

Aiό: Sardinia, pizza, and bike haven in Malasaña

[Aiό](#) in Sardinian means “let’s go” (or “venga vamos” in Spanish). Most likely, Andrea and Marcelo were thinking of this very expression when they decided to open a restaurant in Madrid three years ago. These two friends have brought their hometown of **Sardinia** with them to **Malasaña**, where they’ve created a magnificent combination of **Italian food** and **true *madrileño* ambiance**. It is basically an extraordinary place.



It was love at first sight when I came here with my friend, Nina, from Austria. We had a **menú del día** for **9,50€** (11.50€ on weekends and holidays) that includes two dishes, a drink and dessert. They also have a **pizza menu** that comes with a salad, large pizza, drink and coffee for **10,50€**; and a Sardinian menu with different regional dishes for **14€**. On the weekends, it's better to make a reservation.

We ordered fresh pasta with fresh tomato and basil; a salad and a burger with caramelized onions and homemade fries. Only if the pictures could tell you how good they tasted.



When I travel outside Spain, I always like to look for local spots, and the best indication of that is always by seeing locals themselves. Similarly, when I'm in Madrid and I go to an Italian restaurant, I like to see Italian patrons—to me that's a sign of authenticity. At **Aiό** , you'll find people from all over the world, yet the clientele's dominant nationality is Italian, by far.



You'll also find a large **biking community** here. Users and lovers can find bikes hanging on the walls. Although they're nice decoration, the real reason they're on display is because they're **for sale**. However, if you're already happy with the bike you own, you can also park it here, as **Aío's downstairs area** is a **free bike drop-off point**.



Malasaña is my favorite neighbourhood to get a drink at after work. Thanks to Aío, the neighbourhood has just gotten even better. On Thursdays at 9pm (officially at 8:30pm), they offer **an all-you-can-eat Italian buffet**, called **Aperaió**. It only costs **4.50€**, including the drink of your choice. Last night, I went with my wife, Daphne, to check out the buffet. The first thing we noticed was that almost everyone was drinking the **Aperol Spritz**, the popular Italian aperitif that combines seltzer, champagne, Aperol, a slice of orange and plenty of ice. The drink is strong and stringent, but a feel-good hit for **summer**.

For this modest price, I thought the food wasn't going to blow my socks off. But I couldn't have been more wrong. We were lucky enough to grab a seat right by the counter. As the waiters brought out dish after dish of mouth-watering Italian

goodness, the patrons swarmed around the food and served themselves heaps of rice, pasta, salad and pizza. Although it was all good, the **pasta** was the star dish; it was creamy mushroom mini-shell pasta that the crowd just couldn't get enough of.



The salad was far from your average *ensalada mixta*, as it came with all types of greens, onions, green bell peppers,

cucumbers, apples, raisins and topped with a deliciously sweet vinaigrette dressing. This is officially the best deal you can find in Madrid on food and drinks.



We barely missed the pizza because it flew off the counter in a matter of seconds (that's why there's no picture, so you'll have to go see for yourself!).



[Facebook](#)

Address: [Calle Corredera Baja de San Pablo 25](#)

Tlfn: 910 09 64 69

Hours: M-F 9.00-1.30 /S-S 10.00-2.00

Breakfast: M-F 9.00-13.00 /S-S 10.00-13.00

Lunch: M-F 13.00-16.00

Aperaió (buffet): Thursdays at 20:30

Kintaro. Oy vey.

Craving to nibble on some fine Asian dishes? Go dine at Kintaro, where you'll find infinitely scrumptious Japanese and Chinese food, and horrendous service.

"This place is like heaven." "Oh my God." "This is the most amazing place I've ever been to in my entire life." "It's like paradise."

That's what we were all saying the first time we went to **Kintaro**, an all-you-can-eat **buffet** of delicious **Japanese and Chinese** food costing **15.80€ per person** (**9€ for lunch** during weekdays). In fact, this article is the fruit of a collaboration between **four friends** (Edison, Kyle, James and Daphne) who regularly dine at **Kintaro** together.



Kintaro has its own peculiar charm. You sit beside a conveyor belt that sends out different types of Asian delights, from **spicy tuna rolls to roasted duck**, all night long. And there's no waiting; the food just keeps coming. It's like diving into a grown-up carousel, where sweet and savoury exotic treats circle round and round you all within arm's reach.





We've developed a special technique when it comes to eating at **Kintaro**: first, pack in as many **sushi rolls**, **plates of beef** and **dumplings** as possible; then, move on to dessert – ice cream and fruit; and then there's round two of the same process, followed by round three if we're really in the zone.



Prior to this recent expedition to **Kintaro**, Edison and James had just helped Kyle move out of his apartment (carrying boxes up- and downstairs for hours definitely builds up an appetite) and they were famished. Thus, an all-night buffet was a godsend.



