**LAI Madrid LEW Attendees**

Tab Keller, Carol Youmans cousin and long time Madrid Resident, is the owner of an English as a Second Language School. Here is her response to Tim’s request for some insider tips on dining, and shopping in Madrid. These tips do not come from LAI, but you might them find helpful as you explore the city.

**TAPAS**

Here is how “tapeo” works

Say a group of 6 people go out together. Usually you agree on a set amount of money, for example 30€ each, and give it all to one person to hold…making a “fondo” (kitty). This person pays in each place. The separate check idea does not work in tapas bars. The other way to do it is to take turns paying. If there is a group of 8 and 6 are men, well, you go to 6 different bars until each man has paid one round.

In each bar usually you have one or two tapas and a glass of beer or a glass of wine. You go wandering from bar to bar eating, drinking and chatting. Casual. No time limit.

Beer – you don’t usually choose a specific brand. They just serve you what they have on tap.

Caña is a normal size.

Corto is half a caña.

Doble is double size.

Wine. Tinto (red) or Blanco (white).

Most house wine is just fine. You may want to specifically ask for Tinto – Ribeira or Rioja. Both are wine growing regions and the wine is a tiny bit more expensive but a better.

How do you choose a tapa bar to go into:

1.- Are there Spanish people inside?

2.- Look at the display of food (ingredients) in the window. Does the food look fresh? Do you see anything that appeals to you?

Spaniards go for tapas at more or less 13:30-14:30; 20:00-22:00. Weekdays will be less crowded than Fridays and Saturdays.

Near the Puerta del Sol off of street Carrera San Jeronimo and between the streets Called de la Victoria y Calle Esposa Mina is our favorite tapas district. NOT upscale. Very local.

At Las Bravas, everything is good. Favorites are - Tortilla de patata con bravas sauce (spicy sauce), Patatas bravas, Pulpo (octopus), assorted kinds of Tortillas. There are two locations. The original on Calle Álvarez Gato, 3 / Tables outside on an pedestrian alley: Pasaje Matheu, 5 (<http://lasbravas.com/> )

Nearby you can find Taberna La Tosta and the best Sangria in town (in our humble opinion). There are pitchers of sangria on the counter. You can order a glass or a pitcher. Try the tostas to eat. They are toasted chunks of hunky bread with rather delicious toppings: Melted brie with some raspberry spread; grilled vegetables pork tenderloin with caramelized onions, etc. Most Americans would be comfortable here. However, it is a small place and I wouldn’t go with more than 6 or 8 at once. (<http://www.tripadvisor.es/Restaurant_Review-g187514-d2049331-Reviews-Taberna_La_Tosta-Madrid.html> ) Calle Victoria 8

Bar El Abuelo is very well known for gambas (shrimp). <http://lacasadelabuelo.es/> (La Casa del Abuelo 1: c/ Victoria 12)

Museo de jamon is a kick. Hundreds of serrano ham legs hanging from the ceiling. You can get Jamon serrano, manchego cheese, other kinds of cold cuts. They are on display. You can point. Also, upstairs there are tables if you want to sit down .( <http://www.tripadvisor.es/Attraction_Review-g187514-d246523-Reviews-Museo_del_Jamon-Madrid.html> ) Street address: Carrera San Jeronimo 6,

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Not far from this area is la Plaza de Santa Ana. If the weather is mild, you can sit out. In fact you could show up with a pretty large group and sit outside. There are bars all around the plaza. All should be pretty good.

* This area may be the best option for an informal get together if the weather is ok and you can be outside.

Restaurante el Lateral (<http://www.lateral.com/> ). Good selection that Americans would probably be comfortable with.

Cervercería Alemana – been there a long time. A variety of German & European Beers.

Microbrewery Restaurante Cervecería Naturbier. It also has large tapa plates with a variety of tapas.

On the corner in el Meson Cinco Jotas. If you want really good Iberian Jamon (ham) go there. The good ham is noticeably more expensive and in fact you will notice the difference. A great dish is patatas fritas con huevo frito y jamon. (fried potatos, fried egg on top, Iberian ham). Always, plan to share.

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The bars all in the Plaza Mayor are fine but higher priced and mostly target tourists. There are always a group of gypsy pickpockets working that area. Think gypsy teenagers and probably girls. They work in packs.

