

# Best Brunch on a Budget in Madrid

It's noon on a Sunday, you have just peeled off the covers and opened the blinds, and it's decision time: breakfast or lunch? Who says you have to choose? Brunch, combining the best of both meals, is a concept quickly growing in Madrid, and with multiple affordable options, you don't have to break the bank to enjoy a delicious meal!

**1. Ojalá (featured in the cover photo and rightly so)**



Located on one of Malasaña's narrow streets, you might walk right past Ojalá without realizing the hidden treasure that lies inside. At first glance, this café appears to be another one of Malasaña's trendy locales, with groovy colored light bulbs dispersed around the café, and bleacher-like seating across from the kitchen, with a clear window allowing a look inside as mouth-watering food is being prepared. Head downstairs for more seating, and you will find yourself being transported quite literally to a sandbar, with sand serving in place of carpet or wood flooring. Get comfy on the lounge

chairs and tables low to the ground, feeling warmed immediately by the heat lamps for added effect. A tikki bar completes the look at one end of the “beach.”



The extensive brunch menu offers a little something for everyone, and is all-encompassing, including a coffee or tea (taking care of caffeination needs), and the choice of juice, soda, beer or wine. No detail is overlooked, with fresh juice accompanied by a paper crafted straw served in a tasteful glass bottle.

As for the food, options include something for those looking for something on the sweeter side, with offerings of pastries and fresh fruits, or savory platters, including “World Mix”: organic cornbread with hummus, guacamole, poached egg, and a side of fruit salad and arugula lightly dressed, artfully served on a wooden plank.

It’s hard to leave the oasis that is Ojalá, but it provides the ultimate refuge for a weekend afternoon no matter the season, with outdoor seating when the weather permits.

**Facebook**

*Price for brunch menu: €8-12€*

*Where: Calle de San Andres, 1*

*Metro: Noviciado/Tribunal*

## **2. Little Big Café**



With less than 10 tables inside, the Little Big Café is a cozy spot situated in Chamberí, with chalkboards inside advertising the expansive menu offerings. You are drawn in immediately by the cakes, pies, brownies, and other assorted bakery items displayed on the counter before you have even glanced at the brunch menu. (Don't worry, the sweets are on that menu too).



This café, with the tagline “A little café with a big heart,” is just that, with friendly staff willing to spend time explaining the menu to you. Wooden benches and tables add to the neighborhood feel of the café, along with the bulletin board with Polaroid’s of the “Club VIP” of Little Big.



The brunch menu allows diners the “Menu Cerrado,” a hearty offering that includes both a savory and sweet dish, choice of beverage, a dessert (head to the counter to survey which pastries suit your fancy), and a coffee or tea. Alternatively, diners can pick and choose from sandwiches, French toast or pancakes with your choice of toppings, or the brunch classic Eggs Benedict. The Eggs Benedict don’t disappoint, with an accompanying delicate side salad, and the pancake topping selection is overwhelming, served alongside the thin “tortitas” that won’t last long on your plate.

But the real star of the show is the previously mentioned dessert. Options vary, but the carrot cake is perfection, while the chocolate frosted chocolate cake will delight chocoholics. The best thing about the vast selection of desserts: you'll have an excuse to return and try them all.

**Facebook**

*Price of brunch menu: €16.50*

*When: offered Saturdays and Sundays-11am-4:30pm*

*Where: Calle Fernández de los Ríos, 61*

*Metro: Moncloa/Islas Filipinas/Quevedo*

### **3. Martínez Bar**

For those who have given up on finding any resemblance of a bagel in Madrid, wander over to Martinez on Sundays for a gourmet Bagel Brunch at a reasonable price. Soft jazz greets you as you enter Martinez, followed by mouth-watering smells you'll find yourself hoping are coming to your table. The aesthetically simple design of Martinez has an antiquated feel reminiscent of times past, and the small tables lining the restaurant make it an ideal destination for smaller groups.