But for anyone with an appetite, **Kintaro** is close to heaven indeed. When we were university students in **Madrid**, the habitually philosophizing, dreadlock-sporting and hacky sack-playing crowd called this place home – it was the hotspot when the typical gluttonous cravings could no longer be quenched by junkfood. Just imagine.



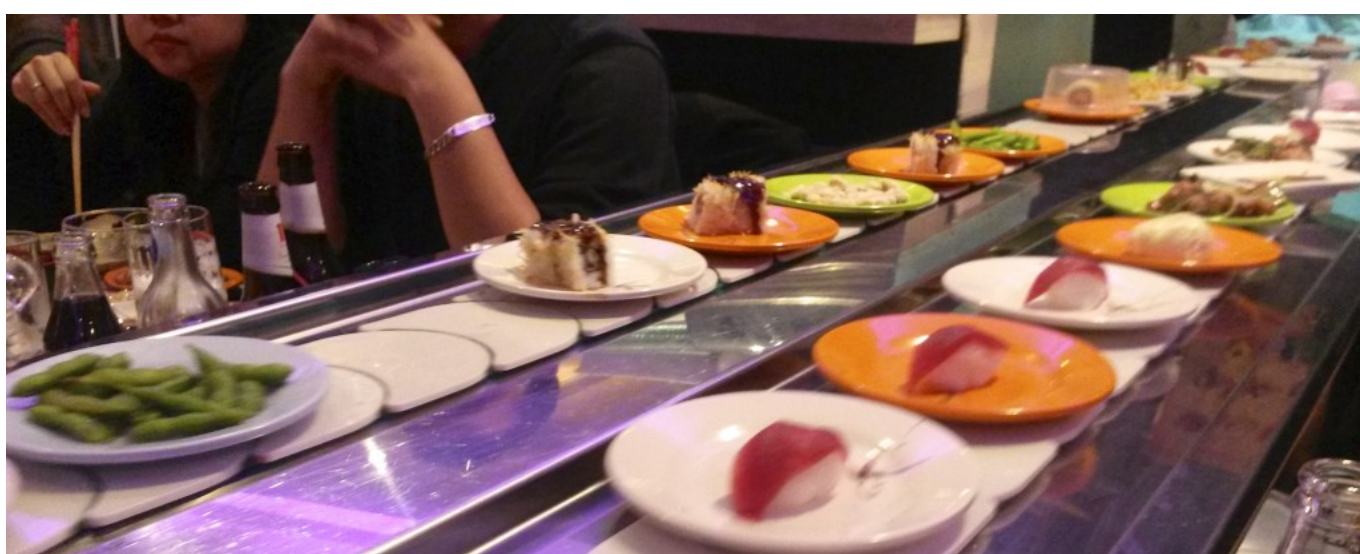
Now, the only reason you should ever go there is if you love eating **good quality Japanese and Chinese food**, for hours upon hours, because that's all Kintaro has to offer. Although the food options are tantalizing and the atmosphere sufficiently refined, **the service is appalling**. If you're not a champion eater, you're either going to feel guilty about not knowing how to pace yourself, or because you went to a place where the waiters tried to push you out as fast as possible.



During this last visit to **Kintaro**, the service got particularly ugly, as three different waiters decided to take turns asking us if we were done, every minute. Given this is a **buffet**, the waiters' asking us if we were finished a million times was virtually our only contact with them, and it was exasperating. By the end, we felt like a screeching broken record saying "no, we're not done yet," over and over again. To say nothing of one of our fellow diners who at one point wanted to punch a certain waiter that had just gotten asked his fifth consecutive "Are you done?" We'd like to add that this attitude displayed by the waiters is nothing new, though usually they are not as obnoxiously insistent.



Another friend told us a similar story. One time, while she and her friends were evidently still stuffing themselves, the waiter came up to them out of nowhere and planted the bill on the table, catching them completely off guard. The restaurant wasn't closing, so it felt like they were being kicked out. To make matters worse, the waiters came every other minute to see if they'd paid.



After reading this, you may be wondering, why on earth would someone go here if the service is so bad? Precisely because

the food is so exquisite and abundant. So, if you can put up with the bad service and are craving for an unlimited amount of **Asian cuisine**, go check it out!

Kintaro

Address: Calle de Fernández de la Hoz 70

Metro: Gregorio Marañón

Price: 15.80€ for an all-you-can-eat Japanese/Chinese dinner buffet, and 9€ for lunch (the slightly over-priced drinks aren't included in either case)

More Asian restaurants featured on Naked Madrid:

- [Ramen Kagura – Madrid's \(almost\) perfect ramen bar](#)
- [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](#)

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

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

Taberna Bulgara, takes you right to Bulgaria



For lunch on Saturday, I went to a **Bulgarian restaurant in Madrid** that a friend had highly recommended to me. By coincidence, it was Mother's Day in Bulgaria, and International Women's Day. So we had much to celebrate.

