

Helena Rohner, handmade jewelry in the heart of La Latina

When you think of **La Latina**, you generally think of tapas, vermouth, the tortilla de patata with caramelized onions at [Juana La Loca](#), and of course, El Rastro. You wouldn't normally think of handmade jewelry, but on **Calle del Almendro**, just off of Cava Baja (by way of Grafal), you'll find the [Helena Rohner](#) showroom.



Originally from the Canary Islands, Rohner bases her designs on the simplicity of shapes and pure lines. She mixes silver (there are gold-plated pieces as well) with a variety of materials (some of her pieces use porcelain, wood, and stones) to create simply beautiful designs. In addition to jewelry, Rohner has designed a variety of other products for companies such as Bodum and Georg Jensen. She's also the **2014 winner of the Medalla de Oro en Bellas Artes.**





Over the holidays, I stumbled upon her jewelry at [The Hovse](#), an amazing pop-up shop a short walk from my then-apartment. I'm always on the lookout for something different, especially things made in Spain. And this is where it all began. I'm a sucker for jewelry since it's normally something you can't outgrow, well at least in theory. I was looking for little **presents to bring to my parents and sister** in New York and I love bringing things that they can't get there.



What captivated me when I stumbled upon her station that very fateful day? Bracelets with simple silver or gold-plated pieces on colored cord. I began trying everything on, and I was sold. I also found a **gold-plated ring** that was a band in the form of a fishtail braid; it was just my style and fit on the exact finger I was looking a ring for. After picking up some items for my parents, sister, and one of my best friends from home, I snagged most of my made-in-Spain **Chrimukkah loot**.



Once I got back, I knew that I wanted more and decided to take a trip to the studio and store. As you enter, you can see the center displays with all of the different styles with the workspace on the left and offices on the right.



On my first visit, I was first drawn to the selection of

bracelets that I had seen at The Hovse in various colors with simple shapes. There was a bright blue that I'm absolutely in love with (I have several pieces in that color), but the saleswoman guided me towards the **granada cord** (it's a very pretty pink that contrast well, in Spanish, granada means pomegranate).



The bracelets on the colored cords are okay to wear in the shower and one of the saleswoman proudly reported that the silver pieces **can be worn while swimming** in the summer and can hold up well. In addition to those bracelets, I then got a bangle with a noted etching to fill a void left by one of my presents that broke. On subsequent visits, I got more bracelets like this, including a gold-plated circle on red cord. I also got a pair of small studs in the form of a knot (most earrings are sold individually). Other pieces I've snagged are a necklace with a knot pendant and another that can be worn as a headband (something I've definitely done to dress up my late-day ponytail on occasion).



When you go to Helena Rohner, you'll come out with more than you planned on getting, but trust me, you'll never want to take them off.

Info

[Website](#)

[Facebook](#)

Calle del Almendro, 4

Metro: La Latina

Hours: Monday-Friday 9 AM-8:30 PM; Saturday 12:00-2:30 PM
and 3:30-8 PM; Sunday 12-3 PM

You'll also like:

Dime que me quieres: Personalized jewelry to show how much you love someone (or yourself)

Salón des Fleurs – Flowers, Tea, and Vintage, Oh My!

Every day is Spring inside [Salón des Fleurs](#). Step inside this quaint store that doubles as a florist and tea room, with a side of vintage products, and breathe in the fresh smell of flowers that are carefully displayed throughout the space.



Twinkling lights adorn the large paneled windows, adding to the charm of this café, if you could even call it simply that. Bright pink, red, and orange flowers are displayed outside next to small tables for those wanting to soak up the sun in good weather.



Sink into one of the comfy armchairs as you consider the all-encompassing tea list. There is nothing standard about the menu at *Salón des Fleurs*, descriptors such as “black tea,” and “green tea” are merely side notes offered to try to explain the flavoring of such teas as *Apple Pie*, *Cookie*, and *Champagne and Strawberries*. Coffee is offered too, but with such exotic tea flavors, why bother?



Served in beautiful painted mugs, the tea puts your morning Earl Grey to shame. If you're looking for a side treat to indulge in, [Salón des Fleurs](#) offers cakes and desserts also, including a two-layered fluffy carrot cake topped with rich cream cheese frosting.

Once you have savored your tea as long as possible, explore the rest of the store a bit. There is more than meets the eye, and you might find yourself discovering little quirks throughout the store, such as the multiple clocks in unusual places, all displaying a different time.



