

# Madrid's Best Ice Cream Shops!

Summer, sun, heat, walks... When I think of all these things, only one thing comes to mind—ice cream! Madrileños love ice cream. In the same way that in winter we never say no to a good hot chocolate with churros, during the summer, it's all about ice cream. *Granizados* and *horchata* are also big winners.

Virtually all cafes and bakeries in Madrid offer a wide range of ice cream flavors and other refreshing treats. But finding the highest quality homemade ice cream isn't so easy. That's why we've brought you this list of our favorite ice cream shops, which are conveniently located in different neighborhoods across the city so you'll have easy access whenever you get a craving!

## Here a few key words when ordering ice cream in Spanish:

Ice cream: *helado*

Flavor: *sabor*

Scoop: *bola*

Cone: *cucurucho*

Cup: *tarrina*

Now, here's the inside scoop on our favorite ice cream shops in Madrid:

### 1. Mistura



Owned by young entrepreneurs who were inspired by a different way of making ice cream in India, Mistura serves up handcrafted ice cream in the heart of Madrid with a smile, using local and healthy ingredients. The first time I went there I was smitten. The guys who work there are really nice and they personalize your ice cream. Right in front of you, they mix the different flavors and toppings of your choice on a cold slab of granite (apparently to enhance its texture). I ordered *maracuyá*. Not to mention they've expanded their coffee and breakfast list.

[Web](#)

**Address:** c/ Augusto Figueroa, 5

**Metro:** Chueca

## 2. Sani Saporì



Run by very friendly and chatty Italians, [Sani Saporì](#) is by far one of our favorite shops in the city for its high quality ice cream (would you expect anything less from Italians?) and host neighborhood, Lavapiés! Situated on Calle Lavapiés 31, right in front of a million Indian food restaurants, you'll find this little cozy shop a godsend after a big dinner or during a nighttime summer stroll. Last time I went, we had to have two rounds each... They didn't have vanilla which was odd to me, but they made up for it with their mix of classic and innovative flavors. My favorite was the chocolate (simple I know, but truly divine). They also have a few tables set up outside which makes it a perfect experience all around.

[Web](#) & [Facebook](#)

Price range: €2.50-3.50, check out the full price list [here](#)

Address: Calle Lavapiés 31

Metro: Lavapiés or Tirso de Molina

### 3. Los Alpes



[photograph: 11870.com](http://11870.com)

Founded in 1950 by Pedro Marchi and Marcelina Ladero, Los Alpes is a real institution in Madrid. Located in the Moncloa area, the variety of flavors is infinite, from the most traditional to the most innovative. As a Madrileña I have to say, it makes me very happy that places like Los Alpes are still here after all these years.

#### **Web**

***Price Range:*** €1.50 – €7.80 (giant)

***Address:*** Calle del Arcipreste de Hita, 6

***Metro:*** Moncloa or Arguelles

### 4. Labonata





Without a doubt, if we talk about Chueca we're talking about good restaurants, shops, cafés and, of course, ice cream is no exception. Located in Plaza de Chueca, this is a wonderful place for anyone who enjoys trying out new flavors, as this shop offers all the traditional kinds as well as more innovative options such as *violet*, *marzipan* and *watermelon*. I chose *lemon pie*... and it was pure pleasure.

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

**Price Range:** €2.90 – €4.50

**Address:** Plaza de Chueca, 8

**Metro:** Chueca

## 5. Kalúa Helado Artesanal



We couldn't leave [Kalúa](#) out of this list. This ice cream shop has been around for ages, or as they say in Spanish, "*ide toda la vida!*" Located on Calle Fuencarral, in between metros Bilbao and Quevedo, Kalúa has been a staple among locals for many years and hasn't lost its popularity despite the appearance of more stylish ice cream parlours like Mistura. The key to this place's success is its **100% handcrafted ice creams**, affordable prices and delicious flavors, like **dulce de leche**, **kinder bueno** and **red velvet**. Kalúa is definitely a must when it comes to summertime treats in Madrid.

[Web](#)

*Address: Calle Fuencarral, 131*

*Metros: Bilbao & Quevedo*

## 6. Palazzo



Here's another institution: Palazzo, an ice cream chain that has a place in every Madrileño's childhood. If you don't believe me, try this: ask any Madrileño about the best ice cream in the centre and their answer will probably be the same "Palazzo". Few places have endured the passing of time as well as Palazzo. Its range of flavors is classic: chocolate, lemon, pistachio, mint...etc. All of them are famous for being entirely artisanal. My favorite flavors are the pistachio and *Turron* (a very traditional Spanish sweet eaten at Christmas time, similar to nougat).

### [Facebook](#)

**Address:** among their various locations, we have: Plaza de la Puerta del Sol, 11 and Calle Goya, 49

**Metro:** Sol or Goya

## **7. Giuseppe Ricci**



Located in Huertas, also known as Barrio de las Letras, this is a wonderful place if you're looking for great handcrafted ice cream. They have a wide variety of flavours.

[Web](#)

**Price range:** €2.20 – €3.20

**Address:** Calle de Las Huertas, 9, 28012 Madrid

**Metro:** Sol, Sevilla or Tirso de Molina

**After posting this article, many people have recommended [Heladerías La Romana](#) on Paseo de la Habana, 27 (metros: Cuzco, Colombia, Pío XII)**

Feel free to recommend us any other places – we'll add them to the list!

Enjoy!!

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## Desperate Literature, for book lovers in Brooklyn, Santorini and now Madrid

Madrid has a new second-hand bookstore thanks to three men – Michael, Corey and Craig – whose unique concept to provide insatiable readers with good books and a literary haven has already won a loyal following in Santorini, Greece, and Brooklyn, New York. Just opened in May, [Desperate Literature](#) comes to Madrid as a new-found treasure for tourists, expats and Madrileños alike.

Editor's note: in 2018 we published a new article – [Desperate Literature: so much more than just a bookshop](#)

### What's in stock?

[Desperate Literature](#) has a wide selection of **used books in English, Spanish and French**, and vinyls too. They get most of their books from library sales in New York and then ship them over, which is why half of their floor is currently usurped by boxes. The shelves are stocked with novels ranging from fiction and crime to philosophy and even *erotica*. Although they're not against best-sellers (you'll find *50 Shades of*

*Grey* and *Game of Thrones*), the space is small, so they do turn down books, aiming for quality rather than quantity. When I walked in, the first three books I spotted were by **Franz Kafka**, **James Joyce** and **George Orwell**, to give you an idea.



on Calle Campomanes 13, near metros Opera, Callao and Santo Domingo

## Why Desperate Literature?

As quoted by Joaquín Font on their [web](#), there are books for all occasions—for when you're bored, sad, or calm. Whatever mood you're in, if you're passing through Madrid or live here and find yourself desperate for a good read, you can either swap the book you've just finished or buy a new one for **3-9€**.

