

# MADRID METROPOLITAN

*Madrid in English*

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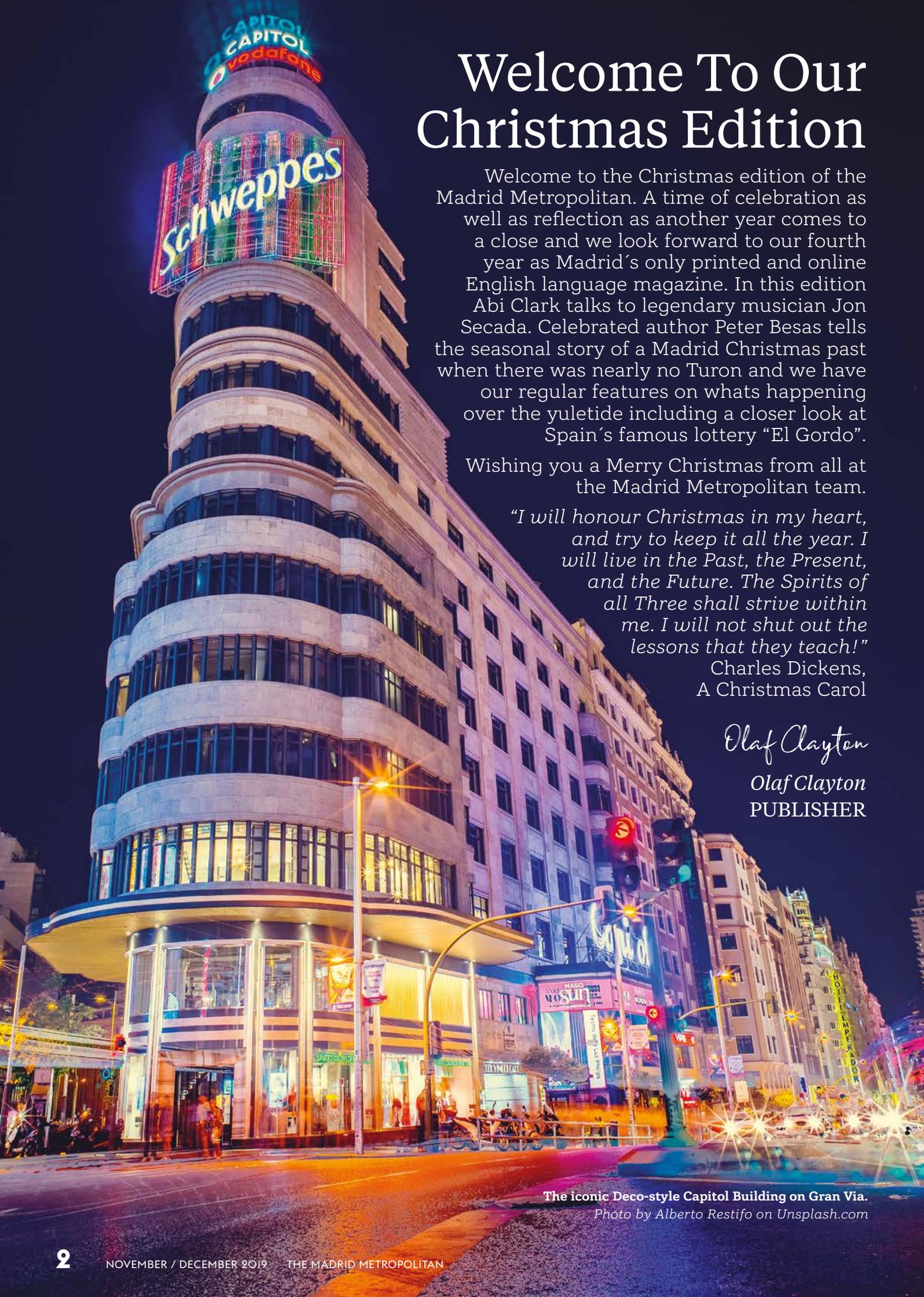
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# Welcome To Our Christmas Edition

Welcome to the Christmas edition of the Madrid Metropolitan. A time of celebration as well as reflection as another year comes to a close and we look forward to our fourth year as Madrid's only printed and online English language magazine. In this edition Abi Clark talks to legendary musician Jon Secada. Celebrated author Peter Besas tells the seasonal story of a Madrid Christmas past when there was nearly no Turon and we have our regular features on whats happening over the yuletide including a closer look at Spain's famous lottery "El Gordo".

Wishing you a Merry Christmas from all at the Madrid Metropolitan team.

*"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach!"*

Charles Dickens,  
A Christmas Carol

*Olaf Clayton*

Olaf Clayton  
PUBLISHER

The iconic Deco-style Capitol Building on Gran Vía.

Photo by Alberto Restifo on Unsplash.com

# STOP BEING A “GUIRI”

5 tips so that you don't look like a foreigner amongst Madrid's local



1

If you live outside the city centre and you're meeting someone centrally, do it at the statue of the Bear and the Strawberry Tree in Puerta del Sol.

2

If you want to try more authentic dishes, leave the city centre, and choose the menu of the day in the bordering districts; you will avoid eating what the tourists eat, and at much more competitive prices.

3

If you are travelling by metro, behave as the locals do. When disembarking, always ask the person in front of you “¿Va a salir?”. Believe us, it is one of the most used phrases on the Madrid underground.

4

If you're in the city centre and need the toilet, *la Fnac* and *el Corte Inglés* are completely free to use without purchasing anything – plus you can take advantage of some shopping!

5

And finally, if you use these typical phrases, it is guaranteed that your “gato” friends from Madrid will be proud of you - but be careful! They are quite informal.

To go to bed

IRSE A SOBAR

It's cool

MOLA MAZO

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Excellent!

EN CERO COMA

In a minute

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# Who's writing this month?



