Krachai, a Cozy & Elegant Thai Restaurant in Chueca

Krachai is yet another seemingly upscale establishment that was first introduced to me by my Dad's friend, Rafael. This fantastic Thai restaurant, situated near metro Alonso Martinez, offers a satisfying 13€ *menu del dia.* My friend Diana and I have eaten here on a handful of special occasions; somehow each time it slips my mind to reserve a table. This is strongly advised due to the location's popularity, otherwise diners are condemned to wait in line. The wait was worth it today. This spot is cozy, dimly lit, and has two floors. The ambiance is calming and the servers are highly attentive and efficient.



Diana and I were well aware of what we would be ordering off

of their *menu del dia* by the time we were seated. We both got the mixed appetizers which consists of the **chicken and peanut sauce skewer,** a spring roll, and a crispy shrimp dumpling. Diana followed this up with the spicy **red curry with chicken strips**, vegetables and jasmine rice. My main course was a **yellow curry with prawns** and vegetables. I am a huge fan of shrimp in all of their various forms.







I voiced that all of my life decisions were validated due to their preceding the moment where this **indulgent feast** was in front of me. By the time the rice expanded in our stomachs, our desserts arrived. I had a scoop of strawberry ice cream, and Diana a small flan, in order to end our experience on a sweet note. I strongly recommend this location and its *menu del dia* when you have a craving for Thai cuisine.

Facebook
Website
Address: *C/ Fernando VI, 11*
Metro: *Alonso Martinez*
Contact: *91 833 65 56*

More Asian restaurants featured on Naked Madrid:

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

- ***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***

Gibraltar, an authentic Moroccan restaurant in Lavapies

My close friend Kameron "el ProfeSoul" Sterling has been an excellent resource to me in my mission to shed light on the endearing establishments hidden within our multi-cultural barrio of Lavapies. "It's all about the fellas," he said charismatically as he led me into Gibraltar, a charming Moroccan restaurant situated on C/ Casino by the Embajadores park. Entering this location was akin to leaving Europe and entering Morocco—the authenticity made visible by its lively crowd of Moroccan gentlemen who were sipping tea, bantering in French and casually shooting the shit.



Kameron was greeted warmly by the head server, who presented us with **delicious mint tea.** Kam is well acquainted with this establishment considering its essentially in his backyard. He recommended that I try the **al harira,** a thick, spicy soup containing chicken, tomatoes and ginger with other herbs.


Bienvenida
Welcome



This was followed up by our respective main courses: a **Tajine of chicken with prunes, almonds**, egg, and vegetables & a **Tajine of Lamb, couscous and vegetables**. Both of these Tajines were phenomenal, with their spectrum of fresh flavors dancing on our palates.



The staff of this establishment are extremely amicable and efficient. The head server, who was quite vocal to me about exactly how fond he is of Kam, was able to guess correctly based on my accent that I'm from New York. I felt very much accepted as an outsider.

Kam and I left this establishment incredibly full and pleased with ourselves—**the check was 11€ each**. I strongly recommend this establishment to any adventurous eaters who are searching for a **colorful window into a completely different world**.

Info

Address: *Calle Del Casino 16*
Metro: *Lavapies, Embajadores*
Phone: *606 78 75 67*

Also check out:

- Baobab, an Authentic Senegalese Restaurant in Lavapiés
- Tribuetxe, a Basque Pintxo Bar in Lavapiés
- Lavapiés and its market: the real food emporium!
- Badila – you need this restaurant in your life

Restaurante Badila, you need this place in your life

Restaurante Badila is my number one. My favourite place to eat in Madrid. I've flirted with other restaurants during the years I've lived here but I keep coming back to this one, it's just SO good. I've dragged pretty much all of my visitors here (some of them multiple times) and Badila never fails to disappoint. It's really only taken me so long to write a post about it because I was wrestling with the idea of whether to share Madrid's best-kept secret, but here we go. The secret is out.



