

El Sombrero Azul – pupusas, yuca, enchiladas and more

It's not uncommon for even the most veteran *madrileños* to stumble upon tucked-away eateries they've never noticed. That's exactly what happened to me when I was strolling along the surprisingly calm **Calle de las Hileras** near Plaza Mayor. The spicy smells stopped me in my tracks, but what brought me inside was the *menú del día* written on the window in puff paint.

Monday through Friday, [El Sombrero Azul](#) offers a *menú salvadoreño-mexicano* that includes a *bebida* (Coke products, beer, sangria, or wine) with a starter big enough to fill you up (like the *pupusas* shown below), a **cocktail** (margaritas, mojitos, you name it) along with a delicious main entree. And for dessert, you can choose from coffee/tea, cheesecake, *bizcocho de tres leches*, and more. **All for 12€.**



What's a *pupusa*, you may ask?

Most countries have their own version of a warm, breaded 'sandwich' filled with meat, cheese, and/or veggies. Food pockets, if you will. **Pupusas are the food pockets of El Salvador**, and El Sombrero Azul has them down to a science. Shown above are two veggie versions, one with zucchini and the other with *frijoles* and cheese (my favorite).



Admittedly, I was a little disappointed in the main entree options, but only because I'm vegetarian. Meat lovers will feel right at home here among the *pastelitos de carne*, *cazuela de cochinita pibil*, *tacos flauta*, and the *plato de carne*. However, the accommodating staff offered me some pretty good alternatives, like fresh yuca (above) or *huevos rancheros*.





If you have room after the first two courses, kick back with a fresh cocktail. Pictured is a delicious **blackberry margarita**, but they also have mojitos and micheladas, as well as fresh Mexican fruit juices and horchata (although those aren't part of the menú).

TIP: The best time to go is during the week, because on weekends and holidays the menú price is 15€.

Oh, and the same space hosts a totally different concept by night: it's called La Cueva de Lola, and it's all about Spanish food and flamenco shows. Post to come soon on that!

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- Address: C/ Hileras 6
- Metro: Ópera or Sol

- Phone: 910 18 54 53

Also check out:

- [Tacos, tamales and tequila: Madrid's best Mexican joints!](#)
 - [Sahuaro, Mexican magic in the heart of Madrid](#)
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María Pandora, a dark and artistic champagne bar in La Latina

If you've ever spent an evening watching the sunset with a liter of Mahou in Parque Las Vistillas (and if you haven't, get on that ASAP), you may have spotted this beautiful, borderline-creepy cocktail bar, María Pandora.





Cryptic, dripping golden letters read MARÍA PANDORA, and the sound of a dramatic poetry reading demand the curiosity of

passersby not yet in the know.



Once inside, you'll already be hooked: every inch of the walls is covered with sinister sketches, the tables are adorned with misshapen melted candles, and vintage furniture adds the finishing touch to make you feel like you're in a haunted mansion.



But despite the ghoulish vibe, the servers here are cheery and chatty. When we ordered champagne and white wine, our server plopped a frozen raspberry in our glass, assuring it would add a little somethin'-somethin'.

Oh, and the tapas here are my kind of food: mounds of candy and fruit.





But the best is yet to come. A meeting point for lovers of art, the bar also functions as a stage for poetry readings,

microteatro, and literary chats several nights of the week. The wall of antique books are for sale (but the century-old portraits of the owner's family are not).



Sign up for an event, order a glass of bubbly, and if you get there early enough, grab a window seat. María Pandora does not disappoint.

**Just note that their opening hours can be a little funky – they tend to open at 7pm except on Mondays, although sometimes they throw private events. So it's best to call ahead to make sure they're open!*

Info

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Phone:** +34 910 42 82 13

- **Address:** Plaza de Gabriel Miró, 1
 - **Metro:** La Latina or Ópera
-

Buns & Bones: mouthwatering baos & Asian fusion near Malasaña

If you're not yet hip to the 'bao' trend that's winning the hearts of foodies everywhere, we'll give you the scoop: a bao is a super-soft steamed bun with various fillings ranging from meat to veggies. If Tom Haverford were to describe it, he'd likely call it a mouth pillow. Sometimes they're sealed at the top like a dumpling, sometimes they're flattened out and served like a thick taco, but one thing remains the same: **they are always fire.**



Pictured: three baos, the vegan (eggplant, hummus, walnuts, & sundried tomato), the veggie (tofu tempura with pisto), & the Tonkatsu (Iberian pork, coleslaw, & tonkatsu sauce).