A spiral staircase leads to an upstairs vintage section, while the downstairs is more dedicated to the flowers, with a florist freshly cutting stems.

Like their alluring tea selection, [Salón des Fleurs](#) offers a variety of flowers, in bright colors, in pots, long stemmed; come here for any occasion and you won't regret it. Don't need flowers? Browse the vintage section or warm up with a mug of tea, any excuse to visit this charming spot will do.

Salón des Fleurs

[Web](#) & [Facebook](#)

Where: Guzman el Bueno, 106

Phone: 915 35 23 48

Prices: Tea, €2.6

1862 Dry Bar – Perfection Served in a Glass

Looking for a perfectly crafted cocktail? Do you prefer the classics, or something a little more adventurous? No matter your taste, there is a spot for you at [1862 Dry Bar](#), located in the heart of Malasaña.

If you need structure, snag a table on the street level, with tables peppering the perimeter of the room, and the bar as the center of attention. For those looking to lounge and drop into a comfortable sofa, head to the dimly lit basement, and find yourself losing all concept of time.

The cocktail menu is comprehensive – running the gamut from Old Fashioned to Cosmopolitan; you name it, they serve it. Don't miss out on the house specials on the backside of the menu, with intricate mixes that you didn't know you wanted until you saw it on the menu.



If you are indecisive like I tend to be, simply ask for a recommendation-the service is friendly and can help you craft your drink based on your likes and dislikes without a second thought. Each careful creation is fairly priced at **8€**.



The basement displays quite literally a cage of alcohol, decoratively illuminated in case you still aren't sure what you're in the mood for.

If you are able to climb out of your comfortable seat on the couch, look beyond the curved archway in the basement that gives way to a smaller bar counter, with old fashioned photos, exposed brick walls, and hanging stemware.



[1862 Dry Bar](#) has all you could ask for-aesthetic appeal in a comfortable setting, affable, knowledgeable employees, and expertly crafted cocktails. But don't take my word for it-start tasting your way through the menu and decide for yourself if you're more of the traditional type, or if you can handle something a little different.

[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Where: Calle del Pez, 27

Metro: Noviciado

Looking for more on Madrid's bar scene?
Check out:

[Madrid's Best Cocktail Bars](#)

[Madrid's Best Craft Beer Bars](#)

[Madrid's Best Rooftop Bars](#)

Americana Music Jam at The Toast!

This Sunday, sit back and unwind at [The Toast Cafe](#) as you listen to the folkloric sounds of Americana, Bluegrass, Blues, Country, and Rock n' Roll. Enjoy free live entertainment and a cozy atmosphere at one of Madrid's cutest cafes. (A perfect way to relax before the week begins!)

Gastrofestival Madrid – a 2-week city-wide food celebration!

Madrid will be celebrating food culture for two full weeks! [GastroFestival](#) is an event that brings together more than 400 restaurants and bars to offer a delightful array of food-

inspired opportunities, from tapas tastings to workshops, with one sole purpose – **TO CELEBRATE FOOD!**

Madrid Fusión and the Ayuntamiento de Madrid (Madrid's city hall) are the organizers we should be thanking. If you are in the capital from Jan. 31 – Feb. 15, don't miss this chance to experience Madrid's finest.

Check out the [program](#) and enjoy!

New York & Madrid, Brought Together in FREE 80's Photography Exhibit!

What do the New York City of Andy Warhol and the Madrid of Pedro Almodóvar have in common? Come to [Mondo Galeria](#) in Chueca to find out! Now until February 7th, the gallery is exhibiting the works of iconic photographer Javier Porto, whose art captured the pop and street cultures of 1980s NYC and Madrid. Many people have talked about a culture change or *movida* during this time but what was it exactly? Who did it represent? This exhibit, titled *Semblanzas de Ida y Vuelta*, provides insight into this fascinating phenomenon.

(Tues. – Sat. 11am-8:30pm)

StreetX0 – An Eclectic Fusion of High and Low, East and West

If you're a foodie living in Madrid, then you've probably heard of [DiverX0](#), the Michelin three star gourmet restaurant born from the wild mind of Mohawk-totting creator and chef **David Muñoz**. If you haven't, watch [this video](#) first.

Muñoz has been omnipresent in gossip media ever since TV personality **Cristina Pedroche** recently confirmed rumors about their relationship on Twitter. Though, young, punkish, and charming, Muñoz is a celebrity in his own right – he even stars in his own [Mercedes ad](#), playing cheeky about his Michelin accolades.