This gem of a restaurant is tucked away behind Plaza Tirso de Molina, on the corner of Calle Cabeza with Calle San Pedro Mártir. Its interior is light and airy, with simple decor and a host of delicious wines on display. There’s only room to squeeze in about ten tables, so the atmosphere is informal and unpretentious, with lovely owner Miguel waiting on tables himself. But the real star of the show here is, of course, the food. Oh, the food.

The menu consists of updated versions of Spanish classics, with a smattering of international dishes, all based on

the tried-and-tested formula: simple, home-cooked fare prepared with the freshest ingredients. Miguel shops around for the best stuff on offer each morning, so the menu changes from day to day and from season to season. **It's a *menú del día* format for both lunch and dinner**, with around six or seven options for *primeros* and the same for *segundos* – far too much choice for someone as indecisive as me!



On our most recent visit, my boyfriend ordered the ***ensalada mixta con frambuesas y queso de cabra*** (mixed salad with goat's cheese and raspberries) to start, whereas I opted for the ***salteado de espárragos con carabinero y crema de lechuga*** (a divine concoction of asparagus, red shrimp and lettuce – it needs to be tasted to be believed!).



For my second course, I went with my old favourite: ***escalopines al cabrales*** (pork fillet with *cabrales* cheese sauce). I must have ordered this dish over a dozen times at Badila but I can’t help myself, it’s just so damn tasty.



My boyfriend chose the ***redondo de ternera a la austriaca*** (stumped on how to translate this one, very tender veal in a delicious sauce?!) which he hadn't tried before. Initially I told him off for ordering something fairly unphotogenic but quickly forgave him because it tasted absolutely amazing and I ended up stealing half of it.



Naturally, we managed to squeeze in dessert. I had a slice of wonderfully gooey chocolate cake and my boyfriend went for his favourite ***cuajada de queso*** (describing this as milk curd just doesn’t do it justice) which I didn’t even manage to get a photo of because he ate it so quickly.



The *menú del día* costs just under 14 euros per person and is worth every penny. The portions are very generous and everything is well thought-out and unbelievably tasty. Even the bread here is delicious, unlike in many Spanish restaurants. The price of the lunchtime menu goes up to just under 18 euros at weekends and the evening menu is slightly more expensive at around 20 euros.

Badila is open every day for lunch from 14:00 – 16:30 and on Friday and Saturday evenings for dinner from 21:00 – 00:00. They only take reservations for dinner, so if you go at lunchtime I'd recommend either going early or going late otherwise you might have to wait for a table. As you'd expect, a place this good does get pretty busy!

Info

- **Facebook**
- **Address:** Calle de la Cabeza 7
- **Metro:** Tirso de Molina

- **Telephone:** 914 29 76 51

The Little Big Café: My little big pick-me-up

I think it was first on Instagram when I saw something from Cup of Couple. It was a fantastic breakfast setup with an exquisite-looking cup of coffee. Then Lovely Pepa posted another. Ever-curious, I clicked on top of the pin and found the address. What luck! It was only five minutes from my apartment. So one Sunday afternoon, I entered **The Little Big Café** for the first time. It's now one of my favorite spots to write, read *The New York Times*, or to just clear my head. In fact, it was here where I wrote my **Helena Rohner article**.

Opened last year by Max and Cris (both with experience living and working abroad), the area of **Chamberí** between Moncloa and Argüelles now has a perfect oasis.