Start off with a fresh orange or grapefruit juice, and then dive into the bagel selection. Bagels are served with a variety of accompaniments, including the salmon and cream cheese, hummus, or goat cheese and marmalade. The warm, freshly toasted bagel is presented on round wooden boards, with the option of a supplemental Bloody Mary or Mimosa to complement your meal. The bagel toppings are not overpowering, and allow diners to enjoy the simplicity of the bagel below at the same time.



The brunch concludes with a coffee or tea, and one of Martinez's fresh desserts. The cheesecake, topped with a berry jam and a perfectly thick graham cracker crust is a guilty pleasure to be enjoyed slowly. Other dessert options include a brownie, carrot cake, or apple tart.



The simplicity of Martinez's Bagel Brunch is what makes it so enjoyable-minimal ingredients allow diners to enjoy fresh flavors without any unnecessary additions.

[Facebook](#)

*Price of bagel brunch: €9.90*

*When: Sundays 1pm-4:30pm*

*Where: Calle Barco, 4*

*Metro: Gran Vía*

#### **4. Carmencita Bar**

Located on an unassuming street in Malasaña, Carmencita is

anything but ordinary. Reservations are a must here, and you might even find yourself out of luck if you dare call past Thursday for the coming weekend. A popular expatriate hangout, you will hear a fair amount of English spoken here, and the restaurant offers a language exchange on Tuesday evenings starting at 9pm.



You can't mention Carmencita without talking about the 1€ mimosa. Little hair of the dog never hurt anyone! You can treat yourself to one (or two, who's counting?) without putting a dent in your wallet.



The brunch plates include Huevos Rancheros, Eggs Benedict, French Toast, and the “American Plate” complete with fried egg, sausage, bacon and hash browns. The fixed price brunch menu is generous: Eggs Benedict with your choice of salmon, avocado, or bacon, your preferred side (hash browns, potatoes, or salad), dessert of the day, coffee and mimosa.

The hollandaise sauce can be a bit excessive, but by the time you get to the hash browns you will have forgotten; these crispy potatoes are beyond compare, and a rare find in Madrid at that.



If you find yourself still having room left for a bit of dessert, you can't go wrong with the dessert of the day. The fluffy cakes are featured on the counter of this small restaurant, so you will be tempted throughout your meal. Finishing the last sips of your mimosa you might find yourself already planning your next trip to Carmencita.

**Facebook**

*Price for complete brunch menu: €14.*

*When: brunch served Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays  
12pm-4:30pm.*

*Where: Calle San Vicente Ferrer, 51*

*Metro: Noviciado*

## **La Gringa (Carmencita Bar's sister restaurant a few doors down)**

Carmencita Bar has a sister location right down the street called **La Gringa** that serves the same delicious brunch. When it's not holding brunch, it's a fun Mexican restaurant that organizes language exchanges and offers great deals on Mexican beers, cocktails, *tacos*, *burritos* and *micheladas*. Here's a sneak peak of their brunch menu, filled with a variety of burgers, egg dishes and of course, mimosas and bloody marys.



### **Facebook**

*Where: San Vicente Ferrer 57*

*When: Saturday & Sunday 12pm-4:30pm. Best to make a reservation: 679 183 399*

*Metro: Noviciado*

## 5. The Toast Café

From the hanging light bulbs encased in mason jars to the freshly squeezed orange juice served in champagne flutes, The Toast is an Instagrammer's paradise, and will satisfy your grumbling stomach too. Just one street over from the Little Big Café, The Toast is nearly always full of content diners lingering over the tasty two course brunch (coffee or tea and juice included) offered on weekends.



Start off with a generous Bloody Mary as you consult the



comprehensive brunch menu. The first plate options include pancakes, tostada, salad with light vinaigrette, or a croissant.



The fluffy pancakes don't disappoint, while the mixed greens salad is artfully topped with fresh vegetables.

The first course is just a warm-up for the second plate options: the obligatory Eggs Benedict, Huevos Rancheros, Breakfast Burrito, omelet, or salmon bagel.

The breakfast burrito is complemented with guacamole, pico de

gallo, while the filling inside surprises with potatoes.

The Toast is a popular weekend destination, so make sure to reserve a table ahead of time, so that the toughest decision will be whether to top your Eggs Benedict with salmon, avocado, or bacon!

