New Cucos, a family-style restaurant in Arturo Soria

Sometimes when I go out to have lunch or dinner I can't help but think that an important part of customer service is missing. So when I had dinner at New Cucos with my friend, when we went outside afterwards, we could only say how well we were treated and what a wonderful dinner we had.

New Cucos is a family-style restaurant in the neighborhood of Arturo Soria. This closeness and warmth can be seen in the way Juan (the owner) treats everyone who works there, as well as all the customers who are having dinner or lunch.

The restaurant is located on the quiet street of Arturo Soria. It is a large space with a perfect covered terrace for more intimate dinners or larger celebrations. The terrace provides a very cozy place where you can talk quietly without being bothered by the next table, and then there's also a smaller and equally cozy interior. The first day we decided to sit in inside, as Real Madrid was playing and we wanted to see the match. The second day we sat in the covered terrace, great decision.

The Food

New Cucos has a simple and traditional menu with very good quality ingredients. The portions are generous, in fact, the most popular dishes on the menu are large sharing platters; these can be great among a group of friends, or even just for two.

First we went for the warm burrata salad with cherry tomatoes. It was simply delicious. Great quality, never tried the burrata and I have to say I totally loved it.



Burrata Salad

Then we decided to try the spring rolls with vegetables and prawns — a highly recommended and delicious dish as well.



Spring rolls

By the time we had to eat our third dish, we were already full, but how can you say no to a plate of ravioli? These were filled with pumpkin and cheese sauce — simply spectacular and very rich. In fact the second time we went we couldn't help but order them again.



Ravioli

The second day we also ordered a delicious mixed salad. For me, nothing beats a well-prepared mixed salad.



Salad

As for the rest of the menu, in addition to the dishes to share, they have a small selection of fish and meat dishes. I have to say the South African ostrich burger looks delicious.

Prices are very reasonable. The first day we had three dishes, three glasses of wine and two beers for 47 euros. The second day our bill came out to 33 euros.

I'd also like to highlight once again that we received fantastic service both times we went; the staff was attentive, asking if everything was fine, and very importantly, without putting any pressure on us to leave. That sort of thing is very noticeable and makes your dinner even better.

Nothing else to add, **New Cucos** points out on Twitter: "eat and drink in an oasis" And I couldn't agree more.

So, "Mucha mierda" (or "break a leg") to Juan and the rest of his family. I'm sure we'll see each other again soon!

Info

• Where: Calle Arturo Soria 84

• Metro: Arturo Soria

• Tf: 913774039

- <u>Twitter</u>

• Monday to saturday 11 to 1.

Marisqueria las Chalanas, Asturian Cider and Seafood in Plaza España

Despite its absence of an ocean, delicious and affordable seafood can be found in Madrid for those who seek it. My friend Jacqui brought the existence of Marisquería las Chalanas to my attention, praising it for its attentive staff and the quality of the portions. With my interest piqued, Jacqui brought myself and our companion Nanor to this location on a Saturday night in order to nibble on sea critters and drink Asturian cider.

We arrived early and perched ourselves at a table in the bar area and later received lingering glances from standing patrons keen to usurp it from us. For this reason **it's pivotal** to arrive before the crowd; deshelling shrimp and crabs without an adequate surface to rest the plate is an uphill battle.

The bar area offers specials where **generous** raciones of seafood cost 5€ with 6 glasses of cider included. We ordered two of these, the first being 1/4 kilo of cold shrimp and the second being a dignified king crab, to share between the three

of us.





Our alert server kept our cider glasses full and was empathetic to Jacqui's needs as a **celiac**; he was proactive and double-checked with the chef that none of our plates were exposed to gluten. In addition to these portions we also ordered **garlic prawns** and **Mussels a la marinara** off of the restaurant menu.





