

# El Brote: a brand-new mushroom restaurant in the heart of El Rastro

Mushrooms: they're an inspiring subject one can easily get carried away with, especially after paying a visit to El Brote. Years of academic mushroom knowledge and on-the-ground wisdom were literally delivered to us on a plate and I'm now a devout mushroom apostle on a mission to spread the message to the foodie people of Madrid.



El Brote's dining area

El Brote (the bud) is a small and cosy restaurant on [Calle de la Ruda](#) run by two mushroom enthusiasts, Eduardo and Alvaro.

Every corner of the place is mushroom-themed, even the floor. Its décor is earthy, humble and a little eccentric, and the original features of the building have been beautifully highlighted throughout the room.



Abstract mushroom artwork



Various gospels of the mushroom bible



The 0th floor of El Brote



A mushroomy display inside the floor

Both Eduardo and Alvaro were keen to explain each dish on their 10-item menu and made recommendations based on the season and their own personal preferences which, funnily enough, were different.

*There's a specific order in which you must eat each ingredient.*

... they explained as each dish was brought out. They suggested we start with the unseasoned mushrooms so that we could taste their pure flavour, then slowly begin combining the other ingredients together to get a feel for the dish as a whole. The flavours were subtle and delicious both separately and collectively – a sign that someone behind the scenes really knows what they're doing.



Trumpet mushrooms with a raw egg yolk and herbs



Red mushrooms with pak choy, gnocci and pumpkin gratin



Black mushrooms with beans, squash and leek

Try their wine too, it's really good. We also noticed that every single table in the restaurant was sharing a bottle of red between them... such a beautiful sight.

**TIP:** El Brote have very few tables and they don't take evening reservations so aim to be the first to arrive as we were, because within 10 minutes of arriving, the place will be full!

## INFO

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
  - **Address:** [Calle de la Ruda, 14](#)
  - **Nearest metro:** La Latina, line 5
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# Taco Maya: A brand-new no-frills taco joint

José Manuel – a well-known chef in the Madrid taco scene – has just opened a brand new, no-frills taco joint in Madrid with his partner, Joe. This colourful and fun eatery is located in a beautiful old building just a five-minute walk from barrio Lavapiés, and has a lovely chilled terrace plus a cosy dining area inside.



Taco Maya's cosy, minimalist dining area

It's possible that you may have stumbled across José Manuel

before: he used to own [Taquería Maya](#) in Huertas, where José met Joe! With a new team member and a more relaxed location, [Taco Maya](#) has a winning formula, and dare I say the best Mexican food I've had in Madrid?

## THE FOOD

Everything is made from scratch by José himself, from the nachos to the tacos and every ingredient is bought in fresh that morning. It's for this reason that the menu sometimes varies depending on what order comes in that day, and there's an array of tacos, quesadillas and nachos to try.



The menu – full of options for all!

This is what we had:



## Lemon and Strawberry Margaritas

First of all, the Lemon and Strawberry Margaritas are incredible – like nothing you’ve ever had before, I promise! The strong kick of tequila was also a great start to the evening.



## The Nachos

We had three types of nachos: Courgette and corn from the cob (vegan), Guacamole and coriander (also vegan), and beef. All were absolutely delicious, and the guacamole was like something I'd make at home in secret so that I could put in as much coriander and fresh red onion as I wanted.



The Beef Tacos



2 x Cheese Tacos and 2 x Lamb Tacos

The beef and guacamole tacos were juicy and moreish, and that extra squeeze of lime cut through all that tender meat perfectly. The veggie options included cheese and guacamole quesadillas, but pictured above we have courgette tacos and two tacos with a creamy vegetable and corn mix and plenty of fresh coriander on top. Having said all that, the tacos themselves were so fresh and you could really decipher their flavour.



Tequila!

To end the evening, José Manuel offered us a wonderfully smooth tequila. He also gave us a salt-sugar-chilli mix for the usual tequila ritual, and now I'll never be able to have just salt again.



José Manuel himself!

The tacos are great and the terrace is a real treat. This humble eatery has a bright future – check it out and be a part of it.

## Info

- **Address:** Paseo de Santa María de la Cabeza, 60
- **Metro:** Embajadores
- [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
- Phone number: 911 733 374 / 642 194 285

## Also check out:

- [Tacos, tamales and tequila: Madrid's best Mexican joints!](#)



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# Café Barbieri: A 114-year-old Art Nouveau café in Lavapiés

[Café Barbieri](#) first brought modernist charm to Madrid's working class district, Lavapiés, in 1902, and although the *barrio* has evolved dramatically over the last 114 years, the interior of this elegant bar hasn't changed one bit.

