

Café Viralata – craft beer, delicious sandwiches, and live music

Jay (Dominican) and Selvi (Italian) are a music-loving couple who decided to put their passion for art and craft beer to good use: in June 2018, they opened Café Viralata in Lavapiés.

While it may be a new bar (with killer decor), it has nothing to do with the wave of pricey hipster joints that has flooded the neighborhood in recent years. No, señor, this place has some very simple *raison d'être*: **good music, good food, and good vibes** at more-than-reasonable prices.

The facade piques the interest of passersby with some sassy paintings of doggos (thanks to [@ramon_amoros_ilustrador](#)) and a blackboard announcing the bar's upcoming events (more on that later).



Once inside, we start with what's important: beer! You've got everything from your classic **Estrella Galicia** to impressive **local IPAs**. They've been working closely with the local brewer community, specifically the guys at Abeerzing, to learn more about "el mundo cervecero." So the beer list is constantly growing and changing.

Café Viralata is also the first bar in Madrid to serve Beertag, a brand new beer from La Rioja brewed by Slezia Albino, one of Jay's oldest friends in Madrid from film school.



As for wine, they of course offer Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Verdejo, and Albariño, but they also recommend wines from Madrid, Alicante, Catalunya, Portugal, and Italy, and **their “tinto de verano” is actually made with an Australian wine.** As Jay says, if you’re a purist, you’ve really gotta keep an open mind here.

Once you’ve got your drink, you’ll probably want something to snack on (if you give a mouse a cookie...). Café Viralata goes way beyond your typical tortilla and olives.

Get started with appetizers like the hummus plate and the avocado toast, and if you're looking for something more substantial, go for one of their sandwiches, **which are made with love on fresh sourdough bread** from the folks at bakery [Madre Hizo Pan](#).

A house favorite is "La Piernotta," a Dominican-Italian version of the typical Dominican "*sandwich de pierna*" with *porchetta* (Italian, roasted, oven-baked pork) with smoked *scamorza* cheese, green peppers, and red onions.

And yes, **they also have fabulous vegetarian and vegan options.**

Lastly, if you have a sweet tooth like me, you can't leave without trying the homemade tiramisu, lovingly crafted by [@lacucinadicarlo](#) (who also provide their pastrami).





Once you've got your food and drink sorted, head to the back of the bar to check out what makes this place truly special: an intimate venue, complete with a piano (that Selvi's mom sent them from Italy!), guitars, a projector, two rows of chairs (I said intimate!), and lots of vinyl records to thumb through.

This space offers anything from **live acoustic concerts** to independent film screenings, theater, micro-theater, poetry readings, spoken word, stand-up comedy, magic shows...



It just doesn't get much better than that.

Oh, and if you're wondering what "viralata" means, this is what Jay had to say about it:

In the Dominican Republic, and also in Portuguese-speaking countries such as Brazil, a 'VIRALATA' is what a stray dog and/or any animal or person of mixed race is called. 'VIRAR' means 'TO TURN' and 'LATA' means 'CAN', a reference to the way that strays 'turn cans' while searching for food; in our café, though, we're strippin' away any negative aspect that surviving and struggling through life may have in our modern society. The struggle is real and it makes us better people! So turn cans, dear viralatas, turn those freakin' cans!

Me apunto.

PS: Stay tuned for Café Viralata's grand opening party...

Info

- [Instagram](#) & [Facebook](#)
 - **Address:** Calle Olivar, 17
 - **Metro:** Tirso de Molina, Antón Martín, or Lavapiés
 - **Phone:** +34 912 96 88 26
-

Creative & colorful cuisine at Cachivache

[Cachivache](#) (say that five times fast!) is one of several restaurants run by Javier Aparicio, and the most casual of them all.

While its location could be deceiving—the nearest metros are Colombia and Concha Espina—the area holds an up-and-coming **cluster of culinary surprises**. The neighborhood boasts some hidden jewels, both Spanish and international.

Once inside, the colorful and modern decor made us feel right at home. Black and white checkered floors and industrial hanging lanterns dominate the space, marrying vintage details with a more contemporary vibe.



One of the first things I noticed (and appreciated) about the restaurant was **how diverse the staff is**. I also learned that nearly the whole team is the same it's been since day one; low turnover is always a good sign, no matter the industry.

We took our seats and were immediately greeted by a smiley server who wasted no time getting right down to business—the wine list (they have their priorities straight at this place). We went with a dry white wine that paired well with pretty much everything we ordered.

After studying the short yet complete food menu—and letting the knowledgeable servers give us recommendations—we started with some tasty appetizers: hummus with cilantro, pistachio, and Syrian couscous; the *coca* with zucchini, bacon, and *tetilla* cheese; and the classic *patatas bravas*.



