

Mercado de Vallehermoso – Madrid's perfect neighbourhood food market

One of the first things I fell in love with about Spain was the abundance of fresh produce and local independent shops. Although the big supermarket chains have undoubtedly made their mark, food markets all over Madrid are still thriving. This is partly because they are so much more than just somewhere to pick up the weekly shop. You can enjoy a quick *caña*, stop for tapas, or stay for a whole meal.

Each *barrio* has its own market with something different to offer. Here's what I love about my local, Mercado de Vallehermoso.



Photo from [Mercado de Vallehermoso](#)

Built in the 1930s, until relatively recently the market had been largely abandoned and forgotten, with two thirds of its stalls shut in 2015. After being rescued from disrepair by a change in management and support from the *Ayuntamiento*, it's now bustling, with all 62 stalls occupied.

At Mercado de Vallehermoso you'll find everything from the traditional baker's, butcher's and fishmonger's stalls to restaurants, wine bars, craft beer, and **Spain's only permanent farmer's market**. As well as Spanish food, you can eat Mexican, Italian, Japanese, Korean, and more. In the Mercado de Productores (farmers market) all the producers are from Madrid, or less than 120 km away, and many of the products are handmade.

Restaurants at Mercado de

Vallehermoso

Washoku Sushi



Washoku Sushi, photo from [Mercado de Vallehermoso](#)

For fast, fresh Japanese food at a very reasonable price, Washoku is perfect. They buy their fish from one of their neighbours at the market, Hermanos Abad, so it's always good quality. Choose from sushi and sashimi selections, Japanese curries and rice, or udon noodle dishes. They also have delicious appetizers, including my favourite *Takoyaki* (similar to a fried dumpling, filled with octopus).

Craft 19



Photo from [Craft 19 Madrid](#)

Hands down the most delicious sandwiches in Madrid! The pastrami sandwich is famous, and rightly so, but the pulled pork and grilled cheese are equally indulgent. You can wash down your mega sandwich (be warned, in true American style, the portions are enormous) with a cool craft beer. There is a good selection of beers on tap, which change continuously, giving you the chance to sample beers from different international breweries.

Sandwiches and beer, what more could one want in life?

Drakkar



Photo from [Drakkar Cervecería](#)

If you're still thirsty for craft beers, Drakkar has a great selection. Unlike some of the craft beer bars and breweries that have opened recently in Madrid, it's great value. Grab a seat at the bar and chat to the friendly staff, who are always happy to give you a recommendation if you feel intimidated when there's more choice than Mahou or Estrella Galicia.

La Virgen



Photo from [Cervezas La Virgen](#)

Continuing the beer route through the market, Madrid brewers La Virgen also have a stall. With a [brewery in Las Rozas](#) and bars across the capital, it's probably the most well-known independent brewery in Madrid. Their spot in Mercado de Vallehermoso is a relaxed place to try some of their beers, to accompany some tasty treats from the market.

[Di Buono](#)



Photo from [Mercado de Vallehermoso](#)

Famous for its *porchetta*, Di Buono is a great deli serving the most delicious products imported from Italy. Sip on an Aperol spritz and try the delicious selection of Italian cheeses and charcuterie. They serve a great selection of wines from small producers in different regions all over Italy.

[Kitchen 154](#)



Photo from [Kitchen 154](#)

If you try one dish at Kitchen 125, make it **the Korean BBQ ribs**. Specialising in Asian fusion dishes with a kick, the

stall is always busy, and everything is cooked as you order. They have a small menu, but everything is cooked perfectly, from curries, to dumplings to crispy chicken wings.

*[Kitchen 154](#) also has a restaurant location on Calle Ruiz 20 in Malasaña.

[Güey Cocina Chingona](#)



Photo from [Güey](#)

Ever wondered what ants or grasshoppers taste like? Güey have

some seriously adventurous dishes on their menu, plus daily specials. Not feeling quite so intrepid when I ate there, I can only tell you that the *tacos al pastor* and guacamole were good (a very vanilla order, I know).

Mercado de Productores

Most of the food stalls on the upper floor have their own tables, where you can only eat food from that establishment, apart from Güey and Washoku, which have a few shared tables. However, if you come in a group and everyone wants to order from different places, you can find a shared seating area on the lower level of the market in the *mercado de productores*. Here you can eat anything from the restaurants on the upper level or the stalls in the farmer's market.

[EGGO](#)



Photo from [EGGO](#)

This is the only place I know of in Madrid you can buy a scotch egg! And if you don't know what a scotch egg is, all the more reason to go to EGG0 because you have been missing out on one of the most delicious snacks. As you can probably guess from the name, EGG0 sells fresh eggs and a few egg dishes (including delicious tortilla), all from free-range chickens from their farm in Ávila.