Restaurants in Madrid are quickly jumping on the bandwagon ('baowagon,' if you will), but one stands out for its prices, location, decor, varied menu, and incredible flavors: [Buns & Bones](#), a streetfood oasis on near Plaza España and Gran Vía.



This place has much more than baos, though. **Their menu is broken down into three sections:** 'buns' (baos), 'bones' (meat and fish dishes), and 'ni buns ni bones' (other options), which includes alluring and modern Asian dishes such as yellowtail sashimi with ponzu sauce and jalapeño, mint hanoi spring rolls, charcoal-grilled octopus, or the farmer's market vegetable tempura.



We started with some delicious edamame and veggie tempura (both vegetarian options).

As you can see, **there's something for everyone here:** the vegans and the meat lovers, the healthy and the indulgent, the daring and the traditional...

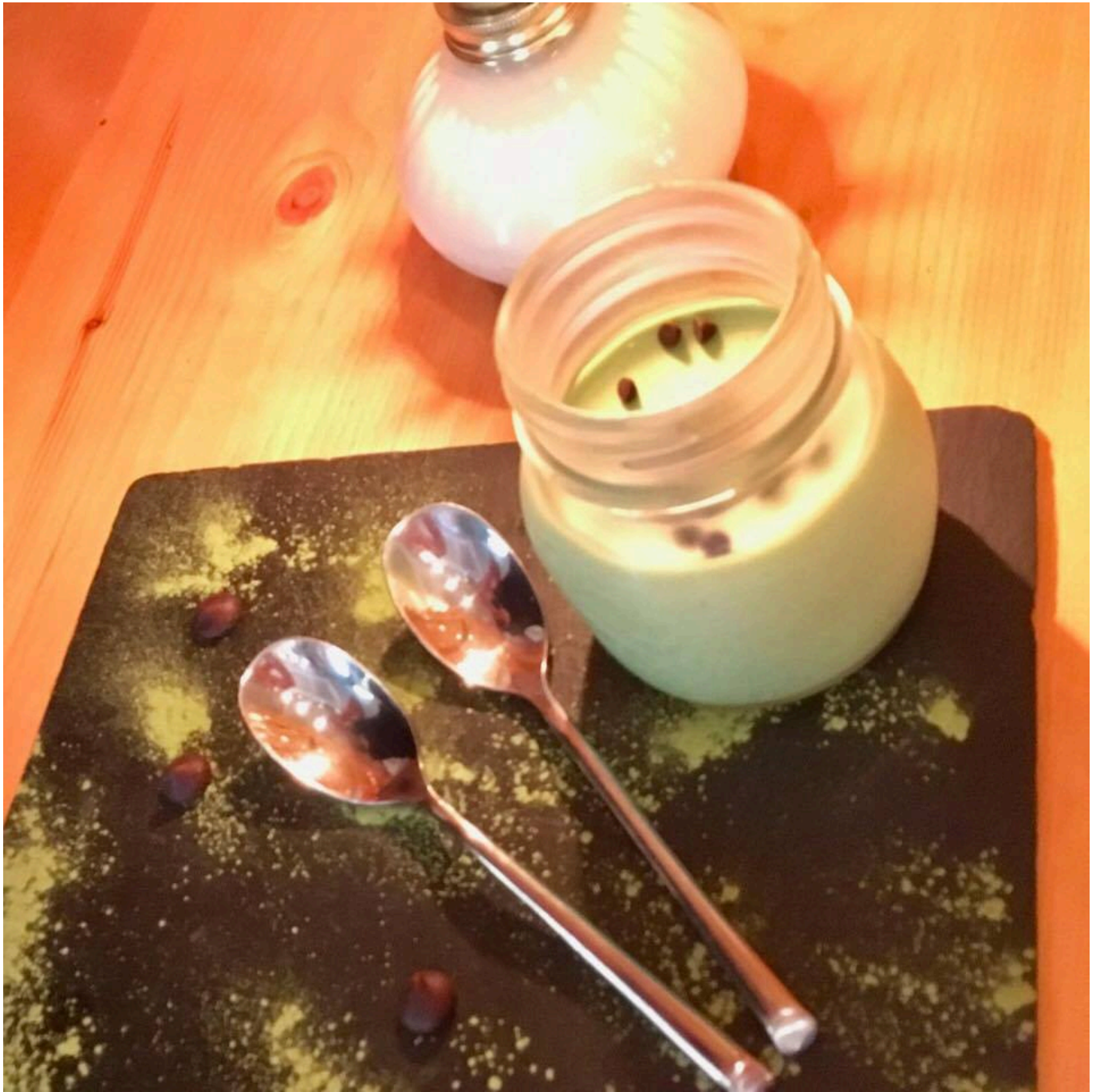


Go starving if you're planning on ordering the BBQ spareribs. They are bigger than my face.



'Poke,' another foodie trend sweeping the nation, is a Hawaiian salmon and veggie rice dish with chili threads. Healthy and bursting with flavor.

If you somehow have room for dessert, they have some unique options—we tried the **green tea panna cotta with chocolate chips**, and it was delightfully light and not overly sugary.



Buns & Bones is open for lunch and dinner (except on Mondays) and has two other locations: in the Antón Martín market and in Chamberí. All have a super laidback atmosphere and are open late, inviting you to digest over a Corona while you admire the quirky decor (one wall reads 'reserved for Banksy').





Info:

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** C/ San Bernardo, 12
- **Metro:** Santo Domingo, Plaza de España
- **Phone:** +34 913 92 89 53

Creamies: Malasaña's new ice

cream & cookie sandwich bar

