La Pecera, Affordable Fine Dining at Círculo de Bellas Artes

Fancy a decadent meal in a regal setting that doesn't burn a hole in your wallet? We found it! El Círculo de Bellas Artes is one of Madrid's most emblematic buildings and its street-level restaurant, **La Pecera**, serves a top-quality ***menú del día*** every day of the week for just €15 (€17 on the terrace). It includes a starter, main course, drink and coffee or dessert, with a variety of dishes and vegetarian options to choose from. And to top it all off, you'll be enjoying your delicious meal in a stunning dining room with beautifully painted ceilings, elegant chandeliers and excellent service.







James and I went on a Monday for the **menú del día** and we're still amazed that you can get such a fine dining experience for only €15 a person. I kept thinking I wished I'd **brought my parents** here each time they'd come to visit. Like myself, I'm sure a lot of people walk by **La Pecera** with its outdoor terrace and fans in the summertime, and assume it is too exclusive to go in. Wrong! Prices are similar to what you'll find at almost all nice restaurants in Madrid. But you just can't beat this magnificent setting…

Now on to the food. For starters, I had the ***arroz caldoso (rice in broth) with clams and shrimp***, and James had the ***pasta with sautéed vegetables and cuttlefish***. Other starters that caught my eye were the homemade salmorejo, ham croquettes, lentils and duck magret salad… good thing I just went with the waiter's recommendation or else it would've taken me ages to order.





The **arroz caldoso** is prepared in an individual pot and with a deliciously flavored seafood sauce. The portion was generous, so I was happy my main course was also fish. James’ cuttlefish pasta had a surprising Asian flavor, something he loved but didn’t expect given the more traditional setting.

For the main course I had the smoked salmon with vegetables in a coconut sauce, another unexpected mix of flavors.



But I must admit that James' main course took the cake: the **Carrillada Ibérica** (Iberian beef cheeks) with apple quince jelly. The meat was so tender it melted in his mouth and the sauce was so flavorful that all James could say was, "Oh, wow."



All the desserts are homemade and included in the menú del día. James had the apple pie and I had a semi-cold yogurt with a reduced Pedro Ximénez sauce. So good.





As we were leaving, I asked the waiter if there's anything else we should try. He told us we had to come back for the **breakfast menu**, which features a range of options, from the standard toast and freshly-squeezed orange juice to a full-on British-style breakfast and **American-style brunch**.

At night, the restaurant holds live jazz concerts and its **bar offers an impressive selection of over 400 bottles of liquor**; all to please local and foreign palates at a reasonable price, within a gorgeous space that'll make any day feel like a special occasion.



So before or after your next visit to a **museum along Paseo del Prado**, or shopping in the center or whatever brings you and yours to Madrid, you’re in for a treat!


LA PECERA
DEL CÍRCULO DE BELLAS ARTES



Lastly, I can't end this article without reminding you that El Círculo de Bellas Artes has one of the **city's best rooftop bars**, called **Tartan Roof**. Make sure to pop up to take in the view, visit its restaurant (just book ahead of time) or enjoy a cocktail.

Info

- **Website** & **Facebook**
- **Address:** Calle Alcalá 42
- **Metro:** Banco de España or Sevilla
- **Phone:** 677458448 / 913 605 400

You may also like:

- Where to take your mom in Madrid

- A year of Menús del Día in Madrid
- Madrid's best rooftop bars

Egeo, delicious Greek cuisine in Lavapiés

New bars and restaurants seem to open up constantly in the diverse neighborhood of Lavapiés. Among these additions is Egeo, a Greek *souvlakeria* situated on the corner of C/ Ave Maria and C/ San Carlos. Here you'll find several Greek-style street food dishes, including pita sandwich options (€3-4), as well as salads and skewers (€5-7).



Egeo has quickly become my go-to place for take-away in the barrio, due to the quality of their ingredients. Zanas, the proprietor of the restaurant, is from Greece and is pleased that his establishment has been so well received by residents of the neighborhood.



The Greek salad is served with a very generous portion of feta cheese and warm slices of pita bread.



The souvlaki and skewers are hearty and filling. The one pictured here is the “hamburger” gyro – it has both veal and lamb meat, plus a fried egg! There are more traditional gyros on the menu as well, such as pork with tomato, onion and tzatziki. Also worth noting is their vegetarian option, a delicious pumpkin souvlaki.



Sometimes they introduce new menu items, like grilled Haloumi cheese (made from a mix of goat’s and sheep’s milk).



Most of the main dishes come with homemade fries and tzatziki. Otherwise you can order them as sides, as we did. Tip: order the potatoes with feta cheese on top. Amazing.



