Salmon Guru, seriously fun spirits near Plaza Santa Ana

The terms *craft cocktails* and *celebrity mixologist* can make eyeballs roll faster than you can say Vesper Martini. Because with all the clapping of mint leaves and fancy garnishes, it's easy for a place to take itself too seriously.

And while the folks behind **Salmon Guru** do have some serious credentials (proprietor is mixology mastermind Diego Cabrera), you won't find any stern-faced barmen shaming your request for vodka here. The only thing serious at this spot is the bartenders' love for well-made drinks.



The dark, unassuming exterior on Calle Echegaray does little to reveal the neon lights and quirky decor inside. The front

room is all 50s-era bungalow, with a bar and palm-print swivel chairs to one side and low seating against dark wood paneling on the other.

But don’t stop there. Follow the neon glow toward the back room and you’ll find yourself in the middle of a pop-art light extravaganza, with neon lightning bolts on the ceiling and familiar comic book faces on the walls.



As soon as you sit down you'll have a menu and glass of water plunked in front of you. If you've lived in Madrid for any

length of time, you know how rare it is to find a spot who’ll bring you a free glass (let alone keep it filled).

Just like the decor, the menu is an eclectic mix. You’ll find perfectly executed classics listed alongside their in-house inventions. If you’re not sure where to start, don’t be shy!

The bartenders are more than happy to recommend a drink based on what you like. Even better is to simply ask about their favorites, which I how I found myself sipping a Laphroaig-infused old-fashioned that isn’t on the menu.



Pasión, a blend of rum, coconut milk and passion fruit



Vesper Martini & classic Manhattan

Need one more reason to check out Salmon Guru? **The place is a must for whiskey lovers.** If you don’t see your favorite amongst the extensive selection of American bourbon and rye on the shelves, ask to see their secret whiskey menu.

All in all, if you're looking sip impeccably made drinks somewhere that's hip while being unpretentious, definitely check out Salmon Guru.

Info

- **Facebook**
- **Address:** Calle Echegaray, 21
- **Metro:** Sevilla or Anton Martin
- **Phone:** 91 000 61 85

By Danielle Owens, Website & Facebook

*A former Oregonian, Californian and Bogotana, Danielle is (for now!) settled in Madrid. Since 2014, she's chronicled her experiences living abroad on her blog, **No Longer Native**.*

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

Street spotlight: Calle Ruda, a tiny portal between La Latina and Embajadores

It goes without saying that there’s no shortage of things to do in Madrid. In fact, sometimes there’s so much, you don’t know where to start. On those days when the sun’s shining and you’re itching to get out of the house, **sometimes it’s best to just walk to a cool part of town and let the city do its thing.** We’re here to give you some inspiration.

Calle de la Ruda

La Latina and Embajadores—bustling multicultural hubs—are connected by a string of tiny streets full of surprises. One of them is **Calle Ruda**, which takes you straight from Mercado La Cebada to Plaza Cascorro, and makes the very short walk well worth it.

Onis, for old-school charm



If you enter the street from Calle Toledo, you're greeted by the classic corner bar, Onis.

