

Museo Cerralbo, an art lover's dream house

If you're looking to explore [Madrid's museum scene](#) beyond the famous Prado and Reina Sofia, I recommend starting with [Los Cinco Museos](#), five former mansions that are all perfectly restored and house outstanding art collections: Cerralbo, Lázaro Galdiano, Artes Decorativas, Sorolla and Romanticismo.

These five museums take you on a journey to a different era, allowing you to see and feel what life might have been like when they were occupied. While each one is worth visiting, [Museo Cerralbo](#) is my personal favorite. I've been here twice – first on my own and then on a [guided tour](#) – and both times I was blown away by the museum's special charm.



Tucked away on a side street near Plaza de España and Templo de Debod, this museum is one of the former residences of the

Marquis of Cerralbo, who lived here with his family in the 19th century. Today, everything remains exactly in tact, from the furniture and art pieces to the wall colors and lighting.



As you walk through its many rooms and corridors, let your imagination run wild, picturing what life was like when this

house was actually a home.



The Marquis was a well known archeologist and passionate art lover. He amassed a collection of art, furniture and objects from Spain and around the world that you can see in every nook and cranny. You'll see beautiful paintings, mirrors, chandeliers and clocks dispersed throughout, and so much more.



The house has two floors. The first floor was where the family actually lived their normal lives, while the second floor is

where you'll find the extravagant ballroom and dining room, for example, that were meant to be shown off to guests.



Each particular room had a different purpose and decor, acting as a unique exhibition space. Here are a few examples.

The armor collection

After going up the gorgeous stairway (the house was actually designed to accommodate for a unique wooden banister), guests would step into the hallway displaying the Marquis's armor collection. This is my favorite exhibit.

