

# El Camoatí – an incredibly romantic Argentinian bistro bar in La Latina

As soon as I walked into Camoatí for the first time a few years ago, it was love at first sight. My friend was holding her birthday party there and I couldn't believe I'd never heard about it before. This charming Argentinian bistro is located on a side street off of La Latina's most popular plaza, Plaza de la Paja. The facade is unassuming so you're likely to walk right past it. But don't!



As you step in, you'll find the cozy bar area, and instantly feel the warm vibe that I'll try to express in this article.

But you'll really have to experience it for yourself.



Both the decor and ambience at Camoatí are truly special. You'll find funky furniture, quirky trinkets and mismatched table settings all around. It's fun to just let your eyes wander and imagine where all the items came from – whoever decorated this place definitely had a unique sense of style.



The main dining area has two separate levels, plus a few tables squeezed into cute little nooks for extra romantic dining. At the tables you'll also find paper and crayons for colorful drawing, like in the good-old days of going to restaurants as kids (they've also got board games).



Dining at Camoatí is always a treat and the food is simply outstanding – the [menu](#) features a wonderful selection of

dishes inspired by Argentinian, French and Italian cuisine. You'll find hearty meat dishes, fresh fish, homemade pasta, tasty desserts, cocktails, wine, coffee, and more. Not to mention the service is very much up to par.

Also note that Camoatí is a great place to go even if you're just in the mood for a drink or a coffee with friends.



**So without further ado, here's what we ordered the last time we went to Camoatí:**

We started out with a glass of Malbec and an Albariño, both recommended by the server.



As an appetizer we ordered the tuna tartar, served with avocado and dressed with soy sauce, ginger and sesame oil. It was incredibly fresh and delicious. I order this almost every time I go.



And for the mains, James got the traditional *milanesa napolitana* – a generous-sized filet of veal that's breaded and covered in tomato sauce and melted mozzarella cheese. It's served with a heaping portion of homemade fries and salad. The photo says it all.



And I went with a lighter option: the salmon that's grilled in teriyaki sauce and served over sautéed vegetables. So good.



To top it all off we went with one of the homemade desserts, recommended by the server: *volcán de dulce de leche con helado*. Amazing.



On other occasions I've also tried their homemade empanadas, the (wonderful) plate of grilled vegetables topped with goat cheese, and other meat dishes that are to die for. But I'm still working my way through the menu.

So whether you're looking for a romantic date night, an afternoon with friends, or simply a delicious meal in a charming setting, I promise you that Camoatí will not disappoint. You'll want to come here again and again.

## Camoatí

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#), & [Instagram](#): [@camoati](#)
- **Address:** Alfonso VI 3
- **Metro:** La Latina

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# El Brote: a brand-new mushroom restaurant in the heart of El Rastro

Mushrooms: they're an inspiring subject one can easily get carried away with, especially after paying a visit to El Brote. Years of academic mushroom knowledge and on-the-ground wisdom were literally delivered to us on a plate and I'm now a devout mushroom apostle on a mission to spread the message to the foodie people of Madrid.



El Brote's dining area

El Brote (the bud) is a small and cosy restaurant on [Calle de la Ruda](#) run by two mushroom enthusiasts, Eduardo and Alvaro. Every corner of the place is mushroom-themed, even the floor. Its décor is earthy, humble and a little eccentric, and the original features of the building have been beautifully highlighted throughout the room.



Abstract mushroom artwork



Various gospels of the mushroom bible



The 0th floor of El Brote



A mushroomy display inside the floor

Both Eduardo and Alvaro were keen to explain each dish on their 10-item menu and made recommendations based on the season and their own personal preferences which, funnily enough, were different.

*There's a specific order in which you must eat each ingredient.*

... they explained as each dish was brought out. They suggested we start with the unseasoned mushrooms so that we could taste their pure flavour, then slowly begin combining the other ingredients together to get a feel for the dish as a whole. The flavours were subtle and delicious both separately and collectively – a sign that someone behind the scenes really knows what they're doing.



