

Honest Greens, feel-good food that tastes good too

For me, eating is always an emotional experience. I want to eat food that makes me feel good, both physically and mentally. Depending on my mood, that can mean very different things. Sometimes all I want is a creamy *croqueta* or my mom's mac and cheese... but other times, my body begs for **whole grains, greens, and lean protein**.

To be completely honest (pun intended), I didn't realize how much I missed **healthy, home-cooked meals** until I found Honest Greens. This brand new spot in Nuevos Ministerios may at first glance look like just another hipster cafe, but I swear it's something special.



The space itself is impeccably decorated and practically begging to be Instagrammed. The **open kitchen** means you can watch all the magic happen. But even more exciting is the fact that most of the menu items are on display right in front of you, so you can browse the options before making your (very difficult) choice.



This is one of those places where I would happily devour anything on the menu, so ordering is a considerable challenge. Luckily, they break it down into a nice and simple process: choose between a market plate or a garden bowl, then pick your sides or protein. Easier said than done.

The **market plates** come with either chipotle marinated chicken, rare beef, tuna tataki, homemade falafel, or black pepper tofu. Each is accompanied by a fresh green salad with pesto dressing and organic sourdough bread with herbed butter.



Chipotle chicken and seasonal vegetables

Is your mouth watering yet? I've barely gotten started. After you choose your base, you get to add extra sides from an overwhelming list. Cold options include coleslaw, beet salad, creamed eggplant, lentils, hummus, and roasted watermelon (yeah, you read that right). Hot sides include mashed pumpkin, baked cauliflower, roasted beets, herbed potatoes, seasonal vegetables, and organic sweet potato, each with creative garnishes ranging from spirulina to spiced yogurt.

I highly recommend the chicken, and although the beef was a bit raw for my liking, it's received rave reviews from plenty of my friends. You can't go wrong with the seasonal vegetables or the sweet potatoes, which add some color and carbs to the plate. And speaking of carbs, the bread might actually be the best part of the dish. Freshly grilled and soaked in butter... how can you argue with that?



A market plate with ternera madrileña and roasted sweet potatoes



Salad fixin's

If you want to put vegetables front and center, opt for a **garden bowl** instead. Spicy kale, ginger honey goat cheese, peanut chili lentils, sesame greens, wild coconut quinoa... with names like that, you can hardly imagine the possibilities. Each bowl is filled to the brim with various veggies, fruits, nuts, seeds, and dressings. You can also add any protein for an extra boost.

Oh, and did I mention there's a soup of the day?

Once all that has sunk in, turn your attention to the drinks. They've got cold pressed juices, homemade fruit-infused waters, wine, beer, and *vermut*—plus **organic fair trade coffee**. In fact, one of the highlights of the place is the adorable coffee truck parked outside, advertising their specialty beans.



Self-serve aguas frescas

The portions here are generous and filling, proving once and for all that it's possible to feel fully satisfied after a healthy meal. But if you manage to save room, try one of the **sugarless and gluten-free desserts**. Their takes on classics like carrot cake and apple crumble might not be exactly what you're expecting, but they have their own charm. If you've got a real sweet tooth you might be disappointed, but it's totally worth it to at least give them a chance.

The best thing about Honest Greens is that it combines the trend of vegetarian and vegan cafes with a selection that caters to meat-eaters as well. While I love a good veggie burger and am slightly addicted to kale, I won't deny that every meal can be improved by a grilled chicken breast or a juicy steak. For me, this place is **the best of both worlds**.



The business cards say it all

Whatever dietary camp you belong to, you'll find something here that fits your tastes. And the next time you're craving some good, honest greens... well, you know where to go.

Info

- [Website](#)
 - [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)
 - **Address:** Paseo de la Castellana, 89
 - **Metro:** Santiago Bernabéu & Nuevos Ministerios
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Arugula, a restaurant serving fantastic salads near Retiro park

Folks, it's getting to be that time of year when the sun is out, the grass is green, and the best way to eat is outside. This weather calls for picnicking! And what better place for a picnic than El Retiro park? Prices inside the park can run ludicrously high and the same can be said for many of the places around the perimeter. Of course, there exists the classic option of bringing a bocadillo, but for a step up, there's a gem of a place on Calle Velazquez called [Arugula](#) that will put together an A plus picnic for you and it's only a stone's throw away from the park.