## Luke Darracott

Originally from the UK, Luke is a qualified alcoholic who studied languages at University. Apart from a year out in Moscow he has lived in Madrid giving wine tastings and gastronomic food tours and writing about Spain since 2009. In 2018 he opened an independent wine shop called Madrid & Darracott with his friend and business partner Roque Madrid. His passion is food, travel and wine; in particular the communication of wine without the pretentiousness.



## Abi Lindsay Clark

Since moving to Madrid in 1997 Abi has been working in the Television & Radio world as a Freelance Journalist, Voice Actress/Radio Presenter and Executive Producer. She has worked extensively with Radio Nacional 5 with her programme 'Un Paseo Por El Mundo' and has written articles for El País and various English language magazines for the Asian market. Apart from a 3 year gap in 2005 working in Television in China and plenty of foreign travel for both work and pleasure, Madrid has been her much loved home for more than 2 decades.



## Amy Shia

An "Alice" in Wonderland in Madrid. Contributing to Madrid Metropolitan about the incredible sights and delights; have a cat, met some queens, still in search of my Madhatter.

# MADRID METROPOLITAN

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# EL GORDO

This year the Spanish Christmas Lottery will award 2.380.000.000 € in prize money. Kris Sinclair Christian takes a closer look at the oldest lottery in the world.

**I**t's a tradition stretching back centuries. Almost every working Spanish family fits their **numeros** into the Christmas budget and eagerly await the 22nd. The origins of the lottery go back to Carlos III, also known as Madrid's greatest mayor whose reign brought about a lot of reforms in the field of art and commerce.

The king came up with the idea of the Yuletide lottery following one of his visits to Italy from whence he came, as a way of filling the coffers of the state treasury rapidly.

The first draw took place in Cadiz (Madrid was in the hands of Napoleon) on 22nd December, 1812 and the date has remained fixed ever since. During the Civil War the lottery was drawn in Valencia.

Months before the draw hopeful people patiently line up in front of the **administraciones** –points of sale, mainly in big cities to purchase a tickets. Lottery vendors sell tickets or **décimos** ( being a tenth of the value of a ticket) which costs

today twenty Euros plus a commission to the vendor. The actual ticket cost is €200 and to make it more affordable 10 pre-printed tear-apart sheets of 10 identical sub-tickets are sold. Many family, friends as well as your local bar will sell a **participacion** (a part of the lottery – that could be divided and subdivided to create hundreds if not thousands of participants for each ticket).

Months before the draw students at the San Idelfonso School (founded in 1543 by **Carlos V**) are chosen to form the group who will be singing out winning numbers in a chant. Originally the young participants were orphans – usually boys until 1984 when Mónica Rodriguez became the first girl so that today there is a mixed group singing out the winning numbers.

These elegantly attired and beaming youngsters begin to chant numbers at 9 a.m. on December 22rd - from the Teatro Real and beamed live across the country. The camera captures the 10,000 metal balls circling rapidly almost making up the 5-digit numbers required to make the winning sequence of numbers ( from #00000 to # 99999). Since this system only produces 100,000 unique ticket numbers, each ticket number is printed multiple times, in several so-called series (**series**). The series is also identified on each ticket by a series number. Hence "Series 001 Ticket 00000" through "Series xxx Ticket 99999" etc to increase the number of winning sequences...and odds of winning!.

The race is then on for local tv crews to find the winners across the country – cava is popped and the celebrations begin - for the losers the commiseration of one last try for the El Niño – on the Epiphany of 6th January.

Where to buy your "lucky" lottery ticket - **Doña Carmen**, Calle del Carmen 22 [loteriamanolita.com](http://loteriamanolita.com)

Born **Manolita de Pablo** (1879-1950) the charming and charismatic young lady opened the first **administration San Bernardo** at age of 25 in 1904. Tall and stately garbed in a striking outfit and donning a multi-colored shawl **Manolita** stood behind the counter for myriads of hours attending to folks who came from all walks of life. Her megawatt smile and gentle voice brought many patrons who were fortunate to win large sums of money.

She came to be known as The temple of the Goddess.

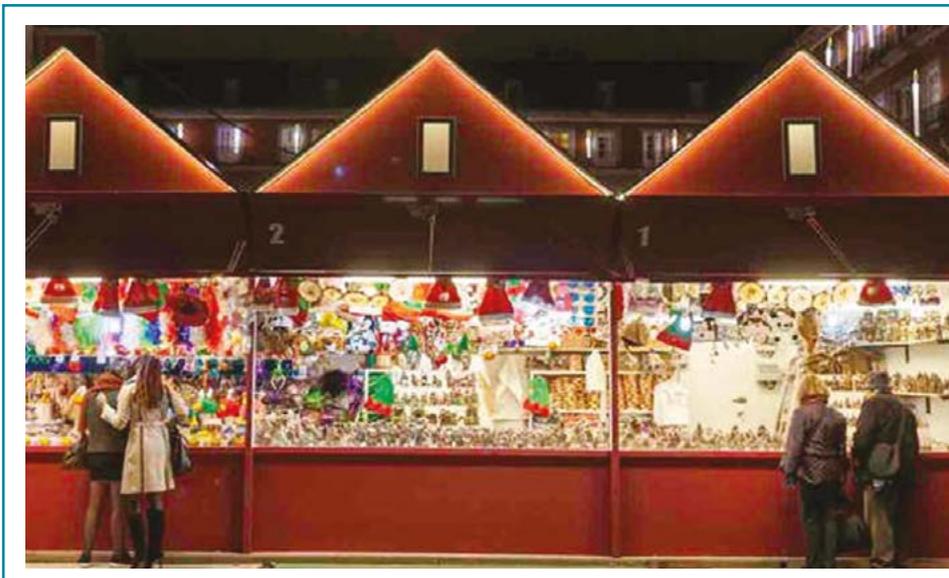
**Manolita** also made frequent trips to the **Basilica de Nuestra Señora del Pilar** in **Zaragoza** taking along some of her favourite numbers to pray and to seek **kismet** for her patrons.

