

Where to Take Your Mom in Madrid – Part 1

Wondering where to take your mom when she comes to visit you in Madrid? Here's a list of places (aside from the Prado and the Royal Palace) that are all hand-picked, tested and approved, if not by me then by my friends. All these ideas have definitely worked – and not just for my mom, but for a lot of out-of-town guests and other family members, too. Here goes!

1. [Madrid Food Tour](#), for a culinary experience full of insight



I can't recommend this tour enough. The guys at [Madrid Food Tour](#) are young and passionate about the city's food culture and history. They offer a variety of tours that take you through the city's most authentic neighborhood markets, tapas bars and restaurants. Plus you get to walk around the city while the tour guides give you insights into Madrid's history. I went on the [Huertas market tour](#) and wrote about it in [a previous post](#).

But you can check out all the tours [here](#) and then choose the one that appeals to you most! The tours are given in English and can be personalized if you have particular food preferences or needs. Just ask them! Another note – I recommend **starting out the trip with this tour** so your mom can get a better feel for the city and its gastronomic offerings.

2. [Bar Lambuzo](#), a family-run Andalusian restaurant



This is one of **my favorite restaurants in Madrid**. What makes Lambuzo perfect is that it is an authentic, Andalusian-style taverna in the heart of Madrid, run by a whole family, and each member has his or her role. For example, you'll find Pepe, the father, working the front and Luis, one of the sons, working the bar. They specialize in food from the South of Spain, so get ready for a variety of fried fish, rice dishes and other delicious treats. Lambuzo now has two locations, although my favorite is the one near Opera, which you can read more about in my previous post [here](#).

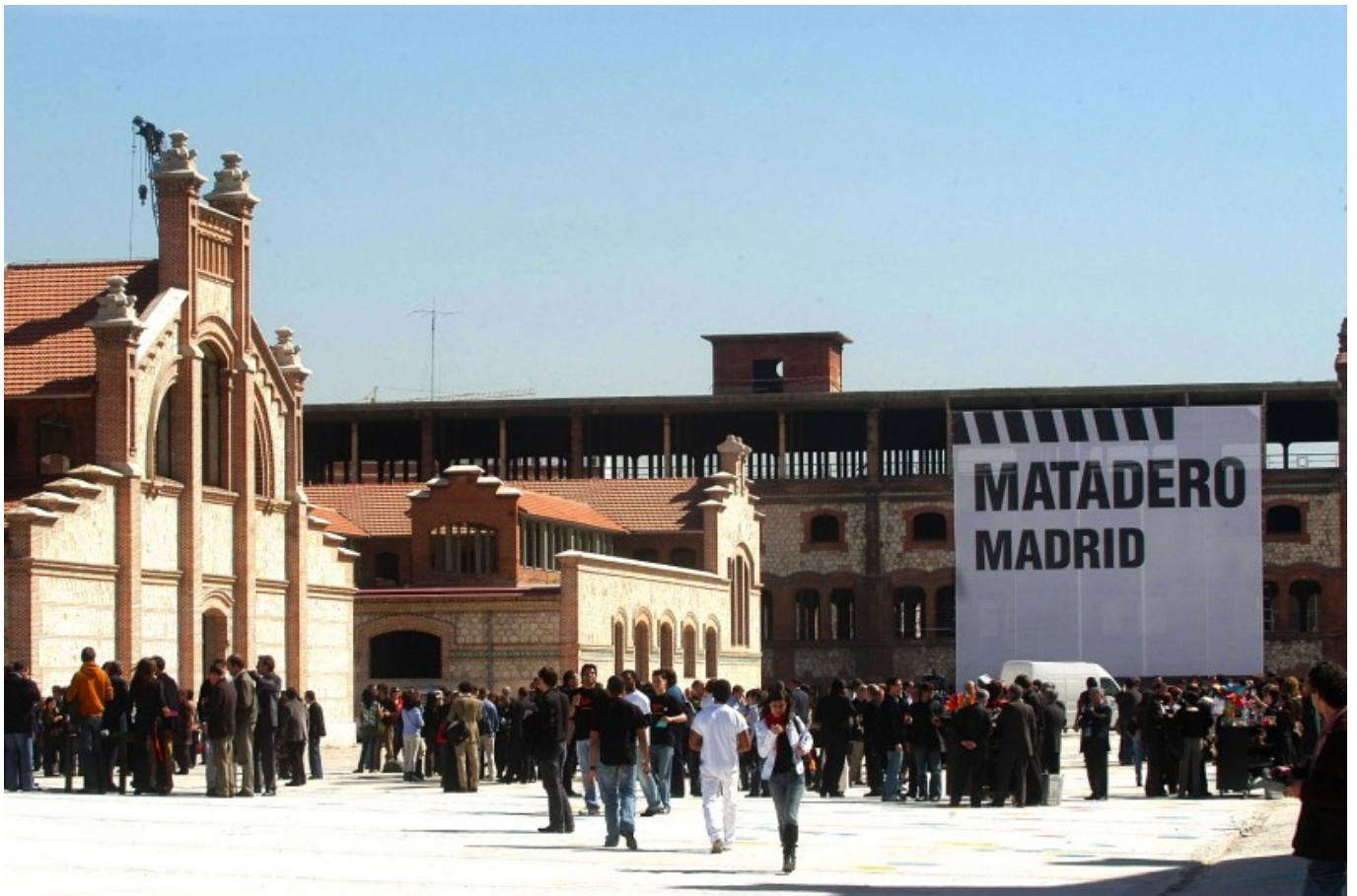
3. [Museums](#), Museo Sorolla & Thyssen in particular



My mother has been to the **Prado and Reina Sofia** twice now and although they're of course worth visiting, she actually preferred the **Thyssen** (so did my brother and sisters) and **Sorolla museums**. While the Thyssen's collection is considered one of the best in the world, the Sorolla's is less

expected – it is in the painter's former home and houses an outstanding collection of pieces that you can see as you walk through the charming rooms. Here's a post on all of [Madrid's obvious and not-so-obvious arts institutions \(plus how to get in for free\)](#) so you can add more to your list.

4. [El Matadero](#) & Madrid Río, for an off-the-beaten-path experience



I always jump at the chance to take friends and family to this place. A former slaughterhouse turned cultural center, **El Matadero** is a must for anyone into contemporary art and cultural activities. It is a huge space with different warehouses, each dedicated to their own type of art. For example, there's the theatre nave, the reading nave and the music nave, among many others. The Matadero also holds wonderful farmers' markets with local products and food trucks, as well as live music and activities for the little

ones. It's also situated along Madrid's river so if the weather is nice, I recommend taking a stroll afterwards or even hopping on a bike.

5. Casa Mingo, an old-school Asturian cider house



I have too many good memories of Casa Mingo, a century-old Asturian restaurant serving roasted chicken and cider by the bottle. Please take your mother here if she likes the good-old kind of restaurant that cannot be imitated no matter how hard you try. This is the real deal (plus it's incredibly cheap!) Here's a [previous post](#) I wrote on it.

