

Marisquería las Chalanas, Asturian Cider and Seafood in Plaza España

Despite its absence of an ocean, delicious and affordable seafood can be found in Madrid for those who seek it. My friend Jacqui brought the existence of [Marisquería las Chalanas](#) to my attention, praising it for its attentive staff and the quality of the portions. With my interest piqued, Jacqui brought myself and our companion Nanor to this location on a **Saturday night in order to nibble on sea critters and drink Asturian cider.**

We arrived early and perched ourselves at a table in the bar area and later received lingering glances from standing patrons keen to usurp it from us. For this reason **it's pivotal to arrive before the crowd**; deshelling shrimp and crabs without an adequate surface to rest the plate is an uphill battle.

The bar area offers specials where **generous *raciones* of seafood cost 5€ with 6 glasses of cider included.** We ordered two of these, the first being **1/4 kilo of cold shrimp** and the second being a dignified **king crab**, to share between the three of us.





Our alert server kept our cider glasses full and was empathetic to Jacqui's needs as a **celiac**; he was proactive and double-checked with the chef that none of our plates were exposed to gluten. In addition to these portions we also ordered **garlic prawns** and **Mussels a la marinara** off of the restaurant menu.





By the end of our meal we were indulgently full and content, all of the food pictured here cost 34€ in total. As we adjusted our coats and scarves to leave, the vultures pounced to claim our little table as their own. I recommend this establishment for celebratory occasions, [parent visits](#) or for [private rendezvous](#) for those entangled illicit trysts because the likelihood of crossing paths with anyone you know here is low.

Info

- [Facebook](#)
 - [Website](#)
 - **Metro:** Plaza de España
 - **Address:** C/San Leonardo 12
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Harry Potter Book Night

Calling all wizards, witches and muggles alike... On Thursday February 4th at 8pm, Desperate Literature will be hosting a [Harry Potter Book Night](#)! Join in on the quizzes to win prizes such as Dobby's last place socks or Hagrid's rock cakes.

British Shorts: Ten. Ten. Ten.

[British Shorts](#) is a new theatre company made up of all native English professional actors on a mission to provide Madrid with good quality short and one-act plays in English. Their first micro-theatre production, '**Ten.Ten.Ten**', was running at [El Escondite](#) in La Latina throughout January and due to its success, it's now been extended to February as well. You can come watch them perform every Wednesday this month at 8:30pm, 9pm and 9:30pm. Tickets cost €4.50.

La Pecera, Affordable Fine Dining at Círculo de Bellas Artes

Fancy a decadent meal in a regal setting that doesn't burn a hole in your wallet? We found it! El Círculo de Bellas Artes is one of Madrid's most emblematic buildings and its street-level restaurant, [La Pecera](#), serves a top-quality *menú del día* every day of the week for just €15 (€17 on the terrace). It includes a starter, main course, drink and coffee or dessert, with a variety of dishes and vegetarian options to choose from. And to top it all off, you'll be enjoying your delicious meal in a stunning dining room with beautifully painted ceilings, elegant chandeliers and excellent service.







James and I went on a Monday for the [menú del día](#) and we're still amazed that you can get such a fine dining experience for only €15 a person. I kept thinking I wished I'd [brought my parents](#) here each time they'd come to visit. Like myself, I'm sure a lot of people walk by [La Pecera](#) with its outdoor terrace and fans in the summertime, and assume it is too exclusive to go in. Wrong! Prices are similar to what you'll find at almost all nice restaurants in Madrid. But you just can't beat this magnificent setting...

Now on to the food. For starters, I had the *arroz caldoso (rice in broth) with clams and shrimp*, and James had the *pasta with sautéed vegetables and cuttlefish*. Other starters that caught my eye were the homemade salmorejo, ham croquettes, lentils and duck magret salad... good thing I just went with the waiter's recommendation or else it would've taken me ages to order.





The **arroz caldoso** is prepared in an individual pot and with a deliciously flavored seafood sauce. The portion was generous, so I was happy my main course was also fish. James' cuttlefish pasta had a surprising Asian flavor, something he loved but didn't expect given the more traditional setting.

For the main course I had the smoked salmon with vegetables in a coconut sauce, another unexpected mix of flavors.



