

Bar Tomate – modest minimalism at its best

Eight years ago I took the plunge and upped sticks to move to Madrid (or Madders as I now affectionately refer to it). The city was in the midst of a financial crisis so bleak, that people went out for a solitary caña rather than cañas – or so it seemed and so I was told.

Fast forward to 2017 and the city feels as though it's booming once again. Not a week passes by without a new opening, a Mercado of some sort throwing back its doors and the now oh-so-popular weekly After Brunch events.

So in such a crowded marketplace how do you stand out? Well, having the kudos of being part of the Grupo Tragaluz alumni doesn't hurt, which is why Bar Tomate has proven to be one of my fail-safe favourites over the years.



Located in the increasingly well-heeled and chic neighbourhood of Chamberí, which coincidentally is one of my favourite Madrid *barrios*, Bar Tomate ticks all the boxes offering breakfast, lunch, dinner *a rare find in a city where *siesta* culture can result in a complete shutdown during certain hours – never ideal if you're prone to getting hungry!

The vibe is rustic and Mediterranean with the emphasis on simple, fresh ingredients and classics cooked well.



I went along for dinner on a Friday night and chowed down like a Queen – decisive isn't my strong point so what was sampled read like an A-Z of deliciousness; ranging from breaded asparagus, chicken tacos, jalapeño spiced shrimp and a burrata the size of my head because, quite frankly, what meal isn't improved with the addition of cheese! This was naturally all chased down with an array of cocktails that made for an interesting walk home.

If simplicity is your thing I can't recommend Bar Tomate

enough. From the minimalist décor to the unfussiness and ease of the service, Bar Tomate's strongpoint comes in its lack of pretentiousness when in reality, it has everything to shout about.

Ditch the flats for an evening, as when the DJ appears (as he does on both a Friday and Saturday night) you're gonna want to get your groove on. Guys, I'll leave that up to you.

All photos from Bar Tomate

Bar Tomate

- [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- **Address:** Fernando El Santo, 26
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- **Metro:** Colon

Jack Percoca: The Little Italian Joint with Big Hearty Food

"The amount of food on the plate says a lot about the person who put it on the plate," laughs Luca. "I serve my customers like I serve my family."

Naples-born Luca is a professional restaurateur. For eight

years, he travelled around the world opening and running game-changing restaurants before finally settling in Madrid and opening Jack Percoca Bar & Kitchen, a cosy little Italian restaurant in the heart of the city's Conde Duque district.



The bar area



The cosy dining area with lots of natural light at lunchtime

The sheer wealth of experience Luca has picked up over the years becomes clear from the moment you walk in. A great deal of thought has gone into the style and layout: **the lighting is soft, there's no 'short-straw' table, the service is attentive, and the food is flawless.**

FOOD FOR FOUR (TO EIGHT)

To start, we ordered Burrata Tricolore, served on a bed of rocket with slices of perfectly ripe tomato and drizzled with Luca's famous basil pesto. We also ordered a bowl of "Smoking Bullets": deep-fried, cheese and ham-filled rigatoni, like an Italian take on croquettes. We loved the tomato-laden Bruschetta and, on the opposite end of all spectrums, the (intensely) Creamy Meatballs.



Smoking Bullets, Creamy Meatballs, Bruschetta and Burrata Tricolore



The Bruschetta

Feeling full yet? For mains, we had the Spaghetti Burger – a succulent home-made burger perched on a crispy basket of spaghetti – and the Steak Tartare with chunky chips. The Donna Sofia pizza is right up there with the best pizzas in Madrid, but the colossal **Truffle Mac and Cheese** was, as usual, the **star of the show.**



The Spaghetti Burger



The Truffle Mac 'n' Cheese

Despite being pretty full, we ordered the Margherita Cheesecake and the Amaretto Connection for all of us to share, because when a dessert is good enough (and you know what I'm talking about here), you'll find room for it.



