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**

Pum Pum Cafe, a new Lavapiés coffeeshop and weekend brunch spot

Situated on C/ Tribulete, 6 is the new establishment **Pum Pum Cafe**. It was brought to my attention by the charismatic Jordan, well known by the coffee-lover community for his tenure as a barista at the popular **Toma Cafe** in Malasaña. The tastefully exposed brick pattern of the wall is a remnant of the conversion process from the butcher shop that previously occupied the space. I'm always keen on discovering new cafes to perch with my laptop. One can easily foresee this business becoming another thriving watering hole in the barrio.



Pum Pum stands out amongst the competition for its breakfast/brunch offerings: a splendid eggs benedict and avocado tostada, an assortment of healthy juices, baked goods and organic products. **Their mission is to offer breakfast at all hours of the day as to not discriminate against those who wake up at 5pm after a rowdy night.** Aficionados of coffee will be as thrilled as I was to see that Pum Pum is equipped to prepare V60 and chemex filter coffees.



The owner Papo is from Argentina, his brother Dam operates the kitchen, barista Jordan hails from Australia and the cafe manager Ira is from Ukraine. Papo has an adorable and well behaved infant son who can be seen on site at the weekend. Their hours during the week are 9am-9pm and their weekend brunch hours are 10am-9pm. This location is strongly recommended to any lovers of coffee and breakfast.



Photo: Steff Gutovska

Info

- Facebook
- Instagram
- **Adress:** Calle Tribulete 6
- **Metro:** Lavapiés

You may also like:

- Toma Café, Fuel up, feel hip
- El Cafelito, for coffee lovers in Lavapiés
- Best brunch on a budget in Madrid
- Swinton & Grant, art, books and coffee in Lavapiés

New Cucos, a family-style restaurant in Arturo Soria

Sometimes when I go out to have lunch or dinner I can't help but think that an important part of customer service is missing. So when I had dinner at New Cucos with my friend, when we went outside afterwards, we could only say how well we were treated and what a wonderful dinner we had.

New Cucos is a family-style restaurant in the neighborhood of Arturo Soria. This closeness and warmth can be seen in the way Juan (the owner) treats everyone who works there, as well as all the customers who are having dinner or lunch.

The restaurant is located on the quiet street of Arturo Soria. It is a large space with a perfect covered terrace for more intimate dinners or larger celebrations. The terrace provides a very cozy place where you can talk quietly without being bothered by the next table, and then there's also a smaller and equally cozy interior. The first day we decided to sit in inside, as Real Madrid was playing and we wanted to see the match. The second day we sat in the covered terrace, great decision.

The Food

New Cucos has a simple and traditional menu with very good quality ingredients. **The portions are generous, in fact, the most popular dishes on the menu are large sharing platters;** these can be great among a group of friends, or even just for two.

First we went for the warm burrata salad with cherry tomatoes. It was simply delicious. Great quality, never tried the burrata and I have to say I totally loved it.



Burrata Salad

Then we decided to try the spring rolls with vegetables and prawns – a highly recommended and delicious dish as well.



Spring rolls

By the time we had to eat our third dish, we were already full, but how can you say no to a plate of ravioli? These were filled with pumpkin and cheese sauce – simply spectacular and very rich. In fact the second time we went we couldn’t help but order them again.



Ravioli

The second day we also ordered a delicious mixed salad. For me, nothing beats a well-prepared mixed salad.



Salad

As for the rest of the menu, in addition to the dishes to share, they have a small selection of fish and meat dishes. I have to say the South African ostrich burger looks delicious.

Prices are very reasonable. The first day we had three dishes, three glasses of wine and two beers for 47 euros. The second day our bill came out to 33 euros.

I'd also like to highlight once again that we received fantastic service both times we went; the staff was attentive, asking if everything was fine, and very importantly, without putting any pressure on us to leave. That sort of thing is very noticeable and makes your dinner even better.

Nothing else to add, **New Cucos** points out on Twitter: "*eat and drink in an oasis*" And I couldn't agree more.

So, "*Mucha mierda*" (or "break a leg") to Juan and the rest of his family. I'm sure we'll see each other again soon!

Info

- ***Where: Calle Arturo Soria 84***
- ***Metro: Arturo Soria***
- ***Tf: 913774039***
- ***Twitter***
- ***Monday to saturday 11 to 1.***

Casa Mira – Best Turrón in Madrid

Today I want to talk about one of the capital's gems, **Casa Mira**. It is probably one of the oldest establishments in Madrid and has become a meeting place for gourmands. What's their secret? Homemade recipes and premium products. Not to mention great customer service.



Casa Mira was founded in 1855 by Don Luis Mira, a master craftsman of ***turrón*** (traditional Spanish pastry similar to nougat). ***Turrón*** is probably the most commonly eaten dessert around Christmas time in Spain. It’s most likely of Moorish origin and by the 15th century, it was one of the most famous desserts in the Spanish court.