menú, a una pizarra, pegador, fibero
deliciosos elaborados con ingredientes naturales...
Desayunos (hasta las 13h.)
a elegir entre café o té
tostada con aceite y tomate 2€
tostada con mantequilla o crema de queso y mermeladas 2€
tostada con miel y canela 2€
tostada con aguacate 3€
bocatín de jamón 3'
bocatín de pavo 3'
porción de bizcocho 2'
media porción de tarta 3'
copos de avena con frutos secos 3'
yogurt con frutas 3'
yogurt con muesli
complementos 1€ extra
zumo de naranja natural
pequeño bol de frutas
Snacks
selección de hummus casero con pan 3€
crema de aguacate con nachos 3€
Snacks brunch
bizcocho con cerezas 3€
pizzetas 3€
panes naturales elaborados con masa madre
leche fresca "Frágola"
THE Little Big CAFE
Menú Brunch
1. escoge un plato de punto
2. escoge un plato de punto
3. escoge un
-refresco
-zumo natural
-cerveza
4. escoge
-café
-té
y una pequeña porción de tarta
17'00 €



Now, you've already heard about **Little Big** as a place for **the best brunch on a budget in Madrid**, and let me tell you, it is absolutely heavenly (my go-to is the *tosta de huevos a la plancha al estilo árabe* on whole-wheat bread). But this cozy café great for more than brunch. Open from 9 am to 8 pm during the week, you can go to **Little Big** at almost any hour.

And with that there are several *menú* options (and let's face it, a ***menú del día*** is one of Spain's greatest little pleasures). In the morning until 1 pm, you can enjoy the breakfast menu (***menú de desayuno***). This includes one breakfast plate (I love the **bocatín de jamón** on whole-wheat…) and a coffee or tea. To round out my special breakfast, I always get one of the make-your-own smoothies. While you can put in yogurt or milk, I prefer to get mine with water so it's more like a juice.



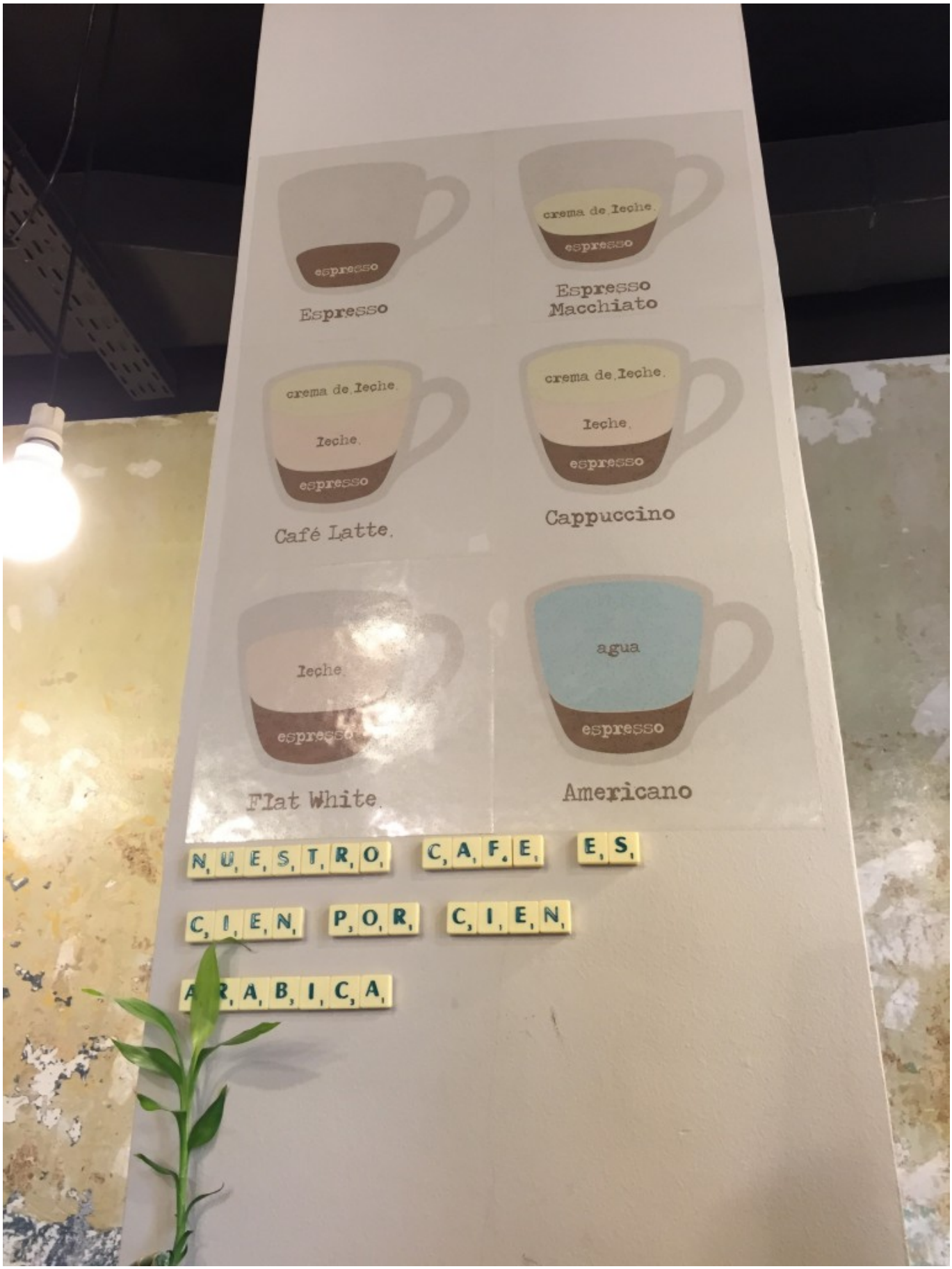
There are two lunch-time menus, the TLBC (which has a sandwich, salad, and drink for €11), or the ***menú del día*** (with two courses, a side dish, drink, and dessert for €10.50). And then on the weekends, the brunch menu is also an amazing meal (you're way full afterwards).

