

Banibanoo, an Iranian Market-style Restaurant in the Center of Madrid!

I have to admit that when I was first invited to try a new Persian food restaurant in Madrid, I had my doubts. Until then my knowledge of Persian food was very limited. But if there is something that I love it is trying new things. So of course, I accepted.

[Banibanoo](#) describes itself as a restaurant offering Persian market cuisine. It is owned by a young woman named Banafsheh who, after working six years in marketing, decided to pursue her dream of becoming a chef and restaurant owner. One day she left her job and went to London to study in Le Cordon Bleu School. Upon returning to Madrid, she discovered that Iranian food was little known in the Spanish capital. So she decided to open her very own restaurant where people could enjoy these wonderful dishes.

The name of the restaurant is also very personal: *Bani* is short for her full name Banafsheh and *Banoo* means Miss. So Banibanoo means *Miss Bani*.



Banibanoo's owner Banafsheh



The restaurant is small and cozy, perfect for a fantastic meal with friends or with your partner. Apart from the food, what I love the most about Banibanoo is how bright it is and that the food is on display at the bar. That way, you can see all the food they serve before you order. It also has an intimate and familiar feeling, as if you were entering a market and wanted to eat something from a particular stand.



Banibanoo.



Fresh ingredients and beautiful homemade dishes are all the decorations you need



Banibanoo

According to Banafsheh, Iranian shares a lot in common with Mediterranean cuisine; the ingredients are all very similar. But

for me, each dish at [Banibanoo](#) tastes unique and exotic, for the mixture of flavors and variety of ingredients on each plate.



Food on display



Food on display

The food

[Banibanoo](#) offers a simple menu, consisting of traditional and original dishes, all made with fresh ingredients and a lot of love. If you're the kind of person who struggles when it comes to ordering, no problem. At Banibanoo you have the option of choosing a menu with three different dishes on one plate. Banafsheh likes to change up the menu every two weeks, offering different recipes along with the old ones. [Banibanoo](#) also offers wonderful breakfasts. On Saturday and Sunday, for example, she offers a very special breakfast that will be the highlight of your weekend: a "burnt" brioche bun with cream cheese and jam.

When I went for lunch with two friends, Banafsheh suggested we

try out different dishes so we could all share. I have to say that was a fantastic idea. The first three dishes we tried were: *broccoli with roasted cherry tomato in a yogurt sauce and tahini*; *beetroot hummus with feta cheese and hazelnuts*; and *gourmet purple potatoes with yogurt sauce, cherry tomatoes and cardamum*.



Menu 1

For the second place, we ordered: *sweet potato with red onions, yogurt sauce, almonds and pomegranate seeds*; *couscous with cheese, mint sauce, cilantro and parsley*; and *Kuku Kadoo: zucchini 'frittata' with mint and cheese*.



Menu 2

Our last plate included: *roasted beets with cherry tomatoes, feta cheese and a pomegranate and Sumac sauce; Shirin Polo, Persian rice, saffron, orange zest, carrot and pistachio (this was one my favorite, amazing!); and Kuku Sabzi: similar to a 'frittata' with herbs, walnuts and cockles.*



Menu 3

For dessert we had an incredible carrot cake (really, please try it!) and a brownie-like chocolate cake. Also delicious.



Carrot cake



Guinness Chocolate cake

All this feast of food could only be accompanied by a typical **Iranian drink, infused with cucumber, flowers and other refreshing ingredients.** How can you describe something that tastes so good? They now have two different drinks based on this one: One is call **Tejebin:** The same drink but with tea and **Cafejebin:** The same but with coffee.



Banibanoo drink

What can I say? If you want to enjoy healthy and traditional food with an exotic taste, this is your place! Fantastic Recommendation – thank you Jose and María for taking me to this wonderful place.

INFO

Address: Calle Martires Concepcionistas 19, Madrid

Price: €12.95, 3-dish menu plus coffee and drink during the week; €13.95 During the weekend, without drinks; Breakfast goes from €2.50 with coffee or tea to €5.50.

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#) (@banibanoomadrid)

Naïf: King of Burgers

In a city so jam-packed with restaurants that one could eat out in a different place every meal and never repeat, it's saying a lot to return to a place more than once, and then too many times to count. Such is the case with [Naïf](#), a cozy/grunge burger spot nestled into Plaza de San Idelfonso serving burgers, with a side of sass. Ask for a glass of water and one of the snarky waiters will return saying they've run out of water, but they do have gin. Alternatively, copas of beer and wine are available for cheap and are a must for washing down the grub.



The jocular banter with the waiters, the hype that comes with having to (almost) yell over the music in order to be heard across the table, the flickering candles of the dining room, all contribute to making repeat [Naif](#) visits, but the real reason to return is for the burgers. Never a disappointment, never.