Sugar addict? Keep reading. Don't have a sweet tooth? This place is not for you. Opened just three weeks, [Creamies](#) is a tiny ice cream sandwich bar in the heart of Malasaña that lures guests in with its neon '80s-esque decor and customers leaving with their sugary mounds of perfection.



The process is simple and tailored to your tastes.

First, you pick the “bread” of the sandwich: a donut (regular

or Oreo), a blueberry muffin top, or a cookie—classic chocolate chip, white chocolate, triple chocolate... Undecided? **You can mix & match** the top and bottom.



Next, **choose the ice cream filling**: “triki” monster (kind of like birthday cake flavor), donut cream, “La Movida Madrileña,” double chocolate brownie, Kinder, yogurt & berry...



Lastly, **you can choose a “topping”**—whichever you choose, they’ll roll the sandwich in it. There are sprinkles, Lacasitos, marshmallows, Froot Loops, cookie crumbs, chocolate sauce, and more.



Would ya just look at that happiness?!

It's cheap, it's delicious, and the service is friendly.
Corred!

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- Insta: [@creamiesmadrid](#)
- Address: C/ Corredera Alta de San Pablo, 30
- Metro: Tribunal

You may also like:

- [Madrid's best ice cream shops](#)

Street spotlight: Calle Ruda, a tiny portal between La Latina and Embajadores

It goes without saying that there's no shortage of things to do in Madrid. In fact, sometimes there's so much, you don't know where to start. On those days when the sun's shining and you're itching to get out of the house, **sometimes it's best to just walk to a cool part of town and let the city do its thing.** We're here to give you some inspiration.

Calle de la Ruda

La Latina and Embajadores—bustling multicultural hubs—are connected by a string of tiny streets full of surprises. One of them is **Calle Ruda**, which takes you straight from Mercado La Cebada to Plaza Cascorro, and makes the very short walk well worth it.

Onis, for old-school charm



If you enter the street from Calle Toledo, you're greeted by the classic corner bar, Onis.

