Federal Café Madrid – Hipster in a Very Good Way

Not too long ago, Madrid's breakfast scene was limited to traditional croissants, toast and churros. Now, however, it's rivalling cities like New York and London. How did this happen so quickly? Don't know. But boy are we loving it… One of the **best places for brunch in Madrid** is **Federal Café**, which may look like a stylish restaurant in Soho, but it's actually located in Malasaña, near **Conde Duque**.





Last Sunday, I went for brunch with three lovely ladies – **Cat**, Aifric and **Helen**.



We all started with fresh smoothies. Mine had pomegranate and organic apple juice – health in a glass.



To eat, I ordered toast with avocado, poppyseed and lemon.



Aifric got the same, although with poached eggs (smart choice).



Helen had a veggie burger with freshly squeezed orange juice.



Then there’s Cat, who wins first prize by a landslide with her full-on plate of poached eggs, bacon, potatoes, sausage and toast. Damn.



The first time I went to **Federal** was actually over a year ago

with my friend, Nina (who's sitting in the window looking at the little kid). We stumbled upon **Federal** while strolling around and were instantly lured in by the comfy window seats that allowed us to dangle our legs onto the sidewalk.



We started with a coffee.



That ended quickly. The menu featured such a wide variety of dishes that were chock full of local, organic and fresh ingredients – we just couldn’t help but order something to eat. I got a sandwich with feta cheese, spinach and olive tapenade. Nina had a burger. Simple but so good!





So if you’re looking for a hip place with healthy food in the center of Madrid, I think you’ve found it!



Info

Web
Facebook
Address: *Pl. de las Comendadoras 9*
Metro: *Noviciado*

You may also like:

Best Brunch on a Budget in Madrid

Little Big Café – my little big pick-me-up

Toma Café – Fuel Up, Feel Hip

Mamá Campo – a Restaurant/Market of Organic Delights in Plaza Olavide

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Juanita Cruz – The Perfect Date Destination (ditch the movie and just do dinner!)

For someone who spends pretty much every waking (non-working hour) flitting back and forth between Chueca and Malasaña, I disappointingly don't actually live in either barrio *luckily this is soon to be rectified and therefore watch out for a spike in Gin sales along Calle Espiritu Santo.

Therefore, it's always beyond exciting when I discover, or in this case I'm introduced to, a little gem in my barrio which is way up North in the Castellaña neck of the woods. I've sampled brunch at my local, Pipa & Co on more than one

occasion and it’s never failed to please but I’d never noticed what lurked below; **Juanita Cruz**. Discreetly hidden under a little arch is a bar/restaurant which can only be described as feeling half like a speakeasy and half like the kind of refurbed warehouse bar, that most of East London is made of. On entrance I basically wondered why I’d never been there before upon spying a place that is right up my street in terms of décor and drinks.



The night that I first went was perfect in terms of both company and the cosy vibe that was largely created by the amazing singer who was warming up her vocal chords quite happily in the corner. Turned out we’d stumbled across an open mic night, which completed the laid back and low key atmosphere perfectly. Cocooned on the kind of battered old sofa that I wouldn’t mind for my new flat, it was the perfect place to while away a few weeknight hours (although I’ve also been told that it gets pretty lively come the weekends when the Spaniards really let their hair down, obvs).

The food menu is definitely worth more than a glance with treats that won’t break the bank but they may have you booking in a spinning class the following day; provolone, carpaccio and the like were all delish.



It’s a clandestine feeling gaff with echoes of post-civil war Spain (according to the blurb on their website) but what I do know is that they sell **G’Vine**, they played good tunes and as far as a **first date venue** goes, it wasn’t too shabby for me.

Save pennies for a cab, take a trip up North. Oh and pack your dancing shoes, come Friday and Saturday it’s time to show off your moves.

Info

Facebook
Web
Address: Paseo de la Habana, 105
Phone: 914 51 17 76
Metro: Cuzco & Colombia

Photos from Facebook

Also check out:

Gin O'clock – Time for Madrid's finest G&T's

El Patio del Fisgón – Feel like You're in Narnia

1862 Dry Bar – Perfection Served in a Glass

Best Date Ideas in Madrid – 3-part series

El Patio De Fisgon – Feel like you've discovered Narnia

My blog posts would imply that I pretty much do nothing but eat in Madrid but I assure you that's not the case. Also ranking high on my to-do's are drinking, tanning, exercising (this is a new found passion that's surprised me more than most) and just general all round gallivanting… But it has to be said that going out for dins is one of my very favourite pastimes and I never need much encourage to ditch home cooking in favour of being waited on. To this end, I am constantly on the prowl for somewhere that will satiate my appetite and not break the bank.

