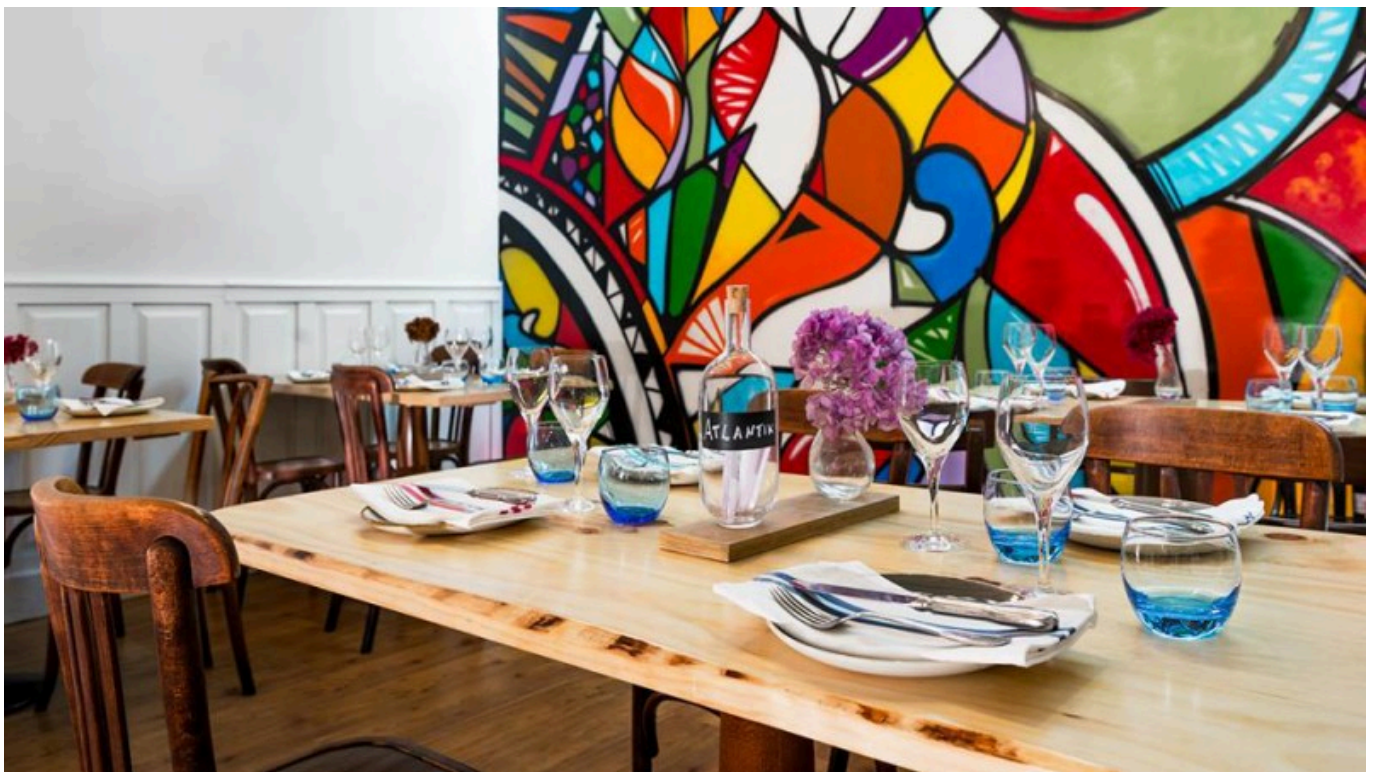


I'd Cross an Ocean for Atlantik Corner

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



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



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



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

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



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



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



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



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



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



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

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

By @littlemissmadrid!

Info

- [Facebook](#), [Website](#), [Instagram](#)
- **Address:** Calle Ventura de la Vega, 11 y 13

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

Living Room Concerts – Weekend “Planazo” in Madrid

In Madrid there are hundreds, if not thousands of things to do on any given weekend. Doing a quick Google search for live music, for example, will show you multiple Top Ten lists of the most well-known spots. However, you won't find a live music venue more intimate than that of [Living Room Concerts](#). It's just like it sounds: concerts held in people's living rooms and you're invited.