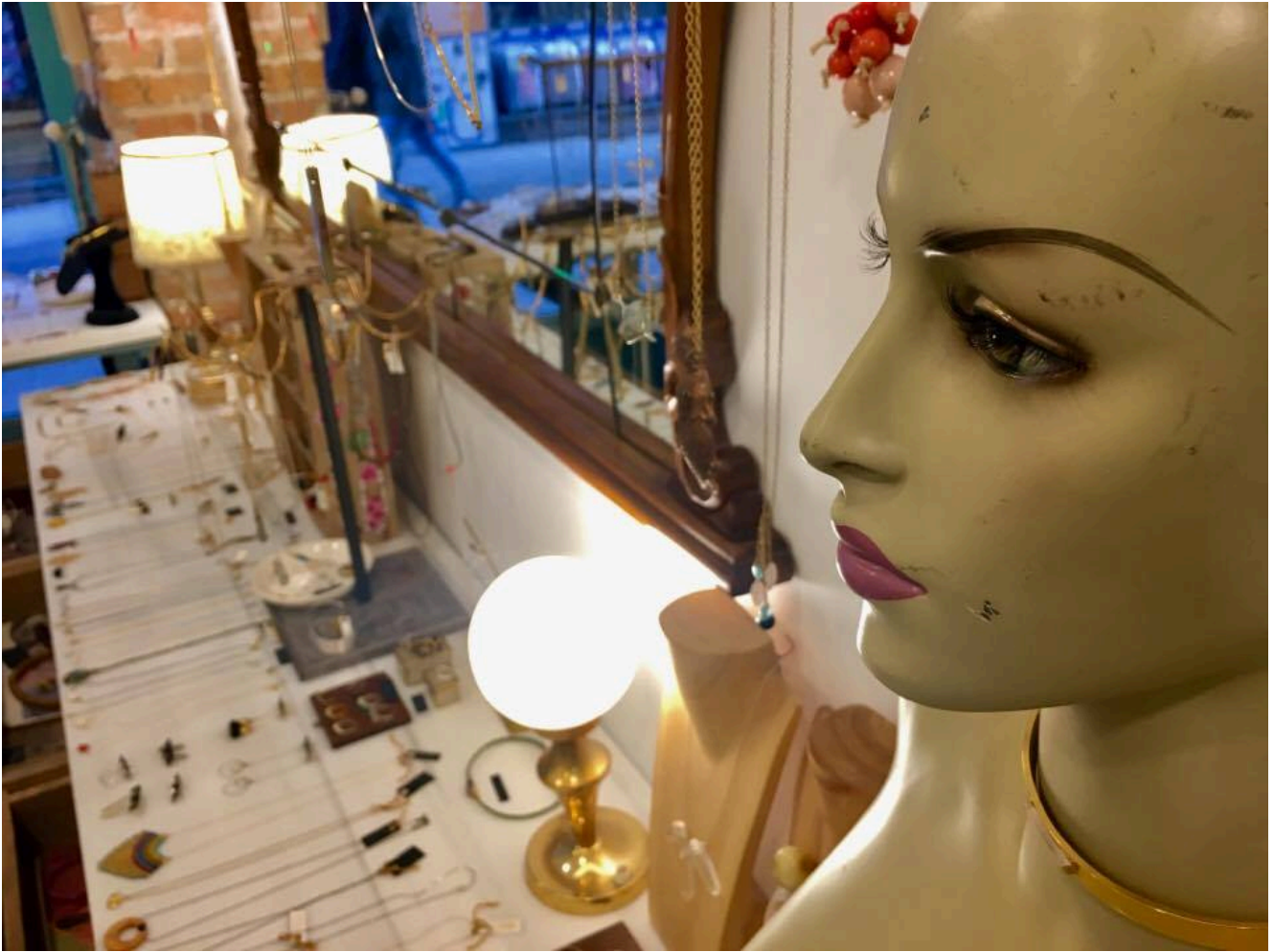
This place is the definition of *castizo*. Tapas in the glass display case, tobacco machines, weird arcade games, and a grumpy server who has probably been here since the place opened (which was 1976, I've learned).