And what better way to end your Greek meal than with baklava? Plus you have the option of adding vanilla ice cream to it. Can’t say no to that…



**This article was updated in February, 2019*

Info

- **Website**, **Facebook**
- **Address:** C/ San Carlos nº 17 (on the corner of C/Ave María)
- **Metro:** Lavapiés
- **Phone:** 918 26 46 44 –

Perrachica, Prioritize A Pow Wow Here Now

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

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



Photo from Facebook

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

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



Photo from Facebook

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

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

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

Info

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

Martina Cocina: Cosy Coffee Shop in La Latina

A few years ago breakfast in Madrid rarely consisted of more than a cafe con leche in one of the more traditional tapas bars. **Nowadays the coffee shop scene has really taken off**, and it's becoming more and more common to see quirky little cafes

offering brunch, iced coffees and other less traditional options.



Martina Cocina fits perfectly into this category. It's situated in the **La Latina/Tirso de Molina** area, where you can find a whole host of cute coffee shops. My friend Elefteria and I went on a Thursday morning, hoping for brunch and a good place to catch up.



The cafe is dotted with people working on their computers (**they have wifi**), reading, or having breakfast with a friend. The ambience is fairly calm and quiet, and you can choose to

sit on the communal bench in the middle of the room, or to tuck yourself away at the back on the cushioned sofa. I guess **Martina Cocina has gone for the "shabby chic" look**, with bulbs hanging from the ceiling from rope and an eclectic mix of distressed wood furnishings. The look works, and the vibe reminds me of somewhere I would find in my hometown of Brighton.



The cafe only serves brunch on Saturdays, but we still managed to have a great make-shift brunch, as the cafe has a fairly wide range of breakfast options. Each day they make a selection of different **quiches and empanadas**, and we ordered one of each as well as the more traditional pan con tomate and some yoghurt and fruit. Elefteria is a **vegetarian** and there were plenty of options for her to choose from. All of the food was good, and **we would especially recommend trying the cheese**

and onion empanada. Our waitress was really friendly and warm, which made us feel comfortable enough to sit for a while and work.



The cafe specialises in teas (they literally have a whole menu just for tea) and they also serve coffee from all over the world. I should probably also mention the **amazing looking cakes** displayed by the counter – seriously regretting not ordering one!



The cafe isn’t just a breakfast spot; at night they dim the lights and serve beer and wine, making it the perfect place for a relaxed dinner with a friend. It also got pretty busy

around lunchtime, and **their menú del día is a good price, at 10,60 euros for three courses and a drink**.

In short, Martina Cocina offers great service, a comfortable setting and great homemade food in one of the most up-and-coming barrios of Madrid.

Info

- **Adress:** Plaza Cascorro 11 28005, Madrid
- **Email:** info@martinacocina.es
- **Website**
- **Facebook**

Article by Laura Blaskett

Photos by Elefteria Garos

You'll also like these spots:

- La China Mandarina, a flashy new bistro in Plaza Cascorro
- Lamiak, Basque pintxo bar in La Latina
- Cosy Wine Bars in La Latina (with gluten-free options!)
- El Cafelito, a trendy spot for coffee lovers in Lavapiés

De María: Fabulous Argentinian Restaurant

I discovered this fabulous restaurant not too long ago, called **De María**, as two people recommended it to me on separate occasions. Since then it has become one of my go-to spots in Madrid. **De María** is one of those restaurants that always leaves a good impression on everyone who dines there; the food is great, portions are generous and the price is fantastic.

De María is popular to say the least; photographs of famous patrons line the walls: athletes like Beckham and actors like Javier Bardem are just some of the familiar faces who have enjoyed this wonderful restaurant.



De María has several locations. So far I've tried three of them and none was disappointing.

The menu is varied and contains good-quality ingredients. You can choose from a variety of mouth-watering starters, such as "chorizo criollo", or vegetable dishes, pastas and salads and, of course, the traditional Argentine beef. The last time I dined here we weren't very hungry so we opted for a lighter menu. Something that stands out to me about **De María** is that

you always get tasty snacks to nibble on while you wait for your food to arrive.



The **chimichurri and pepper sauces** are a must, as is the **cream cheese spread.** During the summer they usually bring a glass of gazpacho or salmorejo. When it’s cold out, they tend to bring you a creamy vegetable soup – in our case, we got a delicious pumpkin soup.

As a starter, we went for the **grilled Provolone cheese**. It was simply exquisite and even more when covered with one of their tasty sauces. “**Chorizo criollo**” is another must.



After the cheese plate, my friend and I ordered salads; she ordered a **mixed salad** and I had a **caprese salad** – light, fresh, and deliciously paired with a beer and a glass of white wine.





We decided to skip dessert because we weren’t too hungry, but the waiter didn’t seem to care: he brought us each **a glass of tangerine sorbet and a yogurt and mango sauce (on the house!)**, along with their traditional shots.