Don Luis’ story is a mix between legend and truth. One day he decided to leave his native town of Jijona – with only one cart, two donkeys and his turrón – to find good luck in the capital. Legend has it that he had to restart the trip several times since he sold the entire supply before reaching his first stop.



Today, Casa Mira’s turrón continues to be just as irresistible. It is 100% handmade, making it probably the best in the country. Don Luis started his business with a little shop in Plaza Mayor; now it is one of the most famous pastry shops in the capital, not to mention one of the most beloved among Madrileños.



Entering Casa Mira is like traveling back in time. The decor is elegant and vintage. The feeling is magical, making you feel as if it were still the year 1900.



Casa Mira is not only famous for their turrón; they have all kinds of traditional handmade sweets. Marron Glaces, Glorias de Jijona (pastries made of marzipan and egg yolk, wrapped in sugar and rolled by hand), *Yemas de Nuez (*pastries made with egg yolk and nuts) and of course, *Fruta Escarchada* (candied/frosted fruit).



They also serve typical sweets according to other holiday seasons, such as Roscón de Reyes.



But my favorite has to be Spanish breakfast pastry, ***pan quemado*** (‘burnt bread’), which is similar to a brioche or sweet bread roll, and costs just €2.50 each. The best way to eat them is to cut them in half and toast both slices, then add butter and jam…. pure heaven.



The prices are overall very reasonable. Although the turrón is not the cheapest you can find in Madrid, considering it is handmade with a century-old recipe, it is worth every penny. A bar of turrón costs around 16 euros and makes for the absolute perfect gift at Christmas time, whether for someone in Madrid or a loved one back home.

Info

- **Web**
- *Address: Carrera de San Jerónimo nº30, 28014, Madrid*
- Tf: 914296796 and 914298895

For more Madrid gift ideas, check out:

Best Gift Ideas from Madrid

El Riojano, Madrid's best pastry shop is right in the centre and it has a hidden tea room

Lambuzo, Authentic Andalusian Flavour in Madrid

Lambuzo is a family-run Andalusian restaurant with two locations in Madrid: Calle de las Conchas 9 (metro Opera) and Calle Ponzano 8 (metro Iglesia), as well as a stand in **Mercado de Chamberí.** Both restaurant locations have a special charm that transports you straight to Andalucía from the moment you step foot inside. The staff is also very friendly and makes you feel at home.

Lambuzo has already been featured on **Naked Madrid a number of times**; it was one of the blog's very first **articles** and has since been included in **Where to Take Your Mom in Madrid** and **An Insider's Guide to Sol**. Their Opera location has a downstairs wine cellar where they hold events such as wine tastings and micro theatre, which we alway feature on our **events page** – be sure to go next time they have one! So as you can see, Lambuzo is already one of Naked's favorite places and I, too, wanted to share my experience with you all.



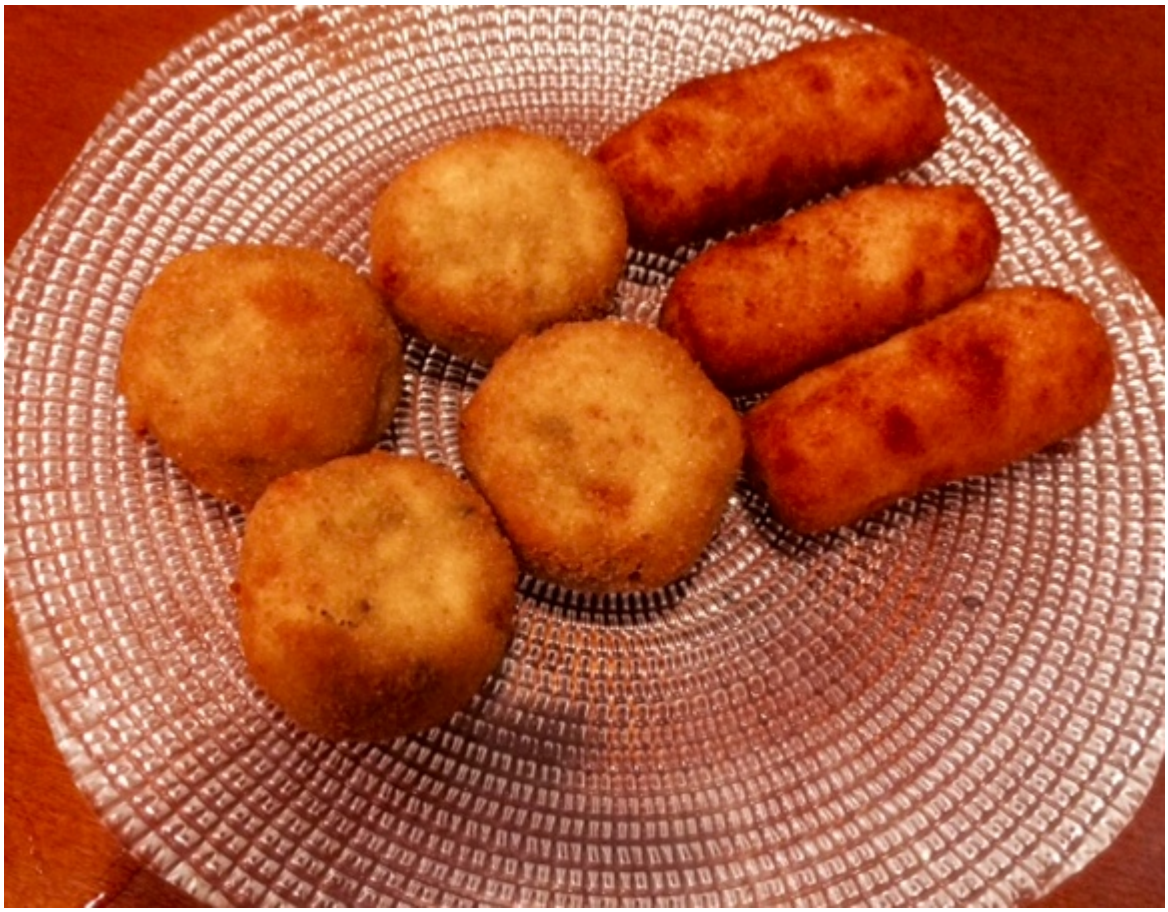
I recently went with three friends and we decided to get a bottle of wine to accompany our meal. The waiter helped us order **a special wine called *Señoríο de Heliche***.



