

Chiringuito de El Señor Martín, top quality beach bar in Sol

The landlocked city of Madrid is supposedly home to the country's best quality fish and seafood. Why? Because Madrileños say so! Opinion aside, it's true that fresh fish from all coasts of Spain are shipped to the capital on a daily basis and one restaurant in Sol has taken full advantage: [Chirignuito de El Señor Martín](#), located on Calle Mayor.



Chiringuito means 'beach bar' in Spanish, hence the restaurant's beach-chic feel and menu featuring a variety of fish and seafood platters. During summer, this *chiringuito* gets even breezier when it opens its glass doors onto Calle Mayor and becomes one with the sidewalk. During

winter, the restaurant also expands its menu to include heartier seafood stews and rice dishes.



James and I had the pleasure of having lunch here on Wednesday. When you walk in, you see the fresh fish on display, which comes straight from [El Señor Martín](#), a high-quality fish market inside **Mercado de San Miguel** (and where the restaurant gets the other half of its name).



You can see right into the kitchen, where you'll find the tattoo-covered chef, Beltrán Alonso. He and the waiter kindly explained each menu item to us, as well as the innovative cooking techniques they use and the origin of their ingredients. So without further ado, here's what we had...



To drink, we started off with two glasses of champagne, which came with a tapa of **camarones**, baby shrimp that are caught using sustainable fishing methods.



Our first sarter was ***ensaladilla rusa***, a traditional homemade potato salad with baby shrimp and fish roe. This is on their permanent menu and it wouldn't be a real Spanish fish restaurant without it!



Our second starter was very innovative: **gambas con dos cocciones y ajo morado de las Pedroñeras**, twice-cooked shrimp with black garlic. It's important to note that the black garlic they use is the best in Spain (if not the world, according to our waiter). The flavor of the shrimp was completely distinct and absolutely delicious.



Our third starter was our favorite: ***calamares***. This is one of the most typical dishes in Andalucía and here, it's not only good quality (fresh from **El Señor Martín** market) but also prepared in extra virgin olive oil, like everything else on the menu. It was so fresh, light and satisfying. You have to get this when you go here no matter what.



For our main dish, we had **arroz meloso con corvina salvaje** (rice cooked in broth with wild sea bass), accompanied by two glasses of **albariño** (Galician white wine). I really loved this dish. The sea bass was cooked to perfection and the rice had a delicious flavor to it. I couldn't have been happier. To top it all off, we had cheesecake!



If you're in Sol and looking for some of the freshest fish in the city, as well as a mini-trip to the beach, this is your place!

Info

- [Web](#) & [Facebook](#)
 - **Address:** Calle Mayor 31
 - **Metro:** Sol
-

Marisqueria las Chalanas, Asturian Cider and Seafood in Plaza España

Despite its absence of an ocean, delicious and affordable seafood can be found in Madrid for those who seek it. My friend Jacqui brought the existence of [Marisquería las Chalanas](#) to my attention, praising it for its attentive staff and the quality of the portions. With my interest piqued, Jacqui brought myself and our companion Nanor to this location on a **Saturday night in order to nibble on sea critters and drink Asturian cider.**

We arrived early and perched ourselves at a table in the bar area and later received lingering glances from standing patrons keen to usurp it from us. For this reason **it's pivotal to arrive before the crowd**; deshelling shrimp and crabs without an adequate surface to rest the plate is an uphill battle.

The bar area offers specials where **generous *raciones* of seafood cost 5€ with 6 glasses of cider included.** We ordered two of these, the first being **1/4 kilo of cold shrimp** and the second being a dignified **king crab**, to share between the three of us.





Our alert server kept our cider glasses full and was empathetic to Jacqui's needs as a **celiac**; he was proactive and double-checked with the chef that none of our plates were exposed to gluten. In addition to these portions we also ordered **garlic prawns** and **Mussels a la marinara** off of the restaurant menu.





By the end of our meal we were indulgently full and content, all of the food pictured here cost 34€ in total. As we adjusted our coats and scarves to leave, the vultures pounced to claim our little table as their own. I recommend this establishment for celebratory occasions, [parent visits](#) or for [private rendezvous](#) for those entangled illicit trysts because the likelihood of crossing paths with anyone you know here is low.

Info

- [Facebook](#)
 - [Website](#)
 - **Metro:** Plaza de España
 - **Address:** C/San Leonardo 12
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La Pecera, Affordable Fine Dining at Círculo de Bellas Artes

Fancy a decadent meal in a regal setting that doesn't burn a hole in your wallet? We found it! El Círculo de Bellas Artes is one of Madrid's most emblematic buildings and its street-level restaurant, [La Pecera](#), serves a top-quality *menú del día* every day of the week for just €15 (€17 on the terrace). It includes a starter, main course, drink and coffee or dessert, with a variety of dishes and vegetarian options to choose from. And to top it all off, you'll be enjoying your delicious meal in a stunning dining room with beautifully painted ceilings, elegant chandeliers and excellent service.