By the end of our meal we were indulgently full and content, all of the food pictured here cost 34€ in total. As we adjusted our coats and scarves to leave, the vultures pounced to claim our little table as their own. I recommend this establishment for celebratory occasions, parent visits or for private rendezvous for those entangled illicit trysts because the likelihood of crossing paths with anyone you know here is low.

Info

Facebook

- Website

• Metro: Plaza de España

- Address: C/San Leonardo 12

La Falda, a cheeky new wine bar and restaurant in Lavapiés

When a restaurant welcomes me with a wine list featuring labels like 'The Madman's Inn' and 'The Perfect Boyfriend', I'm intrigued. When they accompany it with a quality Thai-Spanish tapa and Motown, I'm hooked.



A deliciously smooth glass of Delito Garnacha

La Falda de Lavapiés is just the kind of tongue-in-cheek tavern that the neighborhood needs, offering quirky bites and a one-of-a-kind wine list to the wide variety of patrons that Calle Miguel Servet attracts. I've stopped in for a bite a few times since it opened in early October, and each time the menu, which only features about ten dishes, has been edited to include the week's freshest ingredients. Aside from the everevolving menu, they also feature a distinctive menú del día plus daily specials that range from ramen to callos, highlighting the kind of international versatility that is all too often hard to find in Madrid.

On my most recent visit, we were offered secreto ibérico in sweet and sour sauce as our free aperitivo as we browsed the menu. The Thai flavors and fantastic cut of Spanish pork paired nicely with the Delito Garnacha wine we had chosen, and by the time we waved down the waitress to order, our appetites were more than piqued.

We chose four small plates to share between the two of us, testing La Falda's version of the Spanish classics of jamón croquettes and cured beef, or *cecina*, and their ability to **fuse Castillian products with Asian flair** in their pork spring rolls and octopus sandwich.



Mouth-wateringly marbled cecina



Vietnamese pork spring rolls

The cecina was some of the best I've tried in Madrid, and I consider myself something of a cured beef expert, ordering it any time I spot it on a menu. While all of the flavors were impeccable, the winner had to be the octopus sandwich with its mixture of Thai herbs and Spanish paprika.



Thai-style octopus sandwich

We only stopped ooh-ing and ah-ing over each bite to sing along with the Motown greats that enveloped the room, and reluctantly put our forks down to watch in awe as the couple next to us jumped up to ballroom dance to James Brown's "It's a Man's World."

La Falda is the perfect example of what makes Lavapiés so special: it puts quality at the forefront and serves its food with a wink, but recognizes that in the end, it's only a space for the vibrant community to enjoy life, and does everything it can to facilitate that. Go for a drink or go for a date. Go, eat, watch the people and leave content in mind, body and soul.

Info

- Facebook
- Address: Calle Miguel Servet 4 (Metro Lavapies or Embajadores)

- Phone: 911 688 096

Casa Picsa, another gem on Calle Ponzano

Calle Ponzano is one of the city's most treasured local hangout spots. Situated in Chamberí, it belongs to a handful of Madrid streets that are lined with great bars and restaurants, together with La Cava Baja, Corredera Bajo de San Pablo and La Calle Pez, just to name a few. In addition to the old-school bars de toda la vida, it seems as though a new eatery opens up on Calle Ponzano every week, and I'm slowly making my way through all of them! So far I've been to Sala la Despiece, Bar Lambuzo and Taberna Alipio Ramos. Plus Naked contributor, Kate, has also just written about restaurant Toque de Sal.



Now here comes Naked's fifth discovery along Ponzano: <u>Casa Picsa</u>, an Argentine restaurant specializing in pizzas made in a wood-fired oven with local and seasonal ingredients. I went with my friends Vanessa (who writes <u>Las mesas de Vanessa</u>, another foodie blog you've got to follow), Juan and James.

In true Ponzano form, <u>Casa Picsa</u> has a down-to-earth and comfortable ambience. I'd say it's on the pricier side, but they serve some of the best pizzas I've had in Madrid, with high quality ingredients and great service, too. The décor is modern and simple, with a spacious bar and a small seating area.