The restaurant’s dishes are great for sharing so I recommend ordering a bunch of different plates with friends and tasting as many as possible. It’s the best way to try new dishes! The first starter we chose was “***Ensaladilla con atún de Barbate***” because it is a house speciality. The flavour was very tasty and the texture of the ingredients was very smooth, ready for the palate!



We also ordered ***“Lambuceo de croquetas”*** which consist of different types of **croquetas,** such as ***al ajillo*** (with garlic) and ***camarones*** (shrimp), that tasted just like the ones our mothers make!



For me, ***“Cigarritos de langostinos con Albahaca”*** was the most amazing surprise on the menu. Their name translates into English as ***“Prawn cigars with basil”***. Their careful presentation and distinct flavor make me want to go back right now and order them again.



“*Chocos de Huelva*” is one of the most popular fried fish dishes in Andalucía, and of course we ordered them to complete our dinner. They are prepared in batter and normally come with a special homemade sauce to dip them in. Delicious!



To sum up, I highly recommend going to **Lambuzo** with friends and family – it's an opportunity to get to know a little more about Andalucía, right in the heart of Madrid!

Info

Website

Address: Calle de Ponzano, 8. Madrid

Phone: +34 915 13 80 59

Reservations advised.

A Year of Menus Del Día in Madrid

Tapas get all the fame in Spain. Drinking wine, nibbling chorizo, sharing little bites late into the night—the tapa is romantic. Never mind that the definition is slippery and the quality unpredictable, or that an evening of tapa-hopping can cost you more in the end than sitting down for a proper meal.

But I'd like to take a moment to celebrate a lesser-known Spanish food tradition, one that's equally praiseworthy but seldom mentioned: the ***menu del día.*** These three magic words will get you a three-course meal, with bread and wine included, at an incredible fixed price.

Beginning as a government-mandated measure during the Franco years, this practical lunch tradition was designed to provide affordable meals to day laborers during the workweek. While no longer required by law, restaurants have carried the tradition full-force into the 21st Century, with even high-end establishments kneeling down to offer those of us on tighter budgets delicious lunches at bargain prices. **It's not as sexy or unique as the tapa, but the *menu del día* forms an integral part of the Spanish food culture and is perhaps one of Spain's best-kept secrets**.



The Club.

Over the last year some friends and I decided to take advantage of the *menus* around Madrid. I wouldn't call us a club (ignore that I just did) but rather a shifting group of buddies hanging out over a different meal every Friday. We would fluctuate between two and ten people, though it was always anchored by a couple die-hard members, myself included.

I recommend that anyone with the opportunity start their own tradition as well. It's a great way to try new food, see new corners of the city, and hang out with all the other no-goodnik three-day weekenders over something other than a bar stool.

We had only four rules. All menus had to be:

1. In one of the central barrios.
2. Less than 15 euros per person.
3. Good quality food.
4. Good quality people.

The Rankings.

This list is limited to our *menu del día* meet-ups over the past calendar year. I included both food and atmosphere in my decisions, though the process was by no means meticulous; I'm going off little more than my general impressions of each place. I also recognize this list skews toward trendy restaurants, which is partly because we liked to use the meet-up as an opportunity to get into otherwise busy spots (Friday lunch was normally little hassle), but also as a much-needed break from the every-day Spanish fare. It's worth noting that sometimes little Spanish joints in the outer barrios do the best *menus* of all!

