

Creative & colorful cuisine at Cachivache

[Cachivache](#) (say that five times fast!) is one of several restaurants run by Javier Aparicio, and the most casual of them all.

While its location could be deceiving—the nearest metros are Colombia and Concha Espina—the area holds an up-and-coming **cluster of culinary surprises**. The neighborhood boasts some hidden jewels, both Spanish and international.

Once inside, the colorful and modern decor made us feel right at home. Black and white checkered floors and industrial hanging lanterns dominate the space, marrying vintage details with a more contemporary vibe.





One of the first things I noticed (and appreciated) about the restaurant was **how diverse the staff is**. I also learned that nearly the whole team is the same it's been since day one; low turnover is always a good sign, no matter the industry.

We took our seats and were immediately greeted by a smiley server who wasted no time getting right down to business—the wine list (they have their priorities straight at this place). We went with a dry white wine that paired well with pretty much everything we ordered.

After studying the short yet complete food menu—and letting the knowledgeable servers give us recommendations—we started with some tasty appetizers: hummus with cilantro, pistachio, and Syrian couscous; the coca with zucchini, bacon, and *tetilla* cheese; and the classic *patatas bravas*.



The cuisine at Cachivache is a perfect balance: it's fresh, it's high-quality, and the dishes are recognizable (no *trompe l'oeil* here) **but with creative twists**. Case in point, our main entrees were the fried egg with truffle and parmesan (to die for) and the cannelloni with wild asparagus, fresh mozzarella, and Idiazábal, a mouthwatering cheese from the Basque country. My lunch date also tried the curried beef and can vouch for its deliciousness.





We rounded off our meal with the house *torrija* (sort of like French toast) with ice cream made with *leche merengada*. Let's just say I'd come back to Cachivache just for this dessert.



All in all, my experience at Cachivache was something I won't soon forget. The prices admittedly exceed my normal budget, but for a special night out it's worth a splurge. **Don't forget to make a reservation**—I went on a weekday and it still filled up.

Here's some more Cachivache #foodporn in case you weren't sold already.





Info:

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
 - Address: Calle Serrano, 221
 - Metro: Concha Espina or Colombia
 - Phone: 917 52 41 76
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Cosy Wine Bars in La Latina (with gluten free options!)

If you're looking for some dark and cosy wine bars to enjoy a glass of fantastic Spanish wine and some delicious tapas, then head to La Latina. Known as Madrid's tapas district, this neighbourhood is famous for its lazy Sunday afternoon tradition of tapas-bar-hopping, up and down the winding streets of Cava Baja and Cava Alta.

But first, the history of Cava Baja has more to do with foreigners in Madrid than you might think.

Originally a deep trench that ran along the outside of the medieval city walls, Cava Baja protected the city from bandits and scoundrels, and allowed the people of Madrid to come and go freely without using the city gates. Soon the city boundaries spread, and local taverns sprung up along this stretch to lodge (and feed) travellers and farmers, who came to Madrid to sell their wares at market; You can still see the street sloping downhill and curving to follow the path of the old city wall.

This means that, for expats and visitors to the city, enjoying a glass of local wine and food amongst the higgledy piggledy bars and old taverns of Cava Baja is to not only enjoy La Latina, but also repeat the history of many a travelling peddler visiting Madrid.

[El Tempranillo](#)

For people that like Spanish wine: El Tempranillo. From the moment that you see the entire wall of wine bottle racks behind the bar, you know that you are in the right place.

Chic and modern from the outside but small and traditional on the inside, El Tempranillo has the perfect mix of low lighting, muted conversation and good Spanish wine- and a table to sit at if you order some tapas.



Compared with other wine and tapas bars in Cava Baja, El Tempranillo has something unique that is difficult to put your finger on.

Right in the heart of the hustle and bustle of Cava Baja, it is comparatively understated- but quietly confident. It has a real buzz of people under the dimmed lighting, but is surprisingly quiet. This muted conversation gives a sense of privacy in which you can enjoy your glass of wine, share a few tapas and have a meaningful conversation with good friends- without having to raise your voice.