6. Food markets, not just Mercado de San Miguel



Madrid has a thriving indoor and outdoor market culture. My mother's first experience with Madrid's market scene was Mercado de San Miguel, naturally. While I do suggest taking your mom there, don't forget about Madrid's other markets. On my mom's most recent visit, we went to [Mercado del San Ildefonso](#) in Malasaña and she was stunned by the architecture, vibrant food scene and open-air seating areas. Then there's [Mercado de San Antón](#) in Chueca which is never a bad idea for its gourmet food stands and amazing rooftop bar (check out other [rooftop bars here](#)). Plus, virtually every weekend there's an outdoor market (aside from **the Rastro**) and food festival in Madrid. Some of my suggestions are **Madreat**, **Mercado de Productores** and **Mercado de Motores**.

8. [Desperate Literature](#), a charming international bookstore



My mom adored this place, mainly because the owner, Craig, gave her a glass of whisky to drink as she browsed through the paperbacks and hardcovers, used and new. There's more to the story, though. [Desperate Literature](#) was opened in Madrid about a year ago by the guys who run a very special international bookstore in Santorini, Greece, where my mother had actually visited and my sister had previously worked for a summer. Maybe it's the music, the high quality book selection or the people from all over the world who run Desperate Literature with such care and love, or maybe it's because it's nestled in between the streets that bring you to Madrid's Royal Palace and Opera House.... I guess it just has that *je ne sais quoi*.

And if your mom is an avid reader, she'll get to donate the book she finished reading on her flight to Madrid and find herself a new one for the trip home! Here's a [full post on Desperate Literature](#).

9. [Toni 2](#) or [Bar Cock](#), for cocktails and more...



If you're wondering where to get a drink late at night, you can try [Toni 2](#), a sort of piano bar mostly for patrons of a "certain age" – only the classics are sung here, accompanied by a live pianist. It's an old-fashioned kind of bar with an extra long grand piano in the center (here's a full article on [Toni 2](#)). If your mother isn't so into the vintage karaoke scene, then I'd definitely recommend getting a cocktail at [Bar Cock](#), another beautiful old-fashioned bar off the Gran Vía. The only time I went here, Harrison Ford was there! Also,

across the street from Bar Cock is La Barraca, the restaurant mentioned next.

10. La Barraca, for paella and other Valencian dishes



I've been asked a lot about where to get paella in Madrid and never knew what to say, until recently. One of Madrid's most active writers, Dan Catalan, just discovered a place that his grandmother took him to in Madrid. It's a Valencian restaurant located in the city center called La Barraca, which specializes in rice and seafood dishes like paella, which he says is definitely mother-worthy. Just note that this restaurant is on the pricey side – maybe you'll take your mom here, but she'll have to pick up the tab... Check out Dan's post [here](#).

11. [Rooftop bars](#), like Casa Granada or Mercado de San Anton



Madrid has an impressive number of **rooftop bars** and we've written about 20 or so in our [4-part series](#). If I had to recommend just a few, I'd say [Palacio de Cibeles](#) and [Circulo de Bellas Artes](#) for stunning views, and then [Casa Granada](#) and [Mercado de San Anton](#) for great food and ambience. My mom loved **Casa Granada** back when it was in such desperate need of renovation that we actually felt our chairs were going to slip off the roof. It's since been refurbished so you'll still get the dining experience, just without the fear...

12. La Cava Baja, for “tapas bar” hopping



Lined with tapas bars and restaurants, La Cava Baja is the most happening street in La Latina. The first time I walked along it with my mother was during winter and it was very foggy outside. She said it looked like a fairy tale – as if a knight on a horse was going to appear riding through the mist. Even on a clear day, La Latina is a must if your mother (like mine) enjoys going into Madrid’s charming little bars and walking through the area’s old and windy streets. For specific recommendations on bars in La Latina, check out this article: [Coziest Wine Bars in La Latina \(with gluten free options!\)](#)

13. Flamenco, when in Spain...

I personally can’t recommend any particular flamenco performance in Madrid, but if you think your mother would

enjoy experiencing a tablao, our friends at [Madrid Food Tour](#) have compiled this list of [Where to See Flamenco in Madrid](#) and we trust them.

14. A nearby town, beyond Toledo



My mom went on a guided tour of Toledo a few years ago and didn't enjoy it so much because she didn't get to "roam around freely" as much as she would have liked. So while I'm not against taking a tour, I do think you should make sure to have enough time to wander around and explore the nooks and crannies of wherever you go. I've taken my mom on a number of day trips around Madrid and her favorite was when we drove to [Segovia](#) and [El Escorial](#) in one day. If you can get your hands on a car, I highly recommend it. You can also check out our article on [Madrid's 10 most beautiful surrounding towns](#) which all link to a description, map and transport details.

15. Pepe Botella & Plaza del Dos de

Mayo, for coffee and tea



Pepe Botella has long been my **favorite café in Madrid**, as anyone who's ever visited me will already know. Its ambience, location and simple drink menu has always set it apart from the rest of Madrid's cafés, for me at least. I recommend going here either before or after lunch and sitting with a book or a newspaper, or just chatting away. When I go in the afternoon, I like starting with a **coffee or tea**, and then welcoming in the evening with a **glass of wine**. Here's a [full post on Pepe Botella](#).

Any other suggestions? We'll be coming out with a part 2 so all recommendations

are more than welcome!

You'll also like:

- [Eating our way through Huertas with Madrid Food Tour!](#)
 - [Madrid's Obvious and Not-so-obvious Museums \(and how to get in for free\)](#)
 - [Madrid's 10 Most Beautiful Surrounding Towns \(and how to get to there\)](#)
 - [Madrid's best rooftop bars – part 1](#)
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Catedral de Justo, a self-built cathedral in Mejorada del Campo, Madrid

Conceived and brought to life by a present-day Don Quijote and situated in La Mancha, stands a cathedral like no other. Over half a century ago, former monk and visionary, Justo Gallego Martínez, also called Don Justo, made it his life-long quest to build a cathedral in his hometown of Mejorada del Campo, just 20km from Madrid. Today, at nearly 90 years old, he is still pursuing his dream.

I'd been meaning to visit the **Catedral del Justo** for a long time, although it wasn't until last weekend that I finally made it out there with my husband, James. It's a [great day-trip destination from Madrid](#) if you have a car, as you can combine it with a visit to [Alcalá de Henares](#) afterwards.

To be honest, visiting this cathedral is a visceral experience, making it difficult to describe the feeling of

seeing it first-hand. As I approached it, I was first impressed by how big it is. With outer dimensions of 20×50 square meters, it takes up a whole block and has a somewhat whimsical appearance.



As I entered, I noticed a huge dome hovering over me, 40 meters high and 12 meters in diameter. The columns, walls, floors and stairwells are made out of materials that were either found, recycled or donated from local tile and brick factories. Even though parts of the building reminded me of an old scrapyard, it did resemble a cathedral—just from another planet!

