Perrachica, Prioritize A Pow Wow Here Now

Chamberi isn't an area that's necessarily on everyone's radar. Once you battle through the sea of yummy mummies pushing bugaboos you might not have the 'ganas' to locate somewhere for your weekend brunch. But all that's changed with the arrival of the shiny, new (quite frankly beautiful) Perrachica.

Meaning 5 pesetas, Perrachica is pretty hard to miss. Stumbled upon when getting my weekly mani, it's a glamorous (fairly cavernous) bar/cafe/restaurant that doesn't quite look as though it belongs on the humble looking Calle Eloy Gonzalo but I for one am chuffed to bits that there's somewhere so swish within walking distance of my flat.



Photo from Facebook

Heralding from the super successful Larrumba group, (which also boasts Juanita Cruz, Frida and the like) Perrachica feels like you walked into the rather glam home of a friend who makes you feel like you live in a hovel.

However, aside from the envy inducing decor the food is equally great and the prices won't leave your eyes watering – in fact, they may leave you bemused. With a recent choice of French toast costing a grand total of (drumroll please…) €3.50.



Photo from Facebook

The biggest challenge though isn't making your menu selection – it's getting in. Each time I've walked past it's been full to the rafters with madrileños clearly making the pilgrimage from barrios afar. Waiting lists allegedly exist having been told that the chance of a Saturday reso was slim to none until the end of February.

So I advise making like the Harrod's sale and just camping out – or failing that just take your chances early morning and take advantage of the relative calm. Come 7ish a DJ (quite literally) pops out of the wall and dancing shoes may be required.

From dawn to dusk, Perrachica is set to be an undisputed crowd pleaser *and the perfect place to take out of towners who you're keen to impress (whilst spending less). Sorry, couldn't resist a rhyme.

Info

Dirección:C/ Eloy Gonzalo 10, 28010 Madrid.
Telf: (+34) 91 737 77 75
Email: reservas@perrachica.com
Web & Facebook

The Hovse 2015: Christmas Calling, and better than ever

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, everywhere you go! The wind in the air and the need for big coats further emphasize the fact that the holidays are indeed upon us. This means that the days are being counted down to vacations or trips to various destinations with our families.



Last year I discovered **The Hovse**, the pop-up Christmas market from Better Pop-Ups located in a vacant mansion mere minutes from my apartment in Chamberí.