The tapas at El Tempranillo are addictive. Try the 'revuelto de champiñones salvajes' (mushroom omelette), or the tostas. You might have to wait a little to order at peak times during the weekend or evenings, but the dishes come out quickly once ordered and are worth the wait.

Then, the wine. Order from the chalk board, which has an impressive selection of wine that comes from almost all the

wine regions of Spain. Most exciting, though, is their larger than average selection of good Spanish wines available by the glass, with prices starting as low as 2,50€ and 2,70€. Arrive a little early, set up your company at a table, and enjoy some good wine.



Calle Cava Baja, 38

[Juana La Loca](#)

Juana La Loca makes a nod towards Juana, the 'mad queen of Castile', who although was probably just another misunderstood female royal, still makes for a good story and name for a wine bar.



Small, dark, cosy and kinetic, Juana La Loca is perfect for a glass of Spanish wine and some delicious tapas.

Tightly packed inside, with small tables edging around the long bar, Juana La Loca mixes the worlds of both restaurant and wine bar into one dynamic space. With both bar and table enjoying tapas and wine, just with each enjoying more of one than the other, the two functions blend harmoniously into one shared space.

To start with a glass of wine, choose from the wine board behind the bar. Although the choices are slightly restricted and slightly pricier by the glass, the quality of the wine makes up for the lack of selection. If you like deep, complex red wines, try a Ribera del Duero *Crianza* or *Reserva*.

Without a doubt, the most famous dish served at Juana La Loca is the *tortilla de patatas*: a buttery, melt-in-the-mouth tortilla, finished with a crispy outer layer and served on top of a slice of bread. If you are being visited by friends or

family in Madrid who have not yet tried *tortilla de patatas*, this is the one to debut.

The '*huevos rotos*' are also to-die-for, either to share or as a *ración* for yourself: crispy, chewy, buttery fries topped with melting fried egg, small salty strips of *jamón*, salted *pimientos de padrón* and a shake of paprika, all served on a long plate.

Very well accompanied by a glass of fresh wine to clean your palate and a bowl of Juana La Loca's moreish olives, these delicious options can also be served gluten free if you ask the waiter. The prices may be a little higher, but the quality of the wine and food are a step above the rest.

A little tip is to bring cash with you, as they do not accept cards. The small wine bar-restaurant also fills up quickly in the evenings; after 20:30 tables are only for a meal of tapas (plus wine) and bar spots are only for wine (plus a tapa). Arrive early enough to enjoy some good wine and conversation amongst the relaxed atmosphere, and feel the bar fill up with the buzz of evening service.



Plaza Puerta de Los Moros, 4

www.juanalalocamadrid.com

La Concha

If you like sherry, cava or vermouth, then you are in luck. This tiny mismatched bar with painted wood panels and creative details offers a great selection of Spanish fortified wines and sparkling cava from Cataluña. A refreshing take on the usual full-bodied red wine offered in La Latina, come to La Concha for something a little different.



La Concha has a nomadic feel, keeping in tune with the street's history of travelling visitors, and offers both the upstairs bar for drinks and downstairs seating area for tapas.

If you have yet to try vermouth, a fortified wine infused with various roots, barks, flowers, seeds, herbs and spices, La Concha has 'Vermut Miró', a Spanish vermouth from the northern Spanish city of Reús.

La Concha also has a selection of Spanish Sherries, or 'Jerez' in Spanish. Hailing from the D.O. wine region with the same name, Jerez de la Frontera, Jerez is unique in its elaboration; you cannot find a fortified wine like Sherry anywhere else in the world.



If you like bubbles: Cava. Spain's answer to champagne, this bubbly sparkling wine can come in 4 different kinds: Cava, Cava Reserva (minimum 15 months ageing), Cava Gran Reserva (over 30 months ageing) and Rosé. La Concha has more than one of each kind, from different wineries, to try. Order a glass with one of their tapas. Although Cava traditionally matches well with fish or sweet fruity flavours, this is not necessarily the case; a Brut Nature Gran Reserva would go well with meat dishes, roasts or spicier foods.

