Panifiesto, a bread-lover's paradise in Lavapiés

When I first moved to Madrid, I had a few initial goals: get an apartment, make new friends, and find a badass bakery where I could satisfy my carb cravings—not necessarily in that order. I don't know what it is, but there's something about bread that makes me feel right at home. For me, it's the ultimate comfort food and the simplest culinary pleasure. So when I moved to a new city thousands of miles from home, finding good bread was clearly a priority.

Luckily for me, it didn't take long. Soon after I moved into my apartment in Lavapiés, I stumbled upon the perfect place entirely by chance. Panifiesto doesn't look like much from the outside—or the inside, for that matter. It's a minuscule, minimalist space on the corner of Calle Mesón de Paredes and Calle Juanelo. The tiny storefront features a bench and a counter, behind which the fresh bread is displayed on tall metal shelves. If you peek through the loaves, you can see the magic happening in the kitchen in the back.

When it comes to bread, I've learned that simple is almost always better, and Panifiesto confirms that conclusion. All they do is bread—no pastries, empanadas, or even *tostadas*. You can't come here for breakfast or a drink with friends. In fact, you might not even notice it if you aren't specifically looking.

They offer around five to eight varieties each day: wheat, whole wheat, rye, spelt, baguettes, and *gallego* (half wheat, half rye) are almost always available. Some days they also have *tritordeum* (a grain that’s a combination of wheat and barley), seeded (full of poppy seeds, sunflower seeds, and more), and heavenly golden-hued corn bread (my personal favorite). Also look out for seasonal specialties, like the raisin, rosemary, and honey loaves they offered last Semana Santa.

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The prices are, naturally, a bit more than you might be used to paying for bread: €1.35 for a baguette or €3-5 for a full loaf. You can also buy half a loaf for half the price, and they'll slice it for you if you ask!

So what exactly makes this bread special? The short answer is that it's made with *masa madre*. If you're as gluten-obsessed as I am, you know what that means. If not, pay attention, because this is important. There's not an easy English equivalent for this term. The closest thing we have is "sourdough," but while all sourdough is *pan de masa madre*, not all *pan de masa madre* is what you might think of as sourdough.

Essentially, it means that the bread is made without chemical leaveners like baking powder—just flour, water, and salt. It rises due to the natural bacteria in the dough (sometimes called a pre-ferment or "mother dough"), making it denser and lending it a slightly sour flavor. You can bake any kind of bread with this method, as you can see from the variety of options on offer at Panifiesto.

Have I convinced you yet? If not, I dare you to go to this place and not immediately fall in love. Forget about the sad, stale *barras* at your local *alimentación*, set aside a few extra euros, and indulge in some of the best bread money can buy. It's worth it.

Info

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