1. Bacira (Chamberí, 14 euros)



It’s pretty astounding that a restaurant with a waitlist of more than a month offers a 14-euro fixed-price meal. If that’s not a testament to the spirit of the *menú del día*, I don’t know what is. Make a reservation, wait it out, and go here. The food is a fresh take on the Mediterranean-Asian fusion that’s the rage in Spain these days (thanks, David Muñoz) and the dining room is bright and welcoming with all the touchstones of modern aesthetics (dangling bulbs, faded wood, dark blues and whites) without feeling hackneyed. The food is fresh, creative and delicious. We felt like sexy young business people at English teacher prices.

2. Gabriel. (Conde Duque, 14 euros)



You know you’ve chosen your restaurant well when you find

yourself eating next to Javier Bardem. The rich and famous have good taste, much better than Joe Nobodies like us, but this place stands on its own. The cuisine consists of modern takes on Spanish classics though there are the occasional Asian influences (again, all the rage), and the desserts are incredible. It also has the nicest bathroom in Madrid—shit's straight out of a William Sonoma catalog. Atmosphere is cozy, intimate, and occasionally Bardem-ridden.

3. Momo (Chueca, 11.50 euros)

Unlike other restaurants that include maybe two or three options for a first and second course, Momo offers the entire menu for the *menu del día*. The food is delicious and varied (again, some Mediterranean-Asian fusion going on—I'm spotting a trend). The dishes can sometimes be a bit sauce-heavy (or maybe my tastes are becoming more Spanish) but choose wisely and you'll love your meal. This is one of my go-to *menus del día* when I have visitors because of the wide selection. They also have a menu de noche for a reasonable 18 euros (same as the day menu), but if you're going to be in the area for a reasonably-priced dinner, I'd suggest **Baco y Beto**.

4. Badila (Lavapiés, 13.50 euros)



This restaurant is intimate and classic (the chef himself sometimes takes the orders) with faded white wood walls and a chalkboard listing the daily specials. The food is classic Spanish with a touch of ‘lo moderno,’ and everything is fresh and seasonal. It’s still the best *crema de verduras* I’ve had in Madrid (had seasonal squash with a couple slices of intense chorizo), which says a lot in a city obsessed with creaming vegetables. Here’s a previous post on Badila.

5. La casa dei Pazzi (chueca, 11.50 euros)



Casa dei Pazza

Just to switch things up here, let’s focus on quantity. Casa dei Pazzi offers a substantial salad as a starter and then a whole Italian-style pizza for your main course. There’s also wine, bread and dessert. You’ll wonder how you got away with paying only 11 euros, half-expecting to look over your shoulder as you leave and see an angry Italian chef charging

after you with a pizza paddle.

6. Los Chuchis (Lavapies, 11 euros)



Maybe the most charming atmosphere in the list, it feels a bit like an old diner, with a few tables around a large bar and counter in the middle, the hustle and bustle of the waiters running around and the steady chatter of regulars. The food's great too. We showed up at 1:30 and it was fine, but it filled up quickly. Check out our previous post on Los Chuchis.

7. Bar Galleta (Malasaña, 11.50 euros)



This trendy restaurant in Malasaña has a similar feel to Maricastaña (see below), with both doing modern takes on classic spanish food, though Galleta's menu skews a bit more French. They're also on the same street, so if you don't like the look of one *menu,* try the other. I prefer the atmosphere here though—the warm gold lighting, the wide French doors to the street, the wood and brick interior with wild flowers in vases around the restaurant. When we went the food was classic Spanish but good (crema starter, *entrecot*, a fruit desert) but *the menu del día* seems to change frequently and dramatically, so you can probably catch it on a great day.

8. Maricastaña (Malasaña, 11.50 euros)



The food is classic *menu del día* —your typical *crema de*

verduras starter (or hummus or a salad) with a protein-focused second (*lomo, entrecot, meluza*)—but what they do, they do well. It has a bit of that same late-2000s trendy look to it—exposed brick, sanded wood shelves, dangling lightbulbs and fading white paint—but they manage to pull it off. Galleta wins by a hair, but they're both nice dining experiences.

9. La Candelita (Alonso Martinez, 12 euros)



We all enjoyed this place. They describe their cuisine as "Latin Criollo" (though it leaned more Spanish than Latin American) with a warm Latin-inspired atmosphere. They publish examples of their *menú del día* right on the website http://lacandelita.es/carta/menu-del-dia/ so you don't have to take my word for it!

10. TukTuk (Chamberí or Chueca, 10.50 euros)



TukTuk doesn't even need mentioning on an English-language Madrid blog. They do a nice variety of Southeast Asian dishes and have great quantity and quality menu for the price, so it's always a popular suggestion in the expat community. If you've lived here for over a year, you've definitely heard the typical "let's all go TuckTak! Takatuk! TACKATACKATUKKA!" They're pronouncing it wrong, though—it's "tuktuk." Read our full post on Tuk Tuk.

11. La Tragantúa (Huertas, 12 euros)



(photo credit Carlos Olmo Minube.com)

This place was consistently called the best menú del día in Madrid on TripAdvisor last year, and it might still have that reputation, but the second time I went, the quality and presentation seemed to have slipped. Who knows, it may have been an off day. I don't know how you would characterize their food—it's a bit of a Spanish-and-everything fusion. I would sum it up as "rich." Be careful to mix up the starter and second course, otherwise you'll be like "why'd I order fried cheese in blueberry sauce as an appetizer for pesto-smothered pork?"