De María's prices are very reasonable. We paid about €21 each. So if you want to enjoy Argentinian cuisine and a friendly atmosphere, this is your place. It also has the advantage of having several locations so finding a table will not be a problem.

The locations I've visited are:

- *De María: Calle Hortaleza, 81, 28004, Madrid*
- *De María: Calle Preciados 32, 28013, Madrid*
- *De María:Calle Correo 2, 28012, Madrid*

You can find all the locations listed on their **web**

If you want to enjoy more Argentinian restaurants in Madrid, then check out our article on **Casa Federica**.

La Falda, a cheeky new wine bar and restaurant in Lavapiés

When a restaurant welcomes me with a wine list featuring labels like ‘The Madman’s Inn’ and ‘The Perfect Boyfriend’, I’m intrigued. When they accompany it with a quality Thai-Spanish tapa and Motown, I’m hooked.



A deliciously smooth glass of Delito Garnacha

La Falda de Lavapiés is just the kind of tongue-in-cheek tavern that the neighborhood needs, offering quirky bites and a one-of-a-kind wine list to the wide variety of patrons that Calle Miguel Servet attracts. I’ve stopped in for a bite a few

times since it opened in early October, and each time the menu, which only features about ten dishes, has been edited to include the week's freshest ingredients. Aside from the ever-evolving menu, they also feature a distinctive ***menú del día*** plus daily specials that range from ramen to *callos*, highlighting the kind of international versatility that is all too often hard to find in Madrid.

On my most recent visit, we were offered *secreto ibérico* in sweet and sour sauce as our free *aperitivo* as we browsed the menu. The Thai flavors and fantastic cut of Spanish pork paired nicely with the Delito Garnacha wine we had chosen, and by the time we waved down the waitress to order, our appetites were more than piqued.

We chose four small plates to share between the two of us, testing La Falda's version of the Spanish classics of jamón croquettes and cured beef, or *cecina*, and their ability to **fuse Castillian products with Asian flair** in their pork spring rolls and octopus sandwich.



Mouth-wateringly marbled cecina



Vietnamese pork spring rolls

The *cecina* was some of the best I've tried in Madrid, and I consider myself something of a cured beef expert, ordering it any time I spot it on a menu. While all of the flavors were impeccable, the winner had to be the octopus sandwich with its mixture of Thai herbs and Spanish paprika.



Thai-style octopus sandwich

We only stopped ooh-ing and ah-ing over each bite to sing along with the Motown greats that enveloped the room, and reluctantly put our forks down to watch in awe as the couple next to us jumped up to ballroom dance to James Brown's "It's a Man's World."

La Falda is the perfect example of what makes Lavapiés so special: it puts quality at the forefront and serves its food with a wink, but recognizes that in the end, it's only a space for the vibrant community to enjoy life, and does everything it can to facilitate that. Go for a drink or go for a date. Go, eat, watch the people and leave content in mind, body and

soul.

Info

- Facebook
- **Address:** Calle Miguel Servet 4 (Metro Lavapies or Embajadores)
- **Phone:** 911 688 096

Fogg Bar, Spanish Craft Beer and Artisanal Cheese in Huertas

Madrid's craft beer scene has been flourishing in recent years with several bars and vendors popping up to meet an increasing demand. Fogg Bar, a new establishment situated on C/ Moratin in Huertas, stands out for **serving exclusively Spanish-made artisanal beer on tap** along with delicious cheeses.



My friend Diana and I ventured in on a quiet Tuesday night and perched ourselves at the bar. We were able to chat with the charming proprietor, Marisol, who helped us decide which beers to sample. She and her husband opened this bar in September.



They take a lot of pride in **collaborating with smaller breweries and cheese distributors**, often hosting tastings and gatherings where attendees can meet the brewers.



First I sipped #5, the Columbus Goes North, an IPA from La Quince, a brewery in Madrid. This was followed up by #6, the Sweet Milk Stout from Four Lions, a distributor in León.



I was impressed with the presentation of the tapas that accompanied each drink, as well as the **butifarra, a typical Catalan sausage.** I was quite taken by this establishment and recommend it to all craft beer aficionados looking to taste Spanish-made beers.

Info

- **Facebook**
- **Website**
- **Address:** C/Moratin 5
- **Metro:** Anton Martin

For more on Madrid craft beer, check out:

- **Beer State of Mind in Madrid**
- **Heightened Beer State of Mind in Madrid**
- **La Buena Cerveza, all things beer in Madrid**

Casa Picsa, another gem on Calle Ponzano

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



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

In true Ponzano form, **Casa Picsa** has a down-to-earth and comfortable ambience. I'd say it's on the pricier side, but they serve some of the best pizzas I've had in Madrid, with high quality ingredients and great service, too. The décor is modern and simple, with a spacious bar and a small seating area.