Born in, yes, a living room, it was Nichole Hastings' idea to bring emerging and little known artists and their original music into the spotlight. In nomadic spirit, [LRC](#) moves around Madrid to different pre-approved flats in all barrios spreading new independent music around the city to as many guests as the particular living room (and guest list) can hold.



LRC has even put down roots in one fixed location in Malasaña, a cultural community center called [el Salón del Artista](#). On arrival, be prepared to be ushered in with a warm welcome from the owner of the flat and then find a seat so you can comfortably listen to the original music and stories behind the songs from, often bilingual, artists.



Once inside, it's easy to see that the diverse crowd has arrived expecting to meet new people and listen to original music that they couldn't hear anywhere else.



During any given concert you could hear independent Spanish artists singing in English or a multicultural group singing in some combination of languages. Because of this, the concerts feel inclusive and not limited to any particular group or musical taste.



If you're in Madrid alone or with friends, LRC will sit you within feet of an independent artist and among members of the Living Room Concerts' community in Madrid.

Info

- Follow LRC on [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- **To attend**, the reservations work on the honor system but you do have to sign up through their [Facebook](#) page or their [MeetUp.com](#) page.
- **Price:** The event has a very reasonable cover which can

be turned into a “cover + open bar” for 3 euros more. Towards the end of the concert you can make a donation which goes right to the artists you’ve just met.

• **Links to artists** who’ve recently performed: [Taiacore](#), [BeMyFiasco](#), [David Roma](#)

By Caitlin Mackenzie

Gracias Padre, a new Mexican restaurant you’ll be very thankful for

They say that practicing an attitude of gratitude is the key to a calm and content life. I’m never quite sure who “they” are when I make reference to them in this sort of context. I guess what I’m trying to say is that gratitude continues to be a buzz word for 2018, along with self care and *lagom*. Trust me, look ‘em up.

Anyways, I digress. What I’m attempting to explain is that gratitude simply means pausing and appreciating what you have and giving thanks. To this end, there’s no place easier to feel grateful for than [Gracias Padre](#); an almost box-fresh Mexican restaurant that just graced Calle Ortega y Gasset with its presence a mere month ago.



It's impossible to miss. A riot of colour that wouldn't be out of place on a Holi run, the decor packs a similar punch to the frozen margaritas that are on offer. I dined on a Friday night and it was heaving. So much so that word of mouth is clearly taking hold for GP quicker than you can say "tequila, it makes me happy."



Now I love Mexican food. Like, full blown love it. I love Indian food, I love Italian food, heck, I'm even genuinely starting to like Japanese food (I can't drop the L word just yet, it's still early days). But my full-blown love affair with decent Mexican food started in Tulum three years ago and upon my return, I've spent time, money and energy on dinners where I've wound up bitterly disappointed when I've been served up a plate of a beige-looking stodge.



There's no such issue at [Gracias Padre](#) where the food was light, clean and fresh, not your typical description of Mexican fare, yet everything I ate was delicious and not overtly calorific. **Slight disclaimer, I did try a corn on the cob that was dipped in butter (and mayo) then rolled in parmesan.*

Every sublime mouthful was well worth the need for my Saturday spin class. The fish tacos had the perfect amount of crunch and flaky softness, while the *tinga de pollo* melted in your mouth.



Mexican food isn't hard to find in Madrid, with chains popping up everywhere, you can't miss an opportunity for a burrito, much like it's hard to miss a bearded bloke in Malasaña. What deserves praise however, is authentic Mexican food, cooked with love. The type of tacos that take you back to that beach in Tulum and remind you why you'd give your right arm for a

decent marg after a tough working week.



Much like online dating, finding a true gem of a place to eat is often a numbers game. You've gotta rack up the dates and sift through the duds. Fret not, no need for you to conduct your own research. In this instance I've done the hard work for you. [Gracias Padre](#) is hands down the best Mexican food I've had on this side of the pond – and I've tried a lot of tacos.

