

Nina Pasta Bar: Don't walk right past'a

Like most people living their best PL life (post lockdown, incase you were wondering), I am making it my mission to eat out with gusto, and plough some money back into the hospitality industry—albeit rather selfishly as I wind up well fed, so it's not entirely altruistic.

However, there's one place in the city that I keep going back to. Not only in order to support a small business, but because their food is beyond delicious and the service feels akin to being greeted by old friends. Nina Pasta Bar is the restaurant equivalent of my new favourite toy, and long may it continue.

Nina's is tucked away, just off of Calle Ruda, making it easy to miss and the definition of a hidden gem. The menu isn't overly long; instead they focus on a few specialities, such as spaghetti carbonara which they absolutely nail, every.single.time.



Spaghetti carbonara (image by @pria.rao)

I'm currently in the midst of a love affair with their gnocchi bravos, an Italian take on the Spanish classic. They're little panfried pockets of deliciousness, served with a spicy bravas sauce and a creamy alioli. Challenge yourself to share the dish: I inhale an entire serving these days and don't break a sweat.



Pizzeta (image by @pria.rao)

There's no shortage of places to dine out at in Madrid, but there is a shortage of places (in my opinion) where you literally don't want the meal to end. From the cosy yet understated decor, to the reasonably priced vino tinto and the delectable specials, each morsel tastes as heavenly as the next—you can taste that it's been cooked with love.



Most recently, I had the pumpkin gnocchi with pancetta and I genuinely had to pace myself, such was the urge to faceplate into this hug in a bowl of meal.



Pumpkin gnocchi with pancetta

In light of the weird times that we're currently living through, Nina's feels homely and a safe cocoon (when, frankly, the outside world is leaning heavily towards doom and gloom).



Tiramisu

The service is always warm and welcoming, the tiramisu always decadently rich and the glasses of wine always err on the side of what I affectionately refer to as a 'generous pour'.

Torn between shouting about Nina Pasta Bar from the rooftops and wanting to keep it quiet so that I can still get a 'reso', here I am recommending it wholeheartedly as words cannot 'espresso' how much I love this spot. Sorry, couldn't resist topping and tailing with a pasta pun.

By Cat Powell [@littlemissmadrid](#)

Nina Pasta Bar

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- [Camoatí: an incredibly romantic Argentinian bistro in La Latina](#)
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Against all odds: How 4 new small businesses in Madrid are staying afloat

Small businesses in Madrid are more at risk than ever of having to shut their doors. And perhaps the most unlucky of all are the ones that opened up just a short time before the lockdown—some only a week before.

Despite having the odds against them, these four newly-opened businesses are putting on a brave face and determined to keep their shops open and their dreams alive. Here are their stories on how they've managed to stay afloat throughout the lockdown and how they're continuing to fight the good fight. They also offer sage advice for other businesses on how to survive a global pandemic.

1. Naji Specialty Coffee



After working in the hospitality industry for 20 years—mainly in cafes as a barista—Naji Alasil dreamed of one day owning his own coffee shop. After spending months searching for the perfect place and doing extensive renovations, his dream came true when he opened Naji Specialty Coffee in the charming central neighborhood of Chamberí in January 2020.

Naji quickly grew popular with people flocking to the

beautifully adorned shop to sip on delicious coffee and unique concoctions, such as lime espresso and Naji's famous pistachio latte.

Naji was only open for 40 days when Madrid went into lockdown. Obviously, this was a devastating blow after all of the time, money, and effort Naji spent to open up his dream cafe. However, he didn't lose hope.

"Of course I was sad that we went into lockdown straight away after I had opened. Nevertheless I was very happy that I managed to open the cafe prior to the lockdown—at least I saw my dream realised. And I knew once the lockdown [was] lifted, my customers would come back. I just kept a very positive outlook altogether."

As soon as businesses could start operating again, Naji jumped into full swing, serving takeaway coffee from 9am-9pm most days. He was one of the first coffee shops to reopen on a full-time schedule because he wanted to make up for time lost during the lockdown. Slowly but surely he's rebuilding the momentum he had before the lockdown began.

Undoubtedly, his positive attitude and hustle were his biggest tools for getting through the lockdown and helping see Naji Specialty Coffee through to the new world.

His advice for small businesses?

Prioritize your customers and their safety, be patient, take each day as it comes, and never give up no matter the obstacle

at hand (even a global pandemic!)

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2. Tidbit



Canadian business partners Shawn and Arthur had successfully been running a North American-style coffee and dessert shop in Alicante for five years when they decided to pack up and head for the big city. They moved to Madrid, rebranded their

business from Canada Cupcake Café to Tidbit, and opened shop in Fall 2019.

They began acquiring a loyal customer base who would come to enjoy their array of delicious treats—largely vegan—including cookies, cakes, ice cream, brownies, and cinnamon rolls as well as specialty coffee and teas. Their reputation for being one of Madrid's best suppliers of treats (vegan and regular) was swiftly growing, and then COVID-19 brought momentum to a halt.