Some things have changed though – Café Barbieri is owned by a charismatic chap from New Delhi and staffed with bilingual youngthings. It also now has a small terrace, but this is not why you'd come here – its appeal is truly the interior.

The whole place is lined with mirrors which back then were a symbol of wealth. These mirrors are now aging well, stained a smoky bronze colour with dots of grey rust creeping in from the edges. The ceiling is framed with grids of ornate girders that are connected to decorative cast-iron beams, typical of older buildings in Lavapiés. Although never on, there are ceiling fans too – something increasingly rare in Madrid.

At the back of the bar is a grand piano on a small raised stage. Almost every evening there's a live music session often featuring the piano, and this place does food too – typical Spanish stuff but with an edge.

The worn white marble table tops and red velvet seating lining the dining area mark this place out as opulent, but that's really not the vibe – it's chilled and cosy and attracts a spectrum of people, from the intrepid tourist who's braved it down the hill, to the unassuming local who fancies a read of one of the papers on offer.



Café Barbieri by day



Café Barbieri's beautiful ornate ceiling



The grand piano taking centre stage, and look at all those beautiful mirrors



Look at that original tiled floor!



The bar has a great selection of spirits & vermouth on tap



Café Barbieri by night

Café Barbieri is also on the same street as the Greek foodie place, [Egeo](#), so there you have it, your night is planned!

## Info

- C/Ave María 45
  - Metro: Lavapiés
  - [Website](#) [Facebook](#)
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# New Cucos, a family-style restaurant in Arturo Soria

Sometimes when I go out to have lunch or dinner I can't help but think that an important part of customer service is missing. So when I had dinner at New Cucos with my friend, when we went outside afterwards, we could only say how well we were treated and what a wonderful dinner we had.

**New Cucos** is a family-style restaurant in the neighborhood of Arturo Soria. This closeness and warmth can be seen in the way Juan (the owner) treats everyone who works there, as well as all the customers who are having dinner or lunch.

The restaurant is located on the quiet street of Arturo Soria. It is a large space with a perfect covered terrace for more intimate dinners or larger celebrations. The terrace provides a very cozy place where you can talk quietly without being bothered by the next table, and then there's also a smaller and equally cozy interior. The first day we decided to sit in inside, as Real Madrid was playing and we wanted to see the match. The second day we sat in the covered terrace, great decision.

## The Food

**New Cucos** has a simple and traditional menu with very good quality ingredients. **The portions are generous, in fact, the most popular dishes on the menu are large sharing platters;** these can be great among a group of friends, or even just for two.

First we went for the warm burrata salad with cherry tomatoes. It was simply delicious. Great quality, never tried the burrata and I have to say I totally loved it.





Burrata Salad

Then we decided to try the spring rolls with vegetables and prawns – a highly recommended and delicious dish as well.



Spring rolls

By the time we had to eat our third dish, we were already full, but how can you say no to a plate of ravioli? These were filled with pumpkin and cheese sauce – simply spectacular and very rich. In fact the second time we went we couldn't help but order them again.



Ravioli

The second day we also ordered a delicious mixed salad. For me, nothing beats a well-prepared mixed salad.



## Salad

As for the rest of the menu, in addition to the dishes to share, they have a small selection of fish and meat dishes. I have to say the South African ostrich burger looks delicious.

Prices are very reasonable. The first day we had three dishes, three glasses of wine and two beers for 47 euros. The second day our bill came out to 33 euros.

I'd also like to highlight once again that we received fantastic service both times we went; the staff was attentive, asking if everything was fine, and very importantly, without putting any pressure on us to leave. That sort of thing is very noticeable and makes your dinner even better.

Nothing else to add, **New Cucos** points out on Twitter: *"eat and drink in an oasis"* And I couldn't agree more.

So, *"Mucha mierda"* (or "break a leg") to Juan and the rest of his family. I'm sure we'll see each other again soon!

## Info

- *Where: Calle Arturo Soria 84*
  - *Metro: Arturo Soria*
  - *Tf: 913774039*
  - [Twitter](#)
  - *Monday to Saturday 11 to 1.*
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# Sweet Treat MADREAT – Street Food Festival

Travel the world through food at this unique mobile market open one weekend a month. With a variety of countries represented and blended by cuisine, [Madreat](#) is an inspiring mix of chefs and customers sharing the spices of life. They even take gastronomic suggestions through their website to keep the melting pot bubbling. Stop by their temporarily new location in Casa de Campo on **March 19th and 20th** for an exciting edible experience. If you miss Saturday (from 12pm-12am), remember it closes early on Sunday at 6 pm!