[La Cabezuela](#)



Photo from [Quesería La Cabezuela](#)

La Cabezuela make award-winning handmade cheeses in El Escorial. They offer a range of weird and wonderful flavours, including la *Cervezuela*, made with beer from *La Virgen* brewery. Order a *tabla de quesos* (cheese plate) for 7 euros

and you can try all the ones that catch your eye.

[Randall Coffee Roasters](#)



image by [Randall Coffee](#)

Fed up of the burnt, bitter brews at your local Spanish bar? At Randall Coffee Roasters you can get a delicious cup of coffee or buy beans to brew at home. More like a coffee shop you would see in New York or London, **they roast speciality beans on site. They also serve iced lattes and cold brew,** perfect for the hot summer months. If you fancy a sweet treat

with your coffee, try one of the chocolate, pistachio and sea salt cookies!

Mercado de Vallehermoso has the perfect mix



One of the unique things about Madrid as a capital city has been its ability to embrace and enjoy new influences, while preserving its traditions and “Spanishness.” Mercado de Vallehermoso, like all of Madrid’s many markets, is a great example of this, where you’ll find the perfect mix of traditional and modern; Spanish and international; young and old.

There are so many different stalls in the market, you couldn’t fit everything in one article. These are just a few of the one’s I’ve tried and loved. So, go ahead and explore them all, and let me know what you think!

Mercado de Vallehermoso info

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & Instagram: [@mercadovallehermoso](#)
- **Address:** C/ Vallehermoso 36
- **Metro:** Quevedo

By **Ellen** **Fouweather**
(*Instagram:* [@efouwee](#))

Also read Ellen's article on: [Madrid's 10 best vintage and second-hand shops](#)

Mercadillo Lisboa: A fun Portuguese snack bar in Mercado San Fernando

Brand-new Portuguese eatery Mercadillo Lisboa was waiting for the right moment to join the *mercado* scene until, six weeks ago, just in time for Tapapiés, it finally opened up in the best spot in [Mercado San Fernando](#). Enter through the main doors, head straight to the middle and turn right – they're there next to the fun bar Sondelata, which sells blue wine and carrot cava.

Mercadillo Lisboa is owned and run by three pals – two from Lisbon and one from the Canary Islands. Only two of them are in this photo because the other is camera-shy – he hid around the corner.

This is a great place to get authentic Portuguese food, from a variety of quiches and the classic *Pastéis de Belém*, to *empanadas*, *arancini* and everything *bacalao*. Here are a few

photos of their snack food, very proudly displayed by the jolliest of the three musketeers:



Vegetarian spinach quiche



There are lots of quiches here



Empanadas and cod croquettes



Arancini



Strawberry cheesecake (wow)

You can also buy a selection of Portuguese beers and wines (including *vinho verde*), plus an almond liqueur (*licor de amêndoa*) specially driven over from Portugal by the guy on the right. I bought their last bottle a couple of weeks ago and with it came this story – suddenly €12 seemed like an absolute steal. You'll be glad to know that they've since been back to Portugal and brought another few bottles for us, but get it while you can – or I will!



Lots of Portuguese wines and liqueurs



A selection of Portuguese beers

Pull up a chair at Mercadillo Lisboa or mingle in its sphere of influence with a *vinho verde* and a *bocadillo de bacalao*. And just so you know, you'll probably bump into me.

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- **Address:** C/ Embajadores, 41
- **Metro:** Lavapiés/Embajadores

Opening hours:

- *Mon: Fri: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm – midnight*
- *Sat: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm*
- *Sun: 11:00 am – 5:00 pm*

Christmas Pop-up Market in a Chamberí Mansion – The Hovse

[The Hovse](#) is a Christmas-inspired market that is taking place in a vacant 3-story mansion in Chamberí. Just walk in, explore the different stands selling jewellery, clothing and other nicknacks; and then head up to the top floor for food and drinks. There's also a rooftop. We highly recommend checking it out!

Open every day of the week from 11am-9pm. Free entrance.

If you want to know more about [The Hovse, here's a full post.](#)

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](#)

Mercado de la buena vida, the Hub's monthly ecological and local market!

To help us all deal with this crazy heat wave, [Impact Hub Madrid](#), an innovation center near Atocha, is holding its last [Mercado de la buena vida](#) (the good life market) of the season, on Saturday and Sunday from 12pm-10pm, with free entrance. For this “refreshing” edition, the market will be holding a water fight for the little ones, beer tastings for the older ones, and much more. [Here's more info on the event.](#)

Pasta Mito, an Italian Eatery in Mercado de Chamartín – a gem!