You can also say hi to Michael, the California-raised and Brooklyn-adopted owner; and Jamie, who works there and is also from Brooklyn. Plus they play good music and host events where they experiment with cocktails—one of the ways they're getting to know Madrid is by making homemade vermouth!

## **What's the story behind Desperate Literature?**

All three partners are avid readers and part of the so-called *international booklovers connection*. Corey had sold books on the streets of New York for many years, where he met Michael, who joined in to open used bookshops in Brooklyn. Ten years ago, Craig started **Atlantis Books** in Santorini, Greece. **Atlantis** is an international bookshop that, despite being tiny and hidden away on the island of Santorini, is quite well-known. My mother bought her favorite book there—*East of Eden* by John Steinbeck. My sister, Amanda, actually lived and worked there for a month, as did my sister-in-law, Erin. Every Summer, **Atlantis** showcases a film festival on their roof, where the projector is set up against a backdrop of red sunsets and the Aegean Sea.

Of course there's more to the story, but the philosophy at **Atlantis Books** goes: if you're a book-loving traveller, you can work there and in turn, live and get taken care of for free. It's kind of like *WOOFING* for books instead of farms. It's also a place for travellers to meet, hang out and hold book readings and concerts. Under the same joint venture, these three young partners own two locations in Brooklyn, New York: **Book Thug Nation** and **Human Relations**; and just opened **Desperate Literature** in Madrid in May.



## Who came up with the whole idea?

It started with **Atlantis Books** in Santorini, opened by Craig and a bunch of friends (if you check out their [web](#), Atlantis' opening involved a lot of luck and a bit of whisky). Michael says the idea is based off **Shakespeare and Company**, Paris' famous book store and writers' institution. Opened in 1919 by American expat, Sylvia Beach, **Shakespeare and Company** was frequented by the likes of Gertrude Stein, James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway, and became **a gathering place for literary culture**, selling high-quality English-language books, some of which were banned, such as Joyce's *Ulysses* and D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Although it was closed during WWII, it was reopened in 1956 by American expat, George Whitman, who had amassed a huge collection of English books and wanted to return the generosity he had experienced while travelling the world as a young *vagabond*, by creating **a friendly place for English-speaking expats and bohemian culture**, allowing writers to stay there if they helped out. Today, **Shakespeare & Company** is run by Whitman's daughter who continues the tradition.

## Why did they open Desperate Literature in Madrid, and not... Amsterdam?

Michael says 'it was kind of happenstance.' He and Corey have an affinity for the Spanish language, and both knew people in Madrid. The location was perfect as it was an already-established international bookstore, Petras; and is situated a stone's throw from the Royal Palace.

At the moment, only Michael is living at **Desperate Literature** and hopefully Corey will take his place in November. Michael says that when he visits a city, even for a day, he always checks out the local book stores. He expects that visitors to Madrid will do the same and that **Desperate Literature** will be their literary home away from home.

They're here, so come and say hello!

## Desperate Literature

- [Facebook](#) & [Web](#)

**Hours:** Mon-Sat 12pm-9pm

**Address:** Calle Campomanes, 13

**Metro:** Santo Domingo, Opera and Callao

Please also read our 2018 article – [Desperate Literature: so much more than a bookshop](#)

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## Best Gifts from Madrid

Buying gifts for friends and family in Madrid can be a difficult task. Pretty much everything can be found everywhere

nowadays. I often see the same Spanish brand names and products when I walk around my neighborhood in New York. So I think to myself, why did I even bother lugging that bottle of *Marqués de Riscal* all across the ocean? If you find yourself faced with this same problem (and not inclined to buy your mom a keychain or a magnet), here's a list of well thought-out **gift ideas from Madrid**. Hope it helps!

First let's quickly name some of the **more obvious gift ideas**, which are also good but run the risk of being found in your hometown (scroll down if you're all too familiar with these):

**Handheld fans, flamenco shawls, ceramic tiles and dishes, paella pans, recipe books, aprons** with a flamenco dancer or the flag of Spain, **football/soccer jersey, wine, cured ham and sweets** with long shelf-lives such as *mazapán*, *turron* and *polvorones* (can be bought at [El Riojano](#) or [Casa Mira](#), two very traditional pastry shops in the city center) or a **swiss army/pocket knife** (best from Toledo but also sold in Plaza Mayor). While it's always best to buy these items from independent sellers (which you will find below), if you're pressed for time you can find absolutely everything at **El Corte Inglés**, the country's major department store with locations all around.

Now let's move on to the **more original gift ideas**:

## **1. Anything from La Violeta**



La Violeta is a candy shop located in the center of Madrid. It must be included in this list because it is a typical place **where Madrileños buy gifts for other Madrileños**. *Las violetas* are purple-colored sucking candies wrapped in pretty little boxes and ribbon. You can buy them plain or *escarchadas*, meaning sugar-coated. You can also find *cajas de bombones* (boxes of chocolates) and many other sweet treats. Prices range from **€5** to **€15**.

[Web](#)

**Address:** Plaza de Canalejas, 6

**Metro:** Sol and Sevilla

## **2. Saffron or a pack of mixed Spanish spices for anyone who likes to cook**

My sister, Amanda, actually gave me this idea. Her boyfriend's family is originally from the Basque Country. Her father-in-law loves little trinkets from Spain and also makes **paella** every year for the whole family. So she had the bright idea of buying him a pack of **azafrán** (saffron). **Yes, saffron!** It costs

peanuts in comparison to what it costs in the States. She bought it at **Corte Inglés** and he was over the moon when he received it. For non-purists, you can also buy **sachets**, which is a bag of mixed Spanish spices, also used **for making paella**. Anyone who likes to cook will enjoy this gift!

**3. Berets; can be bought at a charming century-old hat shop right in Plaza Mayor**



Founded in 1894, Madrid's oldest hat shop—[La Favorita C.B.](#)—is now in the hands of its family's fourth generation. It remains in its original location in Plaza Mayor and sells all types of traditional Spanish hats that make for fun and useful gifts. Amanda gave me this idea too. She bought a **black beret** for her stylish sister-in-law which cost **€19**. Although the black beret is traditionally worn in the Basque Country, where it's called

a **Boina**, it very well looked like it could have been bought at Top Shop. I'm sure anyone could rock this look in any city around the world, and they'd have a nice story to tell when someone asked them where they bought it.