To start, Casa Picsa offers small appetizers to share: mezzos from around the world with a Porteño touch, as stated on their menu. They're only meant to whet your appetite, as the real deal is the pizza. As we were a party of four, the waiters recommended we order just a few mezzos and save room for the main attraction. So we went with their homemade Paté Picsa and Porotos en vinagre (organic beans in a vinaigrette). Both were delicious.





The pizza menu is separated into two sections: "old school" and "new school." They cost €20-25 each and are meant to be shared between two people; and trust me, they're big enough. Each pie has eight slices, or "servings of happiness," overflowing with succulent ingredients. Plus you can order two kinds per pie; that way you get to try two in one! *You can also order gluten-free pizzas made with a chickpea based dough.

We followed our waiter's advice and ordered two pies and four different kinds of pizza. We had the **Papada de cerdo ibérico y alcachofas** (Iberian ham and artichokes); **Pato e higos** (duck and fig); **Butifarra negra** (Catalan black sausage) and **Chorizo criollo y grills** (Creole chorizo with turnip greens). My favorite was the ham and artichoke one; the rest of the table said the winner went to the butifarra. They were all delicious, though. And as we walked out of the restaurant and looked at the mouthwatering pies on other patrons' tables, we

knew we'd have to go back to try the rest!





After our main course, we were contentedly stuffed and more than happy to end our night sans sweets. But the waiter managed to convince us to get dessert and we gave in to the **Chocolate cake with dulce de leche ice cream**. How could you possibly resist that? It was insanely good (sorry we forgot to take a photo of it!)

Casa Picsa

Website, Facebook & IG: @picsa

- Address: Calle Ponzano, 76

• Metro: Rios Rosas

• Price: €20-25 per person

Ramen Kagura, Madrid's (almost) perfect ramen bar

Located on Calle de Las Fuentes, in between metro Opera and Plaza Mayor, lies a Japanese restaurant serving **unbelievably tasty ramen, with heaping portions at an affordable price**. I'm tempted to call <u>Ramen Kagura</u> perfect, yet the service could have been much better. To be fair, the food did come out in a split second after ordering.



I went to <u>Ramen Kagura</u> for the first time on Saturday with a big group of friends, three of whom are Japanese (also the ones who recommended we go here). Almost everyone at our table

of seven had also dined at Madrid's most celebrated ramen bar, Chuka, where you basically have to fight to get a table. Naturally, a conversation comparing the two ramen bars did come up. We concluded that Chuka has better-quality ingredients and a chic décor. But when it comes down to it, Ramen Kagura's noodles simply hit the spot; plus it wins in terms of convenience (getting a table is easy) and bang for your buck (for under €10 you get a delicious and very filling meal).



You can order from several different types of ramen bowls, mostly made with pork-based broth, vegetables, and your choice of shoyu or miso sauce. Broth-less, cold and vegetarian versions are also available, as well as rice dishes and sushi (which we didn't try). Each bowl comes with your choice of 100, 200 or 400 grams of ramen noodles, prices ranging accordingly from around €8-11. I ordered the 200-gram bowl and

it was gigantic. James and Edison ordered the 400-gram bowls. Needless to say, they were very happy campers. We devoured everything and there were no complaints regarding portions, taste or price.



I'll let the poor service slide. Perhaps we just went on an off day. Since the food was oh so good, we'll be going back again and again and again...