If you're just craving something sweet for your afternoon snack, then the baked goods at the counter and window are calling your name. The banana bizcocho is gluten and sugar-free, but everything else, in spite of the fact that I can't eat them, looks fabulous. One of my roommates had the cake

made with beer and loved it.



Then, of course, let’s not forget what first my caught my eye in the first place on Instagram: the coffee. With a plethora of variations…



you'll see why their slogan is: "a little café with a big heart." With to-go cups and a VIP program where you can put

your Polaroid on the wall, this is also a place that coffee lovers can love. With the VIP program, you can make The Little Big Café part of your heart the way the owners have seemed to have conceptualize it.



As evidenced by my presence on the wall, the little café with a big heart has become an extension of my home and my little

big pick-me-up.



Info:

***Where**: Calle Fernández de los Ríos, 61*
***Metro:** Moncloa (also easily accessible from Argüelles)*
Twitter
Facebook
Instagram
Website

You may also like:

Coziest Cafés in Chamberí

Best Brunch on a Budget in Madrid

Best Cafe-Bookshops in Madrid, Round 1

Best Cafe-Bookshops in Madrid, Round 2

Toma Café – Fuel up, Feel hip

La China Mandarina, a Flashy New Bistro in Plaza de Cascorro

La China Mandarina, a bistro situated in **Plaza de Cascorro**, was previously an antique shop that underwent a loud and prolonged renovation over the course of several months. Upon its completion, I peered in through its glass windows in an attempt to scope it out. **I'm always on the prowl for affordable & pseudo-classy locations to write about.** La China

Mandarina is a large space, dimly lit, with **a long communal table in the center.** The crowd in the establishment was young and well-dressed. The interior design of the place was a little bit swankier than the older businesses in the zone that remain frozen in time.





Their 11€ menu del dia changes daily, **offering a broad spectrum of healthy & gastronomic snacks**. The menu that was available on the day that I entered consisted of a **thick and spicy lentil soup** followed by a plate containing three small portions, **a salad with apples and olive-based dressing, a couscous curry with vegetables and a salmon tartar.** I traded a wine/beer in favor of a *cafe cortado.* I was tempted by their delicious desserts on display although in this instance I exerted restraint for once.