Here, the king of burgers, is, undoubtedly, the Hamburguesa de Trufa: hamburger gold. The rich flavor of truffles oozes out of the burger with every bite. La Ibérica also pleases with its hefty slices of jamón and manchego respectively. [Naif](#) has the Goldy Locks principle working to its advantage: the burgers are not too big, not too small— they're just right. Nevertheless, they can be a challenge to eat; baskets of napkins are placed on the tables for this very reason. Don't mind about minding manners.



A large chalkboard wall boasts nachos among the house specialities. What comes to the table is a **casserole dish of chips bathing in a tangy bath of cheese, plus some avocados and peppers for a spicy punch**. These are not skating rink nachos. They can be a meal in itself or something to share—cheesy fingers for all.



And beyond burgers, dessert awaits on the horizon. There is **carrot cake**, of course, as well as **cheesecake** and **American Pie**. It's not your mom's recipe, but it's pie! Inexplicably,

it lacks the bottom layer of crust, but there's a top. Let's not be too picky, now. The **carrot cake** benefits from the **addition of nutella and walnuts**.



Eating at [Naif](#) is addicting. You want to be there, wrapped up in this rough and rugged metropolitan environment, until closing time. [Naif](#) can serve as the backdrop for any social situation: **friends, dates, and parental visits alike**. The soundtrack somehow always fits the occasion and the dim lighting makes everything seem cooler than it probably is.



[Web](#)

[Facebook](#)

Where: Calle San Joaquín, 16

Phone: 910 07 20 71

Photos courtesy of Pablo Arias

**Looking for other cool spots in Malasaña?
Check out:**

[La Paca, the perfect Malasaña café and bar](#)

[Pepe Botella, a coffee place where you can think](#)

[Toma Café, Fuel up, Feel hip](#)

[Best Café-Bookshops in Madrid](#)

[Best First Date Ideas in Madrid for foodies](#)

Best Cafe-bookshops in Madrid, Round 2!

Welcome to round two of the [best cafe-bookshops in Madrid](#)! As you may have noticed in [round one](#), Madrid's central neighborhoods boast quite a lot of quaint coffee shops and bars that encourage drinking and reading under one roof.

There's something about drinking coffee or wine amidst a sea of books that makes me feel right at home. Whether you're looking for the perfect place to enjoy a quiet conversation or a good read, here are five more wonderful cafe-bookshops in Madrid that you're bound to fall in love with.

1. [La Central de Callao](#)



La Central (featured in the cover photo) is a trendy bookshop near Callao and hands down the most modern of all on this list. It boasts three floors, a happening café with a full menu and a selection of much more than books on offer. At La Central, you can also find funky mugs, quirky bags, useful calendars, board games, wrapping paper, you name it. It's a great place to get [gifts in Madrid](#).

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** C/ Postigo de San Martín, 8
- **Metro:** Callao

2. J&J Books and Coffee





A long-time staple among Madrid's expat community, this corner bar has a downstairs bookstore selling a large selection of primarily used English-language books, including ESL resources. Up at the bar, you can get craft beer, wine, coffee, bagels and other things to munch on. Also check out J&J's free events, including language exchanges and pub quizzes (trivia nights). Lots of fun!

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** c/ Espíritu Santo, 47
- **Metro:** Noviciado

3. italiana_madrid





This Italian café and bookshop is located on one of Madrid's most vibrant streets – Corredera Baja de San Pablo – which is lined with great bars, cafes and restaurants, such as [Aió Pizzería](#), [Elemental Bistro](#) and [Gymage](#) with its rooftop terrace. At [italiana_madrid](#), you can get a strong espresso or Aperol Spritz, plus browse through a wide selection of Italian reads ranging from cookbooks to children's books. It's also across the street from one of the city's favorite theaters, Teatro Lara.

- [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** Corredera Baja de San Pablo, 10
- **Metro:** Gran Vía

4. La Ciudad Invisible



A travel bookshop selling food and drinks, this two-level cafe boasts huge windows, high ceilings, and plenty of large tables, couches and comfortable armchairs to choose from, making it a great place for getting work done and meeting friends. Plus it sells a killer **Rebujito for 2€** (a really refreshing yet deceptive drink from the South containing sherry, white wine and soda water). It's also across the street from one of my favorite restaurants in Madrid, [Bar Lambuzo](#).