The Amaretto Connection

WELCOME TO PROHIBITION-ERA NEW YORK

This excerpt from the menu sets the scene for the restaurant perfectly:

"It's the era of prohibition and the state has declared war on alcohol. Social downfall in America has reached rock bottom and liquor is squarely to blame. But New York City has been hit by a new wave of crime – the black market. The word on the street is that immoral men are brewing their own high-proof alcohol. Hip flasks of this "moonshine" are stuffed into the boots of liberated women to supply hundreds of "speakeasies". It's also the beginning of the underground jazz movement –

inspiration is thriving in these illegal alcohol-fueled parties, but only the coolest guys and dolls in town are in the know. It was here, in a speakeasy beneath the streets of New York, that Sandy met Jack..."

The infamous black market liquors of the Prohibition era echo throughout Luca's cocktails, which are **strong enough to cut through all three hearty courses and still leave you feeling merry.**



A selection of the classic cocktails

Jack Percoca Bar & Kitchen is humbly priced, but with big hearty food, strong cocktails and a charming atmosphere. This Little Italy eatery is determined to keep Madrid's restaurant

scene on its toes.

INFO

- Jack Percoca's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
 - Address: [Calle Conde Duque 14](#)
 - Call Luca to reserve: **915 13 50 44**
 - Opening hours: Mon-Sun 13.00 – 16.00 / 19.00 – 01.00
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Amargo, the city's best veggie burger (and much more)

The title says it all.

On a cozy corner in Malasaña, [Amargo Place To Be](#) lures you in with its fairytale facade, enveloped with ivy and illuminated by twinkle lights.

Inside, the vibe is both industrial and homey. Friendly faces will greet you (not always a given in the city) and you'll be overwhelmed by a menu **so international** you'll forget where you are.

Nigiris, Mexican nachos, giant *croquetas*, dim sum, lasagna with wonton pasta and pine nuts, duck magret over hummus and a raspberry coulis...

But as we're all biased—especially when it comes to food—what I wanna sell you on is their veggie burger.

I can't even bring myself to try anything else from the impressively diverse and delicious menu, because when I come to Amargo, I only have one thing on my mind: that thick and

savory soy burger piled high with zucchini in tempura, a fried egg, a thick slab of goat cheese, green shoots, caramelized onion, crispy onion crunch, and the special house sauce.



Go starving—just half of this monstrous burger fills me up.

They're open for breakfast, lunch and dinner (from 9am-2am every day!), have a fantastic *menú del día* (€11.90 M-F and €13.50 on weekends and holidays), and boast a lengthy drink list that includes signature cocktails and organic wine (!!!).

But wait, there's more.

If you venture downstairs (follow the 19th-century painting in which a stoic aristocrat dons some fly ass Nikes), you'll find the seating area where diners become audience members.



Since last year, **Amargo has hosted concerts** throughout the week. If you're dining in (make sure to make a reservation—it fills up!), it's just €2 to enjoy anything from flamenco to soul to acoustic while you eat. When I went, I was treated to [Chisara Agor](#)'s achingly soulful voice.

Check out this month's programming on Amargo's [website](#).



The mindblowingly talented Chisara Agor and the amazing Christian García-Fonseca Secher on cajón.

If you're somehow not yet experiencing sensory overload, the lower level also functions as a revolving art gallery. The current artwork is by local visual and urban artist [Misterpiro](#).



Just some pals having a very candid laugh.

In a hurry? Amargo also does **speedy-quick orders to go.**

You have no excuse.

Info

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
 - Instagram: @amargoplacetobe
 - Address: Calle Pez, 2
 - Phone: 910 84 79 90
 - Metro: Callao, Noviciado, Tribunal
-

Arts Club Madrid – Binge, don't purge

I pride myself on revelling in all things indulgent. My mantra is generally something along the lines *'Money – well you can't take it with you'* – which come rent day can be a problem. However, if there are treats to be had/bought/sniffed out, then I'm the girl to find them. Upon recently discovering the [Arts Club](#), I quickly realized that it was the kind of place where I'd happily blow my monthly food budget and then spend the remainder of the month wistfully eating beans on toast.

It is glam.



