Lettera Trattoria Moderna: I love beige carbs and I cannot lie

There is most definitely a pattern emerging when it comes to my most recent blog posts. I love Italian food. I could wholeheartedly eat pasta day after day, and never get bored. Why don't I then? I hear you ask… Well frankly, my waistline can't take it. But I am a fully fledged member of the pizza and pasta fan club.

During these times when I'm unable to return back to the UK (my home country), Italy is the next best thing in terms of comfort food to me. In lieu of a pie, a roast or a fry-up, Italian food cooked with love and attention feels nurturing and the perfect pick-me-up as the temperatures start to drop.



So last Saturday (during yet another *puente* spent in the city), I enjoyed a leisurely lunch at [Lettera Trattoria]

Moderna – a restaurant that's sandwiched between Gran Via and Chueca, sporting some seriously scandi-chic decor. And I had the very best kind of carb coma.



As Madrileños can't currently travel outside of the city, the place was heaving with a lovely lunchtime buzz. We munched on some delicious focaccia whilst perusing the menu and sipped on a couple of glasses of red – a great recommendation from our super attentive waiter.



We shared the show-stopping spaghetti to start, which is made and served from a carved-out parmesan wheel – certainly not a

case of style over substance. It was delicious and, as a cheese lover, gluttonously good.



Fresh spaghetti with parmesan. Image from Lettera

Next came an artichoke pizza and a slow-cooked ragu. We both left empty plates, but ensured that we left room for a pud. We weren’t disappointed.



Pappardelle pasta with slow-cooked ragu. Image from Lettera

We shared the “Tarta de Agustina” – a cake served with ricotta and a crumble made of almonds. It was one of the most unusual, but tastiest desserts that I’ve had in a long time. We fought to munch every last mouthful.



Tarta de Agustina dessert. Image from Lettera

Lettera Trattoria really lives up to its namesake – moderna. It is home-cooking with a modern twist, served in stylish surroundings with knowledgeable staff. It’s a pairing as perfect as Dolce and Gabbana.



We left full, happy and ready for a nap. So while we may not make it to Italy anytime soon, you can enjoy La Dolce Vita a

little closer to home.

By Cat Powell @littlemissmadrid

Lettera Trattoria

- Website & IG: @lettera_trattoria_moderna
- Address: Calle de la Reina 20, Madrid
- Phone: 918 053 432
- Metros: Gran Vía, Sevilla & Banco de España

You may also like:

- Nina Pasta Bar: Don’t walk right past’a
- Retrogusto Bar: My best-kept Madrid secret
- Camoatí: An incredibly romantic Argentine bistro in La Latina

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Retrogusto Bar: My best-kept Madrid secret

I never thought I’d share this place with the world, but the time has come. Retrogusto is a little Italian bar and kitchen

located near Plaza Mayor and Opera, right in the city center. Yet it doesn't feel that way. It feels more like you're in a small town, as it's situated in a quiet plaza with tables set out under a beautiful tree that provides warmth and shade.

I've been living in Madrid for over 12 years now, and this is by far one of my favorite spots in the city. One of the main reasons is that big tree! Another reason is because it's so simple and down to earth.



The restaurant has two terraces: one in the plaza; and the other under a residential building. The indoor area is small and cute, decorated with mis-matching vintage furniture and nicknacks.



You can sit anywhere and enjoy your time here. But that tree is something special; I’ve spent many wonderful evenings under its canopy…



James and I first stumbled upon Retrogusto when we were living near Sol a few years ago, and it quickly became our oasis. We'd always find a table under the tree on weeknights and order several glasses of wine or beer—each round would come with delicious olives, Italian cheese or a surprise *aperitivo* that was always good. For dinner, James would get the meatballs and I'd go for the piadina or eggplant parmesan.



But last time we went, the menu had changed so we tried something new. James got the pasta special with zucchini cream sauce that he’s still dreaming about, no joke. I went for the Caprese salad—light and fresh.



We didn’t get a spot under the tree last time either, because we went on the weekend for a change and it was full. Instead, we grabbed a seat in the other outdoor area, and now we know where all the owners’ friends and regulars hang out!



Before leaving we asked the owner, Silvana, if she could tell us a bit about her story. She’s originally from Sardinia, Italy, and came to Madrid 12 years ago, after living in Ireland and working in accounting. She wanted a change and decided that Spain was pretty similar to Italy, without it being Italy (if that makes sense).



Silvana started out working at a bar in La Latina. Her friends owned Retrogusto at the time, and she would come to hang out and help them. When they decided to leave Spain, she naturally took over and has been running it for seven years now. Her brother works in the kitchen and she's out front. "I don't cook," she says.

Our conversation went on for quite a while, covering the new laws restricting Madrid restaurants and business owners, to the lives of freelancers. I won't get into the details but I will say that she treated us to a round of shots by the end of our meal. Grazie!

Before leaving I asked Silvana what her favorite thing about the bar is: "Its simplicity. It's like being with your family

in a small town.”

I couldn’t agree with her more. Although the secret’s out, let’s make sure it stays that way.

Retrogusto Bar:

- Facebook & IG: @retrogustobar
- Address: Plaza del Biombo
- Metro: Opera or Sol

Note: Because of the restricted closing hours for bars and restaurants right now (11pm) she’s opening a little earlier lately, around 7:30pm.

Amicis Restaurant: Now’s the time for Madrid locals to go to Sol

As in many cities around the globe, Madrid’s city center has been transformed by tourism over the years. Several old taverns and traditional shops have been replaced by chains and souvenir stores, and the streets are usually packed with tourists—which is why locals often avoid the center. But there

are independent businesses in and around Sol that are worth a visit, and now’s the best time to go.

So, I decided to go on a little adventure with my food partner in crime and search for hidden gems near Sol. Our first stop: Amicis Restaurant.