Picture from [Facebook](#)

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**Zoco Comidero: Eat well and feel great at Madrid's first**

# (and only) flexitarian restaurant

## NOW CLOSED

I don't eat meat, but one of my life rules is: **never go to a Vegetarian restaurant.**

I've been jaded by too many poorly thought-out ventures where the food is created from fear of meat rather than love of veg. Vegan and vegetarian cuisine has existed all over the world for millennia, so where did the culinary black hole come from and why has it left us in such a veg-hating dark age feeling hungry and dehydrated?

Last week, a friend of mine recommended veggie-friendly [Zoco Comidero](#) and I might just have seen **the light at the end of the tunnel.**



Rarely do you come across a restaurant with this much respect for food. The concept: flexitarian – a primarily vegetarian diet which occasionally includes meat or fish. In other words, there's something for everyone.

No longer does the vegetarian friend have to eat a *racion de*

*patatas bravas* for dinner, or the carnivorous friend have to suffer through a fish-less fillet or a tofurkey burger (a what?).

At Zoco Comidero, the menu is hugely varied and every dish is put together professionally. Everything on your plate hit the kitchen worktop raw and intact and has been **prepared freshly with no external influences.**

We kicked off Tuesday evening with a kale and kiwi smoothie, an arepa stuffed with an almond-based vegan cheese and chlorella pesto (a delicious black seaweed pesto).







Feeling healthy yet? We shared two *tostas*: one with goat's cheese and a juicy baked tomato and the other with a generous portion of beetroot-marinated raw salmon and homemade mustard. For mains we had a risotto made with kamut (an ancient large wheat grain), and prawn chop suey.





This was all underlined with a trio of deserts: an intense gooey dark chocolate brownie (the secret ingredient: avocado), quinoa 'cheesecake' and a face-twisting lemon curd.



By now the word "healthy" is in the background. **Exotic flavours, textures and presentation** of the food resonates more than anything else. I love Marbell's zen and her way of transmitting it to us urban wildlife through edible flowers and doses of colour.



This is Marbell, the brains and owner of Zoco Comidero

Zoco Comidero is just off the beaten track but in the real heart of Madrid's old town. The restaurant has an elegant interior with low lighting, good music and a bonus view of the palace. There's also a fun downstairs lounge which gets going on weekends. Every Saturday and Sunday, Marbell tries to organise a chilled bit of live music from 10:30 pm onwards **so stick around after dinner for good DJs and Venezuelan bands.**

## Info

- [Web](#) & [Facebook](#)
  - **Address:** Calle Moreria 11
  - **Metro:** La Latina
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# Gastrofestival all over Madrid

With locations scattered throughout the city, over two weeks of tantalizing cuisine will tempt you during the Madrid Gastrofestival January 23rd – February 7th. A fairly young festival, it represents the collaborative effort of more than 400 local wining and dining establishments. Designed to engage all five senses, the Gastrofestival goes beyond food into fashion, culture and art. Check out more [@Gastrofestival](#) or on [Facebook](#).



Photo from [Facebook](#)

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# De María: Fabulous Argentinian Restaurant

I discovered this fabulous restaurant not too long ago, called [De María](#), as two people recommended it to me on separate occasions. Since then it has become one of my go-to spots in Madrid. [De María](#) is one of those restaurants that always leaves a good impression on everyone who dines there; the food is great, portions are generous and the price is fantastic.

[De María](#) is popular to say the least; photographs of famous patrons line the walls: athletes like Beckham and actors like Javier Bardem are just some of the familiar faces who have enjoyed this wonderful restaurant.



**De María** has several locations. So far I've tried three of them and none was disappointing.

The menu is varied and contains good-quality ingredients. You can choose from a variety of mouth-watering starters, such as "chorizo criollo", or vegetable dishes, pastas and salads and, of course, the traditional Argentine beef. The last time I dined here we weren't very hungry so we opted for a lighter menu. Something that stands out to me about **De María** is that

you always get tasty snacks to nibble on while you wait for your food to arrive.



The **chimichurri** and **pepper sauces** are a must, as is the **cream cheese spread**. During the summer they usually bring a glass of gazpacho or salmorejo. When it's cold out, they tend to bring you a creamy vegetable soup – in our case, we got a delicious pumpkin soup.

As a starter, we went for the **grilled Provolone cheese**. It was simply exquisite and even more when covered with one of their tasty sauces. "**Chorizo criollo**" is another must.



After the cheese plate, my friend and I ordered salads; she ordered a **mixed salad** and I had a **caprese salad** – light, fresh, and deliciously paired with a beer and a glass of white wine.