I learned that the location **offers a brunch for 16€** on weekends which I will absolutely return for. I can imagine the spot, like all businesses in this area, being thumping on Sundays due to Rastro traffic. **The location doubles as a coffee shop with wifi during non-meal hours** which allowed me to chronicle my foodie experience while it was fresh in my head. With their gastronomic menu del dia changing every day in all likelihood it will be impossible for me to sample all of their offerings. This ambiguity as to what else they can whip up in the future furthers my desire to return.

Info

Facebook
Address: *Plaza de Coscorro, 17*
Metro: *La Latina*

Looking for more spots in La Latina and Lavapiés? Check out:

- **Cosy Wine Bars in La Latina (with gluten-free options!)**
- **Taberna Lamiak, a Basque pintxo bar with Tuesday-night wine tastings**
- **Tribuetxe, another Basque pintxo bar you have to try**
- **Baobab, an authentic Senegalese restaurant in Lavapiés**

Pecados Argentinos, Freshly-baked Argentine Empanadas in Plaza de Cascorro

When I am scurrying between my private lessons I sometimes get swept up in a blinding hunger. Empanadas are often the most practical solution because they can be both served and consumed quickly, leaving me full, satisfied and capable of fighting onwards. **Pecados Argentinos** is a shop situated in **Plaza de Cascorro** that sells delicious, filling **Argentine empanadas** as well as other products from the land of silver.



Earlier this year I was dabbling with the idea of relocating next to Buenos Aires and I made a point of befriending the staff of this establishment so that I could pick their brains as to what life there entails. The staff of this shop are a group of lovely ladies that greet their clients with terms of endearment such as mi amor and cariño. The Porteño accent is my favorite of the various forms of Spanish that I've been exposed to—when they speak it's almost as if they're singing and my instinctive response is to melt. Several times I have entered this location while rushing between point lessons and have lost track of time due to the hypnotizing nature of their accents during our small-talk.



The establishment offers 11 different types of empanadas and my intention is to eventually sample all of them. My favorite thus far is filled with mushrooms and both mozzarella and parmesan cheese. Another that has aided my recovery from crippling resacas is their empanada of chicken, mozzarella cheese and caramelized onions. I've also enjoyed their staple empanada, which is filled with tuna, red pepper, & onion. The empanada stuffed with mushrooms makes my mouth water.

Not to mention their typical Argentine desserts filled with dulce de leche…



The next time you find yourself navigating the **Rastro flea market**, I strongly recommend you picar a few snacks from this charming establishment.

Info

Web
Facebook
Address: *Plaza de Cascorro 11*
Contact: *910 840 505*

Looking for other spots in La Latina and Lavapiés area? Check out:

Tribuetxe, a Basque pintxo bar

Los Chuchis Bar, downright good food in Lavapiés

Cafelito, a trendy spot for coffee lovers in Lavapiés

Lavapiés and its market – the real food emporium!

Cosy Wine Bars in La Latina

Mastropiero, Indulgent Gourmet Pizzas in Malasaña

A few evenings ago I was trading notes with an enthusiastic foodie friend who pointed me in the direction of Mastopiero, **a gourmet pizzeria in Malasaña operated by Argentines**. As you might already know, the Porteño accent just slays me. I was not led astray when I followed up and checked out the establishment for myself. A cozy and intimate space, Mastopiero is dimly lit and smells absolutely delicious.



Their *carta* offer a broad range of gourmet pizza variety. I like to consider myself to be an imaginative person yet **I never would have previously fathomed that *pulpo gallego* on a pizza could be a thing**. Of course when I saw that as an option I ordered a pizza that was half octopus. I asked the staff to surprise me with the other half and their creation entailed **spicy peppers, chorizo, olives, and caramelized onions**.