[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

**Address:** Plaza Mayor, 25

**Metro:** Sol or Opera

#### **4. Chocolate for dipping churros; can be bought at the famous Chocolatería San Gines (near Sol)**

In Spanish, this is simply called **chocolate a la taza** or **chocolate caliente**. However, for English-speakers this can be quite confusing—this is not just hot chocolate. It refers to the thick chocolate that you **dip churros** into. When my husband's relatives from California were visiting, they bought bags and bags of this chocolate as a present for all their friends back home. It was a hit! And it's not exclusive for dipping **churros**, you can also use it for dipping

strawberries, bananas—anything you like! You can buy it in bags by the kilo at Madrid's most famous churros shop, **Chocolatería San Ginés**, open 24/7 and just a stone's throw from Sol.

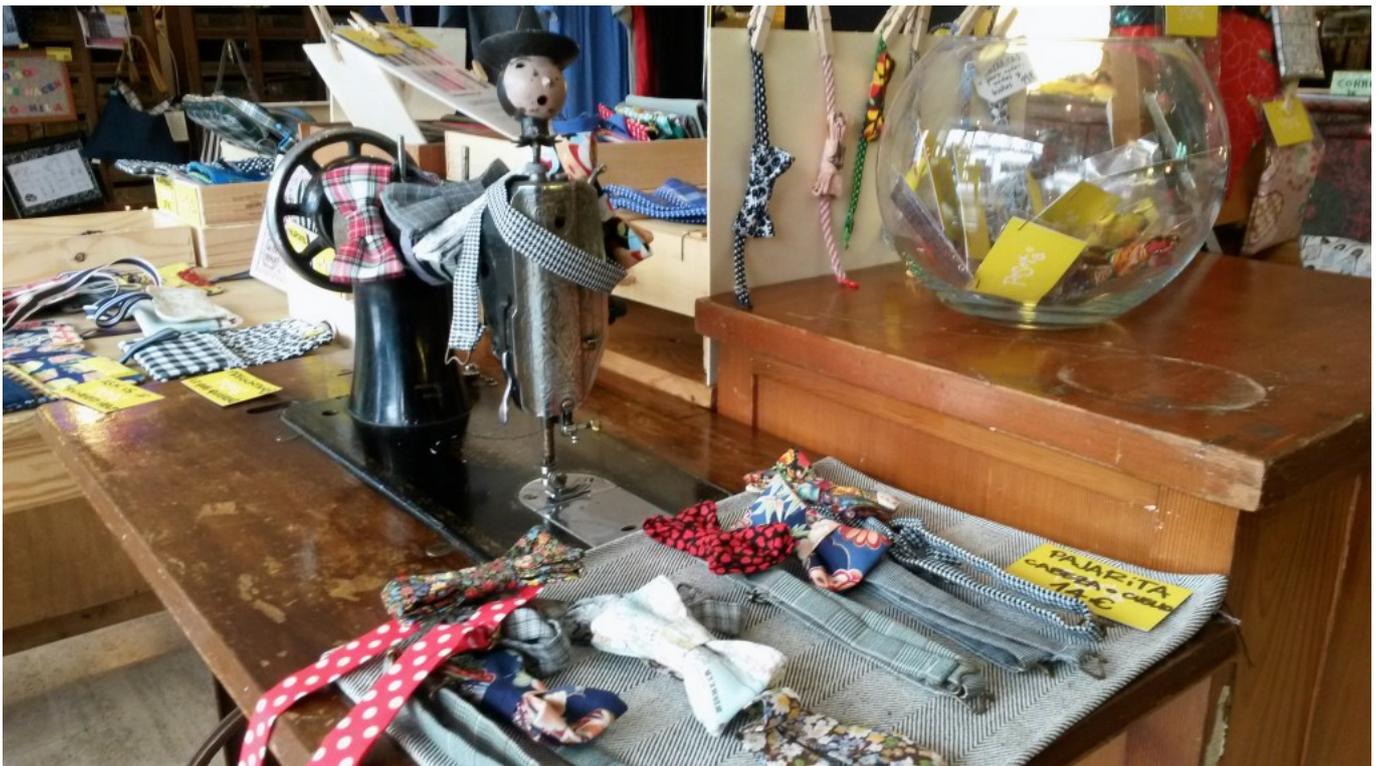
[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

*Address: Pasadizo de San Gines, 5*

*Metro: Sol*

## 5. Peseta; for millions of small gift ideas made in Madrid, using fabrics from around the world (in Malasaña)



Named after Spain's former currency—*las pesetas*—this charming store was founded by Laura Martínez del Pozo around ten years ago. She collects fabrics from all over the world and uses them to make unique, creative and very handy items, from **tablet and laptop cases** to **handbags and wallets**. They even sell beautiful shoes, also typical from Spain—**espadrilles** and **alpargatas**—though with a nice twist as the fabric is a hundred

percent unique. Seeing as these everyday items are useful for everyone, you're sure to find great gifts here.



You can also find Peseta's products sold at an awesome book store and cafe near Callao called [La Central](#), which will talk more about below.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

*Address: c/ Noviciado, 9*

*Metro: Noviciado*

**6. Summer shoes; can be found in stores everywhere (also in Peseta)**



alpargatas at the top and mallorquinas at the bottom

***Esparto*** (espadrilles), ***alpargatas*** and ***mallorquinas*** are the **three most popular summer shoe styles** originating from Spain. All can be found in any colour and in any standard shoe store (the center is littered with typical shoe stores, especially around **Plaza Mayor** and **Calle Carmen** which is right off of Sol). The latter two styles are unisex, so you're bound to find something for both your male and female friends and family. Since Spain is well-known for its amazing shoes, why not wow them with some Spanish summer footwear they can strut around their own city in style? Plus you don't have to limit yourself to the traditional ones. You can find snazzier versions too. You can also check out our post on "[3 Places to Find Espadrilles in Madrid](#)" for more recommendations.



This photo is from a new store called [Alpargatus](#) which is located just off of Plaza Mayor on Calle Postas. They have all types of *alpargatas*, *espadrilles* and *mallorquinas*, plus other souvenirs. It's really convenient.