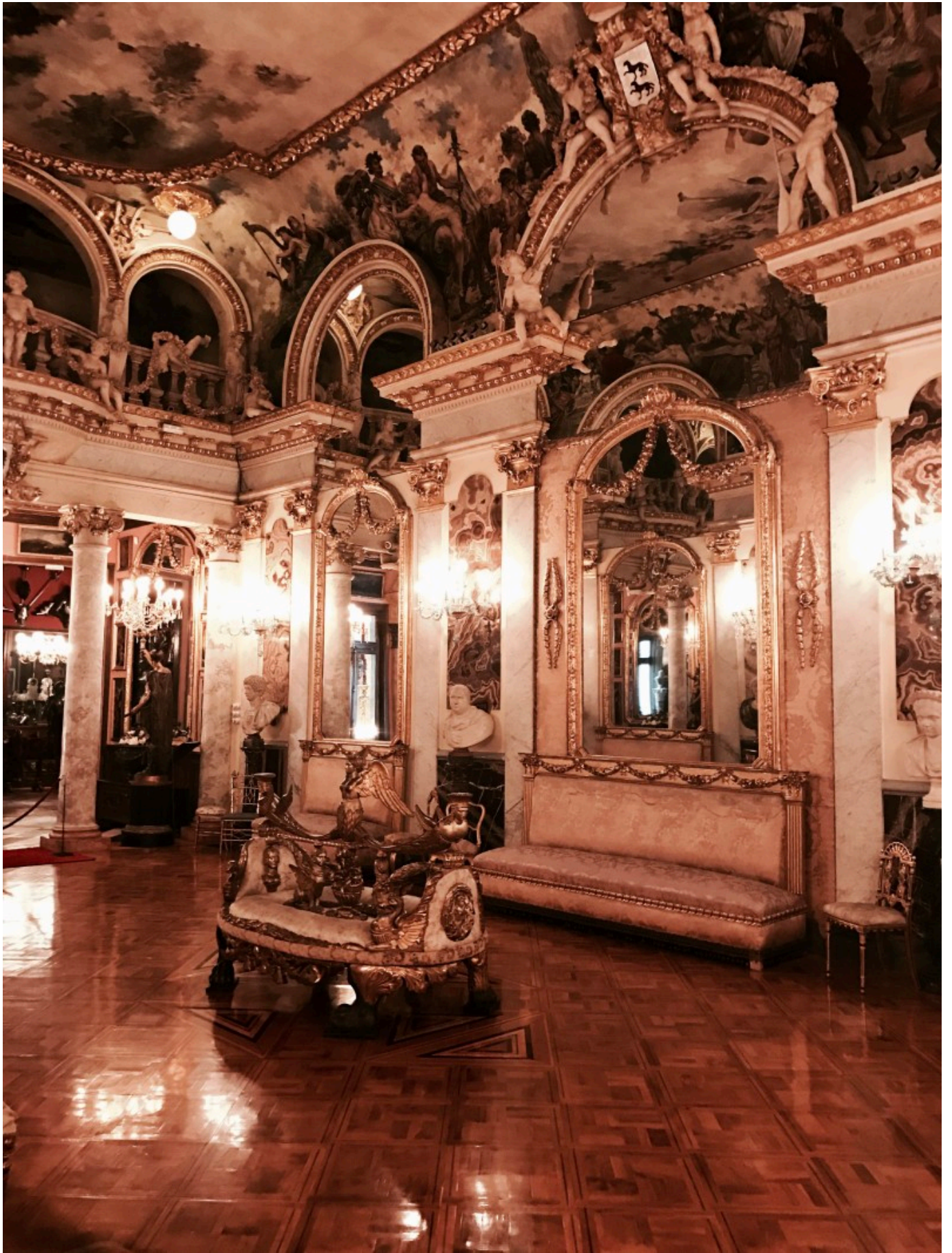






The ballroom

To the right of the armor collection you'll find the stunning ballroom. I would certainly like to dance here one day...



As you can see, the Marquis was particularly fond of playing with lighting and mirrors to add as much depth to each room as

possible. And not an inch of the house was left unadorned.



The library

The library features British-style decor and houses an impressive collection of books in several different languages, some dating back as far as the 15th century. Here you'll also find one of the largest coin collections in Spain.





The billiard room

Right off the dining room you'll find the billiard room. In that time, women weren't expected to join in on the game, so there was a seating area designed just for them to watch as the men played.



Snapshots of more rooms and objects

There are so many little rooms and corridors to check out, each one providing a window into another era and giving your eyes plenty to marvel at. I don't want to give away too much, so here are just a few more images to give you a glimpse of the Cerralbo Museum's collection. But please don't pass up the chance to see it in person!









Photography by Jose Luis Magaña from @asecond.art

Info

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- I highly recommend [booking a guided tour](#) in English, Spanish or French
- **Address:** Calle Ventura Rodríguez, 17
- **Hours:** Tues–Sat 9:30am-3pm; Thursday also from 5-8pm; Sundays and holidays from 10am-3pm
- **Metro:** Plaza de España
- **Los Cinco Museos** pass: if you want to visit all five of these former mansions turned museums, you can purchase a €12 pass called [Los Cinco Museos](#) at any of their ticket offices. The pass gives you unlimited access to all five museums for 10 days, and after that you can enter on Saturdays with a plus one for the rest of the year.

You may also like:

- [Madrid's obvious and not-so-obvious museums \(and how to get in for free!\)](#)

Rave Market – Special Psychedelic Edition

The highly popular [Rave Market](#) is hosting a psychedelic-themed edition at [Shoko](#) nightclub in La Latina this Sunday. More than 40 stands will be selling design and second-hand items, including clothing and accessories. There'll also be live music, performances, art exhibits and drinks to go around!

La Vermutería at Tipos Infames bookstore in Malasaña

The vermouth pop-up bar, [La Vermuteria](#), is back at [Tipos Infames](#) bookstore in Malasaña this Saturday. Skim through the pages of a new book while you treat yourself to a refreshing vermouth before lunch!

Creamies: Malasaña's new ice cream & cookie sandwich bar

Sugar addict? Keep reading. Don't have a sweet tooth? This place is not for you. Opened just three weeks, [Creamies](#) is a tiny ice cream sandwich bar in the heart of Malasaña that lures guests in with its neon '80s-esque decor and customers leaving with their sugary mounds of perfection.



The process is simple and tailored to your tastes.

First, you pick the “bread” of the sandwich: a donut (regular or Oreo), a blueberry muffin top, or a cookie—classic chocolate chip, white chocolate, triple chocolate... Undecided? **You can mix & match** the top and bottom.



Next, choose the ice cream filling: “triki” monster (kind of like birthday cake flavor), donut cream, “La Movida Madrileña,” double chocolate brownie, Kinder, yogurt & berry...



Lastly, **you can choose a “topping”**—whichever you choose, they’ll roll the sandwich in it. There are sprinkles, Lacasitos, marshmallows, Froot Loops, cookie crumbs, chocolate sauce, and more.



Would ya just look at that happiness?!

It's cheap, it's delicious, and the service is friendly.
Corred!

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- Insta: [@creamiesmadrid](#)
- Address: C/ Corredera Alta de San Pablo, 30
- Metro: Tribunal

You may also like:

- [Madrid's best ice cream shops](#)

Volunteer Opportunities in Madrid for Everyone

If you're looking for ways to get involved in the Madrid community and help out – from donating clothes to teaching English in city jails – here are a few non-profit organizations recommended by international volunteers who live here. While some require long-term commitments and knowing Spanish, others can benefit from just a few hours of your time and have no language barriers.