Arthur and Shawn were greatly concerned about their business and the economy in general, but tried to focus on moving forward instead of on fear. They shifted their focus to the takeaway part of the business and polished their online ordering system to accommodate the lack of walk-ins due to the lockdown. They also offered their products through popular takeaway services such as UberEats and Deliveroo, and in the later quarantine phases began to start up takeaway service.

Now that Madrid is no longer under lockdown, businesses are slowly coming back to life and Tidbit has once again opened its doors for customers to pop in for a treat in their tiny but cozy interior or call ahead for pick-up or an eco-friendly bike delivery.

Shawn and Arthur hope the love and support for small businesses only gets stronger, especially now when these shops that make our cities so special need it more than ever.

Their advice to other businesses during these trying times?

“Plan ahead, be aware of the time needed to recover, focus on the offer and demand in your area. This is the ‘chair swap’ game, when all businesses close, relocate or rebrand.”

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3. EatMyTrip



After finding success opening her first restaurant in Barcelona two years ago, Evgeniya Sukhacheva decided to branch out and open the second location of her trendy brunch spot, EatMyTrip, in Madrid. Evgeniya announced the opening of the

second location in the beginning of March 2020—days before coronavirus sent Madrid and Barcelona into an indefinite lockdown.

Like many people, Evgeniya initially thought that the media was blowing the situation out of proportion and that normal life would soon resume. However, when it became apparent that the situation was serious and that the city would be locked down for a while, Evgeniya and her husband started to think of creative ways they could keep their business afloat.

The first idea they came up with was to start an online shop with delivery options for their Barcelona location which already had a following. Then they shifted to takeaway options before being allowed to reopen with limited capacity, a smaller menu, and a two-person staff (just them). Now, EatMyTrip's employees who were under *ERTE* (furlough) are slowly being incorporated back into the Barcelona business while Evgeniya is trying to figure out how they'll be able to open Madrid location and get it off the ground, (while also focusing on paying the rent, bills, and the loans for both locations).

Although the Madrid location remains closed indefinitely, Evgeniya hopes to be able to open it one day soon. In the meantime, the Barcelona location (C. del Consell de Cent, 378) is back to 70% capacity with more customers returning everyday.

Despite all of the adversities, Evgeniya remains positive and offers wisdom for other businesses in similar situations:

“Nothing lasts forever. We can plan something, but life can change everything. It’s [best to] take everything as it is, and try to smile at it, otherwise you will go mad. If you already created a successful business you’ll be able to do it again in the future. Just don’t lose yourself, and don’t forget about your health—it’s the most important thing.”

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4. Mazál



Tamara Cohen—originally from Philadelphia, USA—moved to Madrid in 2015 to teach English. She soon settled into a side gig

baking hard-to-find American treats such as pumpkin pies and bagels and selling them to fellow expatriates before opening up an online shop to the public. Her small shop, Bruja's Bakery, quickly became the go-to place for American treats—especially bagels, which are hard to find abroad (and of good quality).

After making the spontaneous leap from English teacher to expert at-home bagel maker, she finally turned her side hustle into a full-time business with the opening of Mazál Bagels & Café in the central neighborhood of Chamberí in January 2020.

The opening of Mazál was highly anticipated and instantly a hit. The cozy brick-interior eatery would fill up fast with people eager to dive into a bagel brunch complete with mimosas and coffee, as well as delicious challah, cookies, and cakes. However, when lockdown fell over Madrid in early March, Mazál was forced to shut its doors and think of a plan B.

Like many people, Tamara initially didn't think the situation was that serious or would last long. But as the situation quickly became grave, she became worried about her ability to pay the bills and stay above water.

Mazál was closed for a few days before they jumped into action and hired a delivery driver and started taking orders over social media, which became their saving grace. Their delivery driver, Juan Pablo, was with them for over three months, and proved integral to Mazál's survival in lockdown, covering over 3300 km doing deliveries during the three months.

Tamara says that before all of this, Mazál was primarily

focused on growing as fast as possible, which meant doing as much as they could at once. However, priorities have since shifted—Mazál has now drastically simplified what they do which has helped them to stay organized and reach more people.

Although these circumstances have been anything but ideal for a new business, Tamara has remained positive, upbeat, and grateful:

“This is a strange time for everyone. At times, it’s hard not to think that things might be ‘weird’ like this for a very, very long time. But if we have learned anything, it’s to remember that things are weird for *everyone* and to take it one day at a time. You’re doing great, we are all doing great, and we will get through it together. And thank you to [everyone] from the bottom of our hearts for [the support].”

A positive attitude, gratitude, and resilience are undoubtedly a recipe for success.

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By Mary Kresge ([LinkedIn](#) & IG: [@marelixb](#))

You may also like:

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El Camoatí – an incredibly romantic Argentinian bistro bar in La Latina

As soon as I walked into Camoatí for the first time a few years ago, it was love at first sight. My friend was holding her birthday party there and I couldn't believe I'd never heard about it before. This charming Argentinean bistro is located on a side street off of La Latina's most popular plaza, Plaza de la Paja. The facade is unassuming so you're likely to walk right past it. But don't!