12. My Veg (Malasaña, 15 euros)



I bumped My Veg down a couple notches because they didn't include a drink with the *menu del día,* which is an insult to the very tradition! The final cost was closer to 18 euros, making it the most expensive *menu* we had all year. In terms of quality, it would be closer to the top. All the food was market fresh (they pride themselves on "tomatoes that taste like tomatoes") and the presentation modern and meticulous. It's a much fancier place than the outside suggests. Just ignore the terrible name.

13. El Apartmento (Huertas, 12 euros)



I came here after a particularly intense bike ride and without showering, so my memory is one of me hunching over my plate apologetically avoiding eye contact with all the well-dressed businessmen eating around us. The food was delicious though, Spanish food with a modern twist. I managed to take this blurry photo before losing all control and smashing my face into my plate in a black-out feeding frenzy.

14. Siam (Conde Duque, 11.61 euros)

I'm a sucker for Thai food and this place does a decent job for the (oddly specific) price. They include tom yum soup or pad thai as a starter, then a stirfry or curry as a second. The atmosphere is a bit odd, it feels a bit like a theme restaurant. While we're on the topic of thai food, I actually prefer the menú del día at **Maiia Thai (Plaza de España),** though it doesn't rotate much, and sometimes the new **BambuBox (Chueca)** has Tom Kha as a starter, which is nice. I

haven’t included either of those on the list because they weren’t done as a menu with the group. Also: **Krachai (Alonso Martinez)** has very high quality food and some Michelin nods, though the menu is expensive, doesn’t include soup, and doesn’t rotate much.

15. Taberna DNorte (Sol, 10 euros)



So this place has a surprisingly nice interior and the food wasn’t bad (a decent-sized burger, a pisto starter for me, someone got a salad) but it’s located in an exceptionally ugly plaza between Sol and Gran Via and attached to a drab little hotel. It’s the kind of place you’d expect to see a man in a disheveled suit drinking a mid-morning cocktail and nervously waiting to meet his mistress.

16.Vietnam 24 (Chueca, 11 euros)



The menu food isn’t bad, but it’s not particularly noteworthy. We all had some type of chicken or beef stir-fry but they seemed to lack those bright fundamental vietnamese tastes (mint, lime, basil). I also would’ve liked to see pho as a menu option, but that’s wishful thinking. I prefer **La Petit Hanoi** in malasaña.

17. El b_US (Sol, 10 euros)



Everyone else loved this place (including TripAdvisor, where it has some pretty outstanding rankings). It has a unique design concept I guess, but I was not blown away by the food. I also have no idea how we're supposed to pronounce it. "El bus?" "El beh- OOS?" I end up saying it like I'm hesitant to recommend it, which I guess I am: "El b'us."

18. Vivares (chueca, 9.90 euro / 12 euros veg option)



This restaurant is popular for lunch in Chueca, but I can’t figure out why, exactly. We experienced so-so food in a chaotic environment, nothing extraordinary, and the menu felt a bit too long for them to focus on any type of seasonal speciality. My strongest memory is that it was too loud. “Alright, gramps” you’re probably thinking, but the sensation was like being in an adult Chuck-E-Cheese without any of the cool robot puppets.

19. La Mucca (Malasaña, 10 euros)



I enjoy La Mucca for dinner. They have a good boletus pizza and some quality appetizers, and it’s lively and fun in the evening. For lunch, this place disappointed. It was the first *menu del día* where someone had to set aside a dish—a greasy open-faced sandwich with an odd flavor. We were also sitting on the slanting terraza with the harsh mid-afternoon February sunlight blinding our eyes and giving the greasy *Tosta* an even more washed-out, dreary look. The highlight was this salad, but even that can be made easily at home for much cheaper. We sat there dreaming of all the better places on this list, knowing that next week was a fresh start.

Final Thoughts:

You might have noticed almost none of these get awful reviews, but that’s simply because none of these places were awful. Maybe it’s a testament to our rigorous selection process, or maybe we just enjoyed ourselves everywhere. If a place were awful, I would have said so.

I think of Homer the food critic: “I’m giving this my worst review ever: seven thumbs up.”