We're talking full on 'feels like you're on Sex and the City/channelling your inner Carrie Bradshaw' glam – which is a bit of a rare find in a city that prides itself on a lack of pretensions. In fact, walk into the [Arts Club](#) and it feels as

though Carrie Bradshaw's name is written all over it – not literally, but you know what I mean. It's the kind of place that you need to pop your heels on for, unless you fancy looking like the proverbial fish out of water.

The food

The menu is a super tempting mix of Asian fusion (a cliché sounding genre I know but the food was anything but lame).

Date night



The Arts Club is coincidentally how to do a date night. This luxurious spot boasts an impressive beer, wine, and cocktail list; the chicest interior design *and* should someone else be paying (and can therefore stretch to the most sumptuous experience they have to offer) you can bag yourself a table/area for when the dinner part stops and the dancing part

kicks in.

Being nestled in the heart of Barrio Salamanca helps it to retain its air of exclusivity but its laidback luxury is coincidentally part of its charm. Whilst it may be swish and swanky it's not intimidatingly so. I suggest, scarp that, I *insist* that you don your gladrags and spend an evening with the pretty peeps of Madrid.

Photo credit: [Arts Club – Madrid](#)

Info

- [Website](#) & [Facebook](#)
 - **Address:** Calle de Velázquez, 96
 - **Metro:** Núñez de Balboa
 - **Phone:** [648 96 58 39](#)
-

Bosco de Lobos – a casual-chic restaurant in Chueca

Last month I reviewed the sexy, swish [Ana La Santa](#). If we were to talk in terms of siblings, whilst Ana La Santa may be the mature older brother in the dining out stakes, this means that Bosco de Lobos may be the cuter, younger sister. Smaller in size and with a less obvious position within the city (it's tucked away between Calle Fuencarral and Hortaleza) sort of straddling Malasaña and Chueca if you will, it's the ideal place for a simple lunch on their sun-kissed terraza or for a casual date night that won't break the bank.

The atmosphere was (on a Friday night) buzzing to say the least; packed with punters all gagging to sample their take on

eclectic European fare, ranging from wood-fired pizzas, to steak tartare, to heaving pasta dishes. They do a little bit of everything and instead of this being to their detriment (like that friend you have who spreads themselves too thinly) it's all lip-smackingly good.



Like most, I enjoy dining out (ok, perhaps more than most) but I like to do so in places that lack pretention and that do simple things with style. Bosco de Lobos ticks both boxes. Special mention has to go our waitress, Iryna, who was a fountain of knowledge on the wine front, recommending the perfect Rioja to be paired with my steak. We rounded off the evening with a couple of puds and a G&T thrown in for good measure.

Speaking of round, that's exactly how my midriff felt after eating like a Queen. It doesn't hurt that the setting is as tasty as the food, lots of sultry low lighting and artfully

dishevelled bookshelves, making the whole place feel cosily lived in rather than sterile Scandi in tone.

Unlike La Musa, they do take reso's so I implore you to make one – you can thank me later.

All photos from [Bosco de Lobos](#)

Bosco de Lobos

- **Facebook & Instagram:** [@boscodelobosmadrid](#)
- **Address:** COAM, Calle de Hortaleza, 63
- **Phone:** [915 24 94 64](#)
- **Metro:** Alonso Martínez, Chueca & Tribunal

El Andariego, Your Argentinian Corner Bar in Madrid

A few years ago I went out with friends to see a play at a small theater in downtown Madrid. I don't remember where we went (we took a taxi there and back, and I just followed along), but I do remember the street was lined with independent theaters and arts spaces, and afterwards we went to a **sweet corner bar** that I instantly fell in love with. I'd always wondered where that bar was...

Here comes the crazy part. Last month I moved to **Calle Ercilla, near Embajadores**. As I was walking down my new street one day, I started seeing theater after theater... It all looked

too familiar, so I kept on walking and low and behold, there it was! The bar I had gone to all those years ago is called [El Andariego](#), and it's just how I remembered it.