[Facebook](#)

**Address:** *C/ Postas, 20 (just a few steps away from Plaza Mayor)*

**Metro:** *Sol or Opera*

Or check out another post of ours dedicated solely to espadrilles: "[3 Places to Find Espadrilles in Madrid](#)"

## **8. Traditional gloves with silk lining from 100-year-old glove shop in Sol**

*Just a note—I couldn't get a photo because the owner closed the shop for the whole weekend to go to Lisbon and watch the football match...*

Believe it or not, Spain still has entire shops dedicated solely to **gloves**! One of Madrid's most well-known and oldest glove shops is called [Guantes Luque](#), nestled between the streets of Sol and Sevilla. Entering the shop is an experience in and of itself. These elegant gloves take you back to

another era, when items were not mass produced and were meant to last a lifetime. Understandably on the **expensive** side, these traditional **Spanish gloves** are not only beautiful, but have silk lining which is a godsend in winter.

*No web, but they're on [Yelp](#)*

*Address: c/ Espoz y Mina, 3*

*Metro: Sol, Gran Vía or Sevilla*

## **7. Gift Basket – 3 simple and delicious ingredients**



image from [gastronosfera.com](http://gastronosfera.com)

When I asked around for good gift ideas, one expat said that he always brings home a basket of 3 items: **pimientos de piquillo** (roasted red peppers), **aceitunas campo reales** (olives) and a really fancy **aceite de oliva** (olive oil). After speaking with many foreigners living in Spain, it became clear that **campo real olives** are a major hit among the gift-giving crowd. Though if you don't like olives, you can always replace them with a bottle of wine (my favorite red is **Ribera** and my favorite white is **Albariño**), a box of **marzipan** from Toledo or

sweets from **La Violeta** (mentioned #1).

**Where to buy:** while you can buy these items all over the city and of course at **El Corte Inglés**, we recommend you go to [Mercado de Antón Martín](#) or [Mercado de San Fernando](#). These markets are very traditional, unlike many of the others that have become over-priced and over-touristy. You can also go to Qué Rico Tó, mentioned #2 on this list.

### **Mercado de Antón Martín**

[Facebook](#)

*Address: C/ Santa Isabel, 5*

*Metro: Antón Martín*

### **Mercado de San Fernando**

[Facebook](#)

*Address: C/ Embajadores, 41*

*Metro: Lavapiés or Embajadores*

## **8. Spanish Comic Books**



For your alternative or comic-book loving friends, a **Spanish comic** could be a really cool gift. It's always fun to read comics in other languages, especially because the drawings and images help you figure out the story. But of course this gift isn't for everyone. The above photo is of [El Coleccionista](#), a well-known **comic shop in Lavapiés** with a wide collection. My sister, Amanda (also in the photo), bought a few rare books for her friends here. When I asked Amanda if I could include her photo in this article, she said of course—she'd be happy to support any type of independent shop like this one which make up the backbone of a city's personality and charm. I've also just found out that one of the world's best comic stores is located in Madrid too, it's called [Akira Comics](#) and is located a bit further out in the city.

### [El Coleccionista](#)

**Address:** C/ Tribulete, 5

*Metro: Lavapiés*

## 9. Second-hand books with personality from Desperate Literature



At [Desperate Literature](#), a new international bookstore located in the center of Madrid (close to the Royal Palace), you can find good quality used books in English, Spanish and French, many of which are related to Spain and can make for a great, personalized gift. Also, this bookstore has a nice story behind it, as its three young owners—Michael, Corey and Craig—have opened used international bookstores in Santorini,

Greece and in Brooklyn, New York. With the recent opening of Desperate Literature in Madrid, they aim to provide a literary haven for travellers, expats and Madrileños alike. [Here's a long article on Desperate Literature.](#)

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

*Address: c/ Campomanes, 13*

*Metro: Santo Domingo and Opera*

## 10. New books and much more from a La Central, an ultra hip bookstore/cafe near Callao



While my first suggestion would be to go to Desperate Literature, if you're looking for all kinds of new books in

**Spanish** (i.e. children's, novels, poetry, you name it) or other gift ideas such as **board games, notebooks and fun nicknacks**, then this is the store you should be going to.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

*Address: Postigo de San Martín 8*

*Metro: Callao*

## **11. Trinkets from a Funky Madrid Gift Shop called Curiosity**

As far as gift shops go, this one is quite original. At [Curiosity](#), you can get maps of Malasaña and Chueca for €12, which look great framed, as well as tons of other fun little *tchotchkes*. This gift is recommended for someone who has lived or spent a good amount of time in Madrid.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

*Address: c/ Corredera Alta de San Pablo, 28*

*Metro: Tribunal*

**Any other gift ideas? Please share! We'll be happy to add more to this list ☐**

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## **Madrid's best rooftop bars, round 3**

Welcome to **round 3** of **Madrid's best rooftop bars!** We hope that by now you've already visited and enjoyed some of the ones we've mentioned in [round 1](#) and [round 2](#). This third list

includes **5 magnificent rooftop bars**—all but one of which are located right smack in the center of Madrid. Thus if you find yourself strolling along the Gran Vía or the Royal Palace, please know that there is a rooftop terrace with champagne and wine awaiting you!

*\*all photos are from each place's official webpage, unless noted otherwise*

## **8. Apartosuites Jardines de Sabatini**

**Address:** Cuesta San Vicente, 16

**Metro:** Príncipe Pio and Plaza de España



Named after the **Gardens of the Royal Palace (Jardines de Sabitini)**, this hotel has a very nice advantage, as it overlooks both the beautiful **Jardines** and stunning **Palacio Real**. What's more, during the summer, the royal garden plays host to a series of traditional theater, music and dance performances, from flamenco to *Zarzuela*. This hotel rooftop gets a private concert as it's a stone's throw from the stage!

## 9. Bar Terraza Palacio De Cibeles

**Address:** Plaza de Cibeles, 1 (Palacio de Cibeles 6ª Planta)

**Metro:** Banco de España



Overlooking **Plaza de Cibeles**, **Paseo del Prado** and **Madrid's breathtaking skyline**, this iconic and postcard-perfect building used to be the city's main post office, although it has just recently been refurbished and turned into a museum and cultural center with free entry. The building's interior is beautiful; the first few floors are dedicated to art exhibits, while the 6th floor is now known as [Terraza Cibeles](#), a fancy restaurant & cocktail bar overlooking the city with stunning views. Prices on drinks are high, as you can imagine, but the whole experience is a real treat. What's more, every 30 minutes there are **scheduled visits to the *mirador*** (lookout point) for just €2 and €0,50 for under-12-year-olds. Opened to the public for the first time, the visit takes you to the highest point of the building, situated at the very top of the tower on the 8th floor.