In [Mercado Chamartín](#), in the central aisle on the lower floor, you'll find a brand new, chic little Italian eatery called [Pasta Mito](#). All food is freshly prepared in the on-site kitchen, and the owners definitely know what they're doing. Also, the brilliant thing about eateries in neighborhood markets is that the ingredients they cook with tend to come directly from the market's food stalls, so at the same time as being **top-quality stuff**, eating there is great for local businesses too.



My fella and I sat in the cosy 3-tabled dining area and, based on enthusiastic recommendations by the owner, we had... (ima write a list):

- *Glass of the house white each*
- *Complimentary and HUGE antipasto appetiser*
- *Burrata Caprese with fine green pesto*
- *Truffle ravioli with only butter sauce and fresh parmesan sprinkled on top*
- *Tiramisu in a cup*
- *All accompanied by a fresh basket of focaccia*



The food was absolutely incredible and plenty between us – we're glad we shared! The bill came to **€26** exactly, which felt

very reasonable for the quality of food and wine and friendly service.

Whilst we were sat there, we saw lots of people ordering to take away. Great idea too, but the dining experience was way more fun.



The owners are a husband and wife duo. She's Italian, he's Spanish and speaks fluent English. We got chatting and he told us that he spent 4 years cooking under Heston Blumenthal, then worked in one of the UK's top restaurants for a few more years before coming back to Madrid.

I asked him about future plans and he said that next month, they're expanding into the veg stall just opposite, which will mean **an extra 6 or so tables**. Having only opened in September

'14, they'll be staying put in [Mercado Chamartín](#) for now as the business is going well and they seem to love what they have.

[Pasta Mito](#) is by far the best Italian food we've had in Madrid yet – **it's really quite a gem.**

By Leah Pattem

Info

Mercado de Chamartín: [Facebook](#) & [Web](#) (*calle Bolivia 9 <m>Chamartín*)

Pasta Mito: [Facebook](#) (*inside the Mercado de Chamartín, central aisle, lower floor*)

Another market we recommend:

[Mercado de San Fernando in Lavapiés – the real food emporium!](#)

Mercado de Motores, Madrid's coolest flea market!

[Mercado de Motores](#) takes over the city's Museo del Ferrocarril (*train museum*) on the 2nd weekend of every month for a fantastic flea market experience. This month's market will be held on **Saturday, Nov. 8th** (11am-10pm) & **Sunday, Nov. 9th** (11am-8pm). You won't want to miss it. Although it can get extremely crowded, you'll enjoy walking through the many

vintage clothing and independent designer stands that are set up along the museum's train platforms. And the best part is the outdoor area that has tons of fantastic food stalls serving all types of food ranging from traditional Spanish treats to hamburgers and hotdogs. Plus there's live music too!

Here's a full post we wrote on [Madrid's Mercado de Motores](#)

Best Gifts from Madrid

Buying gifts for friends and family in Madrid can be a difficult task. Pretty much everything can be found everywhere nowadays. I often see the same Spanish brand names and products when I walk around my neighborhood in New York. So I think to myself, why did I even bother lugging that bottle of *Marqués de Riscal* all across the ocean? If you find yourself faced with this same problem (and not inclined to buy your mom a keychain or a magnet), here's a list of well thought-out **gift ideas from Madrid**. Hope it helps!

First let's quickly name some of the **more obvious gift ideas**, which are also good but run the risk of being found in your hometown (scroll down if you're all too familiar with these):

Handheld fans, flamenco shawls, ceramic tiles and dishes, paella pans, recipe books, aprons with a flamenco dancer or the flag of Spain, **football/soccer jersey, wine, cured ham and sweets** with long shelf-lives such as *mazapán*, *turron* and *polvorones* (can be bought at [El Riojano](#) or [Casa Mira](#), two very traditional pastry shops in the city center) or a **swiss army/pocket knife** (best from Toledo but also sold in Plaza Mayor). While it's always best to buy these items from

independent sellers (which you will find below), if you're pressed for time you can find absolutely everything at **El Corte Inglés**, the country's major department store with locations all around.

Now let's move on to the **more original gift ideas**:

1. Anything from La Violeta



La Violeta is a candy shop located in the center of Madrid. It must be included in this list because it is a typical place **where Madrileños buy gifts for other Madrileños**. **Las violetas** are purple-colored sucking candies wrapped in pretty little boxes and ribbon. You can buy them plain or **escarchadas**, meaning sugar-coated. You can also find **cajas de bombones** (boxes of chocolates) and many other sweet treats. Prices range from **€5** to **€15**.