This leads me onto my current fave, **El Patio De Fisgon**. Not an obvious choice for lovers of Malasaña/Chueca as it tucked away on a swanky side street just off of Calle Ortega y Gasset (but it's most definitely worth the 5 or so euros in a cab) to find yourself in what felt like something out of The Secret Garden. *All twinkly lights, scented candles and the like – you can

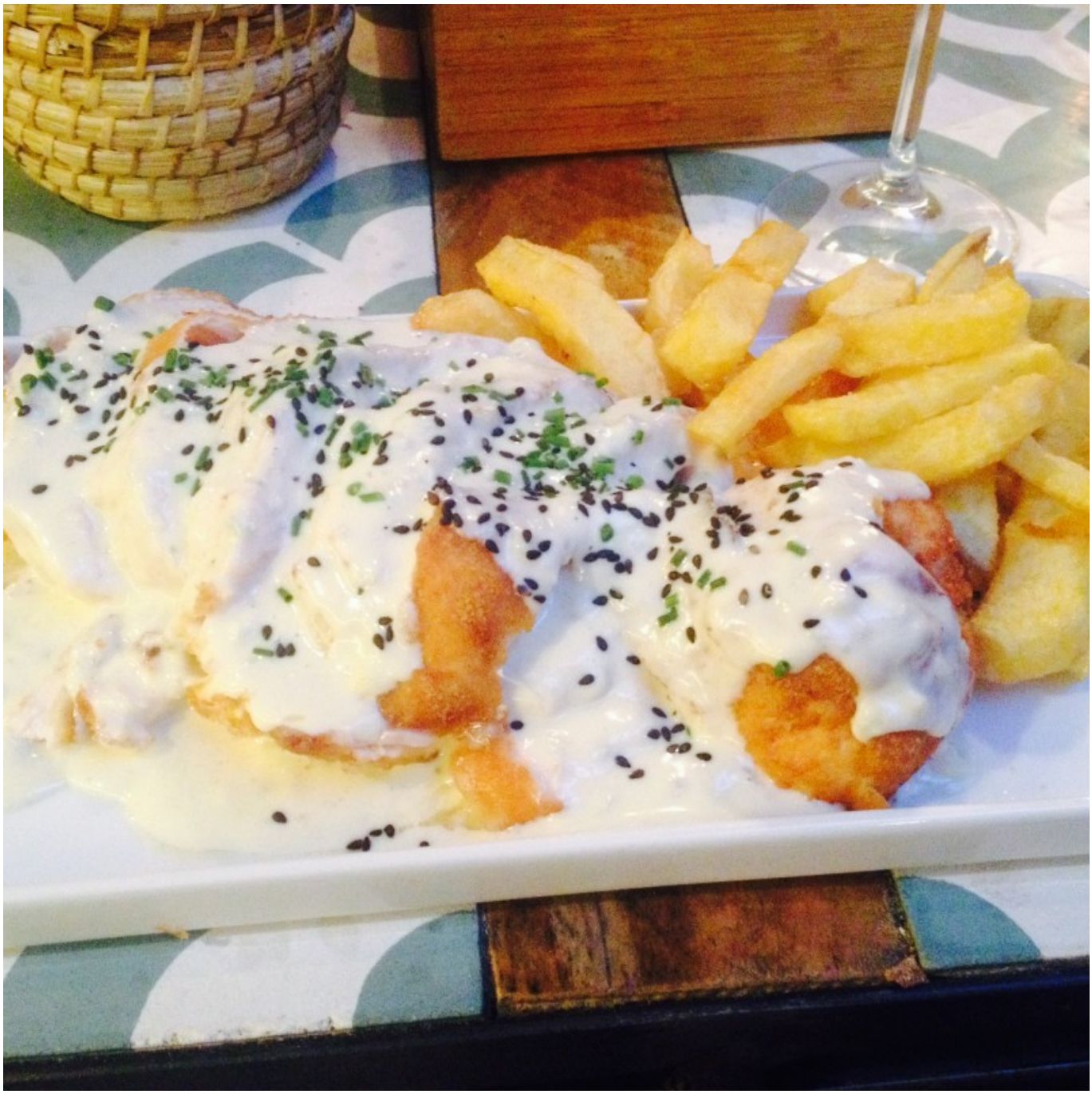
picture the scene.