So whether you're new to the city or have very little spare time, there are plenty of ways to give back – even the smallest gesture can make a difference.

[Casa Solidaria](#)

While Madrid operates government-run food banks for its residents in need, there are many people who can't take advantage of this service due to lack of paperwork. **Casa Solidaria** aims to fill this void, organizing volunteers who prepare food in their own homes and deliver to 150+ people in **Plaza de Tirso de Molina every weekday at 8:30pm**. Each person gets a hot meal, a sandwich and a piece of fruit.

One volunteer said: “For most of these people, this is their primary source of food for the day. Without this, they are at serious risk.” With no regular funding, the charity—which also operates in Barcelona and Lleida—is always always looking for [volunteers and donations](#).

- [Website](#)

Robin Hood Restaurant



Pablo Blazquez Dominguez/Getty Images

Another noble organization feeding the hungry of Madrid is the Robin Hood restaurant on Calle Eguilaz. During the day, Robin Hood is run like a typical Spanish café. But **by night, the chefs and waiting staff use the profits to feed Madrid's most in need residents.**

At this catholic charity-run eatery, the idea is to offer the homeless of Madrid not only their daily bread, but also the civility of dining at a restaurant. Father Ángel García Rodríguez told [NPR](#), "I want them to eat with the same dignity as any other customer. And the same quality, with glasses made of crystal, not plastic, and in an atmosphere of friendship and conversation." The restaurant is attracting the talents of celebrity chefs and staff from the city's top hotels.

Support Robin Hood by dropping in for a bite to eat—just be

sure to make a reservation first as it's booking up months in advance.

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

CONCAES (Confraternidad Carcelaria Española)

CONCAES is a Madrid-based NGO that works to provide support to people affected by crime, whether they're prisoners, victims or family members. One of their main initiatives is giving educational workshops for inmates, to provide or increase skills and help with rehabilitation. English classes are currently run in two different penitentiary centres and give inmates the opportunity to learn English, or improve their level with native teachers.

As a volunteer you are responsible for planning and leading the classes, while you are accompanied by other volunteers or coordinators. According to one volunteer, "It can be challenging at times but it is without a doubt the most rewarding thing that I've done since moving to Madrid. In my experience the students are very motivated and the classes have a great atmosphere. The English workshops take place on Friday mornings so it's easy to combine with work. It can take a while between signing up and getting permission to enter the centres so this is definitely one for people who are in Madrid for more than a few months."

- [Website](#)

Madrid for Refugees



Madrid for Refugees is run by a group of international volunteers who work closely with refugee centers in the Comunidad de Madrid. Their main goal is to help refugees from all over the world to build a life for themselves here in the city, from finding housing to work. One way to support Madrid for Refugees is by attending a **Chefugee event – monthly dinners organized where the entire menu is prepared by a refugee** seeking work opportunities in Madrid's culinary scene. Other ways to get involved include donating clothes and doing language exchanges as well as running errands and being a chauffeur. You can also attend their fundraising events and concerts which are announced on the [MfR Facebook page](#), and all benefits go to helping refugees.

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

[Serve the City](#)

Serve the City is an international volunteer movement that

began in Brussels in 2005, and is now located in over 95 cities around the world. It aims to connect people with local opportunities and events in their cities, so they can show kindness in practical ways to people in need, including refugees, the homeless, orphans, victims of human trafficking, the disabled and the poor. Serve the City believes that even the smallest efforts can make a big difference, and we agree.

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

Know of any other organizations to add to this list? Let us know!

Street spotlight: Calle Ruda, a tiny portal between La Latina and Embajadores

It goes without saying that there's no shortage of things to do in Madrid. In fact, sometimes there's so much, you don't know where to start. On those days when the sun's shining and you're itching to get out of the house, **sometimes it's best to just walk to a cool part of town and let the city do its thing.** We're here to give you some inspiration.

Calle de la Ruda

La Latina and Embajadores—bustling multicultural hubs—are connected by a string of tiny streets full of surprises. One of them is **Calle Ruda**, which takes you straight from Mercado La Cebada to Plaza Cascorro, and makes the very short walk well worth it.

Onis, for old-school charm



If you enter the street from Calle Toledo, you're greeted by the classic corner bar, Onis.

This place is the definition of *castizo*. Tapas in the glass display case, tobacco machines, weird arcade games, and a grumpy server who has probably been here since the place opened (which was 1976, I've learned).

