



**EL MESÓN DE GONZALO**  
A REFERENCE IN SALAMANCA

**EL MESÓN DE GONZALO.**  
PLAZA DEL POETA IGLESIAS, 10. SALAMANCA. TEL.: 923 217 222.  
APPROXIMATE PRICE PER PERSON (EXCL. WINE): €55.

»» This is a must on anyone’s list when visiting Salamanca, because of both its food and its wines. The attractive venue boasts a comfortable environment, and its wine selection stands out as one of the few in the city including unusual labels (remember, we’re in Ribera and Rioja territory, here), and where the glassware and service are more than appropriate.

This is one of the historical businesses in Salamanca. It was founded by Manuel Sendín in 1947, who was followed by his son, Gonzalo Sendín, and it is maintained today by his son, also called Gonzalo, who represents the third generation of the family. He is responsible for the change in décor in the Mesón, which is now more modern, but has not lost any of its true essence. It is still a good reference for good meat, fish and wines, and has updated some of its dishes to include a good mix of traditional and modern styles. This is how he has managed to maintain his local clientele from the time of his father and during his own career. There’s always a good atmosphere here and they serve the ideal wine for every moment of the day. The actual bar has a life of its own after more than 70 years of business, and it was completely renovated in June 2017, when the whole establishment was remodelled and renovated; the start of the new Gonzalo, elegant, comfortable and cool.



The restaurant and bar are in the same building, but are now separate areas with independent doors. At the bar, locals have a direct view into the kitchen and can watch how their tapas and raciones are prepared. Here we find the firm’s usual dishes (ham croquettes, bravas fried potatoes, pig’s trotters ...), and they have also included dishes with oriental influences. Both upstairs, where the bar stands, and downstairs, where the restaurant is housed, the cellar is a pleasure for all self-respecting wine enthusiasts because there is plenty to choose from: a good display of national labels, new and traditional names and some foreign productions ... and it even includes some by-the-glass options. ■ MS



**RIOJA WINE ACADEMY.**  
DOC RIOJA REGULATING COUNCIL.  
www.riojawineacademy.com

»» There’s no doubt that educating consumers, giving them a certain amount of in-depth training, helps to provide the necessary arguments and critique to guarantee the future of quality wine. Some wineries and a few entities also understand it as a powerful diffusion tool that also contributes to consumer loyalty. It’s a simple process: you create an expert and at the same time you train a spokesman or spokeswoman who will publicise the virtues of the label. There are some very-well established, leading courses, run both by labels (Aula Marqués de Riscal, Master Sherry de González Byass) and wine regions (trainers in Cava, in Jerez...). Rioja joined this trend in 2016 when it created the Official Rioja Educators course, aimed at professionals who have spread wine culture through tasting courses and presentations.

After four years of what the DOC Rioja Regulating Council qualifies as “a huge demand” in this initial cycle, attended by more than one hundred students from over 20 countries, the Rioja governing body is now extending the offer by starting up an initiative called the Rioja Wine Academy. This entity has designed four courses that will be given free-of-charge over their website, created for this purpose. Four courses with four well-defined targets from the outset: Diploma in Rioja wines will be the most basic course, lasting 15 hours. It is accompanied by other more specialised courses: Diploma for Trade and Distribution, totalling 18 hours; Diploma for Wine Tourism, lasting 20 hours, and Official Trainer in Rioja Wines, envisaged in three stages, and totalling 30 hours.

The organisers are particularly emphasising this last one, aimed at the most specialised public: “trainers, speakers, writers and journalists from the wine world who want to obtain certificates in Rioja wine”. This is the only group that will be subject to prior selection and their course will combine online material and presentational classes in Rioja, in the Regulating Council HQ, and with visits to vineyards and wineries.

The academy’s web provides all the necessary information for passing the final exam, where candidates will be required to obtain a 75 percent pass in the areas studied. ■ MNÑ





## EL MARGINAL

FOR ALL BUDGETS

**EL MARGINAL.**  
IBIZA, 35. MADRID. TEL. 910 607 280.  
APPROXIMATE PRICE PER PERSON (EXCL. WINE): €30-35.

» Located in the Retiro district, we find a fairly different wine bar than usual. Its comfortable bar area and high tables, which you cannot reserve, are designed for those who are anxious to discover new labels with every visit. El Marginal sits in a pleasant semi-basement, previously known as Buen Provecho at the end of the 80s. Like its predecessor, it also specialises in wine and local cuisine, but it's common here to see the wines taking the limelight and not the food, because the names behind the venture are César Ruiz, Flequi Berruti and Nacho Jiménez, who run the Alma Vinos wine distribution business and the La Tinorería wine outlet.

Their dynamic wine list features around 101 shooting star labels, ordered according to price, and including a good selection of by-the-glass options. They also have a list of confidential wines belonging to their private collection, with a selection of "disappeared", non-released wines, or ones from very exclusive producers. They began the collection over 20 years ago, just biding their time before they could offer it to the public. The impressive wine cellar where visitors are received deserves a special mention. There is no overriding rule regarding the production areas, as the wines come from all corners of Spain and from all over the world.

They also serve a selection of Iberian produce by Carrasco Guijuelo, butifarra pork sausage from Cal Rovira, Premium preserves from Güeyu Mar, such as the grilled sardines, Caviar Paris 1925 and a variety of cheese, as well as traditional raciones, such as Curro fried eggs from the Cobardes y Gallinas solidarity project, fried and served with Iberian shoulder of ham. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at midday, they serve sit down meals prepared by various chefs. If you want to take your time to enjoy these delicacies, they have a high table that sits 8 people available for reservations. They want to promote wine culture by displaying the relationship with the producers, their production method and the resulting tribute to wine. As if that were not enough, they use the ideal glassware for each wine ordered, depending on the origin, type and category. Who could give you more? ■ MR



## SANTERRA NEOTABERNA

A NEW OPENING IN CHAMBERÍ

**SANTERRA NEOTABERNA.**  
PONZANO, 62. MADRID. TEL. 919 070 415.  
APPROXIMATE PRICE PER PERSON (EXCL. WINE): €30.

» One of the new kids on the block in the popular area around Ponzano Street; the new area in Madrid where many reference wine haunts have been opening up in recent years. This one belongs to the owners of Santerra (General Pardiñas, 56), and Santerra Neotaberna opened its doors in December, in Chamberí, as a more roguish, informal version and where the bar area is the focal point, although they also have a dining room too.

In fact, we could actually call it a gastro bar, since it is full of select raw materials showcased in imaginative preparations, based on well-blended products, flavours, techniques and influences. The man behind it all is Miguel Carretero and, among his creations, is the eye-catching fried pork belly with green tomato sauce; beef gizzards, chimichurri sauce, field peas and tuna; *los rejos chili peppers*, his version of the squid sandwich; fried estuary sea bass in Canarian moho sauce... And he also has *callos a la madrileña* (Madrid offal), steak tartar and jamón ibérico cut freshly with a knife. You just have to choose what you want.



As for the wines, there are only a few (reds, whites and a couple of sparkling labels), but they are very distinct and, above all, not very well-known, with a couple of exceptions. It is worth assessing and appreciating this business decision because it gives all its references the same showcase opportunity, thus helping to introduce less popular and less-well known productions. In addition, as the doors are open all day until the early hours of the morning, cocktails are another star feature, together with the live music. They also serve vermouth on Sundays, loyally supporting this Madrid tradition. The venue has a lively atmosphere from the beginning of the afternoon, or from midday on weekends, and is another watering hole for enjoying the wine and gastronomy trend that has been creeping into Ponzano Street over the last few years. ■ MS