I have more recommendations for *menús* around Madrid that were not included in this list because we did not go there in our Friday group. I had to set a limit for the list somewhere. **Please add your suggestions below or on Facebook and we can compile another post.**

Gallery

(all photos were snapped on scene with an iPhone, unless otherwise indicated)



Asian-fusion ceviche at Bacira



Duck confit at Gabriel



Bacira dessert



Stew as the main course at Bacira



Bacira appetizer



Vivares Salad



Vietnam 24



Del Norte



Casa dei Pazza



Badila



Badila crema de calabacín



TukTuk



El Apartamento



La Candelita



Bar Galleta



Bar Galleta



Bar Galleta crema



Bar Galleta



Greek salad starter at La Mucca, Malasaña



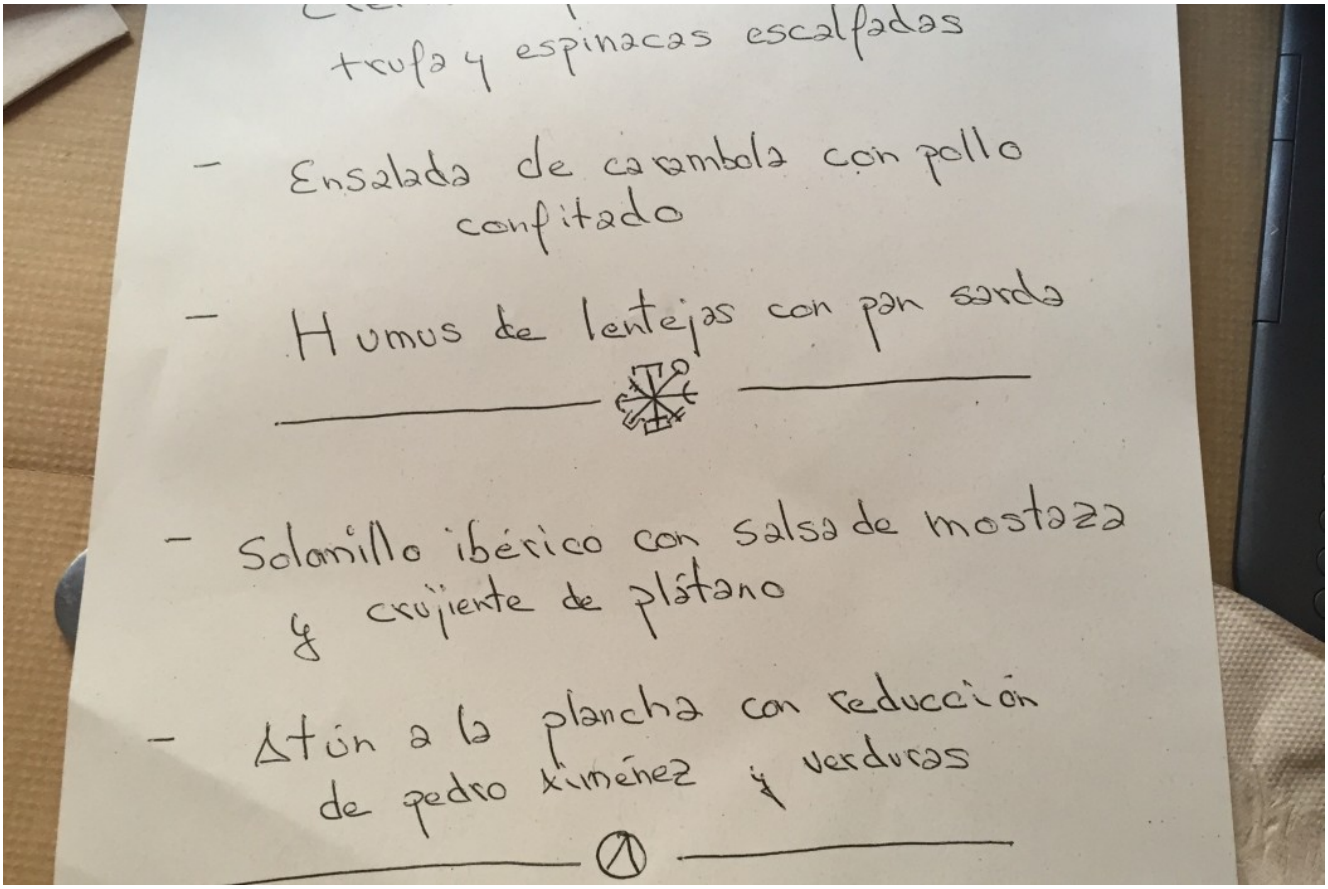
Gabriel



Gabriel crema



Gabriel Menú





Maricastaña



Gabriel dessert



Gabriel dessert



Maricastaña

La Jefa Home Bar, a Chic Restaurant near Recoletos

Located near Paseo de Recoletos and Retiro, **La Jefa** is a restaurant that makes you feel at home. With a chic and Colonial-style décor, La Jefa serves Mediterranean and fusion cuisine, with a kitchen that opens all day long, offering breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner menus.



Photo from La Jefa FB page

On my most recent visit to **La Jefa**, my friend and I found it difficult to order from **all the delicious options** we had to choose from! For starters, we ordered "**Papitas canarias con ajo cristal**" (Canarian-style potatoes with garlic) "**huevos rotos la jefa**" (La Jefa-style eggs), and "**gambones wanton**" (wanton prawns).





For the main course, I chose “**Solomillo de ternera**” **(veal tenderloin)** and it tasted absolutely amazing! It had a mix of different flavors, enhanced with pepper and a special sauce; plus the meat was cooked to perfection.