The cuisine at Cachivache is a perfect balance: it's fresh, it's high-quality, and the dishes are recognizable (no *trompe l'oeil* here) **but with creative twists**. Case in point, our main entrees were the fried egg with truffle and parmesan (to die for) and the cannelloni with wild asparagus, fresh mozzarella, and Idiazábal, a mouthwatering cheese from the Basque country.

My lunch date also tried the curried beef and can vouch for its deliciousness.





We rounded off our meal with the house *torrija* (sort of like French toast) with ice cream made with *leche merengada*. Let's just say I'd come back to Cachivache just for this dessert.



All in all, my experience at Cachivache was something I won't soon forget. The prices admittedly exceed my normal budget, but for a special night out it's worth a splurge. **Don't forget to make a reservation**—I went on a weekday and it still filled up.

Here's some more Cachivache #foodporn in case you weren't sold already.





Info:

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- Address: Calle Serrano, 221
- Metro: Concha Espina or Colombia
- Phone: 917 52 41 76

Context Tavernas and Tapas, a culinary tour through the bars of Huertas

If you've done any traveling lately, you might have noticed that **food tours are rapidly becoming a global trend**. Companies around the world now offer guided visits to restaurants, bars, and markets, promising to let you in on culinary secrets or

show you how to eat like a local. Madrid is no exception. In fact, this city has more than its share of options, thanks to its vibrant dining scene and world-famous cuisine.

I recently had the chance to participate in a food tour for the very first time, thanks to [Context Travel](#). The company offers “**tours for the intellectually curious**” in cities across the world, including several in the Spanish capital. Many are focused on history or art, but this one was especially intriguing: [Savoring Madrid: Tavernas and Tapas](#).

According to the Context website, the goal of this culinary tour is to define the concept of tapas through tastings at *tavernas* in the city center. Like all of their [Madrid tours](#), it’s meant to offer an in-depth look at local culture, customs, and in this case, cuisine. But considering the dozens of bars, restaurants, and specialty dishes that are scattered throughout the city, how could it be possible to cover such a broad topic in just 3 hours? That’s what I intended to find out.



Intricate mosaics decorate the exterior of one of the many historic bars in Huertas.

Hungry for history

The tour began at 7pm outside the Westin Palace hotel, close to many of Madrid's main tourist attractions. Context limits the size of their tours to create a personalized experience—this one consisted only of me and a couple who were on vacation.

Our guide was Tessy Carrada, a culinary journalist of Mexican origin who moved to Madrid a few years ago. She started off by explaining the basics, with the help of maps and diagrams: **what are tapas, where did they come from, and how are they eaten?** What makes Spain's cuisine unique? What can you expect when you go out for tapas in Madrid?

Next she told us how the tour would work. We'd visit three or

four places, all in the Huertas neighborhood (also known as [Barrio de las Letras](#)). The idea was to show us non-touristy spots, the kinds of places locals go, where we'd get a **true taste of the local culture**. At each place, she would order a few tapas to share, taking into account our preferences, interests, and appetites. With the ground rules laid out, we set off into the city.

Cervecería Cervantes



First up was a true classic, a place that was packed with customers even at the early hour of 7:30pm. We ordered drinks, and Tessy explained the particularities of Spanish brewing as we admired the collection of beer cans displayed on the restaurant's walls. The waiter brought out a plate of giant olives and mussels, exemplifying the tradition of providing something to snack on along with every drink.





Tessy then ordered several *raciones* to share: **ham croquetas with padrón peppers, manchego cheese, and jamón ibérico.** As we ate, she offered insight on each and every item: how to make *croquetas*, what makes Spanish ham so special, and how to distinguish true *manchego* from imitations.



I've lived in Spain for a while, and I've eaten (more than) my share of all of these classic tapas, but I'm not exaggerating when I say this might've been the best ham and cheese of my life. It took a lot of self-discipline to restrain myself and save room for the next destination...

La Fábrica



As soon as we entered this colorful, crowded locale we were welcomed with the sights and smells of seafood. We gathered around an old barrel-turned-table and ordered **albariño** wine to accompany the **salpicón** (a kind of seafood salad) and **boquerones** (marinated anchovies) that Tessy suggested. I was quickly reminded of one of the most pleasant discoveries I've made in Madrid: despite my preconceived notions about slimy, stinky seafood, here it's a true delicacy.



The *salpicón* consisted of shrimp, mussels, and octopus swimming in olive oil with tomatoes, peppers, and onions. It was fresh, light, and incredibly delicious. A loaf of crusty bread was brought to the table, and Tessy encouraged us to break off pieces and soak them in the flavorful oil.



The *boquerones* were perfectly seasoned and accompanied by olives and crispy potato chips. We were also served a small plate of cheese and chorizo—but it couldn't compete with the perfection we'd already experienced at Cervantes. The star here was most certainly the seafood.

