

From Deb Schaffer in Spain

## Where to Find Madrid's Best Food Market (The Gelato Is Good, Too)

The taste burst into my mouth, filling it with its tropical flavor. Sitting at the counter, overlooking the space below with the gelato seller behind me, I savored my dessert while watching the crowds move through the building in Madrid. Mango gelato is a wonderful way to end a great evening in this lively city.

I found this hidden gem after asking a friend who lives in the area for a dinner recommendation. Following Google's walking directions from the B&B near the Prado, I wound my way through the cold November streets until I stepped from the bustling Calle de Augusto Figueroa into the land of food delights at the Mercado San Anton. A popular meeting place in the Chueca neighborhood, this area is not on the traditional tourist route—you'll find a local crowd here.

The *mercado* (market) has quite a history in this area. For many years, this run-down neighborhood did not look too appealing to visitors. But in 2008, the merchants in the area decided to invest in rebuilding the Mercado San Anton, boosting the look and feel of the neighborhood by the time the new *mercado* building opened in 2011. Now, the streets bustle with activity as folks shop and socialize at the many establishments in the area; with everyone from toddlers to retirees enjoying the food and the people.

On the first floor, a supermarket of fruit and vegetable vendors as well as butchers and fish sellers show their delicious merchandise to the early evening shoppers. Along with the healthy foods, including olive oils and wine, sweet treats are available at the chocolate and pastry shops. Visitors more interested in prepared foods head up to the second floor for the tapas selections.

Meet your friends and choose from different specialty foods such as Greek gyros, Italian pastas, and American hamburgers, as well as cuts of ham, beef, and chicken that are cooked to order. Although the prices here are about average for Madrid, the atmosphere and the energy make the experience worthwhile. Tables and chairs are available, as well as the counters that line railings. If you weren't hungry when you arrived, the smell of fresh fruit and cooking delicacies starts your tummy rumbling. Don't forget to order the wine or cocktail to complement your meal.

If you prefer to sit down and order a complete meal, La Cocina de San Anton, on the third story, is available for your party. Sit by the windows and watch the crowds enjoying the evening.



One of Madrid's best food experiences is off the beaten tourist track

When you go, keep in mind that the supermarket closes at 10:00 p.m. with the upper floors closing at midnight. On Sundays, the hours for the supermarket are 10.00 a.m. to 3 p.m. The third story terrace and restaurant stays open until 1.30 a.m. Fridays, Saturdays, and public holidays.

For more information and directions, visit [Mercado San Anton](#). The website is in Spanish, though Google does a good translation.