As you step in, you'll find the cozy bar area, and instantly feel the warm vibe that I'll try to express in this article. But you'll really have to experience it for yourself.



Both the decor and ambience at Camoatí are truly special. You'll find funky furniture, quirky trinkets and mismatched table settings all around. It's fun to just let your eyes wander and imagine where all the items came from – whoever decorated this place definitely had a unique sense of style.



The main dining area has two separate levels, plus a few tables squeezed into cute little nooks for extra romantic dining. At the tables you'll also find paper and crayons for colorful drawing, like in the good-old days of going to restaurants as kids (they've also got board games).



Dining at Camoatí is always a treat and the food is simply outstanding – the [menu](#) features a wonderful selection of

dishes inspired by Argentinian, French and Italian cuisine. You'll find hearty meat dishes, fresh fish, homemade pasta, tasty desserts, cocktails, wine, coffee, and more. Not to mention the service is very much up to par.

Also note that Camoatí is a great place to go even if you're just in the mood for a drink or a coffee with friends.



So without further ado, here's what we ordered the last time we went to Camoatí:

We started out with a glass of Malbec and an Albariño, both recommended by the server.



As an appetizer we ordered the tuna tartar, served with avocado and dressed with soy sauce, ginger and sesame oil. It was incredibly fresh and delicious. I order this almost every time I go.



And for the mains, James got the traditional *milanesa napolitana* – a generous-sized filet of veal that's breaded and covered in tomato sauce and melted mozzarella cheese. It's served with a heaping portion of homemade fries and salad. The photo says it all.



And I went with a lighter option: the salmon that's grilled in teriyaki sauce and served over sautéed vegetables. So good.



To top it all off we went with one of the homemade desserts, recommended by the server: *volcán de dulce de leche con helado*. Amazing.



On other occasions I've also tried their homemade empanadas, the (wonderful) plate of grilled vegetables topped with goat cheese, and other meat dishes that are to die for. But I'm still working my way through the menu.

So whether you're looking for a romantic date night, an afternoon with friends, or simply a delicious meal in a charming setting, I promise you that Camoatí will not disappoint. You'll want to come here again and again.

Camoatí

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Try the banh mi sandwiches from a hole-in-the-wall Vietnamese shop in Madrid

When people ask me what it is that I miss the most about living in Paris, my surprising answer is always this: its Vietnamese food. The banh mi sandwich was the base of my diet when I was a broke student and NGO intern, due to its budget-friendly and savory nature.

Banh mi sandwiches are a product of French colonialism introducing the Vietnamese people to the baguette, who then proceeded to stuff it with **julienned daikon radish and carrots, cucumber, pate, cilantro, mayonnaise, sriracha, and, of course, chicken or pork belly** with the latter option being the most traditional version.



Hand model: James Stiles

These gems are served at hole-in-the-wall establishments that I noticed would **often go unnamed and without any branding**. For the longest time, the monopoly over my beloved sandwich in Madrid was controlled by a sleek and modern hipster eatery in Malasaña called the Big Banh, which has since closed its doors. The Big Banh prioritized the presentation of its product to justify it being costly. After they shut down operations, there was a baguette-shaped void in my heart until one day when walking to La Latina from Lavapies I walked by what looked like a normal Asian-owned *alimentación* and *panadería* that caught my attention for a sticker on its windows that said: **"Traditional Banh Mi Here."**



Juan assembling banh mi for hungry consumers

I investigated the next day with high hopes and was not disappointed. The owner and sandwich artist is a long-term resident of Madrid who has adopted the name Juan during his 40 years of living here. Juan hails from **Hoi-Ann, Vietnam** and opened this shop in July 2019 and is excited to introduce Madrid to Vietnam's flavorful *bocadillo*.

He offers the chicken and pork belly varieties of the **sandwich for €3**. I sampled the pork belly sandwich and a **€1 shrimp spring roll** and was full and incredibly content with this discovery and decided to share it with my community in order to empower this new business. **It is important to note that this shop is cash-only.**



Noteworthy for its absence of branding, this unassuming bakery situated at **Calle San Milan 6**, near La Latina metro station, should not be overlooked! I want to see this business thrive and stay open, and I can see it appealing to Madrid's community of English teachers who search for cheap and filling eats in the summer.

Banh Mi sandwiches with no name

- **Location:** Calle San Milan 6
 - **Metro:** La Latina
 - **Cash only**
-

La Osita, great craft beer (and big plans) in La Latina

La Osita is a newly opened bar in the heart of La Latina, created by two beer lovers from the UK, David and Patrick, who are also the founders of the Madrid-based [Oso Brew Co](#). Come pay them a visit, enjoy some refreshing beers and stay tuned, as they've got some very cool beer-related plans in the works!