Web

Address: Plaza de Canalejas, 6

Metro: Sol and Sevilla

2. Saffron or a pack of mixed Spanish spices for anyone who likes to cook

My sister, Amanda, actually gave me this idea. Her boyfriend's family is originally from the Basque Country. Her father-in-law loves little trinkets from Spain and also makes **paella** every year for the whole family. So she had the bright idea of buying him a pack of **azafrán** (saffron). **Yes, saffron!** It costs peanuts in comparison to what it costs in the States. She bought it at **Corte Inglés** and he was over the moon when he received it. For non-purists, you can also buy **sachets**, which is a bag of mixed Spanish spices, also used **for making paella**. Anyone who likes to cook will enjoy this gift!

3. Berets; can be bought at a charming century-old hat shop right in Plaza Mayor



Founded in 1894, Madrid's oldest hat shop—[La Favorita C.B.](#)—is now in the hands of its family's fourth generation. It remains in its original location in Plaza Mayor and sells all types of traditional Spanish hats that make for fun and useful gifts. Amanda gave me this idea too. She bought a **black beret** for her stylish sister-in-law which cost €19. Although the black beret is traditionally worn in the Basque Country, where it's called

a **Boina**, it very well looked like it could have been bought at Top Shop. I'm sure anyone could rock this look in any city around the world, and they'd have a nice story to tell when someone asked them where they bought it.



[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Plaza Mayor, 25

Metro: Sol or Opera

4. Chocolate for dipping churros; can be bought at the famous Chocolatería San Gines (near Sol)

In Spanish, this is simply called **chocolate a la taza** or **chocolate *caliente***. However, for English-speakers this can be quite confusing—this is not just hot chocolate. It refers to the thick chocolate that you **dip churros** into. When my husband's relatives from California were visiting, they bought bags and bags of this chocolate as a present for all their friends back home. It was a hit! And it's not exclusive for dipping *churros*, you can also use it for dipping

strawberries, bananas—anything you like! You can buy it in bags by the kilo at Madrid's most famous churros shop, **Chocolatería San Ginés**, open 24/7 and just a stone's throw from Sol.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Pasadizo de San Gines, 5

Metro: Sol

5. Peseta; for millions of small gift ideas made in Madrid, using fabrics from around the world (in Malasaña)



Named after Spain's former currency—**las pesetas**—this charming store was founded by Laura Martínez del Pozo around ten years ago. She collects fabrics from all over the world and uses them to make unique, creative and very handy items, from **tablet** and **laptop cases** to **handbags** and **wallets**. They even sell beautiful shoes, also typical from Spain—**espadrilles** and **alpargatas**—though with a nice twist as the fabric is a hundred

percent unique. Seeing as these everyday items are useful for everyone, you're sure to find great gifts here.



You can also find Peseta's products sold at an awesome book store and cafe near Callao called [La Central](#), which will talk more about below.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: c/ Noviciado, 9

Metro: Noviciado

6. Summer shoes; can be found in stores everywhere (also in Peseta)



alpargatas at the top and mallorquinas at the bottom

Esparto (espadrilles), **alpargatas** and **mallorquinas** are the **three most popular summer shoe styles** originating from Spain. All can be found in any colour and in any standard shoe store (the center is littered with typical shoe stores, especially around **Plaza Mayor** and **Calle Carmen** which is right off of Sol). The latter two styles are unisex, so you're bound to find something for both your male and female friends and family. Since Spain is well-known for its amazing shoes, why not wow them with some Spanish summer footwear they can strut around their own city in style? Plus you don't have to limit yourself to the traditional ones. You can find snazzier versions too. You can also check out our post on "[3 Places to Find Espadrilles in Madrid](#)" for more recommendations.



This photo is from a new store called [Alpargatus](#) which is located just off of Plaza Mayor on Calle Postas. They have all types of *alpargatas*, *espadrilles* and *mallorquinas*, plus other souvenirs. It's really convenient.

[Facebook](#)

Address: *C/ Postas, 20 (just a few steps away from Plaza Mayor)*

Metro: *Sol or Opera*

Or check out another post of ours dedicated solely to espadrilles: "[3 Places to Find Espadrilles in Madrid](#)"

8. Traditional gloves with silk lining from 100-year-old glove shop in Sol

Just a note—I couldn't get a photo because the owner closed the shop for the whole weekend to go to Lisbon and watch the football match...

Believe it or not, Spain still has entire shops dedicated solely to **gloves**! One of Madrid's most well-known and oldest glove shops is called [Guañtes Luque](#), nestled between the streets of Sol and Sevilla. Entering the shop is an experience in and of itself. These elegant gloves take you back to

another era, when items were not mass produced and were meant to last a lifetime. Understandably on the **expensive** side, these traditional **Spanish gloves** are not only beautiful, but have silk lining which is a godsend in winter.