James and I went on a Monday for the [menú del día](#) and we're still amazed that you can get such a fine dining experience for only €15 a person. I kept thinking I wished I'd [brought my parents](#) here each time they'd come to visit. Like myself, I'm sure a lot of people walk by [La Pecera](#) with its outdoor terrace and fans in the summertime, and assume it is too exclusive to go in. Wrong! Prices are similar to what you'll find at almost all nice restaurants in Madrid. But you just can't beat this magnificent setting...

Now on to the food. For starters, I had the **arroz caldoso (rice in broth) with clams and shrimp**, and James had the **pasta with sautéed vegetables and cuttlefish**. Other starters that caught my eye were the homemade salmorejo, ham croquettes, lentils and duck magret salad... good thing I just went with the waiter's recommendation or else it would've taken me ages to order.





The **arroz caldoso** is prepared in an individual pot and with a deliciously flavored seafood sauce. The portion was generous, so I was happy my main course was also fish. James' cuttlefish pasta had a surprising Asian flavor, something he loved but didn't expect given the more traditional setting.

For the main course I had the smoked salmon with vegetables in a coconut sauce, another unexpected mix of flavors.



But I must admit that James' main course took the cake: the **Carrillada Ibérica** (Iberian beef cheeks) with apple quince jelly. The meat was so tender it melted in his mouth and the sauce was so flavorful that all James could say was, "Oh, wow."



All the desserts are homemade and included in the menú del día. James had the apple pie and I had a semi-cold yogurt with a reduced Pedro Ximénez sauce. So good.





As we were leaving, I asked the waiter if there's anything else we should try. He told us we had to come back for the **breakfast menu**, which features a range of options, from the standard toast and freshly-squeezed orange juice to a full-on British-style breakfast and [American-style brunch](#).

At night, the restaurant holds live jazz concerts and its **bar offers an impressive selection of over 400 bottles of liquor**; all to please local and foreign palates at a reasonable price, within a gorgeous space that'll make any day feel like a special occasion.



So before or after your next visit to a [museum along Paseo del Prado](#), or shopping in the center or whatever brings you and yours to Madrid, you're in for a treat!





Lastly, I can't end this article without reminding you that El Círculo de Bellas Artes has one of the [city's best rooftop bars](#), called [Tartan Roof](#). Make sure to pop up to take in the view, visit its restaurant (just book ahead of time) or enjoy a cocktail.

Info

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Calle Alcalá 42
- **Metro:** Banco de España or Sevilla
- **Phone:** 677458448 / 913 605 400

You may also like:

- [Where to take your mom in Madrid](#)

- [A year of Menús del Día in Madrid](#)
 - [Madrid's best rooftop bars](#)
-

Martina Cocina: Cosy Coffee Shop in La Latina

A few years ago breakfast in Madrid rarely consisted of more than a cafe con leche in one of the more traditional tapas bars. **Nowadays the coffee shop scene has really taken off**, and it's becoming more and more common to see quirky little cafes offering brunch, iced coffees and other less traditional options.



[Martina Cocina](#) fits perfectly into this category. It's situated in the **La Latina/Tirso de Molina** area, where you can find a whole host of cute coffee shops. My friend Elefteria and I went on a Thursday morning, hoping for brunch and a good place to catch up.



The cafe is dotted with people working on their computers (**they have wifi**), reading, or having breakfast with a friend. The ambience is fairly calm and quiet, and you can choose to

sit on the communal bench in the middle of the room, or to tuck yourself away at the back on the cushioned sofa. I guess **Martina Cocina** has gone for the “shabby chic” look, with bulbs hanging from the ceiling from rope and an eclectic mix of distressed wood furnishings. The look works, and the vibe reminds me of somewhere I would find in my hometown of Brighton.



The cafe only serves brunch on Saturdays, but we still managed to have a great make-shift brunch, as the cafe has a fairly wide range of breakfast options. Each day they make a selection of different **quiches and empanadas**, and we ordered one of each as well as the more traditional pan con tomate and some yoghurt and fruit. Elefteria is a **vegetarian** and there were plenty of options for her to choose from. All of the food was good, and **we would especially recommend trying the cheese**

and onion empanada. Our waitress was really friendly and warm, which made us feel comfortable enough to sit for a while and work.



The cafe specialises in teas (they literally have a whole menu just for tea) and they also serve coffee from all over the world. I should probably also mention the **amazing looking cakes** displayed by the counter – seriously regretting not ordering one!