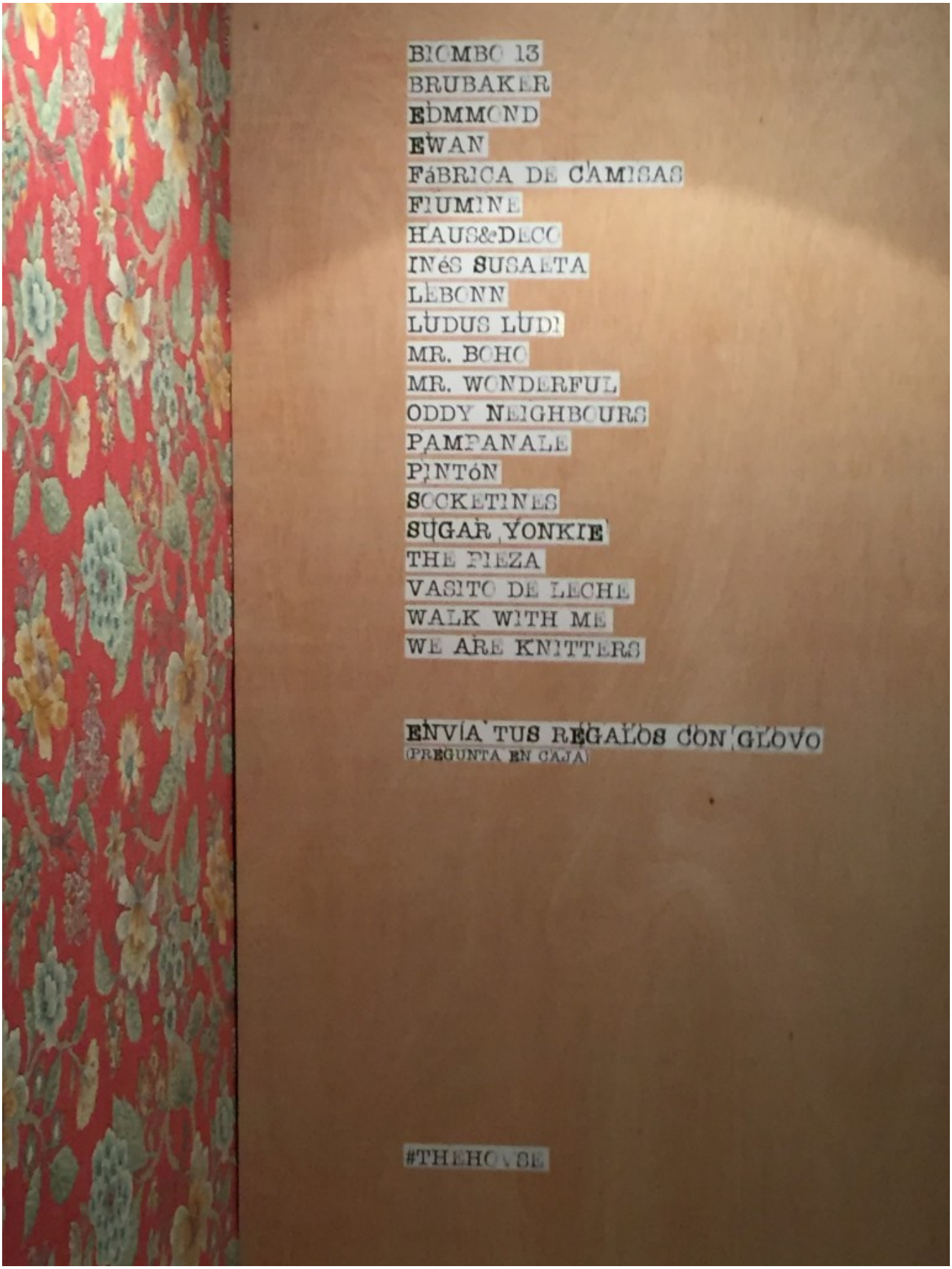


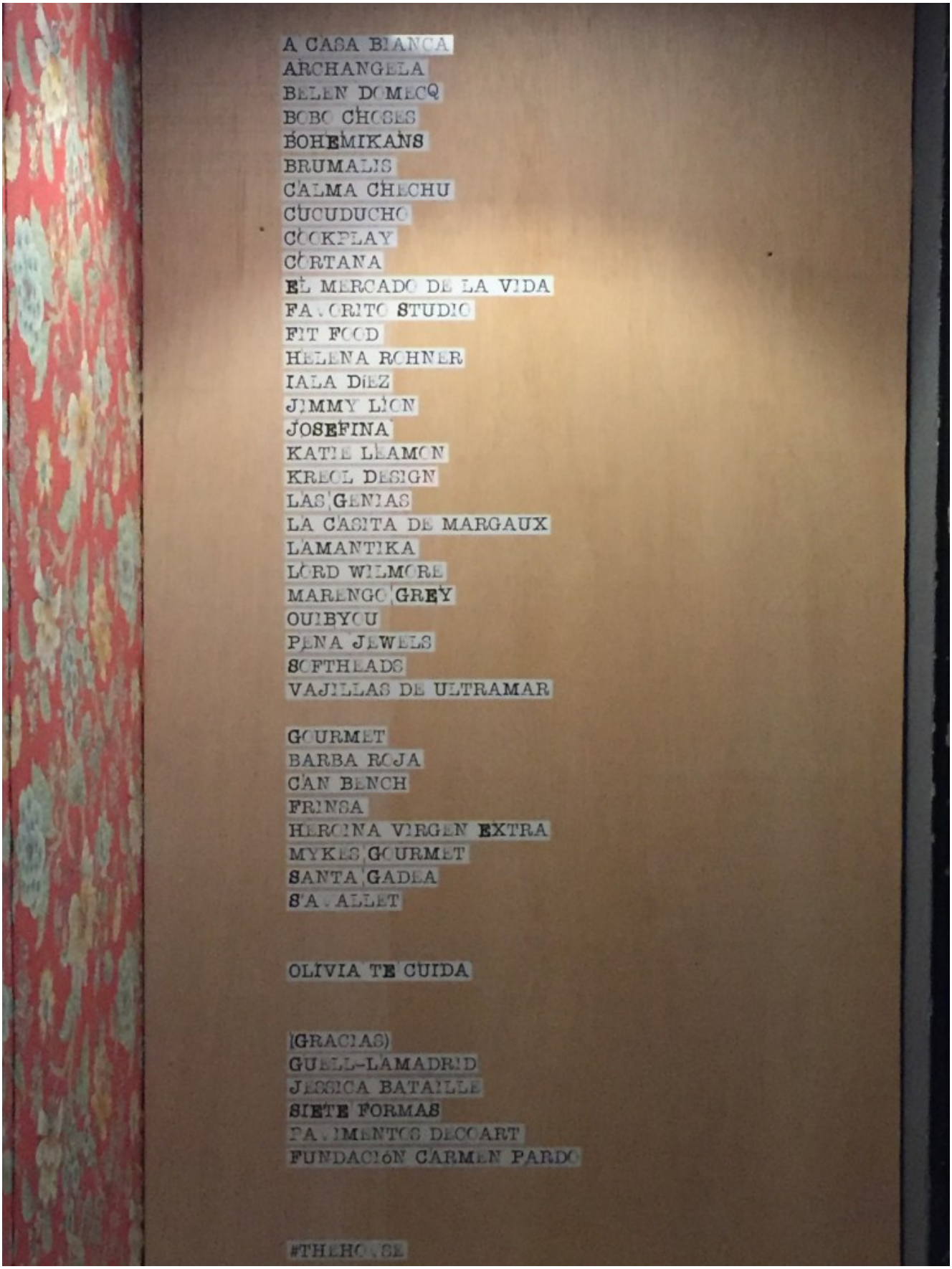
After making weekly pilgrimages to the house throughout most of the holiday season, I managed to touch down in New York with amazing original Chrismukkah presents for the family, my ride-or-dies, and for myself as well (spread out for Hanukkah, Christmas, and one to open for Reyes just so I don't feel left out while jet-lagged on January 6th). I went on my first scouting mission of many to **The Hovse** of the year, and here's my report back:



In what looks just like any typical Chamberí mansion, you walk into this three-story house and are transported into a spacious holiday area with lots of different vendors, greeted by holiday lights and papers reminiscent of snow. Many of last year's vendors are back for another round (including **Helena Rohner**, **Ouibyou**, **Mr. Boho**, and our beloved **Mr. Wonderful**), but there are lots of newbies as well.