A terrace that transports you to a small town in a big city

What first lured us in was Amicis’ spacious terrace. Situated right across from Mercado de San Miguel and Plaza Mayor, Amicis has its own private square surrounded by centuries-old buildings and a pedestrian street. So it feels like you’re dining anywhere but smack in the city center. We like that.



Fresh products straight from the market

Local, fresh ingredients are the base of all their dishes, and there’s something on the menu for everyone. We started out with two recommendations from our server. First, the fresh guacamole that came in a mortar and pestle, so you get to smash the large chunks of avocado yourself and then slather them on your tortilla chips.



Guacamole in a mortar and pestle

Second, the Peking duck tacos that we'll be coming back for. You can't go wrong with either of these.



Peking duck tacos

As for the main dish, I have a rule now: “If they name a dish after the restaurant, I eat it.” For many years, I had problems deciding what to order, so I decided to always ask for anything that the restaurant considers deserving of its own name.

Today’s choice is the **Classic Amicis Burger**: a generous piece of meat, fresh tomato, arugula, melted cheese, caramelized

onion and the secret (I forgot to ask what it was) house sauce. It made me very happy.



Classic Amicis Hamburger

We also ordered the red tuna tataki that hit the spot.



Red tuna tataki with sashimi, avocado and wasabi mayonnaise.

After dinner, we had the chance to chat with one of the owners, Fabio, who’s originally from the UK and has Italian and Spanish heritage. During our meal we saw him greeting everyone in different languages, including all the street musicians by name. Fabio knows about good service; he started working in hospitality at the age of 12, cleaning his father’s Italian restaurant back in the UK.

Years later, Fabio and his partner Maria—who’s also from the UK and grew up in a family food business—stumbled upon a closed taberna that was in desperate need of a renovation. They remodelled it entirely, including the downstairs bodega

which is now used as an intimate room for private dinners (apparently Fabio gives you an iPad with Spotify and lets you stay there for hours).

Fabio talks with passion about their restaurant, team and menu, and he hopes they can continue with their personal venture for many years to come.

Amicis restaurant:

- IG: @amicisrestaurant_madrid
- Web: https://amicisrestaurants.com/
- Address: Plaza del Conde de Miranda, 4
- Metro: Ópera
- Phone: +34 91 058 78 80
- Schedule:
    - **Bar** 13:00/00:00 (Fri & Sat 13:00-01:00)
    - **Kitchen** 13:00/16:00 · 20:00/00:00 (Sat & Sun 13:00/ 00:00)

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9 Low-key rooftop bars in Madrid to enjoy year round

This city may be landlocked, but the sky's the limit when it comes to rooftop bars in Madrid. From fancy restaurant-hotels

like **Picalagartos** and **Hotel Óscar**, to emblematic buildings like **Palacio de Cibeles** and the picture-perfect **Tartan Roof** at Círculo de Bellas Artes, the options seem endless. And if you're in the mood for something a little more casual, we've got you covered.

Here are our top picks for rooftop bars in Madrid that are low key and winter friendly.

1. The Hat



Photo from The Hat Madrid

This popular rooftop bar is located atop one of the city's coolest hostels, right off Plaza Mayor. It provides a great escape from Madrid's crowded center. Pop up for a few drinks with friends or a full meal, whatever you fancy.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram
- **Address:** Calle Imperial 9
- **Metros:** Sol and Tirso de Molina

Check out our full post on The Hat Madrid

2. Mercado de San Antón



Photo from Mercado de San Antón

This is a perfect place to start your evening with friends. As you enter Chueca's beloved food market, Mercado de San Antón, first you'll walk through various food stalls and tapas stands. Then make your way up to the fourth floor for a drink any time of day, any time of year.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram
- **Address:** Calle de Augusto Figueroa, 24

- **Metro:** Chueca

3. El Viajero





This plant-laden rooftop bar has been a staple in La Latina for years. Situated atop El Viajero restaurant, it offers a laidback atmosphere, plus a full bar and food options. It’s a great place to spend a winter evening with friends.

- Facebook & Instagram
- Address: Plaza de la Cebada 11
- Metro: La Latina

4. Gymage



Photo from Gymage

Gymage is a multi-level recreation center located in Plaza de la Luna, just off Gran Vía. Inside you'll find everything from a full-on gym to a health food store. But the best part is the two-level rooftop lounge with a bar, restaurant, and pool! Although you don't get to take a dip in winter, you still get to take in that chill Ibiza vibe and enjoy those gorgeous Madrid sunsets.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram
- Address: Calle de la Luna, 2
- Metro: Callao

5. Forus Barceló



This spacious rooftop restaurant is a green oasis in the middle of Chueca and Malasaña. Situated atop the Barceló food market, here you can enjoy creative and healthy cuisine, in a friendly urban garden environment. It’s also open every day of the week.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram: @azoteaforus
- **Address:** Calle Barceló 6
- **Metro:** Tribunal and Alonso Martínez

6. Doña Luz



This is one of the newest rooftop bars in Madrid, situated right in the heart of Sol, on Calle Montera. The street-level entrance is tiny, so it’s easy to miss. But once you enter the Doña Luz Hotel, squeeze through the door and take the elevator to the top floor. There you’ll find plenty of room to enjoy a nice break on the roof. There’s an indoor and outdoor area, plus a full restaurant and bar.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram
- Address: Calle Montera 10-12
- Metro: Sol