La Vinoteca

Although we attempted to find a spot at the renowned Casa Alberto, at 9pm on a Saturday night it proved difficult. Instead we went to La Vinoteca, which had a much more **modern and upscale atmosphere** than the previous bars. We ordered wine and cava from an impressively long and detailed list.



To round out the night, Tessy ordered **patatas bravas** (fried potatoes smothered in slightly spicy sauce) and two **pinchos** (small toasts): one topped with spinach, goat cheese, and caramelized onions, and another with potato cake and duck magret.

Although the ambience here was lovely and the wine exceptional, I have to admit that the tapas weren't quite as impressive as their successors. That being said, they were still delicious, and certainly provided a well-rounded sampling of some of Spain's most famous specialties.



For the last course of the evening, Tessy chose a **layered trifle of chocolate and cream**, as well as a sort of **mini apple pie** topped with vanilla ice cream. Although these were pretty standard sweets that didn't exactly scream "Spain," it's hard to complain when there's chocolate involved. After devouring dessert, we parted ways for the night with full bellies, satisfied palates, and a whole lot of newfound knowledge.

An interesting aftertaste

For me the best part of this tour, surprisingly, was not the food itself (although of course it was incredible). As a resident of Madrid, I can get authentic tapas whenever I want, on nearly every street corner. What this experience offered me was the chance to engage with the food I was eating on an intellectual level: to learn why tapas are called tapas, what distinguishes *jamón ibérico* from *jamón serrano*, and so much

more. **It was a lesson in being conscious of what I eat and the history and culture it reflects.**

For travelers who only have a few days to sample the best of local cuisine, who don't speak Spanish, or who simply don't know where to begin, Context provides an ideal solution. **Tessy's insider knowledge and impeccable taste made for an interesting, entertaining, and thoroughly authentic journey through the taverns of Huertas.**

Whether you're a tourist who wants to experience the tapas culture firsthand, or a seasoned local who wants to learn more about the city you love, you'll find what you're looking for in the Context Tavernas and Tapas tour.

To learn more about Context or book a tour, click [here](#).

Take a Peek Inside 5 Historical Madrid Bars

Madrid is full of amazing bars that have played a role in Spanish history. Whether it's art, literature, or the Spanish Civil War, these bars hold some sort of significance to Spain's past and are definitely worth the visit.

Here's a sneak peek into the stories behind our favorite historical Madrid bars.

[Fatigas del Querer](#)



Located in Sol is a restaurant with an exterior as beautiful as its interior dating back to the 1920s. This restaurant will grab your attention with its beautiful Andalusian tiles dedicated to Spanish painter Julio Romero de Torres. Even one of his paintings is depicted on these beautifully detailed tiles.



Typical free Spanish tapa

Not only is this bar related to historical Spanish art, but it also has an impressively large menu of Spanish dishes such as **setas empanadas con alioli**. These fried mushrooms with alioli sauce would go great with one of the many **vermuts** that [Fatigas del Querer](#) has to offer.

- **Address:** Calle de la Cruz, 17
- **Metro:** Sol
- **Phone:** +34 915 23 21 31

[La Casa del Abuelo](#)



