

Where to Take Your Mom in Madrid – Part 1

Wondering where to take your mom when she comes to visit you in Madrid? Here's a list of places (aside from the Prado and the Royal Palace) that are all hand-picked, tested and approved, if not by me then by my friends. All these ideas have definitely worked – and not just for my mom, but for a lot of out-of-town guests and other family members, too. Here goes!

1. [Madrid Food Tour](#), for a culinary experience full of insight



I can't recommend this tour enough. The guys at [Madrid Food Tour](#) are young and passionate about the city's food culture and history. They offer a variety of tours that take you through the city's most authentic neighborhood markets, tapas bars and restaurants. Plus you get to walk around the city while the tour guides give you insights into Madrid's history. I went on the [Huertas market tour](#) and wrote about it in [a previous post](#).

But you can check out all the tours [here](#) and then choose the one that appeals to you most! The tours are given in English and can be personalized if you have particular food preferences or needs. Just ask them! Another note – I recommend **starting out the trip with this tour** so your mom can get a better feel for the city and its gastronomic offerings.

2. [Bar Lambuzo](#), a family-run Andalusian restaurant



This is one of **my favorite restaurants in Madrid**. What makes Lambuzo perfect is that it is an authentic, Andalusian-style taverna in the heart of Madrid, run by a whole family, and each member has his or her role. For example, you'll find Pepe, the father, working the front and Luis, one of the sons, working the bar. They specialize in food from the South of Spain, so get ready for a variety of fried fish, rice dishes and other delicious treats. Lambuzo now has two locations, although my favorite is the one near Opera, which you can read more about in my previous post [here](#).

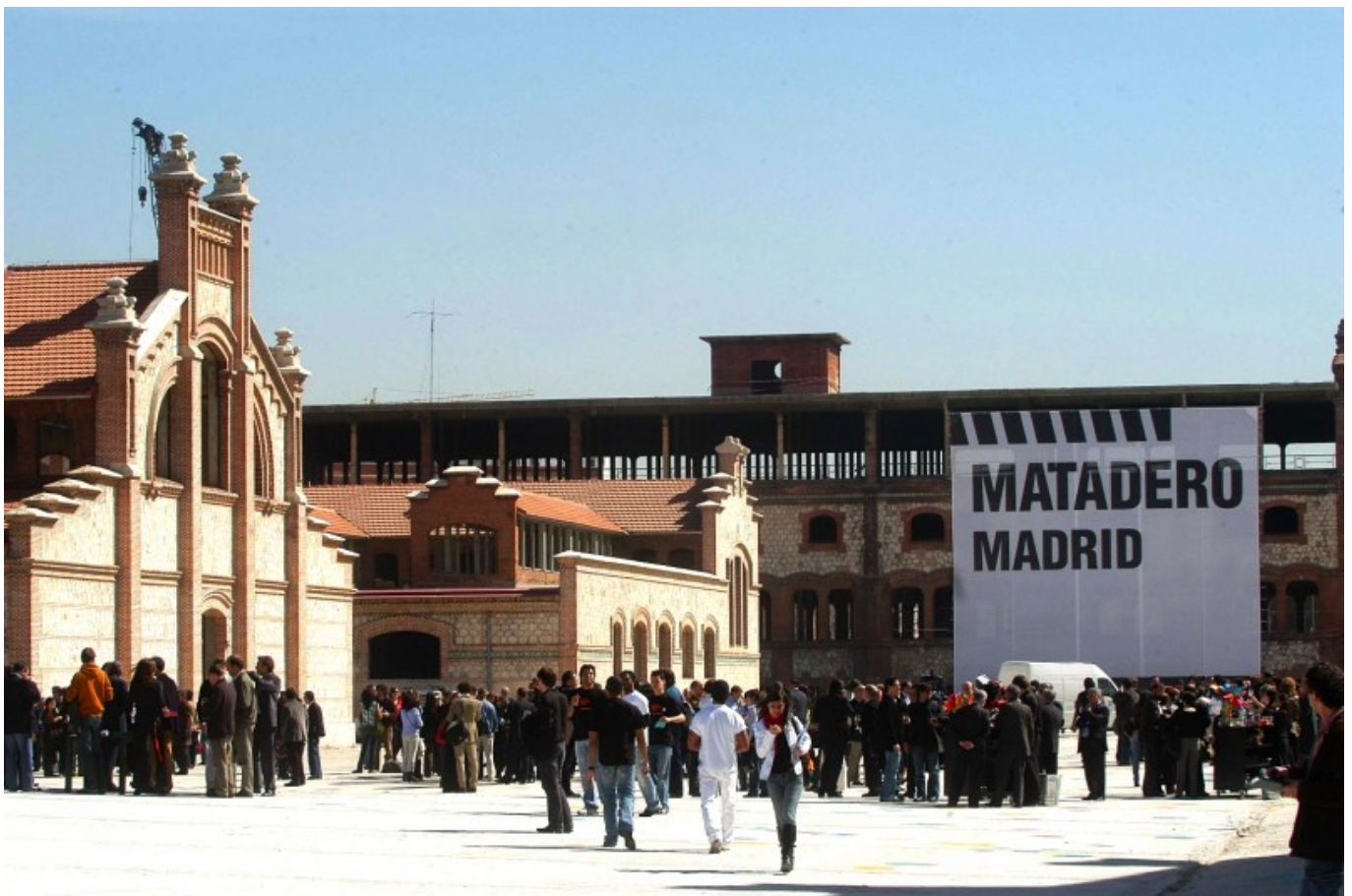
3. [Museums](#), Museo Sorolla & Thyssen in particular



