

Juanita Cruz – The Perfect Date Destination (ditch the movie and just do dinner!)

For someone who spends pretty much every waking (non-working hour) flitting back and forth between Chueca and Malasaña, I disappointingly don't actually live in either barrio *luckily this is soon to be rectified and therefore watch out for a spike in Gin sales along Calle Espiritu Santo.

Therefore, it's always beyond exciting when I discover, or in this case I'm introduced to, a little gem in my barrio which is way up North in the Castellaña neck of the woods. I've sampled brunch at my local, Pipa & Co on more than one occasion and it's never failed to please but I'd never noticed what lurked below; [Juanita Cruz](#). Discreetly hidden under a little arch is a bar/restaurant which can only be described as feeling half like a speakeasy and half like the kind of refurbished warehouse bar, that most of East London is made of. On entrance I basically wondered why I'd never been there before upon spying a place that is right up my street in terms of décor and drinks.



The night that I first went was perfect in terms of both company and the cosy vibe that was largely created by the amazing singer who was warming up her vocal chords quite happily in the corner. Turned out we'd stumbled across an open mic night, which completed the laid back and low key atmosphere perfectly. Cocooned on the kind of battered old sofa that I wouldn't mind for my new flat, it was the perfect place to while away a few weeknight hours (although I've also been told that it gets pretty lively come the weekends when the Spaniards really let their hair down, obv).

The food menu is definitely worth more than a glance with treats that won't break the bank but they may have you booking in a spinning class the following day; provolone, carpaccio and the like were all delish.



It's a clandestine feeling gaff with echoes of post-civil war Spain (according to the blurb on their website) but what I do know is that they sell [G'Vine](#), they played good tunes and as far as a **first date venue** goes, it wasn't too shabby for me.

Save pennies for a cab, take a trip up North. Oh and pack your dancing shoes, come Friday and Saturday it's time to show off your moves.

Info

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: Paseo de la Habana, 105

Phone: 914 51 17 76

Metro: Cuzco & Colombia

Photos from Facebook

Also check out:

[Gin O'clock – Time for Madrid's finest G&T's](#)

[El Patio del Fisgón – Feel like You're in Narnia](#)

[1862 Dry Bar – Perfection Served in a Glass](#)

[Best Date Ideas in Madrid – 3-part series](#)

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

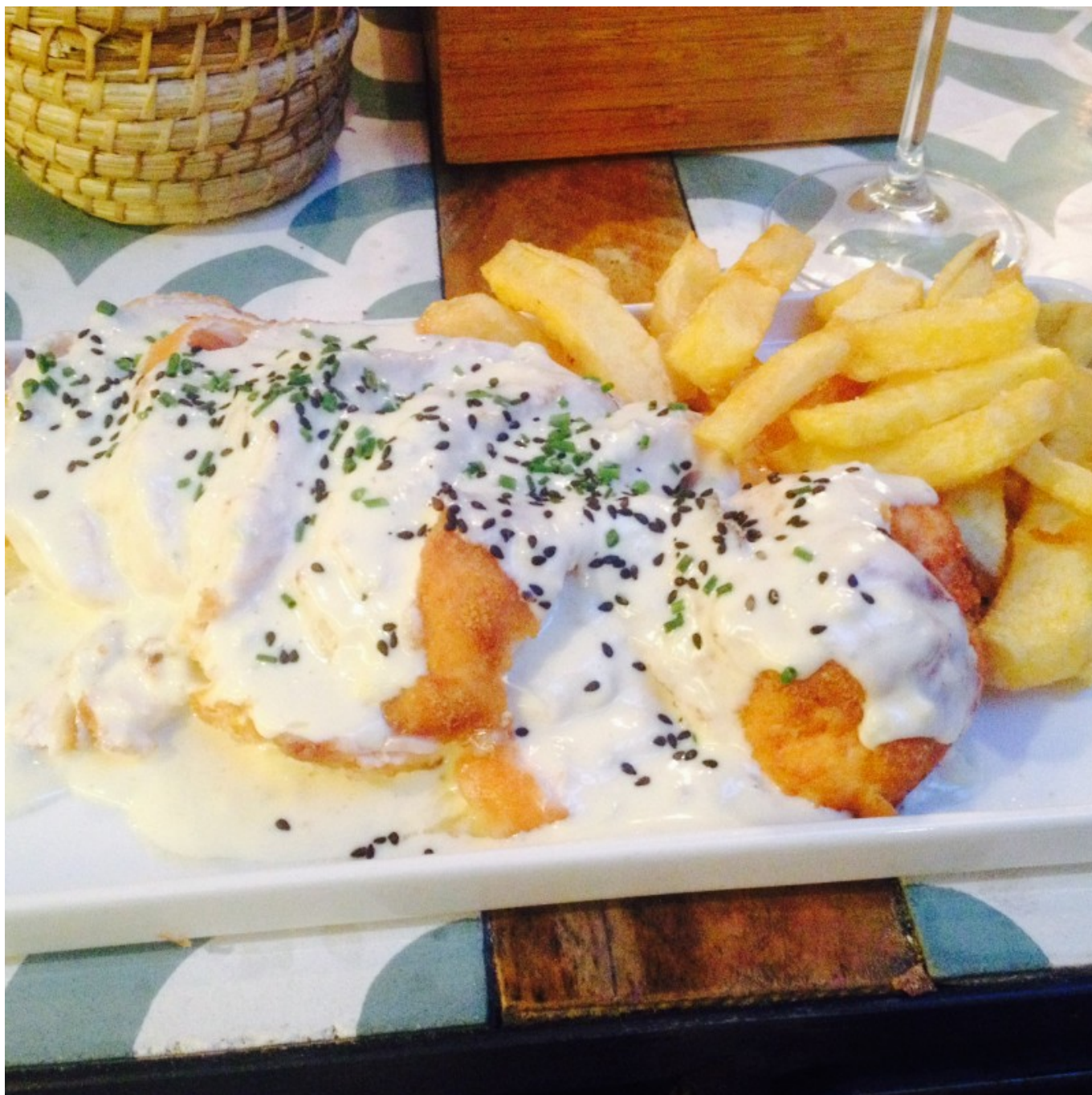
picture the scene.