My friend chose **“pez mantequilla con tabulé” (butter fish with tabbouleh)** with an extraordinary adobo spice, mixed with garlic quinoa tabbouleh. It was so soft that it melted in my mouth.



As far as I'm concerned, wine is absolutely essential for any dinner or lunch. At La Jefa, we decided to enjoy our meal with **a special wine label, named "Juan Gil".** We made a great choice; it was the perfect compliment to our meal.

All in all, I highly recommend this restaurant for a wonderful meal at a good price, no less. The ambience, food and neighborhood make it a great choice for any occasion!

Info

- **Web** & **Facebook**
- Address: Calle de Recoletos 14. Madrid
- Phone: +34 916 217 674
- Reservations advised.

Banibanoo, an Iranian Market-style Restaurant in the Center of Madrid!

I have to admit that when I was first invited to try a new Persian food restaurant in Madrid, I had my doubts. Until then my knowledge of Persian food was very limited. But if there is something that I love it is trying new things. So of course, I accepted.

Banibanoo describes itself as a restaurant offering Persian market cuisine. It is owned by a young woman named Banafsheh who, after working six years in marketing, decided to pursue her dream of becoming a chef and restaurant owner. One day she left her job and went to London to study in Le Cordon Bleu School. Upon returning to Madrid, she discovered that Iranian food was little known in the Spanish capital. So she decided to open her very own restaurant where people could enjoy these wonderful dishes.

The name of the restaurant is also very personal: *Bani* is short for her full name Banafsheh and *Banoo* means Miss. So Banibanoo means *Miss Bani*.



Banibanoo’s owner Banafsheh



The restaurant is small and cozy, perfect for a fantastic meal with friends or with your partner. Apart from the food, what I love the most about Banibanoo is how bright it is and that the food is on display at the bar. That way, you can see all the food they serve before you order. It also has an intimate and familiar feeling, as if you were entering a market and wanted to eat something from a particular stand.



Banibanoo.



Fresh ingredients and beautiful homemade dishes are all the decorations you need



Banibanoo

According to Banafsheh, Iranian shares a lot in common with Mediterrean cuisine; the ingredients are all very similar. But

for me, each dish at Banibanoo tastes unique and exotic, for the mixture of flavors and variety of ingredients on each plate.



Food on display



Food on display

The food

Banibanoo offers a simple menu, consisting of traditional and original dishes, all made with fresh ingredients and a lot of love. If you're the kind of person who struggles when it comes to ordering, no problem. At Banibanoo you have the option of choosing a menu with three different dishes on one plate. Banafsheh likes to change up the menu every two weeks, offering different recipes along with the old ones. Banibanoo also offers wonderful breakfasts. On Saturday and Sunday, for example, she offers a very special breakfast that will be the highlight of your weekend: a "burnt" brioche bun with cream cheese and jam.

When I went for lunch with two friends, Banafsheh suggested we

try out different dishes so we could all share. I have to say that was a fantastic idea. The first three dishes we tried were: *broccoli with roasted cherry tomato in a yogurt sauce and tahini*; *beetroot hummus with feta cheese and hazelnuts*; and *gourmet purple potatoes with yogurt sauce, cherry tomatoes and cardamum*.



Menu 1

For the second place, we ordered: *sweet potato with red onions, yogurt sauce, almonds and pomegranate seeds*; *couscous with cheese, mint sauce, cilantro and parsley*; and *Kuku Kadoo: zucchini 'frittata' with mint and cheese*.



Menu 2

Our last plate included: *roasted beets with cherry tomatoes, feta cheese and a pomegranate and Sumac sauce*; *Shirin Polo, Persian rice, saffron, orange zest, carrot and pistachio* (this was one my favorite, amazing!); and *Kuku Sabzi: similar to a 'frittata' with herbs, walnuts and cockles*.



Menu 3

For dessert we had an incredible carrot cake (really, please try it!) and a brownie-like chocolate cake. Also delicious.



Carrot cake



Guinness Chocolate cake

All this feast of food could only be accompanied by a typical ***Iranian drink, infused with cucumber, flowers and other refreshing ingredients.*** How can you describe something that tastes so good? They now have two different drinks based on this one: One is call ***Tejebin:*** The same drink but with tea and ***Cafejebin***: The same but with coffee.



Banibanoo drink

What can I say? If you want to enjoy healthy and traditional food with an exotic taste, this is your place! Fantastic Recommendation – thank you Jose and María for taking me to this wonderful place.

INFO

Address: Calle Martires Concepcionistas 19, Madrid

Price: €12.95, *3-dish menu plus coffee and drink during the week;* **€13.95** *During the weekend, without drinks; Breakfast goes from €2.50 with coffee or tea to €5.50.*

Facebook

Instagram ***(@banibanoomadrid)***

Cafés Guayacán, an artisanal coffee roaster in Chamberí

Nestled in the heart of Chamberí is Madrid's latest gem, an artisanal coffee roaster offering a wide variety of specialty beans roasted in-house.