The quest for somewhere simple yet swanky came about upon realising that I was hostessing three rather glam PR gals for the weekend, whose tastes are definitely more Balthazar than Burger King. Suffice to say El Patio impressed on all counts. Gorgeous food (and hefty portions), attentive staff (but not claustrophobic-ally so), wine in abundance (and cheap at that) ensured that my crown as a Madrid aficionado remained intact. We ate, drank and were merry for the grand total of 70 euros; coming from London where a soggy sarnie can set you back a fiver this was beyond bargainous. Post dinner drinks followed

at the similarly gorgeous Punk Back which is sadly not quite as purse friendly – but equally swish. We're not talking the need to remortgage a casa for a copa but it's definitely at the higher end of the scale price for Madrid. Saying that, if you like to sip your gins surrounded by the beautiful people then it's worth letting your wallet take a hit.





El Patio wise, I recommend requesting a table out on the terrazza to fully enjoy the ‘see and be seen vibe’ and let’s face it, we all look that little bit better when illuminated by the soft focus glow of a fairy light. So what’s been one of my best kept secrets looks set to be no more. I suggest you book a table and for the record, the rollitos artesanos de pato are worth every gluttonous cal.

Slight disclaimer alert Having recently gone back for a second visit, I have to red flag that the 8.30pm dinner sitting results in your being kicked off your table (rather

unceremoniously) by 10pm so defo book a later dins if you can…

Info

> ***Facebook***
> ***Address:*** *Calle de Don Ramón de la Cruz, 26, 28006 Madrid*
> ***Phone:*** *915 77 63 74*

Maya, a cozy Taqueria & Mexican product store in Huertas

Maya is a new Mexican establishment, situated on C/Echegaray in Huertas. The owner & chef, Jose Manuel, hails from Mexico City. Jose previously worked in **the hidden burrito shop in Lavapies**, notably wearing a customized chef's hat. We met during his tenure there and became fast friends due to his approachable nature. After having not seen him in several months, I was taking a stroll through Huertas with a friend and we both noticed a Taqueria. She and I pondered whether it was new or had always been there. Jose surfaced and summoned us to the bar, inviting us to a drink in order to catch up and show us his new business endeavor. Jose's grand ambition is to make **quality Mexican products** more accessible to consumers in Madrid.


VIVACE


El Sabor
Rojas Rojas
Chipotles
Salsa Jalapeños
LA MOREÑA
chiladas



Knowing that Americans are always on the prowl for new places to satisfy their taco cravings, I took it upon myself to do my community a service and sample a handful of Jose's creations in order to share my findings.

First I sampled the *taco de pastor*, cilantro and onion with green lime.



The second specimen was *Cochinita de Pibil* with achiote.



The last taco was *Fajitas Alambre de ternera*



All of these treats were followed by a Tamale served on a plantain leaf.



They were all yummy, my favorite being the *taco de pastor*. I found everything about the establishment quite familiar. Their regular, a pipe-smoking elderly writer, took pride in presenting me with a poetry anthology that had his face on the back cover. This location is young, and thus the experience is quite personalized. For those of you who are seeking a venue for your taco Tuesdays, or a place to find unique Mexican ingredients to be used in your culinary endeavors at home, I strongly recommend this establishment.