Ruda Café, for coffee



Looking for something more modern? We got you. Keep heading down Ruda and you'll come across [Ruda Café](#), a new (opened last year) coffeeshop that's riding the wave of java experts that has hit Madrid in recent years. We're not mad about this trend. And yes, they have wifi. They also sell packaged artisanal coffee and tea, jam, art, and coffeemakers.

De Piedra, for handmade jewelry



But there's only so much coffee you can drink (unfortunate, I know). So now that you're fueled up, you're ready to browse the cute little shops of this gem of a street. If you're a fan of jewelry and creepy mannequins, pay a visit to **De Piedra**, an artisanal jewelry shop at C/ Ruda 19. They haven't been at this location long, but the store has been open for some 15 years.

Molar, for records, books and cassette tapes



Next you'll come across my personal favorite place on the street, **Molar**. Think record store meets bookshop. They even sell cassette tapes, which is not something you see every day in Mad City.

Mamá Elba, for something sweet



Got a sweet tooth? [Mamá Elba](#) has been open a mere 3 weeks, and is already drawing a loyal customer base. Their selection of ice cream (including vegan and gluten-free), cakes, and coffee will leave you overwhelmed by heavenly choices.

Erre Catorce (R14), for art and design



[R14](#) is another **brand new spot** on the street, just open for a month. It's a modern interior design shop, with local art, restored vintage furniture pieces (from around the world, namely Scandinavia and the US), apparel, and lots of cool home decor.

Soon they'll be putting on events to promote and discuss interior design and art, so keep your eyes peeled and follow them on [Facebook](#).

La Tienda de Cerveza, for craft beer



Next up: craft beer. Okay, I lied before, THIS place is my favorite. [La Tienda de Cerveza](#) is a must in La Latina (and in the city, really). The shelves are lined with hundreds of bottled or canned craft beers and ciders from both Madrid and around the world. They have a few tables in the back, and they hold tasting events often. An absolute must for *cervecerxs*.

Tienda Biológica, for something healthy

Something I love about Madrid is that **you can eat healthy without going bankrupt**. Tienda Biológica is living proof of this. This small organic food shop sells health products at reasonable prices, and it's run by the sweetest lady.

La China Mandarina, for a great meal in a modern space



And last but not least (and not even covering half of the street's spots), for a great meal and a laidback ambience, visit [La China Mandarin](#) at the end of Calle Ruda (closest to Plaza Cascorro). It's one of those places that masters the art of offering both very traditional and very modern cuisine on the same menu. So if you're craving a *tortilla de patatas* but your friend has a hankering for a vegan burger, there's something for everyone.

They have great wifi and won't roll their eyes if you work on your laptop all morning (I know from experience).

There's also a mushroom-themed restaurant called El Brote! Check out Leah's article about it here:

[*El Brote: a brand-new mushroom restaurant in the heart of El Rastro*](#)

Calle Ruda is just one of a plethora of tiny goldmines in Madrid. If none of these spots call your attention (tough crowd!), we suggest you still come to the area on a beautiful day and just get lost. You can't go wrong.

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
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-

Keyaan's: A Taste of the Dominican Republic in Madrid

When it comes to restaurant reviews, the word “authentic” gets thrown around a lot. It’s become a buzzword for people seeking out genuine food and unique eating experiences, but all too often it’s used as a catchall adjective that doesn’t really mean much, a vague and perhaps inaccurate way to lure in customers looking for “the real deal.”

This is not the case at Keyaan’s. If there were ever an establishment that deserved the label of authenticity, it would be this place. Specializing in Dominican empanadas, traditional sides, and homemade desserts, the colorful café brings a true taste of the D.R. to the streets of Chamberí. After opening its doors only two months ago, it’s already accumulated a loyal clientele—and it only takes one bite to understand why.



The story of Keyaan's began with a simple craving. Around two years ago, just after her son Ilias was born, Zakiya Ramirez had a powerful longing for a good empanada. Her husband Aderly, who hails from the Dominican Republic, called up his mom and asked for her recipe. After a bit of tweaking and improvisation, he cooked up his very first batch of empanadas using nothing but a hot plate. Zakiya was floored; it seemed her husband had a hidden natural talent that not even he was aware of.



Zakiya, Aderly, and Ilias Keyaan Ramirez

In the years since, Aderly's recipe gradually evolved and improved until the couple decided it was time to share his skills with the world. They opened Keyaan's in November, christening it with their son's middle name, and it's already gained a considerable—and well-deserved—reputation.

I recently dropped by to sample some of their signature offerings, with my friend and trusty taste-tester Sophia by my side. We were presented with dish after dish of Dominican delicacies, hitting as many of the menu's high spots as possible before falling into a full-on food coma.