Here are the lists of the first-floor and second-floor vendors:


BIOMBO 13
BRUBAKER
EDMMOND
EWAN
FáBRICA DE CAMISAS
FIUMINE
HAUS&DECO
INéS SUSAETA
LEBONN
LUDUS LUDI
MR. BOHO
MR. WONDERFUL
ODDY NEIGHBOURS
PAMPANALE
PINTóN
SOCKETINES
SUGAR YONKIE
THE PIEZA
VASITO DE LECHE
WALK WITH ME
WE ARE KNITTERS
ENVÍA TUS REGALOS CON GLOVO
(PREGUNTA EN CAJA)
#THEHOUSE


A CASA BIANCA
ARCHANGELA
BELEN DOMECQ
BOBO CHOSES
BOHEMIKANS
BRUMALIS
CALMA CHECHU
CUCUDUCHO
COCKPLAY
CORTANA
EL MERCADO DE LA VIDA
FA.CRITO STUDIO
FIT FOOD
HELENA ROHNER
IALA DIEZ
JIMMY LION
JOSEFINA
KATIE LEAMON
KREOL DESIGN
LAS GENIAS
LA CASITA DE MARGAUX
LAMANTIKA
LORD WILMORE
MARENGO GREY
OUIBYOU
PENA JEWELS
SOFTHEADS
VAJILLAS DE ULTRAMAR
GOURMET
BARBA ROJA
CAN BENCH
FRINSA
HEROINA VIRGEN EXTRA
MYKES GOURMET
SANTA GADEA
S'A. ALLET
OLIVIA TE CUIDA
(GRACIAS)
GUELL-LAMADRID
JESSICA BATAILLE
SIETE FORMAS
PA.IMENTOS DECOART
FUNDACIóN CARMEN PARDO
#THEHO.SE

But there’s more…

You’ll also find **Mercado de Motores**‘ mainstays **La Mantika** in case you need to get a blanket for your apartment to deal with the cold, **Katie Leamon** stationery, and lots of leather goods in case you want a perfect **Made in Spain leather bag, pouch, or wallet.** And below is a photo of handmade jewellery by **Helena Rohner**, a Madrid-based jeweller whose store in La Latina I wrote about in a **previous post**.



There are even some really cool aprons (I think I may have just given a spoiler alert about somebody's present, but sorry not sorry)


MARENGO GREY

This year, the biggest innovations come in two forms:

Innovation #1: The Food

As always, **The Hovse** has dining spaces where hip eateries set up shop and you get the benefit of trying eats from these places without having to fight with all of Madrid to grab a table. Two of this year's players are in **Salesas**, aka the area behind Calle de Génova and the Plaza de Santa Bárbara in between Alonso Martínez and Chueca that's becoming Madrid's Soho: **Olivia Te Cuida**, known for it's healthy offerings (as the restaurant's name implies), and **MEAT**, acclaimed and written about all over town for its burgers (**MEAT's space is up on the terrace**).



If juicing or health food is more your style, you'll also find a temporary outpost of **Fit Food** – where you can try a big selection of the juices on offer (and perhaps tempt you to try a Detox treatment in January so you can fit into clothes you

buy during *rebajas*).

Innovation #2: Sybilla Atelier

This year's *Premio Nacional de Moda* winner, **Sybilla**, has taken over the entire top floor of The Hovse with a temporary atelier. You're transported deep inside her world, with samples of all of her different cuts with colors. The clothes look absolutely dreamy, as well as the collaboration with a French accessories label.



And the best part?

The team at the Atelier will take your measurements and you can get something custom-made. Talk about something TRULY made just for you!
So run over to **The Hovse** and get the coolest **Madrid holiday gifts** for everyone on your list –from family, friends, ride-or-dies, and anyone else who you may find special.

Info

- **Web**: The Hovse by Better
- **Address**: Calle General Arrando 40
- **Metro**: Alonso Martínez, Rubén Darío, Iglesia
- **Hours**: open every day from 11 AM to 9 PM until December 24th (Christmas Eve)

For more on holiday shopping in Madrid, check out:

- **Best Gifts from Madrid**
- **Casa Mira, Best Turrón in Madrid**
- **El Riojano, Madrid's best pastry shop**

Casa Picsa, another gem on Calle Ponzano

Calle Ponzano is one of the city's most treasured local hangout spots. Situated in Chamberí, it belongs to a handful

of Madrid streets that are lined with great bars and restaurants, together with **La Cava Baja, Corredera Bajo de San Pablo** and **La Calle Pez**, just to name a few. In addition to the old-school bars *de toda la vida*, it seems as though a new eatery opens up on **Calle Ponzano** every week, and I'm slowly making my way through all of them! So far I've been to **Sala la Despiece**, **Bar Lambuzo** and **Taberna Alipio Ramos**. Plus Naked contributor, Kate, has also just written about restaurant **Toque de Sal**.