The literal icing on the cake of this experience is that diners are given a **free slice of chocolate fudge cake** accompanied by creamy *dulce de leche* to top off their experience. If it were possible I would totally have an IV drip of their dulce de leche installed into my body. The service in this establishment was absolutely stellar and I am confident that I will return soon to sample their other pies.



Facebook
Address: *Calle San Vicente Ferrer, 36*
Metro: *Tribunal/Noviciado*

Looking for other nice spots in Malasaña? Check out:

Aiò, a piece of Sardinia in Malasaña

Toma Café, Fuel up, Feel Hip

La Paca, the perfect Malasaña café

Pepe Botella, a coffee place where you can think

Naif, the king of burgers in Malasaña

La Maruca, a Swanky Cantabrian Restaurant in Barrio Salamanca

My Dad comes to Spain frequently in order to see myself and his close friends, Rafael, Catherine, Alfredo & Ruth. It has been hugely comforting to have such trusted and accessible "real adults" during my time abroad. In addition to being warm, generous, and offering of exceptional council, my Dad's friends are in the know in regards to **Madrid's ritzier restaurants**. I was fortunate to have been invited to tag along to their **dinner at La Maruca**, an establishment in **barrio Salamanca** that I certainly would not have discovered under different circumstances.


LA MARUCA



A large space with a stylish staff and a cozy fireplace by the bar, the location radiates class. Catherine took the initiative to order several appetizers—***croquetas de carne cocido*, a tartar of smoked salmon & avocado** as well as a plate of delicious anchovies with red bell peppers. We drank wine and had a pleasant conversation with a lot of swift code-changing between Spanish & English.



For my main course I ordered pluma de cerdo, a delicious dish of perfectly cooked pork. Rafael ordered *pulpo a la plancha,* which was presented quite aesthetically. Enrique, my Dad, consumed the *albondigas*, which he enjoyed greatly. Catherine's dish was the *tajada de merluza*. Ruth ordered *canelones rellenos de poularda con salsa de foie*, another incredibly photogenic plate.



Initially I believed that this restaurant would be well above my pay grade, but that was not the case—each plate cost between **10-14€**. This isn't the first time that the "real adults" have introduced me to a seemingly unapproachable establishment that ultimately turned out to be reasonably priced. I can imagine tactfully utilizing this location in the future in order to put up a front of fanciness while on a date.



Contact info

Facebook
Website

Where to find La Maruca

Address: Calle de Velázquez 54
Metro: Velasquez
Phone :917 81 49 69

You may also check out series on best first date ideas in Madrid:

Flowers are nice, but this first date is better (part 1)

Chocolates are nice, but this first date is better (part 2)

Dating in Madrid for Foodies (part 3)

Soy Kitchen – a Fusion of Asian Flavors

Previously, I wrote about **StreetXO**, a hip Asian fusion restaurant in Salamanca helmed by culinary wild child, David Muñoz. Though the food was intriguing more than delicious, I thought it was a decent and fun effort on Muñoz's part – I also thought I'd probably found the best Asian fusion in Madrid.

Then I went to **Soy Kitchen**.



Located in a old area around Grand Via, in **Plaza de los Montenses**, Soy Kitchen looks unassumingly like a typical neighborhood bar. Inconspicuously sitting in a familiar list

of *cocktails*, *vinos*, and *vermut* sits ***tapas asiáticas,*** the only indication that this place serves altogether different fare than most bars. The lower half of the establishment serves drinks and tapas, the upper portion is the restaurant. The decor is simple, but that’s where the simplicity ends.



The popularity of Soy Kitchen rests solely on the machinations of proprietor and sole chef, **Julio**. Born in Shanghai and educated in Hong Kong, Julio’s career in Spain began when he moved to Pamplona and won a prestigious tapas award. If you get a chance to speak to him, do. Julio is just like the dishes he serves: an eclectic mix of Asian flavors in a

thoroughly Spanish setting.



There is **no menu** (though they always check with the customer if they have any preferences/allergies), which means you are

left in the hands of the chef – and what incredibly capable hands they are. This is Asian fusion done by an Asian, and you can taste the difference.