During her lifetime as a lotera – lottery vendor-26 jackpots were distributed. When she passed on the branch at Puerta del Sol (next to La Malloquina – the pastry shop)) came to be known as La Hermana de Doña Manolita and was run by her sister Carmen who in turn made it over to her son.

In 1973 **Carmen Galvez de Pablo, Doña Manolita's** niece was in charge of the lottery store. Lastly, it was sold to another family in 1987 who have to this day – and the luck continues.....

# CHRISTMAS IN MADRID

We take a look at whats on in town over the festive season.



**PLAZA MAYOR CHRISTMAS MARKET.**  
From 24th November to 31st December

The traditional Plaza Mayor Christmas Market opens 24th November and this year boasts 104 stands and stalls selling all kind of Christmas goodies including decorations, trees and hand crafted Nativity scenes. Look out for the seasonal crapper! [www.navidadplazamayor.jimdo.com](http://www.navidadplazamayor.jimdo.com)



**THE BOTANIC GARDENS CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.** 19th November to 6th January

The elegant Royal Botanic Gardens opens its gates for a display of festive lights to the accompaniment of festive music reproduced through the network of speakers hidden in the huge trees.



**PLAZA DE SANTA CRUZ, CAROUSEL**

Just behind the Plaza Mayor which this year sees the vintage Christmas Carousel moved from her former home. Alongside is the artisanal market selling breads, jams and other delights. A must for the kids after buying your tree and decorations!



**VIII CARRERA DE PAPA NOEL – 8th December**

The 8th Papa Noel fun run for a 6km seasonal jaunt along the Paseo de la Castellana which kicks off the Yelutide festivities in the capital – come dressed as Santa or one of the elves – everyone welcome – for more information and to register : [www.lacarreradepapanoel.com](http://www.lacarreradepapanoel.com)



**NAVILUZ – CHRISTMAS BUS.** Running from 29th November to 6th January  
The Naviluz Christmas double-decker bus takes you on a non-stop 45 minute ride to see the Madrid Christmas lights. Starting in Colon and following a route that takes in Gran Vía, Cibeles Alcala and Serrano.



**THE MAGIC THREE KINGS TRAIN**

Jump aboard the magical train on Principe Pio to say hello to Melchor, Gaspar y Baltasar as it heads east – well Torrelodones. <http://www.trendelosreyesmagos.com/>





**ICE CIRCUS II** – 15th November to 12th January  
 The Sonrisas Company return this year with their Christmas extravaganza on ice. A magical musical & iceskating show for all the family.  
[www.circodehielo.com](http://www.circodehielo.com)

**CIRCO PRICE.** From 29th November to 5th January. Teatro Circo Price, Rondade Atocha, 3528012

Founded by Englishman Thomas Price in 1853 the Circo Price has become a Madrid institution. This year brings the adventures of the owl Don Buho as he searches for a tree to have a proper Christmas.



**GRAPES GRAPES – MY KINGDOM FOR A GRAPE (OR 12)**

New Year's Eve finishes with all eyes on the Real Casa de Correos in Puerta del Sol and the chiming of the bells heralding in the New Year. The tradition which dates back to the early 20th century and a bumper grape harvest is now firmly embedded with family celebrations across the country. No cheating. Skin and pips et all.



**EL GORDO.** 22nd December

The Sorteo de Navidad is the world's oldest (1812) and biggest lottery (over 2 billion euros expected to be won this year) is held on the morning of the 22nd December – so get your decimo (you are actually buying a 10th of a ticket) and be part of the excitement as the pupils from San Ildefonso school draw and sing out the winning numbers...it could be yours.



**EL BOSQUE DE LOS DESEOS.** From 10th December to 5th January

The Real Casa de Correos is the very symbol of Madrid and for the country it is the centre of attention with the chimes of the bells heralding in the new year. This Christmas it will also house a spectacular display of Christmas trees where children can hang their wishes for you know who to visit, you know when, to leave you know what, you know where...

**SANTA'S CORREOS.**

20th December to 4th January

The Post Office opens its doors to the curious and the children to find out what happens to those letters to Santa and the Three Kings – head to the Sala "La Arquera" in the Ministerio de Fomento on Paseo de la Castellana. Free entry: For more information: <http://departamentodeenviosextraordinarios.com/>





**CABALGATA: 5th January**

Come watch the arrival of the Their Majesties Melchor, Gaspar y Baltasar as their parade takes them down the Castellana and the traditional giving of sweets and goodies to the children.



**CORTYLANDIA. FROM 15TH NOVEMBER TO 5TH JANUARY**

El Corte Inglés at the back of the Preciados store features this year's Cortylandia with shows and and carols throughout the day



**SAN SILVESTRE VALLECANA 2019. 31st December**

Now in its 55th year the annual San Silvestre Valleccana attracts some 40,000 participants in part fun run complete with Fancy dress and seasonal costumes and part competitive race finishing up in the Valleccas football stadium. <https://sansilvestrevalleccana.com/> info@ sansilvestrevalleccana.com



**32ND MADRID ARTS AND CRAFTS FAIR.**

From 8th December

The Paseo de Recoletos hosts the 32nd Arts and Crafts Fair showcasing the best in artesanal gifts and crafts from the Madrid region as well as further afield with stalls for ceramics, pottery, costume jewellery, leather goods amongst many others. For more information: <http://www.comunidad.madrid/inversion/inicia-desarrolla-tu-empresa/artesanos>