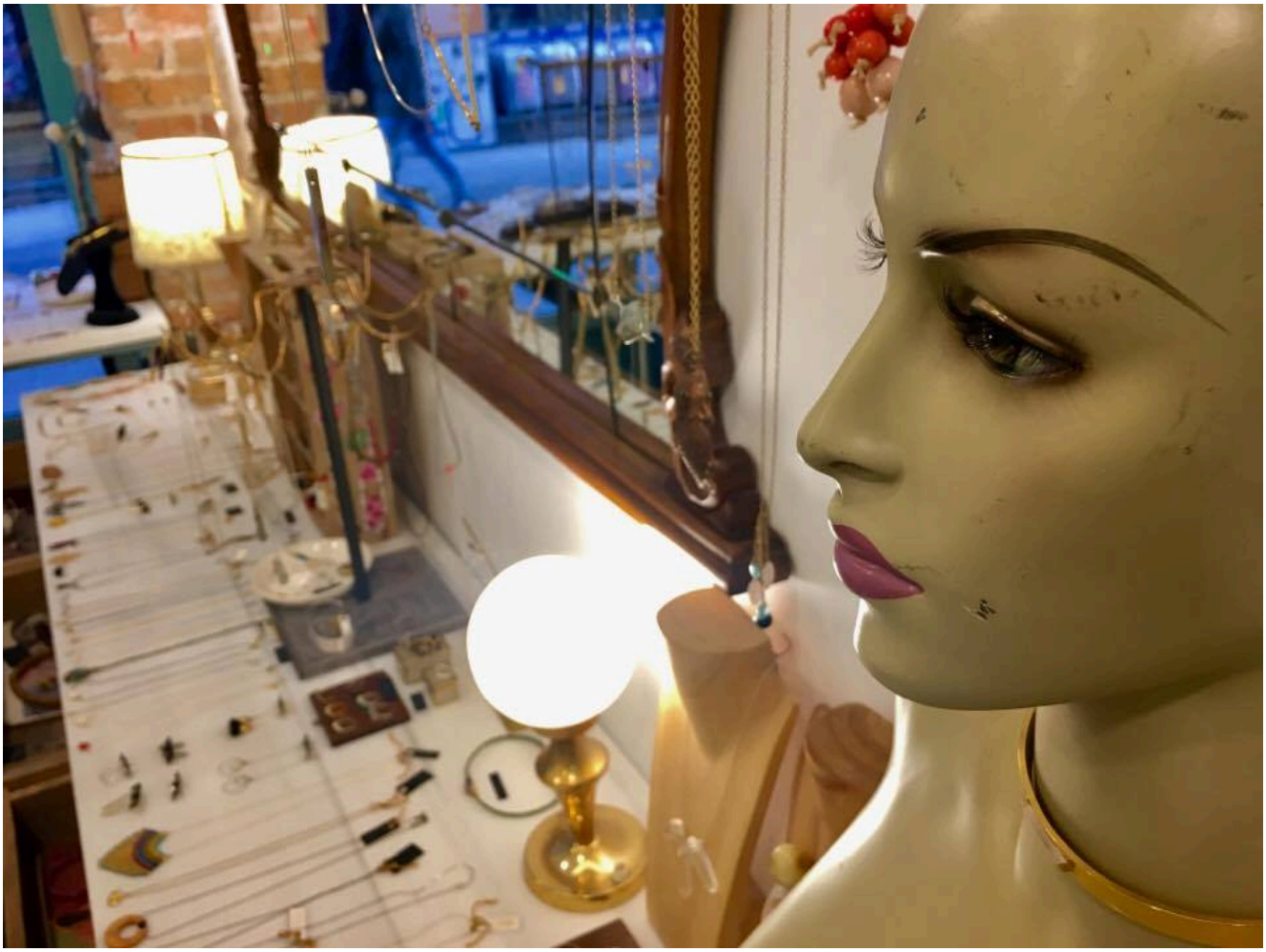
This place is the definition of *castizo*. Tapas in the glass display case, tobacco machines, weird arcade games, and a grumpy server who has probably been here since the place opened (which was 1976, I've learned).

Ruda Café, for coffee



Looking for something more modern? We got you. Keep heading down Ruda and you'll come across **Ruda Café**, a new (opened last year) coffeeshop that's riding the wave of java experts that has hit Madrid in recent years. We're not mad about this trend. And yes, they have wifi. They also sell packaged artisanal coffee and tea, jam, art, and coffeemakers.

De Piedra, for handmade jewelry



But there’s only so much coffee you can drink (unfortunate, I know). So now that you’re fueled up, you’re ready to browse the cute little shops of this gem of a street. If you’re a fan of jewelry and creepy mannequins, pay a visit to **De Piedra**, an artisanal jewelry shop at C/ Ruda 19. They haven’t been at this location long, but the store has been open for some 15 years.

Molar, for records, books and cassette tapes



Next you'll come across my personal favorite place on the street, **Molar**. Think record store meets bookshop. They even sell cassette tapes, which is not something you see every day in Mad City.

Mamá Elba, for something sweet



Got a sweet tooth? **Mamá Elba** has been open a mere 3 weeks, and is already drawing a loyal customer base. Their selection of ice cream (including vegan and gluten-free), cakes, and coffee will leave you overwhelmed by heavenly choices.

Erre Catorce (R14), for art and design



R14 is another **brand new spot** on the street, just open for a month. It's a modern interior design shop, with local art, restored vintage furniture pieces (from around the world, namely Scandinavia and the US), apparel, and lots of cool home decor.