But I must admit that James' main course took the cake: the **Carrillada Ibérica** (Iberian beef cheeks) with apple quince jelly. The meat was so tender it melted in his mouth and the sauce was so flavorful that all James could say was, "Oh, wow."



All the desserts are homemade and included in the menú del día. James had the apple pie and I had a semi-cold yogurt with a reduced Pedro Ximénez sauce. So good.





As we were leaving, I asked the waiter if there's anything else we should try. He told us we had to come back for the **breakfast menu**, which features a range of options, from the standard toast and freshly-squeezed orange juice to a full-on British-style breakfast and [American-style brunch](#).

At night, the restaurant holds live jazz concerts and its **bar offers an impressive selection of over 400 bottles of liquor**; all to please local and foreign palates at a reasonable price, within a gorgeous space that'll make any day feel like a special occasion.



So before or after your next visit to a [museum along Paseo del Prado](#), or shopping in the center or whatever brings you and yours to Madrid, you're in for a treat!





Lastly, I can't end this article without reminding you that El Círculo de Bellas Artes has one of the [city's best rooftop bars](#), called [Tartan Roof](#). Make sure to pop up to take in the view, visit its restaurant (just book ahead of time) or enjoy a cocktail.

Info

- [Website & Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Calle Alcalá 42
- **Metro:** Banco de España or Sevilla
- **Phone:** 677458448 / 913 605 400

You may also like:

- [Where to take your mom in Madrid](#)

- [A year of Menús del Día in Madrid](#)
 - [Madrid's best rooftop bars](#)
-

Café del Rey, an unexpected restaurant behind Príncipe Pío

Situated on an unassuming street behind Príncipe Pío lies [Café del Rey](#), a modern restaurant that's totally unexpected. Although it's a five-minute walk from the train station, as well as the Royal Palace, Templo Dubod and Plaza de España, the street it's located on is quite off the beaten path.

James and I went on a Saturday night when the center was uncomfortably crowded, as per usual. Dodging pedestrians left and right, we headed down Cuesta San Vicente. Just before reaching the station, we turned right onto a quiet street called Paseo del Rey and bam! We'd completely escaped the city's hustle and bustle and could finally breathe again.

Two minutes later we arrived at the restaurant, whose stylish decor stands out among the surrounding residential buildings. What is this modern restaurant doing here? It looks like it should be in Malasaña, Chueca, or even Salamanca. That said, we were happy it wasn't located in those neighborhoods because it gave us the chance to try something new and head in a different direction.



photo from their [Facebook](#), as are all the high-quality pics below!

The front part of the venue is a casual bar, delicatessen and

shop. You'll find sandwiches on baguettes, mouthwatering cakes and other treats on display, plus a great beer selection and wine list. We went for dinner so we sat in the dining area in the back, also chic and with plenty of space to remind us we weren't in an itchy bitsy bar in La Latina (which we love, just sometimes we crave some leg room).



As we were eating dinner, we couldn't help but talk about how oddly situated the restaurant was. How could anyone find it if they weren't looking for it? Bottom line is you couldn't. That's kind of why we like it. While in the summer I'm sure it's always packed because of its beach-themed outdoor terrace, during the wintertime I imagine the clientele is more from the neighborhood, as well as people coming in from Principe Pio or after spending the day along Madrid's river. They also hold events like wine and beer tastings that bring in patrons.



Back to our dinner: James got a burger (which the waiter recommended) and I went with the salmon with vegetables (I'm on a bit of a health kick these days), accompanied by a few glasses of red wine.



The table next to us was having a true feast and I must say the pasta and tuna dishes they ordered looked huge. We enjoyed our meal and the price range was reasonable. For example, the burgers cost €8-11. We didn't end up trying their famous cakes which I honestly regret. That's their specialty – the red velvet and carrot cake in particular – and they looked incredible!



The wait staff were also very friendly and attentive.

Since Café del Rey serves breakfast and brunch menus too, we've got plenty of reasons to go back. I also can't wait till summer to check out their outdoor seating areas.

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- [Website](#)
- Twitter/Instagram: @cafedelrey22

La Nodriza, Madrid's loveliest health food store!