The cafe isn't just a breakfast spot; at night they dim the lights and serve beer and wine, making it the perfect place for a relaxed dinner with a friend. It also got pretty busy

around lunchtime, and **their menú del día is a good price, at 10,60 euros for three courses and a drink.**

In short, Martina Cocina offers great service, a comfortable setting and great homemade food in one of the most up-and-coming barrios of Madrid.

Info

- **Adress:** Plaza Cascorro 11 28005, Madrid
- **Email:** info@martinacocina.es
- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#)

Article by Laura Blaskett

Photos by Elefteria Garos

You'll also like these spots:

- [La China Mandarina, a flashy new bistro in Plaza Cascorro](#)
 - [Lamiak, Basque pintxo bar in La Latina](#)
 - [Cosy Wine Bars in La Latina \(with gluten-free options!\)](#)
 - [El Cafelito, a trendy spot for coffee lovers in Lavapiés](#)
-

Fogg Bar, Spanish Craft Beer and Artisanal Cheese in Huertas

[Madrid's craft beer scene](#) has been flourishing in recent years with several bars and vendors popping up to meet an increasing demand. [Fogg Bar](#), a new establishment situated on C/ Moratin in Huertas, stands out for **serving exclusively Spanish-made artisanal beer on tap** along with delicious cheeses.



My friend Diana and I ventured in on a quiet Tuesday night and perched ourselves at the bar. We were able to chat with the charming proprietor, Marisol, who helped us decide which beers to sample. She and her husband opened this bar in September.



They take a lot of pride in **collaborating with smaller breweries and cheese distributors**, often hosting tastings and gatherings where attendees can meet the brewers.



First I sipped #5, the Columbus Goes North, an IPA from La Quince, a brewery in Madrid. This was followed up by #6, the Sweet Milk Stout from Four Lions, a distributor in León.



I was impressed with the presentation of the tapas that accompanied each drink, as well as the **butifarra, a typical Catalan sausage**. I was quite taken by this establishment and recommend it to all craft beer aficionados looking to taste Spanish-made beers.

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- [Website](#)
- **Address:** C/Moratin 5
- **Metro:** Anton Martin

For more on Madrid craft beer, check out:

- [Beer State of Mind in Madrid](#)
 - [Heightened Beer State of Mind in Madrid](#)
 - [La Buena Cerveza, all things beer in Madrid](#)
-

Toque de Sal Chamberí Restaurant: So chic and so good

Going out to eat or drink on Calle Ponzano, the street with the highest concentration of bars in Madrid, is such an art that it has its own verb, *ponzaning*. It's one of the best parts about living in Chamberí, with so many of the city's best new places all in one place. One of the newest to come on the scene is [Toque de Sal](#), which I learned about from the [Madrid Confidential](#) newsletter, naming it one of five new places to try this fall.



It had been on my bucket list all season, but then school got in my way. And finally, my friend and I were able to squeeze

in (on a Friday night without a reservation) to finally get to try it. When you go inside you feel as if you're in a chic restaurant in Paris, with beautiful tiled floors, dark wood, and a wonderfully lit bar. The front was absolutely full of people, which was to be expected because it's the weekend and this is Ponzano. The dining area in the back is small and intimate, but you have tables to sit for two and larger tables that are more elevated (perfect for a fun dinner with your *cuadrilla* of friends).



Toque de Sal - CHAMBERÍ -

ENTRANTES

Gazpacho	7,5 €
Crema del Día	8 €
Croquetas Caseras (4 uds.)	7 €
Jamón Ibérico de Bellota con Pan con Tomate	17 €
Mortadela Italiana con Aceite de Trufa y Grisines	8 €
Chupa Chups de Codorniz con Salsa Pekín	10 €
Mejillones a la Belga con Patatas Fritas	12 €
Poie Gras de Canard Mi-Cuit Casero	13 €
Tabla de Quesos al Corte	14 €
Huevos al Nido	9 €
Fetuccini Negro con Carabinero	16 €
Berenjenas a la Parmesana	8 €

ENSALADAS

Ensalada de Perdiz en Escabeche	14 €
Ensalada de Tomate, Quinoa y Ventresca	12 €
Ensalada de Espinacas y Queso de Cabra	9 €
Ensalada de Pollo Trufado	10 €

CARNES

Steak Tartar	13 €
Solomillo a la Mostaza o Plancha *	17 €
Hamburguesa Toque de Sal *	13 €
Rabo de Toro *	15 €
Albóndigas Riad Abracadabra *	14 €

PESCADOS

Cremoso de Salmón y Aguacate	13 €
Lubina a la Plancha con Verduritas	14 €
Ceviche de Corvina	14 €