Trumpet mushrooms with a raw egg yolk and herbs



Red mushrooms with pak choy, gnocci and pumpkin gratin



Black mushrooms with beans, squash and leek

Try their wine too, it's really good. We also noticed that every single table in the restaurant was sharing a bottle of red between them... such a beautiful sight.

**TIP:** El Brote have very few tables and they don't take evening reservations so aim to be the first to arrive as we were, because within 10 minutes of arriving, the place will be full!

## INFO

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
  - **Address:** [Calle de la Ruda, 14](#)
  - **Nearest metro:** La Latina, line 5
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# Veggie Nirvana at VivaBurger in La Latina

In the foodie hotspot Plaza de la Paja, in *barrio* La Latina, lies a vegetarian oasis with an oddly beachy vibe, complete with pale teal walls, distressed white wood, and beaded curtains.



You can sit inside or at one of their lovely terrace tables in this little nook of La Latina. While there's almost always a full house (and for good reason), the staff works like a well-oiled machine, and the owner treats everyone like family.



Everything on the menu is vegan or vegetarian—and seriously delicious. Being shamefully addicted to cheese, I was admittedly nervous to try their vegan burger of the day. But it exceeded my expectations in every way: **filling, creamy, and flavorful, it left me more than satisfied.** It comes with a salad or soup, fresh fries, and a drink (can be wine or beer too).







If you're not feeling a veggie burger, the eatery offers an **alternative *menú del día***: they celebrate a different country every day with a rotating international menu. Indian curry garam masala, Greek salad and musaka, Peruvian avocado ceviche, Moroccan couscous, Argentinian vegetable *parrillada* and empanadas... and about 20 others.







For dessert, I had a fresh mint green tea smoothie. Having a huge sweet tooth, it wasn't what I was expecting, but it was flavorful and refreshing, especially on such a hot day. If you order dessert a la carte, instead of with the lunch special, you have lots of other options like their scrumptious carrot cake or vegan ice cream.



Amazingly, the burger for the menú is apparently a more “basic” veggie burger. If that’s basic, I can only imagine the

full menu is mind-blowing. I'll for sure be back for more.

## Info

- [Facebook](#)
  - **Website:** vivaburger.es
  - **Instagram:** @viva\_burger
  - **Address:** Costanilla de San Andrés 16
  - **Phone:** 91 366 33 49
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# Kittens & coffee at Polineko, an ethical cat cafe in La Latina

You may have heard of the Japanese concept of a '**neko café**,' or a cat cafe, which has made a splash in the world's biggest cities in recent years.

In Japan, the idea was born because most landlords don't allow pets. So animal lovers go to a cat cafe and pick which cat they'd like to play with. Each time they visit, they spend time with the same cat, forming a relationship with him or her. It's kind of like having a part-time pet.

In other cities though, like London and New York, it works a bit different. You simply pay to **hang out in a feline-filled cafe**, and the cats roam free while you sip a latte and relax.



The latter has arrived to Madrid. There are a handful of options, but my favorite is [Polineko](#), recently opened in La Latina. It stands out for several reasons:

- **Its authentic Japanese style.** Between the decor, the Japanese snacks like doriyakis, and the anime-themed items in their shop, you'll feel like you've stepped into a real neko café.