Ruda Café, for coffee



Looking for something more modern? We got you. Keep heading down Ruda and you'll come across [Ruda Café](#), a new (opened last year) coffeeshop that's riding the wave of java experts that has hit Madrid in recent years. We're not mad about this trend. And yes, they have wifi. They also sell packaged artisanal coffee and tea, jam, art, and coffeemakers.

De Piedra, for handmade jewelry



But there's only so much coffee you can drink (unfortunate, I know). So now that you're fueled up, you're ready to browse the cute little shops of this gem of a street. If you're a fan of jewelry and creepy mannequins, pay a visit to **De Piedra**, an artisanal jewelry shop at C/ Ruda 19. They haven't been at this location long, but the store has been open for some 15 years.

Molar, for records, books and cassette tapes



Next you'll come across my personal favorite place on the street, **Molar**. Think record store meets bookshop. They even sell cassette tapes, which is not something you see every day in Mad City.

Mamá Elba, for something sweet



Got a sweet tooth? [Mamá Elba](#) has been open a mere 3 weeks, and is already drawing a loyal customer base. Their selection of ice cream (including vegan and gluten-free), cakes, and coffee will leave you overwhelmed by heavenly choices.

Erre Catorce (R14), for art and design



[R14](#) is another **brand new spot** on the street, just open for a month. It's a modern interior design shop, with local art, restored vintage furniture pieces (from around the world, namely Scandinavia and the US), apparel, and lots of cool home decor.

Soon they'll be putting on events to promote and discuss interior design and art, so keep your eyes peeled and follow them on [Facebook](#).

La Tienda de Cerveza, for craft beer



Next up: craft beer. Okay, I lied before, THIS place is my favorite. [La Tienda de Cerveza](#) is a must in La Latina (and in the city, really). The shelves are lined with hundreds of bottled or canned craft beers and ciders from both Madrid and around the world. They have a few tables in the back, and they hold tasting events often. An absolute must for *cervecerxs*.

Tienda Biológica, for something healthy

Something I love about Madrid is that **you can eat healthy without going bankrupt**. Tienda Biológica is living proof of this. This small organic food shop sells health products at reasonable prices, and it's run by the sweetest lady.

La China Mandarina, for a great meal in a modern space



And last but not least (and not even covering half of the street's spots), for a great meal and a laidback ambience, visit [La China Mandarin](#) at the end of Calle Ruda (closest to Plaza Cascorro). It's one of those places that masters the art of offering both very traditional and very modern cuisine on the same menu. So if you're craving a *tortilla de patatas* but your friend has a hankering for a vegan burger, there's something for everyone.

They have great wifi and won't roll their eyes if you work on your laptop all morning (I know from experience).

There's also a mushroom-themed restaurant called El Brote! Check out Leah's article about it here:

[*El Brote: a brand-new mushroom restaurant in the heart of El Rastro*](#)

Calle Ruda is just one of a plethora of tiny goldmines in Madrid. If none of these spots call your attention (tough crowd!), we suggest you still come to the area on a beautiful day and just get lost. You can't go wrong.

Amargo, the city's best veggie burger (and much more)

The title says it all.

On a cozy corner in Malasaña, [Amargo Place To Be](#) lures you in with its fairytale facade, enveloped with ivy and illuminated by twinkle lights.

Inside, the vibe is both industrial and homey. Friendly faces will greet you (not always a given in the city) and you'll be overwhelmed by a menu **so international** you'll forget where you are.

Nigiris, Mexican nachos, giant *croquetas*, dim sum, lasagna with wonton pasta and pine nuts, duck magret over hummus and a raspberry coulis...

But as we're all biased—especially when it comes to food—what I wanna sell you on is their veggie burger.

I can't even bring myself to try anything else from the impressively diverse and delicious menu, because when I come to Amargo, I only have one thing on my mind: that thick and savory soy burger piled high with zucchini in tempura, a fried egg, a thick slab of goat cheese, green shoots, caramelized onion, crispy onion crunch, and the special house sauce.



Go starving—just half of this monstrous burger fills me up.

