

James' ongoing guide to killing time at home in Madrid

Step zero. Chill. There's nothing better than drinking a few beers or having some wine with your besties – your cats, maybe dogs, and occasionally, a few humans (inspired by Niki). Once you've got this down, you're ready to start my personal ongoing guide to killing time in Madrid while supporting local business at the same time. Let's go!

Treat yourself to good food and drinks

1. Get local beer delivered to your home

My go-to beer is from Madrid's local brewery [Cervezas La Virgen](#). It's definitely more expensive than my also-beloved Mahou, but also a lot better. Check out their *Jamonera* beer and the classic *Lager*. Thanks for the inspiration, [Helen](#).

2. Learn from the real food experts, Devour Tours



Back in 2015, we went on one of Devour's awesome tours ([Huertas neighborhood food and market tour](#)) and Lauren Aloise and James Blick's team have been just killing it ever since then.

Today, they're also offering tons of [online food experiences](#) where their local tour guides tell you how to make their city's classic dishes over Zoom. And you get to cook with them in real time. I just took the "Cook Pasta Like a Roman with Abbie" where I learned how to make two Italian sauces. Here's a glimpse of the end result – I was way too hungry to set up better pics but wow, they were good.



I also want to give a shout-out to my good friend Melissa who lives in Lisbon. She's giving an online tour called [Discover Portugal's History Through 10 Dishes](#). I haven't taken it yet but knowing her, I can only expect an absolutely kick-ass experience full of passion (inspired by Melissa, *claro*).

3. Make your own bread



Lots of my friends have taken up bread-making these past few months and sharing mouthwatering photos with me. So I started making my own recently, too. Although I'm far from becoming an expert on this, here's an easy way to start:

- Take two cups of flour: I mix strong bread flour – ask for *harina de fuerza* at Spanish supermarkets – and wheat flour.
- Add two teaspoons of yeast (I guess it won't be the end of the world if you can't find it, but your bread won't rise as much), olive oil (one spoon is fine!), sugar and salt (plus a little pepper if you're like me).
- Mix it with one cup of beer (I made it once with *La Jazonera* mentioned above, and it rocked my world). You can also mix it with water, which is... *meh*.
- Let it rise for a couple hours in a bowl covered with

dry cloth. Then deflate the air (check this [technique](#) out) and let it rise again.

- Last step: put your dough in a pot (make sure you add some flour so the dough doesn't stick to the bottom) and make a cut in the dough with a knife. Then cover it and put it in your oven at 225° C for 45 minutes. After that, take the cover off and keep it in the oven for 10 more minutes.

Perhaps “easy” wasn't the right word. But trust me, it seems more difficult than it actually is (I made it after all!). Let it cool for a bit and you're good to go (inspired by Carmen and Joss).