- [Facebook](#)

- **Address:** *c/ Costanilla de los Ángeles, 7*
- **Metro:** *Opera & Santo Domingo*

5. María Pandora



María Pandora is one of my favorite spots in the city. Perched atop a hill overlooking Parque las Vistillas, behind the Royal Palace, here you'll find the perfect place to watch the sunset while enjoying a glass of champagne (the house specialty) or your drink of choice. Although María Pandora is more of a bar than a coffeeshop, it still deserves a spot on this list of literary cafés. It also holds events such as [poetry nights](#), microtheater, and book readings. [Check out our full article on María Pandora here.](#)

- [Website & Facebook](#)
- **Phone:** +34 910 42 82 13

- **Address:** Plaza de Gabriel Miró, 1
- **Metro:** La Latina or Ópera

Make sure to read: “[Best Cafe-Bookshops in Madrid, Round 1](#)”

Also check out our [favorite bookshop in the city, Desperate Literature](#)

Bodegas Rosell, one of Madrid’s best tabernas

Madrid is a fascinating city. We see so many new restaurants and bars opening up every week and yet, the city’s good-old *tabernas* and more traditional bars are also thriving. When I crave the latter (which is quite often), one of my go-to spots is Bodegas Rosell.

[Bodegas Rosell, one of my favorite old taverns in Madrid](#)

[Bodegas Rosell](#) is one of those havens that I like to go to when I want to get away from the city’s newer spots. Located close to Atocha, everything about **Bodegas Rosell** screams Madrid; you can breathe in tradition as soon as you walk in.

This wonderful place was founded in 1920 by the Rosell family, who converted a former wine shop into a neighborhood *taberna*. Today, **Bodegas Rosell** preserves the spirit of the old, traditional taverns that were so popular in another time. Its decor, food, portions, staff and service will take you a step

back in time.

The Decor

When you arrive and stand in front of its facade, you realize you're in a special place. The facade's tiles are a genuine work of art, painted by Alfonso Romero, who also painted altar pieces in the **Plaza de Toros de las Ventas** (Madrid's iconic bullfighting ring).



While the exterior oozes with tradition, the interior doesn't leave you unimpressed either. It's not a particularly large place, which makes it even more charming. The walls are decorated with guitars, photographs of the Rosell Family, bottles of wine, and of course, we can't forget about

the great map of the Community of Madrid. Can it be more traditional?

Bodegas Rosell is just perfect for a quick snack on a stool at any of the *barrel tables*; or for a quieter lunch or dinner at any of their *4-legged tables*. They also have private salons, so it won't be a problem if you are a large group.

The Food

Bodegas Rosell offers a traditional menu with generous portions. Specializing in meat dishes, one of their star dishes is *solomillo* (**pork tenderloin**). Another favourite is *bacalao* (**cod**) prepared *al horno* (oven-baked) or *rebozado* (fried in an egg and flour batter). And of course, you can also find excellent **canned seafood**, such as *mejillones* (**mussels**), *berberechos* (**cockles**) and *anchoas* (**anchovies**).



I'm not very fond of fish, but this *bacalao* was superb.



The *entrecot* was so big that we had to ask the waiter to split it in two. This pic only shows half.



The *albóndigas* (meatballs) were amazing!

My favorite thing to order here is the plate of *embutidos ibéricos* (Iberian cured meats) and the cheeses. You can have various types of cheese such as **Manchego, olive oil, Idiazabal, goat, sheep**, so I recommend ordering the **cheese board** for those undecided or who like all of them. The Iberian cured meats are wonderful, such as *jamón serrano, chorizo, lomo* and *salchichón*. I also recommend ordering the *tabla de ibéricos* (cured meat platter with all of them).

Of course we also have the typical salads and vegetable dishes for those who aren't so keen on meat or cheese.



Mixed salad

Special mention; the fantastic *tostas* and *tapas*; perfect to accompany a refreshing *caña* (small draft beer). My favorite tapa is the *boquerones en vinagre* (white anchovies in

vinegar).

The house specialties are also fantastic: My favorites are the homemade, absolutely delicious **croquettes**, not to mention the typical *callos a la madrileña* (**Madrid-style tripe**) and the Spanish *tortilla* (**egg and potato omelet**).



The house croquettes are wonderful, probably one of the best I've ever had in Madrid.

Despite all of these scrumptious dishes, Bodega Rosell's main attraction remains the **Cocido Madrileño** (a very typical and hearty stew prepared with garbanzo beans and all types of sausage) that they prepare by order.

Although the food menu is wide and varied, the dessert menu is smaller yet equally delicious; *leche frita* (fried milk) or *natillas* (custard) are some of the delights that Bodegas Rosell offers to end a delicious meal.



Cheesecake



Flan

All that's left to say is that if you're looking for an **authentic Spanish tavern**, then you've found it!

Price & Contact Info

The price range is varied and quite affordable. You can have a *tosta* or *tapa* for **€2.90** or a great steak for **€13.50**.

- [Websit](#) & [Facebook](#)
- **Address:** c/ General Lacy, 14
- **Phone:** 914 67 84 58

Here are some of our other favorite Madrid taverns & Spanish restaurants:

- [Taberna Lamiak](#) (Basque-style pincho bar)
- [Bar Lambuzo](#) (Family-run Andalusian restaurant)
- [Casa Mingo](#) (Asturian cider house!)