Gracias Padre

- [Facebook](#), [Website](#) & Instagram: [@gracias.padre](#)
- **Address:** Calle de José Ortega y Gasset, 55
- **Phone:** 910 66 00 85
- **Metro:** Lista

La Porcinería, get your pork on

Welcome to Madrid's first pork bistro! Situated on a quiet street on Calle Lagasca, the newly opened **La Porcinería** is a creative tribute to *cerdo* in all its culinary glory.



The decor is light and casual, with pig cartoons and quotes sprinkled all around. You're welcomed into the street-level entrance with a few high tables and an open bar. Downstairs you'll find a cozy dining room where we had dinner on a Tuesday night.



All dishes on the menu contain pork, as you can imagine, with only one exception (that we didn't try). There's a nice range of items to choose from – some Asian inspired, others more traditional, and a few surprises in the mix. Our server, Alex, recommended we start off with a bottle of red and had us sample their signature starters and mains.



First up was the Thai-style pork *bombón*, so satisfying to cut into and find tender strips of pork inside with a mix of flavors and textures.



Then came a real treat for both the eyes and tastebuds – fried artichokes with fine strips of pancetta. First Alex topped it with freshly shaved foie and then proceeded to flambé it at the table.



We also had a *lagarto ibérico* (a special cut of Iberian pork) served on top of a rich, velvety layer of yuca purée with white truffle. If you're into truffle, this is your dish.



We rounded off the savory part of our meal with the Sicilian-style Iberian burger that was topped with provolone cheese and grilled onions, and came with a side of homemade fries.

Feeling completely satisfied and not overly stuffed, we couldn't have asked for a better pork-filled experience! That is, until dessert came.



The chocolate *salami* cake with ice cream was the perfect finish – don't worry, the only nod to pork in this dish was the fun presentation. After devouring every bite, we slowly finished off the delicious bottle of red. I don't remember what type of wine it was, but it came recommended by Alex as a house special that night. So just make sure to ask your server for a suggestion!

So pork fans, La Porcinería should definitely be on your list.

Info

- [Instagram](#), [Website](#), [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** C/ Lagasca 103, Madrid
- **Metro:** Núñez de Balboa
- **Phone:** 910 33 38 74

Unleash your inner kid at The Playground

Ever miss recess? Family game nights? Dedicating a whole day to just having a good time?

I don't blame you—**adulthood is hard**. Sometimes all I want to do is go back to being a kid, when I could completely lose myself in a game of cards or kickball and momentarily forget about the rest of the world. I miss the carefree way I made new friends and laughed so hard I couldn't breathe—even with people I'd only just met.

Apparently, I'm not the only one suffering from this particular brand of nostalgia. A few years ago, the lovely and talented Majida Mundial (a longtime Madrid resident who hails from New York) decided to do something about it.

She created [Let's Go Ánimo](#), a company dedicated to helping people have fun, meet new friends, and release the inner child that lives on inside us all.



Majida, the founder of Let's Go Ánimo, cracks up with The Playground participants.

Every month, Let's Go Ánimo hosts [The Playground](#), a night of board games and friendly competition that's every bit as fun as it sounds. At first glance it may seem like your average expat networking night; it's held on Thursday evenings on a trendy Malasaña street, everyone speaks English, and yes, there's wine involved. But the similarities end there.

When you walk in the door, you'll be placed on a team with other attendees who you'll compete with throughout the night. The games are different every time—you might play Jenga, Scattergories, Cards Against Humanity, Limbo, Twister, or an endless number of other classics. The winner of each game is awarded points for their team, and at the end of the evening there's a challenge round to crown the overall champion. **Expect plenty of fun, prizes, and unlimited surprises.**



A fierce Twister competition puts players' balance to the test.

Of course, there are some things that set The Playground apart from the game nights of your youth: namely, alcohol. The **€10 entry fee** includes a drink and a few small tapas, and you can buy more throughout the night if you're still hungry (or thirsty). Beer, wine and *tinto de verano* are usually on offer.