**Facebook**

*Price for brunch: €14*

*When: brunch served Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays  
11am-5pm*

*Where: Calle Fernando El Católico, 50*

*Metro: Arguelles/Moncloa/Quevedo/Islas Filipinas*

**By Meredith Parmalee**

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## **Gourmet Experience at El Corte Inglés in Callao**

Spain's major department store, El Corte Inglés, first opened in the 1940's. Today, many of us Spaniards love El Corte Inglés as it sells virtually anything under the sun, from your laptop and underwear to your mattress and plane ticket. A little outdated indeed, one of the stores decided it was time for a facelift – a few months ago, the Corte Inglés in Callao converted the top floor into **Gourmet Experience**, a tantalizing food hall with stunning views of Madrid's Gran Vía and the emblematic Schweppes sign.



But why is it so special it? First off, we have a variety of food stalls serving anything you can think of – sushi, pizza, quesadillas, pinchos and hamburgers, etc. – all in the same space. You can also have your meal at each individual stall, or in the main dining area where the views will take your breath away. On the same floor, there's also a supermarket specializing in international gourmet products, like sauces, jams and olive oil, just to name a few.





Here's a look at all the food stalls you can find at this gourmet heaven:

## 1. HAMBURGUESA NOSTRA



**Hamburguesa Nostra** is one of the most popular stalls. Trying to ask for a burger during the weekend can be a complicated task. And we're not surprised. HN offers us a variety of more than **30 types of meat, as well as sauces and unique breads**. Yet, surprisingly enough, it's easy to order! You just have to choose the burger meat you want and customise it with your choice of bread sauce and other garnishes. Then wait for the call so you can pick it. You won't regret it ... we always end up returning.

Prices range from 9€ for a basic burger to 13€ for a gourmet burger. For 0.50€ and 1€ euro you can customize it.

## **STREET XS0**



Street XS0 serves modern and contemporary food. Chicken marinated in sweet chilli, smoked razor clams in olive oil and grilled tataki butter fish are just some of the wonderful dishes that you can enjoy in this great stand.

## **LA MAQUINA**



If you're in the mood for traditional Spanish cuisine, then go to La Maquina, where you can find delicious tapas and pinchos. Tortilla de patatas, *pincho de jamón*, cheese, and delicious *bocadillos*. We love the food but we love the prices even more. What truly stands out about La Maquina is its simplicity and good quality food.

## **CENTRAL MEXICANA**





One of our favourites is always crowded and don't get me wrong, I understand why. On the menu, we can find all types of delicious Mexican dishes, from traditional enchiladas to wonderful tacos. And let's not forget about the generous salads and nachos topped with cheese and guacamole. My favorite dishes are the chicken taco Coyoacan and the nachos with guacamole. The prices are very reasonable. You can get two tacos for 6€.

## **TSE YANG DIMSUM CLUB**



If you love sushi and Japanese cuisine in general, then TYDC is for you!

**AMORINO**



If you've got a sweet tooth, Amorino will be your parries. Here you can enjoy ice cream, sorbets, waffles and pancakes with an infinite variety of toppings. They also serve great drinks, like milk shakes and frappes. Now they also sell macaroons that are out of this world!

## **AL CUADRADO**



There can be no Gourmet space without a place for pizzas and the ones here are simply delicious. These are served “*al corte*” and “*al taglio*” as the Italians say, and the price depends on the weight. What we like the most about this pizza place is that they try to innovate, although always with a very Mediterranean touch.

## HARINA



Perfect for breakfast, lunch, dinner or an afternoon tea. Many Madrileños already know this space because it's not the only Harina. We love how they mix the minimalist touch of their decoration with the more traditional cuisine. The breads and cakes are simply delicious. Our suggestion: "empanada de bonito" (tuna empanada) and a cup of coffee.

## **JUANILLO CLUB**



A 1950's-style cocktail bar located in the heart of Madrid! Here you can enjoy traditional cocktails as the caipirinha, mojitos, bloody marries, cosmopolitans, etc., to the most avant-garde cocktails. In addition, you can accompany them with some delicious oysters. What else can you ask for?