Around Christmastime I got an email from Terry and Charlotte who run [Desperate Literature](#), an international bookstore that's just a street up from Opera. Here's what they wrote: "We came across a local health and organic food store that we fell in love with. The owner is great... and it's a crying shame that locals and health-conscious expats don't know about the place. It only has [Facebook](#), but voila, now we've done our part and spread the good news," inferring it was Naked Madrid's turn to do the same!

Thank you, Terry and Charlotte, for sending me that email! I finally made it to [La Nodriza](#) today and I have to agree – how had I not known about it earlier? It's just a few steps from plaza Opera and lovingly run by a woman named Lucía, who handpicks each item with careful consideration to customers' requests and also speaks English. Originally from Spain, Lucía has lived all over the world, having spent years in England,

Sweden (she speaks Swedish, too), Chile and even Kuwait and Oman. Long story short, she's got a lot of stories. Eventually she decided to follow her passion and study nutrition, which led her to **open La Nodriza two years ago, "her dream come true."**



Although La Nodriza is small, it offers an impressive selection of handmade and organic products, ranging from cosmetics and olive oil to fresh produce and yogurt. You can even get a weekly order of local fruits and vegetables. Chances are you'll find that hard-to-find item here, or you can ask Lucía to order it for you! Not to mention, **La Nodriza is also a great place to find a gift for someone back home** (like locally produced olive oil or raw honey), **or even for someone in town** (like Burt's Bees products).



What I bought

What caught my eye the most was her wide selection of raw honeys. She has two large containers of honey from local producers that you can purchase by the kilo: one is made with lavender (*lavanda*), and the other with heather (*brezo*). Lucía let us taste both of them, which were so pure and delicious. **I bought a kilo of the heather honey (€10.50) because it was darker and richer, which is the kind I prefer, and I also got to pour it myself.**



The next thing I bought was **organic peanut butter** by a brand called **Monki**. Although it wasn't cheap (€7.20) and there was another less expensive option, Lucía assured me this one's quality was well worth it. As I sit here with my Monki peanut butter on toast, all I can say is I second her opinion.

While browsing, Lucía gave us both a piece of **dark chocolate with chilli peppers** because, "it's something different." As we were leaving, she popped two bite-size **red apples** into our bag. "They're small," she said, "but totally fresh and pack in a lot of flavor." And they do, indeed.

So, people of Madrid, if you're looking for a place to get your supply of organic, fresh and local products in the heart of the city, you've found it. These products may be more expensive than what you'll find at Mercadona, but they're oh so worth it!

Info

- [Facebook](#)
- **Hours:** Open Tues-Sunday from 12pm-10pm
- **Phone:** +34 912 50 29 65
- **Address:** Calle Caños del Peral, 5

You may also like:

- [Best Gifts from Madrid](#)
- [Desperate Literature, for book lovers in Brooklyn, Santorini and now Madrid!](#)
- [Where to take your Mom in Madrid](#)

Vermouth Party at El Imparcial by La Vermutería

Even if you're hungover on Sunday morning, head over to [La Vermutería's](#) *pop-up aperitif party* from 12:30-2:30 at [El Imparcial](#), a chic restaurant and bar near metros La Latina and Tirso de Molina. It's the perfect way to whet your appetite before lunch, i.e. with a glass (or two) of Lustau vermouth, Spanish tapas and some dancing to a live DJ, plus good vibes all around. Don't miss it!

[#elpoderdelvermut](#)

Host: @vermuteriapopup

Venue: @imparcialmadrid

Rave Market: shop second-hand in a nightclub!

Shoko, one of Madrid's nightclubs in La Latina, will be opening its doors all day Sunday to host a unique event called [Rave Market](#), where you'll find second-hand items, music, art and design. Apparently this edition is a "flirting special"... not sure what that means but we'll be there to find out ☐

"Weird Folk" Music Concert at Desperate Literature

[Desperate Literature](#) is hosting yet another cool event on Friday night at 9pm. Expect drinks, dancing and fine literature, accompanied by live music played by [The Mañana People](#). According to the guys at Desperate Literature, "They're bloomin' brilliant so we got them in again: join us once more for the blue-grass, weird folk fantasmagoria that is [The Mañana People!](#)"

Courage on the corner: a window into the life of a Senegalese migrant and Baye Fall culture