Info

Facebook
Where: *Calle Echegaray 29*
Metro: *Anton Martin*
Contact: *600 68 73 51*

Also check out:

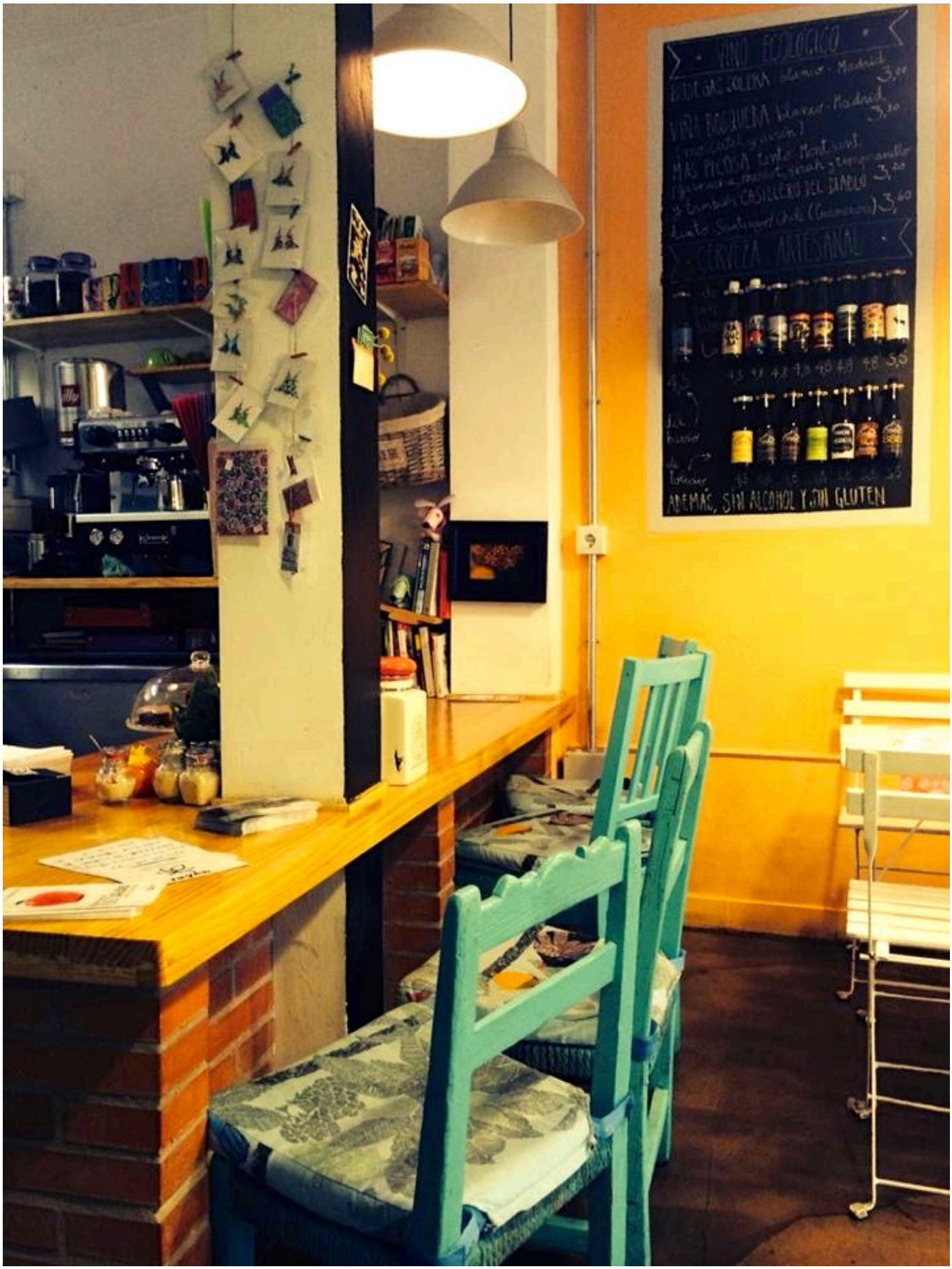
Best Mexican Joints in Madrid

Perdizione – a hidden hole-in-the-wall burrito bar in Lavapiés

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Rayen Vegano – A Vegan Gem You Can’t Miss Out On

This was the first vegan restaurant I’ve visited in Madrid and to this day it remains my favourite. Whilst the food is moderately priced, it’s certainly unique. And you absolutely have to try the sharing plate of vegan cheeses!



Rayen Vegano can get surprisingly busy, so make sure you come during early lunch hours if you haven’t made a reservation.

Their menu changes daily and they offer homemade bread, cakes and, of course, fresh food.