It turns out **El Andariego** is a neighborhood favorite and pretty well known throughout Madrid. It specializes in Argentinian dishes, the star being the “**entrañas**” (entrails) which are out of this world, and other **grilled meat dishes** (€12.50).



Then of course they have a selection of **homemade empanadas** (€2.50-3.50). We tried the spinach and criolla ones which both hit the spot.





We also ordered an off-the-charts **quiche made with spinach, squash and pumpkin seeds**; plus the **provoleta**, melted provolone cheese (€6 each and delicious).





El Andariego also offers **vegan options like baba ganoush and hummus**, plus a selection of **Mexican dishes**. As I was watching other plates land on patrons' tables, I spotted an impressive mountain of quesadillas that I'll have to try next time.

So far I've eaten here twice and each time the bill came out to a total of just **22 euros for 2**, including a glass of red wine each. Granted we shared everything but still, it's very affordable.

So I can say the food, drinks and prices are all great. The only downside? It can get a bit cramped but that's pretty typical of Madrid bars, especially the good ones. Everybody wants in!

Info

- [Facebook](#)
 - **Address:** Calle del Labrador, 12 (corner with Calle Ercilla)
 - **Metro:** Embajadores
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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](#)
-

Abrásame, delicious Caribbean food in Malasaña

Situated just off Calle Pez, [Abrásame](#) is a fantastic restaurant specializing in traditional Caribbean and Latin American cuisine such as grilled chicken, arepas and tostones, at great prices.

I went with James on a Friday night and we were quickly greeted by Carmen, one of the owners, who guided us through the menu. Their specialty is **pollo a la brasa (charcoal-grilled chicken)**, made with love and marinated in a secret sauce (she did let out there's ginger in it).



We also couldn't resist ordering the ribs marinated in orange and honey, so we shared half portions of each. Both were

packed with flavor, incredibly tender and not too greasy at all, something I much appreciate.



Their **arepas** are also musts according to Carmen. I had the delicious **reina** with chicken and avocado, and James ordered the **carne mechada** which was truly unbelievable (€4.40 each). They came with two homemade sauces: **Abrásame Piri Piri** (spicy) and **Guasacaca** (mojo verde), a traditional Venezuelan sauce made with avocado and parsley that I loved and slathered over everything. I'll be dreaming about these till I go back for more.



To top it off, we heeded Carmen's advice once again and ordered the **quesillo**, which to my surprise has no cheese in it! It's similar to flan but oh so much better. It was seriously to die for – if you're going to share it, a battle will surely go down to get the last bite.



After wiping our plates clean and finishing off our beers, we got the chance to chat with both the owners, Carmen (from Extremadura) and Ronald (from Venezuela). Both have called Madrid home for over 15 years, having lived in Malasaña since they first arrived. They decided to open Abrásame six months ago because they noticed Madrid lacked authentic and well-made ***pollo a la brasa***.

At first they were going to open a take-away place but because preparing this dish requires a big grill with a large ventilation system, they ended up creating a full-on restaurant that seats around 35 people. The space is very welcoming and well-designed. They also have a comfy couch you can wait on if you decide to order to go. One of their main sources of business is takeaway and home delivery.

So, folks, with such delicious food at [prices](#) this good, I

wouldn't think twice about getting your home-cooked Caribbean-Latin American flavor fix here!

Info

[Website](#) & [Facebook](#)

Address: Andrés Borrego, 16, Malasaña.

Metro: Noviciado

Go Crazy for Cannibal.

New restaurant openings (or in fact any kind of opening) within Madrid are pretty much ten a penny. When strolling round any of the barrios, you'd be hard pressed to not spy an exposed brick or a jam jar cocktail vying for your attention, in what's becoming an increasingly crammed marketplace.

However, there are some new spots that feel no need for fanfare and know full well that the masses are going to flock in their droves. [Cannibal](#) holds this covetable spot. The restaurant equivalent of someone tall, dark and handsome – Cannibal is poised to become the darling of the Madrid restaurant scene and you won't just need to take my word for it; you could ask anyone who was there last Saturday (when it was packed to the rafters).