How it all started



The story of La Osita started over ten years ago when David and Patrick met during Erasmus in Madrid (at an Irish pub), and they've been dreaming of coming back ever since. With David's experience in the food and beverage industry, and Patrick's experience working at one of London's leading craft breweries, [Anspach & Hobday](#), they make the perfect duo.

When they returned to Madrid a year ago, they founded Oso Brew Co. and started selling their beers at popups in [Mercado de Vallehermoso](#), a great neighborhood food market. It was the perfect place to test their brews with the locals, as patrons could pair them with foods from a myriad of stalls. And they got particularly interesting feedback from the elderly Spaniards, who had been content with their Mahous yet ventured to try something new and liked it!

Just this March, they founded their own bar, La Osita, right on one of Madrid's most beloved bar-hopping streets, Calle Cava Baja.



When you walk in you'll see their daily beer selection listed on the chalkboard. The first two options are their homemade brews – citrus cream ale and *cerveza de mesa* (table beer) – which they make at a local brewery in Alcobendas, [Cervecería Península](#).

	Cervecería	Cerveza	Estilo	Origen	ABV	34cl	50cl	1L
1	OSD BREW CO.	CERVEZA DE MESA	TABLE BEER	MADRID	3.8%	€3	€4.5	€8.5
2	OSD BREW CO.	CITRUS CREAM ALE	CREAM ALE	MADRID	4.4%	€3	€4.5	€8.5
3	A + H	THE EEEPA	IPA	U.K	6.2%	€4	€6	€11
4	A + H	THE THREE THREADS	TRAD. PORTER	U.K	6.0%	€4	€6	€11
5	PENINSULA	HAZY VIBES CITRA+MOSAIC	DDH PALE	MADRID	4.5%	€4	€6	€11
6	PENINSULA	HAZY VIBES AFRICAN QUEEN	DDH IPA	MADRID	6%	€4	€6	€11
7	AUGUSTINER	HELLES	LAGER	ALEMANIA	5.2%	€3.5	€5	€9
8	PENINSULA	GALACTIC SUNRISE	DDH IPA	MADRID	7%	€4	€6	€11

Here's what was listed on the chalkboard the day we went!

The day we went, they were also serving beer from A&H (UK) and Augustiner (Munich), as well as several types of Peninsula beers on tap – supporting and working with industry neighbors is important to them. They also offer a hand-picked selection of whiskeys, gins and wine. We didn't get to try any of them, since we were busy sampling all the great beers, so we'll have to go back!

What we had



When we went to La Osita on a Saturday afternoon, we grabbed a seat at the bar so Patrick and David could tell us about Oso Brew's story and all the beers they have on offer, as well as the exciting plans for the near future. As we were there, parties of Spaniards and foreigners alike were trickling in off La Cava Baja.

We sampled several different types of beers they had on tap that night. We started off with their home brews. My favorite was the citrus one – it was light and really refreshing, and had the perfect touch of citrus. And James' favorite was the table beer, because it was clean, balanced and "so easy to drink."



We also tried the [Galactic Sunrise](#) from Peninsula, which had an intense burst of flavor that came from “double dry hopping” (you can ask the guys what that means!). And we finished off with a delicious dark beer, [Three Threads Porter](#) from Anspach & Hobday. It had chocolate and coffee flavors that derive primarily from the malts used and how they’re roasted. Fun fact: apparently, this is a favorite among the elderly Spanish women.



The front area is small enough that you'll likely strike up a conversation with the party next to you. And that's perfectly fine. There are also a few tables in the back where you can sit down with your friends. David said it can be used for birthday parties and the like (just call ahead to book).

	Cerveceo	Cerveza	Estilo	Origen	ABV	W	U	A
1	A+H	THE PATAGONIA BEER	BEIGIAN PALE	U-K	4.1%	£3.50	£5	£6.50
2	A+H	THE DAY HOPPED ALE	BLONDE ALE	U-K	5.2%	£4	£6	£11
3	A+H	THE EEP	IPA	U-K	6.2%	£4	£6	£11
4	A+H	THE THREE THROAT	TRAD. PORTER	U-K	6.0%	£4	£6	£11
5	PENINSULA	HASTY VIKES EXTRA MILD	DDH PALE	MADRID	4.5%	£4	£6	£11
6	PENINSULA	HASTY VIKES MEXICAN QUEEN	DDH IPA	MADRID	6%	£4	£6	£11
7	PENINSULA	HASTY VIKES BULMER ORANGE	DDH IPA	MADRID	7%	£4	£6	£11
8	PENINSULA	DACTYLIC SUNRISE	DDH IPA	MADRID	7%	£4	£6	£11

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Although they don't currently offer a menu, they make it a point to maintain the (wonderful) tradition of offering complementary tapas with every round of drinks. And not just potato chips, but good chorizo and cheese.

What's in store: a restaurant and brew pub!