Now here comes Naked's fifth discovery along Ponzano: **Casa Picsa**, an Argentine restaurant specializing in pizzas made in a wood-fired oven with local and seasonal ingredients. I went with my friends Vanessa (who writes **Las mesas de Vanessa**, another foodie blog you've got to follow), Juan and James.

In true Ponzano form, **Casa Picsa** has a down-to-earth and

comfortable ambience. I'd say it's on the pricier side, but they serve some of the best pizzas I've had in Madrid, with high quality ingredients and great service, too. The décor is modern and simple, with a spacious bar and a small seating area.



To start, Casa Picsa offers small appetizers to share: *mezzos from around the world with a Porteño touch*, as stated on their menu. They're only meant to whet your appetite, as the real deal is the pizza. As we were a party of four, the waiters recommended we order just a few mezzos and save room for the main attraction. So we went with their homemade ***Paté Picsa*** and ***Porotos en vinagre*** (organic beans in a vinaigrette). Both were delicious.





The pizza menu is separated into two sections: "old school" and "new school." They cost €20-25 each and are meant to be shared between two people; and trust me, they're big enough. Each pie has eight slices, or "servings of happiness," overflowing with succulent ingredients. Plus you can order two kinds per pie; that way you get to try two in one! **You can also order gluten-free pizzas made with a chickpea based dough.*

We followed our waiter's advice and ordered two pies and four different kinds of pizza. We had the **Papada de cerdo ibérico y alcachofas** (Iberian ham and artichokes); **Pato e higos** (duck and fig); **Butifarra negra** (Catalan black sausage) and **Chorizo criollo y grills** (Creole chorizo with turnip greens). My favorite was the ham and artichoke one; the rest of the table said the winner went to the butifarra. They were all delicious, though. And as we walked out of the restaurant and looked at the mouthwatering pies on other patrons' tables, we

knew we’d have to go back to try the rest!





After our main course, we were contentedly stuffed and more than happy to end our night sans sweets. But the waiter managed to convince us to get dessert and we gave in to the **Chocolate cake with dulce de leche ice cream**. How could you possibly resist that? It was insanely good (sorry we forgot to take a photo of it!)

Casa Picsa

- **Website, Facebook & IG: @picsa**
- **Address:** Calle Ponzano, 76
- **Metro:** Rios Rosas
- **Price:** €20-25 per person

Toque de Sal Chamberí Restaurant: So chic and so good

Going out to eat or drink on Calle Ponzano, the street with the highest concentration of bars in Madrid, is such an art that it has its own verb, ***ponzaning***. It's one of the best parts about living in Chamberí, with so many of the city's best new places all in one place. One of the newest to come on the scene is **Toque de Sal**, which I learned about from the **Madrid Confidential** newsletter, naming it one of five new places to try this fall.



It had been on my bucket list all season, but then school got in my way. And finally, my friend and I were able to squeeze

in (on a Friday night without a reservation) to finally get to try it. When you go inside you feel as if you’re in a chic restaurant in Paris, with beautiful tiled floors, dark wood, and a wonderfully lit bar. The front was absolutely full of people, which was to be expected because it’s the weekend and this is Ponzano. The dining area in the back is small and intimate, but you have tables to sit for two and larger tables that are more elevated (perfect for a fun dinner with your *cuadrilla* of friends).



Your place setting is equally elegant, with a menu in a gold leather cover:



…and personalized plates. The golden touches, from the silverware, the placemats, and the menu covers were analogous

to the gold standard service we received. Our waitress was incredibly warm and attentive, and it was fitting with how precious and inviting the space is inside.

And now, the food. Was absolutely to die for. My friend chose the **grilled sea bass** that came with vegetables:



…and I first had the ***crema del día*** **(which was mushroom when we went)**, and then, I had something I hadn't had in a very long time: ***rabo de toro*****, or oxtail**.



It was absolutely perfect: the meat fell right off the bone, and the sauce gave me the same warm feeling that I get when my father gets inspired to make *boeuf bourguignon* in his trusty crockpot. It was ideal for a cool fall night, and I'll definitely be back to have this again and again and again.



If that gem of an Instagram close-up didn’t convince you enough, it’s evident in this shot that I was ready to dig in, and believe me, I enjoyed every single minute of it.

A girl’s night wouldn’t be complete without dessert, and since I really shouldn’t be eating sugar and I wanted to give myself a *capricho*, I decided to try the ***tarta de manzana***. There was more apple than crust, which for me was exactly what I wanted, and I couldn’t get enough. For someone who doesn’t like heavy

desserts I found something that would be worth doing an hour’s worth of cardio the next day for.