Go down the stairs in the far corner and walk several blocks back behind the Plaza Mayor on the streets between Calle Cava Baja, Calle del Almendro and Calle Cava Alta. This is La Latina tapa bar district. Classic classic area. More authentic than the Plaza Mayor itself.

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**Places for Urban Planners**

The two places that I think a bunch of urban planners would be interested in are:

**El Mercado de San Miguel** – this was the oldest traditional market with stalls in town. Wrought iron. They have converted it into a tapa bar / market area. Each stall has a specialty. The problem is that it can be quite crowded. (Go earlier – maybe 19:30 to see if you are lucky and it is less crowded.) In any case, the urban planners must see this place. (<http://www.mercadodesanmiguel.es/el-mercado/> ) Street address: Plaza de San Miguel

**El Mercado de San Anton**, a similar concept. Perhaps more manageable.

Address: Barrio de Chueca, Calle Augusto Figueroa, 24

<http://www.tripadvisor.es/Attraction_Review-g187514-d3181168-Reviews-San_Anton_Market-Madrid.html>

<http://www.mercadosananton.com/>

<http://www.mercadosananton.com/?q=restaurante-terraza>

This is located in the Chueca district (Castro district of Madrid). Some nice bars around there.

**Trendy, avant-garde cuisine**

Check out Estado Puro. Down by the Palace hotel. Emulsions, new-fangled stuff. Very tasty. Can be pricing. The décor is kind of cool. (Beware of pickpockets in this area around the Prado and the big name hotels.)

<http://www.tripadvisor.es/Restaurant_Review-g187514-d1159964-Reviews-Estado_Puro-Madrid.html>

Plaza de Canovas del Castillo, 4,

**A Chain of Inexpensive Tapa Bars**

100 Montaditos – Go up to the bar and check off the little finger size baguette sandwiches you want. There are about 100 different fillings. Each person should order 2 or 3. Then you pick up your beer or wine and go to a table. They will call out your name when your order is ready. They little sandwiches all come together on a platter with potato chips in the middle. (Check it out….really good business model).

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**Near the Hotel Gran Melia Fenix**

**Breakfast or afternoon tea time or even dinner. Pain Quotidien (Calle de Serrano, 27)** is a chain of bakery – coffee houses from Belgium. The café con leche is great. Get “un doble” and it comes in a bowl. Order a small basket of assorted breads and your choice of spreads. Guaranteed to make you happy.

For other times of the day, they have assorted “bio” dishes which would make Californians feel at home.

**Spanish hot chocolate and churros at Chocolateria San Gines.**

(Order a glass of water too. You will need it.)

One of the most classic places in town. And for sure the best chocolate. Don’t go to another place.

<http://www.chocolateriasangines.com/Chocolateria_San_Gines/Bienvenidos_a_San_Gines.html>

Street address: Pasadizo de San Ginés 5

 **“Bar Tomate”.** (about 2 long blocks up the main street La Castellana) Open 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. Specializes in fresh, creative dishes. But you need reservations for lunch and dinner. (Unless you show up at 13:30 or 20:30– early.) They say it is **THE** place to go these days.

<http://grupotragaluz.com/restaurante/bar_tomate/> (Street address: Fernando El Santo, 26)

Reservations definitely needed if you have a large group.

**Shopping**

And a few shopping tips to pick up a little something for people back home.

My favorite shops which offer handmade artisan items like jewelry, purses, scarves, etc.

* Inside the Plaza Mayor in the far corner on the right just before going through the arch and down the stairs (the corner is obvious) there is a small artesan’s shop with “real” (not factory made) items.
* Calle Mayor starts at Puerta del Sol and is the main street that goes by the Plaza Mayor. Walk down that and stay outside the Plaza Mayor. Then you come to the entrance to a parking garage. There is a little shop there on the corner. Nice quality. Support local artists.

Standard Tourist shops

* Across the street from the Prado Museum is a large souvenir shop. Pretty good selection.
* On the pedestrian street coming off the Puerta del Sol is Calle Arenal. There are some good Souvenir shops in there.

El Corte Inglés is the big department store with many locations. They have a tourist section.