Arts Club Madrid – Binge, don't purge

I pride myself on revelling in all things indulgent. My mantra is generally something along the lines *'Money – well you can't take it with you'* – which come rent day can be a problem. However, if there are treats to be had/bought/sniffed out, then I'm the girl to find them. Upon recently discovering the **Arts Club**, I quickly realized that it was the kind of place where I'd happily blow my monthly food budget and then spend the remainder of the month wistfully eating beans on toast.

It is glam.



We're talking full on 'feels like you're on Sex and the City/channelling your inner Carrie Bradshaw' glam – which is a bit of a rare find in a city that prides itself on a lack of pretentions. In fact, walk into the **Arts Club** and it feels as

though Carrie Bradshaw's name is written all over it – not literally, but you know what I mean. It's the kind of place that you need to pop your heels on for, unless you fancy looking like the proverbial fish out of water.

The food

The menu is a super tempting mix of Asian fusion (a cliché sounding genre I know but the food was anything but lame).

Date night



The Arts Club is coincidently how to do a date night. This luxurious spot boasts an impressive beer, wine, and cocktail list; the chicest interior design *and* should someone else be paying (and can therefore stretch to the most sumptuous experience they have to offer) you can bag yourself a table/area for when the dinner part stops and the dancing part

kicks in.

Being nestled in the heart of Barrio Salamanca helps it to retain its air of exclusivity but its laidback luxury is coincidently part of its charm. Whilst it may be swish and swanky it's not intimidatingly so. I suggest, scarp that, I *insist* that you don your gladrags and spend an evening with the pretty peeps of Madrid.

Photo credit: **Arts Club – Madrid**

Info

- **Website** & **Facebook**
- **Address:** Calle de Velázquez, 96
- **Metro:** Núñez de Balboa
- **Phone:** 648 96 58 39

Bosco de Lobos – a casual-chic restaurant in Chueca

Last month I reviewed the sexy, swish **Ana La Santa**. If we were to talk in terms of siblings, whilst Ana La Santa may be the mature older brother in the dining out stakes, this means that Bosco de Lobos may be the cuter, younger sister. Smaller in size and with a less obvious position within the city (it's tucked away between Calle Fuencarral and Hortaleza) sort of straddling Malasaña and Chueca if you will, it's the ideal place for a simple lunch on their sun-kissed terraza or for a casual date night that won't break the bank.

The atmosphere was (on a Friday night) buzzing to say the least; packed with punters all gagging to sample their take on

eclectic European fare, ranging from wood-fired pizzas, to steak tartare, to heaving pasta dishes. They do a little bit of everything and instead of this being to their detriment (like that friend you have who spreads themselves too thinly) it's all lip-smackingly good.



Like most, I enjoy dining out (ok, perhaps more than most) but I like to do so in places that lack pretention and that do simple things with style. Bosco de Lobos ticks both boxes. Special mention has to go our waitress, Iryna, who was a fountain of knowledge on the wine front, recommending the perfect Rioja to be paired with my steak. We rounded off the evening with a couple of puds and a G&T thrown in for good measure.

Speaking of round, that's exactly how my midriff felt after eating like a Queen. It doesn't hurt that the setting is as tasty as the food, lots of sultry low lighting and artfully

dishevelled bookshelves, making the whole place feel cosily lived in rather than sterile Scandi in tone.

Unlike La Musa, they do take reso's so I implore you to make one – you can thank me later.

All photos from Bosco de Lobos

Bosco de Lobos

- **Facebook & Instagram: @boscodelobosmadrid**
- **Address:** COAM, Calle de Hortaleza, 63
- **Phone:** 915 24 94 64
- **Metro:** Alonso Martínez, Chueca & Tribunal

Ana La Santa… Baby it's cold outside

Being an expat in Madrid seems to equate to a couple of things; you're highly likely to favour drinking a caña over a coffee (it honestly works out cheaper), most of your wardrobe will consist of Zara purchases (although that *may* just be me) and I'm pretty sure that come Autumn time, you start to long for Sunday afternoons curled up in a pub with a fire and a glass of red for company. Whilst Madrid can offer a visitor many things (often wall to wall sunshine), it doesn't really pack a punch on the pub front…

However, Ana La Santa has been become my default

option for when I’m craving cosiness, and there’s good reason why.