Info

Web & Facebook

Address: Calle de las Fuentes, 1

Metros: Opera or Sol

Hours: Monday through Sunday: 1pm-4:15pm / 8:30pm-11:45pm

More Asian restaurants featured on Naked Madrid:

- Kintaro Oy Vey
- <u>Sumo This Japanese restaurant's name says it all</u>
- Tuk Tuk Asian-inspired street food
- Chuka Ramen Bar Madrid's hottest ramen restaurant
- Hattori Hanzo Japanese food, straight up. No sushi.
- Nippon 2 top quality yet affordable sushi, finally!
- <u>Soy Kitchen a fusion of Asian flavors</u>
- Karachai A cozy and elegant Thai restaurant in Alonso
 Martínez

La Barraca, an upscale Valencian restaurant in downtown Madrid

It is easy to be skeptical about the quality of the seafood in Madrid due to its severe lack of an ocean; I would write off most locations that serve paella as tourist traps while advising visitors to seek out their paella in Valencia or elsewhere. However, after sampling the *arroz negre* at <u>La Barraca</u> I am more optimistic about the state of paella affairs in Madrid and strongly recommend this stellar location.



My first time visiting Madrid was in August of 2008. This excursion with my grandmother, "Safta" Lucy, was a present for my acceptance to college. At that time I never would have fathomed that shortly after finishing my undergraduate degree I would go on to call Madrid my home. Back then I was not nearly as adventurous of an eater as I am now — I have verguenza that I had an aversion to seafood when Safta Lucy originally brought me to La Barraca, an upscale location in Madrid devoted to seafood and rice dishes.

In the present day, 7 years later, Safta Lucy and her friend Semita were passing through Madrid together as a stop on their journey between Mexico and Israel. Lucy made a reservation for us once again at La Barraca, which my stomach now had the refined maturity to appreciate. The walls of this establishment are decorated with tasteful ceramic art as well as photos of the famous clientele.



Our starters consisted of *gambas al ajillo*, *gallos a la madrileña*, and *mejillones relleñadas*. Garlic prawns are my favorite *marisco* and I jump at any opportunity to eat them during visits to coastal cities. The *gallos* were hearty and filling while the *mussels* were both meaty and delicate in texture.





For the main course we shared **arroz negre**, a paella dish served with squids with the rice blackened by their ink. The ink is a delicacy that contributes positively to the flavor and texture of the rice.



And of course dessert, a cheesecake to end on a sweet note.



Info

<u>Website</u>

Address: Calle de la Reina

Phone: 915 32 71 54 Reservations advised.

You'll also like:

- <u>La Maruca, a swanky Cantabrian restaurant in</u>
<u>Barrio Salamanca</u>

<u>Lambuzo</u>, a <u>family-run Andalusian restaurant</u> in the heart of Madrid

- Cozy wine bars in La Latina (with gluten free options!)

Banibanoo, an Iranian Marketstyle Restaurant in the Center of Madrid!

I have to admit that when I was first invited to try a new Persian food restaurant in Madrid, I had my doubts. Until then my knowledge of Persian food was very limited. But if there is something that I love it is trying new things. So of course, I accepted.

Banibanoo describes itself as a restaurant offering Persian market cuisine. It is owned by a young woman named Banafsheh who, after working six years in marketing, decided to pursue her dream of becoming a chef and restaurant owner. One day she left her job and went to London to study in Le Cordon Bleu School. Upon returning to Madrid, she discovered that Iranian food was little known in the Spanish capital. So she decided to open her very own restaurant where people could enjoy these wonderful dishes.

The name of the restaurant is also very personal: *Bani* is short for her full name Banafsheh and *Banoo* means Miss. So Banibanoo means *Miss Bani*.



Banibanoo's owner Banafsheh



The restaurant is small and cozy, perfect for a fantastic meal with friends or with your partner. Apart from the food, what I love the most about Banibanoo is how bright it is and that the food is on display at the bar. That way, you can see all the food they serve before you order. It also has an intimate and familiar feeling, as if you were entering a market and wanted to eat something from a particular stand.



Banibanoo.



Fresh ingredients and beautiful homemade dishes are all the decorations you need



Banibanoo

According to Banafsheh, Iranian shares a lot in common with Mediterrean cuisine; the ingredients are all very similar. But

for me, each dish at <u>Banibanoo</u> tastes unique and exotic, for the mixture of flavors and variety of ingredients on each plate.