## 10. [The Roof](#) at ME Madrid Reina Victoria Hotel

**Address:** Plaza de Santa Ana, 14

**Metro:** Sol, Sevilla



I've never been here, mainly because it's way too fancy and exclusive for my taste, but The Roof is one of Madrid's most famous rooftop bars, located atop the high-end Meliá Hotel in Plaza de Santa Ana, one of Madrid's most famous squares full of bars and restaurants. Take the elevator up to the top floor and you'll find beautiful views, purple lighting contrasted against the building's white tower, expensive cocktails, fine cuisine and lounge chairs. It must make for a truly glamorous experience.

## 11. [Hotel Urban](#)

**Address:** Carrera de San Jerónimo, 34

**Metro:** Sevilla



As its name entails, **Hotel Urban** is extremely fashionable and modern. The hotel also prides itself on having an art deco look and contemporary-style interior design. Its high-end restaurant is named [Europa Decó](#), its oyster bar is named [The Glass Bar](#), and its spectacular rooftop is named [La Terraza del Urban](#). If you like sipping on cocktails in chic bars with exquisite views, you will absolutely love this place..

## 12. [Hotel Silken Puerta América Madrid](#)

**Address:** Avenida de America, 41

**Metro:** Cartagena



image from societeperrier.com

This is the first rooftop terrace we've mentioned that is not within walking distance from Sol! **Hotel Silken** stands out along Madrid's major highway for its multicolored facade and unconventional shape. Making it even more unique, **each of the hotel's 12 floors was designed by an internationally acclaimed architect**, including Arata Isozaki from Japan, Zaha Hadid from Iran and Norman Foster from the UK. Highly modern to say the least, this hotel is situated near **Avenida de America**, a transport and business hub that draws in all kinds of crowds. The **hotel's rooftop terrace** is absolutely incredible in summer; it is an open-air nightclub that offers a much appreciated breeze, plus a significant drop in temperature as it's so high up!

**If you're looking for more of Madrid's best rooftop bars, check out [round 1](#) and [round 2](#) of this series.**

**And of course, if we've missed any, let us know!**

**Also check out a few of our other "best of" Madrid**

lists:

- [Madrid's best cocktails](#)
  - [Madrid's best bars for craft beer](#)
  - [Madrid's best first date ideas](#)
  - [Madrid's best gift ideas](#)
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## El Riojano, Madrid's best pastry shop is right in the centre and it has a hidden tea room!

For all of you who are like me and have a major sweet tooth, I present [El Riojano](#)—an old-work pastry shop in the city centre and the perfect place to start off this series on **Madrid's sweetest eats!**

Who said that *Roscón de Reyes* is only eaten at Christmas? At **El Riojano** in Sol, you can order it all year round or taste it in their very own tea room.



For many years, all I knew about **El Riojano** was that it was a pastry shop in the centre of Madrid, tiny and with extraordinary quality. But today, I know it a bit more. For example, it was founded in 1855 by Damaso de la Maza, baker of the Royal Family. As Maza died without heirs, the pastry shop is now owned by its fifth family. While it has changed hands throughout history, its spirit remains intact.

For many it is considered one of the **best secrets of Madrid**, where you can enjoy not only the typical sweets of religious holidays, but all of Spain's best sweet and savoury treats,

from *pastas* (finger cookies) to *hojaldres* (puff pastries filled with all types of goodness).





My little love affair with this place emerged a few months ago, when I asked a friend of mine, also a *Madrileña*, if she knew a nice place for tea in the centre. I wanted to try something new.

She replied without hesitation: **El Riojano.**

I was a bit surprised so I replied, "Are you sure? El Riojano has no tea room." She insisted I go find out for myself.

Well, when I entered I still thought my friend was totally mistaken.



But then I discovered the wonderful tea room hidden through the back. It turned out my friend was right. I was simply blown away!



While admiring the room, I took a seat and looked at the menu. The menu is very simple, dominated by savoury pastries such as *hojaldres* and *empanadas*, and, of course, a long list of irresistible sweets.



I opted for a riskier pastry, made with **dates and bacon**. Delightful!

My friend who came with me decided to order an *empanada de pollo* (chicken pie), which she said tasted wonderful.

We also decided to share some *saladitos*. These are mini pastries filled with different flavours such as cheese and sausage. **La ración** (a full portion) comes with **6 saladitos**.

For dessert, we decided to try some delicious *Torrijas*, Spain's version of French toast—to die for!

The lounge has an old, spacious and clean air to it, making you feel as though **you've gone back in time**. Although it's not always full (which is great), do **go early if there is a holiday** or you will have to wait.

Price-wise, **El Riojano** is very reasonable. The pastries cost around €2-3 each, and for €3.50, you get 6 *hojaldritos*. The average price person is around €11, which will get you a few *raciones* of savoury pastries and sweets, plus a drink.

Since I discovered **El Riojano**, it has become one of my **essential places** in the centre for a quick snack or breakfast. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do!

[Facebook](#)

**Address:** C/ Mayor, 10

**Telephone:** 913 66 44 82

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**Flowers are nice (but this  
First Date is better) Part 1**



The moment: Check your phone or ditch all together

I get nervous and will probably continue to get nervous when planning a first date. It's not easy. It can even be daunting. You might have just met the girl/boy on a drunken Saturday night and you find yourself trying to come up with a way to entertain, show off, and come across as interesting and intelligent all at once. So I'm back to getting nervous and with little idea of what might or might now work.

Topics of interest can be hard to find but I believe that the location of the date should tie into the conversation. So rather than the usual routine of restaurant then drinks, this is a bit more dynamic and Madrileño (known for going to lots of places on one night).

The idea behind my method is to take your date to at least 3 different places on a given night. Each place will compliment each other and yet offer a very different component of the night. I have included a route order to help. All the places will be in walking distance from each other.

Part 1 is taking the arts and culture route. Not the Prado and its thousands of archangels, but more modern and contemporary offerings. Something more quirky to get the conversation flowing.

This in no way will guarantee you get laid on the first night. Too many factors depend on that result. However, it should reduce those awkward silent moments because you're grasping for a common topic. Quick tip for the awkward moment, just kiss him/her. There is no perfect moment. Only the courage to move your head forward 5 inches.

**Act One:** [Fundacion Telefonica](#) in Calle Fuencarral 3



Fundación Telefonica

We start in the Fundacion Telefonica on Fuencarral. This gallery is always free and almost always open, except Mondays. It regularly changes the collections and usually has photography showing. I am no art student but when you are confronted with space geese and watching a video of their training to fly to the moon, it makes you smile and realise we live in a great place (Moon Goose Analogue, 2011-1012, Agnes Meyer-Brandis). So quickly check out the website and see

what's on, the stranger the better as you don't need to be knowledgeable. Only a sense of humour is required.

