

Mercado de Vallehermoso – Madrid's perfect neighbourhood food market

One of the first things I fell in love with about Spain was the abundance of fresh produce and local independent shops. Although the big supermarket chains have undoubtedly made their mark, food markets all over Madrid are still thriving. This is partly because they are so much more than just somewhere to pick up the weekly shop. You can enjoy a quick *caña*, stop for tapas, or stay for a whole meal.

Each *barrio* has its own market with something different to offer. Here's what I love about my local, Mercado de Vallehermoso.



Photo from [Mercado de Vallehermoso](#)

Built in the 1930s, until relatively recently the market had been largely abandoned and forgotten, with two thirds of its stalls shut in 2015. After being rescued from disrepair by a change in management and support from the *Ayuntamiento*, it's now bustling, with all 62 stalls occupied.

At Mercado de Vallehermoso you'll find everything from the traditional baker's, butcher's and fishmonger's stalls to restaurants, wine bars, craft beer, and **Spain's only permanent farmer's market**. As well as Spanish food, you can eat Mexican, Italian, Japanese, Korean, and more. In the Mercado de Productores (farmers market) all the producers are from Madrid, or less than 120 km away, and many of the products are handmade.

Restaurants at Mercado de

Vallehermoso

Washoku Sushi



Washoku Sushi, photo from Mercado de Vallehermoso

For fast, fresh Japanese food at a very reasonable price, Washoku is perfect. They buy their fish from one of their neighbours at the market, Hermanos Abad, so it's always good quality. Choose from sushi and sashimi selections, Japanese curries and rice, or udon noodle dishes. They also have delicious appetizers, including my favourite *Takoyaki* (similar to a fried dumpling, filled with octopus).

Craft 19



Photo from [Craft 19 Madrid](#)

Hands down the most delicious sandwiches in Madrid! The pastrami sandwich is famous, and rightly so, but the pulled pork and grilled cheese are equally indulgent. You can wash down your mega sandwich (be warned, in true American style, the portions are enormous) with a cool craft beer. There is a good selection of beers on tap, which change continuously, giving you the chance to sample beers from different international breweries.

Sandwiches and beer, what more could one want in life?

[Drakkar](#)



Photo from [Drakkar Cervecería](#)

If you're still thirsty for craft beers, Drakkar has a great selection. Unlike some of the craft beer bars and breweries that have opened recently in Madrid, it's great value. Grab a seat at the bar and chat to the friendly staff, who are always happy to give you a recommendation if you feel intimidated when there's more choice than Mahou or Estrella Galicia.

[La Virgen](#)



Photo from [Cervezas La Virgen](#)

Continuing the beer route through the market, Madrid brewers La Virgen also have a stall. With a [brewery in Las Rozas](#) and bars across the capital, it's probably the most well-known independent brewery in Madrid. Their spot in Mercado de Vallehermoso is a relaxed place to try some of their beers, to accompany some tasty treats from the market.

[Di Buono](#)



Photo from [Mercado de Vallehermoso](#)

Famous for its *porchetta*, Di Buono is a great deli serving the most delicious products imported from Italy. Sip on an Aperol spritz and try the delicious selection of Italian cheeses and charcuterie. They serve a great selection of wines from small producers in different regions all over Italy.

[Kitchen 154](#)



Photo from [Kitchen 154](#)

If you try one dish at Kitchen 125, make it **the Korean BBQ ribs**. Specialising in Asian fusion dishes with a kick, the

stall is always busy, and everything is cooked as you order. They have a small menu, but everything is cooked perfectly, from curries, to dumplings to crispy chicken wings.

*[Kitchen 154](#) also has a restaurant location on Calle Ruiz 20 in Malasaña.

[Güey Cocina Chingona](#)



Photo from [Güey](#)

Ever wondered what ants or grasshoppers taste like? Güey have

some seriously adventurous dishes on their menu, plus daily specials. Not feeling quite so intrepid when I ate there, I can only tell you that the *tacos al pastor* and guacamole were good (a very vanilla order, I know).

Mercado de Productores

Most of the food stalls on the upper floor have their own tables, where you can only eat food from that establishment, apart from Güey and Washoku, which have a few shared tables. However, if you come in a group and everyone wants to order from different places, you can find a shared seating area on the lower level of the market in the *mercado de productores*. Here you can eat anything from the restaurants on the upper level or the stalls in the farmer's market.

[EGGO](#)



Photo from [EGGO](#)

This is the only place I know of in Madrid you can buy a scotch egg! And if you don't know what a scotch egg is, all the more reason to go to EGG0 because you have been missing out on one of the most delicious snacks. As you can probably guess from the name, EGG0 sells fresh eggs and a few egg dishes (including delicious tortilla), all from free-range chickens from their farm in Ávila.

[La Cabezuela](#)



Photo from [Quesería La Cabezuela](#)

La Cabezuela make award-winning handmade cheeses in El Escorial. They offer a range of weird and wonderful flavours, including *la Cervezuela*, made with beer from *La Virgen* brewery. Order a *tabla de quesos* (cheese plate) for 7 euros

and you can try all the ones that catch your eye.