No web, but they're on [Yelp](#)

Address: c/ Espoz y Mina, 3

Metro: Sol, Gran Vía or Sevilla

7. Gift Basket – 3 simple and delicious ingredients

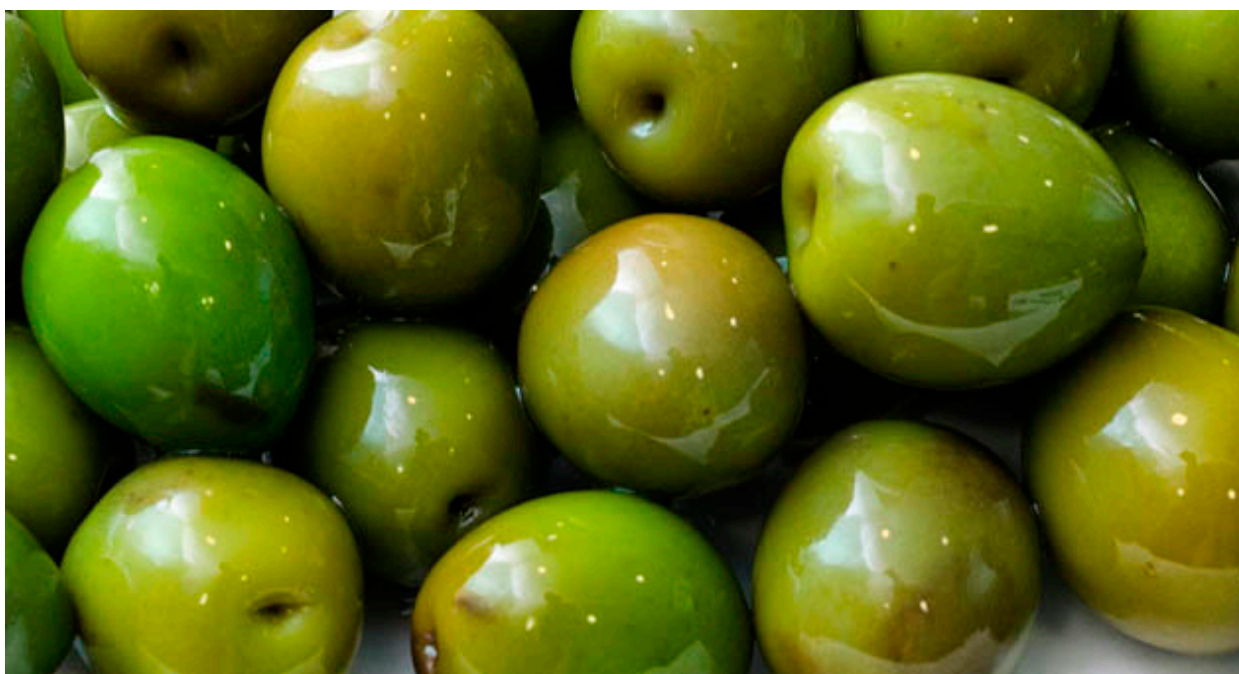


image from gastronosfera.com

When I asked around for good gift ideas, one expat said that he always brings home a basket of 3 items: **pimientos de piquillo** (roasted red peppers), **aceitunas campo reales** (olives) and a really fancy **aceite de oliva** (olive oil). After speaking with many foreigners living in Spain, it became clear that **campo real olives** are a major hit among the gift-giving crowd. Though if you don't like olives, you can always replace them with a bottle of wine (my favorite red is **Ribera** and my favorite white is **Albariño**), a box of **marzipan** from Toledo or

sweets from **La Violeta** (mentioned #1).

Where to buy: while you can buy these items all over the city and of course at **El Corte Inglés**, we recommend you go to [Mercado de Antón Martín](#) or [Mercado de San Fernando](#). These markets are very traditional, unlike many of the others that have become over-priced and over-touristy. You can also go to Qué Rico Tó, mentioned #2 on this list.

Mercado de Antón Martín

[Facebook](#)

Address: C/ Santa Isabel, 5

Metro: Antón Martín

Mercado de San Fernando

[Facebook](#)

Address: C/ Embajadores, 41

Metro: Lavapiés or Embajadores

8. Spanish Comic Books



For your alternative or comic-book loving friends, a **Spanish comic** could be a really cool gift. It's always fun to read comics in other languages, especially because the drawings and images help you figure out the story. But of course this gift isn't for everyone. The above photo is of [El Coleccionista](#), a well-known **comic shop in Lavapiés** with a wide collection. My sister, Amanda (also in the photo), bought a few rare books for her friends here. When I asked Amanda if I could include her photo in this article, she said of course—she'd be happy to support any type of independent shop like this one which make up the backbone of a city's personality and charm. I've also just found out that one of the world's best comic stores is located in Madrid too, it's called [Akira Comics](#) and is located a bit further out in the city.