They're open for breakfast, lunch and dinner (from 9am-2am every day!), have a fantastic *menú del día* (€11.90 M-F and €13.50 on weekends and holidays), and boast a lengthy drink list that includes signature cocktails and organic wine (!!!).

But wait, there's more.

If you venture downstairs (follow the 19th-century painting in which a stoic aristocrat dons some fly ass Nikes), you'll find the seating area where diners become audience members.



Since last year, **Amargo** has hosted **concerts** throughout the week. If you're dining in (make sure to make a reservation—it fills up!), it's just €2 to enjoy anything from flamenco to soul to acoustic while you eat. When I went, I was treated to [Chisara Agor](#)'s achingly soulful voice.

Check out this month's programming on Amargo's [website](#).



The mindblowingly talented Chisara Agor and the amazing Christian García-Fonseca Secher on cajón.

If you're somehow not yet experiencing sensory overload, the lower level also functions as a revolving art gallery. The current artwork is by local visual and urban artist [Misterpiro](#).



Just some pals having a very candid laugh.

In a hurry? Amargo also does **speedy-quick orders to go.**

You have no excuse.

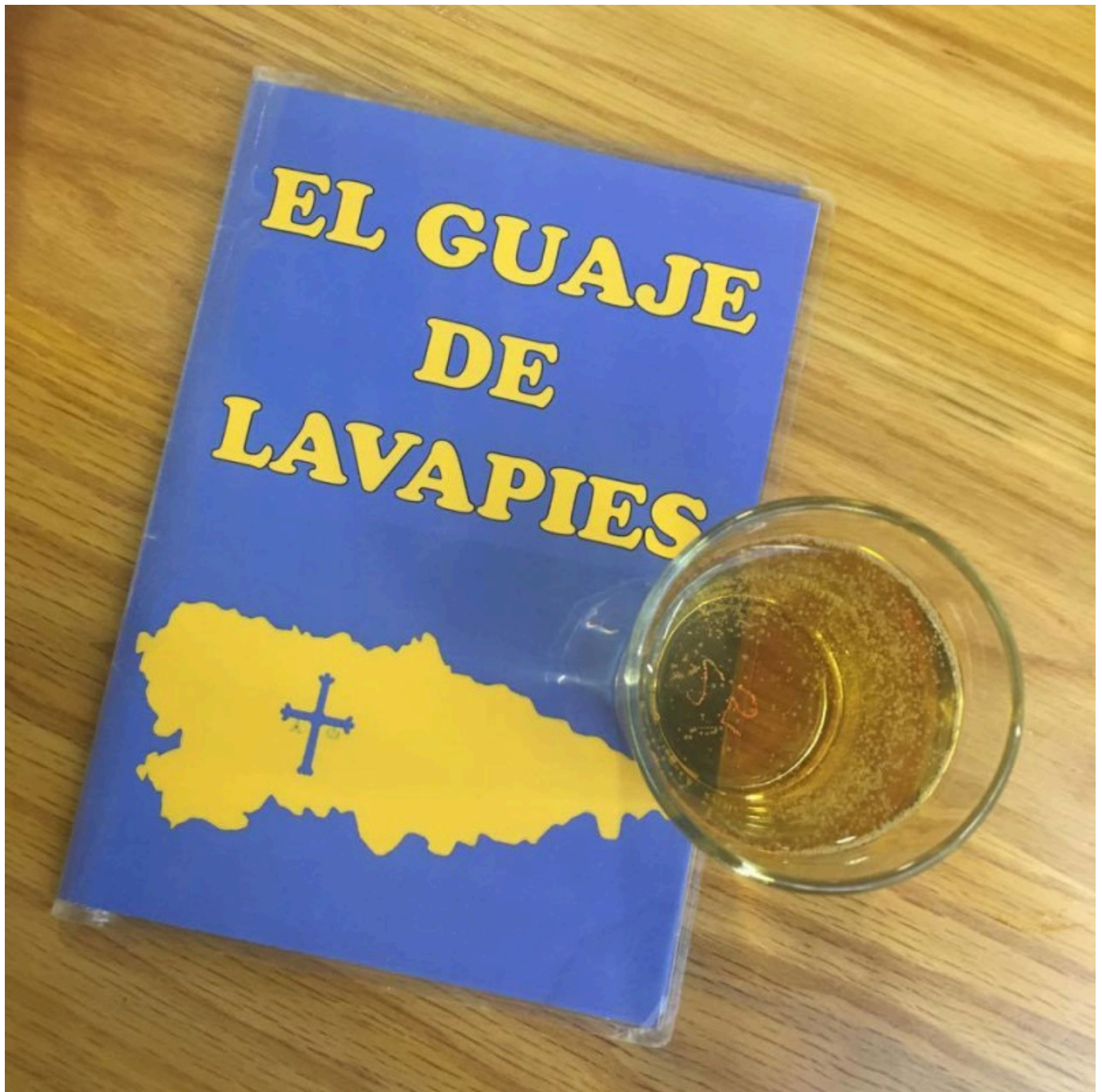
Info

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-

El Guaje de Lavapiés, an Authentic Asturian Oasis

Tucked into the [Mercado de San Fernando](#) is a tiny piece of Asturias. From the *queso gamoneu* to the blue-and-yellow flags marking their territory on every spare inch of the bar, you'll feel like you're really there.

[El Guaje de Lavapiés](#) is a *sidrería* that offers some of the most high-quality Asturian ciders, cheeses, and cured meats Madrid has to offer.



Rafael, the owner, is known around town as "[El Guaje](#)," a term used to refer to someone younger than you in Asturias. El Guaje opened up shop 10 months ago, and is happy with his success, although his dream is to open a full-size restaurant.



Is the space enormous? No. Does it have wifi? Also no. But what it does have it much better: delicious food, good prices, and no big chain of production and distribution—everything comes straight from our northern neighbors and is grown and made naturally.

Here you see El Guaje's *tosta con membrillo y cabrales*—toast with quince paste and blue cheese produced by rural dairy farmers and cured in natural caves (€3.50).