Even their food changes daily – I've ordered 'Brunchito' twice and both times the plating was completely different, which is something I've never seen before, but it's welcoming. The waitress speaks English (you can even get the English version of their menu) and the restaurant is extremely passionate about vegan ethics – it shows even through their wifi password.


HAPPY HOUR
PARA PERROS

Everything is cute here, from the little decorative touches on each table to the ‘*Happy hour para perros*‘ sign outside with a dog bowl full of water and their mission statement – “Change the world, become a vegan.”



And the best part? All vegan and vegetarian restaurants in the area support each other. In front of Rayen Vegano you’ll be able to find a bunch of business cards from other restaurants and shops along with information about meditation and yoga classes.

Info:

Facebook
Address: *Calle Lope de Vega 7*

Phone: *675382072*

By Mandy Lutman

El Jardín Secreto de Salvador Bachiller – A Secret Rooftop Paradise on Calle Montera

Among the constant crowds along Calle Montera, there is a hidden little paradise nestled atop the rooftop of an accessories shop: **El Jardín Secreto de Salvador Bachiller**. Access to this magical new **rooftop bar** is still a secret, so enjoy it before the word gets out.

At night, the shop is empty and the security guard invites you to take the elevator, which makes you feel just like you're in a James Bond movie. As you walk in, you no longer feel as though you were in the city centre but rather, in a lush and soothing garden. The place offers a romantic atmosphere with flowers everywhere and dim lighting.



The cocktail menu offers creative drinks, ranging from a **Mango Margarita** to a **Berry Mojito**, which sets them apart from more traditional bars in the area. Also, candies are served with your cocktails and a bowl of nuts with your wine.



Image from **FB**

As for the food, it’s healthy and served with multi-grain bread. Perfect for breakfast or a *meriend*a (afternoon snack). And for dessert, I highly recommend the exquisite *Coulant de Chocolate* with passion fruit.



Image from **FB**

The prices are rather high but the experience is unique and worth it. A terrace tax of 20% will be added to orders.

Info

- **Facebook**
- **Address:** Calle Montera 37
- **Phone:** 915 31 02 60

Also check out:

- **Discover the Hat's Secret Rooftop Bar. You're welcome.**

- Madrid’s Best Rooftop Bars, Round 1
- Madrid’s Best Rooftop Bars, Round 2
- Madrid’s Best Rooftop Bars, Round 3

Lady Madonna – take a day off the diet

It’s very easy when living in Madrid to slide into a certain pattern and become all about the booze. Wine’s cheaper than water (seriously, I’ve paid more for a Perrier than I have for a Pinot on more than one occasion). Cañas replace coffee and without realising, you’ve wound up on an unintentional liquid diet that’s bad for both your purse strings (as well as your head).



Having said that, there are times when you want to chow on down without breaking the bank and dress up for dinner – **Lady Madonna** has got this nailed. Tucked away on Calle Orellana 6 (a stone's throw from Alonso Martinez metro) it is a little oasis amongst the local eating options that include Burger King *that said there's a time and place for a Whopper but maybe not on a Friday night!

First discovered on a random Thursday whilst on a quest for a trendy *terrazza*, I experienced what can only be described as the **best cake that I have ever had in Madrid**. It involved Chocolate. It involved Guinness. Weird you say? Nope, more like a party in your boca and everyone should be invited. There literally aren't enough superlatives to describe its deliciousness – instead I suggest you order it on arrival and wrap up your dins with another one come desert time (again, speaking from experience).



Not only is the food borderline orgasmic (not just my opinion, it’s been uttered by my dining companions if I seem too easily pleased) but the décor is literally like something torn from the pages of Wallpaper Magazine. In other words, not a piece of Ikea furniture in sight and somewhere that I’d quite happily move into after kicking out time. You’re greeted with gorgeous tiled floors, plates that almost got swiped and popped into my handbag and lighting that seemed to create an Instagram filter effect which is never a bad thing in my book. **Lady Madonna** is completely cornering that New York warehouse vibe.



I’m steadily working my way through the menu but the following things stood out as being calories well spent: the **Gambones a la Brasa** managed to tempt a confirmed carnivore into seafood submission, whereas the **Ensalada de Burrata** even had me eating my greens. If like me, dinner isn’t a delight without some decent red action fear not, **a glass of Rioja is “una ganga” at 2 euros 50 a pop**.