The next thing that caught my eye was Don Justo himself, sitting contentedly on a chair, reading a book as if everything surrounding him was completely normal. His little dog was running around and an old TV was playing the same

trance-like song, over and over again.



When I got home I started reading up on the history of the cathedral. It turns out that Don Justo never got a legal building permit, nor is his cathedral recognized by the Catholic Church. But for me, there was no question I was entering a spiritual place.





What strikes me the most is the story behind his decision to dedicate his life to building this cathedral by himself. Born in 1925, Don Justo had a religious upbringing and aspired to be a monk. However, his dream was crushed when he was diagnosed with tuberculosis; he promised himself that if he ever recovered, he would build a cathedral from scratch and make a shrine to “Our Lady of the Pillar”. In 1961, he started building on an olive grove that belonged to his family in his hometown of Mejorada del Campo, and he hasn’t stopped since.





He never studied architecture nor formalized any sort of building plan; instead he envisioned it in his mind and drew inspiration primarily from the Vatican, St. Peter's Basilica and other churches around Spain. On certain occasions, he received help from professional architects and volunteers, but overall, this cathedral is the realization of one individual's dream. He has financed his work through renting inherited land and donations.





Although it will take at least another 15-20 years to complete the cathedral, Don Justo expects to be there every day,

despite his nearly 90 years. Walking through the cathedral's crypt, courtyard, mini cloisters and chapels; gazing up at the dome and examining the different recycled materials used to make the columns, staircases, and floors—it feels slightly Gaudí-esque. In fact, the town of Mejorada del Campo, which notoriously has not fully embraced Don Justo's cathedral, eventually changed the name of the street on which it lies to "Calle Antonio Gaudí."





Not surprisingly, I've read that many people have called Don Justo crazy. Watching this present-day Don Quijote sitting on his chair, reading quietly in the cathedral he has been building with his own hands for more than half a century... while it all feels like a dream, the cathedral is real, and so is Don Justo. I highly recommend paying them a visit and enjoying the experience of witnessing such a unique vision come to life.

How to get there:

Catedral de Justo is located in **Mejorada del Campo**, a small town just 20km from Madrid. To get there, there are two **public buses** from the center: *Avenida de América* (line 282) and *Conde Casal* (line 341). However, going by car is a better option, so you can continue your day-trip to [Alcalá de Henares](#),

Cervantes' hometown, which is about a half hour away or less.

Address: *Calle de Antonio Gaudí*

Bus Line 341 from Conde Casal ([link](#))

Bus Line 282 from Avenida de América ([link](#))

Also check out our post on 10 best day-trips from Madrid!

Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars – Round 4

With temperatures reaching well over 100 °F (38 °C), there are only two places you should be in Madrid right now: either in a swimming pool (in the [city](#) or the [mountains](#)) or on a rooftop bar. If you're stuck with the latter, not to worry—Madrid has plenty of rooftop bars for you to escape to. To help you find them, Naked Madrid came out with a 3-part series on [Madrid's best rooftop bars](#) last summer, and we've been meaning to come out with **part 4** ever since. And it's finally here! All the rooftop bars in this article are located in the center of Madrid, yet each one offers something completely different. Hope you enjoy them all!

Oh and you should also know that **part 5** is already on its way... so stay tuned!

1) The Hat (Sol/Plaza Mayor)



You've never seen a hostel like this before; the word 'hipster' does not even begin to describe it. High ceilings, art-scrawled walls and an international crowd are what you'll find here. The Hat's rooftop bar is open all year round, serving up cocktails and delicious *tostas* (my favorite is with goat cheese and caramelized onions, and comes with a shot of salmorejo and potato chips), quiche, and some pretty damn good *tortilla de patata*. [Here's a full post on The Hat for more info.](#)

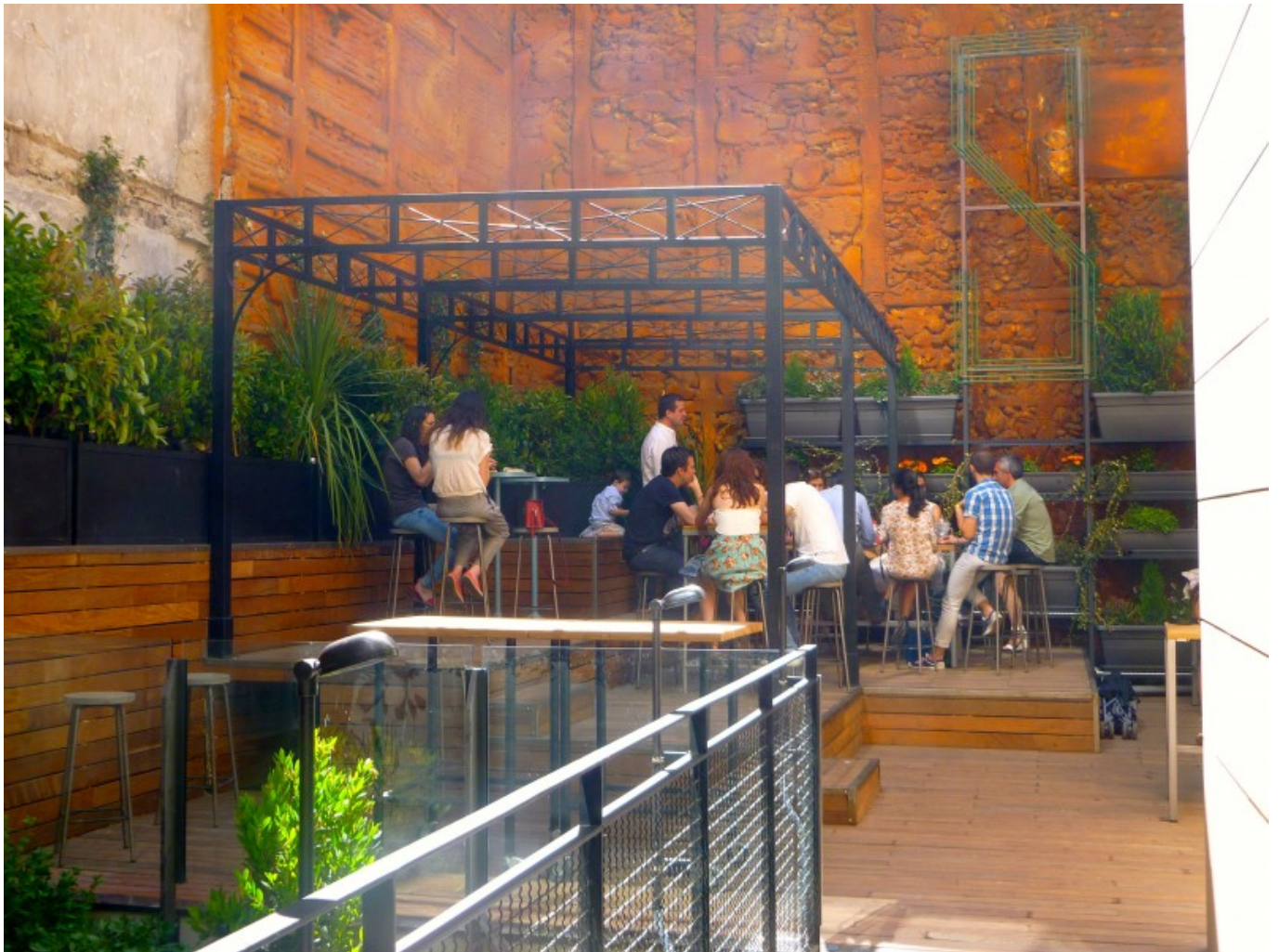
Web

Address: *Calle Imperial 9*

Metro: *La Latina, Sol, Opera*

Phone: *917 72 85 72*

2) Mercado del San Ildefonso (Malasaña)