Situated in what is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful plazas in all of Madrid, Ana La Santa, the bar and restaurant that occupies the **ground floor of the hard to miss Hotel ME**, is without doubt the chicest (and next best thing) that’s akin to a Gastropub that you might find back in Blighty. Picture a roaring fire, squidgy sofas, easy on the eye staff and the kind of simple style that is more often found in Scandi-land and you’d be on the right page.



This season’s buzz word for urbanites is hygge.

Pronounced *hoo-ga*, this Danish word defies literal translation. **In essence it means enjoying life’s small but soothing moments** – perhaps nibbling some *croquetas de jamón* with one hand, whilst sipping a perfectly mixed Gin and Tonic in the other…

It’s about investing in emotional well-being through the

simple and homespun. That's exactly what I managed to achieve there on a bitingly cold Tuesday evening. I left feeling with a slightly larger waistline and feeling that **our host (the wonderful Alba) was a new friend – the service was THAT good**.

When Spain's not sunny (and trust me it happens) I urge you to bunker down amid soft cushions, flickering candles and bask in the warmth of Ana La Santa. All that's left on your part is to find yourself a Spaniard to snuggle with.

All photos from Ana la Santa

Ana la Santa

- **Facebook & Instagram: @analasantamadrid**
- **Address: Plaza Sta. Ana, 14**
- **Metro: Sol/Sevilla**
- **Phone: 917 01 60 13**

El Andariego, Your Argentinian Corner Bar in Madrid

A few years ago I went out with friends to see a play at a small theater in downtown Madrid. I don't remember where we went (we took a taxi there and back, and I just followed along), but I do remember the street was lined with independent theaters and arts spaces, and afterwards we went to **a sweet corner bar** that I instantly fell in love with. I'd always wondered where that bar was…

Here comes the crazy part. Last month I moved to **Calle Ercilla, near Embajadores**. As I was walking down my new street one day, I started seeing theater after theater… It all looked too familiar, so I kept on walking and low and behold, there it was! The bar I had gone to all those years ago is called **El Andariego**, and it's just how I remembered it.



It turns out **El Andariego** is a neighborhood favorite and pretty well known throughout Madrid. It specializes in Argentinian dishes, the star being the "**entrañas**" (entrails) which are out of this world, and other **grilled meat dishes** (€12.50).



Then of course they have a selection of **homemade empanadas** (€2.50-3.50). We tried the spinach and criolla ones which both hit the spot.


CRIOLLA
POLLO



We also ordered an off-the-charts **quiche made with spinach, squash and pumpkin seeds**; plus the **provoleta**, melted provolone cheese (€6 each and delicious).





El Andariego also offers **vegan options like baba ganoush and hummus,** plus a selection of **Mexican dishes.** As I was watching other plates land on patrons' tables, I spotted an impressive mountain of quesadillas that I'll have to try next time.

So far I've eaten here twice and each time the bill came out to a total of just **22 euros for 2,** including a glass of red wine each. Granted we shared everything but still, it's very affordable.

So I can say the food, drinks and prices are all great. The only downside? It can get a bit cramped but that's pretty typical of Madrid bars, especially the good ones. Everybody wants in!

Info

- Facebook
- **Address:** Calle del Labrador, 12 (corner with Calle Ercilla)
- **Metro:** Embajadores

Café Barbieri: A 114-year-old Art Noveau café in Lavapiés

Café Barbieri first brought modernist charm to Madrid's working class district, Lavapiés, in 1902, and although the *barrio* has evolved dramatically over the last 114 years, the interior of this elegant bar hasn't changed one bit.

Some things have changed though – Café Barbieri is owned by a charismatic chap from New Delhi and staffed with bilingual youngthings. It also now has a small terrace, but this is not why you'd come here – its appeal is truly the interior.

The whole place is lined with mirrors which back then were a symbol of wealth. These mirrors are now aging well, stained a smoky bronze colour with dots of grey rust creeping in from the edges. The ceiling is framed with grids of ornate girders that are connected to decorative cast-iron beams, typical of older buildings in Lavapiés. Although never on, there are ceiling fans too – something increasingly rare in Madrid.

At the back of the bar is a grand piano on a small raised stage. Almost every evening there's a live music session often featuring the piano, and this place does food too – typical

Spanish stuff but with an edge.

The worn white marble table tops and red velvet seating lining the dining area mark this place out as opulent, but that’s really not the vibe – it’s chilled and cosy and attracts a spectrum of people, from the intrepid tourist who’s braved it down the hill, to the unassuming local who fancies a read of one of the papers on offer.