[El Coleccionista](#)

Address: C/ Tribulete, 5

9. Second-hand books with personality from Desperate Literature



At [Desperate Literature](#), a new international bookstore located in the center of Madrid (close to the Royal Palace), you can find good quality used books in English, Spanish and French, many of which are related to Spain and can make for a great, personalized gift. Also, this bookstore has a nice story behind it, as its three young owners—Michael, Corey and Craig—have opened used international bookstores in Santorini,

Greece and in Brooklyn, New York. With the recent opening of Desperate Literature in Madrid, they aim to provide a literary haven for travellers, expats and Madrileños alike. [Here's a long article on Desperate Literature.](#)

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

Address: c/ Campomanes, 13

Metro: Santo Domingo and Opera

10. New books and much more from a La Central, an ultra hip bookstore/cafe near Callao



While my first suggestion would be to go to Desperate Literature, if you're looking for all kinds of new books in

Spanish (i.e. children's, novels, poetry, you name it) or other gift ideas such as **board games, notebooks and fun nicknacks**, then this is the store you should be going to.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Postigo de San Martín 8

Metro: Callao

11. Trinkets from a Funky Madrid Gift Shop called Curiosite

As far as gift shops go, this one is quite original. At [Curiosite](#), you can get maps of Malasaña and Chueca for €12, which look great framed, as well as tons of other fun little *tchotchkes*. This gift is recommended for someone who has lived or spent a good amount of time in Madrid.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: c/ Corredera Alta de San Pablo, 28

Metro: Tribunal

Any other gift ideas? Please share! We'll be happy to add more to this list ☐

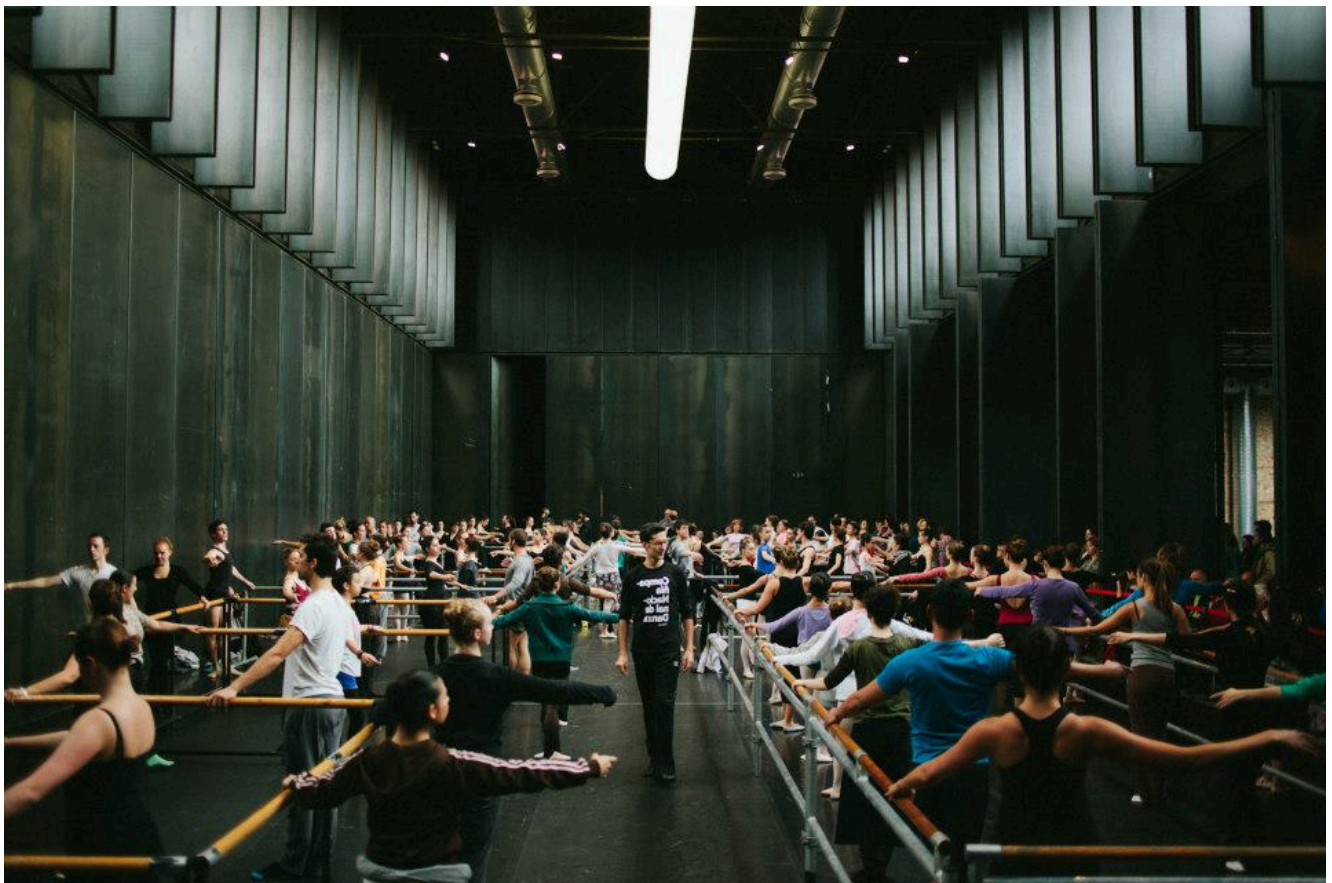
El Matadero, a slaughterhouse turned phenomenal cultural