Food on display



Food on display

The food

Banibanoo offers a simple menu, consisting of traditional and original dishes, all made with fresh ingredients and a lot of love. If you're the kind of person who struggles when it comes to ordering, no problem. At Banibanoo you have the option of choosing a menu with three different dishes on one plate. Banafsheh likes to change up the menu every two weeks, offering different recipes along with the old ones. Banibanoo also offers wonderful breakfasts. On Saturday and Sunday, for example, she offers a very special breakfast that will be the highlight of your weekend: a "burnt" brioche bun with cream cheese and jam.

When I went for lunch with two friends, Banafsheh suggested we

try out different dishes so we could all share. I have to say that was a fantastic idea. The first three dishes we tried were: broccoli with roasted cherry tomato in a yogurt sauce and tahini; beetroot hummus with feta cheese and hazelnuts; and gourmet purple potatoes with yogurt sauce, cherry tomatoes and cardamum.



Menu 1

For the second place, we ordered: sweet potato with red onions, yogurt sauce, almonds and pomegranate seeds; couscous with cheese, mint sauce, cilantro and parsley; and Kuku Kadoo: zucchini 'frittata' with mint and cheese.



Menu 2

Our last plate included: roasted beets with cherry tomatoes, feta cheese and a pomegranate and Sumac sauce; Shirin Polo, Persian rice, saffron, orange zest, carrot and pistachio (this was one my favorite, amazing!); and Kuku Sabzi: similar to a 'frittata' with herbs, walnuts and cockles.



Menu 3

For dessert we had an incredible carrot cake (really, please try it!) and a brownie-like chocolate cake. Also delicious.



Carrot cake



Guinness Chocolate cake

All this feast of food could only be accompanied by a typical Iranian drink, infused with cucumber, flowers and other refreshing ingredients. How can you describe something that tastes so good? They now have two different drinks based on this one: One is call Tejebin: The same drink but with tea and Cafejebin: The same but with coffee.



Banibanoo drink

What can I say? If you want to enjoy healthy and traditional food with an exotic taste, this is your place! Fantastic Recommendation — thank you Jose and María for taking me to this wonderful place.

INFO

Address: Calle Martires Concepcionistas 19, Madrid

Price: €12.95, 3-dish menu plus coffee and drink during the week; €13.95 During the weekend, without drinks; Breakfast goes from €2.50 with coffee or tea to €5.50.

Facebook

Gluten free pastelerías in Madrid: Part 1- Confitería Marqués

Sugar dusted pastries, chocolate dipped palmeras and fruit filled tarts: gluten free friends, the search is over. If you're a foodie who just happens to be of the gluten free inclination, finding delicious confectionary in the city can be a little, shall we say, challenging.

We all know that there are the international coffee shops that serve the same chocolate brownie and the supermarket aisles that sell the same two or three packaged cookies, but where do you go when your **traveller**, **foodie heart** wants to spring out into the city and explore its **homemade artisan treats**?

This series is dedicated to Madrid's best hidden corners for delicious homemade cakes and cookies, gluten free style. You can even take your non-gluten free friends, and I promise you that they will not be able to tell the difference; they may even find their new favourite spot!

Confitería Marqués

Tucked away on Fernando el Católico, Confitería Marqués is the little Madrid bakery where it feels like everything has been made especially for you. With its tea party bunting and dainty glass cake stands, it has an element of the Alice and Wonderland to it, with everything in miniature.

There are fruit tarts, mini croissants, individual loaf cakes, savoury empanadas, palmeritas, apple slices, jam tarts, and more.

The sheer selection that they offer is fantastic for any gluten free Madrid foodie, as well as any foreigner in Madrid that wants to try some local pasteles with a reminder of home. Everything is made in the pasteleria and tastes as homemade as it sounds.