A quick look at DiverX0's reservations online shows there are no openings till June; however, luckily for those of us who don't have reservations or who can't wait to sample Muñoz's creations, there's **StreetX0**. Originally opened in 2012, StreetX0 is Muñoz's more casual and affordable restaurant.



Recently relocated at **El Corte Ingles's Gourmet Experience** on Serrano 52, the restaurant boasts exciting decor, delicious cocktails, and intriguing food. It's no surprise that Muñoz serves up Asian-inspired dishes seeing as he cut his teeth at Nobu and Hakkasaan in London. His fare, though, is a little grittier, as the name of his new restaurant implies – the decor and the food are supposed to conjure up a wet market in Hong Kong or a food alley in Singapore (minus the cockroaches). Upturned crates serve as bar stools and neon signs line the walls.





First things first, as soon as you sit down, somebody comes and gets your cocktail order – doesn't matter if you're coming

for lunch or dinner. The cocktails are beautiful, perfumed concoctions that put you in the right mood for the feast to come.



An open kitchen sits at the heart of the restaurant breathing hot and loud as chefs wearing straight-jacket-like coats call

out the orders and stoke the coals. Definitely try to get a bar seat, you'll get dinner and a show.





When you hear '**sandwich**' called out every few minutes you know that's one thing on the menu you *have* to order. The *Sandwich Club* sounds inconspicuous and unexciting compared

to the rest of the menu, but that is where your assumptions would be wrong.



Now, does that look like any club sandwich you've ever had? I thought not. The fried egg tops a Chinese *bao* filled with succulent, melt-in-your-mouth pork. Bizarre, unlikely, and strangely good. Then there's the Korean inspired wonton lasagna dish and the Mexican mole dish with obligatory chips drizzled over tender quail.





The mole is served on a thick, waxy paper, no plate. When you're done, they just crumple the paper-plate up and take it away. If you're craving desert after, you'll have to take yourself to the frozen yogurt stand on the same floor, as StreetX0 doesn't serve sweets. But hey, who needs sweets when you have cocktails?



With the music pulsing in the background and a delicious, albeit expensive, cocktail list, it's easy to see why this spot is so hot – no matter the time of day, there's always a line. Atmosphere and energy trump food here, but the food is worth it, too, just be sure to get there very early (at least half-an-hour before opening) or very late (past nine-thirty) if you don't want to have to wait in line.

Address: Serrano, 52

Times: Sun 11:00 am – 12:00 am. Mon – Sat 10:00 am – 12:00 am.

There's also a happening [Gourmet Experience at the Corte](#)

[Inglés at Callao](#) with an outdoor rooftop terrace. Check out our previous article on it [here](#).

Toma Café: fuel up, feel hip

[Toma Cafe](#) could very well be a coffee shop in a hipster mecca like San Francisco or Brooklyn. Upon wandering into the sparse space with narrow benches lining the walls and a bicycle dangling from the ceiling, one might wonder: “Have I wandered onto the set of Portlandia?”





People peck at their laptops while seated at teensy tables. The baristas take their posts at the helm of the espresso machine seriously. More seats can be found in the back, but space is rather cramped. One's daily dose of **espresso** can be consumed in various different forms. Options extend beyond the confines of *café con leche*.



A gem on the beverage menu: *chocolate picante*. In this concoction, bitter chocolate and prickly heat make ordinary chocolate seem lame.



A limited **breakfast** list exists offering a few variations on toast (tomato and olive oil, butter and jam, not much more). Alternatively, as Marie Antoinette famously did not say, *let them eat cake*. **The chocolate cake is made with Madrid's own Cerveza La Virgen**—what could be better for breakfast?



The omnipresent **carrot cake** also beckons from the pastry case. Here, the crowd-pleaser takes on a spicy character and the cream cheese frosting makes an already good cake better.



Luckily for those in search of a caffeinated workspace, **Toma Cafe** opens for breakfast at early hours. Come here to fuel up and to fill hip.



[Facebook](#)

[Web](#)

Address: calle La Palma 49

Metro: San Bernardo or Noviciado

Hours: M-F 8am-8pm. Sat & Sun 10am-8pm

Here are some more of our favorite cafes in Madrid:

[Pepe Botella, a Coffee Place Where You Can Think](#)

[La Paca, the Perfect Cafe in Malasaña](#)

[Best Cafe-Bookshops in Madrid, Round 1 & Round 2](#)

An insider's guide to Sol: avoid the tourist traps and beat the Christmas crowds

Madrid is a fantastic place to be at Christmas and nowhere is more festive, and more popular, than the area around Puerta del Sol, Ópera and Plaza Mayor. As well as the usual hordes of foreign tourists, Spaniards from all over Madrid and beyond flock to the city centre to see the Christmas lights, queue up at Doña Manolita for their lottery tickets, shop for nativity supplies in Plaza Mayor and take in the spectacle of Cortylandia.