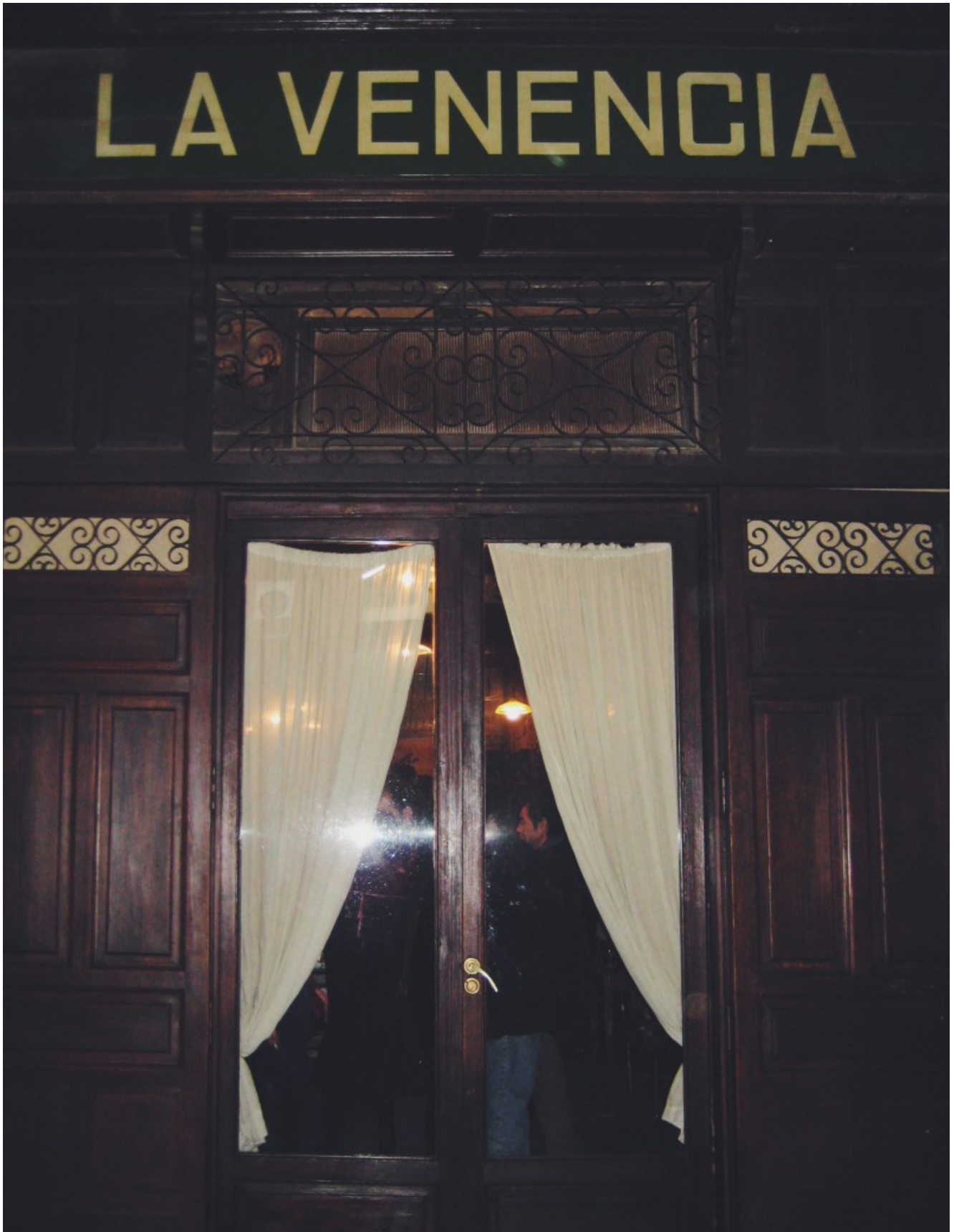
Just by the name alone, it's clear that this bar has stood the test of time and still remains a [Madrid classic](#).



Established in 1906, [La Casa del Abuelo](#) has seen Spain at the best of times and the worst of times, including the Spanish Civil War. During this time, La Casa del Abuelo only served garlic or grilled shrimp paired with a Spanish sweet wine due to the food shortage. Since then, this bar's ***gambas al ajillo*** and ***gambas a la plancha*** have become a delicious specialty.

- [Web](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Calle de la Victoria, 12
- **Metro:** Sol
- **Phone:** +34 910 00 01 33

[La Venencia](#)



[Source](#)

During the height of the Spanish Civil War, this bar was one of the few spots where Republican soldiers and other anti-

fascists, such as Ernest Hemingway would go. Taking photos has been prohibited since the 1930's just in case there were any fascist spies around.

Nevertheless, this bar is incredibly beautiful with its antique bottles and large barrels of wine that haven't changed since this historical time period. And if you're a sherry lover, known as *Jerez* in Spanish, this bar has an amazing variety to choose from.

- ***Cash only**
- **Address:** Calle Echegaray, 7
- **Metro:** Sol, Sevilla
- **Phone:** +34 914 29 73 13

[1912 Museo Bar](#)



Westin Palace Hotel

Located inside the [Westin Palace Hotel](#) is the perfect bar if you're in the mood for an elegant night out. Rumor has it that this high-end bar has had a fair number of influential guests such as Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, and Ernest Hemingway.



Established in 1912, this bar still maintains a museum-like appearance with old photographs of the history of the hotel and life in Spain. The bar itself has some of the most high-end alcohols that you can find here in Madrid. Although this place is a little bit on the pricey side, you won't be disappointed by the service or the selection.

- **Address:** Plaza de las Cortes, 7
- **Metro:** Banco de España, Sevilla, Antón Martín
- **Phone:** +34 913 60 80 00

[San Ginés](#)



And if you're looking for a break from all the alcohol and tapas, this chocolatería is the perfect place to switch it up. San Ginés has been a Madrid classic since 1894 and is easy to miss while walking through the crowded center of the city. It had even been named "La escondida", or "the hidden one" by some during the Second Republic of Spain. Regardless, this café has gained a lot of fame over the years and has even been mentioned in great works of literature, such as Ramón del Valle-Inclán's Bohemian Lights.



Original image by: @carlas.abreu via Instagram

San Ginés has by far the best ***chocolate con churros*** in Madrid. The menu also consists of ***porras***, known as giant churros, a variety of coffees, and even chocolate liqueur. So if you haven't already, head on over to San Ginés and get your sugar fix.