# Once Museum

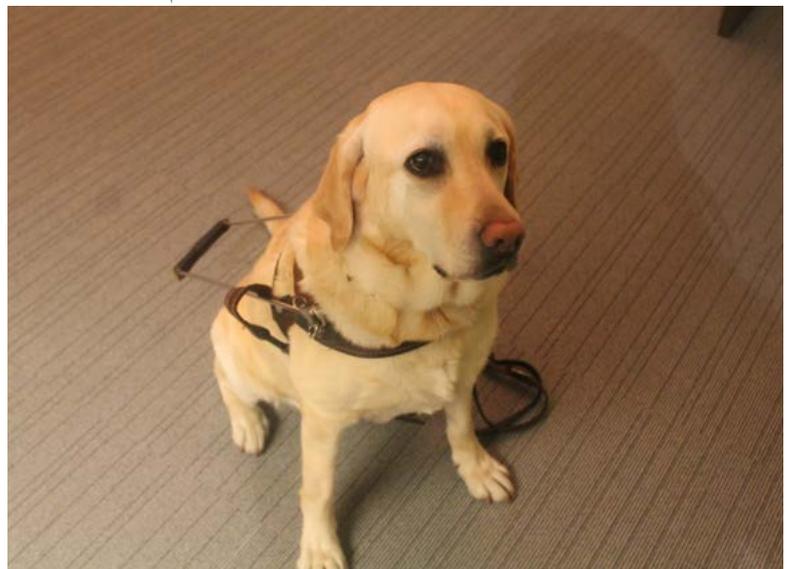
The once organization - museum. **Kris Sinclair Christian** takes a look at this unique museum

**T**he ONCE organization (Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles) prides itself on playing a key role in Spain and Latin America. It has been caring for blind and the virtually impaired since its inception in 1938.

"A large dose of energy, what we call illusion." is how this singular organization defines itself on its website. This is palpable from the fact that over the years the non-profit organization has gone from strength providing more than 80,000 jobs to visually impaired people who would otherwise be on state benefit and in 2013 it was awarded a Prince of Asturias Award for its work in the community.

**"AN EXTRAORDINARY MUSEUM"**

The ONCE museum in Cuatro Caminos was opened in 1992. Unlike other museums - this is unique in



that the guards encourage you to 'see, feel and touch' all the items on display in this spacious cultural center which include skillfully executed scale models of World Heritage monuments such as the Statue of Liberty, Eiffel Tower, London Bridge and the Taj Mahal.

These as well as a well presented history of the tickets sold by the blind can be traced back to their origins in this remarkable center. Book lovers will enjoy leafing through the extensive bibliographic

material.

English speakers will be pleased to know that a guided tour by Ms. Patricia Andreo, a charming blind volunteer who speaks English with great fluency is available. Please call 91 589 42 19 in advance.

**ADDRESS:** C/ La Coruña ,18

**OPENING HOURS:** Tuesday to Friday 10 a.m. To 3 p.m. And 4 p.m. To 7 p.m.

**SATURDAYS:** From 10 a.m. To 2 p.m. <http://museo.once.es>



# NAVIDAD IN MADRID

“Oh no don’t tell me!” That plaintive cry was from María, it was in Spanish and the translation worried me. I had been looking forward to my first Christmas in Madrid but María knew what was in store. A traditional Spanish Christmas can be summed up in three words, family, family and family.

BY JOHN MACDONALD

Every day over Christmas from the twenty-fourth of December to the sixth of January we dined, drank, entertained or were entertained by members of her family. Traditional Spanish nativity scenes include a camel which each day is moved closer to the ‘Stable’ arriving on the sixth of January. There are those that wish the itinerant dromedary ‘all-speed’ to get the thing done quickly while others, the majority, relish the festive season and all it entails. Being dragged around the ‘Mercado Navidad’ in the Plaza Mayor in a frantic search for Christmas necessities signalled the start of our festive season. Everyone in Madrid seems to leave their shopping to the last minute. The Madrileños shop in the middle of the night and in blind panic.

Christmas proper starts on the twenty-fourth or ‘Nochebuena’, with a ‘family’ meal. I was taken by surprise by the seafood, Gambas (prawns) and langostinos (small lobsters) covered an entire table, their tiny black eyes staring questioningly. This is followed by a consomé and in turn by lamb and lombarda (boiled red cabbage). I ended the meal with my first taste of the sticky ‘turrón’ bars which explains why there are so many dental surgeries in Madrid.

On Christmas Day the children and I got our main presents. The ‘Three Kings’ used to bring these on the sixth of January but recently Papa Noel (Father Christmas) has included the Iberian peninsular in his itinerary. The Three Kings still bring gifts but these tend to be school orientated perhaps because the three gentleman are more intellectual than the red-coated chap or maybe it’s because it’s back to school on the seventh.

On to December the twenty-eighth which remembers Herod’s infanticide. The children’s innocence is celebrated by perpetrating practical-jokes and



chanting ‘inocente’. I became a target in our local bar, a note saying ‘Idiota’ on my back, Maria hinted how well they must know me.

I always enjoy New Year but the Spanish version ‘Nochevieja’ outdid the northern European variety. The indispensable feasting was followed by midnight chimes from the Puerta del Sol. One grape must be eaten for each chime and washed down with Cava. It is said that the ladies wear red underwear for luck but I didn’t personally check this point.

On the sixth of January ‘Dia del Reyes’ we ate the circular ‘Roscon de Reyes’ while the evening saw the Three Kings in street parades throwing sweets to the children.

I found the Christmas period in Madrid enchanting and fun but it required stamina and a robust digestive system.

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Est. 1952

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19 Nov	LEADS Group	18:00-19:30
28 Nov	Thanksgiving Dinner @ Dingo Restaurant	19:30-22:00
10 Dec	Christmas Happy Hour @ TBA	19:00-21:00
17 Dec	LEADS Group	18:00-19:30
10 Jan	Happy Hour @ TBA	19:00-21:00
30 Jan	Corporate Member Cocktail @ Ramses	- By invitation Only

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# SPANISH Masterpieces – explained



Art gallery owner Odalys Sanchez talks us through her top 3 painting to see when you are in Madrid and the history behind them.