As for my friend, she got the **chocolate coulant**, which is her personal favorite desert of all time.



If the picture doesn't convince you, take her word for it: it had a *muy buena pinta* and it was absolutely wonderful.

Toque de Sal definitely lived up to the hype, bringing a touch of chic to Ponzano, and I've found my new favorite neighborhood joint that I will inevitably now bring all of my friends to. It's also a perfect way to enjoy *ponzaning* while having a great sit-down dining experience, whether with friends, a birthday, or maybe a dinner date.

Info

Toque de Sal Chamberí
Facebook

Address: Calle de Ponzano, 46
Tel.: 914 26 64 65
Metro: Alonso Cano (Line 7)

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



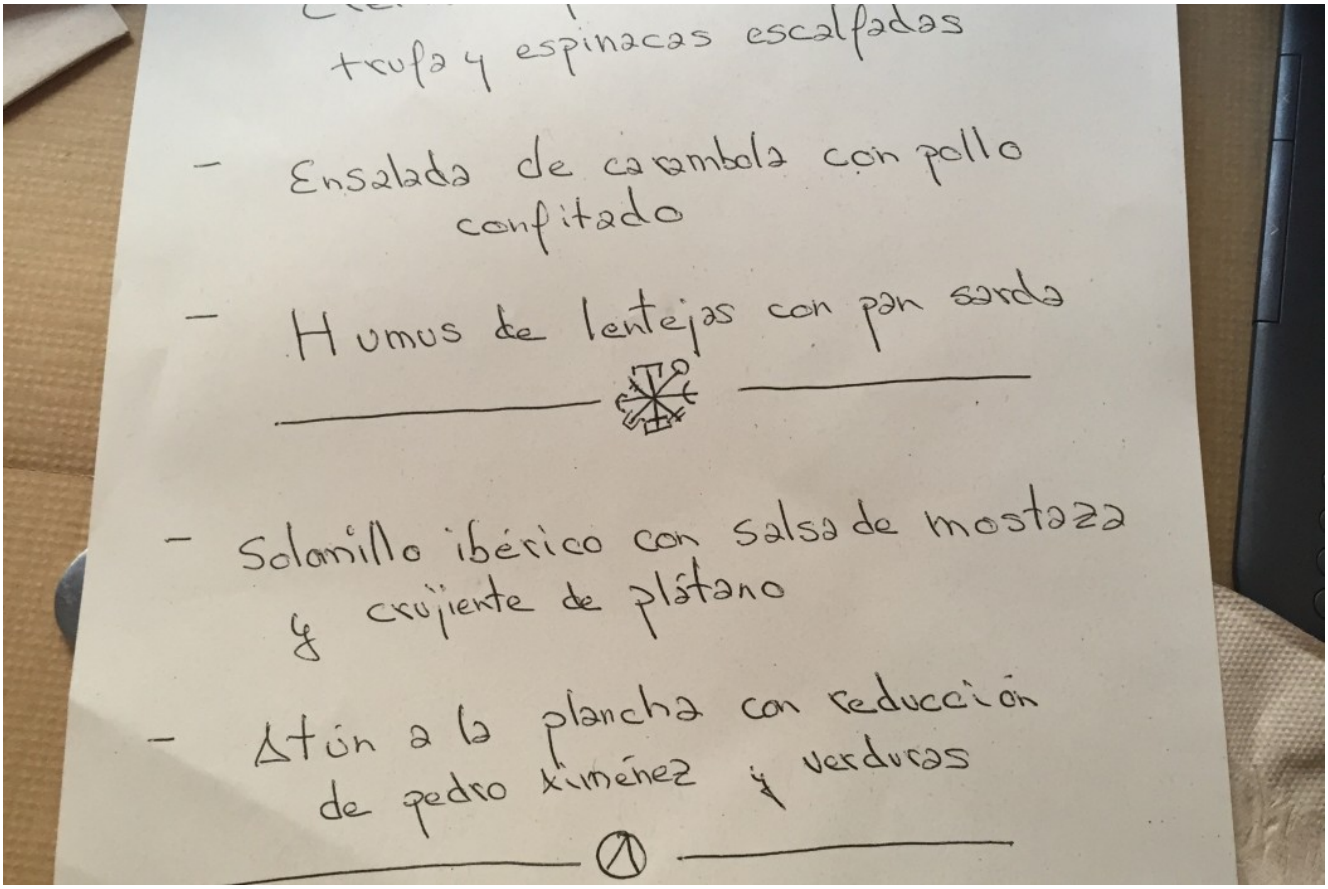
Gabriel



Gabriel crema



Gabriel Menú





Maricastaña



Gabriel dessert



Gabriel dessert



Maricastaña

Espadrilles: 3 places in Madrid to get your hands on one of Spanish footwear's greatest items

Summertime is here, and while many of us have already done a little bit of vacationing, there's a little **Made in Spain** thing that is made for a truly authentic *veraniego*: **the espadrille (*alpargatas*)**. Before I spent a lot of time in Spain, my summer footwear was just about limited to flip-flops and other summer sandals (and let's face it, they really hurt your feet, and in my case, your tolerance for them stands at

zero when your heel cracks for the first time). But then when I walked around major Spanish beach towns, it wasn't flip-flops that were the main shoe of choice: they were espadrilles.