POSTRES

Vaca Lechera	6 €
Mousse de Chocolate al Toque de Sal	6 €
Tarta del Día	6 €
Helados: Chocolate, Vainilla o Turrón	5 €
Tarta de Manzana	6 €
Fruta del Día	5 €

MAS SIDES *

Patatas Fritas, Verduritas, Puré de Patata, Chalotas Glaseadas, Ensalada Verde, Arroz Salteado	2,5 €
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10% IVA incl. - Pan y Cubierto 1 € - Visa, MasterCard, AMEX

Your place setting is equally elegant, with a menu in a gold leather cover:



...and personalized plates. The golden touches, from the silverware, the placemats, and the menu covers were analogous

to the gold standard service we received. Our waitress was incredibly warm and attentive, and it was fitting with how precious and inviting the space is inside.

And now, the food. Was absolutely to die for. My friend chose the **grilled sea bass** that came with vegetables:



...and I first had the *crema del día* (which was mushroom when we went), and then, I had something I hadn't had in a very long time: *rabo de toro*, or oxtail.



It was absolutely perfect: the meat fell right off the bone, and the sauce gave me the same warm feeling that I get when my father gets inspired to make *boeuf bourguignon* in his trusty crockpot. It was ideal for a cool fall night, and I'll definitely be back to have this again and again and again.



If that gem of an Instagram close-up didn't convince you enough, it's evident in this shot that I was ready to dig in, and believe me, I enjoyed every single minute of it.

A girl's night wouldn't be complete without dessert, and since I really shouldn't be eating sugar and I wanted to give myself a *capricho*, I decided to try the ***tarta de manzana***. There was more apple than crust, which for me was exactly what I wanted, and I couldn't get enough. For someone who doesn't like heavy

desserts I found something that would be worth doing an hour's worth of cardio the next day for.



As for my friend, she got the **chocolate coulant**, which is her personal favorite desert of all time.



If the picture doesn't convince you, take her word for it: it had a *muy buena pinta* and it was absolutely wonderful.

[Toque de Sal](#) definitely lived up to the hype, bringing a touch of chic to Ponzano, and I've found my new favorite neighborhood joint that I will inevitably now bring all of my friends to. It's also a perfect way to enjoy *ponzaning* while having a great sit-down dining experience, whether with friends, a birthday, or maybe a dinner date.

Info

Toque de Sal Chamberí

[Facebook](#)

Address: Calle de Ponzano, 46

Tel.: 914 26 64 65

Metro: Alonso Cano (Line 7)

La Latina's 'seafood party' in Mercado de La Cebada: The place to see and be seen!

Mercados are the heart and soul of any Spanish city. If you want to get under the skin of the place you're visiting, make a beeline for the city's biggest food market. Wander around each section (meat, vegetables, fish, etc.) and you will instantly see what the region's all about. Then make your way to the *mercado's* busiest bar, order what everyone else is drinking and demand your rightful complimentary *tapa*. If it's

something you've never clapped eyes on, even better.



La Latina's [Mercado de la Cebada](#) is no exception. The place encapsulates Spanish culture to almost cliché levels: **the heart and soul of Madrid is right here.**



Every weekday, [Mercado de la Cebada](#) will sell you fresh produce from all over Spain. There's also a good selection of local bars in the labyrinth of alleys both upstairs and downstairs, and even a few clothes stalls, toyshops and cobblers for some of the market's more devout punters.



But then, every Saturday at lunchtime, [Mercado de la Cebada](#) transforms into what I will describe as nothing less than a **seafood party**.





The atmosphere is electric; iced molluscs and pulpo are flowing, and groups of friends doing what they do best:

sharing food and belly-laughing, plastic cup of valdepeñas in one hand, half-eaten shrimp in the other.





Grab a few friends and get there **no later than 2:30pm**. Find one of the aproned chaps hovering in front of his stall, affectionately touching everyone with his fishy hands, and place your order per *ración* or by weight.



Before you take your polystyrene plates to the nearest paper-covered stack of crates, don't forget to pick up your **complimentary bottle of wine or cans of beer. Yeah... COMPLIMENTARY!** Due to licensing rules, these shops can't sell drinks. I imagine there's a slight markup on the prices of seafood but, having said that, **the prices are some of the lowest I've seen in Madrid, and the quality is some of the best.**

There are cups, serviettes, toothpicks and mussel 'spives' (spoon-knives) strategically strewn around the stalls – a seafood spectacular with no frills, and all the better for it.