Soon they'll be putting on events to promote and discuss interior design and art, so keep your eyes peeled and follow them on Facebook.

La Tienda de Cerveza, for craft beer



Next up: craft beer. Okay, I lied before, THIS place is my favorite. **La Tienda de Cerveza** is a must in La Latina (and in the city, really). The shelves are lined with hundreds of bottled or canned craft beers and ciders from both Madrid and around the world. They have a few tables in the back, and they hold tasting events often. An absolute must for *cervecerxs*.

Tienda Biológica, for something healthy

Something I love about Madrid is that **you can eat healthy without going bankrupt**. Tienda Biológica is living proof of this. This small organic food shop sells health products at reasonable prices, and it's run by the sweetest lady.

La China Mandarina, for a great meal in a modern space



And last but not least (and not even covering half of the street's spots), for a great meal and a laidback ambience, visit **La China Mandarina** at the end of Calle Ruda (closest to Plaza Cascorro). It's one of those places that masters the art of offering both very traditional and very modern cuisine on the same menu. So if you're craving a *tortilla de patatas* but your friend has a hankering for a vegan burger, there's something for everyone.

They have great wifi and won't roll their eyes if you work on your laptop all morning (I know from experience).

There's also a mushroom-themed restaurant called El Brote! Check out Leah's article about it here:

> *El Brote: a brand-new mushroom restaurant in the heart of El Rastro*

Calle Ruda is just one of a plethora of tiny goldmines in Madrid. If none of these spots call your attention (tough crowd!), we suggest you still come to the area on a beautiful day and just get lost. You can't go wrong.