Of course, you can also buy these products in bulk to take home and enjoy later.



But if you're like me, and nothing hits the spot like a good craft beer, El Guaje's got you covered, with a selection from Caleyá of pale ales, IPAs, ambers, etc., as well as your trusty Estrella and Mahou.



If you're lucky, you'll arrive in time for the show—there's an open space at the center of the market, which happens to be right in front of this bar, where they put on dancing shows, plays, and other cultural events.

iPuxa Asturias!

Information

- [Facebook](#)
- Address: C/ Embajadores, 41 inside [Mercado de San Fernando](#)
- Hours: Vary by the day, but typical market hours. Most business on weekends!

PS: Right in front of El Guaje is another one of our favorite stands, [Mercado de Lisboa](#). Check it out!

Taproom Madrid: the craft beer bar we were all waiting for

If you're anything like me, you've been patiently awaiting a bar with a great selection of quality craft beer.

Over the past few years, there have been a few contenders. In fact, just in the past year, several new *cervecerías artesanales* have popped up around the city center, especially in the Malasaña and Lavapiés neighborhoods.

But with relatively small selections, these bars have left the diehard fans much to desire.

That is, until [Taproom Madrid](#) came onto the scene.



Tucked into the up-and-coming university neighborhood of Moncloa, Taproom Madrid offers 40+ delicious craft beers on tap, from IPAs to porters, pale ales, stouts, amber ales and everything in between.

Taproom is one of those place where there's something for everyone. Not sure which beer to order? **You can do a tasting of four different cañas for 10€.** Or you can always ask the friendly and beer-savvy bartenders, who recommended me the Founders' Porter (spoiler alert: it's the stuff dreams are made of).

If you come hungry, Tierra Burrito (the work of the same owners) is right next door, and you can bring your burrito to the bar while you sip a cold one.

Beer + burritos + good music... what more can you ask for?



As if that weren't enough, if you're a soccer fan, there's an added bonus: the space's enormous projector screens always have a game on.

Although the space is gigantic by Spanish standards—with two

seating areas plus a patio—the place still gets full to the brim by 8pm. Go early (they open at 6pm) to score a seat.



Info:

- [Facebook](#)
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