We all know Madrid's market culture is off the hook. We've got **Mercado de San Miguel** in Sol for the tourist crowd; **Mercado de San Antón** (whose rooftop bar we also love and [mentioned in Round 1](#)) in Chueca for the cooler and more urban crowd; and **Mercado de San Fernando** in Lavapiés for the more authentic and cultural crowd, just to name a few. And now we have **Mercado de San Ildefonso**, which takes the cake for its architecture and impressive use of space. Once an average neighborhood market, San Ildefonso now boasts three stories of gourmet food stalls and two outdoor patios sandwiched between its adjacent buildings. [Here's a full article on Mercado del San Ildefonso.](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: C/ Fuencarral, 57

Metro: Tribunal

3. [El Jardín Secreto](#) (on Calle Montera, Gran Vía)



Jardín Secreto feels like a tiny rooftop garden in somebody's private home. You wouldn't expect that it's actually situated on top of an accessories store – Salvador Bachiller – and on Calle Montera, no less. Smack in the center of the city, in between metros Gran Vía and Sol, you can enter this normal-looking store, pop up to the top floor and take in the *fresher* air with a drink and a bite to eat. It might not have any views, but it sure has a unique ambience and surprise factor that's worth experiencing. [Here's a full article on Jardín Secreto for more info.](#)

[Facebook](#)

Address: Calle Montera 37

Phone: 915 31 02 60

Metro: Gran Vía or Sol

4. Innside Madrid Suecia (near Alcalá/Plaza de Cibeles)



I haven't actually been here yet but many of my friends have raved about it. Judging by its location, the new rooftop bar at **Innside Madrid Suecia Hotel** looks a bit more upscale than the others on this list – probably best for a night out of

cocktails mixed with a killer view. It's owned by the Meliá Hotel chain, which also owns the famous "[The Roof in Plaza Santa Ana, previously mentioned in Round 3](#)", and situated on a street behind Calle Alcalá and El Círculo de Bellas Artes (with yet another stunning rooftop, "[Tartan Roof](#)", [mentioned in Round 1](#)). For now, I've taken these photos off of the Hotel's [web](#), yet I plan on replacing them as soon as I get the chance to treat myself to such an experience.

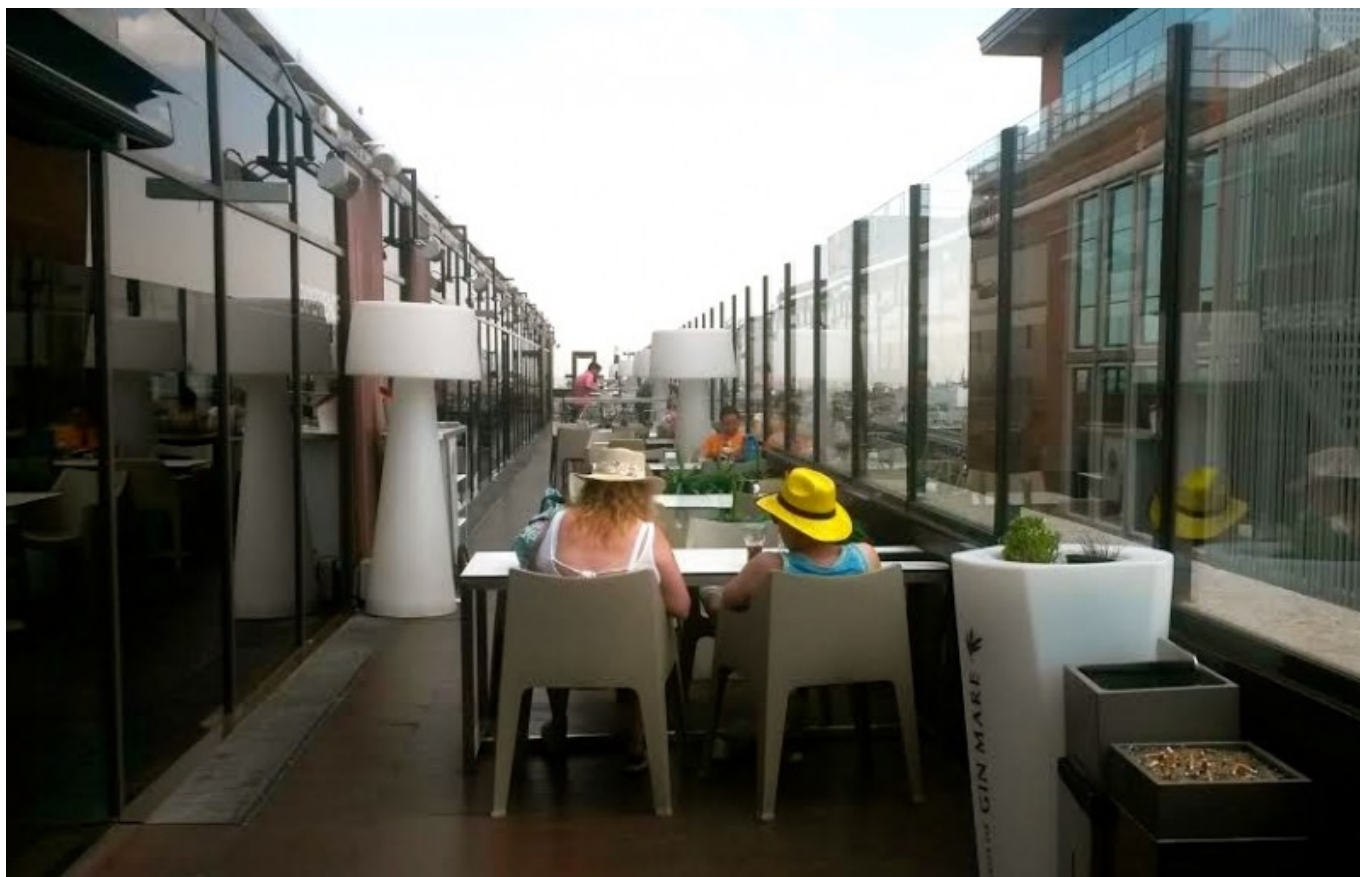
[Web](#)