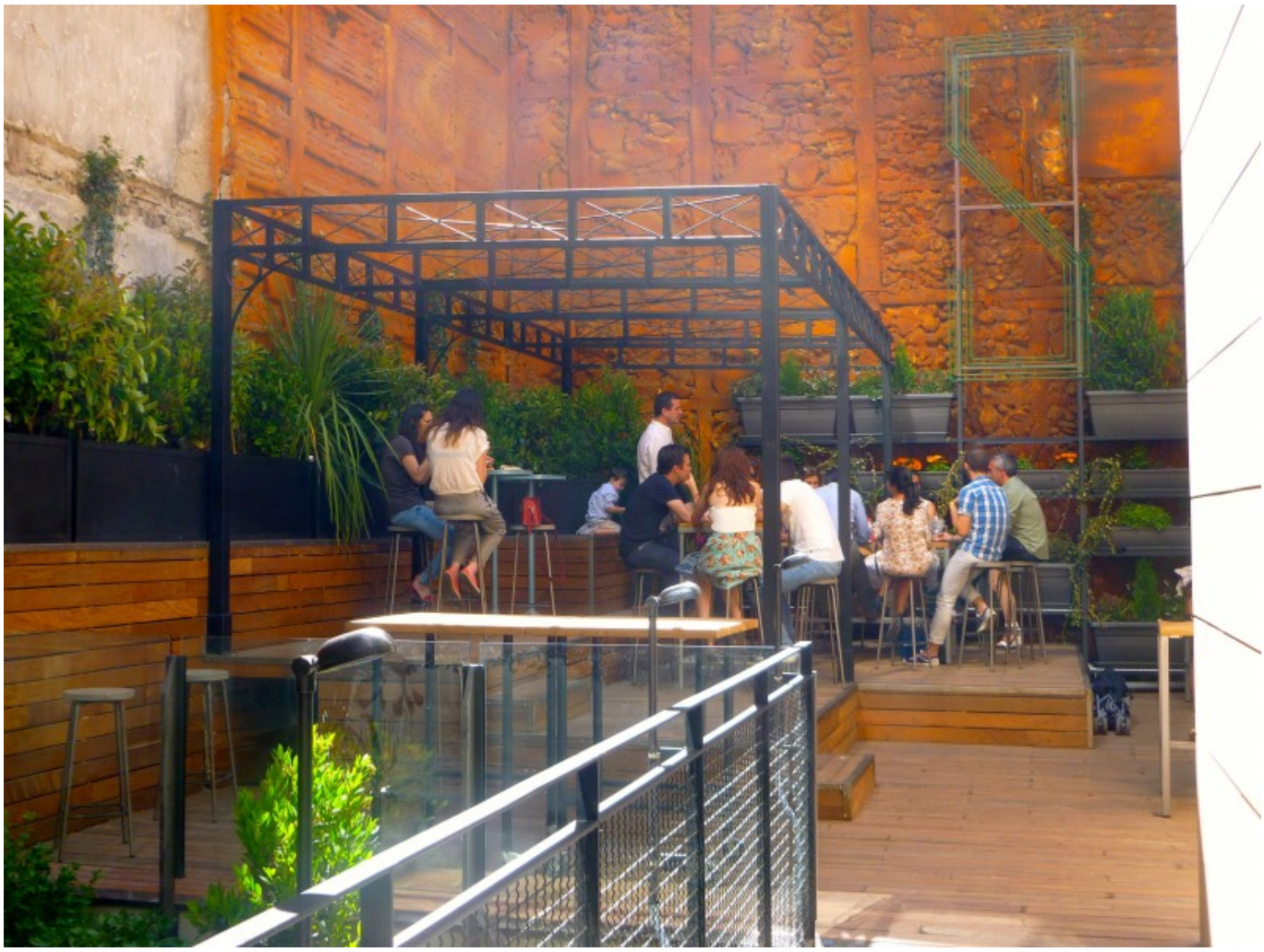
7. Jardín Secreto



This rooftop is also situated on Calle Montera, and it's called Jardín Secreto (although it's not that much of a secret anymore). Step inside the accessories store, Salvador Bachiller, and take the elevator up to the top floor to discover a small yet charming rooftop absolutely covered in plants and flowers. Although you won't find much of a view, you will discover a nice change of scenery from the busy city center.

- Website & Facebook
- Address:Calle Montera 37
- Metro: Gran Vía or Sol

8. Mercado de San Ildefonso



This isn’t exactly a rooftop bar, but it still deserves a spot on our list. This outdoor terrace is located inside an ultra modern food market in Malasaña, Mercado de San Ildefonso, right on Calle Fuencarral. So once you grab a drink and a bite to eat from the array of food stalls, find a seat in this fun patio area.

- Website, Facebook & Instagram
- Address: C/ Fuencarral, 57
- Metros: Tribunal

9. Casa de Granada



In Tirso de Molina, you'll find Casa Granada situated on the top floor of an unassuming residential building. This rather old-school restaurant has been around for ages and is definitely the least "chic" option on the list. The menu features traditional Spanish dishes, from *croquetas* to *patatas bravas*. It's well insulated during the chillier months of the year and when the awnings are up, you get great views of the heart of the city.

- Website, Facebook
- Address: Calle del Doctor Cortezo, 17
- Metro: Tirso de Molina

Did we miss any other low-key rooftop bars in Madrid open year round? Let us

know and we’ll add them to the list!

Sala Equis – impress your friends with lunch in an old XXX theatre

Lunch at a once-was pornography theatre in Madrid is not what anyone expects and is exactly why you must go. The gem that awaits you is hardly recognizable from the street but once you arrive at Tirso de Molina metro, you’re just feet away.

Once inside **Sala Equis**, pass the popcorn machine and “taquilla” and go down towards the sun-soaked covered patio with two-story-high skylights. The natural light makes it a little difficult to see the main screen but it ironically plays second fiddle to the overall ambience.



During our afternoon visit, the suspended screen played an old black-and-white movie that blended into the background amongst the greenery and food and drink counter. According to **Sala Equis' website**, there are often concerts in this same space though we weren't privy to see any that day.



Lunchtime turned out to be the ideal hour considering there was plenty of options for spaces to sit and eat but there were enough people to kickstart the pre-Saturday night feeling. We skipped the lawn chairs, swings and stadium-style seating and opted for some iron loveseats with tables.