hub

If you're looking for something as impressive as the Prado or the Reina Sofia, but off-the-beaten-path, it's [El Matadero](#). The perfect place to spend a leisurely afternoon alone or with friends in Madrid, here you can calmly diddle daddle through a maze of **art exhibits** and **designer market stands**. Then, enjoy a *café con leche* or a cold Madrid brew outside. **El Matadero** has it all—from Spain's national dance company performances to international innovation conferences.

What is it?

Just a 10-minute subway ride from Sol, **El Matadero** is a culture/innovation hub and architectural treasure. The **former slaughterhouse** (hence, the name) is now a public-private entity offering book-readings, theater and music performances, photography exhibits and independent cinema on a nightly basis, most of which are **free**.



on día internacional de la danza, image from Matadero's Facebook page

Not to be compared with any other space in the city, **El Matadero** is an ambitious project and the fruit of a most innovative and modern Madrid. **This cultural center** also provides ongoing activities for families as well as a space for local innovators to develop their projects, all of which you can see while wandering through its enormous labyrinth of warehouses (naves) and open work spaces.



There are six **naves**, each used for a different purpose. For example, the **Nave Español** holds theater and dance performances. The **Cineteca** showcases international and independent film festivals. The **Música Nave** holds concerts and recording studios.



The **old oven** has now been usurped by the café, **La Cantina**, that sells locally produced food and wines, and has the kind of atmosphere that makes you want to stay forever. Plus, it has one of the **best terrazas** (outdoor seating areas) in all of Madrid, in my opinion at least.



When the weather's nice, my husband and I like to go there by bike; it's a breezy 30-minute ride from *Principe Pio* along Madrid's river (*Madrid Río*), which the city has done an amazing job of revamping. The river is now lined with bike and pedestrian paths, unique bridges, playgrounds (for grown-ups too!), street workout equipment, sprawling green zones and sprinkler areas. Plus it's a straight shot to **El Matadero**.



Last summer I took my sister, Amanda, from New York, to **El Matadero** for the whole afternoon. We first slipped into what used to be the slaughterhouse's fridge area, where an odd fire exhibit was being showcased. When we stepped out onto the courtyard, a group of flamenco dancers were *zapateando* (stomping) and smoking in a circle, getting ready to go on stage in the **Nave Español**. Then we parked ourselves at **La Cantina** for a glass of wine and a plate of delicious vegetable dishes made from **Madrid's local gardens**.

Amanda was amazed how all of this was so open to the public, and that it wasn't even packed. She said that if this were to be opened in Brooklyn, lines would be stretching to Queens.

History

El Matadero was built in the 1920s as a pig slaughterhouse, and was turned into a cultural center in 2006. When they renovated the slaughterhouse, the goal was to keep the original columns, the beams, the ovens and exterior structure in tact. For example, the first room you see on the left of the entrance used to be the freezer. Now it's an exhibition space. The dark, sinister feel makes you ponder what really went on in there. The interior was designed to be versatile and sustainable – most of the walls can be rolled away or folded up to make way for projects and events of all scale.

What to do?

Even if you're in Madrid for a few days, don't be intimidated by the amount of things going on. I highly recommend checking out their [activities list](#) (which is in English) or just stopping by to see the architecture and the vibe. As you stroll through the different spaces, you'll stumble upon anything from an indoor garden to a conference on new technology. Activities are open to the public in the afternoon, and you're free to walk around the plaza, find a nook to study in or have a drink at the café anytime.