Address: *Calle del Marqués de Casa Riera 4*

Metro: *Banco de España and Sevilla*

5) Gourmet Experience at El Corte Inglés (Callao)





Madrid's number one department store, **El Corte Inglés**, finally decided to give itself a much needed facelift and revamp the 9th floor of its location in Callao, turning it into 'Gourmet Experience'; and it truly is an experience. With an outdoor rooftop and dozens of food stalls, one of which is [StreetX0](#), an affordable version of Madrid's famous young Michelin-starred chef, David Muñoz's DiversoX0, you'll also find stalls serving Mexican, Italian, Spanish and Japanese food, as well as cocktails, ice-cream and much more. [Here's full article on Gourmet Experience at Callao.](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Plaza Callao 2, inside El Corté Inglés, 9th floor

Metro: Callao

We're already working on Round 5 of

Madrid's top rooftop bars. Any suggestions?

In case you haven't seen rounds 1-3, here you are:

- [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 1](#)
 - [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 2](#)
 - [Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 3](#)
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Federal Café Madrid – Hipster in a Very Good Way

Not too long ago, Madrid's breakfast scene was limited to traditional croissants, toast and churros. Now, however, it's rivalling cities like New York and London. How did this happen so quickly? Don't know. But boy are we loving it... One of the [best places for brunch in Madrid](#) is [Federal Café](#), which may look like a stylish restaurant in Soho, but it's actually located in Malasaña, near [Conde Duque](#).



Last Sunday, I went for brunch with three lovely ladies – [Cat](#), Aifric and [Helen](#).



We all started with fresh smoothies. Mine had pomegranate and organic apple juice – health in a glass.



To eat, I ordered toast with avocado, poppyseed and lemon.



Aifric got the same, although with poached eggs (smart choice).



Helen had a veggie burger with freshly squeezed orange juice.



Then there's Cat, who wins first prize by a landslide with her full-on plate of poached eggs, bacon, potatoes, sausage and toast. Damn.



The first time I went to [Federal](#) was actually over a year ago

with my friend, Nina (who's sitting in the window looking at the little kid). We stumbled upon [Federal](#) while strolling around and were instantly lured in by the comfy window seats that allowed us to dangle our legs onto the sidewalk.



We started with a coffee.



That ended quickly. The menu featured such a wide variety of dishes that were chock full of local, organic and fresh ingredients – we just couldn't help but order something to eat. I got a sandwich with feta cheese, spinach and olive tapenade. Nina had a burger. Simple but so good!





So if you're looking for a hip place with healthy food in the center of Madrid, I think you've found it!



Info

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

Address: [Pl. de las Comendadoras 9](#)

Metro: Noviciado

You may also like:

[Best Brunch on a Budget in Madrid](#)

[Little Big Café – my little big pick-me-up](#)

[Toma Café – Fuel Up, Feel Hip](#)

[Mamá Campo – a Restaurant/Market of Organic Delights in Plaza Olavide](#)

Tuk Tuk – An Asian-Inspired Street Food Restaurant in Madrid

Opened by two British men, Alan and Rick, [Tuk Tuk](#) is a low-key restaurant with two locations near Bilbao and Chueca. All their dishes are based on Asian street food recipes, particularly from Bangkok, Hong Kong and Saigon. With an international wait staff (many of whom are native English speakers) and a range of flavor-packed dishes (plentiful and affordable to boot), it's no wonder why [Tuk Tuk](#) has become so popular among the city's expat community and Madrileños alike.



Tuk Tuk's [menu](#) features noodles, rice bowls, soups, curries and barbecued meat platters. Chock full of different types of vegetables and spices, your tastebuds get a mix of tangy, spicy, coconuty and sweet ingredients in every bite. Tuk Tuk can please any palate. And it's vegetarian friendly, too.

You'll find my favorite dish in the photo below: **Babi Panggang** (barbecued pork with a caramel-like glaze and thick soy sauce). It came on the **Pat Pong Party Platter (€30)**, a great starter for a big group. Just look at the **four dishes** it includes:





I also like the mango and cucumber salad as an appetizer to share. As for main dishes, so far I've tried a soup, rice bowl and Thai curry. Although I don't remember their names, I'd happily eat all of them again. **My advice:** just go in, run your finger down the menu and choose whatever you land on. You can't go wrong!



Info

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Menu if you feel you need to prepare beforehand

Average price per person: €15-20

Tuk Tuk has two locations now, one near Bilbao and the other, Chueca:

<M> Bilbao: Calle del Cardenal Cisneros 6 |
Reservations: 914 45 91 80

<M> Chueca: Calle del Barquillo 26 | Reservations:
915 23 25 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](#)
- [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](#)
- [Karachai – A cozy and elegant Thai restaurant in Alonso Martínez](#)

Discover The Hat's secret rooftop bar. You're welcome.