The menu can’t be described as one thing or another since it offers a bit of it all. We had the vegan burger with fries (€9), a flatbread pizza with fig and goat’s cheese (€7.50), a quiche with bleu cheese and squash (€5.50), a couple of kimchi and shrimp wraps (€8 each).







The food was interesting, much like the locale. There’s also Mahou on tap and a full bar.

Apart from the covered patio, there is still a functioning movie theatre. Though the genre originally screened is no longer, one can still find the red velvet couches that you could only imagine to be found in a former pornography movie

theatre.

Currently, Sala Equis plays all original version films (with subtitles). This month, classics like *Chitty Bang Bang* are playing alongside *Big Fish* and *Lady Bird*. Odd choices they may seem, but the selections are unexpectedly refreshing. Film tickets run about €6.50.

By Caitlin Mackenzie

Sala Equis

- **Website** & **Facebook**
- **Instagram:** @salaequismadrid
- **Address:** Duque de Alba, 4 (Tirso de Molina or La Latina)

I'd Cross an Ocean for Atlantik Corner

Sometimes you walk into a restaurant and you can just sense that somebody has put their heart and soul into it. That's exactly how I felt last Tuesday evening when visiting Atlantik Corner for the first time. From the little details, to the big concept that envelops their entire menu, no aspect of the dining experience had been overlooked; no aspect deemed too trivial.



Atlantik Corner is a Portuguese restaurant, but with a twist. There's no cliched chicken peri peri on offer here. This is fusion cooking at its best. Unbeknown to me, Portugal has strong historical links with Brazil *(that part I knew)* but I wasn't aware of their ties with Africa and India. So with flavours from these foreign lands having been thrown into the mix, the result is a menu that can only be described as a masterclass in uniqueness.



Nuno de Noronha Goucha, the owner of Atlantik Corner, was a fountain of knowledge when it came to wine, decor and all things delicious from Spain’s next-door neighbour. Hailing from Portugal himself, the restaurant is clearly a labour of love and he explained that the concept behind the menu was to encapsulate all things ‘Atlantic’ – rather than the Mediterranean food that’s often held in such high esteem when you mention the south of Europe.



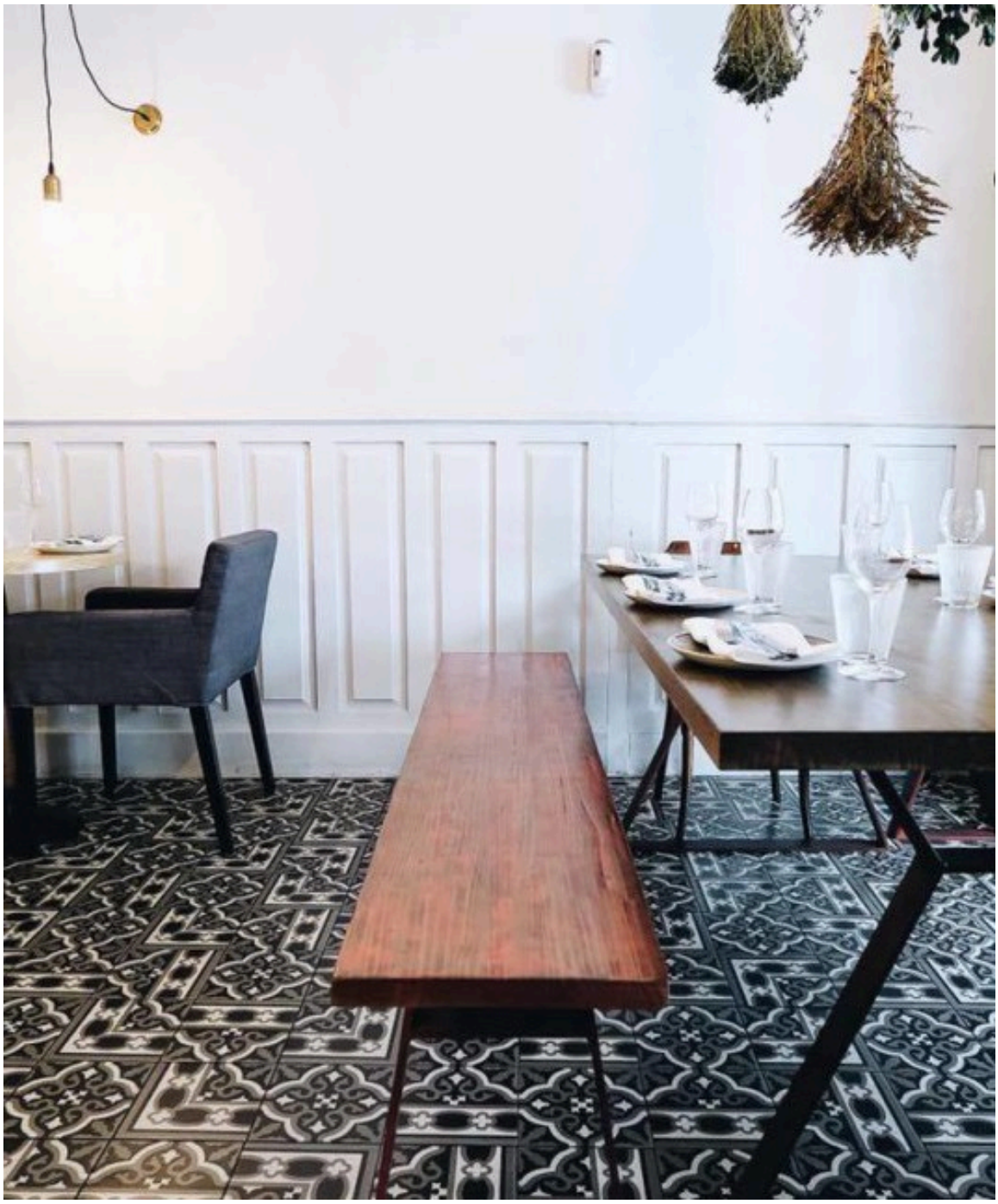


Kicking things off (and naturally, with a story behind it) was

a delectable duck pate served with oaty biscuits that Galician sailors used to take on their voyages (for when their bread went bad). Well, I can only attest that they were some lucky lads because the *marinheiras* were so good that I could've snaffled the entire bowl and tipped them into my handbag, you know, to keep my hunger pangs at bay.