We decided to skip dessert because we weren't too hungry, but the waiter didn't seem to care: he brought us each a glass of tangerine sorbet and a yogurt and mango sauce (on the house!), along with their traditional shots.





**De María's prices are very reasonable.** We paid about €21 each. So if you want to enjoy Argentinian cuisine and a friendly atmosphere, this is your place. It also has the advantage of having several locations so finding a table will not be a problem.

The locations I've visited are:

- *De María: Calle Hortaleza, 81, 28004, Madrid*
- *De María: Calle Preciados 32, 28013, Madrid*
- *De María: Calle Correo 2, 28012, Madrid*

You can find all the locations listed on their [web](#)

If you want to enjoy more Argentinian restaurants in Madrid, then check out our article on [Casa Federica](#).

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# 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](#)**

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## **Gluten free pastelerías in Madrid: Part 2 – La Oriental**

[La Oriental](#) is a teeny tiny traditional *pastelería* that offers a whole array of gluten free goodies. Founded in 1950 and currently run by the fourth generation of bakers, here you'll find locally inspired *pasteles*, elaborated using traditional Madrileño methods and the best local ingredients. This is the place to go to step into the world of **traditional artisan pastries** and try some local specialities. Luckily for gluten free foodies, it is central to the city and just a short stroll from the Argüelles metro stop!

When you step into the bakery you are immediately surrounded at all heights by stacks of galletas, trays of mini pasteles, counters brimming with all sorts of chocolates, beautifully decorated tartas, light pink *meregues* and boxes of assorted **chocolate-dipped shortbreads**.





It is not hard to find the gluten free goodies as the shop is covered in '**sin gluten**' symbols to help you find your way around.

You'll find delicacies in every counter, including the tall fridge in front of the window, which is jam-packed with tartas, cheesecakes and birthday cakes (see the raspberry cheesecake above, yum!). There is also a counter with an entire selection of **rocas**, which are chocolates filled with caramelised nuts, in dark chocolate, milk chocolate, white chocolate... well, in every kind of chocolate that you could imagine.



Also sitting on nonchalantly on top of the counters, as if

they have no idea of the effect they'll have on you, are **boxes of assorted biscuits**, which are, indeed, gluten free too.

There are Viennese-style biscuits covered in jam and chopped nuts, star-shaped shortbreads, vanilla cookies topped in dark chocolate and sprinkles, and many more options. In addition to the boxes on the counters, there are also boxes behind the shop front, which the shop assistants will no sooner whisk out for you than you can say 'sin gluten'.



As well as the shop's excellent 'gluten free' signing, the best part of visiting the shop is being greeted by the shop's incredibly smiley fourth generation owner, or one of her friendly assistants. As soon as you mention that you are 'celiaca' or 'celiaco', a whole range of extra delights will be whisked out from the back and you'll wonder why you never came here before.

The pastel of choice on this visit was one of the 'bandejas' of mini pasteles, which I can say are without a doubt the most

delicious little morsels I have tried in my natural gluten-free, and non-gluten free, life.







Each tray is slightly different, with six rows of beautifully presented mini pasteles, each little pastel like a mini work of art. You can tell that at La Oriental they take their baking seriously. In this particular '*bandeja*', there were **six types of mini pasteles**: a custard-cream topped sponge; a light pastry sandwiched with chocolate cream; dark chocolate cups with vanilla custard filling and chocolate sprinkles; a profiterole-style pastry filled with dark chocolate cream; an orange cream square and, last but not least, dark chocolate cups filled with whipped cream and topped with a raspberry.



The mini selections of pastries like this *bandeja* are wrapped

up in a sweet little La Oriental box with reflective gold lining and tied up with string, making them the perfect treat to buy for a friend, gluten free or not gluten-free, or maybe, let's be honest, just for yourself.



In addition to this, the tartas in the tall fridge counter in front of the window can also be ordered for special occasions like birthdays, or just selected from the shop on the day (they all look delicious!).

## Extra notes

There are also sugar-free and lactose free options. Just ask the owner.

Extra tip: some of the boxes of biscuits already have prices on, but the rest are priced according to weight, so make sure you check with the owner before you select your box.

# Info

*Calle Ferraz, 47*

[Website](#)

*Tel: 91 559 70 45*

## Word of the post

I hope that you liked this post on La Oriental. Today's special word, in homage to the delicious nature of the post's content, is:

**natillas**– a creamy custard, yum.

## You'll also like:

- [Gluten free pastelerías in Madrid: Part 1, Confeterías Marqués](#)
- [El Riojano, Madrid's best pastry shop in the centre with a hidden tea room!](#)
- [María's – sensational sweets on Calle Zurbano](#)