Gambones a la brasa – grilled shrimp

I was warned by the hip (but not scarily so staff) that if you want a table on a Saturday night you need to be booking up about a week in advance. My concern is that after a rave review that might up the ante to a fortnight. Either way, Lady Madonna is the kind of place that cocoons you with its culinary chicness but has you pining for your Oysho jammies by the time you pay the bill (or maybe that's just me/an attack of my eyes being bigger than my belly!).

Try it, you might like it.

All images from Lady Madonna

Lady Madonna

- **Facebook & Instagram: @ladymadonna_restaurante**
- **Address:** Calle Orellana, 6
- **Metro:** Alonso Martínez

- **Phone:** 915 02 41 82

The Quest for Bagels in Madrid: 5 Locations Offering the Elusive Comfort Food

Bagels were a staple of my life back home in the outskirts of New York City—**the inaccessible status of bagels was the only demerit against Spain** in an earlier draft of my "Should I Move to Spain" pros & cons list. I've craved them badly during my time abroad, to the point where I have even asked my closest friend from home, Jake, to allow me to witness his consumption of authentic bagels via Skype. Bagels are a foreign concept here—whenever I'm describing them to Spanish folks, they can't visualize the distinction from a donut or *roscon de reyes.*

However, due to **Madrid's growing American expat population**, I held out hope that opportunist business owners would step up and fill the circular void. The ensuing investigation had me scouring the city, running down every lead and pressing on every underworld connection. These are my findings: I strongly advise purists to **manage their expectations** when sampling imitations of such an esteemed snack from the old country.

So here, my friends, is a list of Madrid's bagel joints. In true form, I've saved the best bite for last…

1) Restaurante Olsen – Calle del Prado 15

(CLOSED DOWN)

The pursuit began with a rocky start for me and my friend Julie. Although the servers at Restaurante Olsen, a Scandanavian restaurant near the Prado, were kind enough to give us their leftover “bagels” for free, they weren’t at all what we were hoping for—in fact I would go as far as to call these circular bread sticks **an abomination of nature.** This restaurant, which has since closed down, established the precedent low standard to which the ensuing specimens were held.



2) La Bicicleta Cafe – Plaza San Ildefonso, 9

This popular hipster cafe in Malasaña has a few bagel sandwiches under the display case by the bar. They’re **a bit**

too dry (and expensive) for my liking. Served with arugula and *jamon,* **this sandwich might as well be served on any other type of bread.**



3) La Libre – Calle de Argumosa, 39

This cafe/bookshop in Lavapies offers a broad variety of *tostadas*, one of which is called "El Larson." The bagels are imported from England and kept frozen, served to diners with cream cheese and lox and little bits of avocado. Due to its status as the bagel most accessible to me within my *barrio*, this is my default when the craving overwhelms me. Although not as crisp as I would like, it does the job adequately. The **added sesame seeds** are indeed a pleasant touch.



4) Mür – Plaza Cristino Martos, 2

A large and comfortable brunch spot, Mür offers an 8.50€ euro “American” breakfast entailing a toasted bagel sandwich with cream cheese & lox, steak fries, and a cup of coffee. This location earns points for its product’s toasty crispness and presentation but loses points for its small size. The first bite is accompanied by the **familiar crunch sound.**



5) J&Js Books and Coffee – Calle del Espíritu Santo, 47

This popular expat bar/English language bookstore swiftly cornered the market with their vast selection of homemade bagels. **The only known establishment that manufactures bagels from scratch,** it is apparent that they have a concise understanding of both the product and the expectations held by the consumer. Their offerings are flavorful, especially when served fresh during their weekend brunch. The pictures below document the process in which their bagels are produced.







Have I missed anything in my investigation? Feel free to share the details of any other Bagel providers in the comments section!

Also check out our series on Madrid's best cafe-bookstores!

Round 1

Round 2

Pasta Mito, an Italian Eatery in Mercado de Chamartín – a gem!

In **Mercado Chamartin**, in the central aisle on the lower floor, you'll find a brand new, chic little Italian eatery called **Pasta Mito**. All food is freshly prepared in the on-site kitchen, and the owners definitely know what they're doing. Also, the brilliant thing about eateries in neighborhood markets is that the ingredients they cook with tend to come directly from the market's food stalls, so at the same time as being **top-quality stuff**, eating there is great for local businesses too.