Café Barbieri by day



Café Barbieri’s beautiful ornate ceiling



The grand piano taking centre stage, and look at all those beautiful mirrors



Look at that original tiled floor!



The bar has a great selection of spirits & vermouth on tap



Café Barbieri by night

Café Barbieri is also on the same street as the Greek foodie place, Egeo, so there you have it, your night is planned!

Info

- C/Ave María 45
- Metro: Lavapiés
- **Website** **Facebook**

Casa Jaguar: a jungle paradise in central Madrid

After a long, hot summer, Madrid is starting to wake up again as people slowly trickle back from their holidays. If you've recently returned and the thought of going back to work or school is getting you down, then do not despair! There's a fabulous new restaurant in town called Casa Jaguar and it's the perfect antidote to those post-holiday blues.



Tucked away on a side street near Ópera, Casa Jaguar opened just before the summer. It's owned by four business partners, one of whom is also the owner of Camoatí (another of my favourite restaurants in Madrid, you must try it if you haven't already!). Walk through the door and you feel like you could be in another country. The huge Rousseau-inspired jungle mural, wicker chairs, wooden tables and palette of browns and greens blend perfectly to create an ambience that is

both exotic and cosy.



The large, wooden-topped bar is the perfect place to sit and have a drink whilst chatting to the lovely Fabian (another of the owners). He’ll whip you up a delicious cocktail, or you can choose from the large variety of Latin American beers and carefully curated wine list.



And that’s before I even get started on the food. My goodness, the food! I’ve visited Casa Jaguar for both lunch and dinner, and everything I’ve tried has been exquisite. From Tuesday to Friday they offer a *menú del día* for the bargainous price of 12 euros, which includes a starter, a choice of two mains (one is always a veggie option) and dessert or coffee. Best of all, the menu changes every day so there’s never a chance to get bored!



I went for dinner the other evening with a couple of friends and the food was *even* tastier. We ordered a starter of roasted potato and yucca wedges with guacamole and a Peruvian spicy cheese sauce, which we managed to polish off in about 30 seconds.



For my main course, I decided to stick with the vegetarian theme and ordered beetroot and sweetcorn risotto with spinach, sun-dried tomatoes and goat’s cheese – absolutely divine.



Cat (a die-hard carnivore) opted for the beer and honey braised pork with sweet potato mash. This got a big thumbs-up from her.



Ella went for the tropical shrimp with pineapple, coconut milk and rum, with coriander rice on crunchy green banana. As delicious as it sounds (so delicious that she snaffled a piece of pineapple before I could take a photo!).



The whole menu is awash with delicious Latin American ingredients and flavours. The desserts looked amazing too, although we were all too full to try them! Everything is very reasonably priced and the service is fantastic. Jaguar you? After my visits to Casa Jaguar, very happy!



Info

- Casa Jaguar Website, Facebook and Instagram
- Address: Calle de los Caños del Peral 9
- Metro: Ópera, Callao, Santo Domingo
- Telephone: 910 245 712
- Opening hours: Tuesday-Thursday 13h-16:30h, 21h-00h, Friday-Saturday 13h-16:30h, 21h-01h, Closed Sunday and Monday *(Currently closed for lunch in August but full opening hours resuming 6th Sept onwards)*

(First photo courtesy of Casa Jaguar's Facebook page)

Abrásame, delicious Caribbean food in Malasaña

Situated just off Calle Pez, **Abrásame** is a fantastic restaurant specializing in traditional Caribbean and Latin American cuisine such as grilled chicken, arepas and tostones, at great prices.

I went with James on a Friday night and we were quickly greeted by Carmen, one of the owners, who guided us through the menu. Their specialty is **pollo a la brasa (charcoal-grilled chicken),** made with love and marinated in a secret sauce (she did let out there's ginger in it).



We also couldn't resist ordering the ribs marinated in orange and honey, so we shared half portions of each. Both were

packed with flavor, incredibly tender and not too greasy at all, something I much appreciate.



Their **arepas** are also musts according to Carmen. I had the delicious **reina** with chicken and avocado, and James ordered the **carne mechada** which was truly unbelievable (€4.40 each). They came with two homemade sauces: **Abrásame Piri Piri** (spicy) and **Guasacaca** (mojo verde), a traditional Venezuelan sauce made with avocado and parsley that I loved and slathered over everything. I'll be dreaming about these till I go back for more.



To top it off, we heeded Carmen’s advice once again and ordered the ***quesillo***, which to my surprise has no cheese in it! It’s similar to flan but oh so much better. It was seriously to die for – if you’re going to share it, a battle will surely go down to get the last bite.