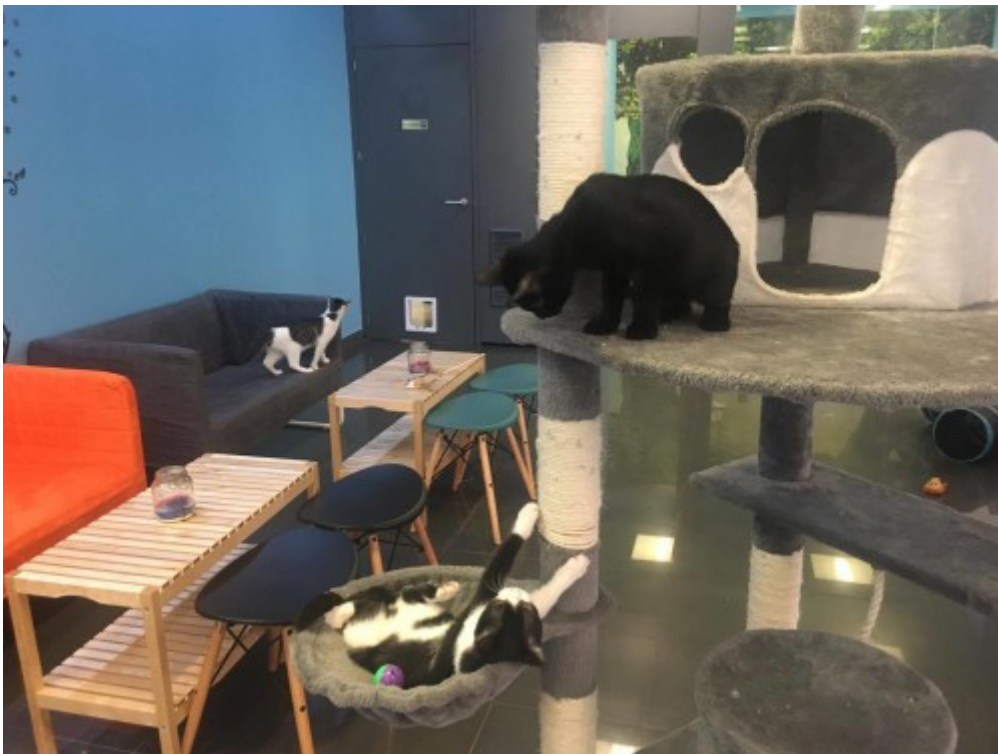
- **Its mission.** Above all, Polineko aims to foster loving relationships between humans and their feline friends. Unlike other cat cafes in Madrid, you can touch and play with all the cats, and almost all of them are available for adoption. They partner with animal protection agencies like [ALBA](#) that facilitate the adoption process, guaranteeing that all cats are healthy and vaccinated, and that they end up in loving and reliable 'forever' homes.



- **Its staff.** Everyone who works here is incredibly friendly and knowledgeable, from Steven (the warm and open co-owner), to Juan (barista extraordinaire), and its other co-owner, Melisa, who I didn't meet but is a veterinarian and does free behavioral consultations for your cat every Friday!



- **The environment.** The cafe is spacious and opts for couches instead of tables and chairs. There's free wifi and they won't bat an eye if you choose to work on a laptop, or if you prefer to sit on the ground and play with the kitties.





- **The coffee.** It's delicious. That's all. Oh, and they have every kind of milk variety you can think of. Try it with almond milk!





In addition to coffee and Japanese snacks, Polineko also offers bowls of cereal (Froot Loops and Lucky Charms, oh my!) and Japanese beer and tea.



**Polineko is open Sunday-Thursday from 11am-10pm, and Friday and Saturday from 11am-11pm.**

## Prices are as follows:

- 4€ for 30 minutes and a beverage
- 6€ for 30 minutes, a beverage, and a Japanese snack
- 6€ for an hour and a beverage
- 8€ for an hour, a beverage, and a snack

The staff is also planning to launch **intercambio nights** soon—stay tuned for more info by following them on social media.

Here are more cat pics.







*Photos courtesy of Polineko and the author.*

## Info

- **Address:** Carrera de San Francisco, 11
- **Metro:** La Latina
- **Facebook**
- **Instagram & Twitter:** @polineko\_madrid
- **Website:** [www.polineko.com](http://www.polineko.com)
- **Phone:** 680 85 83 89

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# María Pandora, a dark and

# artistic champagne bar in La Latina

If you've ever spent an evening watching the sunset with a liter of Mahou in Parque Las Vistillas (and if you haven't, get on that ASAP), you may have spotted this beautiful, borderline-creepy cocktail bar, María Pandora.