This was teamed with an ice cold Alvarinho wine that was perfectly chilled and was able to covert even the most diehard Crianza drinker. Then to really ramp up the *ooh's* and *aaah's*, a selection of homemade bread appeared, served effortlessly in a tiny cloth bag bestowed to the restaurant by none other than Nuno's own Mother – a nice touch, I'm sure you'll agree.



I feel it’s worth a mention at this point that given it being a Portugese restuarant, the tile porn was off the scale. Gorgeous floors partnered the equally gorgeous food – ensuring that all senses were assaulted with loveliness. After the surprise appetiser, we plumped for three dishes, all designed to be shared and all incorporating an electric mix of ingredients.



We tried a *ravioli de gambon* – the pasta was wafer-thin (my favourite) and the prawns were pink, plump and perfect. This was followed by *suprema de vaca*, teamed with two spicy sauces, *mojo picon* and Thai green curry – I told you it was unique. And then came the final showstopper – *a carabinero al carbon.*



Now until fairly recently, I’m not ashamed to say that I was pretty squeemish when it came to all things ‘under the sea’. I watched the waiter somewhat apprehensively as he squeezed the head of the *carabinero* with force, resulting in lots of gooey goodness, which laced the cous cous with an almost syrupy flourish. I tried not to think too intently about what it was exactly, but what was undeniable was the taste – I could’ve licked the plate.



Now some peeps after that little lot would be full, but I like to think that when it comes to appetites, I'm not most people. Not a huge dessert fan, once again I took advice from Nuno and went for a *torrija de brioche*. There are no words to describe how good that pud was so I won't even attempt it – however, what I will say is that I'd go back for that alone. Not that it's the only thing that will ensure a repeat performance – the *menu del día* (priced at a bargainous €14.50 for three courses) should have people flocking in droves.



So with dinner concluding and me being somewhat in awe of the tile/prawn combo, I wondered what was left to conquer in terms of the excitement stakes – well how's this for beyond cute? You could leave an actual message in a bottle. No I'm not just quoting Sting for fun – the team behind Atlantik Corner urge you to write a wish before you leave, and leave it safely ensconced in a bottle and they'll do the rest – aka, throw it into the Atlantic Ocean for you.

Wanna know what I wished for? That they could come up with a calorie-free version of the *torrija*, so that I could tuck in morning, noon and night.

By @littlemissmadrid!

Info

- **Facebook**, **Website**, **Instagram**
- **Address:** Calle Ventura de la Vega, 11 y 13

- **Metro:** Sevilla or Antón Martín
- **Phone:** 910 71 72 45

Crackers for Caramba

Is it just me or does the run up to Christmas turn into a complete whirlwind of eating, drinking and being very, very merry – and that's all before the main event has even started. By the time December 25th rolls round you're often fit to collapse thanks to the endless festive functions that have filled your diary from the get go of the month.

However, where's the fun in being all 'bah humbug' about the excuse to crack open the bubbles and swerve the gym? There's none. So in the spirit of embracing the delirium of December, I booked a dinner at Caramba with a visiting friend and headed out to celebrate the most manic of months.



Caramba hails from the well known Grupo Larumba; which means that a stylish setting is a guarantee. Close to Puerta de Alcalá, it's perfectly placed for locals and tourists alike. Should you have spent the day pounding the pavements in an attempt to soak up the city you can easily grab a tasty treat at the end of your day.