One of my friends who was with us, Kaloyan, is originally from Bulgaria and said **"Guys, I seriously feel like I'm in Bulgaria right now."** The décor, the music (albeit outdated), the company and the food were such vivid replicas of a typical Bulgarian tavern, that all of us forgot we were in Madrid throughout the entire lunch. In fact, a group of Bulgarian women dining next to us started dancing in circles after they ate. I felt like I had joined in on a Bulgarian wedding.



As it was a gorgeous and sunny day, we ordered **Bulgarian beer**, Kamenitza, which came casually in cans, and **Shopksa salad**, which reminded me of Greek salad; it had freshly diced tomatoes, cucumbers, green bell peppers, onions, parsley and heaps of fetta cheese. My friend Edison ordered a brothy and delicious **lamb soup**, and for the table we ordered **Bulgarian bread**, one sprinkled with fetta cheese and one without. The bread was really incredible.



I must admit, I didn't even take a look at the menu. Since my friend is from Bulgaria, and the waiter too, their recommendations were more than trustworthy for me. So if you don't know what to order, go ahead and do as we did.

For the main course, we each got our own, intimidatingly huge **Parrilla Mixta** (grilled meat platter). It came with different

types of Bulgarian sausage, shish kebab (skewered meat), hamburger patty, white and red bean salad, and fresh cabbage salad. It was also served with a delicious red bell pepper sauce. This may be obvious, but we had to take some home.



Now, here comes the best part. Dessert! Yes, we still had room for dessert, and we ordered three different kinds to share: **Bulgarian Tarta** (*heaven*), **Baklava** (*homemade puff pastry filled with nuts and honey*) and **Tikvenik** (*homemade puff pastry filled with pumpkin*). I only have photos of the latter two because my friends devoured the Bulgarian Tarta before I had the chance to snap a photo. All of the desserts were incredible, especially the Tarta and the Baklava.



To top it all off, our kind waiter gave us shots on the house!

[Taberna Bulgara](#) is a bit of a journey from the center of Madrid, but well worth it. Take metro line 1 to Puente de Vallecas (a 15-min ride from Sol), and walk up Avenida Peña Prieta for a good ten minutes and you'll see it. And with all

the food we ate, we paid **20E** each.

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

Address: Avd. Peña Prieta, 82

Telephone: 91 551 56 00



Casa Mingo, the real cider house



An **Asturian cider house** serving traditional, simple and exquisite rotisserie chicken since 1888, **Casa Mingo** is the real deal—no frills, no fuss, just the good stuff. The high walls are lined with bottles and barrels, making you feel as though you've been immersed in a sea of cider. And although the wooden floors are holding up, the wear and tear are evident. Be sure there's no intention of refurbishing this wooden tavern. Its notable use and warm simplicity is what makes it so special.



image from casamingo.es

Even the menu is simple: **roasted chicken**, croquettes, chorizo, *chistorra* (similar to chorizo but thinner and spicier), cheese (*manchego* which is cured, or *de cabrales* which is very, very blue, a.k.a. it's just mold), roasted red peppers with tuna, and empanadas. They have two types of **cider: sweet and natural**, and you order them by the bottle. Although there are a few more items on the menu, that's pretty much everything. And no matter how much you order, your bill is likely to come out to less than **15E per person**.

The first time I went to **Casa Mingo** I had already been living in Madrid for a few years, though I'd never seen anything like it. It was love at first sight (an American who had been living in Madrid for twenty years let me in on the secret). Since then, **Casa Mingo** has become my spot whenever I want to show off Madrid to family and friends.

I've even brought my "foodie" friends with the harder-to-please palates, some who are chefs and some who have even opened up their own Spanish restaurants outside Spain. **Casa Mingo** has never failed to delight them.

My favorite dishes are the **roasted chicken** and the **roasted red peppers with tuna**. And for dessert, try the *tarta de sidra* or *tarta de santiago*.



rotisserie chicken and endless cider at Casa Mingo



a whole roast chicken at Casa Mingo



No reservations, but the place is enormous so the wait won't be long. In addition to the main dining room, they have outdoor seating and a rooftop as well. The last time I sat outside there, it was Spring and our table was showered with little flowers falling off trees all around us. It was lovely.



my friend Ryan's attempt to pour cider the Austurian way

And if you're feeling up for the challenge, get a table outside and try **pouring the *sidra* from above your head** (spilling is completely accepted, but ask for a nozzle to help). The correct word for this is ***escanciar***, and it's the traditional way to pour cider in Asturias.

Here's a photo I took of a professional pouring cider at a Spanish gourmet food fair. Feel free to ask any of the waiters

at **Casa Mingo** to show you how it's done.



a professional showing how to pour cider the right

way, a.k.a. “escanciar”

[Web](#)

Address: Paseo de la Florida, 34

Metro: Principe Pio

Telephone: 915 47 79 18