Cryptic, dripping golden letters read MARÍA PANDORA, and the sound of a dramatic poetry reading demand the curiosity of

passersby not yet in the know.



Once inside, you'll already be hooked: every inch of the walls is covered with sinister sketches, the tables are adorned with misshapen melted candles, and vintage furniture adds the finishing touch to make you feel like you're in a haunted mansion.



But despite the ghoulish vibe, the servers here are cheery and chatty. When we ordered champagne and white wine, our server plopped a frozen raspberry in our glass, assuring it would add a little somethin'-somethin'.

Oh, and the tapas here are my kind of food: mounds of candy and fruit.





But the best is yet to come. A meeting point for lovers of art, the bar also functions as a stage for poetry readings,

*microteatro*, and literary chats several nights of the week. The wall of antique books are for sale (but the century-old portraits of the owner's family are not).



Sign up for an event, order a glass of bubbly, and if you get there early enough, grab a window seat. María Pandora does not disappoint.

*\*Just note that their opening hours can be a little funky – they tend to open at 7pm except on Mondays, although sometimes they throw private events. So it's best to call ahead to make sure they're open!*

## Info

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Phone:** +34 910 42 82 13

- **Address:** Plaza de Gabriel Miró, 1
  - **Metro:** La Latina or Ópera
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# Zoco Comidero: Eat well and feel great at Madrid's first (and only) flexitarian restaurant

## NOW CLOSED

I don't eat meat, but one of my life rules is: **never go to a Vegetarian restaurant.**

I've been jaded by too many poorly thought-out ventures where the food is created from fear of meat rather than love of veg. Vegan and vegetarian cuisine has existed all over the world for millennia, so where did the culinary black hole come from and why has it left us in such a veg-hating dark age feeling hungry and dehydrated?

Last week, a friend of mine recommended veggie-friendly [Zoco Comidero](#) and I might just have seen **the light at the end of the tunnel.**



**Rarely do you come across a restaurant with this much respect for food.** The concept: flexitarian – a primarily vegetarian diet which occasionally includes meat or fish. In other words, there's something for everyone.

No longer does the vegetarian friend have to eat a *racion de patatas bravas* for dinner, or the carnivorous friend have to suffer through a fish-less fillet or a tofurkey burger (a what?).

At Zoco Comidero, the menu is hugely varied and every dish is put together professionally. Everything on your plate hit the kitchen worktop raw and intact and has been **prepared freshly with no external influences.**

We kicked off Tuesday evening with a kale and kiwi smoothie, an arepa stuffed with an almond-based vegan cheese and chlorella pesto (a delicious black seaweed pesto).



Feeling healthy yet? We shared two *tostas*: one with goat's cheese and a juicy baked tomato and the other with a generous portion of beetroot-marinated raw salmon and homemade mustard. For mains we had a risotto made with kamut (an ancient large wheat grain), and prawn chop suey.



This was all underlined with a trio of deserts: an intense gooey dark chocolate brownie (the secret ingredient: avocado), quinoa 'cheesecake' and a face-twisting lemon curd.



By now the word “healthy” is in the background. **Exotic flavours, textures and presentation** of the food resonates more than anything else. I love Marbell’s zen and her way of transmitting it to us urban wildlife through edible flowers and doses of colour.



This is Marbell, the brains and owner of Zoco Comidero

Zoco Comidero is just off the beaten track but in the real

heart of Madrid's old town. The restaurant has an elegant interior with low lighting, good music and a bonus view of the palace. There's also a fun downstairs lounge which gets going on weekends. Every Saturday and Sunday, Marbell tries to organise a chilled bit of live music from 10:30 pm onwards **so stick around after dinner for good DJs and Venezuelan bands.**

## Info

- [Web](#) & [Facebook](#)
  - **Address:** Calle Moreria 11
  - **Metro:** La Latina
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## Martina Cocina: Cosy Coffee Shop in La Latina

A few years ago breakfast in Madrid rarely consisted of more than a cafe con leche in one of the more traditional tapas bars. **Nowadays the coffee shop scene has really taken off**, and it's becoming more and more common to see quirky little cafes offering brunch, iced coffees and other less traditional options.