Best time: 18-20h

Metro: Gran Via

**Act Two:** [Aio](#) in Corredera Baja de San Pablo, 25 (mentioned in a [previous article](#))



Now that we have started down the cultural road, we cannot go too formal with the restaurant. It needs to fit the setting but shouldn't cost too much. Aio is an Italian restaurant that offers aperitivo for dinner. Aperitivo means you just buy

drinks at a slightly higher price and are able to eat from the buffet at your heart's content. The food is typical Italian with pizza, pasta and salads on offer. Aperitivo is incredibly popular in Italy since the crisis hit, as a way to entice consumers to leave their homes. You cannot reserve a table but there's always a positive atmosphere.

Best time: 20-22h

Alternative: la Mucca is an excellent restaurant. You can make reservations and also sit outside on the terrace. It is the more high quality and expensive option.

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao

[Facebook](#)

**Act Three:** [Microteatro](#) por dinero in Calle de Loreto Prado y Enrique Chicote, 9



What surprise will await?

You then continue the night by going to Micro Teatro, a bar where you can watch a small theatrical performance for only €4. You can enjoy drinks upstairs and then when your number is

called out, you will descend the stairs into the basement and go into the designated room. All groups are at most 15 people and you come face to face with the actors in the small room. Each little play lasts around 15 minutes, which is good because not all are great. It never fails to create another conversation and even if you only understand 50%, it will still be entertaining.

Best time: 22-24h

Alternative: [Bar Lambuzo](#): an Andalusian tavern offering Micro Teatro every Thursday night from 9pm-11pm in their downstairs wine cellar (21h-23h if you will J!), with sessions every half hour for 4€ (more information in a [previous article](#))

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao

**The Final Act:** [El Perro de la parte de atras del coche](#) (or just el Perro) in Calle de La Puebla, 15,



Once you still have energy and need a club, I recommend El

Perro, which is around the corner. This club is free entry before 24h, otherwise entry is €10. The music varies a lot. Not a huge dancing room means even if it is not packed will have you feeling like enough people are present.

Best time: after 24h

Alternative: Wind down with a cocktail instead of some dance moves at [1862 Dry Bar](#) in Calle Pez 27, which is open to 1.30am and until 2am on weekends. The martini like many of their cocktails is thoroughly worth it.

Metro: Tribunal/Gran Via/Callao



For other great date ideas in Madrid, check out these off-the-beaten-path cultural centres, restaurants and bars!

- [El Matadero](#), a slaughterhouse turned cultural hub
  - [Bar Lambuzo](#), a family-run Andalusian tavern in the centre of Madrid offering activities in their wine cellar, from wine tastings to microteatro!
  - [La Paca](#), the perfect Malasaña bar & café offering movie nights, art, markets, music and Chema!
  - [Mercado de Motores](#), Madrid's coolest vintage & food market that takes over the city's old train museum once a month!
  - [La Buena Cerveza](#), an international and imported beer shop in Madrid offering beer tastings, workshops and more...
  - [Beer State of Mind](#), go on a route to discover Madrid's best craft beer bars, you'll love them all ☐
  - [Martinis, Margaritas and More](#), where to get the best cocktails in Madrid...
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# Martinis, Margaritas and more

Gin tonic, rum with coke and whiskey and ginger ale. All great drinks but very repetitive. What about an Old Fashioned, Vesper Martini or just on the rocks? Sounds much sexier. **Cocktails** are becoming a bigger trend and the quality is improving, as are the **bartenders** standing behind the bar.

So if you want to impress a date or your friends with some classy glasses and just plain **cool-looking cocktail bars**, I present you a list of some very fine venues. These venues have some **excellent bartenders** and the service is guaranteed to be great.

So stop deciding which gin you will pair with what tonic and enter the world of James Bond and Don Draper.

## 1. [Le Cabrera](#) in Bárbara de Braganza, 2



This is one of the best looking and coolest cocktail bars in Madrid. Unofficially also known as the **best cocktail bar in Madrid**. Opened by Diego Cabrera who hails from Quilmes, Argentina, every detail has been tended to. Although Diego has recently left the bar to open a new venue, the bar has still retained all its quality. The idea behind the bar came when Sergi Arola offered Diego, who was looking to have his own

place, to be part of his project to turn the lower half of Le Cabrera into a bar.

This cocktail bar, even for all its beauty, would be worth very little without the men and women standing behind all the bottles and fruit. The **bartenders regularly take part in WORLD CLASS**, a competition of the best bartenders in the world, going through to the finals for Spain.

To get to the **cocktail bar**, you have to go down the stairs when you arrive inside. Upstairs they have a restaurant in which I have never eaten. **All cocktails cost 11€** and are well worth it.

### **Recommended Cocktail: Old Fashioned Bourbon.**

The trick with the **Old Fashioned** is to stir the ice for long enough (approx. 5 minutes) in the glass. The Bulleit Bourbon is a truly excellent one and has recently been launched in Spain.

[Facebook](#)

**Metro:** Chueca / Colon

## 2. [Costello](#) in Caballero de Gracia 10



**Great cocktails and live music!** I just love this combination. On the ground level you will find an excellent bar with house

bartender regularly offering you to challenge him by making up a **cocktail on the spot**. All you have to do is to tell him if you prefer it sweet, sour, etc., and if you want to have a specific ingredient. Then this wizard will create it.

Downstairs is a **basement with a stage and a further bar** (no cocktails). Regularly offering live music of **Spanish bands**, this is what makes Costello unique. One of the **best concerts** I went to in Madrid was with the front man playing the saxophone.

Very easy to find as you start to walk to the massive McDonald's on Gran Via and from there, the **bar is located in a side street**. On weekends, you will want to arrive before 22h or will have to wait a little outside.



**Recommended Cocktail: Make your own! Or choose the  
Missionary's Downfall (picture above)**

[Facebook](#)

**Metro:** Gran Via / Sol

3. [Only You](#) – Barquillo 21



Opened less than 6 months ago, this **hotel is very chic and modern**. The reception area shows a wall of white suitcases for starters, and they have a blue room where a cup of tea or a **Martini** would not be out of place.

What also impresses is the **friendly customer service** and bright back bar lights. You can clearly see the different type of spirits on offer and nothing is hidden away or obscured.