Madrid non-newbies will remember that the site of Cannibal once housed the infamous brunch spot 'Cafe Oliver' and when it closed its doors, many mourned the loss. So imagine my excitement whilst on my daily walk to work when I spied renovations.



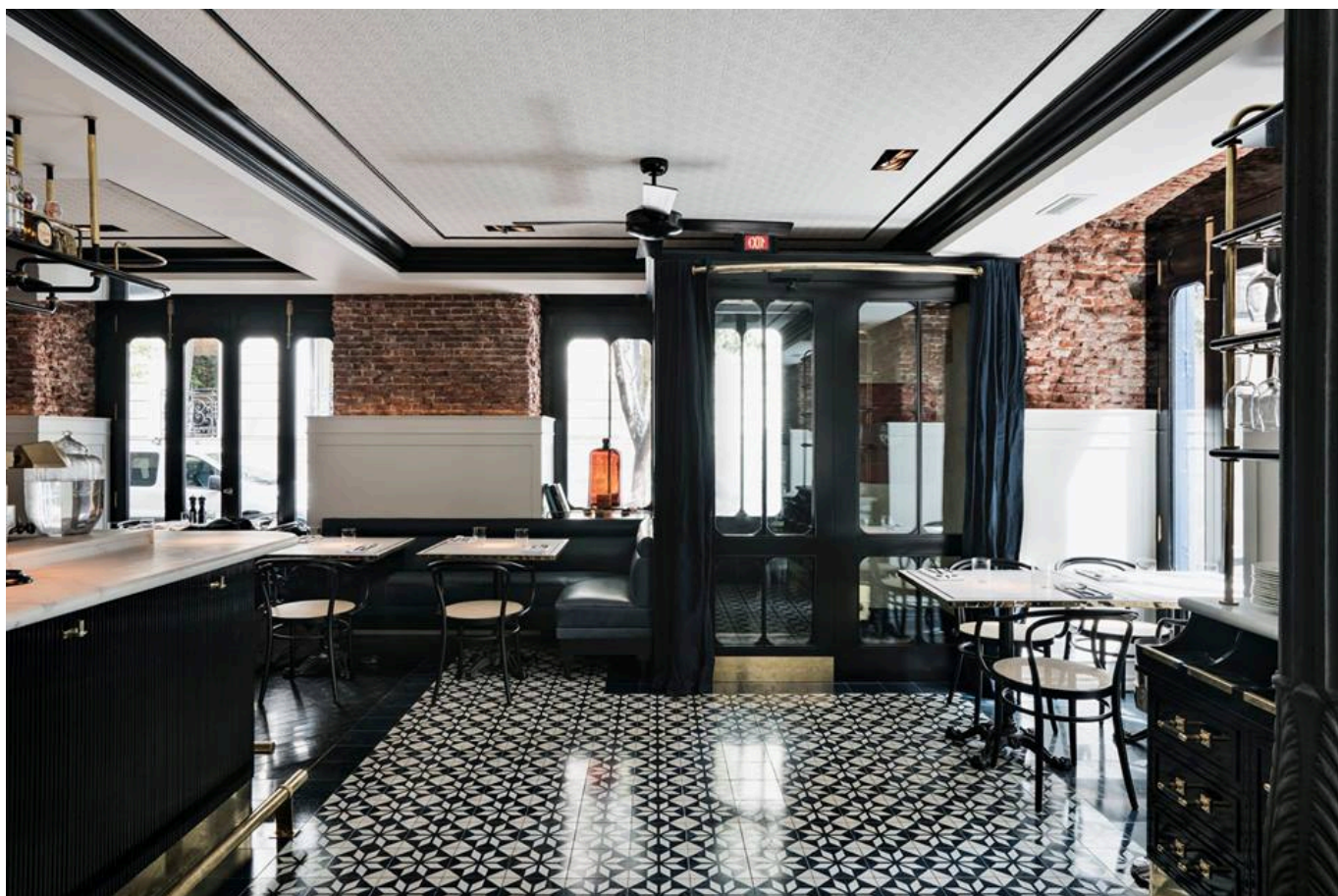
Now painted in an inky blue hue, the newly opened Cannibal is hard to miss. The name alludes to what's on offer dinner wise. The raw stuff. Tartare. Ceviche. Carpaccio. But don't despair if you're not a fan of the cold stuff, the menu offers a mean hamburger and THE most delish Peruvian Pork dish that was inhaled within mere minutes.