If you're shy or nervous about meeting new people, The Playground will leave you no choice but to let loose and get out of your comfort zone. Awkward icebreakers, dance-offs, improv activities... everything is fair game.

Pro tip: you'll have more fun if you go all out and really get into it—apathy and introversion might be acceptable at a normal bar or networking night, but here they just won't fly.

In addition to the monthly Playground events, Let's Go Ánimo organizes special activities and celebrations throughout the year. Sometimes there's a particular theme; the Christmas edition held in December featured a white elephant gift exchange, an ugly sweater contest, and no shortage of holiday cheer.



Participants strut their stuff in an ugly Christmas sweater fashion show.

Other past events have included picnics in the park and Thanksgiving-themed fun. Let's Go Ánimo also offers corporate [team building workshops](#), and Majida even teaches [Sevillanas dance classes](#) in English, if that's your thing!

Stay up to date on upcoming events by joining the brand new Facebook group, [The High-Vibe Tribe](#). According to Majida, **"This group is being created to build an international family-like community of passionate people all over the world who believe that being an adult does not have to equal living a dull life, and that living the fulfilling life you dream of is not only possible but necessary!"**

So if you're tired of the same old language exchanges and afterwork meet-ups, and you want to try something totally new and unique, mark your calendar for the next edition of The

Playground—or any of Let's Go Ánimo's events—and get ready to have the time of your life.

Info

- [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) & [Website](#)
 - **Location:** El Salón del Artista, Calle de la Palma, 50
 - **Metro:** Noviciado & Tribunal
-

Salivate at Sargo

The run-up to Christmas is undoubtedly (if you're anything like me) a social whirlwind. I'm not quite sure where the need came from to see literally *everyone that you know* before Santa arrives; it's almost as though we feel like the world might implode come December 25th.

In light of this, I often wind up feeling as though I'm over stretched having over committed. And therefore – rather than be filled with “Christmas cheer” – this quickly turns to “Christmas fear” as I realise I've spent too much time partying and not enough time purchasing (other people's gifts that is).