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

Lady Madonna – take a day off the diet

It's very easy when living in Madrid to slide into a certain pattern and become all about the booze. Wine's cheaper than water (seriously, I've paid more for a Perrier than I have for a Pinot on more than one occasion). Cañas replace coffee and without realising, you've wound up on an unintentional liquid diet that's bad for both your purse strings (as well as your head).



Having said that, there are times when you want to chow on down without breaking the bank and dress up for dinner – [Lady Madonna](#) has got this nailed. Tucked away on Calle Orellana 6 (a stone's throw from Alonso Martinez metro) it is a little oasis amongst the local eating options that include Burger King *that said there's a time and place for a Whopper but maybe not on a Friday night!

First discovered on a random Thursday whilst on a quest for a trendy *terrazza*, I experienced what can only be described as the **best cake that I have ever had in Madrid**. It involved Chocolate. It involved Guinness. Weird you say? Nope, more like a party in your boca and everyone should be invited. There literally aren't enough superlatives to describe its deliciousness – instead I suggest you order it on arrival and wrap up your dins with another one come desert time (again, speaking from experience).



Not only is the food borderline orgasmic (not just my opinion, it's been uttered by my dining companions if I seem too easily pleased) but the décor is literally like something torn from the pages of Wallpaper Magazine. In other words, not a piece of Ikea furniture in sight and somewhere that I'd quite happily move into after kicking out time. You're greeted with gorgeous tiled floors, plates that almost got swiped and popped into my handbag and lighting that seemed to create an Instagram filter effect which is never a bad thing in my book. [Lady Madonna](#) is completely cornering that New York warehouse vibe.



I'm steadily working my way through the menu but the following things stood out as being calories well spent: the **Gambones a la Brasa** managed to tempt a confirmed carnivore into seafood submission, whereas the **Ensalada de Burrata** even had me eating my greens. If like me, dinner isn't a delight without some decent red action fear not, a **glass of Rioja is "una ganga" at 2 euros 50 a pop.**



Gambones a la brasa – grilled shrimp

I was warned by the hip (but not scarily so staff) that if you want a table on a Saturday night you need to be booking up about a week in advance. My concern is that after a rave review that might up the ante to a fortnight. Either way, Lady Madonna is the kind of place that cocoons you with its culinary chicness but has you pining for your Oysho jammies by the time you pay the bill (or maybe that's just me/an attack of my eyes being bigger than my belly!).

Try it, you might like it.

All images from [Lady Madonna](#)

Lady Madonna

- [Facebook](#) & Instagram: [@ladymadonna_restaurante](#)
- Address: Calle Orellana, 6
- Metro: Alonso Martínez

Best place to get your mop chopped in Madrid, the minefield of avoiding a mullet

I remember it well: My first hairdressing experience in Madrid. There were tears. There was a tantrum. There was most certainly no danger of me leaving a tip.

The scene of the **hairdressing crime** was a little place near to Sol. In hindsight this was probably my first error, **guiri central** and clearly not the kind of place that a *madrileño* would frequent. My dirty blonde locks were left with a definite tinge of ginge and it took months (and a great deal of expense) to restore my battered tresses to their former 'glory'.

Enter Aveda. The holy grail of hairdressers and one of my favourite spots to head to when TLC is needed. Situated on **Calle de Jose Ortega y Gasset**, it's smack bang in the middle of what is the essentially the swishest of barrios, so if you're judging a book by its cover, you can rest assured that you're in good hands. *I always leave feeling like a blissed out little Buddha!