- [Web](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Pasadizo de San Gines, 5
- **Metro:** Sol

▪ Phone: +34 913 65 65 46

You might also like: [5 authentic Madrid bars loved by locals](#)

5 Authentic Madrid Bars Loved by Locals

If you came to Madrid for some homemade *croquetas* or high quality *jamón ibérico*, you want to make sure that you're going to the best places. In Madrid, like any other major European city, it can be difficult to distinguish the local favorites from the tourist traps. But this doesn't necessarily mean that you have to venture off the beaten path to find traditional Spanish delicacies.

To save you the trouble, here's a list of some of the most authentic bars that can easily be found in the center of the city. So get ready to discover Madrid, one *tapa* at a time.

1) EL Madroño



This restaurant screams authenticity with its interior and exterior tile decorations that depict Madrid's history and culture. When walking in, the first thing that will catch your eye is the homemade pastries and cakes that you'll be anticipating throughout your meal. Once seated, it's no surprise if a free *tapa* is brought to your table before even ordering.

El Madroño is the perfect place to order a glass of *vermut* paired with the *delicias de bacalao con mermelada de madroño*. These cod bites are fried to golden perfection and served with a side of madroño jam, the fruit from Madrid.



Delicias de bacalao con mermelada de madroño

- **Address:** Calle Latoneros, 3
- **Metro:** La Latina
- **Phone:** +34 913 64 56 29

2) Bar La Campana



If you're looking for the perfect *bocadillo de calamares*, look no further because La Campana is hands down the best place. Right next to Plaza Mayor, this bar is always crowded with locals, no matter what time of day it is. My personal favorite is a calamari sandwich paired with *una cerveza con limón*, otherwise known as beer with a splash of lemon. And if you're feeling extra hungry, you can't go wrong with an order of *patatas bravas* or *patatas alioli*.



Bocadillos de calamares con patatas bravas y patatas alioli

- **Address:** Calle Botoneras, 6
- **Metro:** Sol
- **Phone:** +34 913 64 29 84

3) Casa Toni



Found on Calle de la Cruz, this small restaurant definitely stands out against the others, with its worn out awning and window where you can see the chef hard at work. The first thing that you'll notice while walking into Casa Toni is the chef grilling up portions of *pimientos* and *oreja* to a charred perfection. In my opinion, this place has the best *sepia* ever. This grilled cuttlefish topped with fresh herbs and served with a side of mayo should be enjoyed with a Madrid white wine.



Sepia con vino Madrileño

- **Address:** Calle de la Cruz, 14
- **Metro:** Sol
- **Phone:** +34 915 32 25 80

4) Casa González



This half-bar half-artisan store located off of [Calle Huertas](#) is the perfect place to enjoy a light round of tapas, and maybe take a few of the goods home with you. Casa González is a cheese lover's dream with its delicious *raclette tosta* and variety of other European cheeses to choose from. My personal favorite take-home item is the *queso de arzúa*, which is a fresh cheese from the north of Spain. After enjoying a nice glass of wine and a tapa or two, don't be afraid to bring home a bag full of artisan goodies with you.



- [Web](#)
- **Address:** Calle del León, 12
- **Metro:** Antón Martín, Sol
- **Phone:** +34 914 29 56 18

5) Bodegas Ricla



About a 5-minute walk from Plaza Mayor is where you can find an old-fashioned bar decorated with bottles of wine that definitely gives a classic tavern feel. You can even take one of those bottles home with you! Just ask anyone behind the counter and they will be happy to help. Besides the amazing Spanish wines, Bodegas Ricla has a pretty good *vermut de grifo* (vermouth on tap) that goes perfectly with a side of *albóndigas*, otherwise known as meatballs.



- Address: Calle Cuchilleros, 6
- Metro: La Latina, Tirso de Molina
- Phone: +34 913 65 20 69

Also check out: [What to see in Barrio de las Letras](#)

Café del Rey, an unexpected

restaurant behind Príncipe Pío

Situated on an unassuming street behind Príncipe Pío lies [Café del Rey](#), a modern restaurant that's totally unexpected. Although it's a five-minute walk from the train station, as well as the Royal Palace, Templo Dubod and Plaza de España, the street it's located on is quite off the beaten path.

James and I went on a Saturday night when the center was uncomfortably crowded, as per usual. Dodging pedestrians left and right, we headed down Cuesta San Vicente. Just before reaching the station, we turned right onto a quiet street called Paseo del Rey and bam! We'd completely escaped the city's hustle and bustle and could finally breathe again.

Two minutes later we arrived at the restaurant, whose stylish decor stands out among the surrounding residential buildings. What is this modern restaurant doing here? It looks like it should be in Malasaña, Chueca, or even Salamanca. That said, we were happy it wasn't located in those neighborhoods because it gave us the chance to try something new and head in a different direction.



photo from their [Facebook](#), as are all the high-quality pics below!