My mother has been to the **Prado and Reina Sofia** twice now and although they're of course worth visiting, she actually preferred the **Thyssen** (so did my brother and sisters) and **Sorolla museums**. While the Thyssen's collection is considered one of the best in the world, the Sorolla's is less

expected – it is in the painter's former home and houses an outstanding collection of pieces that you can see as you walk through the charming rooms. Here's a post on all of [Madrid's obvious and not-so-obvious arts institutions \(plus how to get in for free\)](#) so you can add more to your list.

4. [El Matadero](#) & Madrid Río, for an off-the-beaten-path experience



I always jump at the chance to take friends and family to this place. A former slaughterhouse turned cultural center, **El Matadero** is a must for anyone into contemporary art and cultural activities. It is a huge space with different warehouses, each dedicated to their own type of art. For example, there's the theatre nave, the reading nave and the music nave, among many others. The Matadero also holds wonderful farmers' markets with local products and food trucks, as well as live music and activities for the little

ones. It's also situated along Madrid's river so if the weather is nice, I recommend taking a stroll afterwards or even hopping on a bike.

5. Casa Mingo, an old-school Asturian cider house



I have too many good memories of Casa Mingo, a century-old Asturian restaurant serving roasted chicken and cider by the bottle. Please take your mother here if she likes the good-old kind of restaurant that cannot be imitated no matter how hard you try. This is the real deal (plus it's incredibly cheap!) Here's a [previous post](#) I wrote on it.

6. Food markets, not just Mercado de San Miguel



Madrid has a thriving indoor and outdoor market culture. My mother's first experience with Madrid's market scene was Mercado de San Miguel, naturally. While I do suggest taking your mom there, don't forget about Madrid's other markets. On my mom's most recent visit, we went to [Mercado del San Ildefonso](#) in Malasaña and she was stunned by the architecture, vibrant food scene and open-air seating areas. Then there's [Mercado de San Antón](#) in Chueca which is never a bad idea for its gourmet food stands and amazing rooftop bar (check out other [rooftop bars here](#)). Plus, virtually every weekend there's an outdoor market (aside from **the Rastro**) and food festival in Madrid. Some of my suggestions are **Madreat**, **Mercado de Productores** and **Mercado de Motores**.

8. Desperate Literature, a charming international bookstore



My mom adored this place, mainly because the owner, Craig, gave her a glass of whisky to drink as she browsed through the paperbacks and hardcovers, used and new. There's more to the story, though. Desperate Literature was opened in Madrid about a year ago by the guys who run a very special international bookstore in Santorini, Greece, where my mother had actually visited and my sister had previously worked for a summer. Maybe it's the music, the high quality book selection or the people from all over the world who run Desperate Literature with such care and love, or maybe it's because it's nestled in between the streets that bring you to Madrid's Royal Palace and Opera House... I guess it just has that *je ne sais quoi*.

And if your mom is an avid reader, she'll get to donate the book she finished reading on her flight to Madrid and find herself a new one for the trip home! Here's a [full post on Desperate Literature](#).

9. [Toni 2](#) or [Bar Cock](#), for cocktails and more...



If you're wondering where to get a drink late at night, you can try [Toni 2](#), a sort of piano bar mostly for patrons of a "certain age" – only the classics are sung here, accompanied by a live pianist. It's an old-fashioned kind of bar with an extra long grand piano in the center (here's a full article on [Toni 2](#)). If your mother isn't so into the vintage karaoke scene, then I'd definitely recommend getting a cocktail at [Bar Cock](#), another beautiful old-fashioned bar off the Gran Vía. The only time I went here, Harrison Ford was there! Also,

across the street from Bar Cock is La Barraca, the restaurant mentioned next.

10. [La Barraca](#), for paella and other Valencian dishes



I've been asked a lot about where to get paella in Madrid and never knew what to say, until recently. One of Madrid's most active writers, [Dan Catalan](#), just discovered a place that his grandmother took him to in Madrid. It's a Valencian restaurant located in the city center called La Barraca, which specializes in rice and seafood dishes like paella, which he says is definitely mother-worthy. Just note that this restaurant is on the pricey side – maybe you'll take your mom here, but she'll have to pick up the tab... Check out Dan's post [here](#).

11. Rooftop bars, like Casa Granada or Mercado de San Anton



Madrid has an impressive number of **rooftop bars** and we've written about 20 or so in our [4-part series](#). If I had to recommend just a few, I'd say [Palacio de Cibeles](#) and [Circulo de Bellas Artes](#) for stunning views, and then [Casa Granada](#) and [Mercado de San Anton](#) for great food and ambience. My mom loved **Casa Granada** back when it was in such desperate need of renovation that we actually felt our chairs were going to slip off the roof. It's since been refurbished so you'll still get the dining experience, just without the fear..