BY ELLIOT PIGGOT



## The Guernica

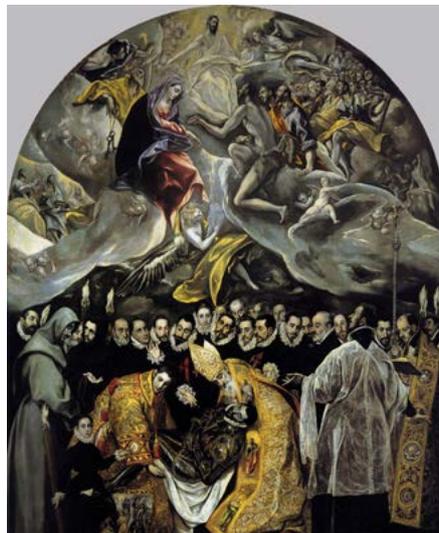
**ARTIST:** Pablo Picasso  
**CREATED:** April 26, 1937–June 1937  
**LOCATION:** Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía Madrid

The Guernica is one of the most recognisable modern art paintings in the world. What is the story behind it and what does it represent?

The Guernica is one of the most important and symbolic paintings in the art world painted by one of the most important artists of the 20th century. It was first commissioned by republicans to represent Spain at the International Exposition in Paris in 1937 as a way of changing opinions about the Spanish civil war. When World War II broke out painting remained in New York's MOMA until 1981 when democracy had been restored in Spain.

It is a symbolic, not decorative painting with symbols in the painting including a lady crying with her dead child, the bull (a Spanish icon) and a dying soldier with a sword amongst others. We also see the light of a lantern representing hope and the Arabian symbol for god as an eye in the sky. All of these symbols represent the disaster of war and evoke a very emotive reaction to the painting. The greys in the composition set a bleak mood and also express the chaos and pain of war.

Picasso used classic composition in a modern way becoming one of the most prolific artists in the world producing 100s of paintings and becoming an exception to the rule in the art world that usually lowers value when supply is high.



## The Burial of the Count of Orgaz

**ARTIST:** El Greco  
**CREATED:** 1586–1588  
**LOCATION:** Iglesia de Santo Tomé, Toledo, Spain

The next painting you have chosen was not painted by a Spanish artist but is still very important in Spanish art history?

Yes El Greco was a very important Greek artist who worked in Spain for many years in Toledo, just outside Madrid. This impressive 16 by 10 foot masterpiece hangs in the Santo Tomé church in Toledo and has never been shown in another place as El Greco did the painting specifically for the church.

The Count of Orgaz was a very important rich man who paid to restore the church in the 1300s. When he died he wrote in his will that all the people of the town must pay the church an annual maintenance fee. However by the 1300s the locals could not pay the fee and the painting was commissioned to remember the idea of the Count of Orgaz.

Legend has it that during the Counts funeral the heavens opened and mourners witnessed a sky filled with images St John and other saints and angels.

The painting is divided into two parts: heaven above and the mortal burial scene below. The painting contains various icons of the catholic church as well as many prominent Toledan social figures of the time. In the painting we see many people with elongated features as well as rich gold and red colours which were El Greco's signature Mannerist style.



## Las Meninas

**ARTIST:** Diego Velázquez  
**DIMENSIONS:** 3.18 mx 2.76 m  
**LOCATION:** National Prado Museum  
**CREATED:** 1656

The last painting you have chosen has been one of the most widely analyzed works in Art - can you explain why?

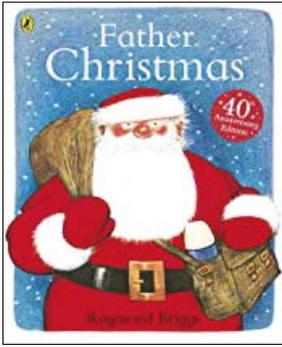
At first glance the painting is a group portrait of the royal family done at the end of Velázquez's life when he had been the official court painter for 33 years. However Las Meninas is much more complex than this- one of the most significant things about the painting is the fact that the artist makes an appearance in the painting himself which at the time was considered very modern.

The picture is divided into a grid system and seven layers of depth and has the most carefully defined space. The infant Margarita is in the centre of the picture making her the focal point of the composition and Velázquez uses light and dark to further order the composition. In the back of the painting we see the Spanish queen's chamberlain Don José Nieto Velázquez who is stood on the stairs but we don't know if he is entering or leaving the scene.

There are many different opinions as to the different perspectives in the painting - are the King and Queen looking from behind the picture or are they standing in front being painted as well? I think the artist is treating the painting as a kind of self portrait by painting his life and environment but not in the normal way.

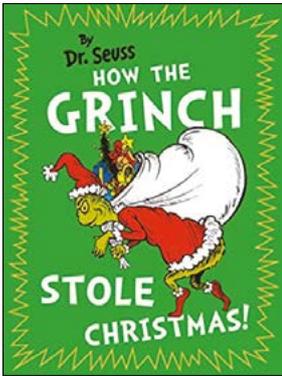
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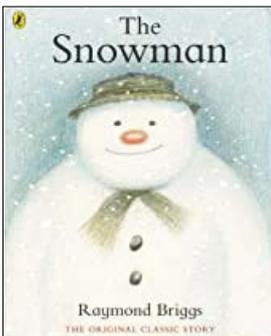
**Father Christmas - Raymond Briggs**

A slightly grumpy Father Christmas prepares the present deliveries. A funny and touching story with beautiful illustrations.



**How the Grinch stole Christmas - Dr Sues**

The Grinch's heart is two sizes too small, and he hates Christmas and all kinds of festivities. Can the inhabitants of Whoville change his mind?