Info

[Web](#) – [Facebook](#)

Address: Plaza de la Cebada, La Latina, 28005

Metro: La Latina (right outside)

Opening hours: Mon – Fri 9am-2pm / 5-8:30pm; Sat 9am-3pm

Another soulful neighbourhood market, not too far away, is [Mercado de San Fernando in Lavapiés](#)

A Year of Menus Del Día in Madrid

Tapas get all the fame in Spain. Drinking wine, nibbling chorizo, sharing little bites late into the night—the tapa is romantic. Never mind that the definition is slippery and the quality unpredictable, or that an evening of tapa-hopping can cost you more in the end than sitting down for a proper meal.

But I'd like to take a moment to celebrate a lesser-known Spanish food tradition, one that's equally praiseworthy but seldom mentioned: the *menu del día*. These three magic words will get you a three-course meal, with bread and wine included, at an incredible fixed price.

Beginning as a government-mandated measure during the Franco years, this practical lunch tradition was designed to provide affordable meals to day laborers during the workweek. While no longer required by law, restaurants have carried the tradition

full-force into the 21st Century, with even high-end establishments kneeling down to offer those of us on tighter budgets delicious lunches at bargain prices. **It's not as sexy or unique as the tapa, but the *menu del día* forms an integral part of the Spanish food culture and is perhaps one of Spain's best-kept secrets.**



The Club.

Over the last year some friends and I decided to take advantage of the *menus* around Madrid. I wouldn't call us a club (ignore that I just did) but rather a shifting group of buddies hanging out over a different meal every Friday. We would fluctuate between two and ten people, though it was always anchored by a couple die-hard members, myself included.

I recommend that anyone with the opportunity start their own tradition as well. It's a great way to try new food, see new corners of the city, and hang out with all the other no-goodnik three-day weekenders over something other than a bar stool.

We had only four rules. All menus had to be:

1. In one of the central barrios.
2. Less than 15 euros per person.
3. Good quality food.
4. Good quality people.

The Rankings.

This list is limited to our *menu del día* meet-ups over the past calendar year. I included both food and atmosphere in my decisions, though the process was by no means meticulous; I'm going off little more than my general impressions of each place. I also recognize this list skews toward trendy restaurants, which is partly because we liked to use the meet-up as an opportunity to get into otherwise busy spots (Friday lunch was normally little hassle), but also as a much-needed break from the every-day Spanish fare. It's worth noting that sometimes little Spanish joints in the outer barrios do the best *menus* of all!

1. Bacira (Chamberí, 14 euros)



It's pretty astounding that a restaurant with a waitlist of more than a month offers a 14-euro fixed-price meal. If that's not a testament to the spirit of the *menú del día*, I don't know what is. Make a reservation, wait it out, and go here. The food is a fresh take on the Mediterranean-Asian fusion that's the rage in Spain these days (thanks, David Muñoz) and the dining room is bright and welcoming with all the touchstones of modern aesthetics (dangling bulbs, faded wood, dark blues and whites) without feeling hackneyed. The food is fresh, creative and delicious. We felt like sexy young business people at English teacher prices.

2. Gabriel. (Conde Duque, 14 euros)



You know you've chosen your restaurant well when you find yourself eating next to Javier Bardem. The rich and famous have good taste, much better than Joe Nobodies like us, but this place stands on its own. The cuisine consists of modern takes on Spanish classics though there are the occasional Asian influences (again, all the rage), and the desserts are incredible. It also has the nicest bathroom in Madrid—shit's straight out of a William Sonoma catalog. Atmosphere is cozy, intimate, and occasionally Bardem-ridden.

3. [Momo](#) (Chueca, 11.50 euros)

Unlike other restaurants that include maybe two or three options for a first and second course, Momo offers the entire menu for the *menu del día*. The food is delicious and varied (again, some Mediterranean-Asian fusion going on—I'm spotting

a trend). The dishes can sometimes be a bit sauce-heavy (or maybe my tastes are becoming more Spanish) but choose wisely and you'll love your meal. This is one of my go-to *menus del día* when I have visitors because of the wide selection. They also have a menu de noche for a reasonable 18 euros (same as the day menu), but if you're going to be in the area for a reasonably-priced dinner, I'd suggest **Baco y Beto**.

4. Badila (Lavapiés, 13.50 euros)



This restaurant is intimate and classic (the chef himself sometimes takes the orders) with faded white wood walls and a chalkboard listing the daily specials. The food is classic Spanish with a touch of 'lo moderno,' and everything is fresh and seasonal. It's still the best *crema de verduras* I've had in Madrid (had seasonal squash with a couple slices of intense

chorizo), which says a lot in a city obsessed with creaming vegetables. Here's a [previous post on Badila](#).