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





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

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

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





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

Casa Picsa

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

La Latina's 'seafood party' in Mercado de La Cebada: The place to see and be seen!

Mercados are the heart and soul of any Spanish city. If you want to get under the skin of the place you're visiting, make a beeline for the city's biggest food market. Wander around each section (meat, vegetables, fish, etc.) and you will instantly see what the region's all about. Then make your way to the *mercado*'s busiest bar, order what everyone else is drinking and demand your rightful complimentary *tapa*. If it's something you've never clapped eyes on, even better.



La Latina's **Mercado de la Cebada** is no exception. The place encapsulates Spanish culture to almost cliché levels: **the heart and soul of Madrid is right here.**



Every weekday, **Mercado de la Cebada will sell you fresh produce from all over Spain**. There's also a good selection of local bars in the labyrinth of alleys both upstairs and downstairs, and even a few clothes stalls, toyshops and cobblers for some of the market's more devout punters.



But then, every Saturday at lunchtime, [Mercado de la Cebada](#) transforms into what I will describe as nothing less than a **seafood party**.







The atmosphere is electric; iced molluscs and pulpo are flowing, and groups of friends doing what they do best:

sharing food and belly-laughing, plastic cup of valdepeñas in one hand, half-eaten shrimp in the other.





Grab a few friends and get there **no later than 2:30pm**. Find one of the aproned chaps hovering in front of his stall, affectionately touching everyone with his fishy hands, and place your order per *ración* or by weight.



Before you take your polystyrene plates to the nearest paper-covered stack of crates, don't forget to pick up your **complimentary bottle of wine or cans of beer. Yeah… COMPLIMENTARY!** Due to licensing rules, these shops can't sell drinks. I imagine there's a slight markup on the prices of seafood but, having said that, **the prices are some of the lowest I've seen in Madrid, and the quality is some of the best**.

There are cups, serviettes, toothpicks and mussel 'spives' (spoon-knives) strategically strewn around the stalls – a seafood spectacular with no frills, and all the better for it.

Info

- Web – Facebook

Address: Plaza de la Cebada, La Latina, 28005

Metro: La Latina (right outside)

Opening hours: Mon – Fri 9am-2pm / 5-8:30pm; Sat 9am-3pm

Another soulful neighbourhood market, not too far away, is Mercado de San Fernando in Lavapiés

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Ramen Kagura, Madrid's (almost) perfect ramen bar

Located on Calle de Las Fuentes, in between metro Opera and Plaza Mayor, lies a Japanese restaurant serving **unbelievably tasty ramen, with heaping portions at an affordable price**. I'm tempted to call **Ramen Kagura** perfect, yet the service could have been much better. To be fair, the food did come out in a split second after ordering.



I went to **Ramen Kagura** for the first time on Saturday with a big group of friends, three of whom are Japanese (also the ones who recommended we go here). Almost everyone at our table of seven had also dined at Madrid's most celebrated ramen bar, **Chuka**, where you basically have to fight to get a table. Naturally, a conversation comparing the two ramen bars did come up. We concluded that **Chuka** has better-quality ingredients and a chic décor. But when it comes down to it, **Ramen Kagura's noodles simply hit the spot;** plus it wins in terms of convenience (getting a table is easy) and **bang for your buck** (for under €10 you get a delicious and very filling meal).



You can order from several different types of ramen bowls, mostly made with pork-based broth, vegetables, and your choice of shoyu or miso sauce. Broth-less, cold and vegetarian versions are also available, as well as rice dishes and sushi (which we didn’t try). **Each bowl comes with your choice of 100, 200 or 400 grams of ramen noodles,** prices ranging accordingly from around **€8-11**. I ordered the 200-gram bowl and it was gigantic. James and Edison ordered the 400-gram bowls. Needless to say, they were very happy campers. We devoured everything and there were no complaints regarding portions, taste or price.



I’ll let the poor service slide. Perhaps we just went on an off day. Since the food was oh so good, we’ll be going back again and again and again…

Info

Web & **Facebook**

Address: Calle de las Fuentes, 1

Metros: Opera or Sol

Hours: Monday through Sunday: 1pm-4:15pm / 8:30pm-11:45pm

More Asian restaurants featured on Naked Madrid:

- Kintaro – Oy Vey
- Sumo – This Japanese restaurant's name says it all
- Tuk Tuk – Asian-inspired street food
- Chuka Ramen Bar – Madrid's hottest ramen restaurant
- Hattori Hanzo – Japanese food, straight up. No sushi.
- Nippon 2 – top quality yet affordable sushi, finally!
- Soy Kitchen – a fusion of Asian flavors
- Karachai – A cozy and elegant Thai restaurant in Alonso Martínez