They have a kitchen downstairs where they're planning on inviting up-and-coming chefs to work for three to four months at a time. They're also planning on opening a "brew pub" in the near future (a hybrid between a brewery and a pub). There's no set location yet but they want it to be within the "M-30."

So for now, come check out La Osita on Cava Baja and grab yourself a drink (or two, or three). If you're not sure what kind of beer to order, Patrick and David will be happy to tell

you all about the different options and even let you taste them before you make your final decision. And if you're not in the mood for beer, they'll fix you a G&T, a glass of whiskey, or a *copa de vino*. Cheers!

Photography by Matthew Curtis
(pelliclemag.com & totalales.co.uk)

La Osita

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & Instagram:
[@laositamadrid](#) & [@osobrewco](#)
- **Address:** Cava Baja 10
- **Metro:** La Latina

Top 5 specialty coffee shops in Madrid

The rich and earthy flavor of coffee in the air, La Marzocco espresso machine sitting on the counter, the obligatory map of Africa on the wall, cartons of Oatly milk stored in the fridge, at least one man bun... these and more are the characteristics of specialty coffee shops in Madrid. So, if you find a specialty café to be quirky and even eccentric, it means you're in the right place, and someone is about to brew the heck out of your cup of coffee.

Specialty coffee shops have a distinct and unique way of doing things that communicates in no subtle way, their high regard for good quality coffee. The coffee beans sourced directly from farms in Puerto Rico, Colombia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Brazil,

or Guatemala, etc. have premium flavor profiles curated perfectly through every step from planting, to production and roasting. Besides the obvious benefits this has on the brew quality, it's also quite sustainable. If you can trace a coffee to its source, then it's more likely from a sustainable source.

Specialty coffee is relatively new in Madrid, but it has risen in popularity in the last two to three years with new cafés opening up all over the city. So if you're in Madrid and you're craving a cup of coffee with a distinct flavor profile, below are the top specialty coffee shops in Madrid you can check out!

Toma Café



Toma Café is located in the Malasaña neighborhood which boasts lots of the arts, cultural scenery in Madrid. Put succinctly, Malasaña is the hipster capital of Madrid so it's no surprise you can find specialty coffee there.

Toma Café is easily one of the best places to find good coffee in Madrid. Each cup of coffee is brewed expertly by experienced baristas. The atmosphere is relaxed, comfortable, and friendly. Toma Café has something that a lot of specialty coffee shops in Madrid don't have – **a really good breakfast and brunch menu.**

They have a working kitchen, and the menu has delicious offerings like avocado toast, yogurt and fruit bowl, and a bunch of pastry offerings made fresh daily. Their lattes and flat whites are specifically delicious with a distinct taste that can be traced back to the careful and patient brewing process of the baristas, and the filtered water.

- **Facebook** & Instagram: [@tomacafe](#) & [@tomacafewarriors](#)
- **Address 1:** Calle de la Palma, 49 (metro: Noviciado or Tribunal)
- **Address 2:** Calle Santa Feliciana 5 (metro: Iglesia or Quevedo)

Hola Coffee



Hola coffee is located in Lavapiés, which is known for being the cultural hub of different types of ethnic restaurants, bars, and tapa places in Madrid. Hola coffee has a very light and airy vibe and atmosphere.

Picture this: it's Saturday morning and you're sitting on one of their benches, sunlight is sipping in through the windows and bouncing off their white walls. You can hear the machine brewing coffee, James Blake is playing softly in the background, you've been served a freshly brewed drip, and you can feel the different flavor profiles in each sip while you enjoy a good read or talk about your love for Madrid's art scene with a friend. It's a good day.

- **Facebook** & Instagram: [@holacoffee](#)
- **Address:** Calle del Dr. Fourquet, 33
- **Metro:** Embajadores or Lavapiés

Acid Café



Prepare to be out-hipstered at Acid Café. Concrete walls and floors, minimalist decor, metal tables, wooden stools, strategically placed plants, toasted scones, metal straws (because the planet), gluten-free vegan cookies and yes, delicious and high-quality coffee brewed intricately with all the hipster love they can muster.

The minimalist decor is perfect to put you at ease. The vibe is toned down and usually quiet, making it ideal for spending an afternoon reading a book and sipping on some good coffee. It's also quite big so there's more than enough sitting for

groups.

- [Facebook](#) & Instagram: [@acid.cafe](#)
- **Address:** Calle de la Verónica, 9
- **Metro:** Antón Martín

Ruda Café



Ruda Café is located in the neighborhood of La Latina, known for having a wide variety of cocktail bars and tapa spots.

Ruda Café has a quaint and rustic vibe with exposed brick walls and wall-mounted shelves stacked with tons of coffee and coffee paraphernalia.

It's quite small and embodies more of a coffee tasting room vibe with just enough sitting to host those who truly appreciate their finely brewed coffee. Also if you're looking to get a bag to go for your French press at home, Ruda has some of the finest beans.