As well as all of the above, another reason why Confitería Marqués is so unique is that it also makes savoury food such as **empanadas**, filled with cheese, vegetables, fish and meat. These crispy, buttery little pastry puffs make for a delectable little lunch.



Then there are the pastries, tarts, palmeritas, fruit slices and loaf cakes. Each are exactly as they should be, and some are even better.

The apple loaf cakes have a base of sweet apple pieces and raisins, are soft on the inside and scented with vanilla. The palmeritas are crispy and flaky and come traditionally plain, or coated in dark chocolate. Plus, the chocolate orange tart is rich and decadent, filled with dark chocolate cream, and hints of citrusy orange.



The owner of the shop is extremely friendly and can help you pick out something from the counter, or choose something from the incredible handmade confectionary that they have to the left of the counter and throughout the rest of the shop, including **small boxes of cookies** and **beautifully presented chocolates**. These would be perfect as a thoughtful little gift or -why not- a special treat for yourself.

You can even buy a homemade birthday cake, chilled desserts or a traditional Christmas Roscón de Reyes from the tall stand to the right of the counter; any would make a great surprise for a gluten free friend on a special occasion or a delicious traditional dessert to share after a meal at home with friends.

Another little tip is that they can make **gluten free bread** in house to order; just ask the lady at the counter when you would like it for.

Info

Web: www.confiteriamarques.com

Address: Calle Fernando Católico, 76

Metro: Argüelles

Extra notes

Don't forget to ask about the delicious foods available for lactose and nut allergies. You can go with all of your friends!

You'll also like:

<u>Cosy Wine Bars in La Latina — with gluten-free options!</u>

<u>Rayen Vegano - a vegan "gem" of a restaurant in</u> Huertas

El Patio De Fisgon — Feel like you've discovered Narnia

My blog posts would imply that I pretty much do nothing but eat in Madrid but I assure you that's not the case. Also ranking high on my to-do's are drinking, tanning, exercising (this is a new found passion that's surprised me more than most) and just general all round gallivanting... But it has to

be said that going out for dins is one of my very favourite pastimes and I never need much encourage to ditch home cooking in favour of being waited on. To this end, I am constantly on the prowl for somewhere that will satiate my appetite and not break the bank.

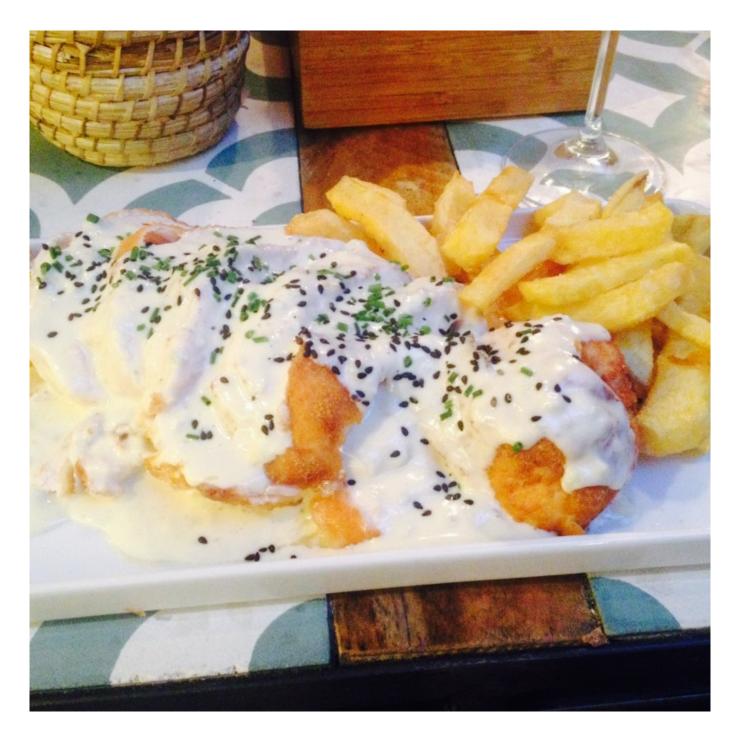
This leads me onto my current fave, **El Patio De Fisgon**. Not an obvious choice for lovers of Malasaña/Chueca as it tucked away on a swanky side street just off of Calle Ortega y Gasset (but it's most definitely worth the 5 or so euros in a cab) to find yourself in what felt like something out of The Secret Garden. *All twinkly lights, scented candles and the like — you can picture the scene.