First up: the empanadas. Aderly's specialty is front and center at Keyaan's, making up the bulk of the menu. You can choose from several fillings (beef, chicken, cheese, vegetables, tuna, and even pepperoni, in a variety of combinations) and two sizes (just one of the big ones will fill you up, but the mini empanadas are too cute to resist). Unlike some versions, these are chock full of the good stuff, meaning you won't be biting into a pocket of air. The dough is made fresh each day, and every single empanada is hand-formed and fried to order. The result is crispy on the outside, soft on the inside, and juicy without being greasy; a difficult balance to strike.



As tempting as it may be to gorge yourself on nothing but empanadas, it would be a crime to leave without sampling the sides. The *fritos* (flattened and fried plantains, similar to *tostones*) and *bollitos de yuca* (fried balls of yuca stuffed with melty gouda cheese) also achieve an ideal equilibrium, indulgent and rich without being too heavy.



Not to mention the *quipes*—fried balls of bulgur wheat dough stuffed with chicken, beef, or cheese—a classic dish that arrived in the Dominican Republic by way of the Arab world (you might have tried its Middle-Eastern cousin, *kibbeh*).



Upon biting into one, Sophia's first words were "I just wanna dive into it." In fact, she named it her favorite of all the dishes she tried, which is certainly saying something. According to Zakiya, it's a customer favorite as well; almost every Dominican who comes to Keyaan's orders empanadas with a side of *quipes*, and they're far from disappointed. One regular swore that their empanadas are even better than those of the most famous restaurant in Santo Domingo. Needless to say, authentic is an understatement.



If you've managed to make it through the savory stuff without getting too full, you won't be disappointed by dessert. There's a wide selection of *batidos* in flavors ranging from the classics to irresistibly creative inventions. The fruitier options (strawberry, papaya, coconut, and mango) are made the Dominican way, with evaporated milk, while the richer varieties (chocolate, vanilla, Oreo, Kinder Bueno, Ferrero Rocher, *galleta Biscoff*, and *magdalena*) are made with ice cream for a more American-style milkshake. They're served in enormous glasses and topped with whipped cream, ideal for sharing (or not). Not too sweet, perfectly rich, and deliciously creamy. You might be surprised at how fast you can finish one.



Galleta Biscoff batido: “Like drinking a cookie”

Still hungry? Try one of the sweet empanadas, dreamed up as a way to combine Aderly’s talents with Zakiya’s passion for baking. The same perfectly fried dough, stuffed with apple pie, *dulce de leche*, nutella cheesecake, Oreo, white chocolate, strawberries, or pineapple... it’s clearly a match made in heaven.

All of the desserts are made entirely from scratch, and rumor has it that Zakiya’s cheesecake is the best in all of Spain. If you want to taste it in all its glory, you can order it by the slice as well as in empanada form. For something a bit more traditional, try the *majarete* or *habichuelas con dulce*, classic Dominican desserts made from corn and beans,

respectively.



White chocolate caramel cheesecake

To wash it all down, you can choose from a variety of espresso drinks made with Dominican Café Santo Domingo (“Even the coffee is amazing,” according to Sophia), including bulletproof coffee and *affogato*. Or give into temptation and go for Zakiya’s signature Nutella hot chocolate, or the Dominican specialty *morir soñando* (orange or passion fruit juice mixed with evaporated milk). If you want something a bit lighter, there are also several kinds of natural juices.



Keyaan's offers weekly specials and events that draw a crowd of expats and locals alike. If you want to sample as many empanada flavors as possible, you'll appreciate Lunes de Locura, when mini empanadas are available for just €1 each (and larger ones for €2.50). There are also monthly language exchanges, giveaways, and much more on the horizon. Zakiya has big dreams for Keyaan's, hoping to one day turn it into an international chain with locations in London, Santo Domingo, and the United States. Her customers are already begging her to expand, so they can feed their newly formed empanada addictions no matter where in the world they may be.



For now, though, we'll have to be satisfied with this cozy café and its incredible power to transport us from the center of Madrid to the middle of the Caribbean. Keyaan's is unquestionably authentic, but it's so much more than that: it's a place where real homemade food takes center stage, giving us a taste not only of Dominican culture but also of the genuine tradition, dedication, and love that's folded into each and every empanada. No wonder we keep coming back for more.



Professional taste-tester Sophia enjoying Keyaan's specialties

Info

- [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
- **Address:** Calle Blasco de Garay, 10
- **Metro:** Argüelles and San Bernardo
- **Phone:** 915 99 38 76

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
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-

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

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- **Phone:** [915 24 94 64](#)
- **Metro:** Alonso Martínez, Chueca & Tribunal