After wiping our plates clean and finishing off our beers, we got the chance to chat with both the owners, Carmen (from Extremadura) and Ronald (from Venezuela). Both have called Madrid home for over 15 years, having lived in Malasaña since they first arrived. They decided to open Abrásame six months ago because they noticed Madrid lacked authentic and well-made ***pollo a la brasa.***

At first they were going to open a take-away place but because preparing this dish requires a big grill with a large ventilation system, they ended up creating a full-on restaurant that seats around 35 people. The space is very welcoming and well-designed. They also have a comfy couch you can wait on if you decide to order to go. One of their main sources of business is takeaway and home delivery.

So, folks, with such delicious food at **prices** this good, I

wouldn’t think twice about getting your home-cooked Caribbean-Latin American flavor fix here!

Info

Website & Facebook

Address: Andrés Borrego, 16, Malasaña.

Metro: Noviciado

Go Crazy for Cannibal.

New restaurant openings (or in fact any kind of opening) within Madrid are pretty much ten a penny. When strolling round any of the barrios, you’d be hard pressed to not spy an exposed brick or a jam jar cocktail vying for your attention, in what’s becoming an increasingly crammed marketplace.

However, there are some new spots that feel no need for fanfare and know full well that the masses are going to flock in their droves. Cannibal holds this covetable spot. The restaurant equivalent of someone tall, dark and handsome – Cannibal is poised to become the darling of the Madrid restaurant scene and you won’t just need to take my word for it; you could ask anyone who was there last Saturday (when it was packed to the rafters).



Madrid non-newbies will remember that the site of Cannibal once housed the infamous brunch spot ‘Cafe Oliver’ and when it closed its doors, many mourned the loss. So imagine my excitement whilst on my daily walk to work when I spied renovations.



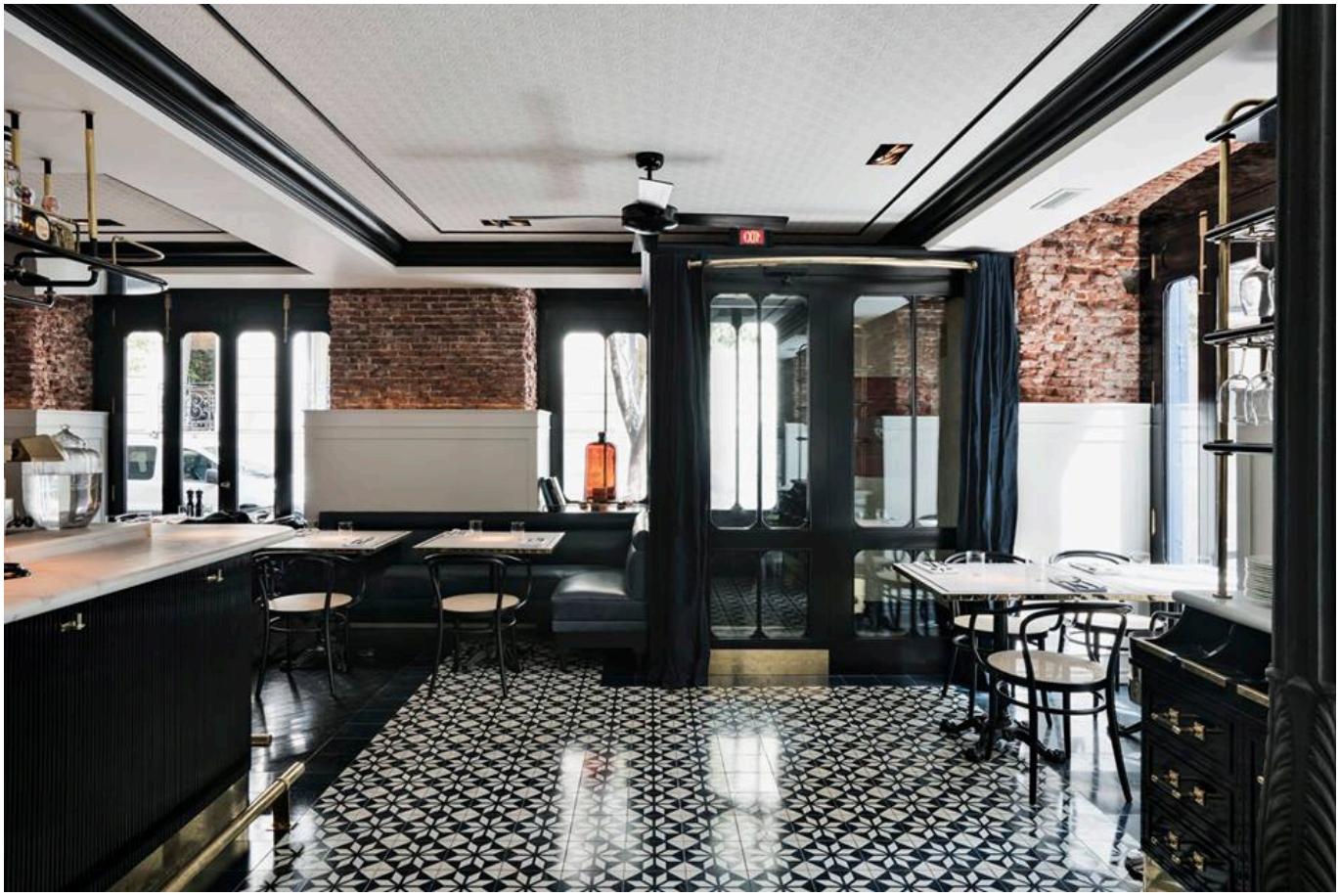
Now painted in an inky blue hue, the newly opened Cannibal is hard to miss. The name alludes to what’s on offer dinner wise. The raw stuff. Tartare. Ceviche. Carpaccio. But don’t despair if you’re not a fan of the cold stuff, the menu offers a mean hamburger and THE most delish Peruvian Pork dish that was inhaled within mere minutes.