The image above is a noodle dish that comes with a peanut sauce made with four different types of soy, a lovely mild spice, and many other little secrets that I wish I knew. The image below is a coconut filled with a medley of seafood, and the image below that is a whole garlic and soy lobster that was finger-sucking good.





Throughout the ten course meal (yes, Julio single-handedly cooks ten courses for each and every one of his tables), I was continuously surprised and impressed by the harmony of flavors. As I said earlier, I tend to be suspicious of fusions

because they often reflect an ignorance about the diversity in Asian cuisine.

Every bite was an explosion of so many different flavors from all over Asia I kept expecting them to clash or become too overwhelming, but they never did. Julio is a master chef and finds the perfect balance between spicy, sweet, sour, and savory in each of his dishes.



Julio serves up at least eight dishes, and if you're still hungry you can have an additional meat option of beef or fish. I had the beef. The chef himself came out to stir up the tender pieces in a hot pot and place the perfectly cooked meat on grilled rice cakes.

If you manage to get a reservation, my only suggestion is that you come hungry and stay for an after-dinner *vermut* downstairs – your palette will have gone around Asia and landed firmly back in Spain in a single night.

Info

Facebook
Address: Plaza Montenses, 4
Metro: Plaza de España

More Asian restaurants featured on Naked Madrid:

- **Ramen Kagura, Madrid's (almost) perfect ramen bar**
- **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!**
- **Krachai – A cozy and elegant Thai restaurant in Alonso Martínez**

Bocadillo de Jamón y Champán- Sandwiches with Substance

If I have learned anything during my time living in Madrid, I know the importance of ***jamón***. It is a staple in the diet here, and the variety of forms, cuts, and quality can be overwhelming. Luckily, **Bocadillo de Jamón y Champán** recognizes the significance of this and offers a **simplified menu of assorted ham sandwiches and an impressive champagne selection.**



Located a short walk away from **Alonso Martínez**, the hanging mini-lights adorning the exterior of the restaurant tastefully illuminate hanging ham legs and bottles of champagne behind the bar.



Settle in at one of the tall tables inside, and consider yourself lucky if you don’t have to wait to take a seat! Space is coveted at **this cozy restaurant**, making it a destination more suited to small groups, or for those who don’t mind posting up at the countertops opposite the bar.



Each ham sandwich is given a name and comes in different sizes; ideal for trying more than one! The **Telmo** is filled with a creamy cheese, caramelized onions, and peppers, along with finely cut ham of course, while the **Antonito** is accompanied by Manchego.



Nothing is left to chance, with crispy fresh bread toasted to perfection to top it all off. For those preferring the straightforwardness of ham without the accoutrements, Bocadillo offers servings of different ham cuts as well without the fuss of bread.

The sandwiches are all reasonably priced, varying from **€3.5** for a half sandwich, to **€7.5** for the whole enchilada, or bocadillo so to speak, and glasses of champagne start at **€2.5** but you could spend up to **€9**.



Although other beverages are on the menu at **Bocadillo de Jamón y Champán**, the champagne is the obvious choice, served in long-stemmed glasses. Available options, either by the glass or bottle, are advertised on a chalkboard, allowing you to choose based on the occasion.

There is nothing snobby about **Bocadillo de Jamón y Champán**. It is the perfect spot to indulge in the quality hams Spain is so known for, without needing the background of a connoisseur, or a study guide of the history of jamón-you can simply enjoy the delicious sandwich put in front of **you feeling like a true**

Madrileño.

Facebook
Address: *Calle Fernando VI, 21, 28004 Madrid*
Metro: *Chueca & Alonso Martínez*

Looking for other nice spots in Madrid? Check out:

Cozy Wine Bars in La Latina (with gluten free options!)

Toma Café: Fuel up, Feel hip

Best Date Ideas for Foodies in Madrid

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