[Martina Cocina](#) fits perfectly into this category. It's situated in the **La Latina/Tirso de Molina** area, where you can find a whole host of cute coffee shops. My friend Elefteria and I went on a Thursday morning, hoping for brunch and a good place to catch up.



The cafe is dotted with people working on their computers (**they have wifi**), reading, or having breakfast with a friend. The ambience is fairly calm and quiet, and you can choose to

sit on the communal bench in the middle of the room, or to tuck yourself away at the back on the cushioned sofa. I guess **Martina Cocina** has gone for the “shabby chic” look, with bulbs hanging from the ceiling from rope and an eclectic mix of distressed wood furnishings. The look works, and the vibe reminds me of somewhere I would find in my hometown of Brighton.



The cafe only serves brunch on Saturdays, but we still managed to have a great make-shift brunch, as the cafe has a fairly wide range of breakfast options. Each day they make a selection of different **quiches and empanadas**, and we ordered one of each as well as the more traditional pan con tomate and some yoghurt and fruit. Elefteria is a **vegetarian** and there were plenty of options for her to choose from. All of the food was good, and **we would especially recommend trying the cheese**

**and onion empanada.** Our waitress was really friendly and warm, which made us feel comfortable enough to sit for a while and work.



The cafe specialises in teas (they literally have a whole menu just for tea) and they also serve coffee from all over the world. I should probably also mention the **amazing looking cakes** displayed by the counter – seriously regretting not ordering one!



The cafe isn't just a breakfast spot; at night they dim the lights and serve beer and wine, making it the perfect place for a relaxed dinner with a friend. It also got pretty busy

around lunchtime, and **their menú del día is a good price, at 10,60 euros for three courses and a drink.**

In short, Martina Cocina offers great service, a comfortable setting and great homemade food in one of the most up-and-coming barrios of Madrid.

## Info

- **Adress:** Plaza Cascorro 11 28005, Madrid
- **Email:** [info@martinacocina.es](mailto:info@martinacocina.es)
- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#)

## Article by Laura Blaskett

## Photos by Elefteria Garos

### You'll also like these spots:

- [La China Mandarina, a flashy new bistro in Plaza Cascorro](#)
  - [Lamiak, Basque pintxo bar in La Latina](#)
  - [Cosy Wine Bars in La Latina \(with gluten-free options!\)](#)
  - [El Cafelito, a trendy spot for coffee lovers in Lavapiés](#)
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# De María: Fabulous Argentinian Restaurant

I discovered this fabulous restaurant not too long ago, called [De María](#), as two people recommended it to me on separate occasions. Since then it has become one of my go-to spots in Madrid. [De María](#) is one of those restaurants that always leaves a good impression on everyone who dines there; the food is great, portions are generous and the price is fantastic.

[De María](#) is popular to say the least; photographs of famous patrons line the walls: athletes like Beckham and actors like Javier Bardem are just some of the familiar faces who have enjoyed this wonderful restaurant.



**De María** has several locations. So far I've tried three of them and none was disappointing.

The menu is varied and contains good-quality ingredients. You can choose from a variety of mouth-watering starters, such as "chorizo criollo", or vegetable dishes, pastas and salads and, of course, the traditional Argentine beef. The last time I dined here we weren't very hungry so we opted for a lighter menu. Something that stands out to me about **De María** is that

you always get tasty snacks to nibble on while you wait for your food to arrive.



The **chimichurri** and **pepper sauces** are a must, as is the **cream cheese spread**. During the summer they usually bring a glass of gazpacho or salmorejo. When it's cold out, they tend to bring you a creamy vegetable soup – in our case, we got a delicious pumpkin soup.