On Thursdays, they offer an **AfterWork** with a different concept and music each week. **The cocktails cost 11€**. The menu offers a large selection of different drinks. I would recommend trying one of their 5 own creations. The menu card will also explain to you what type of flavour the different gins have.

**Recommended Cocktail: Barquillo Boyz**

[Facebook](#)

**Metro:** Chueca

4. [Bon Vivant](#) in Calle San Gregorio, 8



Another **Gastrobar** that recently opened in Madrid. It does concentrate more on being a restaurant but the cocktails have a great flair about them. If you order the **Piña Colada** it will be presented to you in a pineapple—a very real, very big and delicious pineapple.

The **cocktail bar** is located at the back with bright back bar lights. Take a seat at the bar and watch the **bartender create the cocktail** in front of your eyes. There is a **lot of action**; the crushed ice is made by hacking a large block of ice with a pick to pieces. Goggles are not included in the experience.



**Recommended Cocktail: Pisco Sour**

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Metro: Chueca

If you're more of a **beer** person than a cocktail person, check out our posts on **Madrid's rising beer scene**:

- [A Beer State of Mind in Madrid](#), *the best places to get craft beers in the city*
- [La Buena Cerveza](#), *a shop in Chueca where you can find all types of imported and craft beers, as well as do tastings and workshops*

Or check out our **favorite Madrid rooftops** where you can have both!

- [Madrid's Best Rooftops, round 1](#)
- [Madrid's Best Rooftops, round 2](#)

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## Madrid's best rooftop bars, round 2

If you've just read round one of [Madrid's best rooftop bars](#), hope you're ready for round two! This list includes **4 rooftop bars** from different central neighbourhoods of Madrid. Some more upscale than others, these spectacular roofs are perfect havens during the city's hot months to come.



## 4. [Gymage](#); on top of a gym

[Gymage](#) looks like it's in Ibiza, yet it's located atop a normal-looking gym. As you sink into white couches, order from a long list of colorful **cocktails** and feel as though you're on a sandy Mediterranean beach. The first time I went here it was actually pouring rain outside, though the ambience was still fresh and lively. It was quite cozy to be under the glass-covered area while sipping on *mojitos* and *cosmopolitans*, watching the raindrops trickling down the glass.

**Address:** c/ Corredera Baja de San Pablo, 2, 2<sup>a</sup>

**Metro:** Callao

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)



## 5. [El Hotel de las Letras](#); on top of a hotel

Situated right on the *Gran Vía*, **El Hotel de las Letras'** rooftop overlooks all of Madrid's emblematic buildings and provides a much needed escape from the city's busy streets. The hotel is in a beautifully restored building with high ceilings and smart design, and it was one of the first hotels to open its *azotea* to the public, thereby helping start Madrid's rooftop craze. Although prices on drinks are rather high, the views are spectacular, a live DJ spins at night, and the location is simply unbeatable. After a long day of shopping in the city-center, there's nothing better than getting yourself up and away from the hustle and bustle, and having yourself a drink in the sky.

**Address:** *Calle Gran Vía, 11,*

**Metro:** *Gran Vía or Sevilla*

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)



image from [elviajeromadrid.com](http://elviajeromadrid.com)

## 6. [El Viajero](#); on top of a restaurant & bar

For me, **El Viajero**'s quaint rooftop garden stands out for its host neighborhood—**La Latina**—my favorite place to be on Sundays, or any day of the week for that matter. La Latina is

one of **Madrid's oldest neighborhoods** and home to some of the city's most traditional architecture. The nightlife here is always upbeat thanks to an abundance of small bars stacked against each other on famous streets such as *La Cava Baja*, and packed into cute plazas such as *Plaza de la Paja*. Situated on a street corner, **El Viajero** is one of La Latina's most popular restaurant bars, and its rooftop is well-loved. With plants hanging from every corner and views of old balconies and churches, I wouldn't think twice about going here if you find yourself in the area.

**Address:** Plaza Cebada, 11

**Metro:** La Latina

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)



image from: <http://www.room-matehotels.com>

## 7. [Hotel Oscar](#); on top of a hotel & nightclub

In the heart of Chueca, **Hotel Oscar** has hands down the most **modern, fashionable** and **upscale rooftop bar** on the list. Breathtaking views, white chaise lounges and luxurious swimming pools make Hotel Oscar's rooftop a **top hit** among Madrid's in crowd, and a hallmark of Madrid's urban nightlife. The **Oscar Hotel** describes itself with adjectives such as cosmopolitan, friendly, nocturnal and modern, and boasts a contemporary style that's reminiscent of the Bauhaus movement. In other words, it's the hottest place to be when the sun goes down.

*\*the roof opens at the end of April*

**Address:** Plaza Vázquez de Mella, 12

**Metro:** Chueca or Gran Vía

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

**Check out Madrid's best rooftop bars, [round 3!](#)**

**Also feel free to let us know about your favorite Madrid rooftop bar if we've missed any ☐**

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# Lateral, my go-to restaurant

Whenever my husband and I are in the mood to go out for a **good dinner for a good price**, [Lateral](#) is our spot. It's also proven to be the most successful restaurant when it comes to taking out friends and family visiting us in Madrid, which we do quite often.

Before I go on, I must admit that **Lateral** is a restaurant chain (a **chain!**), with a handful of locations. But it's definitely the good kind that makes you rethink what that means. **Spanish cuisine** can be very heavy, especially if you're not used to it. Somehow, however, **Lateral** has taken what I think are **the best parts of Spanish food** and tweaked them to make them pleasant for absolutely **all tastebuds**. That's why this is my go-to restaurant.

In addition, all their locations have spacious *terrazas* (**outdoor seating areas**) with heaters in the winter and fans in the summer, making it hard to resist at any time of year.



You are looking at the best tosta ever... with grilled pork tenderloin and melted brie

My favorite thing to order here is the **tosta de solomillo con queso brie** (pork tenderloin with melted brie on toast). My husband, James, always orders the same, but with **cebolla caremilzada** (caramelized onions). One time, James had his extended family from California visiting; two teenage girls and their parents with several food preferences to take into consideration. Out of all the restaurants we took them to, **Lateral** was by far their favorite. They especially loved the **gazpacho** because they were given the platter of freshly diced vegetables so they could garnish it themselves. And of course, they too fell in love with the **tostas**.