- [Facebook](#) & Instagram [@rudacafe](#)
- **Address:** Calle de la Ruda, 11
- **Metro:** La Latina

Boconó Coffee



Bocono Coffee is located in La Latina/Embajadores neighborhood. It's a good-sized café that can take large

groups. They also have a delicious brunch menu that's very affordable, and a fine collection of cakes baked in house. The scenery and atmosphere are very welcoming and great for an afternoon coffee date! While you're there, check out their impressive gallery wall which is perfect for the gram.

- **Facebook** & Instagram: [@bocono.coffee.roaster](#)
- **Address:** Calle de Embajadores, 3
- **Metro:** Tirso de Molina or La Latina

Specialty coffee shops in Madrid are on the rise

There are more specialty coffee shops in Madrid with new ones opening up every day. I recommend these five places because they come up on top. I've also spent a considerable amount of time and money in each, so I make these recommendations with certainty. If you're a coffee nerd, feel free to chat up the baristas at any of these places and learn more about where they source their beans and their brewing process.

By Jiji Majiri Ugboma (IG: [@Jiji129](#))

Jiji is the Creative Director of [Clever-ish Magazine](#) (IG: [@cleverishmag](#))

All images are from each cafés respective social media accounts

9 Low-key rooftop bars in Madrid to enjoy year round

This city may be landlocked, but the sky's the limit when it comes to rooftop bars in Madrid. From fancy restaurant-hotels like [Picalagartos](#) and [Hotel Óscar](#), to emblematic buildings like [Palacio de Cibeles](#) and the picture-perfect [Tartan Roof](#) at Círculo de Bellas Artes, the options seem endless. And if you're in the mood for something a little more casual, we've got you covered.

Here are our top picks for rooftop bars in Madrid that are low key and winter friendly.

1. The Hat



Photo from [The Hat Madrid](#)

This popular rooftop bar is located atop one of the city's coolest hostels, right off Plaza Mayor. It provides a great escape from Madrid's crowded center. Pop up for a few drinks with friends or a full meal, whatever you fancy.

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- **Address:** Calle Imperial 9
- **Metros:** Sol and Tirso de Molina

Check out our full post on [The Hat Madrid](#)

2. Mercado de San Antón



Photo from [Mercado de San Antón](#)

This is a perfect place to start your evening with friends. As

you enter Chueca's beloved food market, Mercado de San Antón, first you'll walk through various food stalls and tapas stands. Then make your way up to the fourth floor for a drink any time of day, any time of year.

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- **Address:** Calle de Augusto Figueroa, 24
- **Metro:** Chueca

3. El Viajero





This plant-laden rooftop bar has been a staple in La Latina for years. Situated atop El Viajero restaurant, it offers a laidback atmosphere, plus a full bar and food options. It's a great place to spend a winter evening with friends.

- [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- Address: Plaza de la Cebada 11
- Metro: La Latina

4. Gymage



Photo from [Gymage](#)

Gymage is a multi-level recreation center located in Plaza de la Luna, just off Gran Vía. Inside you'll find everything from a full-on gym to a health food store. But the best part is the two-level rooftop lounge with a bar, restaurant, and pool! Although you don't get to take a dip in winter, you still get to take in that chill Ibiza vibe and enjoy those gorgeous Madrid sunsets.

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- Address: Calle de la Luna, 2
- Metro: Callao

5. Forus Barceló



This spacious rooftop restaurant is a green oasis in the middle of Chueca and Malasaña. Situated atop the Barceló food market, here you can enjoy creative and healthy cuisine, in a friendly urban garden environment. It's also open every day of the week.

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & Instagram: @azoteaforus
- **Address:** Calle Barceló 6
- **Metro:** Tribunal and Alonso Martínez

6. Doña Luz



This is one of the newest rooftop bars in Madrid, situated right in the heart of Sol, on Calle Montera. The street-level entrance is tiny, so it's easy to miss. But once you enter the Doña Luz Hotel, squeeze through the door and take the elevator to the top floor. There you'll find plenty of room to enjoy a nice break on the roof. There's an indoor and outdoor area, plus a full restaurant and bar.

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- Address: Calle Montera 10-12
- Metro: Sol