## **ASADORES IMANOL**



Here we can find a piece of San Sebastian and its traditional “pintxos”. We’ve fallen in love with their simple and unpretentious menu. Our suggestions: For cold pintxos, go with the Iberian ham and *boqueron en vinagres* (anchovies in vinegar). For hot pintxos, go with the croquettes and *solomillo* (pork tenderloin). When it comes to tapas: We are passionate about the *tortilla española* (Spanish potato omelet) and *huevos rotos con jamón* (french fries topped with two fried eggs and ham).

Plus, the prices are more than reasonable: 2.35€ and 2.50€ for any of the pintxos. 4.90€ for desserts. The price on tapas ranges from 8 to 11 euros.

*So, what do you think? Are you going to leave Madrid without having had a gourmet experience atop El Corte Inglés?*

Where: Corte Inglés Callao. 9th floor.

Metros: Callao, Sol and Gran Vía.

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# Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars, Round 1

Madrid has **magnificent rooftop bars**, and you'll find them perched atop unexpected places. Here's round one of my favorites. What's more, all of these places are within **walking distance** from one another, so you could turn this list into a **rooftop bar crawl** if you had the whole day to spend atop buildings, watching the sky change colors. Here's a list of Madrid's best rooftop bar.





Image from Gau&Café's Facebook page

# Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars

## 1. Gau&Café: on top of a university

Considered one of [8 Hidden Gems in Madrid](#) by the Guardian newspaper, this rooftop bar truly deserves **first place** on my list. Tucked away on a side street in **Lavapiés**, Gau&Cafe rests atop one of UNED University's historic campus buildings. As you enter the university and walk up four flights of stairs, you'd never imagine that [Gau&Café](#) would be so chic, inviting and beautiful—you'd never even know it was there. The space is divided into two sections: one for drinks, and one for dinner. In the drink section, you can order a delicious **8€ hamburger**. If you're looking for a sit-down dinner, do [make a reservation](#) (the [menu](#) features lots of local, seasonal products, namely *zucchini*, *cous cous*, *eggplant* and *hummus dishes*).

**Address:** *c/ Tribulete 14, 4th floor*

**Metro:** *Lavapiés*

**Web**

**Facebook**



## 2. Casa de Granada: on top of a residential building

At home in the sky, this rooftop bar holds a special place in my heart as it will always be the first rooftop I ever went to in Madrid. **Casa de Granada** is essentially a regular **Spanish restaurant**, situated on a roof that has outdoor seating and an enclosed area. Nibble on traditional **Spanish dishes** as you look out on Madrid's short-story buildings, plazas, and terracotta-tiled roofs. You may also catch women hanging clothes out to dry and maybe even listen in on the neighbour's telephone conversation. Although **Casa de Granada** has recently renovated, it's maintained its nonchalant style which is what makes it fun. When it comes to food, you should stick to the **Spanish staples**—*croquetas*, *huevos rotos*, *pimientos de padrón*, *calamares*, you name it.

**Address:** c/ del Doctor Cortezo, 17, 6th floor

**Metro:** Tirso de Molina or Sol

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)



### **3. Mercado de San Antón: on top of a gourmet market**

This **gourmet market** is the hipper version of its uber-upscale pedestrian competitor, *Mercado de San Miguel*. In other words, **Mercado de San Antón** is infinitely cooler and more enjoyable. First of all, it's in Chueca (enough said). Secondly, it has three floors and therefore much more seating area. And then there's a stunning **rooftop bar**, perfect for people-watching! What's more, the rooftop bar's prices are reasonable; a glass of wine costs the same as at any other bar on street level. So why not pop up to the roof and have your

drink there? Sometimes they have free live music too.