The quest for somewhere simple yet swanky came about upon realising that I was hostessing three rather glam PR gals for the weekend, whose tastes are definitely more Balthazar than Burger King. Suffice to say El Patio impressed on all counts. Gorgeous food (and hefty portions), attentive staff (but not claustrophobic-ally so), wine in abundance (and cheap at that) ensured that my crown as a Madrid aficionado remained intact. We ate, drank and were merry for the grand total of 70 euros; coming from London where a soggy sarnie can set you back a fiver this was beyond bargainous. Post dinner drinks followed at the similarly gorgeous Punk Back which is sadly not quite as purse friendly — but equally swish. We're not talking the

need to remortgage a casa for a copa but it's definitely at the higher end of the scale price for Madrid. Saying that, if you like to sip your gins surrounded by the beautiful people then it's worth letting your wallet take a hit.





El Patio wise, I recommend requesting a table out on the terrazza to fully enjoy the 'see and be seen vibe' and let's face it, we all look that little bit better when illuminated by the soft focus glow of a fairy light. So what's been one of my best kept secrets looks set to be no more. I suggest you book a table and for the record, the rollitos artesanos de pato are worth every gluttonous cal.

Slight disclaimer alert Having recently gone back for a second visit, I have to red flag that the 8.30pm dinner sitting results in your being kicked off your table (rather

unceremoniously) by 10pm so defo book a later dins if you can...

Info

Facebook

Address: Calle de Don Ramón de la Cruz, 26, 28006 Madrid

Phone: 915 77 63 74

Los Porfiados, an inviting Argentine bistro in Lavapies

I routinely walk by <u>Los Porfiados</u> and have always been intrigued by what I could glimpse from the outside. I was thrilled when I finally had the opportunity to enter and scratch it off of my shortlist. An Argentine bistro situated on **Calle Buenavista**, this establishment radiates elegance and class. The decor and lighting are cozy and inspire diners with a sense of comfort. **Reservations are necessary in order to be seated due to its popularity.** I saw many people enter and then be turned away due to this spot being so trendy.



The staff all hail from Buenos Aires, sans one who is from Barcelona. I was told that the location is only a year and a half old, swiftly ascending to local fame. Upon being seated, the attentive waiter relayed to me my options from their vast menu. It was difficult to choose from their selection—they offer Argentine empanadas and gourmet pizzas, fillets of meat and a many fresh salads. To start I had a smooth cream of broccoli soup, accompanied by a glass of vino tinto.





The main course was a *solomillo de cerdo* with sweet potato chips. Absolutely excellent, the meat was savory and cooked to perfection. After using *eenie meanie minie mo* to make a decision of which of their assortment of desserts to consume, I was presented with a delicious chocolate cake. The check was slightly steeper than most of the other locations I've written about, coming out to 19€. Keep in mind that this is a cash only business. I recommend this location to anyone who wants to be classy for a night, whether to impress a date or to celebrate a personal achievement, or to merely hone the skill of pretending to be classy.



Info

<u>Website</u> Facebook

Address: Calle Buenavista 18
Metro: Anton Martin or Lavapies

Contact: 910842945

Other restaurants we love in Lavapiés:

Los Chuchis Bar, downright good food in Lavapiés

Tribuetxe, a Basque Pintxo bar in Lavapiés

Restaurante Badila — you need this restaurant in your life