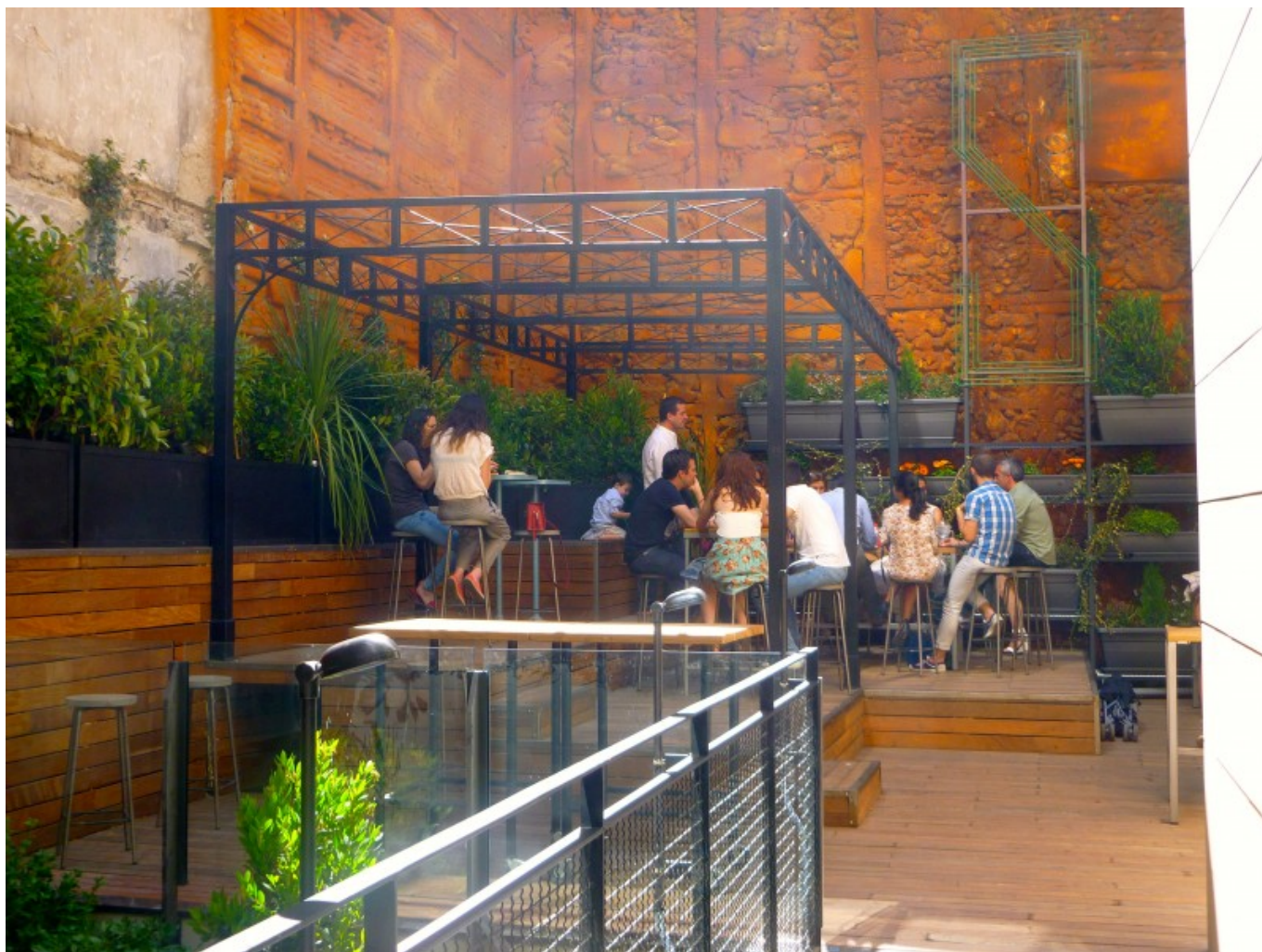
7. Jardín Secreto



This rooftop is also situated on Calle Montero, and it's called Jardín Secreto (although it's not that much of a secret anymore). Step inside the accessories store, Salvador Bachiller, and take the elevator up to the top floor to discover a small yet charming rooftop absolutely covered in plants and flowers. Although you won't find much of a view, you will discover a nice change of scenery from the busy city center.

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- Address: Calle Montero 37
- Metro: Gran Vía or Sol

8. Mercado de San Ildefonso



This isn't exactly a rooftop bar, but it still deserves a spot on our list. This outdoor terrace is located inside an ultra modern food market in Malasaña, [Mercado de San Ildefonso](#), right on Calle Fuencarral. So once you grab a drink and a bite to eat from the array of food stalls, find a seat in this fun patio area.

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- Address: C/ Fuencarral, 57
- Metros: Tribunal

9. Casa de Granada



In Tirso de Molina, you'll find Casa Granada situated on the top floor of an unassuming residential building. This rather old-school restaurant has been around for ages and is definitely the least "chic" option on the list. The menu features traditional Spanish dishes, from *croquetas* to *patatas bravas*. It's well insulated during the chillier months of the year and when the awnings are up, you get great views of the heart of the city.

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#)
- Address: Calle del Doctor Cortezo, 17
- Metro: Tirso de Molina

Did we miss any other low-key rooftop bars in Madrid open year round? Let us

know and we'll add them to the list!

Sala Equis – impress your friends with lunch in an old XXX theatre

Lunch at a once-was pornography theatre in Madrid is not what anyone expects and is exactly why you must go. The gem that awaits you is hardly recognizable from the street but once you arrive at Tirso de Molina metro, you're just feet away.

Once inside [Sala Equis](#), pass the popcorn machine and "taquilla" and go down towards the sun-soaked covered patio with two-story-high skylights. The natural light makes it a little difficult to see the main screen but it ironically plays second fiddle to the overall ambience.