Now I could wax lyrical about just how good the food was – because it truly was. We're talking last meal type claims (if like me burrata and steak carpaccio is your idea of food heaven). But it wasn't just the food that had my company and

me swooning; it was the service.

In a country where asking for the bill is usually met with a grunt, the team at Cannibal couldn’t have been more charming or attentive – much to the glee of my dinner companions. They happily talked through the menu with genuine interest, they were knowledgeable about ingredients and at no point were our glasses empty. I know this kind of vibe is to be expected in a country like the states, but in the land of jamon this is rare.



It goes without saying that the decor satiated my interiors porn thirst and it didn’t hurt to have a window seat on a balmy evening, where you would people watch over your dulce de leche pud.



Like all restaurants reviews, I’m always torn between spreading the word and keeping schtum for fear of a place becoming busier than the Bernabeu on a match day, but the secret’s out.



Embrace your inner cannibal and happy feasting. Who cares if it’s bikini season with food that good? That’s what kaftan’s are for.

All photos are from **Cannibal Raw Bar Madrid’s FB page & **Instagram***

Info

- **Facebook** & **Website** & **Instagram**
- **Address:** Calle Almirante., 12, 28004 Madrid
- **Phone:** 910 26 87 94
- **Metro:** Chueca, Colón, Banco de España

Arugula, a restaurant serving fantastic salads near Retiro park

Folks, it’s getting to be that time of year when the sun is out, the grass is green, and the best way to eat is outside. This weather calls for picnicking! And what better place for a picnic than El Retiro park? Prices inside the park can run ludicrously high and the same can be said for many of the places around the perimeter. Of course, there exists the classic option of bringing a bocadillo, but for a step up, there’s a gem of a place on Calle Velazquez called Arugula that will put together an A plus picnic for you and it’s only a stone’s throw away from the park.



A little over 10 euros can buy you a menú complete with soup, salad, beverage, and coffee. Other options beside salad are available including focaccias and wraps. It’s a reasonably priced combination considering the salads are huge, not to mention delicious.



At Arugula, the customer takes the reigns when it comes to

creating the salads. To start, there are three options for the lettuce base (romaine, mesclun and arugula, or mesclun and spinach). After that, there exists the option to add pasta or rice to bulk up the salad.



Next, onto the toppings, which are divided into two categories: basic and premium. Here’s where it can get tricky because all the toppings look tempting, colorfully arranged in

a patchwork spread behind the counter. The basic ingredients include avocado, bacon, egg, carrots, olives, and lentils to name a few. The premium ingredients are even more luxurious and include such items as goat cheese, salmon, serrano ham, and sun dried tomatoes. Chose three basic ingredients and one premium, and then it’s onto the dressing.