Upon arrival you're greeted with Vogue, an array of coffee options and a head massage. I'd pay **40 euros** for that alone after a tough day at work. What comes next is a masterclass in keeping the customer sweet. They talk through your hair type,

your style, (how early you're willing to get up in the morning to tame your natural curls in my case) and only then will they help you to decide on a cut (or colour) that's going to work. More often than not **this chat happens in English** – so if your pigeon Spanish won't cut it you need not worry as it's unlikely that they mistake the term 'highlights' for a 'buzzcut'.

I admit that I am pretty picky when it comes to hairdressers and never really quite understand why I don't leave a salon looking like Giselle (despite the fact that I've taken in a picture to show the stylist and everything!) but I have genuinely never left **Aveda** feeling anything less than chuffed. Word of warning: I am rarely able to leave without purchasing some of their gorgeous products or taking a cheeky dip into the nearby Lavinia for a post haircut tipple. (More of that in a future post).

Steer clear of any pretenders, Aveda is top of the chops.

[Web](#)

Where: Aveda Calle de José Ortega y Gasset, 26, 28006 Madrid

Phone: 914 32 22 46

Metro: Núñez de Balboa or Velázquez

Another option:

Leo is a great hairdresser in Madrid, bilingual in English and Spanish. His haircuts cost around **20€** (including blowdrying and styling). He also does hair coloring and makeup. Contact him through his page on **Facebook**.

Also check out:

Beauty Series for the Ladies – Madrid’s Best Nail Salons

Gin O’Clock – Time to Enjoy Madrid’s Finest G&T’s

In my youth (to be said in granny-esque tones) I had many love affairs, with many different tipples. You name it; I’d tried it (and more than likely I would have had the hangover to show for it). Malibu and Pineapple, Archers and Lemonade, Amaretto and Coke followed by a brief dalliance with Vodka and Cranberry. They’d all been enjoyed (or endured) until I finally met my drink soulmate; **the G&T.**

Being a Brit, it’s fair to say that they’d had always been on my radar, but upon moving to Madrid my unabashed obsession with them reached fever pitch. Clearly encouraged by the sheer abundance of gin bars that positively litter the *calles* of pretty much every *barrio*. To this end I’m going to share my gin aficionado tips on **where to grab the best G’Vine in the city.**

La Prudencia



Situated on one of my favourite streets in Madrid, this small but perfectly formed bar is ideal for a romantic rendezvous due to its gorgeous low lighting and shabby chic decor, as well as being the perfect place for a few pre-club copas. It was here where I first sampled a **Brockman's gin** (one of my current faves in case you're curious) but should you fancy a gin that's served exactly as it should be then put **La Prudencia** on your list. The bar is piled high with fruits, herbs and even rose petals which the expert bar staff use with flair. They explain why certain flavour combinations have been matched and don't make you feel like a numpty for asking. Most gins start at around **10 euros** which (given that they're the size of your head) is in my opinion, money well spent.

[Facebook](#)

Where: *Calle del Espíritu Santo, 41*

Phone: *915 22 30 97*

Metro: *Noviciado or Tribunal*

The Gin Room



Now here's a bar that is slightly out of my comfort zone (and by that I mean it's not in Malasaña) but if you're looking for reason to get out of your skinny jeans and into an LBD whilst sipping on a gin, this place is it. Extremely slick and stylish, **The Gin Room** has a gin list quite literally as long as my arm. Whilst the atmosphere there was slightly lacking on my last trip, the gins certainly packed a punch. By default I always tend to revert back to **G'Vine** (it's French and fabulous). Here it came served with grapes which complimented the delicate floral flavour of **G'Vine** perfectly. Before the night was through I'd managed to blitz about 70 euros on six gins (not all for me might I add) so this is definitely not the place to visit when there's too much month left at the end of your money. Saying that, as a payday treat it's a great place to enjoy a glamorous gin o'clock.

[Facebook](#)

Where: Calle de la Academia, 7
Phone: 699 75 59 88
Metro: Atocha or Banco de España

Shuzo's



Shuzo, Shuzo, Shuzo, it almost pains me to share this hidden gem for fear that I'll never be able to perch on a bar stool there again. First things first, it is tiny (we're talking the size of a wardrobe) and secondly the array of gins that they stock is a gin lovers delight – I think I genuinely clapped and whooped on arrival, admittedly it doesn't take much! This bar has the old classics such as **Hendricks**, **Bombay** and the like as well, as some very quirky brands such as **Monkey 47**, an unusual (yet potent) gin hailing from the Black Forest in Germany. The atmosphere here is laid back but rest assured you definitely feel as though you are 'someone in the know' upon

entering into this wee Aladdin's cave.

[Facebook](#)

Where: *Calle de Jorge Juan, 52*

Phone: *914 35 91 71*

Metro: *Príncipe de Vergara*

So folks, there's three to get you started and remember – it's always gin o'clock somewhere in the world...so bottoms up!

Looking for more on Madrid's best cocktail bars? Check out:

1862 Dry Bar – perfection served in a glass!

Madrid's best cocktail bars – Martinis, Cosmopolitans and more...