For something light, you should try the **gazpacho, tartar de aguacate con salmon** (fresh avocado topped with salmon, tomato and chives) and the **tosta de salmon con queso brie** (smoked salmon and brie cheese on a slice of toasted bread).



tosta de salmon con brie



tartar de aguacate con salmon

Although the Spanish passion for **croquettes** is not always understood by foreigners, **las croquetas de jamón** are a must here too, as are the **albóndigas** (meatballs). Since I always order them both, last week I decided to venture out a bit and went for the **mini-hamburgers** instead, and wow, that was a good choice. They're served with a reduced **Pedro Ximenez** (sherry) sauce which you can sop up with bread.



mini hamburguesas con reducción de Pedro Ximenez (sherry reduction)

One of our latest and most surprising discoveries was the **tortilla de patata** (Spanish potato and egg omelette). This Spanish staple is so common that it had never occurred to us to order it at **Lateral**. But don't be fooled, please do try their **tortilla de patata** right away. It's really one of the best I've had in Madrid.



the tortilla de patata, a surprisingly delicious Spanish staple: potato and egg omelette

And when it comes to dessert, I recommend the **tiramisu**, the **torrijas** (a very traditional Spanish version of bread pudding; a slice of bread soaked in milk and honey, then fried and topped with whipped cream and ice cream) and you should also try the **apple crumble**. Again, this was a surprise. Never would I have thought that apple crumble could be so good (I've had it many times and it's usually just not my cup of tea. Here, though, it truly was).



Apple and cranberry crumble topped with vanilla ice cream, to die for

To drink, I usually order **tinto de verano** (a great spin on sangría) which is a cold mix of red wine and a sweet Spanish seltzer called **casera**. During the winter, I almost always share a bottle of wine with friends. Last time the waiter recommended the **Finca Vieja Reserva from La Mancha** for 12E, which was very much worth it.

**Price range: 10-20E per person**

[Web](#)

They have various [locations](#) in Madrid, but the two I go to are:

**C/ Fuencarral, 43**

Tel: 91 531 68 77

**Plaza de Santa Ana, 12**

Tel: 91 420 15 82

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# Bar Lambuzo, a family-run Andalusian restaurant offering a mix of activities in their wine cellar

Tucked away in the side streets of Sol, [Bar Lambuzo](#) is an Andalusian oasis in the center of Madrid, lovingly run by a family from **Cádiz** with a history in the food business that goes back to their great grandfather. This family has brought all their favorite recipes and passion from their home to the capital. In fact, the bar makes it a point to sell products from Southern regions such as Cádiz, Seville and Huelva, calling itself an **Abacería**, meaning a bar that sells local products.



the entrance invites you in with thousands of wine bottles decorating the walls

Opened a little over a year ago, **Bar Lambuzo** has already become a beloved neighborhood spot for its authentic cuisine, warm ambience and family-style service; it is a haven for Andalusians living away from home, and for anyone seeking a **true taste of the South in the center of Madrid.**



with friends in Bar Lambuzo's underground cellar, tasting wines from Bodegas Barbadillo

What's more, **Lambuzo** offers **fun activities in the downstairs wine cellar**, from football forums to **wine-tastings** and **olive-oil-tastings**. I've been to the tastings and highly recommend them! At the last wine tasting I went to, we had a presentation from [Bodegas Barbadillo](#), a winery from Cádiz that is actually the house wine at Bar Lambuzo. As usual, we tried three different types—rosé, white and red—the red was really spectacular.

In between each generously poured glass, we were served an assortment of homemade tapas: ***ensaladilla rusa*** (potato salad), croquettes ***de ortiguilla*** (translated into English as "sea anemone", so let's keep it in Spanish), and ***ragu de ternera con arroz*** (veal stew on rice). The tapas were wonderful as always, and the wine portions are best described as **plentiful**. The bottles were left open on the tables, and we were welcome to serve ourselves as much as we liked. Meager portions are unheard of here.



Owner and father Pepe serving at a wine tasting in the cellar

On Thursdays, Lambuzo also holds **Microteatro**: they showcase 30-minute theater performances, from 9pm-11pm. Each session costs **4€**, plus you're more than welcome to grab a drink at the bar and bring it down to the cellar as you enjoy the show, and then go right back upstairs for more when it's over.

As far as the menu goes, father **Pepe** will gladly tell you about the daily specials, and you can't go wrong with anything on the set menu. Their star dishes are from their selection of **fried fish**, a staple in Andalusian cuisine. And you can count on it being good—the first time I went, a guy from the South of Spain popped out of his seat and called up a friend to say: "You won't believe it. I'm in Madrid eating real *pescaito frito*".



assorted pescadito frito



boquerones fritos con limón (fried white anchovies with a squeeze of lemon) and white wine from Bodegas Barbadillo

My husband, James, and I have been going to **Bar Lambuzo** practically since it opened. What keeps us going back so often is the warm service and delicious food and wine (not to mention, really affordable!). Our favorite dishes are their varied **croquetas** (croquettes), **salmorejo** (a cold, tomato and bread-based soup), **arroz con atun rojo y pisto** (*rice with tuna and ratatouille*), and **solomillo al whiskey** (*whiskey pork loin, served on delicious handcut fries*). For dessert, try the

**tocino del cielo** (similar to creme brûlée without the crunchy top), made by Ignacia.



Croquetas



Salmorejo, a cold soup or dip originating from Cordoba,

made with tomato, bread and olive oil, topped with tuna and then drizzled with some more, olive oil



solomillo al whisky (pork tenderloin with roasted garlic, served on top of handcut french fries)



tocino de cielo, made by daughter Ignacia (similar to creme brûlée without the crunchy top layer)

Lambuzo's tapas range in price from 3€-5€, and main dishes average at 11€. For lunch. They offer a menu del día (set lunch menu) for 10€ with a starter, main dish, drink, plus coffee or dessert. And they have an express lunch menu for 8€, including one dish.

If you decide to go to Lambuzo for dinner, I recommend making a reservation—the secret's out and the place gets packed!

## **Info:**

[Facebook page](#)

[Web](#)

**Hours:** Tuesday – Thursday: 13:00 – 16:30, 20:00 – 0:00

Friday – Saturday: 13:00 – 17:30, 20:00 – 1:00

Sunday: 13:00 – 17:30

*Closed on Mondays*

**Price range:** 10-20€ per person

## There are currently two locations:

1. The first **Lambuzo** is the one with the downstairs cellar:

**Address:** Calle de las Conchas, 9

**Metros:** Sol, Callao, Santo Domingo or Opera

2. **Lambuzo** has just opened a second location in [Chamberí](#) which is smaller but still has the same charm and family feel:

**Address:** Calle Ponzano, 8

**Metros:** Iglesia & Alonso Cano