The front part of the venue is a casual bar, delicatessen and

shop. You'll find sandwiches on baguettes, mouthwatering cakes and other treats on display, plus a great beer selection and wine list. We went for dinner so we sat in the dining area in the back, also chic and with plenty of space to remind us we weren't in an itchy bitsy bar in La Latina (which we love, just sometimes we crave some leg room).



As we were eating dinner, we couldn't help but talk about how oddly situated the restaurant was. How could anyone find it if they weren't looking for it? Bottom line is you couldn't. That's kind of why we like it. While in the summer I'm sure it's always packed because of its beach-themed outdoor terrace, during the wintertime I imagine the clientele is more from the neighborhood, as well as people coming in from Principe Pio or after spending the day along Madrid's river. They also hold events like wine and beer tastings that bring in patrons.



Back to our dinner: James got a burger (which the waiter recommended) and I went with the salmon with vegetables (I'm on a bit of a health kick these days), accompanied by a few glasses of red wine.



The table next to us was having a true feast and I must say the pasta and tuna dishes they ordered looked huge. We enjoyed our meal and the price range was reasonable. For example, the burgers cost €8-11. We didn't end up trying their famous cakes which I honestly regret. That's their specialty – the red velvet and carrot cake in particular – and they looked incredible!



The wait staff were also very friendly and attentive.

Since Café del Rey serves breakfast and brunch menus too, we've got plenty of reasons to go back. I also can't wait till summer to check out their outdoor seating areas.

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- [Website](#)
- Twitter/Instagram: @cafedelrey22

La Falda, a cheeky new wine bar and restaurant in Lavapiés

When a restaurant welcomes me with a wine list featuring labels like 'The Madman's Inn' and 'The Perfect Boyfriend', I'm intrigued. When they accompany it with a quality Thai-Spanish tapa and Motown, I'm hooked.



A deliciously smooth glass of Delito Garnacha

[La Falda de Lavapiés](#) is just the kind of tongue-in-cheek tavern that the neighborhood needs, offering quirky bites and a one-of-a-kind wine list to the wide variety of patrons that Calle Miguel Servet attracts. I've stopped in for a bite a few times since it opened in early October, and each time the menu, which only features about ten dishes, has been edited to include the week's freshest ingredients. Aside from the ever-evolving menu, they also feature a distinctive [menú del día](#) plus daily specials that range from ramen to *callos*, highlighting the kind of international versatility that is all too often hard to find in Madrid.

On my most recent visit, we were offered *secreto ibérico* in sweet and sour sauce as our free *aperitivo* as we browsed the menu. The Thai flavors and fantastic cut of Spanish pork paired nicely with the Delito Garnacha wine we had chosen, and by the time we waved down the waitress to order, our appetites were more than piqued.

We chose four small plates to share between the two of us, testing La Falda's version of the Spanish classics of jamón croquettes and cured beef, or *cecina*, and their ability to **fuse Castillian products with Asian flair** in their pork spring rolls and octopus sandwich.



Mouth-wateringly marbled cecina



Vietnamese pork spring rolls

The *cecina* was some of the best I've tried in Madrid, and I consider myself something of a cured beef expert, ordering it any time I spot it on a menu. While all of the flavors were impeccable, the winner had to be the octopus sandwich with its mixture of Thai herbs and Spanish paprika.



Thai-style octopus sandwich

We only stopped ooh-ing and ah-ing over each bite to sing along with the Motown greats that enveloped the room, and reluctantly put our forks down to watch in awe as the couple next to us jumped up to ballroom dance to James Brown's "It's a Man's World."

La Falda is the perfect example of what makes Lavapiés so special: it puts quality at the forefront and serves its food with a wink, but recognizes that in the end, it's only a space for the vibrant community to enjoy life, and does everything it can to facilitate that. Go for a drink or go for a date. Go, eat, watch the people and leave content in mind, body and soul.

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Calle Miguel Servet 4 (Metro Lavapiés or Embajadores)

▪ Phone: 911 688 096

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](#)

Stunning Local Olive Grove Tour, in English! – Proyecto Los Aires

In 2013, biologists **Guillermo and Laura** – Spain's newest generation of **olive farmers** – took over the family business and embarked on an innovative mission: to connect the local countryside with the city of Madrid and make farming a **sustainable way of life** once again.

How it all started:

Over a century ago, in a small town in the region of **Toledo**, Guillermo's great grandfather planted his first grove of around 200 olive trees, and between the evenly spaced olive saplings grew rows of sun-drenched grapevines.

A hundred odd years later, only the footprints of the old

vines are visible, but the olive trees have grown beautifully gnarled and twisted, with silver miniature leaves and shiny hard fruit, ready for the annual harvest of some of the tastiest **organic extra virgin olive oil** in Spain.