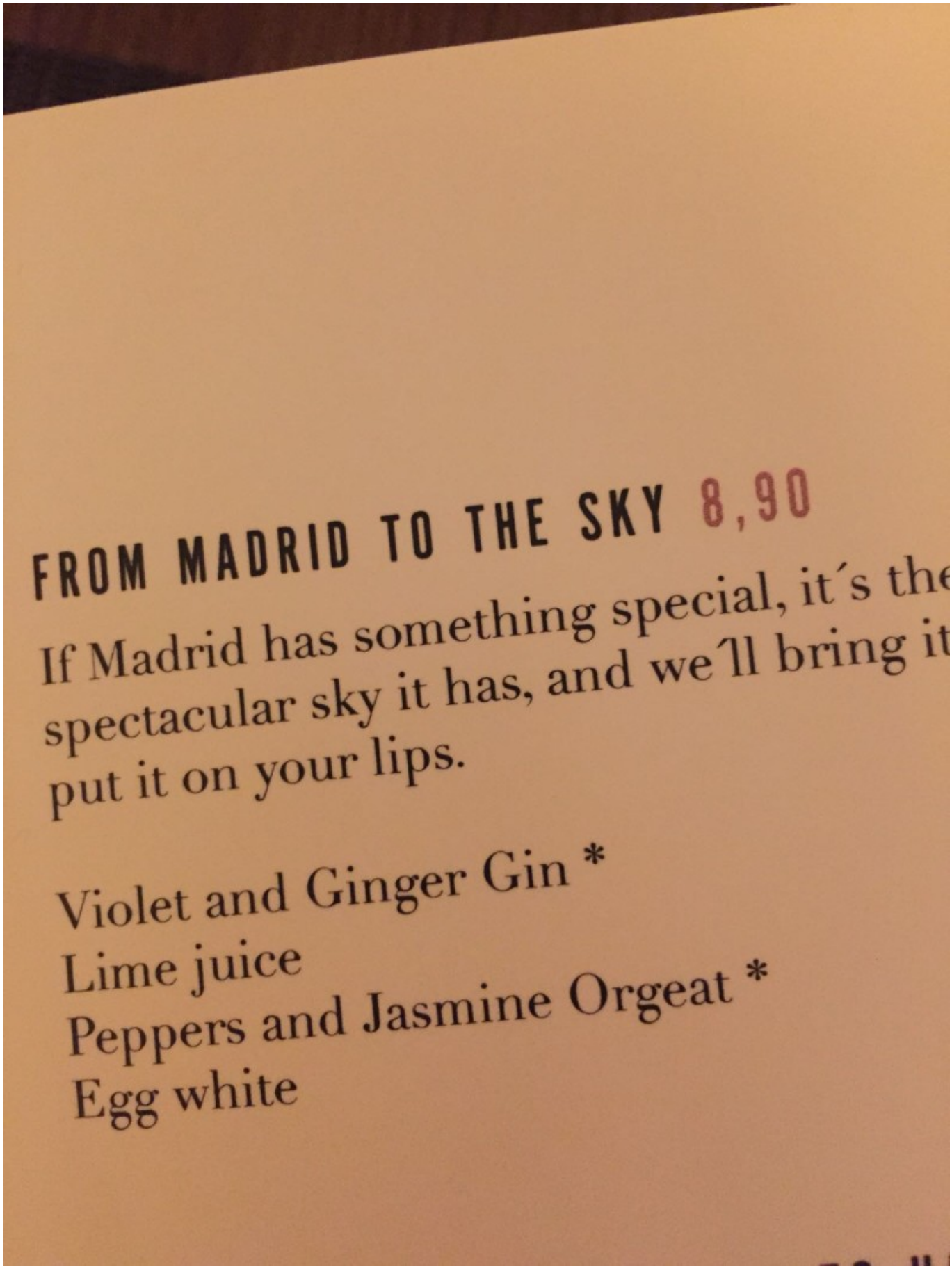
Alternatively, it's an ideal place to enjoy a leisurely lunch before mooching around the nearby stores on Gran Via. The menu is a mix of Spanish traditional, modern classics and an Asian twist. For instance, we indulged in *croquetas de jamón* (a nod to Spain's finest), but we also had some delectable Japanese style prawns that remained on the plate for all of about 13 seconds.

Next up came a tuna tartare that made us feel slightly more virtuous on the old health front (having polished off some golden, crispy chicken fingers beforehand that were almost wholly responsible for me now reaching for the old spanx). We concluded the sumptuous savoury side of things with a beef tenderloin that was as tasty as any steak that I've sampled in Argentina.



However, what got my pulse racing was the quirky list of cocktails; of which my personal favourite was the rather

novelty named ‘De Madrid Al Cielo’ – a magical mix of violet flavoured gin, lime juice and egg white – it was as pleasing on the palate as it was on the eye. Speaking of all things aesthetically pleasing, the decor was as lovely as the almond cake that we concluded the evening with.



In a country where sadly the service often leaves a nasty taste in the mouth (anyone else feel like they have to beg for

a bill?!), our server, Cata, deserves a special shout out. Attentive but not overbearing, he asked my friend what her tipple of choice was (gin, I mean she's a Brit, it's in our DNA) and with no questions asked he whipped her up her own personalised cocktail. A nice touch, I'm sure you'll agree.

Caramba, much like other hotspots in the Larumba group, is certainly not a case of style over substance. The food was delish. The cocktails a delight. And the service – the jewel in Caramba's crown.

Caramba Madrid

- **Facebook**, **Website** **&** **Instagram**
- **Address:** C/ Alcalá 19
- **Metro:** Sevilla
- **Phone:** 910 88 28 98

Take a Peek Inside 5 Historical Madrid Bars

Madrid is full of amazing bars that have played a role in Spanish history. Whether it's art, literature, or the Spanish Civil War, these bars hold some sort of significance to Spain's past and are definitely worth the visit.

Here's a sneak peek into the stories behind our favorite historical Madrid bars.

Fatigas del Querer



Located in Sol is a restaurant with an exterior as beautiful as its interior dating back to the 1920s. This restaurant will grab your attention with its beautiful Andalusian tiles dedicated to Spanish painter Julio Romero de Torres. Even one of his paintings is depicted on these beautifully detailed tiles.



Typical free Spanish tapa

Not only is this bar related to historical Spanish art, but it also has an impressively large menu of Spanish dishes such as ***setas empanadas con alioli***. These fried mushrooms with alioli sauce would go great with one of the many ***vermuts*** that **Fatigas del Querer** has to offer.

- **Address:** Calle de la Cruz, 17
- **Metro:** Sol
- **Phone:** +34 915 23 21 31