Now I could wax lyrical about just how good the food was – because it truly was. We're talking last meal type claims (if like me burrata and steak carpaccio is your idea of food heaven). But it wasn't just the food that had my company and

me swooning; it was the service.

In a country where asking for the bill is usually met with a grunt, the team at Cannibal couldn't have been more charming or attentive – much to the glee of my dinner companions. They happily talked through the menu with genuine interest, they were knowledgeable about ingredients and at no point were our glasses empty. I know this kind of vibe is to be expected in a country like the states, but in the land of jamon this is rare.



It goes without saying that the decor satiated my interiors porn thirst and it didn't hurt to have a window seat on a balmy evening, where you would people watch over your dulce de leche pud.



Like all restaurants reviews, I'm always torn between spreading the word and keeping schtum for fear of a place becoming busier than the Bernabeu on a match day, but the secret's out.



Embrace your inner cannibal and happy feasting. Who cares if it's bikini season with food that good? That's what kaftan's are for.

*All photos are from [Cannibal Raw Bar Madrid's FB page & Instagram](#)

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Website](#) & [Instagram](#)
 - **Address:** Calle Almirante., 12, 28004 Madrid
 - **Phone:** 910 26 87 94
 - **Metro:** Chueca, Colón, Banco de España
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Leave El Barrio for El Imparcial, in Tirso de Molina

I've started jokingly referring to Gran Vía as my Madrid version of the River Thames. Should you know London, you'll know that when it comes to being a dweller of the affectionately nicknamed 'smog', you very much fall either the North or South camp thanks to the watery divide; and to this end I feel that the same can be said for Madders. If you're Fuencarral side of Gran Vía you tend to spend your free time hot footing it around the streets of Malasaña and Chueca. Whereas if you veer down towards Sol, you can usually be found whiling away time between La Latina and Lavapiés. Either way, had I not crossed the 'symbolic' gulf provided by our very own Oxford Street equivalent, I may never have found [El Imparcial](#).



Inconspicuous and almost completely nondescript from the exterior, [El Imparcial](#) is quite the find upon entering. On the right hand side your greeted by a pocket-sized bar where you can grab a coffee or a cana. However, make your way up the

impressively sized staircases and you enter into an Aladdin's Cave of all round prettiness. I'm loathe to bandy around this term liberally, but the high ceilings and beautifully restored décor can almost be described as '*breath taking*' – close one eye and squint with the other and it does have a touch of the old Palace De Versailles about it.



Part concept store, part restaurant, El Imparcial straddles a line where you literally want **everything** that you see. Cocktails, they've got them in spades. Food, well there are morsels so delicious that it wouldn't be uncommon to not want to share your starter *apologies to my fam as I inhaled the bao buns without as much as a thought of 'did you want to try one?!'



Last but not least are the Wallpaper magazine worthy purchases waiting to adorn your casa. El Imparcial stocks a carefully (and I'd hazard a guess, lovingly) curated range of stationary, magazines and books – apt really considering the building once housed a newspaper.



Food wise they offer a complete smorgasbord of delights. We wolfed down (amongst other treats) Roasted black cod with miso edamame beans, oxtail croquettes and a lip smackingly good buttifara pizza with scamorza. Our lunch lasted for hours, dinner...even longer. It really is one of those places that seems to draw you in and make you not want to leave (or maybe after the array of cocktails placing one foot in front of other could've been tricky and partly to blame for the desire not to budge).

Did I mention just how pretty it is? *and that's just the staff. Book well ahead or find yourself lingering outside, nose pressed against the glass wanting to get in.

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Web](#)
- **Address:** Calle Duque de Alba, 4, 28012 Madrid
- **Metro:** Tirso de Molina