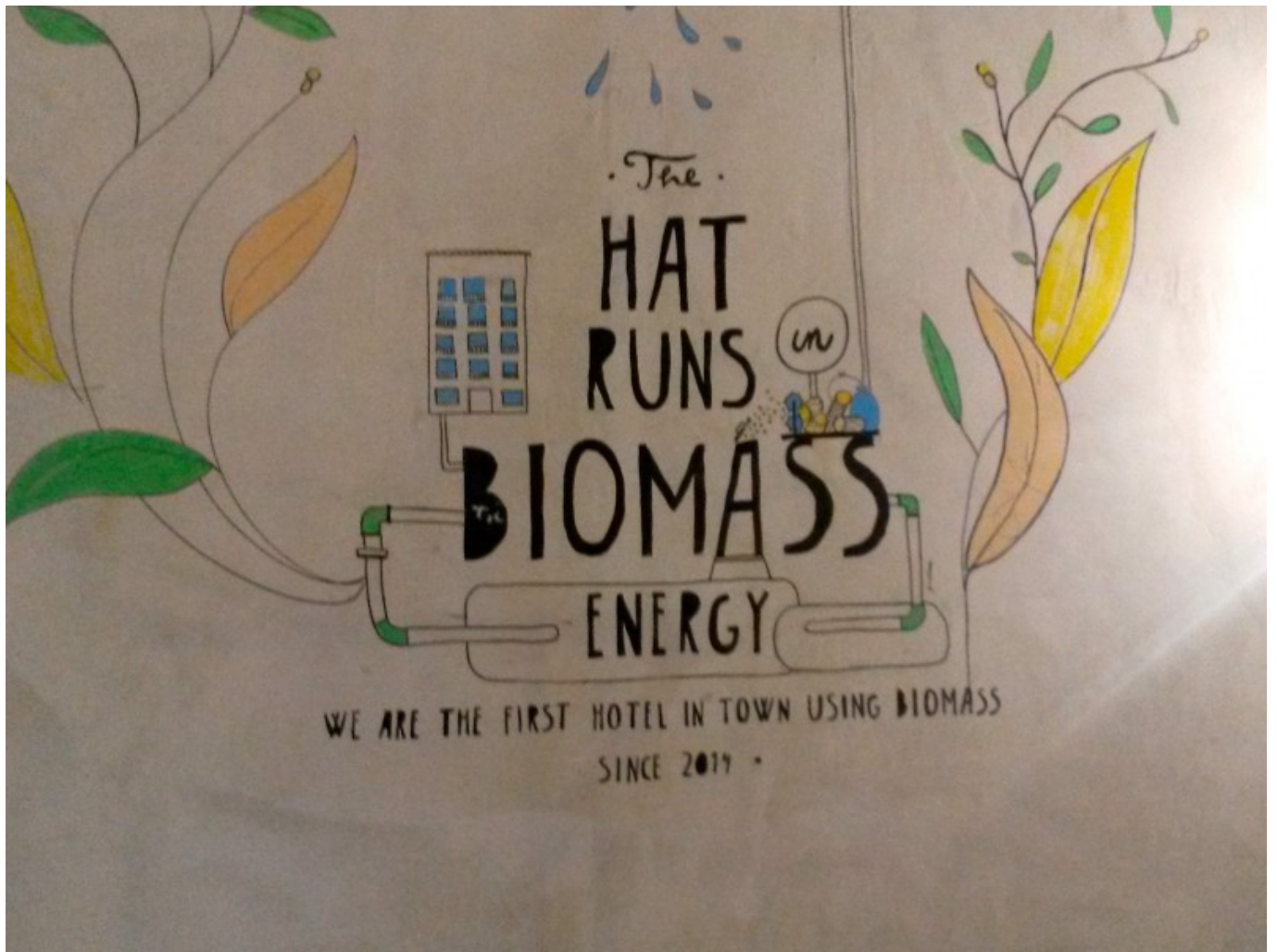
Madrid may be landlocked, but it has some pretty unbelievable [rooftop bars](#), and you'll find my favorite at **The Hat**. Why? Because it's laid-back, central and totally unexpected.



Just a stone's throw from Plaza Mayor, **The Hat** is a hotel –

but the kind you've never seen before. The first hotel in the city to run on biomass energy and appeal to 'smart travellers', The Hat boasts ultra-modern interior design and also holds free walking tours and markets.





But the best part is the rooftop bar, where you can enjoy the quaint views of Madrid's old buildings while basking in the sun and sipping on your favorite **iced** drink... How could you not want to spend the whole day up here?



James and I first discovered this secret **terraza** during winter, thanks to a small yet very clear sign out on the street.



With **outdoor heating and a nice indoor space**, The Hat's rooftop bar quickly became our spot. It's cozy on even the coldest winter night in Madrid. Along with a glass of red, I always ordered the **tosta de queso de cabra con cebolla caramelizada** (toasted bread with goats cheese and caramelized onions) and James got the **pincho de tortilla**. Both come with a **side of potato chips and a shot of salmoneiro** (a wonderful little addition to an already delicious treat). I've also got my eye on their **quiche**, although I haven't tried them yet.



Yesterday, we finally made it up to **The Hat's rooftop bar** for the first time this Spring. On one of those perfect sunny days in Madrid, we thought it would be impossible to find a table – but we did! And it was simply the nicest place to spend a day like that in the bustling city center. The only downside is that if you don't get a seat in the shade, Madrid's sun can be quite intense. So remember to get something to cool off – I recommend a **mojito** or **tinto de verano**.







The Hat will certainly be included in the upcoming round four of our series on [Madrid's best rooftop bars](#), though it deserved its own post too.

Info

[Facebook](#)

[Website](#)

Tel +34 917 72 85 72

Address Calle Imperial 9

Also check out:

[Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 1](#)

[Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 2](#)

[Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 3](#)

Eating Our Way through Huertas with Devour Tours

On a recent chilly Saturday morning, James and I set out on one of the city's best ranked activities, [Devour Tours](#). I had never been on a food-inspired tour before, let alone in a city whose food culture I'm quite familiar with. Yet the chance to meet local honey and jam specialists, indulge in chocolate-soaked figs and hop from butchers' shops to tapas bars while learning historical tidbits did indeed change the way I look at the city I've called home for the past seven years.





While [Devours Tours](#) offers a bunch of different gastronomic routes throughout the city, we went on the one I consider the most enticing – [Huertas Neighborhood Food & Market Tour](#). The home of the tour was Barrio de las Letras, a central neighborhood named after the famous Spanish writers who once resided, scribbled and drank together there in the 1600's, such as Cervantes, Lope de Vega and Quevedo.

Those of us who live here today know the neighborhood as Huertas, coined after the bar-filled street that runs through it. Unlike many areas surrounding Sol or Plaza Mayor, this barrio upholds a charming and unchanged spirit thanks to its thriving delicatessens, tapas bars and traditional markets. Offerings of old and new spins on local cuisine await you as you walk through its gorgeous cobble-stoned streets. And Devour Tours will let you in on all its secrets.



Our tour guide, James Blick, was not only an expert on Madrid's history and food scene, but also made each and every person on the tour – which consisted of a young Scandinavian couple, two parents from Alabama visiting their daughter on her semester abroad and a group of middle-aged women from Ireland – feel comfortable by asking personal questions, encouraging conversation and creating a wonderful vibe throughout the three-and-a-half-hour event.

I also want to note that my husband, also James, doesn't like cheese (weird, I know) and had told the guys at Devour Tours beforehand. His eyes lit up as he saw a plate of cured meat awaiting him at the cheese tasting, showing how they clearly make it a point to accommodate different tastes and dietary needs.



James (the tour guide) also engaged in friendly chit chat with all the local market vendors and shop owners – something quintessentially Spanish, I must add. Wherever we stopped for a story and a bite, James knew the locals by name and the stories behind their businesses; those close-knit relationships make the tour truly delightful and offer insight into the city's day-to-day life. This kind of rapport and insider know-how can only be attained with a great deal of time and care.



Overall it was clear how much attention was put into designing this tour; every detail was planned to perfection, from the food portions and variety to the timing and storytelling. We had more than enough tapas to fill us all up, yet paced and served up just right so we never felt too full to keep us from walking or having a few more bites at the next stop!



Since I don't want to give too much away, I'll have to wrap things up here. The last thing I'll note is that I had walked by absolutely every place we visited on the tour on many occasions. Most of these places I had never stopped to think about nor even enter.

Now I know that as I stroll along the streets I often frequent such as Calle Huertas and Calle Leon, I'll see a different side of my adopted city. I'll also enjoy a handful of new eateries that are now going straight to the top of my list.



Madrid's best Italian restaurant is not in the likeliest of places.



