring roll, and a crispy shrimp dumpling. Diana followed this up with the spicy **red curry with chicken strips**, vegetables and jasmine rice. My main course was a **yellow curry with prawns** and vegetables. I am a huge fan of shrimp in all of their various forms.







I voiced that all of my life decisions were validated due to their preceding the moment where this **indulgent feast** was in front of me. By the time the rice expanded in our stomachs, our desserts arrived. I had a scoop of strawberry ice cream, and Diana a small flan, in order to end our experience on a sweet note. I strongly recommend this location and its *menu del dia* when you have a craving for Thai cuisine.

Facebook
Website
Address: *C/ Fernando VI, 11*
Metro: *Alonso Martinez*
Contact: *91 833 65 56*

More Asian restaurants featured on Naked Madrid:

- ***Ramen Kagura, Madrid's (almost) perfect ramen bar***

- ***Kintaro – Oy Vey***
- ***Sumo – This Japanese restaurant's name says it all***
- ***Tuk Tuk – Asian-inspired street food***
- ***Chuka Ramen Bar – Madrid's hottest ramen restaurant***
- ***Hattori Hanzo – Japanese food, straight up. No sushi.***
- ***Nippon 2 – top quality yet affordable sushi, finally!***
- ***Soy Kitchen – a fusion of Asian flavors***

Gibraltar, an authentic Moroccan restaurant in Lavapies

My close friend Kameron "el ProfeSoul" Sterling has been an excellent resource to me in my mission to shed light on the endearing establishments hidden within our multi-cultural barrio of Lavapies. "It's all about the fellas," he said charismatically as he led me into Gibraltar, a charming Moroccan restaurant situated on C/ Casino by the Embajadores park. Entering this location was akin to leaving Europe and entering Morocco—the authenticity made visible by its lively crowd of Moroccan gentlemen who were sipping tea, bantering in French and casually shooting the shit.



Kameron was greeted warmly by the head server, who presented us with **delicious mint tea.** Kam is well acquainted with this establishment considering its essentially in his backyard. He recommended that I try the **al harira,** a thick, spicy soup containing chicken, tomatoes and ginger with other herbs.


Bienvenida
Welcome



This was followed up by our respective main courses: a **Tajine of chicken with prunes, almonds**, egg, and vegetables & a **Tajine of Lamb, couscous and vegetables**. Both of these Tajines were phenomenal, with their spectrum of fresh flavors dancing on our palates.



The staff of this establishment are extremely amicable and efficient. The head server, who was quite vocal to me about exactly how fond he is of Kam, was able to guess correctly based on my accent that I'm from New York. I felt very much accepted as an outsider.

Kam and I left this establishment incredibly full and pleased with ourselves—**the check was 11€ each**. I strongly recommend this establishment to any adventurous eaters who are searching for a **colorful window into a completely different world**.

Info

Address: *Calle Del Casino 16*
Metro: *Lavapies, Embajadores*
Phone: *606 78 75 67*

Also check out:

- Baobab, an Authentic Senegalese Restaurant in Lavapiés
- Tribuetxe, a Basque Pintxo Bar in Lavapiés
- Lavapiés and its market: the real food emporium!
- Badila – you need this restaurant in your life