The eight dressings can be mixed and matched just like the toppings to create scrumptious hybrids like pesto/roquefort, for example. For the indecisive, there are salads already

designed and listed (with pictures of the ingredients) on large posters hanging on the wall. To compliment the salad, add soup or yogurt, throw in a beverage and don’t forget the coffee and voilá! Your picnic is ready. It’s a lot of food, filling, but upon finishing the meal, you’ll be left with the feeling that you’ve made a healthy choice.



When you order a menu to go, the staff at Arugula will wrap everything up for you and give you a sturdy bag to carry it all with you to the park. Even the coffee is accounted for;

they will put a piece of tape over the mouth of the cup to prevent spilling en route. Service is fast and you'll be picnicking in no time. It's about a five minute walk from the restaurant to the park.

Info

Web & Facebook

Address: Calle Velázquez, 9

El Patio del Fisgón in Plaza de Chamberí

The post about the original **El Patio del Fisgón** was subtitled "*Feel like you've discovered Narnia*." If the Barrio de Salamanca location seemed to be a turn-off for those who prefer galavanting around Malasaña and Chueca, my very own neighborhood, Chamberí (which is becoming more and more *de moda* by the minute) has its very own Patio del Fisgón to enjoy. If the location was a caveat in the original location, the Chamberí locale has an unbeatable one: on the very Plaza de Chamberí. This *castiza* plaza is not as big as nearby Olavide, but its strategic location equidistant from Bilbao, Alonso Martínez, Ponzano, and Rubén Darío makes it a great place to be when the weather gets warmer.

Daphne and I made our way there one early Sunday afternoon in the dead of winter, and we imagined how satisfying it will be to sit outside on the outdoor furniture they have set up right on the plaza once it's finally *terraza* weather. We found ourselves very lucky to be able to get a table without a

reservation (this was at about 1:30 PM) as the crowds started to pour in about 20 minutes after we sat down.



Much like in the original, the interior transports you to days with better weather, like the back wall with its lush greenery that makes you feel like you’re in a garden rather than in one of the city’s residential hubs.

Each place-setting is unique with whimsical furniture, from the chairs, the tiles on top of some of the tables, and the choice of placemats.



So now that the wonderful ambience is covered, let’s get to the menu. There’s a great variety, so if you watch very

carefully what you eat (like me), this is a perfect place to go where it won't be painstakingly difficult to find something you'll love and be satisfied afterwards. During the week, there's a special *menu depurativo* with a choice of salad or gazpacho and then a *tortilla francesa* or grilled chicken. This will definitely come in handy once Operación Bikini preparations come into high gear.

The first thing that made me fall in love with this place was the fact that gazpacho was on the menu all year round.



I must have been andaluza in a past life because my love for gazpacho knows no bounds

It was a perfectly-sized cazuela that was a great way to kick off the meal. The texture was just the way I liked it; I probably could have slurped it in a glass had I been given the option. As my next option, I went with the *huevos rotos sobre*

alcachofas y butifarra negra. I have to admit that I’m a sucker for eggs on Sundays and I’m also really into artichokes. These were some of the best artichokes I’ve ever had.



They were grilled instead of fried, preserving the softness from a cooked artichoke and not too heavy. The addition of the

butifarra added for an extra flavor element, but there was definitely more egg and artichoke (just the way I wanted it). I savored every single bite and I'm dreaming of the next time I'm going to be able to order it.

As for Daphne, her *milhojas de berenjena y queso de cabra* were amazing.



Just on presentation alone they look out of this world…

The tomato sauce was perfect and the eggplant and goat cheese was perfectly balanced. This dish is on the *Para Compartir* section of the menu, but the portion size was definitely satisfying for one. When you come here, you MUST get the *milhojas*. You will not regret it. The rest of the menu has a lot of variety, giving you options for any mood. From Wednesday to Saturday, the kitchen always stays open during the day, which makes it ideal if you're in the neighborhood,

hungry, and everywhere else isn’t able to make you something.

If you’re coming for dinner, definitely make a reservation, and follow Cat’s advice from the last post and try to make the reservation later so you have more time to savor your time on the Patio del Fisgón.

Info

El Patio del Fisgón Chamberí
Where: Plaza de Chamberí, 2
Phone: +34 914 10 94 45
Website & **Facebook**
Email: **chamberi@elpatiodelfisgon.com**
Metro: Iglesia (Line 1), Bilbao (Lines 1 and 4), Rubén Darío (Line 5), Alonso Martínez (Lines 4, 5, and 10)

Also check out our post on the original Patio del Fisgón in Barrio Salamanca!