If you plan on doing any of these things, my top piece of advice would be avoid going at the weekends, as the whole centre is utter chaos. During last year's December *punte* they even had to temporarily suspend metro services to Sol and make people get off at neighbouring stations, due to the sheer

volume of people already in the plaza and surrounding streets.

Whatever day you embark upon your festive jaunt, you'll no doubt be in need of a break and some refreshment after a while. Christmas shopping can be thirsty work! Many of the bars and restaurants around Puerta del Sol are incredibly touristy or incredibly busy (or both!), so how do you find a decent spot?

Read on for our insider's guide to the hidden gems of the Madrid's centre.

If you want breakfast...



You'll need a decent desayuno to set you up for a busy day of shopping and sightseeing, and in time-honoured tradition you might head to [San Ginés](#) (Pasadizo de San Ginés 5) or [Valor](#) (Calle Postigo de San Martín 7) for some chocolate con churros. Go early if you do, and certainly don't visit at merienda time as the queues are out of the door.

Alternatively, you could try one of these lesser-known spots for breakfast:

[Ferpal](#) (Calle Arenal 7)



Many tourists eye up the delicious meats, cheeses and other treats in the windows of this top-quality delicatessen, but few realise there's also a bar inside. They serve delicious coffee, croissants, bocatas and sandwiches, all for only a couple of euros. Kill two birds with one stone and pick up a few tasty Christmas presents while you're here. They normally close on Sundays but will be open over the festive season.

[El Riojano](#) (Calle Mayor 10)



Ok, so it's not exactly a hidden gem, but did you know that this famous pastry shop has a secret tea room in the back? If you have a sweet tooth and you fancy a more relaxing experience than the scrum at [La Mallorquina](#) (another must-see, although perhaps at a quieter time of year!), then this is most definitely your place. Read Laura's more detailed [post on El Riojano here](#).

If you fancy a drink...

Battling your way to the front of the Cortylandia crowd on a Saturday afternoon is enough to make anyone need an alcoholic beverage! (If you've never heard of Cortylandia I won't go into details other than that it's one of those Spanish traditions that you probably need to see for yourselves. Oh, and this year, it's penguins.) Here are a couple of my favourite places:

[La Torre del Oro](#) (Plaza Mayor 26)



If you've been shopping for your Christmas tree or the moss for your nativity, then this bar is extremely handy for a quick beer. The terraza outside is like any other, you need to go inside for the decor that makes this bar special. The waiters are all extremely jolly and dish out tasty tapas with every drink. An Andalusian classic hidden slap-bang in the centre of Madrid.

Matador (Calle de la Cruz 39)



Another bull-themed bar with interesting stuff on the walls, I love this place for its cosy atmosphere, great-value drinks and generous tapas. Its cave-like interior is pretty small so it can get crowded, but if you're lucky enough to grab a stool you might end up forgetting the shopping and spending all afternoon here!

If you're hungry...

There are times when tapas just won't do and you need something more substantial. Try one of these spots for some tasty grub:

[El Ñeru](#) (Calle Bordadores 5)



Cachopo at El Ñeru. Image from [El Ñeru's Facebook](#)

There are plenty of Asturian restaurants around this area but this one is my favourite. You can stand at the bar upstairs and gorge yourself on free tapas (try the cabrales cheese one) and dishes such as their magnificent cachopo, or you can take the weight off your feet and dine in the cavernous restaurant downstairs. It isn't the cheapest but it's worth it for the exquisite (and extremely filling!) food and excellent service.

[Bar Lambuzo](#) (Calle de las Conchas 9)



Image from [Lambuzo's Web](#)

If you fancy something a little lighter, stop by this delightful restaurant run by a family from Cadiz. From salmorejo to croquetas to a whole array of pescadito frito, everything on the menu is absolutely delicious, extremely reasonably-priced and will inject a little ray of Andalusian sunshine into even the darkest winter day. Check out Daphne's [post for more information on Bar Lambuzo](#).

If you need to get away from it all...