4. Add even more great carbs to your diet (why not??) by making your own pizza from scratch



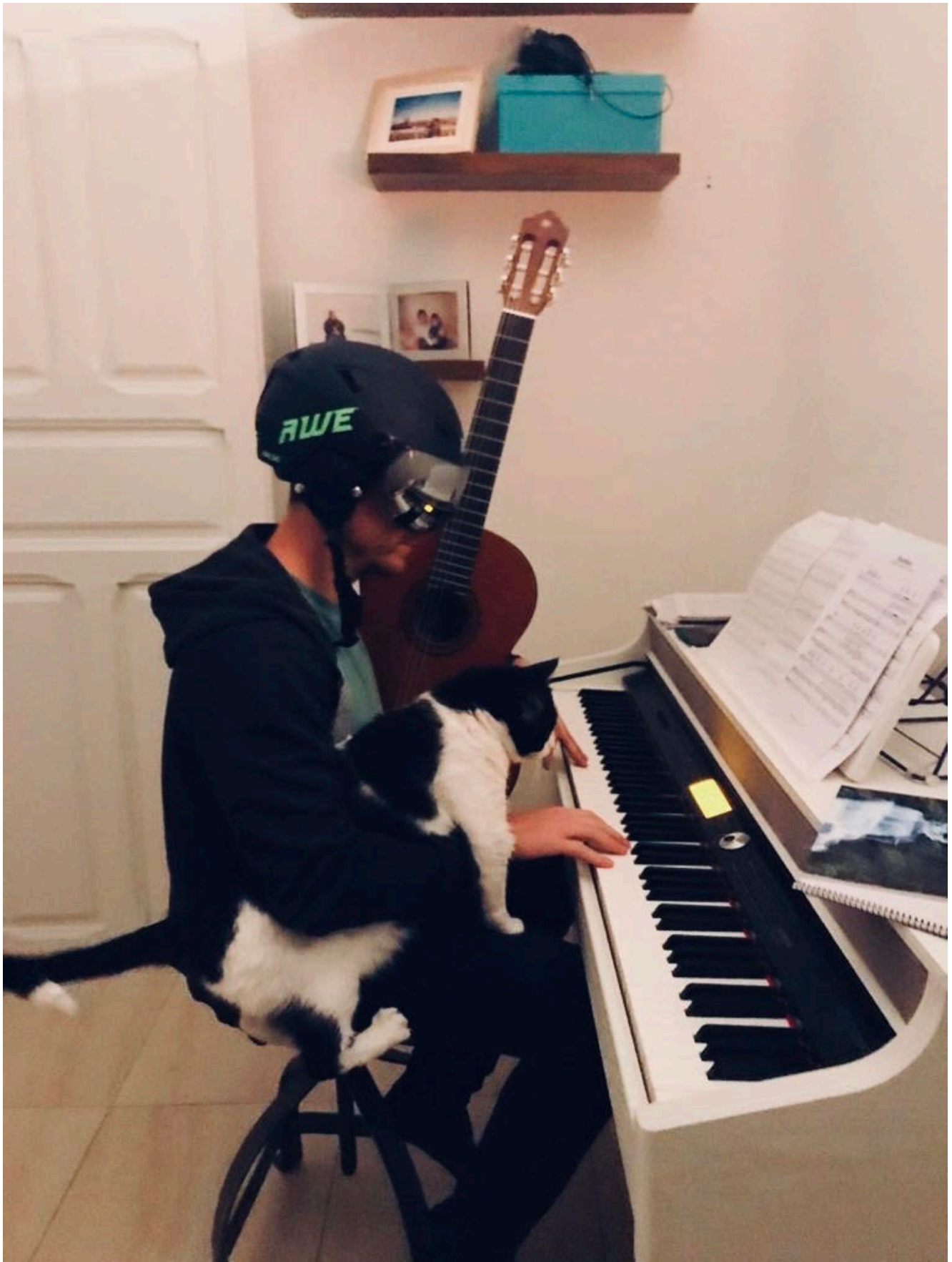
To make my own pizza dough, I followed Jaime Oliver's [5-min recipe](#) (I used beer instead of water, because beer simply makes everything better). I also added my family's *Bolognese* sauce recipe – meat, onions, soy and “Worcestershire” sauce (or “*salsa perrins*” for my Spaniards out there who also find that to be the most frightening word to pronounce in English). Feel free to add whatever else works for you (arugula is also great, inspired by Jake).

Burn those extra *kilos* at home

Get moving with [Stacy Quick \(Mustard Fitness\)](#)'s home workouts. I briefly met this guy a few years ago, and I can only say the dude is legit. Stacy contacted me a few days ago with his [free](#)

[home workouts](#) and they're bananas!

Put some art in your life



1. Practice your (new?) favorite instrument

I've been having regular piano and violin classes online with my private teachers. But if you're looking to start from scratch or learn a new instrument on your own, [Fender is offering a free trial period](#). I normally use [Ultimate Guitar](#) to learn my favorite songs, yet the Fender app is useful when it comes to picking up a new instrument (inspired by Meag and Bea).

2. Join my local choir!

Singers in Madrid, join me and my choir buddies at the [Coralavapies](#) (Lavapiés Choir), a non-profit organization founded by Osvaldo Ciccioli in 2003. Me and my ridiculous friend Kyler found out about them a couple months ago. Ever since, we've been singing mostly Spanish folk songs, every Wednesday night. Followed by drinks, of course (inspired by Kyler).

3. Get interactive with the [Mad Improv](#) crew!

Mad Improv is a local English-speaking theater group that usually performs in theaters around the city and holds really fun workshops. Now they're offering online classes. For more info contact [Steve Loader](#) (inspired by Daphne).

4. Get your dance groove on every day at 6pm

My friend Martín, who happens to be a professional DJ (and teaches people how to mix), has been broadcasting [live DJ sessions](#) daily at 6pm, Madrid time. Watch big Helen and small Helen get their groove on (you'll understand when you join the

party).

Thanks for reading. Can't wait to hug you all again.