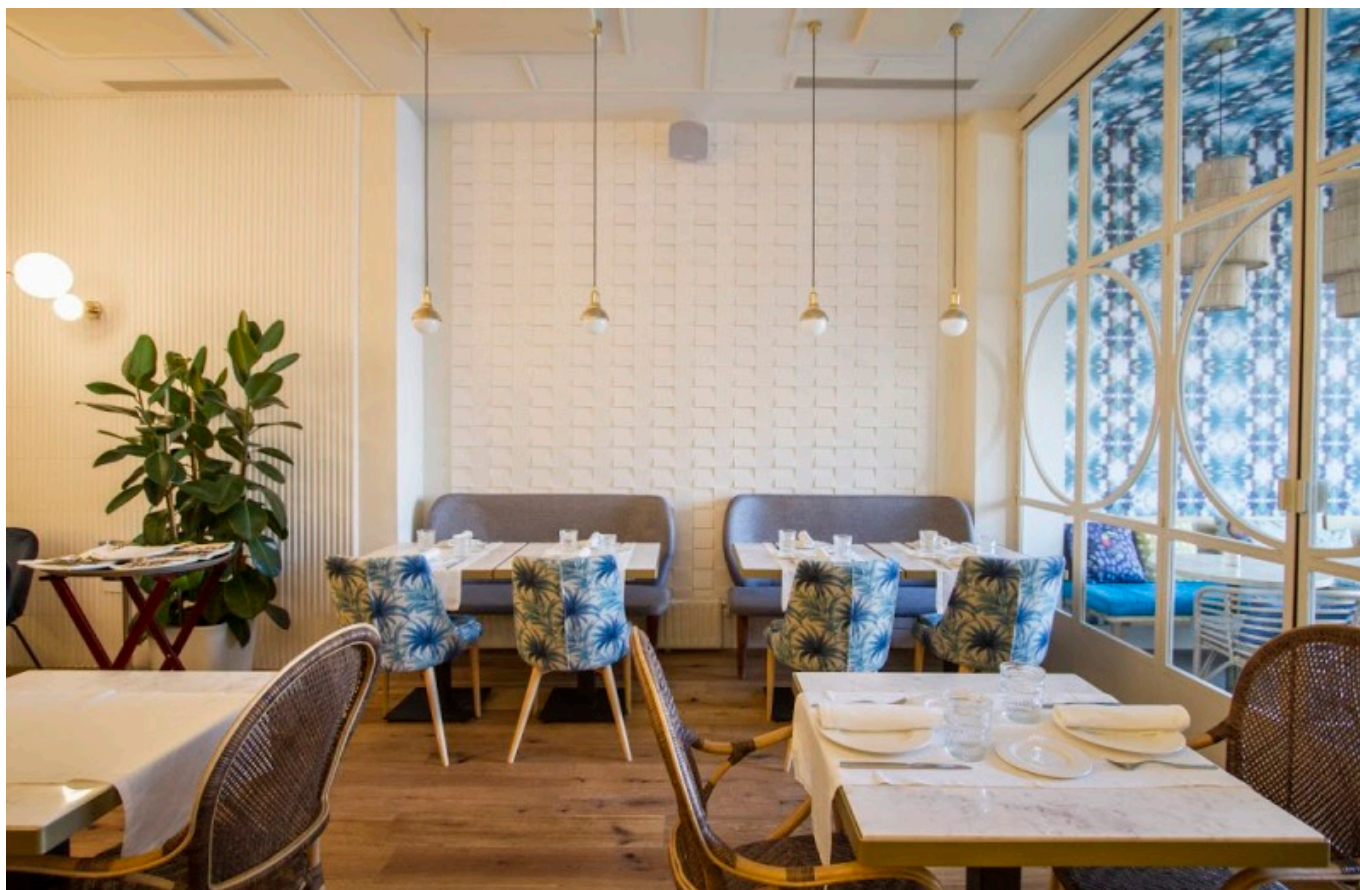
However, there are some dates in the old diary that are no hardship to keep. In this case, it was dinner at the recently opened [Sargo](#). Located in Barrio Salamanca – not my usual stomping ground, but in an area that I do aspire to spend more time in and around – Sargo felt like the sophisticated older sister to many of the [restaurants that I tend to frequent](#).



I met my friend at the bar for a sparkly start (some gin-based fizz) and began to peruse the menu. It quickly transpired that whilst there were definite crowd pleasers to be found, innovation was the buzz word at Sargo with plenty of inventive options, of which I'll elaborate on later.



For me, I'm all about the "three S's" when I go out for dinner, so let me explain. Style, service and (lip) smackingly good food. It wasn't wasted on me that the decor at [Sargo](#) was Pinterest worthy in terms of its prettiness and if I'm going to be sat still for hours, then I want something nice to look at.



On that note, next comes the service. It didn't go unnoticed on myself or my dining companion that our waiter was incredibly attentive and essentially, he could've been plucked from the beaches of Rio. Pau was everything you'd want in a server, knowledgeable but not pushy. Friendly but not overbearing. Gorgeous but not so distractingly so that our food would go cold.



So onto the food, it passed the “S” test and then some. As I went with a veggie friend (we cover all food group bases) and tried A LOT of different things – what can I tell you, we were warming up for Christmas.



The standout dish for me was the *sashimi de atún rojo*, which was a work of art – quite literally, it was served upon a *pintoresco*. The concept of the menu is undoubtedly unique though – split into easy-to-read groups such as “*de machete*” – perfect for meat lovers and “*de cuchara*” which is ideal for those seeking comfort – which to be honest in these tiresome temps, who isn’t?





We bid the team at [Sargo](#) farewell having tackled the menu as a tag team and safe in the knowledge that we'd given their marvellously Mediterranean menu a good old bash.

If you're looking for a spot that definitely isn't style over substance, give Sargo more than just a glance. Set to become a darling of the Salamanca scene, set up camp now before the hordes arrive.

Info

- [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Website](#)
- **Address:** Calle del General Diaz Porlier 57
- **Metro:** Lista
- **Phone:** 910 1066 57