So whether you're coming through Madrid for a weekend or already live here, let Devour Tours show you around for a few hours, especially if you're a foodie like me! Buen provecho!

To book a tour or read some of their tips on where to find the best food in the city, check out [Devour Tours website!](#)

Taberna Griega, a real neighborhood Greek restaurant in Madrid

It took me seven years of searching, but only one bite to know I had finally discovered Madrid's most authentic Greek restaurant, **Taberna Griega**.

Although I grew up in New York City, my father was born and raised in Greece. Like many Greek-American families, we were the proud owners of a Greek restaurant. We also took regular month-long summer vacations to Greece, eating our way through small mountain villages, seaside spots and family gatherings large and small. So I do feel somewhat of an authority on Greek food to tell you that **Taberna Griega** is the real deal!



Taberna Griega is owned and run by Teo, a Greek man from Volos who has been living in Madrid for 37 years. Located in a residential neighborhood near metro Pacífico, this restaurant is the kind of place you won't find out about in guidebooks, mainly because of its location and lack of modernity, which is precisely what gives it its charm. I only heard about it from a friend who lives in the area.



The after-dinner shot lit all our throats on fire, except for Kaloyan, who says it's nothing compared to some Bulgarian alcohols he's tried. I'll take his word for it.

My friends and I had been planning on getting Greek food for a while because we like to try each other's home cuisine. We've gone to [Taberna Bulgara](#) with Kaloyan, and to a Filipino restaurant with Lorelie. With James it's pretty easy, as he's from Spain. With Edison, however, it's a bit tricky as he's from Taiwan and there are no Taiwanese restaurants that we know of in Madrid. But since he's also of Japanese heritage, he makes us Japanese curry at home and we frequent Japanese restaurants like [Kintaro](#) and [Sumo](#).

So it was time for us to eat Greek food in light of where my father's from. When we arrived at **Taberna Griega** on a rainy Sunday at 2pm, we instantly realized how wonderfully Greek this place was. The walls are painted blue and white to match

the Aegean sea. In case that's not enough to tell you it's Greek, you can also look around at the statues of Greek gods, or of course, at the Greek flags displayed in every corner.





But these over-the-top decorations shouldn't surprise you if you've seen the film, 'My Big Fat Greek Wedding'. What will surprise you, however, is the delicious meal you can get for under 20€.

We started with a round of drinks at the crowded bar alongside neighborhood patrons. Teo appreciated my effort to speak in the little Greek I remembered (my vocabulary is that of a three-year-old). Make sure to thank him and the staff with an enthusiastic *efharistó* (thanks) when leaving! When we moved to our table beside Aphrodite, we ordered four starters to share – a Greek peasant salad, taramá, tzatziki and spinach and cheese pies.



A typical way to start a Greek meal is with different dips, salads and pita bread.



Tzatziki is a dip made of yogurt, cucumber, garlic and dill. Absolutely delicious with pita bread.



Taramasalata is a creamy dip made of fish roe, usually mixed with either bread crumbs or mashed potatoes.



Spanakopita (spinach pie) and tiropita (cheese pie). On the menu you'll find them called 'empanadas griegas'

For the main course, Kaloyan ordered **souvlaki** (meat skewers), and I ordered **gemistá** (roasted red pepper stuffed with meat and rice). And James, Edison and Lorelie ordered the mixed meat platter of two chicken skewers, **befteki** (Greek hamburgers filled with feta cheese) and gyro meat.



Souvlaki, either lamb or veal skewers (Kalo ordered veal)



Gemistá, stuffed bell peppers filled with meat and rice. So good.



Mixed meat platter for 2-3 people

For dessert, we got the two most popular and delicious Greek sweets, **baklava** and **kataifi**, both made of honey, nuts and filo dough.



Baklavi



Kataifi

At the end of our meal, Teo gave us a round of shots to help us recover from what we had just devoured, and the bill came out to 20€ each. So if you've craving some real Greek food or want to experience an unpretentious neighborhood restaurant in Madrid, then here you are!

[Facebook](#)

Address: Juan de Urbietta, 6

Metro: Pacífico

Phone: 914 34 89 19

If you're looking for a more take-away Greek place in the center, you should definitely go to Greek & Shop in Malasaña.

And if you're looking for an authentic Bulgarian restaurant, you must go to [Taberna Bulgaria](#).

Best Cafe-bookshops in Madrid, Round 2!

Welcome to round two of the [best cafe-bookshops in Madrid](#)! As you may have noticed in [round one](#), Madrid's central neighborhoods boast quite a lot of quaint coffee shops and bars that encourage drinking and reading under one roof.

There's something about drinking coffee or wine amidst a sea of books that makes me feel right at home. Whether you're looking for the perfect place to enjoy a quiet conversation or a good read, here are five more wonderful cafe-bookshops in Madrid that you're bound to fall in love with.

1. [La Central de Callao](#)



La Central (featured in the cover photo) is a trendy bookshop near Callao and hands down the most modern of all on this list. It boasts three floors, a happening café with a full menu and a selection of much more than books on offer. At La Central, you can also find funky mugs, quirky bags, useful calendars, board games, wrapping paper, you name it. It's a great place to get [gifts in Madrid](#).

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** C/ Postigo de San Martín, 8
- **Metro:** Callao

2. J&J Books and Coffee





A long-time staple among Madrid's expat community, this corner bar has a downstairs bookstore selling a large selection of primarily used English-language books, including ESL resources. Up at the bar, you can get craft beer, wine, coffee, bagels and other things to munch on. Also check out J&J's free events, including language exchanges and pub quizzes (trivia nights). Lots of fun!

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** c/ Espíritu Santo, 47
- **Metro:** Noviciado

3. italiana_madrid





This Italian café and bookshop is located on one of Madrid's most vibrant streets – Corredera Baja de San Pablo – which is lined with great bars, cafes and restaurants, such as [Aió Pizzería](#), [Elemental Bistro](#) and [Gymage](#) with its rooftop terrace. At [italiana_madrid](#), you can get a strong espresso or Aperol Spritz, plus browse through a wide selection of Italian reads ranging from cookbooks to children's books. It's also across the street from one of the city's favorite theaters, Teatro Lara.

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Corredera Baja de San Pablo, 10
- **Metro:** Gran Vía

4. La Ciudad Invisible



A travel bookshop selling food and drinks, this two-level cafe boasts huge windows, high ceilings, and plenty of large tables, couches and comfortable armchairs to choose from, making it a great place for getting work done and meeting friends. Plus it sells a killer **Rebujito for 2€** (a really refreshing yet deceptive drink from the South containing sherry, white wine and soda water). It's also across the street from one of my favorite restaurants in Madrid, [Bar Lambuzo](#).