Now wait, you're probably thinking: All Spaniards wear the wedge ones everywhere? Nope (except for the woman at my gym who wears them on the exercise bike and to lift weights); there's actually a lot more variety of them than the ones you normally see in New York, Miami, LA, London, or Palm Beach. You can find them in just about every shoe store around (and even in Zara!), but as a true proponent of finding things that are **really authentic and handmade**, **here are three places where you can get your hands on them in Madrid, some more traditional and others more modern**.


10,95
10,95
10,95
10,95
37,00
37,00
27,75

1. If you're looking for something traditional… Casa Hernanz

A few years ago, when I was an *alpargata novice*, I checked, like any good New Yorker does, *The New York Times.* I had seen an article about Casa Hernanz, just off Plaza Mayor. And this is without a doubt the most emblematic place to get espadrilles in Madrid, While we often tend to get concerned about a place's proximity to Plaza Mayor because of the fear of it being a tourist trap, coming here, like going to the rooftop bar at The Hat or eating your way through the Mercado de San Miguel, is absolutely worth it (while an expensive relaxing cup of *café con leche* is not).



Founded in 1840, and in the fourth generation, you'll find the wide selection of threads and fabrics the family produces. And

of course, the star product- the espadrilles themselves. It’s no wonder you’ll find a line out the door onto the street



…on a Friday at 10 AM

Be sure to try everything on! You want them to be snug at first because they stretch out over time!



Casa Hernanz
Calle de Toledo, 18

28005 MADRID
Tel.: +34 913 66 54 50
Hours: Mondays and Fridays 9:30 to 1:30 PM/4:30-8; Saturday 10-2 Closed Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays
Metro: Tirso de Molina (Line 1), La Latina (Line 5)
Website

2. If you're looking for a "capricho" (to treat yourself)… Mintandrose



Modeling my Skorpios along the Alameda de Apodaca in Cádiz

Mintandrose is a fairly new player in the espadrille market, but their 100% handmade models are making a splash not only in the fancier parts of Spain, but also abroad, including in American retailers such as Nordstrom and Anthropologie. With single-soled and double-soled models in a variety of hues (such as all black, white with a black tip, or marine blue with a white tip), this is your go-to for a splurge.

The main way to buy them is online, but in my experience the best thing to do is to try them on. You want them to be SUPER TIGHT because since they're all made by hand, they'll gradually grow looser (my first pair is now a little too big for my feet). They also make canvas models and the line has expanded to include sandals and bags.

Should you want to try them on, the website offers a list of stockists. I went and got one of my pairs at Etbang in Chueca (which I will have to go and write about at a later date).



Some of the selection of Mintandrose at Etbang

Mintandrose
Online Shop
stockists
If you want to try them on go to…
Etbang
Calle Pelayo, 66
28004 MADRID
Tel.: +34 626 56 04 82
Hours: Monday-Saturday 11:30-2:30 PM, 5 PM-8:30 PM
Metro: Alonso Martínez (Lines 4, 5, and 10), Chueca (Lines 5)

http://etbang.com/

3. If you’re looking to go where the locals go (and for other shoes all year-round, too)… La Alpargatería



They say that Chamberí is one of the city’s most *castizo*, or authentic, neighborhoods, in this ‘hood (which is my favorite

to live in) there’s a hidden gem of a store at La Alpargatería. If you associate García de Paredes with the Extranjería office where your drop off your prórroga paperwork, than just know that this street is so much better than that. A lot of my haunts happen to be on this very street, and when it’s time for my pairs of espadrilles in the summer, this is my spot. I bought my family matching ones for our family vacation last year in Greece; let’s just say that I got them converted (or at least that’s what I’d like to believe).



The most basic model, which comes in a whole plethora of colors, is €7.50. That’s what I call a great quality/price

example. My favorite color is *crudo* (which is a type of off-white) because it’s the perfect neutral tone that goes with most of my wardrobe, and it deals better with urban wonders that would get a white pair very dirty in no time. I’ve also gotten my black wedges there, perfect for those who like the idea of tying the rope up your ankles, but would rather buckle in at the top.



They even have new models, which you can see in the picture above, that have a rubber sole as opposed to the traditional

one. This is perfect for city-dwellers who love their espadrilles, but want a little bit more safety in their step.

La Alpargatería isn't just a place for summertimes espadrilles; they also have Victoria sneakers, ballet flats (aka *manoletinas*) in a wide plethora of colors and fabrics (suede AND leather), and if you need some *zapatillas de casa* (because going barefoot in your *piso compartido* really isn't going to fly), they've got you covered.

> ***La Alpagatería***
> ***Web***
> *Calle de García de Paredes, 74*
> *28010 MADRID*
> *Tel.: +34 913 08 32 11*
> *Hours: Monday-Friday 10 AM-2 PM/5 PM-8 PM; Saturdays 10 AM-2 PM*
> *Metro: Gregorio Marañón (Lines 7 and 10)*

Check out our new Made in Spain category for more on local designers and producers. And feel free to make some recommendations!