[Randall Coffee Roasters](#)



image by [Randall Coffee](#)

Fed up of the burnt, bitter brews at your local Spanish bar? At Randall Coffee Roasters you can get a delicious cup of coffee or buy beans to brew at home. More like a coffee shop you would see in New York or London, **they roast speciality beans on site. They also serve iced lattes and cold brew,** perfect for the hot summer months. If you fancy a sweet treat

with your coffee, try one of the chocolate, pistachio and sea salt cookies!

Mercado de Vallehermoso has the perfect mix



One of the unique things about Madrid as a capital city has been its ability to embrace and enjoy new influences, while preserving its traditions and “Spanishness.” Mercado de Vallehermoso, like all of Madrid’s many markets, is a great example of this, where you’ll find the perfect mix of traditional and modern; Spanish and international; young and old.

There are so many different stalls in the market, you couldn’t fit everything in one article. These are just a few of the one’s I’ve tried and loved. So, go ahead and explore them all, and let me know what you think!

Mercado de Vallehermoso info

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & Instagram: [@mercadovallehermoso](#)
- **Address:** C/ Vallehermoso 36
- **Metro:** Quevedo

By **Ellen** **Fouweather**
(*Instagram:* [@efouwee](#))

Also read Ellen's article on: [Madrid's 10 best vintage and second-hand shops](#)

Mercadillo Lisboa: A fun Portuguese snack bar in Mercado San Fernando

Brand-new Portuguese eatery Mercadillo Lisboa was waiting for the right moment to join the *mercado* scene until, six weeks ago, just in time for Tapapiés, it finally opened up in the best spot in [Mercado San Fernando](#). Enter through the main doors, head straight to the middle and turn right – they're there next to the fun bar Sondelata, which sells blue wine and carrot cava.

Mercadillo Lisboa is owned and run by three pals – two from Lisbon and one from the Canary Islands. Only two of them are in this photo because the other is camera-shy – he hid around the corner.

This is a great place to get authentic Portuguese food, from a variety of quiches and the classic *Pastéis de Belém*, to *empanadas*, *arancini* and everything *bacalao*. Here are a few

photos of their snack food, very proudly displayed by the jolliest of the three musketeers:



Vegetarian spinach quiche



There are lots of quiches here



Empanadas and cod croquettes



Arancini



Strawberry cheesecake (wow)

You can also buy a selection of Portuguese beers and wines (including *vinho verde*), plus an almond liqueur (*licor de amêndoa*) specially driven over from Portugal by the guy on the right. I bought their last bottle a couple of weeks ago and with it came this story – suddenly €12 seemed like an absolute steal. You'll be glad to know that they've since been back to Portugal and brought another few bottles for us, but get it while you can – or I will!



Lots of Portuguese wines and liqueurs



A selection of Portuguese beers

Pull up a chair at Mercadillo Lisboa or mingle in its sphere of influence with a *vinho verde* and a *bocadillo de bacalao*. And just so you know, you'll probably bump into me.

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- **Address:** C/ Embajadores, 41
- **Metro:** Lavapiés/Embajadores

Opening hours:

- *Mon: Fri: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm – midnight*
- *Sat: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm*
- *Sun: 11:00 am – 5:00 pm*

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](#)

Design Market & Food Trucks at Mercado Central de Diseño at El Matadero

Ever few months, a design market takes place at [El Matadero](#), a former slaughterhouse turned cultural center and arguably the city's coolest venue. If you've never been, this weekend's your chance! Expect to see over 160 designers, workshops, live performances and 20 food trucks, plus much more!

El Matadero is just a few stops away from Sol. Entrance to [El Mercado Central de Diseño](#) costs €2.

Here's the [event page](#).

Read more about [El Matadero here](#).

[\[#MercadoDeDiseño\]](#)

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](#).

Gastro Market at La Industrial II

Spend your weekend tasting quality organic products and browsing through artisan crafts at the new edition of Gastro Market in [La Industrial](#) in Malasaña. At this new gastronomic marketplace, you'll get to enjoy both local and international products.

Malasaña Market invades Espacio Isla Barceló

This weekend, Malasaña's spirit will invade [Espacio Isla Barceló](#), a huge market and events space near Tribunal. Expect the venue to be full of clothing stands, food stalls, art, and much more.

Croquette Festival in TriBall neighborhood – Madrid's new

Soho

You have until Saturday 14th of March to enjoy the first edition of the [Jornada Gastronómica de la Croqueta](#) in TriBall. What's [TriBall](#), might you ask? Created by an association of central businesses, TriBall is the new name for a couple of streets located in Malasaña and Chueca – quickly becoming the city's coolest place to be – like Calle Ballesta, Corredora Baja de San Pablo and Valverde.

Download [here](#) the plan and the restaurants' addresses!