My fella and I sat in the cosy 3-tabled dining area and, based on enthusiastic recommendations by the owner, we had… (ima write a list):

- *Glass of the house white each*
- *Complimentary and HUGE antipasto appetiser*
- *Burrata Caprese with fine green pesto*
- *Truffle ravioli with only butter sauce and fresh parmesan sprinkled on top*
- *Tiramisu in a cup*
- *All accompanied by a fresh basket of focaccia*



The food was absolutely incredible and plenty between us – we’re glad we shared! The bill came to **€26** exactly, which felt

very reasonable for the quality of food and wine and friendly service.

Whilst we were sat there, we saw lots of people ordering to take away. Great idea too, but the dining experience was way more fun.



The owners are a husband and wife duo. She's Italian, he's Spanish and speaks fluent English. We got chatting and he told us that he spent 4 years cooking under Heston Blumental, then worked in one of the UK's top restaurants for a few more years before coming back to Madrid.

I asked him about future plans and he said that next month, they're expanding into the veg stall just opposite, which will mean **an extra 6 or so tables**. Having only opened in September

’14, they’ll be staying put in **Mercado Chamartin** for now as the business is going well and they seem to love what they have.

Pasta Mito is by far the best Italian food we’ve had in Madrid yet – **it’s really quite a gem**.

By Leah Pattem

Info

Mercado de Chamartín: **Facebook** & **Web** *(calle Bolivia 9 <m> Chamartín)*

Pasta Mito: **Facebook** *(inside the Mercado de Chamartín, central aisle, lower floor)*

Another market we recommend:

Mercado de San Fernando in Lavapiés – the real food emporium!

Mamá Campo: A restaurant-market of organic delights in Plaza de Olavide

Plaza de Olavide is one of Madrid’s hidden gems. Situated in the heart of Chamberí between the Iglesia, Bilbao, and Quevedo Metro stops, it’s a perfect place to sit on spring days or balmy summer nights. This leads me to Mamá Campo, another one

of those places I discovered thanks to an exquisite brunch photo on the Cup of couple Instagram account. Mamá Campo has an organic market as well as a restaurant and children's store/center.

The Mamá Campo restaurant serves all ecological products, epitomizing the eco trend all over the city. One Friday in between doctor's appointments, interviews, and private lessons, I took advantage of the first of many sunny Madrid spring days to FINALLY get a chance to eat lunch at Mamá Campo.



The décor inside the restaurant is very cool. There’s reusable wood and other products, making you feel one with nature. There are communal tables (where I sat as I was flying solo), very reminiscent of Le Pain Quotidien, as well as normal tables for groups of friends. The best part about sitting at the communal table was being perched high above on the stool (especially choice for taking pictures with my iPhone).



As for for choice of dish, I ordered a grilled sea bass filet with sorted vegetables. I was also given an aperitivo of salmorejo with some delicious whole-wheat bread. I was

extremely satisfied with my choice and can’t wait for my next visit.

But, like I said, the magic of Mamá Campo isn’t just that it’s a restaurant. The market, on the part of Calle Trafalgar more towards the Bilbao Metro stop just off of Olavide, has a great selection of products to enjoy at home.



As you walk in, the whole left wall is full of a whole range of produce. You can also buy a sample of organic breads that look absolutely amazing, as well as bio embutidos, sauces, rice milk, almond, coconut milk, and more.



The aesthetic is very similar to the restaurant, with minimalist painting on the walls, splashes of color, wooden cartons to store all of the produce (as you can see here), and classic woven baskets to store your wares. And it looks like that this could have been kale…



which for this New Yorker is definitely great news if kale can be found.

The next time you discover Olavide on a sunny day and are looking for some organic produce or a delicious, sustainable meal, then Mamá Campo is your go-to place in this little hidden rincón of Madrid.

Web
Facebook

Restaurante Mamá Campo
Plaza de Olavide
28010 MADRID
Metro: *Iglesia, Bilbao, or Quevedo*
Tel.: 91 447 41 38

Mamá Campo
Calle Trafalgar, 22
28010 MADRID

Metro: *Bilbao*