As a starter, we went for the **grilled Provolone cheese**. It was simply exquisite and even more when covered with one of their tasty sauces. "**Chorizo criollo**" is another must.



After the cheese plate, my friend and I ordered salads; she ordered a **mixed salad** and I had a **caprese salad** – light, fresh, and deliciously paired with a beer and a glass of white wine.



We decided to skip dessert because we weren't too hungry, but the waiter didn't seem to care: he brought us each a glass of tangerine sorbet and a yogurt and mango sauce (on the house!), along with their traditional shots.





**De María's prices are very reasonable.** We paid about €21 each. So if you want to enjoy Argentinian cuisine and a friendly atmosphere, this is your place. It also has the advantage of having several locations so finding a table will not be a problem.

The locations I've visited are:

- *De María: Calle Hortaleza, 81, 28004, Madrid*
- *De María: Calle Preciados 32, 28013, Madrid*
- *De María: Calle Correo 2, 28012, Madrid*

You can find all the locations listed on their [web](#)

If you want to enjoy more Argentinian restaurants in Madrid, then check out our article on [Casa Federica](#).

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# Forasteros Concert – Folk, Gypsy-jazz & Swing Music in La Latina

Don't miss the chance to support a Madrid-based band playing tracks from their recently released EP "Hello You!" (Have a listen [here](#)) together with classic and new Forasterian creations. [Forasteros](#) is made up of a group of international musicians playing a mix of folk, swing and gypsy-jazz music. They'll be holding a concert on Saturday, Nov 28, at 11pm in La Latina, at a venue called [Collage Drinks Art](#). Entrance costs €6 with a drink. Also check out our [feature article on Forasteros](#).

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## La Latina's 'seafood party' in Mercado de La Cebada: The place to see and be seen!

**Mercados are the heart and soul of any Spanish city.** If you want to get under the skin of the place you're visiting, make a beeline for the city's biggest food market. Wander around each section (meat, vegetables, fish, etc.) and you will instantly see what the region's all about. Then make your way to the *mercado's* busiest bar, order what everyone else is drinking and demand your rightful complimentary *tapa*. If it's something you've never clapped eyes on, even better.



La Latina's [Mercado de la Cebada](#) is no exception. The place encapsulates Spanish culture to almost cliché levels: the heart and soul of Madrid is right here.



Every weekday, [Mercado de la Cebada](#) will sell you fresh produce from all over Spain. There's also a good selection of local bars in the labyrinth of alleys both upstairs and downstairs, and even a few clothes stalls, toyshops and cobblers for some of the market's more devout punters.



But then, every Saturday at lunchtime, [Mercado de la Cebada](#) transforms into what I will describe as nothing less than a **seafood party**.





The atmosphere is electric; iced molluscs and pulpo are flowing, and groups of friends doing what they do best: sharing food and belly-laughing, plastic cup of valdepeñas in one hand, half-eaten shrimp in the other.





Grab a few friends and get there **no later than 2:30pm**. Find one of the aproned chaps hovering in front of his stall, affectionately touching everyone with his fishy hands, and place your order per *ración* or by weight.



Before you take your polystyrene plates to the nearest paper-covered stack of crates, don't forget to pick up your **complimentary bottle of wine or cans of beer. Yeah... COMPLIMENTARY!** Due to licensing rules, these shops can't sell drinks. I imagine there's a slight markup on the prices of seafood but, having said that, **the prices are some of the lowest I've seen in Madrid, and the quality is some of the best.**

There are cups, serviettes, toothpicks and mussel 'spives' (spoon-knives) strategically strewn around the stalls – a seafood spectacular with no frills, and all the better for it.

## Info

[Web](#) – [Facebook](#)

**Address:** Plaza de la Cebada, La Latina, 28005

**Metro:** La Latina (right outside)

**Opening hours:** Mon – Fri 9am-2pm / 5-8:30pm; Sat 9am-3pm

**Another soulful neighbourhood market, not too far away, is [Mercado de San Fernando in Lavapiés](#)**