5. La casa dei Pazzi (chueca, 11.50 euros)



Casa dei Pazzi

Just to switch things up here, let's focus on quantity. Casa dei Pazzi offers a substantial salad as a starter and then a whole Italian-style pizza for your main course. There's also wine, bread and dessert. You'll wonder how you got away with paying only 11 euros, half-expecting to look over your shoulder as you leave and see an angry Italian chef charging after you with a pizza paddle.

6. Los Chuchis (Lavapies, 11 euros)



Maybe the most charming atmosphere in the list, it feels a bit like an old diner, with a few tables around a large bar and counter in the middle, the hustle and bustle of the waiters running around and the steady chatter of regulars. The food's great too. We showed up at 1:30 and it was fine, but it filled up quickly. Check out our [previous post on Los Chuchis](#).

7. Bar Galleta (Malasaña, 11.50 euros)



This trendy restaurant in Malasaña has a similar feel to Maricastaña (see below), with both doing modern takes on classic spanish food, though Galleta's menu skews a bit more French. They're also on the same street, so if you don't like the look of one *menu*, try the other. I prefer the atmosphere here though—the warm gold lighting, the wide French doors to the street, the wood and brick interior with wild flowers in vases around the restaurant. When we went the food was classic Spanish but good (crema starter, *entrecot*, a fruit desert) but *the menu del día* seems to change frequently and dramatically, so you can probably catch it on a great day.

8. Maricastaña (Malasaña, 11.50 euros)



The food is classic *menu del día* –your typical *crema de*

verduras starter (or hummus or a salad) with a protein-focused second (*lomo, entrecot, meluza*)—but what they do, they do well. It has a bit of that same late-2000s trendy look to it—exposed brick, sanded wood shelves, dangling lightbulbs and fading white paint—but they manage to pull it off. Galleta wins by a hair, but they’re both nice dining experiences.

9. La Candelita (Alonso Martinez, 12 euros)



We all enjoyed this place. They describe their cuisine as “Latin Criollo” (though it leaned more Spanish than Latin American) with a warm Latin-inspired atmosphere. They publish examples of their *menú del día* right on the website <http://lacandelita.es/carta/menu-del-dia/> so you don’t have to take my word for it!

10. TukTuk (Chamberí or Chueca, 10.50 euros)



TukTuk doesn't even need mentioning on an English-language Madrid blog. They do a nice variety of Southeast Asian dishes and have great quantity and quality menu for the price, so it's always a popular suggestion in the expat community. If you've lived here for over a year, you've definitely heard the typical "let's all go TuckTak! Takatuk! TACKATAKATUKKA!" They're pronouncing it wrong, though—it's "tuktuk." Read our [full post on Tuk Tuk](#).

11. La Tragantúa (Huertas, 12 euros)



(photo credit Carlos Olmo Minube.com)

This place was consistently called the best menú del día in Madrid on TripAdvisor last year, and it might still have that reputation, but the second time I went, the quality and presentation seemed to have slipped. Who knows, it may have been an off day. I don't know how you would characterize their food—it's a bit of a Spanish-and-everything fusion. I would sum it up as "rich." Be careful to mix up the starter and second course, otherwise you'll be like "why'd I order fried cheese in blueberry sauce as an appetizer for pesto-smothered pork?"

12. My Veg (Malasaña, 15 euros)



I bumped My Veg down a couple notches because they didn't include a drink with the *menu del día*, which is an insult to the very tradition! The final cost was closer to 18 euros, making it the most expensive *menu* we had all year. In terms of quality, it would be closer to the top. All the food was market fresh (they pride themselves on "tomatoes that taste like tomatoes") and the presentation modern and meticulous. It's a much fancier place than the outside suggests. Just ignore the terrible name.

13. El Apartamento (Huertas, 12 euros)



I came here after a particularly intense bike ride and without showering, so my memory is one of me hunching over my plate apologetically avoiding eye contact with all the well-dressed businessmen eating around us. The food was delicious though, Spanish food with a modern twist. I managed to take this blurry photo before losing all control and smashing my face into my plate in a black-out feeding frenzy.

14. Siam (Conde Duque, 11.61 euros)

I'm a sucker for Thai food and this place does a decent job for the (oddly specific) price. They include tom yum soup or pad thai as a starter, then a stirfry or curry as a second. The atmosphere is a bit odd, it feels a bit like a theme restaurant. While we're on the topic of thai food, I actually prefer the menú del día at **Maiia Thai (Plaza de España)**, though it doesn't rotate much, and sometimes the new **BambuBox (Chueca)** has Tom Kha as a starter, which is nice. I

haven't included either of those on the list because they weren't done as a menu with the group. Also: **Krachai (Alonso Martinez)** has very high quality food and some Michelin nods, though the menu is expensive, doesn't include soup, and doesn't rotate much.