Barrio Lavapiés can be personified by its many smells: the Indian curries and scents escaping from the ethnic restaurants and the grit of the infrequently cleaned streets. Least subtle of all is the lingering scent of weed and hash smoked by entrepreneurial gentlemen on the corner, who actively solicit the business of passersby. People of all ages congregate and *botellón* when the weather allows it. There is a strong sense of community here among the international and local residents. **In recent years the neighborhood of Lavapiés has become trendy and has been slowly undergoing the inevitable gentrification process.**



I was moved by a *Vice* documentary titled [“Storming Spain’s Razor-Wire Fence”](#) that depicts the odyssey undertaken by many African migrants in their attempts to enter mainland Spain via the border shared between Morocco & Ceuta y Melilla. The documentary provided a brutal window into their journeys but didn’t go into any detail as to how those who had succeeded would go on to assimilate. My curiosity was piqued as to **potential stories that could be shared by my neighbors in Lavapiés** if they were granted an adequate platform to do so.



My close friend Kam “El Profesoul” accompanied me as my barrio ambassador; together we scoured the block, my notebook in hand as we searched for subjects to interview. As an active musician and long-term resident of the neighborhood, Kam has befriended many members of the African community. One such friend of Kam’s was responsive to my interview request and invited us to join him and his crew on the smoky stairs where they were strategically perched. **Moha**, a bearded African with dignified posture, kept his eyes hidden behind yellow plastic sunglasses. In the background was [Zikr music](#) from Senegal playing softly. **Moha and his companions identify themselves as [Baye Falls](#), a sub-group of the Mouride Brotherhood that is prominent in Senegal.** The ensuing conversation took place in Spanish with my notes taken in English.

My interview with Moha



Where are you from? Do you feel at home here?

I am from Senegal and I am grateful to be a documented resident of Spain for five years. My family moved here before I did and I was fortunately granted permission to join them. Many of my friends were separated from their families during their journeys or after arriving here because without legal papers they cannot leave Spain. Every resource of value was taken from our Africa and we come here to have a better life. We've made this barrio our home. We bring our music, our food our culture and our love.

What do you want members of my community

to know about yours?

Baye Fall culture is about respect, love and valor. We don't steal. We love our neighbors. If we see one of our own misbehave, we confront them and put them on the right path. (During our conversation one of Moha's peers catcalled a passerby and was swiftly berated by the group, exemplifying these principles.) We believe in nonviolence and love. We're open to outsiders. See him? My white friend below, we're teaching him *Baye Fall*. We don't fight, when we do it's not with the world but within ourselves. "Su lucha es suya misma"

What is a typical day like on the corner? What qualities have helped you survive here?

"Si no trapicheos, no comes" – If we don't hustle, we can't eat.

Many are obligated to stay in the game, whether or not it's what we want. We meet a lot of people this way. On a typical day we can work the corners and do our parts in peace and there is no problem. Sometimes we are confronted by the police. I have seen many friends detained and disappeared for not having their legal documents. Without my documents I would not have the freedom and peace that I am blessed with now. To avoid police, it helps to change our clothes several times throughout the day. Without papers, one must find alternatives to contracted work. Many of us have mastered a trade or art form. **We're painters, drummers, singers, sculptors, woodworkers.** We are many things. We gather on Sundays to teach our skills to each other and anyone else who seeks it.



The police interrogating my African neighbors in a previous Lavapies apartment

What can be done to improve the assimilation process in the future?

We must be reminded that we are all equal. That we can forget our differences. **Opportunities that we create ourselves cannot be taken away from us.** We must not fall weak and be foolish. We must be able to ask for help when we need it and then give it back.

What is your happiest memory in the barrio?

There is a [yearly grand party](#) of *Baye Falls*. The exact date depends on the lunar cycle; this past year it was in November.

People come from all over to celebrate and dance in the streets. It is beautiful.

How do you feel that Lavapiés is now becoming a “trendy” neighborhood? Are you concerned that it will become gentrified and lose its charm and essence?

The Spanish youth that live in the barrio are not affecting it in a negative way. The students and artists are innovative and have many ideas that could work. They have clear hearts and have *Baye Fall* in them even if they don't know it. **Lavapiés is the heart of Madrid, let's not forget that.**



Please share any comments you may have, and stay tuned – Dan will be providing us with more special

articles like this one over the coming months.

You may also like:

- Baobab, an authentic Senegalese restaurant in Lavapiés