During our afternoon visit, the suspended screen played an old black-and-white movie that blended into the background amongst the greenery and food and drink counter. According to [Sala Equis' website](#), there are often concerts in this same space though we weren't privy to see any that day.



Lunchtime turned out to be the ideal hour considering there was plenty of options for spaces to sit and eat but there were enough people to kickstart the pre-Saturday night feeling. We skipped the lawn chairs, swings and stadium-style seating and opted for some iron loveseats with tables.

The menu can't be described as one thing or another since it offers a bit of it all. We had the vegan burger with fries (€9), a flatbread pizza with fig and goat's cheese (€7.50), a quiche with bleu cheese and squash (€5.50), a couple of kimchi and shrimp wraps (€8 each).







The food was interesting, much like the locale. There's also Mahou on tap and a full bar.

Apart from the covered patio, there is still a functioning movie theatre. Though the genre originally screened is no longer, one can still find the red velvet couches that you could only imagine to be found in a former pornography movie

theatre.

Currently, Sala Equis plays all original version films (with subtitles). This month, classics like *Chitty Bang Bang* are playing alongside *Big Fish* and *Lady Bird*. Odd choices they may seem, but the selections are unexpectedly refreshing. Film tickets run about €6.50.

By Caitlin Mackenzie

Sala Equis

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Instagram:** @salaequismadrid
- **Address:** [Duque de Alba, 4](#) (Tirso de Molina or La Latina)

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

Mushrooms: they're an inspiring subject one can easily get carried away with, especially after paying a visit to El Brote. Years of academic mushroom knowledge and on-the-ground wisdom were literally delivered to us on a plate and I'm now a devout mushroom apostle on a mission to spread the message to the foodie people of Madrid.



El Brote's dining area

El Brote (the bud) is a small and cosy restaurant on [Calle de la Ruda](#) run by two mushroom enthusiasts, Eduardo and Alvaro. Every corner of the place is mushroom-themed, even the floor. Its décor is earthy, humble and a little eccentric, and the original features of the building have been beautifully highlighted throughout the room.



Abstract mushroom artwork



Various gospels of the mushroom bible



The 0th floor of El Brote



A mushroomy display inside the floor

Both Eduardo and Alvaro were keen to explain each dish on their 10-item menu and made recommendations based on the season and their own personal preferences which, funnily enough, were different.

There's a specific order in which you must eat each ingredient.

... they explained as each dish was brought out. They suggested we start with the unseasoned mushrooms so that we could taste their pure flavour, then slowly begin combining the other ingredients together to get a feel for the dish as a whole. The flavours were subtle and delicious both separately and collectively – a sign that someone behind the scenes really knows what they're doing.



Trumpet mushrooms with a raw egg yolk and herbs



Red mushrooms with pak choy, gnocchi and pumpkin gratin



Black mushrooms with beans, squash and leek

Try their wine too, it's really good. We also noticed that every single table in the restaurant was sharing a bottle of red between them... such a beautiful sight.

TIP: El Brote have very few tables and they don't take evening reservations so aim to be the first to arrive as we were, because within 10 minutes of arriving, the place will be full!

INFO

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
 - Address: [Calle de la Ruda, 14](#)
 - Nearest metro: La Latina, line 5
-

Veggie Nirvana at VivaBurger in La Latina

In the foodie hotspot Plaza de la Paja, in *barrio* La Latina, lies a vegetarian oasis with an oddly beachy vibe, complete with pale teal walls, distressed white wood, and beaded curtains.



You can sit inside or at one of their lovely terrace tables in this little nook of La Latina. While there's almost always a full house (and for good reason), the staff works like a well-oiled machine, and the owner treats everyone like family.



Everything on the menu is vegan or vegetarian—and seriously delicious. Being shamefully addicted to cheese, I was admittedly nervous to try their vegan burger of the day. But it exceeded my expectations in every way: **filling, creamy, and flavorful, it left me more than satisfied.** It comes with a salad or soup, fresh fries, and a drink (can be wine or beer too).







If you're not feeling a veggie burger, the eatery offers an **alternative *menú del día***: they celebrate a different country every day with a rotating international menu. Indian curry garam masala, Greek salad and musaka, Peruvian avocado ceviche, Moroccan couscous, Argentinian vegetable *parrillada* and empanadas... and about 20 others.







For dessert, I had a fresh mint green tea smoothie. Having a huge sweet tooth, it wasn't what I was expecting, but it was flavorful and refreshing, especially on such a hot day. If you order dessert a la carte, instead of with the lunch special, you have lots of other options like their scrumptious carrot cake or vegan ice cream.



Amazingly, the burger for the menú is apparently a more “basic” veggie burger. If that’s basic, I can only imagine the

full menu is mind-blowing. I'll for sure be back for more.

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- **Website:** vivaburger.es
- **Instagram:** @viva_burger
- **Address:** Costanilla de San Andrés 16
- **Phone:** 91 366 33 49