12. La Cava Baja, for “tapas bar” hopping



Lined with tapas bars and restaurants, La Cava Baja is the most happening street in La Latina. The first time I walked along it with my mother was during winter and it was very foggy outside. She said it looked like a fairy tale – as if a knight on a horse was going to appear riding through the mist. Even on a clear day, La Latina is a must if your mother (like mine) enjoys going into Madrid’s charming little bars and walking through the area’s old and windy streets. For specific recommendations on bars in La Latina, check out this article: [Coziest Wine Bars in La Latina \(with gluten free options!\)](#)

13. Flamenco, when in Spain...

I personally can’t recommend any particular flamenco performance in Madrid, but if you think your mother would

enjoy experiencing a tablao, our friends at [Madrid Food Tour](#) have compiled this list of [Where to See Flamenco in Madrid](#) and we trust them.

14. A nearby town, beyond Toledo



My mom went on a guided tour of Toledo a few years ago and didn't enjoy it so much because she didn't get to "roam around freely" as much as she would have liked. So while I'm not against taking a tour, I do think you should make sure to have enough time to wander around and explore the nooks and crannies of wherever you go. I've taken my mom on a number of day trips around Madrid and her favorite was when we drove to [Segovia](#) and [El Escorial](#) in one day. If you can get your hands on a car, I highly recommend it. You can also check out our article on [Madrid's 10 most beautiful surrounding towns](#) which all link to a description, map and transport details.

15. Pepe Botella & Plaza del Dos de

Mayo, for coffee and tea



Pepe Botella has long been my **favorite café in Madrid**, as anyone who's ever visited me will already know. Its ambience, location and simple drink menu has always set it apart from the rest of Madrid's cafés, for me at least. I recommend going here either before or after lunch and sitting with a book or a newspaper, or just chatting away. When I go in the afternoon, I like starting with a **coffee or tea**, and then welcoming in the evening with a **glass of wine**. Here's a [full post on Pepe Botella](#).

Any other suggestions? We'll be coming out with a part 2 so all recommendations

are more than welcome!

You'll also like:

- [Eating our way through Huertas with Madrid Food Tour!](#)
- [Madrid's Obvious and Not-so-obvious Museums \(and how to get in for free\)](#)
- [Madrid's 10 Most Beautiful Surrounding Towns \(and how to get to there\)](#)
- [Madrid's best rooftop bars – part 1](#)

Casa Mingo, the real cider house



An **Asturian cider house** serving traditional, simple and exquisite rotisserie chicken since 1888, **Casa Mingo** is the

real deal—no frills, no fuss, just the good stuff. The high walls are lined with bottles and barrels, making you feel as though you've been immersed in a sea of cider. And although the wooden floors are holding up, the wear and tear are evident. Be sure there's no intention of refurbishing this wooden tavern. Its notable use and warm simplicity is what makes it so special.



image from casamingo.es

Even the menu is simple: **roasted chicken**, croquettes, chorizo, *chistorra* (similar to chorizo but thinner and spicier), cheese (*manchego* which is cured, or *de cabrales* which is very, very blue, a.k.a. it's just mold), roasted red peppers with tuna, and empanadas. They have two types of **cider: sweet and natural**, and you order them by the bottle. Although there are a few more items on the menu, that's pretty much everything. And no matter how much you order, your bill is likely to come out to less than **15E per person**.

The first time I went to **Casa Mingo** I had already been living in Madrid for a few years, though I'd never seen anything like

it. It was love at first sight (an American who had been living in Madrid for twenty years let me in on the secret). Since then, **Casa Mingo** has become my spot whenever I want to show off Madrid to family and friends.

I've even brought my "foodie" friends with the harder-to-please palates, some who are chefs and some who have even opened up their own Spanish restaurants outside Spain. **Casa Mingo** has never failed to delight them.

My favorite dishes are the **roasted chicken** and the **roasted red peppers with tuna**. And for dessert, try the *tarta de sidra* or *tarta de santiago*.



rotisserie chicken and endless cider at Casa Mingo



a whole roast chicken at Casa Mingo



No reservations, but the place is enormous so the wait won't be long. In addition to the main dining room, they have outdoor seating and a rooftop as well. The last time I sat outside there, it was Spring and our table was showered with little flowers falling off trees all around us. It was lovely.



my friend Ryan's attempt to pour cider the Asturian way

And if you're feeling up for the challenge, get a table outside and try **pouring the sidra from above your head** (spilling is completely accepted, but ask for a nozzle to help). The correct word for this is **escanciar**, and it's the traditional way to pour cider in Asturias.

Here's a photo I took of a professional pouring cider at a Spanish gourmet food fair. Feel free to ask any of the waiters

at **Casa Mingo** to show you how it's done.



a professional showing how to pour cider the right

way, a.k.a. “escanciar”

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