The centenarian olive trees

Guillermo and Laura's story:

Olive farming has been in both of their families for generations, inspiring them to study biology at university, which is where they met. From early on, they drew sketches on scraps of paper illustrating grand ambitions to re-bond our booming capital with its rural backyard, enthusiastically telling anyone who will listen about the genius that is the organic farming ecosystem (it's genius).

By mid 2014, their dream had gathered enough steam for them to **quit their jobs** and make [Proyecto Los Aires](#) their life, and for being in the midst of an **economic depression**, it's incredible how much they've already achieved.

The tour:

On Saturday, we headed out to their stunning olive grove in **Arcicóllar**, about an hour south of Madrid. When we arrived, we met up with our fellow tour buddies and set off on our educational meander through the olive trees.

Guillermo and Laura led us around their oldest plot and explained the **process of creating olive oil**: from planting and harvesting to filtering and bottling. Their scientific angle on the entire practice is fascinating, but I won't say any more – the oohs and aahs are all part of the fun!



The walking tour begins



Taking a closer look at the trees

After the walking tour (and tanning opportunity), we sat down at a shaded table nestled idyllically among the centenarian trees. It was time for the **tasting**. This involved professionally sampling several olive oils in little blue glass cups, and learning how to tell the difference between generic **supermarket oil** and **top-quality organic oil** such as theirs.

And then came the food and wine. Through local connections and friends and family, Guillermo and Laura brought together a plethora of **Iberian foodie gems** for us to eat. A *mercado* on a table came to mind, and our tour companions' similarly delighted reactions included lots of "mmm"s and "oh my God"s and jokey squabbles over who liked the **pumpkin *morcilla*** most. We chatted, talking about Guillermo and Laura's endeavours as well as our own, then gratefully accepted Guillermo's offer of

a top-up of wine to accompany our final wander through the trees (and take a few grove-selfies). Finally, we had the opportunity to buy some of the delicious products we tasted that day.



The tasting (and eating and drinking)



The quaintest little market stall in the world

After an **eye-opening and mouth-watering experience**, we said our goodbyes to the lovely Guillermo and Laura and hopped on the bus back to Madrid, desperate to get the word out to you!

The project explained:

[Proyecto Los Aires](#) aims to **promote local agriculture** by running **educational tours & tastings** on their farm and forging a direct link between urban consumers and the rural economy. Their oil (Los Aires Extra Virgin Olive Oil) can be found in **gourmet shops** such as Oleoteca Murúa at [Mercado San Antón](#). Guillermo and Laura also regularly sell their oil in **markets across Madrid** such as [Mercado de Motores](#), [Mercado Central de Diseño](#), [Nómada Market](#) and [Gastro Market](#). Next time you're there, **go and say hello!**



Los Aires olive groves

How to get there:

The **meeting point** for the tour is the bus stop in the town of **Arcicóllar** (see location [here](#)). Regular buses (see timetable [here](#)) will get you there from Madrid's **Méndez Alvaro** bus station in **just over an hour**. If you're driving, it takes around **50 minutes** from central Madrid.

Details & Contact Info:

Tours run **year-round** on **any day of the week** or weekend and must be booked at least **48 hours** in advance.

[Facebook](#) & [Web](#)

The website is in English and Spanish! For more information about the tour, pricing, and to book, click [here](#).

Cosy Wine Bars in La Latina (with gluten free options!)

If you're looking for some dark and cosy wine bars to enjoy a glass of fantastic Spanish wine and some delicious tapas, then head to La Latina. Known as Madrid's tapas district, this neighbourhood is famous for its lazy Sunday afternoon tradition of tapas-bar-hopping, up and down the winding streets of Cava Baja and Cava Alta.

But first, the history of Cava Baja has more to do with foreigners in Madrid than you might think.

Originally a deep trench that ran along the outside of the medieval city walls, Cava Baja protected the city from bandits and scoundrels, and allowed the people of Madrid to come and go freely without using the city gates. Soon the city boundaries spread, and local taverns sprung up along this stretch to lodge (and feed) travellers and farmers, who came to Madrid to sell their wares at market; You can still see the street sloping downhill and curving to follow the path of the old city wall.

This means that, for expats and visitors to the city, enjoying a glass of local wine and food amongst the higgledy piggledy bars and old taverns of Cava Baja is to not only enjoy La Latina, but also repeat the history of many a travelling peddler visiting Madrid.

[El Tempranillo](#)

For people that like Spanish wine: El Tempranillo. From the moment that you see the entire wall of wine bottle racks behind the bar, you know that you are in the right place.

Chic and modern from the outside but small and traditional on the inside, El Tempranillo has the perfect mix of low lighting, muted conversation and good Spanish wine- and a table to sit at if you order some tapas.



Compared with other wine and tapas bars in Cava Baja, El Tempranillo has something unique that is difficult to put your finger on.