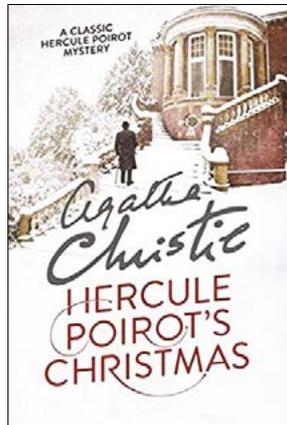
**The Snowman - Raymond Briggs**

Also by Raymond Briggs, a wordless book which captures the magic of a child's Christmas adventure. The stunning animated film is a Christmas classic

# BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

Katharine Cannings

What better way to get into the festive spirit than curling up with a Christmas story? Start a new tradition and build up a collection of holiday books to celebrate this special time of year. If you are looking for the perfect gift, this selection of books has something for everyone - funny, silly and traditional. Whatever and however you celebrate, we wish you a joyful and wonderful holiday in the company of your loved ones and some excellent books!



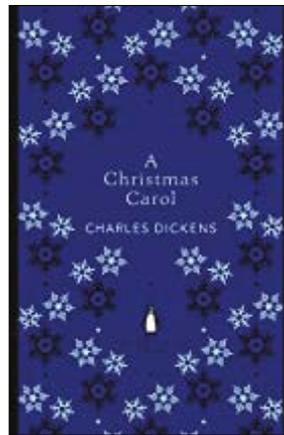
**Hercule Poirot's Christmas - Agatha Christie**

It's a bloody rather than merry Christmas in this classic Agatha Christie story.. A murder mystery with a festive setting, and Hercule Poirot tying up all the loose ends.



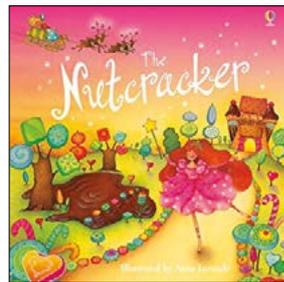
**The Polar Express - Chris Van Allsburg**

All aboard for a magical adventure to the North Pole on a mysterious train. Do you still believe in Christmas magic?



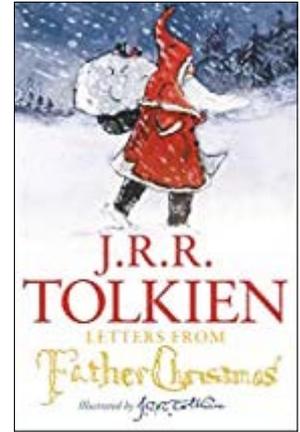
**A Christmas Carol - Charles Dickens**

A Christmas classic set in Victorian times with themes of generosity and social justice which are still relevant today.



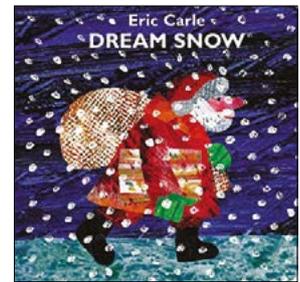
**The Nutcracker - E. T. A. Hoffmann**

A little girl's toys come to life on Christmas Eve, and the nutcracker goes into battle against the Mouse King. Is it all a dream?



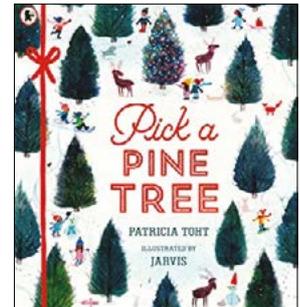
**Letters from Father Christmas - JRR Tolkien**

A charming collection of letters sent by Tolkien to his children every Christmas, with beautiful calligraphy and artwork.



**Dream Snow - Eric Carle**

A peaceful tale of Christmas kindness told with Eric Carle's stunning simplicity.



**Pick a Pine Tree - Patricia Toht**

An irresistible story with gorgeous illustrations which convey the excitement of preparing for christmas. An ideal gift book.

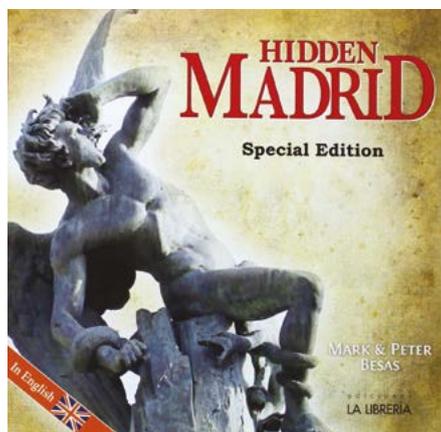


**Katharine** has spent the last 15 years developing teaching projects and programmes for encouraging reading in English in schools and libraries all over Spain. She is the founder of **La Hora del Cuento**, a storytelling and theatre company specialised in English activities in schools. She is also the director of **Glow Learning**, a book distributor which provides a consultancy service to the education sector for English language books and resources. She is passionate about children's literature, travel and tapas, and is the mum of two bilingual children.



## The Turrón that Almost Didn't Arrive in Madrid

In the mid-19th century, a modest confectioner named Luis Mira had for years made his living by following a family tradition in the manufacture of the typical Spanish sweet called turrón which for centuries had given fame to the town in which he lived in, Jijona, near the city of Alicante on the Mediterranean coast.



### Discover more of the capital's secret gems

Hidden Madrid is on sale at all major bookshops in Madrid, including El Corte Inglés, FNAC and the Casa de Libro. These and hundreds of other books about Madrid are also available at the publisher's bookshop, Ediciones La Librería, located on the Calle Mayor 80.