What's new?

Since October 2013, El Matadero has its own independent market—[El Mercado Central de Diseño](#).



El Matadero's monthly market—[El Mercado Central de Diseño](#)—is one of Madrid's first design markets for entrepreneurs in the worlds of fashion, design and arts & crafts. During the two-day market, various free **music concerts** and **events** are put on as well, making it a **hot spot** to go with friends on the weekend!



Information:

El Matadero

Facebook

Where: Paseo de la Chopera 14 Metro: Legazpi (line 3, yellow)

Hours: Tuesday to Friday from 4pm to 10pm Saturday to Sunday from 11am to 10pm

Telephone: 915 17 73 09

Lavapiés and its Market: the real food emporium!

Grab a round of imported **German beers** at wholesale price, share a bottle of **local Spanish wine** for as little as 2€ (bottled and corked right before your eyes), and all the while, snack on **kalamata olives**, **manchego** cheese or even **sushi**. How nice does that sound?

Madrid's [Mercado de San Fernando](#), or "el mercado de Lavapiés", as it is more commonly known, is a vibrant indoor market where bars selling imported German beers, local Spanish wines, Italian breads, sushi, homemade Greek food, oysters and much, much more are nestled in right alongside the cobbler, grocer and butcher.



Local Spanish wines for less than 5€ , bottled and corked right before your eyes. Makes for a perfect gift.



Greek Kalamata Olives, my favorite

As in all big cities, neighborhoods go in and out of style as fast as Zara's storefronts. Madrid is no exception. Once considered a dodgier side of town, **Lavapies is fast becoming the city's newest nightlife destination**, attracting Madrid's trendiest young hipster crowds. Great restaurants and bars, from urban chic to authentic Moroccan, are interspersed within the demographic makeup of the neighborhood. And the prices are still modest in comparison to other hotspots like Malasaña and Chueca.



Colorful handmade leather goods

All neighborhoods of Madrid have their local markets. Many, especially in the more upscale areas, have been refurbished and turned into fashionable displays of Spain's haute cuisine, such as Mercado de San Miguel and Mercado de San Anton. But in 2012, [Mercado de San Fernando](#) – el mercado de Lavapiés – decided to reinvent itself making it more reflective of the eclectic tastes of its host neighborhood. Unlike the others, **Lavapiés' market** has managed to embrace the new while maintaining its laid-back, local and traditional essence.



The streets of Lavapiés are lined with **Indian restaurants**, hipster cafés and independent boutiques, and its market is just as diverse as all the small alleys and plazuelas surrounding it. Here you will find a wonderful mix of

traditional Spanish shops and foreign options. The fruit-seller and the good old Bar Barroso blend happily together with the higher-end oyster/wine bar, Bond 40, and the stylish leather handbag maker.



Cocktails and oysters



oyster bar and butcher shop sit side by side

When I first went to [Mercado de San Fernando](#), it was by chance. I was walking up Calle Embajadores and stumbled upon a rather austere building with a grey facade. Little did I know that I was about to slip through the market's winding aisles to discover stands selling quiches and empanadas, as well as full bars crowded with patrons from all walks of life—families with children, the older generation, groups of hipsters, foreigners and locals alike.



Homemade food from quiche to meatballs



Sushi!

I like to start off by browsing through the market's many stands, and graze a bit before I settle down at the German bar for an imported beer. Then I head over to the Greek's for dinner—moussaka, **kalamata olives**, feta cheese and spinach pie. It just doesn't get any better than that. For me, that is. For you, who knows?



irresistible Greek food

Though the possibilities are endless when it comes to food, here you can expect, above all, a great ambience. Judging from the live music and boisterous company I experienced the last time I went, it's safe to say that the word is out.



Oysters, clams and pimientos de padron



bread and empanadas... mmmm



the quintessential Spanish butcher

While I think the monthly [Mercado de Motores](#) is Madrid's "coolest" market, **Mercado de San Fernando** is much different. This one's open every day and it's totally unexpected!



Spanish-style treats and snacks



Mercado de San Fernando/Lavapiés' facade on calle Embajadores, 41

Plus, on **Sundays** they throw different events, such as **Swing Dancing** and **Salsa Lessons** (free...)!

Information:

[Facebook](#)

Metro: Embajadores/Lavapiés (yellow line 3)

Address: C/ Embajadores, 41

Email: mercadosanfernandomadrid@gmail.com

Schedule:

- *Mon: Fri: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm – 9:00 pm*
- *Sat: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm*
- *Sun: 11:00 am – 5:00 pm*