***Address:*** C/ Augusto Figueroa 24, 3rd floor

***Metro:*** Chueca

***[Facebook](#)***



image from [www.azoteadelcirculo.com](http://www.azoteadelcirculo.com)

## 4. Tartan Roof: on top of **Círculo de Bellas Artes (Fine Arts Building)**

The sky is the canvas atop this fine arts institution. Overlooking the *Castellana* and *Plaza de Cibeles*, and perched on top of the exquisite *Circulo de Bellas Artes* building, it's no wonder why [Tartan Roof](#) has the most breathtaking views out of all on this list. For 3€, anyone can go up to the roof to have a look. The fee is waved if you have **dinner reservations** (an absolute must). My friend's earlier post says it all [here](#). This is also a really popular place for cocktails, though slightly expensive, you're paying for the view, not the drink itself. The first time I went to this roof was on ***Día de la Música*** (Music Day). The **Azotea** (rooftop) was participating by holding a free swing and tap dance performance. It was incredible to be up there looking out on Madrid's skyline.

**Address:** *c/ Alcalá 42*

**Metro:** *Banco de España or Sevilla*

[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

If you're looking for more, here's [Madrid's best rooftops, Round 2](#) and [Round 3](#)!

And feel free to let us know about your

favorite Madrid rooftop bars!

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## Goiko Grill, an awesome burger joint in Madrid



**Goiko Grill** is the kind of place I wish I had known about years ago. Owned and run by Venezuelans, **Goiko Grill** is a down-to-earth, young and awesome burger joint, serving, in my opinion, the **best burgers in Madrid**. Plus it has a fun vibe and good service.

And though I've never tried anything off their burger list, they're also known for their starters, especially the **nachos**

and **teques** (tequeños, a popular Venezuelan finger food, similar to mozzarella sticks) as well as for their fresh salads, sandwiches and great desserts.



Teques (image from [www.facebook.com/goikogrill](http://www.facebook.com/goikogrill))

All of Goiko Grill's burgers are made with 180 grams of top quality Spanish beef, the beloved **carne de buey** to be exact, and come with ridiculously good **homemade potato wedges**.

What's more, the [burger menu](#) has a number of mouth-watering combinations and quirky names to pull you in, such as the **Puchi** (*cheddar, bacon and grilled mushrooms*), **La Philly** (*190 grams of top quality, tender Spanish beef, topped with crunchy fried onions and cream cheese*) and the **Aloha** (*topped with a slice of grilled pineapple and cinnamon, and a slice of ham*).

With so many options, it's nice that the waiters are friendly and even speak English. Luís, the waiter who I met last time, is originally from Venezuela but lived in the U.S. for many years. He told me all about **Goiko Grill** and helped me choose



what burger to order as he saw the indecision written on my face. **Everything is good here**, he told me, so don't be afraid to try something new.



Aita burger del norte, topped with Arzua cheese and roasted red peppers

So far, my favorite two burgers are the **M-30 Goat Cheese Burger** (9.50E) and the **Aita Northern Burger** (12.50E). The **Goat Cheese burger** comes with a thick disc of savory, crumbly goat cheese, and a warm layer of sweet caramelized onions oozing over. The **Aita del Norte** burger comes with Galician **Arzúa cheese** and roasted red peppers.

The last time I went to **Goiko Grill** I went with a friend of mine, Alondra, who has a passion for guacamole. Hence, she ordered the **Chipotle** burger which came with heaps of guacamole, chipotle sauce, and cheddar cheese. She said it more than hit the spot, and that the homemade potato wedges brought back memories of her mother bringing home a bag of potatoes, chopping them up and frying them.



Chipotle Burger with cheddar cheese, chipotle sauce and guacamole (image from [www.facebook.com/goikogrill](http://www.facebook.com/goikogrill))

My husband, who's also smitten with Goiko Grill, has a slight problem—he wants to try out all the burgers but always ends up ordering his favorite: **La Pigma burger**. It comes with a fried egg, bacon, cheddar cheese and Maho Goiko sauce. Apparently, this burger is the favorite among the boys, and there's a history behind it that you'll have to ask the waiters yourself.



In addition to succulent burgers, **Goiko Grill** also has great drinks. Monday through Friday from 5pm-8pm, **Goiko Grill** has different Happy Hour deals; 2x1 on mojitos, beers, wine and other drinks depending on the day. Since it's located right across the street from **Instituto de Empresa (IE)**, Spain's most prestigious business university, the clientele is young and enjoys the casual scene.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

**Address:** c/ María de Molina, 16

**Metro:** Gregorio Marañón

**Phone:** +910 17 76 98