BY PETER BESAS

**L**uis was not one of your run-of-the-mill confectioners of sweets, but rather a veritable artisan, almost an alchemist when it came to the concoction of turrón. The secret recipe with which he made the turrón contained only the best ingredients. When preparing it, Luis cooked the honey in a double-bottomed pan, called a malaxadora, stirring the thick almond paste with an enormous wooden spoon in a hypnotic motion that only he knew, until the mixture had reached the consistency of what expert turrón-makers call the punto melero, that critical moment when the pan must be taken off the fire. Luis knew that his delicious concoction was nigh to being a nectar of the gods. And he had plans... big plans.

After having prepared a large amount of his "elixir", the confectioner filled his cart to the brim and set off to the capital. He knew the risks of doing business in Madrid. He could easily be overshadowed by thousands of other hawkers, though he also knew that making a go of it there would raise him to be the top turrón-maker in all of Spain. It was a risk well worth taking. However, the road was long, and as he proceeded from village to village, before bedding down and in order to earn a little money, he would place

his cart in the village square and try to sell some of his wares. Imagine his satisfaction when, upon a customer tasting his turrón he or she would exclaim out loud how delicious and tasty it was. Soon the word would spread of how exquisite Luis' turrónes tasted, and in a trice a crowd would assemble around his cart wanting to buy samples of the sweet.

And thus it was in each village that he stopped in. By the time he had got halfway to Madrid he had sold out his whole supply of turrón and had to return to Jijona. Luis Mira then set out on the same trip to Madrid two more times, but as before he sold out his whole shipment of turrónes before ever getting to the capital. Finally, on his fourth trip he managed to arrive at his destination and set up a stand in the Plaza Mayor. His success was so overwhelming that soon after, in 1855, he moved from his stand into a shop on the Carrera de San Jerónimo 30, calling it Casa Mira. The shop's fame was so great that it eventually became the "Purveyor to the Royal House", and among its customers were Queen Isabel II, King Amadeo of Savoy and the Kings Alfonso XII and Alfonso XIII. This can still be verified today, since Casa Mira is still in business and inside the shop you can see a tablet proving it.

It requires all your will power not to stop in front of the Casa Mira showcase, with its slowly revolving display showing the myriad of sweet delicacies on sale in the shop: sugared almonds, marzipan, cakes, glazed fruit and, of course all sorts of turrónes. The turrón is sold in blocks of five kilos, but can also be bought in tablets. At present, the shop is run by the descendants of Luis Mira, and one of the salesladies assures us that the preparation of the turrón is still kept secret, being passed on from generation to generation.



# Food & Love?

*Blind dates at Makkila, Madrid's most romantic restaurants*



Madrid. Teachers, English Language. Italian Cuisine.

BY AMY SHIA

Could that be the recipe for love? For this issue, we matched up 27-Year-Old British teacher, George with 30-Year-old, Swedish-American, Zahra. Would sparkling conversation over a warm bowl of pasta at one of Madrid's premier restaurants, Malafemmena, lead to something more?

## SHE SAYS

- 1. What were you hoping for?** I was hoping to meet an interesting person who I could have a conversation with and perhaps have mutual interests.
- 2. What was your first impression of George?** He's nice and interested in history and wanted to learn the language, so he moved to Spain.
- 3. What did you talk about?** We talked about what we liked/disliked, our families, our work, our impressions of Spain, and what his experience of Spain has been as he is new.
- 4. Describe George in three words.** Nice, formal, doesn't like spicy food.
- 5. Would he get along with your friends?** I think so.
- 6. What did you think about the restaurant?** I really liked it. It has a nice vibe, decorated well and has a fun mix of the old and new. The staff were really friendly and accommodating.
- 7. What was your favourite dish of the evening?** The tiramisu for dessert was my favourite!
- 8. Were there any awkward moment on the night?** So I never asked for his name...whoops..it was a total oversight on my part. It wasn't because I didn't want to know, I just literally never thought to.
- 9. And would you meet again?**

I'd be open to meeting again as friends.



## HE SAYS

- 1. What were you hoping for?** I didn't really have any expectations, just someone who was easy to talk to!
- 2. What was your first impression of Zahra?** My first impression was that she seemed nice.
- 3. What did you talk about?** Work, Spain, travel, America, a variety of things actually.
- 4. Describe Zahra in three words.** Interesting, kind and genuine.
- 5. Would she get along with your friends?** Yes.
- 6. What did you think about the restaurant?** The food was really good. It is a lovely restaurant!
- 7. What was your favourite dish of the evening?** The burrata was delicious!
- 8. Were there any awkward moment on the night?** No, I don't think so!
- 9. And would you meet again?** We had an interesting conversation but I think that would be all for me.

## MENU FOR THE NIGHT

Our participants selected burrata and seafood pasta for starter, Veggie pappardelle as main and shared a tiramisu for dessert.

If you would like to participate in the next edition of Food and Love, find us on our facebook page or email: [blinddatemadridmet@gmail.com](mailto:blinddatemadridmet@gmail.com) with your details.

## MALAFEMMENA

**Address:** Calle del Dr. Esquerdo, 13, 28028 Madrid  
**Website:** [malafemmena.com](http://malafemmena.com)  
**Reservations:** 913 36 94 20



# GO NUTS IN MADRID!



**D**any Sarrouf and Marwan Riachi are the Roast Brothers who with warm Lebanese hospitality welcome you to their boutique shop to sample their delicious range of artisanal home roasted and flavoured selection of premium nuts – forget “frutos secos” – this is how nuts are supposed to be. Packed with protein, fibre and essential fats just a small portion makes for a vitality-boosting and delicious snack. Our favourite – well the Manchego - or was it the Curry....oh – forget about all those chocolate ones....

The shop is situated at Bravo Murillo 10. For more information on that as well as Christmas gift boxes [www.nutnutshop.com](http://www.nutnutshop.com)



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The end is nigh. The end of the year that is. The locals are all going to start gearing up for the Christmas period. Where the Brits might trot out all the classic gastronomic trappings at this time of year - roast turkey, pigs in blankets, sprouts, Christmas crackers, et al. - the Spanish don't. Not really.