▪ [Facebook](#)

- **Address:** *c/ Costanilla de los Ángeles, 7*
- **Metro:** *Opera & Santo Domingo*

5. María Pandora



María Pandora is one of my favorite spots in the city. Perched atop a hill overlooking Parque las Vistillas, behind the Royal Palace, here you'll find the perfect place to watch the sunset while enjoying a glass of champagne (the house specialty) or your drink of choice. Although María Pandora is more of a bar than a coffeeshop, it still deserves a spot on this list of literary cafés. It also holds events such as [poetry nights](#), microtheater, and book readings. [Check out our full article on María Pandora here.](#)

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Phone:** +34 910 42 82 13

- **Address:** Plaza de Gabriel Miró, 1
- **Metro:** La Latina or Ópera

Make sure to read: “[Best Cafe-Bookshops in Madrid, Round 1](#)”

Also check out our [favorite bookshop in the city, Desperate Literature](#)

‘The Hovse’ pop-up market revives a vacant three-story mansion in Chamberí with 80 designers and vermouth

Madrid’s pop-up culture can overwhelm a normal bar goer like myself. Every weekend there’s a pop-up market, a pop-up restaurant or a pop-up this or that. If you can’t go to all of them, go to this one – **The Hovse** has eighty designers and food stalls taking over a beautiful three-story mansion on Calle General Arrando, 40, from 12pm-9pm every day until December 24th. Do not miss it.



There's something whimsical about this old house that makes it the perfect place to create a [Christmas time pop-up market](#). I found it wonderfully entertaining to walk up each flight of stairs to discover what was in store, all the while wondering what the house might have looked like when it was once occupied by tenants. Now, on the first and second floor you'll find stands selling clothing, jewellery, furniture, Christmas decorations and other nicknacks. But my favorite part is by far the third floor (where you'll find the drinks) and of course, the rooftop!



The ones responsible for all this are called [Better](#), a young Madrid-based agency that throws pop-up events to promote

different brands and venues. They're currently holding another event called [The Table By](#) at Hotel Urso, where 6 leading restaurants from across Spain are invited to Madrid for one month at a time. As you can see, Better's approach to marketing and event planning is to take over unexpected spaces and give them a new light.

And that's exactly what they've done with **The Hovse**.





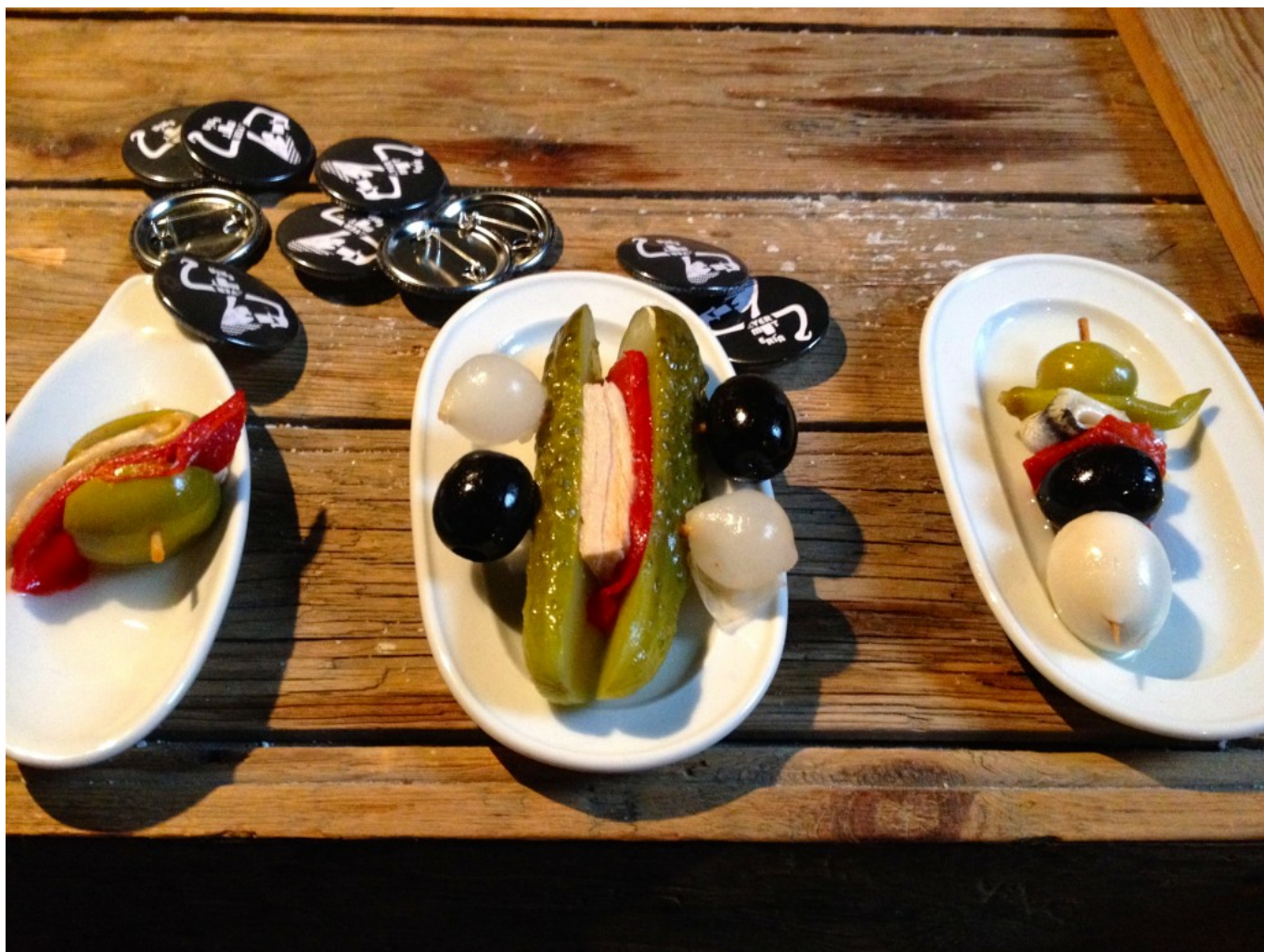


After browsing, climb up to the third floor. Get yourself a glass of vermouth, wine or limonada, or a cup of coffee. Then grab a seat on the couch or pop up to the roof.



One of the main providers of drinks at The Hovse is [La Vermutería](#). a pop-up bar that travels around the city like a nomad, taking over different venues and throwing vermouth-inspired events where DJs, good ambience and up and coming vermouth brands are all at play. At The Hovse, you can get a glass of ridiculously good vermouth for 2€ and choose from a selection of tapas. Other food stalls such as [Ma Petite Creperie](#) and [El Huerto de Lucas](#) are also serving up sweet and savoury treats.





Where do you sit back and relax? In the living room... of course.



Or on the rooftop terrace!



Info:

The Hovse by [Better](#)

Address: Calle General Arrando 40

Metro: Alonso Martínez, Rubén Darío, Iglesia

When: 12pm-9pm until December 24th

Check out our [events calendar](#) to find out about other pop-up markets in Madrid

You may also like our post on “[Best Christmas Markets in Madrid 2014](#)”