A little over 10 euros can buy you a menú complete with soup, salad, beverage, and coffee. Other options beside salad are available including focaccias and wraps. It's a reasonably priced combination considering the salads are huge, not to mention delicious.



At Arugula, the customer takes the reigns when it comes to

creating the salads. To start, there are three options for the lettuce base (romaine, mesclun and arugula, or mesclun and spinach). After that, there exists the option to add pasta or rice to bulk up the salad.



Next, onto the toppings, which are divided into two categories: basic and premium. Here's where it can get tricky because all the toppings look tempting, colorfully arranged in

a patchwork spread behind the counter. The basic ingredients include avocado, bacon, egg, carrots, olives, and lentils to name a few. The premium ingredients are even more luxurious and include such items as goat cheese, salmon, serrano ham, and sun dried tomatoes. Chose three basic ingredients and one premium, and then it's onto the dressing.



The eight dressings can be mixed and matched just like the toppings to create scrumptious hybrids like pesto/roquefort, for example. For the indecisive, there are salads already

designed and listed (with pictures of the ingredients) on large posters hanging on the wall. To compliment the salad, add soup or yogurt, throw in a beverage and don't forget the coffee and voilà! Your picnic is ready. It's a lot of food, filling, but upon finishing the meal, you'll be left with the feeling that you've made a healthy choice.



When you order a menu to go, the staff at Arugula will wrap everything up for you and give you a sturdy bag to carry it all with you to the park. Even the coffee is accounted for;

they will put a piece of tape over the mouth of the cup to prevent spilling en route. Service is fast and you'll be picnicking in no time. It's about a five minute walk from the restaurant to the park.

Info

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

Address: Calle Velázquez, 9

Wanda Café Optimista

Now that I'm starting school at IE this fall, I need to have a full arsenal of lunch places in my Rolodex. For a few weeks I kept passing by Wanda thinking to myself, *I've got to come here*. So finally, as things start to wind down and I find myself full of optimism, Daphne and I got together to have lunch at [Wanda Café Optimista](#).



The décor makes it a perfect place to have some coffee, get lost in conversation (as we did), AND for IE students (especially with those who will have classes in María de Molina, 4) there are big tables for group projects. As I perused [Wanda's website](#) to get the final research components to wrap up this article and make it ready for publication, the owners of the restaurant did have the oasis idea in mind. With primarily light, neutral woods, along with splashes of neon colors reminiscent of summery ikat prints, the hustle and bustle of the Castellana and the Plaza del Doctor Marañón seemed a world away.



At lunchtime, there are a number of deals. The *plato del día* the day we were there was salmon, basmati rice, and roasted tomatoes. This, along with a coffee and drink, was €9.



What was even more amazing was Daphne's iced tea, with fresh strawberries and mint.



Now that I have received a temporary reunion with fruit, I am even more determined to go back and have it.

There are some other deals as well, including the salad buffet. For an absolute hardcore salad eater like myself, the setup is great. You have your salad (with you choosing the toppings and having it tossed like the tried and true salad establishments in my hometown of New York City that line every major area with office buildings) and a natural juice. So not only do I need to go back to Wanda to get myself a delicious strawberry iced tea, I also need to have some salad and juice.



If you don't want to take advantage of any of the deals and want to have a more traditional restaurant experience, then there's plenty of things to whet your appetite. While I add the ventresca (tuna belly), tomato, and onion salad, there were also plenty of other options. You can have something more traditional, like salmorejo, bacalao, cecina de León, or croquetas, but if you crave something more international, then there's plenty for you too. You can find a selection of thin-crust pizzas, chicken tikka masala, eggs benedict, AND onion rings.

But if you thought Wanda was just for lunch, it's also open until 2 AM. If you find yourself having a long night of work and studying, you'll have yourself a great oasis.

Info

Wanda Café Optimista

Calle María de Molina, 1

Tel.: +34 91 737 53 64

Hours: Monday- Friday 8 AM-2 AM; Saturday and Holidays 10 AM-2

AM

Metro: Gregorio Marañón (Lines 7 and 10)

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