You may also like our previous post on: Best Gifts from Madrid

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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.


CAFÉ
NACIEN
Santa Bárbara
3
32
GRT
CERT N°0


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

Gluten free pastelerías in Madrid: Part 1- Confitería Marqués

Sugar dusted pastries, chocolate dipped palmeras and fruit filled tarts: gluten free friends, the search is over. If you're a foodie who just happens to be of the gluten free inclination, finding delicious confectionary in the city can be a little, shall we say, challenging.

We all know that there are the international coffee shops that serve the same chocolate brownie and the supermarket aisles that sell the same two or three packaged cookies, but where do

you go when your **traveller, foodie heart** wants to spring out into the city and explore its **homemade artisan treats**?

This series is dedicated to **Madrid's best hidden corners for delicious homemade cakes and cookies, gluten free style**. You can even take your non-gluten free friends, and I promise you that they will not be able to tell the difference; they may even find their new favourite spot!

Confitería Marqués

Tucked away on Fernando el Católico, Confitería Marqués is the little Madrid bakery where it feels like everything has been made especially for you. With its tea party bunting and dainty glass cake stands, it has an element of the Alice and Wonderland to it, with everything in miniature.

There are **fruit tarts, mini croissants, individual loaf cakes, savoury empanadas, palmeritas, apple slices, jam tarts, and more**.

The sheer selection that they offer is fantastic for any gluten free Madrid foodie, as well as any foreigner in Madrid that wants to try some local pasteles with a reminder of home. Everything is made in the pasteleria and tastes as homemade as it sounds.





As well as all of the above, another reason why Confitería

Marqués is so unique is that it also makes savoury food such as **empanadas**, filled with cheese, vegetables, fish and meat. These crispy, buttery little pastry puffs make for a delectable little lunch.



Then there are the pastries, tarts, palmeritas, fruit slices and loaf cakes. Each are exactly as they should be, and some are even better.

The **apple loaf cakes** have a base of sweet apple pieces and raisins, are soft on the inside and scented with vanilla. The **palmeritas** are crispy and flaky and come traditionally plain, or coated in dark chocolate. Plus, the **chocolate orange tart** is rich and decadent, filled with dark chocolate cream, and hints of citrusy orange.



The owner of the shop is extremely friendly and can help you pick out something from the counter, or choose something from the incredible handmade confectionary that they have to the left of the counter and throughout the rest of the shop, including **small boxes of cookies** and **beautifully presented chocolates**. These would be perfect as a thoughtful little gift or -why not- a special treat for yourself.

You can even buy **a homemade birthday cake, chilled desserts or a traditional Christmas Roscón de Reyes** from the tall stand to the right of the counter; any would make a great surprise for a gluten free friend on a special occasion or a delicious traditional dessert to share after a meal at home with friends.

Another little tip is that they can make **gluten free bread** in house to order; just ask the lady at the counter when you would like it for.

Info

Web: www.confiteriamarques.com
Address: Calle Fernando Católico, 76
Metro: Argüelles

Extra notes

Don't forget to ask about the delicious foods available for **lactose and nut allergies**. You can go with all of your friends!

You'll also like:

- **Cosy Wine Bars in La Latina – with gluten-free options!**
- **Rayen Vegano – a vegan "gem" of a restaurant in Huertas**

Monkee Koffee: Amazing coffee next to Canal Isabel II

Like any good native New Yorker, and like every *madrileño* for that matter, there's nothing like a great cup of coffee, and preferably it's not costing you an arm and a leg like that *relaxing cup of café con leche in Plaza Mayor*. I yet again found out about **Monkee Koffee** through **Cup of Couple**'s

Instagram account, and was ecstatic to have it be within a 20-minute walk of my apartment.



On a Saturday afternoon I headed to **Monkee** to meet a friend, looking forward to having my mind blown by coffee. The first thing that strikes you when you pull up is the sliding door (which is an absolute rarity, except for maybe Panaria).



When you walk up to the counter, you'll find a menu not only with different kinds of coffee, but also smoothies, AND food. Not only can you get standard baked goods (like cookies, cakes, and some tostadas), BUT there are a number of sandwiches or salads to really be able to get your munch on.

It's a great spot for cold-brewed iced coffee, which in Madrid can be a little bit of a challenge to find. The one caveat for me was that there was no skim milk, but I'd be willing to indulge in soy milk in my cold-brew. For those of you who were big Blue Bottle Coffee fans in San Francisco and New York, this is the closest you'll get to it in Chamberí.



There are a variety of seating arrangements, including a smaller table with big, comfy chairs, where my friend and I got lost in conversation. If you want to get work done, you can sit at the long, communal table in the middle à Le Pain Quotidien, or on another long table just along the brick wall where you can see the Monkee logo and a bright letter o. For groups of friends, there are also some other tables where you can pull up chairs and seat groups of three, four, or five comfortably. I can definitely see myself coming here to write, study, or get lost in a good book.



Monkee Koffee also has a choice location this time of year. It's located just around the corner from Parque de Santander and the Instalaciones Deportivas del Canal Isabel II, which is my swimming pool of choice on hot summer afternoons.