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

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

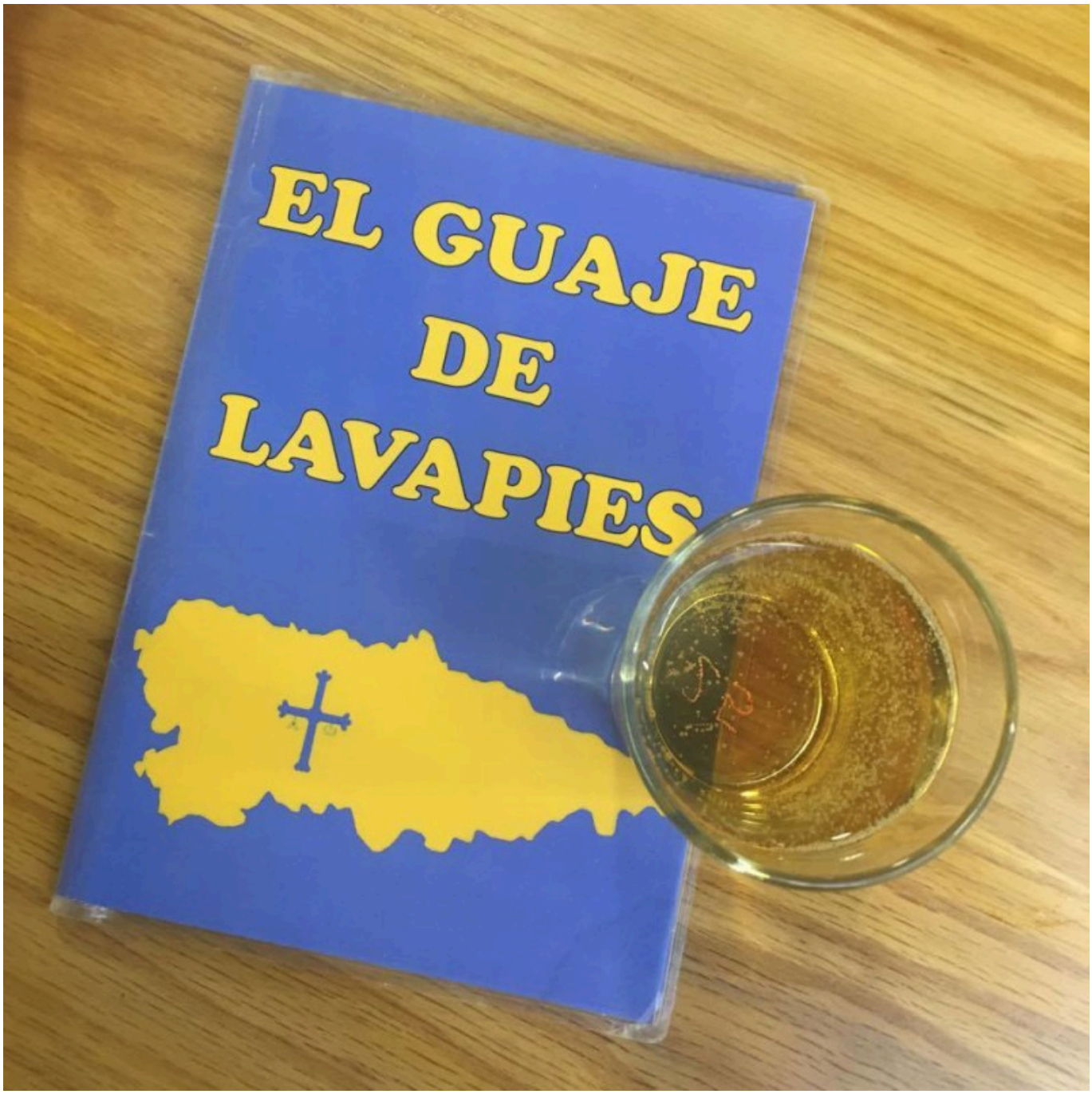
Bosco de Lobos

- **Facebook & Instagram: @boscodelobosmadrid**
- **Address:** COAM, Calle de Hortaleza, 63
- **Phone:** 915 24 94 64
- **Metro:** Alonso Martínez, Chueca & Tribunal

El Guaje de Lavapiés, an Authentic Asturian Oasis

Tucked into the Mercado de San Fernando is a tiny piece of Asturias. From the *queso gamoneu* to the blue-and-yellow flags marking their territory on every spare inch of the bar, you'll feel like you're really there.

El Guaje de Lavapiés is a *sidrería* that offers some of the most high-quality Asturian ciders, cheeses, and cured meats Madrid has to offer.



Rafael, the owner, is known around town as "**El Guaje**," a term used to refer to someone younger than you in Asturias. El Guaje opened up shop 10 months ago, and is happy with his success, although his dream is to open a full-size restaurant.



Is the space enormous? No. Does it have wifi? Also no. But what it does have it much better: delicious food, good prices, and no big chain of production and distribution—everything comes straight from our northern neighbors and is grown and made naturally.

Here you see El Guaje's *tosta con membrillo y cabrales*—toast with quince paste and blue cheese produced by rural dairy farmers and cured in natural caves (€3.50).



Of course, you can also buy these products in bulk to take home and enjoy later.



But if you’re like me, and nothing hits the spot like a good craft beer, El Guaje’s got you covered, with a selection from Caleya of pale ales, IPAs, ambers, etc., as well as your trusty Estrella and Mahou.



If you’re lucky, you’ll arrive in time for the show—there’s an open space at the center of the market, which happens to be right in front of this bar, where they put on dancing shows, plays, and other cultural events.

¡Puxa Asturias!

Information

- Facebook
- Address: C/ Embajadores, 41 inside Mercado de San Fernando
- Hours: Vary by the day, but typical market hours. Most business on weekends!

PS: Right in front of El Guaje is another one of our favorite stands, Mercado de Lisboa. Check it out!

Taproom Madrid: the craft beer bar we were all waiting for

If you're anything like me, you've been patiently awaiting a bar with a great selection of quality craft beer.

Over the past few years, there have been a few contenders. In fact, just in the past year, several new *cervecerías artesanales* have popped up around the city center, especially in the Malasaña and Lavapiés neighborhoods.

But with relatively small selections, these bars have left the diehard fans much to desire.

That is, **until Taproom Madrid came onto the scene.**



Tucked into the up-and-coming university neighborhood of Moncloa, Taproom Madrid offers 40+ delicious craft beers on tap, from IPAs to porters, pale ales, stouts, amber ales and everything in between.

Taproom is one of those place where there's something for everyone. Not sure which beer to order? Y**ou can do a tasting of four different *cañas* for 10€**. Or you can always ask the friendly and beer-savvy bartenders, who recommended me the Founders' Porter (spoiler alert: it's the stuff dreams are made of).