La Casa del Abuelo



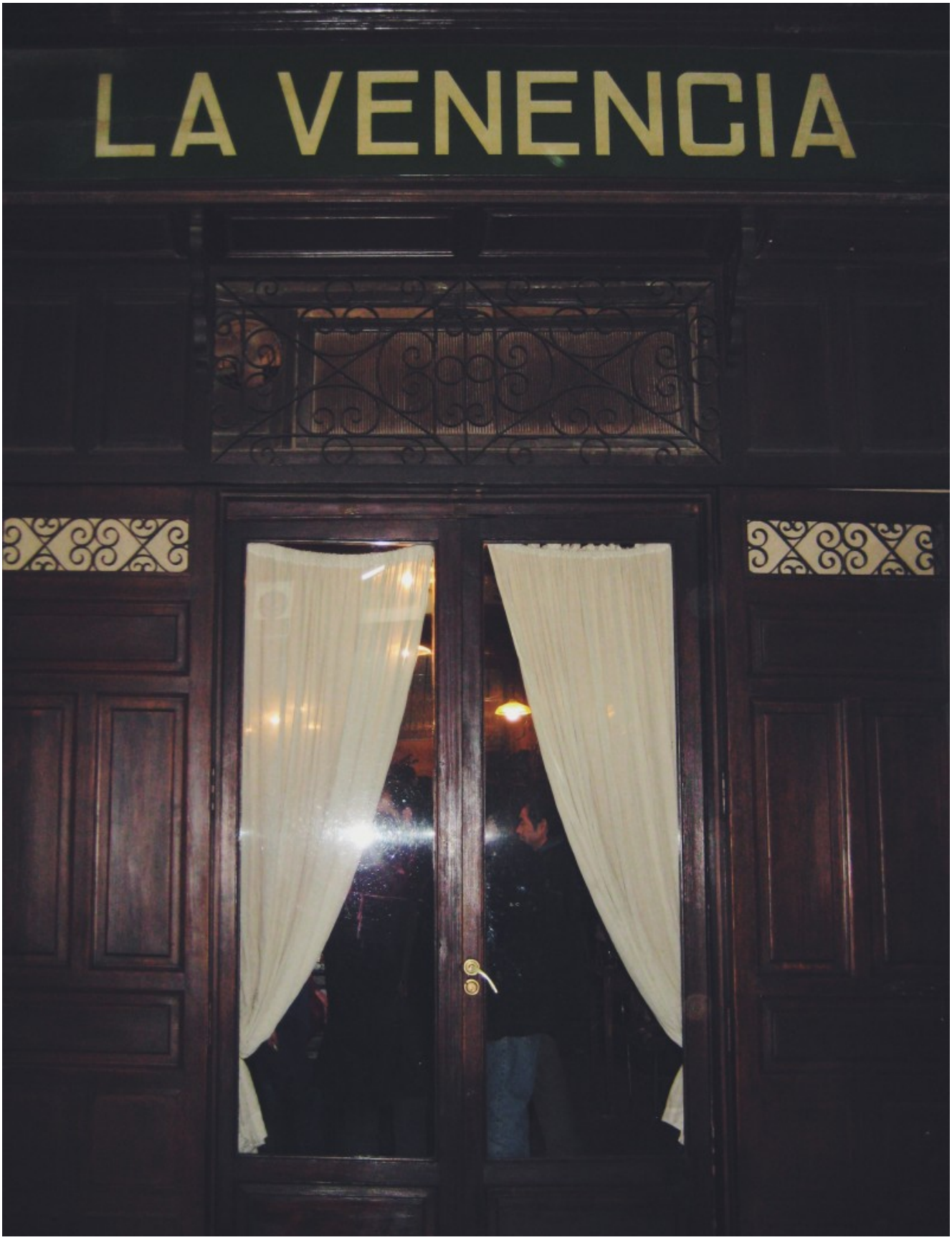
Just by the name alone, it’s clear that this bar has stood the test of time and still remains a Madrid classic.



Established in 1906, [La Casa del Abuelo] has seen Spain at the best of times and the worst of times, including the Spanish Civil War. During this time, La Casa del Abuelo only served garlic or grilled shrimp paired with a Spanish sweet wine due to the food shortage. Since then, this bar's ***gambas al ajillo*** and ***gambas a la plancha*** have become a delicious specialty.

- [Web] & [Facebook]
- **Address:** Calle de la Victoria, 12
- **Metro:** Sol
- **Phone:** +34 910 00 01 33

[La Venencia]



Source

During the height of the Spanish Civil War, this bar was one of the few spots where Republican soldiers and other anti-

fascists, such as Ernest Hemingway would go. Taking photos has been prohibited since the 1930’s just in case there were any fascist spies around.

Nevertheless, this bar is incredibly beautiful with its antique bottles and large barrels of wine that haven’t changed since this historical time period. And if you’re a sherry lover, known as *Jerez* in Spanish, this bar has an amazing variety to choose from.

- ***Cash only***
- **Address:** Calle Echegaray, 7
- **Metro:** Sol, Sevilla
- **Phone:** +34 914 29 73 13

1912 Museo Bar



Westin Palace Hotel

Located inside the Westin Palace Hotel is the perfect bar if you're in the mood for an elegant night out. Rumor has it that this high-end bar has had a fair number of influential guests such as Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, and Ernest Hemingway.



Established in 1912, this bar still maintains a museum-like appearance with old photographs of the history of the hotel and life in Spain. The bar itself has some of the most high-end alcohols that you can find here in Madrid. Although this place is a little bit on the pricey side, you won't be disappointed by the service or the selection.

- **Address:** Plaza de las Cortes, 7
- **Metro:** Banco de España, Sevilla, Antón Martín
- **Phone:** +34 913 60 80 00

San Ginés



And if you’re looking for a break from all the alcohol and tapas, this chocolatería is the perfect place to switch it up. San Ginés has been a Madrid classic since 1894 and is easy to miss while walking through the crowded center of the city. It had even been named “La escondida”, or “the hidden one” by some during the Second Republic of Spain. Regardless, this café has gained a lot of fame over the years and has even been mentioned in great works of literature, such as Ramón del Valle-Inclán’s Bohemian Lights.



Original image by: @carlas.abreu via Instagram

San Ginés has by far the best ***chocolate con churros*** in Madrid. The menu also consists of ***porras***, known as giant churros, a variety of coffees, and even chocolate liqueur. So if you haven't already, head on over to San Ginés and get your sugar fix.

- **Web & Facebook**
- **Address:** Pasadizo de San Gines, 5
- **Metro:** Sol

- **Phone:** +34 913 65 65 46

You might also like: 5 authentic Madrid bars loved by locals

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5 Authentic Madrid Bars Loved by Locals

If you came to Madrid for some homemade *croquetas* or high quality *jamón ibérico*, you want to make sure that you're going to the best places. In Madrid, like any other major European city, it can be difficult to distinguish the local favorites from the tourist traps. But this doesn't necessarily mean that you have to venture off the beaten path to find traditional Spanish delicacies.