On a week night you will easily find a spot here. Just head down the kooky stairs and order from their small tapas menu, which is also available completely gluten free.



Calle Cava Baja, 7
www.laonchataberna.com

Extra notes

If you would like to know what to look for in these wine and tapas bars, or are not sure what kinds of wines you like yet, you can also do some [wine tasting in Madrid](#).

Wine word

Maridaje – food and wine pairing

Here are a few more articles you might like:

[Madrid's 3 Best Wine Shops](#)

[Taberna Lamiak, another wonderful bar in La Latina](#)

[Madrid's Best Cafe-Bookshops](#)

Let's visit the wine region, Ribera del Duero, from Madrid!

We all know that we owe a lot to the Romans- the feats of engineering, the inventions, the creation of basic law, the art. But in the case of Ribera del Duero, we owe them the discovery of the perfect place to grow the tempranillo grape, and the beginnings of the Ribera del Duero wine region.

Do you like full-bodied red wines, exploring ancient ruins and travelling through stunning landscapes? Then Ribera del Duero could be your next destination. To give you a head start, here are some useful tips from inside the wine industry, including where the region is, why it is famous, my favourite winery and how to get there from Madrid.

The scoop

Ribera del Duero is talked about as being one of the most prestigious wine regions in Spain. It is renowned for its **full-bodied, elegant and complex red wines**, which are of an **extremely high quality** (the region's regulatory body only allows a certain amount of grapes to be produced per harvest-

meaning that quality is in, and quantity is out).

In fact, in 2012 Ribera won a Wine Star award for being the **best wine region in the entire world** (which in the wine world is the equivalent to winning the Oscars).

Roman Gods and Medieval fortresses

Ribera del Duero became an official D.O. (Designation of Origin) region in 1982, but wine has been produced here for **over 2,000 years**. We know for sure that the Roman people of Ribera del Duero made wine, because they left behind mosaics of the Roman God of wine, Bacchus.

Bacchus was, amongst other things, the youthful, beautiful and (somewhat) androgynous God of harvest, wine and general all-round debauchery (he was actually the half mortal son of Zeus, so who can blame him). You can still see a 66 metre mosaic tile floor dedicated to him and his frivolous escapades at the *Baños de Valdearados*, a small pueblo right in the centre of Ribera del Duero.



The Ancient Romans believed that wine was a 'daily necessity' and produced wine in Ribera del Duero for everyone in society- men, women, slaves, aristocrats and peasants

In fact, Ribera del Duero gets its entire name from the Romans and their love of wine; they were also so thankful for the blessing of the river on their vineyards, that they personified the river as Durius, a River God (who, we can only assume, was working in cahoots with Bacchus).

Ribera del Duero continued to make wine long after the Romans left- all throughout the Visigoth, Muslim, Christian and medieval eras, right up until today. This means that Ribera del Duero not only has beautiful vineyard landscapes shaped by thousands of years of wine making, but also a winemaking tradition as old as the Coliseum.

If you are interested in medieval history or have a penchant for fairy-tale architecture, Ribera del Duero also has an

incredible collection of Middle Age castles. On my last trip, I visited the official 'National Monument' of the castle of Peñafiel, which is located where all good castles are- on top of a hill.



The castle of Peñafiel

Geography

Ribera del Duero is a long and narrow wine region shaped to follow the path of the Duero river. Ribera del Duero is effectively an extended area of vineyard river bank, which is why the word 'Ribera' (river bank) is used in its name.



The Ribera del Duero the wine region includes parts of **four regional territories**– covering the south of Burgos, extending west into Valladolid and encompassing sections of Segovia in the south and Soria to the east.

There are 4 main municipalities: Peñafiel, Roa, Aranda del Duero and San Esteban de Gormaz. These are surrounded by rural areas of vineyards and wineries, churches, castles and beautiful valleys.

My favourite winery

There are almost 300 wineries spread over the river banks of Ribera del Duero, a combination of hundred-year-old traditional family wineries and modern corporate giants, but for me, the winery [Pago de Carraovejas](#) is a real diamond- a shining example of how to keep Ribera del Duero's wine traditions alive, but not be afraid of modern innovation.