15. Taberna DNorte (Sol, 10 euros)



So this place has a surprisingly nice interior and the food wasn't bad (a decent-sized burger, a pisto starter for me, someone got a salad) but it's located in an exceptionally ugly plaza between Sol and Gran Vía and attached to a drab little hotel. It's the kind of place you'd expect to see a man in a disheveled suit drinking a mid-morning cocktail and nervously waiting to meet his mistress.

16. Vietnam 24 (Chueca, 11 euros)



The menu food isn't bad, but it's not particularly noteworthy. We all had some type of chicken or beef stir-fry but they seemed to lack those bright fundamental vietnamese tastes (mint, lime, basil). I also would've liked to see pho as a menu option, but that's wishful thinking. I prefer **La Petit Hanoi** in malasaña.

17. El b_US (Sol, 10 euros)



Everyone else loved this place (including TripAdvisor, where it has some pretty outstanding rankings). It has a unique design concept I guess, but I was not blown away by the food. I also have no idea how we're supposed to pronounce it. "El bus?" "El beh- OOS?" I end up saying it like I'm hesitant to recommend it, which I guess I am: "El b'us."

18. Vivares (chueca, 9.90 euro / 12 euros veg option)



This restaurant is popular for lunch in Chueca, but I can't figure out why, exactly. We experienced so-so food in a chaotic environment, nothing extraordinary, and the menu felt a bit too long for them to focus on any type of seasonal speciality. My strongest memory is that it was too loud. "Alright, gramps" you're probably thinking, but the sensation was like being in an adult Chuck-E-Cheese without any of the cool robot puppets.

19. La Mucca (Malasaña, 10 euros)



I enjoy La Mucca for dinner. They have a good boletus pizza and some quality appetizers, and it's lively and fun in the evening. For lunch, this place disappointed. It was the first *menu del día* where someone had to set aside a dish—a greasy open-faced sandwich with an odd flavor. We were also sitting on the slanting terraza with the harsh mid-afternoon February sunlight blinding our eyes and giving the greasy *Tosta* an even more washed-out, dreary look. The highlight was this salad, but even that can be made easily at home for much cheaper. We sat there dreaming of all the better places on this list, knowing that next week was a fresh start.

Final Thoughts:

You might have noticed almost none of these get awful reviews, but that's simply because none of these places were awful. Maybe it's a testament to our rigorous selection process, or maybe we just enjoyed ourselves everywhere. If a place were awful, I would have said so.

I think of Homer the food critic: "I'm giving this my worst review ever: seven thumbs up."

I have more recommendations for *menús* around Madrid that were not included in this list because we did not go there in our Friday group. I had to set a limit for the list somewhere. **Please add your suggestions below or on Facebook and we can compile another post.**

Gallery

(all photos were snapped on scene with an iPhone, unless otherwise indicated)