Right in the heart of the hustle and bustle of Cava Baja, it is comparatively understated- but quietly confident. It has a real buzz of people under the dimmed lighting, but is surprisingly quiet. This muted conversation gives a sense of privacy in which you can enjoy your glass of wine, share a few tapas and have a meaningful conversation with good friends- without having to raise your voice.

The tapas at El Tempranillo are addictive. Try the 'revuelto de champiñones salvajes' (mushroom omelette), or the tostas. You might have to wait a little to order at peak times during

the weekend or evenings, but the dishes come out quickly once ordered and are worth the wait.

Then, the wine. Order from the chalk board, which has an impressive selection of wine that comes from almost all the wine regions of Spain. Most exciting, though, is their larger than average selection of good Spanish wines available by the glass, with prices starting as low as 2,50€ and 2,70€. Arrive a little early, set up your company at a table, and enjoy some good wine.



Calle Cava Baja, 38

[Juana La Loca](#)

Juana La Loca makes a nod towards Juana, the 'mad queen of Castile', who although was probably just another misunderstood female royal, still makes for a good story and name for a wine bar.



Small, dark, cosy and kinetic, Juana La Loca is perfect for a glass of Spanish wine and some delicious tapas.

Tightly packed inside, with small tables edging around the long bar, Juana La Loca mixes the worlds of both restaurant and wine bar into one dynamic space. With both bar and table enjoying tapas and wine, just with each enjoying more of one than the other, the two functions blend harmoniously into one shared space.

To start with a glass of wine, choose from the wine board behind the bar. Although the choices are slightly restricted and slightly pricier by the glass, the quality of the wine makes up for the lack of selection. If you like deep, complex red wines, try a Ribera del Duero *Crianza* or *Reserva*.

Without a doubt, the most famous dish served at Juana La Loca is the *tortilla de patatas*: a buttery, melt-in-the-mouth tortilla, finished with a crispy outer layer and served on top of a slice of bread. If you are being visited by friends or

family in Madrid who have not yet tried *tortilla de patatas*, this is the one to debut.

The '*huevos rotos*' are also to-die-for, either to share or as a *ración* for yourself: crispy, chewy, buttery fries topped with melting fried egg, small salty strips of *jamón*, salted *pimientos de padrón* and a shake of paprika, all served on a long plate.

Very well accompanied by a glass of fresh wine to clean your palate and a bowl of Juana La Loca's moreish olives, these delicious options can also be served gluten free if you ask the waiter. The prices may be a little higher, but the quality of the wine and food are a step above the rest.

A little tip is to bring cash with you, as they do not accept cards. The small wine bar-restaurant also fills up quickly in the evenings; after 20:30 tables are only for a meal of tapas (plus wine) and bar spots are only for wine (plus a tapa). Arrive early enough to enjoy some good wine and conversation amongst the relaxed atmosphere, and feel the bar fill up with the buzz of evening service.



Plaza Puerta de Los Moros, 4

www.juanalalocamadrid.com

[La Concha](#)

If you like sherry, cava or vermouth, then you are in luck. This tiny mismatched bar with painted wood panels and creative details offers a great selection of Spanish fortified wines and sparkling cava from Cataluña. A refreshing take on the usual full-bodied red wine offered in La Latina, come to La Concha for something a little different.



La Concha has a nomadic feel, keeping in tune with the street's history of travelling visitors, and offers both the upstairs bar for drinks and downstairs seating area for tapas.

If you have yet to try vermouth, a fortified wine infused with various roots, barks, flowers, seeds, herbs and spices, La Concha has 'Vermut Miró', a Spanish vermouth from the northern Spanish city of Reús.

La concha also has a selection of Spanish Sherries, or 'Jerez' in Spanish. Hailing from the D.O. wine region with the same name, Jerez de la Frontera, Jerez is unique in its elaboration; you cannot find a fortified wine like Sherry anywhere else in the world.



If you like bubbles: Cava. Spain's answer to champagne, this bubbly sparkling wine can come in 4 different kinds: Cava, Cava Reserva (minimum 15 months ageing), Cava Gran Reserva (over 30 months ageing) and Rosé. La Concha has more than one of each kind, from different wineries, to try. Order a glass with one of their tapas. Although Cava traditionally matches well with fish or sweet fruity flavours, this is not necessarily the case; a Brut Nature Gran Reserva would go well with meat dishes, roasts or spicier foods.

On a week night you will easily find a spot here. Just head down the kooky stairs and order from their small tapas menu, which is also available completely gluten free.



Calle Cava Baja, 7
www.laconchataberna.com

Extra notes

If you would like to know what to look for in these wine and tapas bars, or are not sure what kinds of wines you like yet, you can also do some [wine tasting in Madrid](#).

Wine word

Maridaje – food and wine pairing

Here are a few more articles you might like:

[Madrid's 3 Best Wine Shops](#)

[Taberna Lamiak, another wonderful bar in La Latina](#)

[Madrid's Best Cafe-Bookshops](#)