As a former barista and bona fide coffee addict, I was excited to see **Cafes Guayacán** open up in my *barrio*. My first visit, I was welcomed by owner, roaster and third generation Madrileño, Enrique, who was eager to share his passion for coffee. Guayacán is not a café but a space dedicated to coffee, with tastings, brewing equipment and, of course, coffee beans.


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Toper



Boasting a wide range of single origin coffee in 125 and 250 gram take home packs Guayacán grinds your beans according to

preparation method whether you're using filter, Italiana, French Press or Espresso.



The best thing about **Cafés Guayacán** is tasting their coffees and talking with Enrique about the ensuing aromas. In house, you can try Enrique's delicately prepared coffees, brewed using the filtration method without milk. With coffee in hand you can talk about favourite tastes, methods and styles. Even if your Spanish level is low, like mine, fear not, Enrique is patient and eager to instill his knowledge and to find out your opinion.



[Cafés Guayacán](#) also offers personalised blends, which would make a perfect present for someone serious about coffee. Talk

with Enrique about your dream coffee taste then leave it to the maestro to blend and roast away creating a one of a kind taste named after you or your caffeine crazed sweetheart.


Elegant
Barrel



It’s certainly the best way to get the most out of your home coffee. If you’re looking to get started up at home with a

coffee maker, **Cafes Guayacán** also sells a host of accessories from French Press, Filtration systems and Moka Pots (Italiana).


Sidamo
Cafés Guayaki
Lima
Santa Barbara
Java
Chapadão
Java
Manjolinho
Paraguay
La Esmeralda
coffee



Also check out their delicious artisanal selection of **chocolate** for sale from Jaen, perfect with an afternoon cuppa

Joe. My personal favourite is *chocolate con sal de guerande*.



Take home packs of ground coffee range from 4-7 euros depending on size and variety. To try a cup of Guayacán coffee without purchasing a take home pack costs 2 euros.

By Sean McKenzie

Info:

Facebook & ***Web***
Address: *Calle Fernández de los Ríos, 26*
Metro: *Quevedo, Canal*
Phone: *910 01 36 14*
Hours: *Monday – Friday: 10am – 2pm, 5pm – 8:30pm. Saturday:*

10am – 2pm

Other Madrid cafes we like:

Coziest cafés in Chamberí

Monkee Coffee, an amazing coffee shop next to Canal Isabel II

The Little Big Café, my big little pick me up

Pepe Botella, a coffee shop where you can think

Toma Café, fuel up, feel hip

Cafelito, a trendy spot for coffee lovers in Lavapiés

Wanda Café Optimista

Now that I'm starting school at IE this fall, I need to have a full arsenal of lunch places in my Rolodex. For a few weeks I kept passing by Wanda thinking to myself, *I've got to come here*. So finally, as things start to wind down and I find myself full of optimism, Daphne and I got together to have lunch at **Wanda Café Optimista**.



The décor makes it a perfect place to have some coffee, get lost in conversation (as we did), AND for IE students (especially with those who will have classes in María de Molina, 4) there are big tables for group projects. As I perused **Wanda's website** to get the final research components to wrap up this article and make it ready for publication, the owners of the restaurant did have the oasis idea in mind. With primarily light, nautral woods, along with splashes of neon colors reminiscent of summery ikat prints, the hustle and bustle of the Castellana and the Plaza del Doctor Marañón seemed a world away.



At lunchtime, there are a number of deals. The *plato del día* the day we were there was salmon, basmati rice, and roasted tomatoes. This, along with a coffee and drink, was €9.



What was even more amazing was Daphne’s iced tea, with fresh strawberries and mint.



Now that I have received a temporary reunion with fruit, I am even more determined to go back and have it.

There are some other deals as well, including the salad buffet. For an absolute hardcore salad eater like myself, the setup is great. You have your salad (with you choosing the toppings and having it tossed like the tried and true salad establishments in my hometown of New York City that line every major area with office buildings) and a natural juice. So not only do I need to go back to Wanda to get myself a delicious strawberry iced tea, I also need to have some salad and juice.



If you don’t want to take advantage of any of the deals and want to have a more traditional restaurant experience, then there’s plenty of things to whet your appetite. While I add the ventresca (tuna belly), tomato, and onion salad, there were also plenty of other options. You can have something more traditional, like salmorejo, bacalao, cecina de León, or croquetas, but if you crave something more international, then there’s plenty for you too. You can find a selection of thin-crust pizzas, chicken tikka masala, eggs benedict, AND onion rings.

But if you thought Wanda was just for lunch, it’s also open until 2 AM. If you find yourself having a long night of work and studying, you’ll have yourself a great oasis.

Info

Wanda Café Optimista
Calle María de Molina, 1
Tel.: +34 91 737 53 64
Hours: Monday- Friday 8 AM-2 AM; Saturday and Holidays 10 AM-2

AM
Metro: Gregorio Marañón (Lines 7 and 10)
Web & Facebook