Back in the 1970's, a curious young sommelier José María Ruíz had a dream that he would one day own his own restaurant, where he would serve Segovia's most traditional dish, 'cochinillo' (roast baby piglet), which would be paired with his own Ribera wine.

Years later, and just 3km outside Peñafiel, Ruíz's impressive winery is in the perfect location in a sunny valley, protected by the hills from the North Wind and close enough to the river.



The vineyards of Pago de Carraovejas in its special valley this summer 2014, with views of Peñafiel castle in the distance

On my last trip to Ribera, I took part in the unveiling of Pago de Carraovejas' new wine tasting technique: the peeling and tasting of the skin, pulp and seeds of the grape before tasting the wines. This is a prime example of Carraovejas' innovative approach to wine and ability to think outside of the box, as is their research with Universities to create their own natural yeasts and bacteria specific to the land.



Pago de Carraovejas in winter, photograph taken by my colleague and wine expert Raul Buendía. As the seasons change, so do the landscapes- with so many vineyards, each season brings unique stunning views

If you tour their winery, not only will you taste their fantastic red wines throughout the tour in different winemaking rooms (a refreshing take on the traditional end-of-tour wine tasting), but you will also get to enjoy 3 delicious tapas dishes (including 'cochinillo') that have been carefully elaborated in Ruiz's dream restaurant to pair with the wines.



One of the delicious tapas served in the barrel room on my last visit- a tuna, sautéed pepper and vegetable stack, with edible flower

If you have a food allergy, Pago de Carraovejas are up to the job. They can adapt their tasting menu to gluten free and lactose free diets if you let them know in advance- and they will even serve gluten free bread. You might also want to let them know if you don't want to eat 'cochinillo' (baby piglet fed only milk and slaughtered at 15-20 days old), if you are a vegetarian, vegan or have certain meat eating beliefs.

Which wineries?

To see a list of all of the wineries registered in the region, go to the official [Ribera del Duero D.O.](http://www.riberadelduero.es) website.

If this seems too overwhelming and you aren't sure which winery to pick, or how to organise numerous visits that fit

together, you could organise a [wine tour of Ribera del Duero](#) from Madrid. You could even visit a winery that produces one of your favourite wines!

How to get there

Ribera del Duero has so many places to visit that you could leave Madrid in a number of different directions, depending on where you are headed. Here are two routes to the wine towns Peñafiel and Aranda de Duero.

By car:

I would recommend travelling to Ribera del Duero by car so that you can see Ribera's landscapes as you travel up from Madrid. This is all part of seeing Ribera- the land, the vineyards, castles and landscapes have all been shaped by wine making. You will also have the freedom to move about the region once you are there- you could stay in a wine town and drive to rural wineries and castles during the day, returning to eat delicious local food in the town at night.

You can see which companies rent cars in Madrid by going to our previous [Travelling by car in Madrid: renting cars, car sharing or carpooling](#) article.

Route: Madrid- Peñafiel

Duration: 2 hours approx.

Tip: Combine this route with a stop at the beautiful UNESCO city of Segovia on the way

Route: Madrid- Aranda de Duero

Duration: 1 hour 45 approx.

Tip: You can find recommended Aranda de Duero scenic driving routes for once you have arrived in the area, on the official [Aranda y Ribera guide](#) website. Useful for a weekend trip.

By bus:

It is possible to travel to a few of the wine towns by coach

from Madrid. This would be a good option if you would just like to visit the main wine towns.

Route: Madrid- Peñafiel

Depart from: Moncloa

Duration: 3 hours approx.

Price: 17,00 approx. single

Company: The official Peñafiel website cites travelling with [La Sepulvedana](#)

Route: Madrid- Aranda de Duero

Depart from: Avenida de America

Duration: 2 hours

Price: 12,00€ approx. single (24,00€ approx. return)

Company: [Alsa](#)

Wine word for your trip

El sarmiento– the little young, green vine shoot