Asian-fusion ceviche at Bacira



Duck confit at Gabriel



Bacira dessert



Stew as the main course at Bacira



Bacira appetizer



Vivares Salad



Vietnam 24



Del Norte



Casa dei Pazzi



Badila



Badila crema de calabacín



TukTuk



El Apartamento



La Candelita



Bar Galleta



Bar Galleta



Bar Galleta crema



Bar Galleta



Greek salad starter at La Mucca, Malasaña



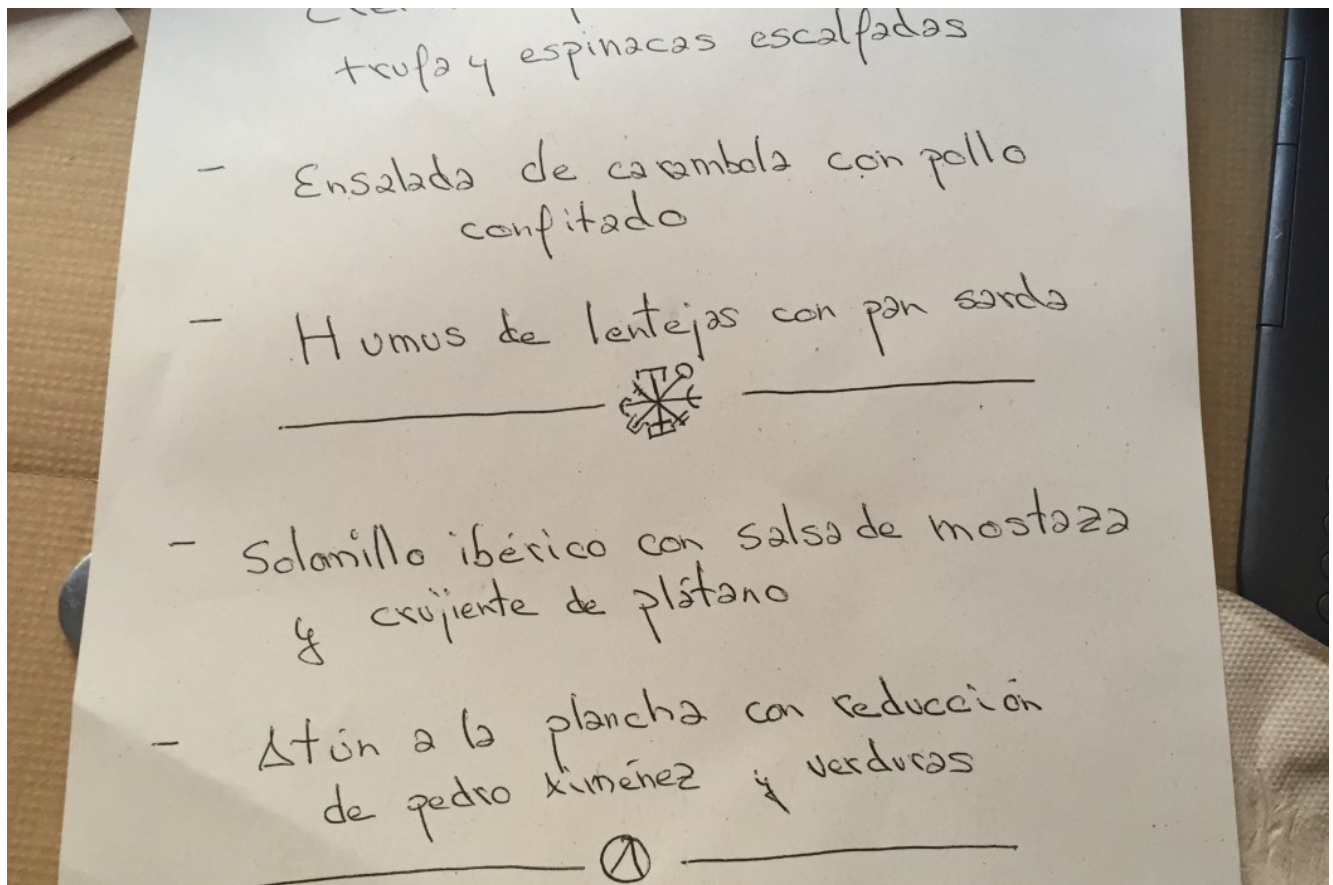
Gabriel



Gabriel crema



Gabriel Menú



Maricastaña



Gabriel dessert



Gabriel dessert



Maricastaña

La Barraca, an upscale Valencian restaurant in downtown Madrid

It is easy to be skeptical about the quality of the seafood in Madrid due to its severe lack of an ocean; I would write off most locations that serve paella as tourist traps while advising visitors to seek out their paella in Valencia or elsewhere. However, after sampling the *arroz negro* at [La Barraca](#) I am more optimistic about the state of paella affairs in Madrid and strongly recommend this stellar location.



My first time visiting Madrid was in August of 2008. This excursion with my grandmother, “Safta” Lucy, was a present for my acceptance to college. At that time I never would have fathomed that shortly after finishing my undergraduate degree I would go on to call Madrid my home. Back then I was not nearly as adventurous of an eater as I am now – I have **vergüenza** that I had an aversion to seafood when Safta Lucy originally brought me to [La Barraca](#), an upscale location in Madrid devoted to seafood and rice dishes.

In the present day, 7 years later, Safta Lucy and her friend Semita were passing through Madrid together as a stop on their journey between Mexico and Israel. Lucy made a reservation for us once again at [La Barraca](#), which my stomach now had the refined maturity to appreciate. The walls of this establishment are decorated with **tasteful ceramic art** as well as photos of the **famous clientele**.



Our starters consisted of ***gambas al ajillo***, ***gallos a la madrileña***, and ***mejillones rellenas***. Garlic prawns are my favorite ***marisco*** and I jump at any opportunity to eat them during visits to coastal cities. The ***gallos*** were hearty and filling while the ***mussels*** were both meaty and delicate in texture.





For the main course we shared **arroz negro**, a paella dish served with squids with the rice blackened by their ink. The ink is a delicacy that contributes positively to the flavor and texture of the rice.



And of course dessert, a **cheesecake** to end on a sweet note.



Info

[Website](#)

Address: Calle de la Reina

Phone: 915 32 71 54

Reservations advised.

You'll also like:

- [La Maruca, a swanky Cantabrian restaurant in Barrio Salamanca](#)

Lambuzo, a family-run Andalusian restaurant in the heart of Madrid

- Cozy wine bars in La Latina (with gluten free options!)

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

▪ **Phone:** 915 02 41 82