I'm glad to have found a place to get my cold-brewed iced coffee and food to-go before I relax by the pool, or stay in and get some fuel and some work done.

Info

Web
Twitter
Facebook
Address: *Calle Vallehermoso, 112*
Tel.: *+34 915 45 66 09*
Metro: *Canal (Lines 2 and 7)*

Here’s a list of more of our favorite cafés in Madrid:

- **Little Big Café: my big little pick-me-up**
- **4 Coziest Cafés in Chamberí**
- **Cafelito: for coffee lovers in Lavapiés**
- **Toma Café: Fuel up, Feel hip**
- **Pepe Botella: a coffee place where you can think**
- **La Paca: the perfect café in Malasaña**

Maria’s: Sensational Sweets on Calle Zurbano

I heard from a few friends that a recent New York Times article had rated **Calle Zurbano** one of the writers’ “favorite streets in Europe.” I remembered Zurbano; I had stayed in a hotel on the north side as my introduction to both Madrid and my teaching program. While the people I met and the things I learned on Zurbano were of the highest quality, the street itself did not surprise or amaze me eight months ago. Nevertheless, my friend and I committed to revisiting Zurbano and seeing if anything inspired us. We stumbled upon inspiration. Hidden in the article’s recommendations sits a tiny bakery hiding between ritzy hotels, bustling banks, and mainstream restaurants: **María’s Bakery**.


Maria´s Bakery
The New York Times
MARIA'S BAKERY
Favorite Streets in 12 European Cities
Desayunos

María's looks like it crashed onto **Calle Zurbano** straight out of your Pinterest news feed. The place oozes chic hipness—grey wood panels lead to off-white walls, chalkboard paint menus, reclaimed benches with homemade cusions, and wooden card tables covered in doilies and faux-70s tablecloths. Like your Staten Island grandmother got a hold of a Paula Dean magazine.



The bakery's eponymous María is apparently famous around these parts. **Locals pop into her ten square meters of space just to say hi**, read her newspapers, drink her coffee, and grab a baguette or a pastry to-go. Even the other staff know visitors by name, asking about babies or job lay-offs or who won the Real-Juventus match.

And, of course, there's the food. María and company arise before the sun to proof, knead, and bake the day's glutinous goods. *Pistolas, artisanas,* croissants, cookies – all things line María's stuffed shelves. **The cake selection includes dozens of decadent decisions**: "Muerte por chocolate," "mousse

de Bailley's," "tarta de queso con salsa de mora," even the oft-elusive "red velvet."



Maria's Bakery in Zurbano

As you get a high from the smell of bubbling yeast and caramelizing sugars, take a look at **María's eclectic selection of international sweets**, like *bonbones, alfajores,* tarts, *pasteles de Belén*, *dulces de leche*, macarons, and much more.

However, a proper critic has to judge any bakery by the Spanish classic: *pan con aceite,* with a coffee. Luckily, María's does not disappoint, masterfully toasting its 8-cereal brown bread, complimenting its nutty savoriness with peppery Andalusia olive oil and ground rock salt. Washed dow with frothy milk and brewed beans, it makes for a **great breakfast deal around €2**.



Stick around long enough and you'll get to try some of María'snewest experiments. While we crunched and munched our *pan*, we also were brought small plates of other samples, new treats that the bakery's working on right now. This season, María's is toying with **nut and oat hard crackers**, thin biscotti to market as "light" for snacking clients. To go with the recent holiday, we also tried María's ***rosquillas de San Isidro***, the *listas* covered in orange and lemon glaze, the *tontas* smacking of anis and cloves.


Tiramisu
Oreo
Naranja
Fresa
Limon
Red Velvet
Pastas
Bizcochos
Bollería Argentina
Bollería Francesa Artesanal
Cafes Helados
Zumos Naturales
Sandwiches
Comidas
Montaje de Bodegones
Catering
Mini Bocaditos salados con
Croquetas, Tartaletas, mini Quiches
Rollitos chinos, Hojaldres rellenos, etc...
Debido a la frescura de los productos, se reserva Enzmas Parvio !!!

As we got *napolitanas* and *medias lunas* filled with *dulce de leche* to go, Erika told us from behind the cash register that we weren't the fist Americans to visit; the **New York Time's** "favorite streets in Europe" gave the bakery a steady drop of international attention. Since then, Anglos amble around Zurbano, waltzing into María's and placing their orders with a combination of gestures, grunts, and broken English. While we laughed, I taught the staff how to say "home made," hoping it would help guide our more linguistically ignorant compatriots. If you're walking down Zurbano and trying to see what all the fuss is about, give María's a try. It's small, it's strange, it's out of place – and it's adorable.

Info

Web
Facebook
Address: *Calle Zurbano, 15*
Metro*: Alonso Martínez*
Phone*: 91 702 63 02*

Also check out:

Mama Campo – a restaurant/market of organic delights in Plaza Olavide

Harina – for something sweet or savoury

Pan Comido – a French bakery where our bread will most certainly be eaten all up

4 Coziest Cafes in Chamberí