If you come hungry, Tierra Burrito (the work of the same owners) is right next door, and you can bring your burrito to the bar while you sip a cold one.

Beer + burritos + good music… what more can you ask for?



As if that weren't enough, if you're a soccer fan, there's an added bonus: the space's enormous projector screens always have a game on.

Although the space is gigantic by Spanish standards—with two

seating areas plus a patio—the place still gets full to the brim by 8pm. Go early (they open at 6pm) to score a seat.



Info:

- **Facebook**
- **Address:** Guzmán El Bueno, 52
- **Metro:** Moncloa / Argüelles
- **Phone:** 915 50 05 85

Ana La Santa… Baby it’s cold outside

Being an expat in Madrid seems to equate to a couple of things; you’re highly likely to favour drinking a caña over a coffee (it honestly works out cheaper), most of your wardrobe will consist of Zara purchases (although that *may* just be me) and I’m pretty sure that come Autumn time, you start to long for Sunday afternoons curled up in a pub with a fire and a glass of red for company. Whilst Madrid can offer a visitor many things (often wall to wall sunshine), it doesn’t really pack a punch on the pub front…

However, Ana La Santa has been become my default option for when I’m craving cosiness, and there’s good reason why.



Situated in what is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful

plazas in all of Madrid, Ana La Santa, the bar and restaurant that occupies the **ground floor of the hard to miss Hotel ME**, is without doubt the chicest (and next best thing) that's akin to a Gastropub that you might find back in Blighty. Picture a roaring fire, squidgy sofas, easy on the eye staff and the kind of simple style that is more often found in Scandi-land and you'd be on the right page.



This season's buzz word for urbanites is hygge.

Pronounced *hoo-ga*, this Danish word defies literal translation. **In essence it means enjoying life's small but soothing moments** – perhaps nibbling some *croquetas de jamón* with one hand, whilst sipping a perfectly mixed Gin and Tonic in the other…

It's about investing in emotional well-being through the simple and homespun. That's exactly what I managed to achieve there on a bitingly cold Tuesday evening. I left feeling with a slightly larger waistline and feeling that **our host (the wonderful Alba) was a new friend – the service was THAT good**.

When Spain's not sunny (and trust me it happens) I urge you to bunker down amid soft cushions, flickering candles and bask in the warmth of Ana La Santa. All that's left on your part is to find yourself a Spaniard to snuggle with.

All photos from Ana la Santa

Ana la Santa

- **Facebook & Instagram: @analasantamadrid**
- **Address: Plaza Sta. Ana, 14**
- **Metro: Sol/Sevilla**
- **Phone: 917 01 60 13**

Café Barbieri: A 114-year-old Art Noveau café in Lavapiés

Café Barbieri first brought modernist charm to Madrid's working class district, Lavapiés, in 1902, and although the *barrio* has evolved dramatically over the last 114 years, the interior of this elegant bar hasn't changed one bit.

Some things have changed though – Café Barbieri is owned by a charismatic chap from New Delhi and staffed with bilingual youngthings. It also now has a small terrace, but this is not why you'd come here – its appeal is truly the interior.

The whole place is lined with mirrors which back then were a symbol of wealth. These mirrors are now aging well, stained a smoky bronze colour with dots of grey rust creeping in from the edges. The ceiling is framed with grids of ornate girders that are connected to decorative cast-iron beams, typical of older buildings in Lavapiés. Although never on, there are ceiling fans too – something increasingly rare in Madrid.

At the back of the bar is a grand piano on a small raised stage. Almost every evening there's a live music session often featuring the piano, and this place does food too – typical Spanish stuff but with an edge.

The worn white marble table tops and red velvet seating lining the dining area mark this place out as opulent, but that's really not the vibe – it's chilled and cosy and attracts a spectrum of people, from the intrepid tourist who's braved it down the hill, to the unassuming local who fancies a read of one of the papers on offer.



Café Barbieri by day



Café Barbieri’s beautiful ornate ceiling



The grand piano taking centre stage, and look at all those beautiful mirrors



Look at that original tiled floor!



The bar has a great selection of spirits & vermouth on tap



Café Barbieri by night

Café Barbieri is also on the same street as the Greek foodie place, Egeo, so there you have it, your night is planned!

Info

- C/Ave María 45
- Metro: Lavapiés
- **Website** **Facebook**

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**