Even for the most die-hard Christmas fans, the crowds can sometimes get a bit much. All of these bars are just a short walk from Puerta del Sol and each provides a much-needed oasis of tranquility away from the masses.

Anticafe (Calle Unión 2)



Image from [Anticafe's Facebook](#)

Tucked away on a quiet street near Ópera, Anticafe is a great place to chill out with a coffee, caña or cocktail. The music

is great and the decor wonderfully quirky, so just sink into one of their mismatched armchairs, put your feet up and forget all about your festive to-do list.

Casa Pueblo (Calle León 3)



Image from [Casa Pueblo's Facebook](#)

This cosy bar is the perfect antidote to the madness of the Christmas crowds. Let the friendly staff whip you up one of their delicious mojitos or order a tasty slice of cake if you're in need of some sugar. If you're lucky you might catch one of their live jazz sessions too.

Plaza Menor (Calle Gómez de Mora 3)



Head to this fantastic little drinking den nestled right behind Plaza Mayor for a cocktail, a copa or just a cup of tea. The interior is a maze of low-roofed caves so grab a spot and maybe some of their yummy carrot cake and lose yourself for a couple of hours.

Know of any other hidden gems in the centre of Madrid? Let us know!

**Tacos, tamales and tequila:
the best Mexican joints in**

Madrid

If you had to eat just one type of cuisine for the rest of your life, what would you choose? For me, Mexican food wins hands down every time. I could happily munch on chilaquiles for breakfast, enchiladas for lunch, pozole for dinner and still have room for a few tacos al pastor or some juicy tamales...all washed down with several delicious micheladas of course. I spent a year working in Mexico after I finished university and it wasn't nearly long enough to sample all the delicious treats on offer, although I did manage to squeeze in tequila ice cream, grasshoppers and mezcal with worm salt, amongst other things!

So where can you get your Mexican fix in Madrid? Avoid the expensive chain restaurants and the Tex-Mex joints, and instead try one of these gems:

[Taquería Mi Ciudad](#) (Calle Hileras 5 and Calle Fuentes 11 <m> Sol/Ópera)



The infamous Gringa at Taquería Mi Ciudad

As the name suggests, tacos are the star of the show here: pastor, cochinita pibil, tinga, carnitas...they've got them all, as well as the usual staples like guacamole, quesadillas and frijoles. My personal favourite is the Gringa, a heavenly combination of carne al pastor, cheese and pineapple sandwiched between two flour tortillas...it needs to be eaten to be believed! If you sit at the bar you can watch the taco man work his magic, although there are plenty of tables for larger groups. Alternatively, you could hop one street over to the original restaurant on Calle Fuentes, which has standing room for about 10.

[La Malinche](#) (Calle Torija 10 <m> Santo Domingo)



Image from www.facebook.com/lamalinche.madrid

This place is the real deal, a Spanish-Mexican husband and wife dream team. He concocts delicious micheladas and margaritas at the bar upstairs, whilst she rustles up delicious sopes, huaraches and all other manner of delights in the kitchen below. Even the tortillas are homemade. The portions are very generous so make sure you go with an empty belly! Great value for money.

[Antigua Taquería](#) (Calle Cabestreros <m>
La Latina/Tirso de Molina/Lavapiés and
Calle Áncora 19 <m> Palos de la Frontera)



Antigua Taquería

An amazing hybrid of traditional bar de toda la vida and Mexican hipster joint. The menu here is limited – just tacos, nachos and quesadillas – but everything on it is absolutely divine. I have a particular weakness for their quesadillas and always end up ordering the huitlacoche one...it translates as corn smut which sounds grim, but don't knock it until you've tried it. Heap some of their delicious salsas on top and you're good to go...just watch out for the red one! Luckily they also make a mean margarita for you to wash it all down with.

[Tepic](#) (Calle Pelayo 4 <m> Chueca)



Image from www.facebook.com/restauranteTEPIC

I had my first ride in a pick-up truck, learned to dance to banda and tried ceviche for the first time in the Mexican state of Tepic, so I'll always think of it fondly. Tepic in Chueca doesn't disappoint either, with its varied menu of tacos, flautas, enchiladas and other tasty treats. They even have soups, salads and vegetarian options, just make sure you leave room for one of their delicious desserts! If you're looking for a more upmarket meal in a swanky restaurant which manages to avoid all the usual Mexican clichés whilst still being thoroughly Mexican, this is your place.

For more on **Tepic**, check out our friends [post here](#) with mouth-watering photos.