To save you the trouble, here's a list of some of the most authentic bars that can easily be found in the center of the city. So get ready to discover Madrid, one *tapa* at a time.

1) El Madroño



This restaurant screams authenticity with its interior and exterior tile decorations that depict Madrid's history and culture. When walking in, the first thing that will catch your eye is the homemade pastries and cakes that you'll be anticipating throughout your meal. Once seated, it's no surprise if a free *tapa* is brought to your table before even ordering.

El Madroño is the perfect place to order a glass of *vermut* paired with the *delicias de bacalao con mermelada de madroño*. These cod bites are fried to golden perfection and served with a side of madroño jam, the fruit from Madrid.



Delicias de bacalao con mermelada de madroño

- **Address:** Calle Latoneros, 3
- **Metro:** La Latina
- **Phone:** +34 913 64 56 29

2) Bar la Campana



If you’re looking for the perfect *bocadillo de calamares*, look no further because La Campana is hands down the best place. Right next to Plaza Mayor, this bar is always crowded with locals, no matter what time of day it is. My personal favorite is a calamari sandwich paired with *una cerveza con limón*, otherwise known as beer with a splash of lemon. And if you’re feeling extra hungry, you can’t go wrong with an order of *patatas bravas* or *patatas alioli*.



Bocadillos de calamares con patatas bravas y patatas alioli

- **Address:** Calle Botoneras, 6
- **Metro:** Sol
- **Phone:** +34 913 64 29 84

3) Casa Toni



Found on Calle de la Cruz, this small restaurant definitely stands out against the others, with its worn out awning and window where you can see the chef hard at work. The first thing that you'll notice while walking into Casa Toni is the chef grilling up portions of *pimientos* and *oreja* to a charred perfection. In my opinion, this place has the best *sepia* ever. This grilled cuttlefish topped with fresh herbs and served with a side of mayo should be enjoyed with a Madrid white wine.



Sepia con vino Madrileño

- **Address:** Calle de la Cruz, 14
- **Metro:** Sol
- **Phone:** +34 915 32 25 80

4) Casa González



This half-bar half-artisan store located off of Calle Huertas is the perfect place to enjoy a light round of tapas, and maybe take a few of the goods home with you. Casa González is a cheese lover's dream with its delicious *raclette tosta* and variety of other European cheeses to choose from. My personal favorite take-home item is the *queso de arzúa*, which is a fresh cheese from the north of Spain. After enjoying a nice glass of wine and a tapa or two, don't be afraid to bring home a bag full of artisan goodies with you.



- [Web]
- **Address:** Calle del León, 12
- **Metro:** Antón Martín, Sol
- **Phone:** +34 914 29 56 18

5) Bodegas Ricla



About a 5-minute walk from Plaza Mayor is where you can find an old-fashioned bar decorated with bottles of wine that definitely gives a classic tavern feel. You can even take one of those bottles home with you! Just ask anyone behind the counter and they will be happy to help. Besides the amazing Spanish wines, Bodegas Ricla has a pretty good *vermut de grifo* (vermouth on tap) that goes perfectly with a side of *albóndigas,* otherwise known as meatballs.



- **Address:** Calle Cuchilleros, 6
- **Metro:** La Latina, Tirso de Molina
- **Phone:** +34 913 65 20 69

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Salmon Guru, seriously fun

spirits near Plaza Santa Ana

The terms *craft cocktails* and *celebrity mixologist* can make eyeballs roll faster than you can say Vesper Martini. Because with all the clapping of mint leaves and fancy garnishes, it's easy for a place to take itself too seriously.

And while the folks behind **Salmon Guru** do have some serious credentials (proprietor is mixology mastermind Diego Cabrera), you won't find any stern-faced barmen shaming your request for vodka here. The only thing serious at this spot is the bartenders' love for well-made drinks.



The dark, unassuming exterior on Calle Echegaray does little to reveal the neon lights and quirky decor inside. The front room is all 50s-era bungalow, with a bar and palm-print swivel chairs to one side and low seating against dark wood paneling

on the other.

But don’t stop there. Follow the neon glow toward the back room and you’ll find yourself in the middle of a pop-art light extravaganza, with neon lightning bolts on the ceiling and familiar comic book faces on the walls.



As soon as you sit down you'll have a menu and glass of water plunked in front of you. If you've lived in Madrid for any

length of time, you know how rare it is to find a spot who’ll bring you a free glass (let alone keep it filled).

Just like the decor, the menu is an eclectic mix. You’ll find perfectly executed classics listed alongside their in-house inventions. If you’re not sure where to start, don’t be shy!

The bartenders are more than happy to recommend a drink based on what you like. Even better is to simply ask about their favorites, which I how I found myself sipping a Laphroaig-infused old-fashioned that isn’t on the menu.



Pasión, a blend of rum, coconut milk and passion fruit



Vesper Martini & classic Manhattan

Need one more reason to check out Salmon Guru? **The place is a must for whiskey lovers.** If you don’t see your favorite amongst the extensive selection of American bourbon and rye on the shelves, ask to see their secret whiskey menu.

All in all, if you're looking sip impeccably made drinks somewhere that's hip while being unpretentious, definitely check out Salmon Guru.

Info

- **Facebook**
- **Address:** Calle Echegaray, 21
- **Metro:** Sevilla or Anton Martin
- **Phone:** 91 000 61 85

By Danielle Owens, Website & Facebook

*A former Oregonian, Californian and Bogotana, Danielle is (for now!) settled in Madrid. Since 2014, she's chronicled her experiences living abroad on her blog, **No Longer Native**.*