# LUKE'S FESTIVE CHEER

BY LUKE DARRACOT

In Spain it seems that the festive period is a chance to splash out a little on the meals and simply proffer the best each household can buy of each food group. Beautifully sweet prawns from Huelva, succulent cochinillo (insert cordero or cabrito as applicable), roasted sea bream, a somewhat disappointing roscón de Reyes that everyone pretends to love, and mountains of turrón.

But what about booze? This is, after all, the country with over 5000 wineries. There must be something afoot in Spain during Yuletide surely. Britain guzzles gallons of Champagne and Prosecco at the end of the year and a lot of families make that old wintry favourite: mulled wine. The Germans throw in their two cents with glühwein and hot spiced ciders. In fact a lot of Northern Europe, where the cold lives, has a panoply of these wines. But so does the rest of the continent. The Scandis tuck into glögg, the Balkans have kuhano vino, the Bulgarians delight in drinking greyano vino, the French vin chaud, the northern Italians have vin brulé, the northerly provinces of our neighbour Portugal have vinho quente. Almost every country in



Europe seems to do something with wine and heat and spices. Not Spain.

Now there is a fine argument to be made about climate. Spain is an objectively hot country so it is fair to see why the concept of a simmering hot wine full of fruit, sugar, and spices never took off. But, as those of us who live here know, it really does get rather cold, very cold in fact, at certain points of the year in a lot of the country. The closest the country gets is Galicia's wonderfully boozy flaming coffee bowl the queimada. If you don't know what that is, Youtube a video of it and enjoy.

So Spain doesn't, and probably will never, have a form of mulled wine. But when the cold winds of the meseta whip in through the plains and strike Madrid, what then can we drink? Well, here's a few tips on how to drink through Christmas in Madrid this year.

## Bubbles

Yes, bubbles mean celebration. But also dry sparkling wines are one of the best food-pairing wines in the world. The bubbles combined with the bracing acidity not only cuts through fat, oil, butter, that pervades many Spanish dishes, but the fizz also helps clean your palate in a more physical sense so that every bite of food is like the first time.

Some ideas: Umbretum (15€), Gramona Imperial (21.50€).

## Wintry whites

When people think of cold wintry days their thoughts rarely turn to white wines. Given this drink is most often served at the very least slightly chilled it makes sense perhaps that when it's chilly and frosty outside you might not instinctively turn to the vino blanco. But a bold, aromatic, perhaps barrel-aged or fermented white can be bigger and more warming than some reds. The full body and booze doing the work the temperature can't. Some ideas: Avancia Cuveé de O Godello (12.50€), The Granite Post Albariño (18€), Ossian Verdejo (31.50€)

## Bold reds

This is the mainstay of Christmas plonk in Spain. Sales of Riojas and Riberas skyrocket. People come into the shop asking for their Vega Sicilia or Marques de Riscal Gran Reserva. Classics that cost a lot of money and, to be honest, are a little old fashioned. But big reds are the right idea. The combination of alcohol, bold tannins and a warmer temperature are ideal for the cold snaps of invierno. Some ideas: Valdigal 2015 (14.90€), Godina (19€), Sentencia (30€).

Following his recent tour in Madrid I had the huge pleasure of interviewing the highly renowned and extremely talented singer songwriter Jon Secada. He tells us everything from his latest projects to balancing his professional and personal life and his love of Spain.



## ABI LINDSAY CLARK CATCHES UP WITH JON SECADA

# SECADA'S WORLD

**Your mega hit 'Just another day' has rung in the souls and homes of people throughout the world. What do you think was the key to such success in reaching the hearts of so many different cultures?**

That first song was the beginning of everything in my career. Something that I never expected in the way that it happened. The fusion of what I did with the very first CD of the different styles of music was something that I wanted to do but I never thought that the combination of the R&B and that little bit of the Latin flavour, that people from so many different countries would like it. But I got very lucky and I was very thankful and appreciated the fact that the record company at the time, felt that the song could be successful in different places and that CD could be successful and it was.

**Did the English version of this song 'Just another day' come first or the Spanish version 'Otro dia mas sin verte?'**

Yes, the English version came first and then about six months later the Spanish version. I grew up completely bilingual here in Miami and so I was writing songs both in English and Spanish and the fact that my career took off in English was something that I did not expect so it was the idea of my manager at the time to do the record in Spanish as well and 6 months after the song was first released in English it became a very successful project in Spanish, but it was definitely an idea that came after the fact.

You were one of the first bilingual artists to have international recognition in both markets. What differences have you encountered between the Spanish and the English-speaking markets.

I never really felt that there was a difference except the fact that it's just the difference in language. I think I was able to connect in both languages and the passion of that was able to translate and it was a blessing, one song for people to appreciate in two languages no matter where I went, for me that was really

the magic of the whole thing. I couldn't believe how one record in two languages everybody can relate to. I never felt there was a difference in how people took it whether it was a latin country or not, that's the beauty of music.

**The way that I always looked at my songs since the beginning of my career when I had to change from one language to the other, I didn't look at it so much as a translation but more like an adaptation. So you take the song and you want to keep the basic idea of it but you are kind of thinking about the song differently in the other language because you want it to sound just as good without thinking that you want to keep the literal lyrics of the original version. I think that is the way these songs worked so good. The songs were really more adapted to the new language instead of being a direct translation.**

**Of all the awards that you have won which are you most proud of?**  
My 3rd grammy a couple of years ago



was very exciting for me, it was a Spanish project based on a Cuban singer in the 50s and 60s so something that meant a lot to me as a kid and it was a project that was a labour of love, we did it very true to the time period when his music was popular. Benny Moré was a very important artist and it was exciting to be able to do something like that and was a tribute to a great artist.

But my first grammy was definitely by far the most important for me and to get a grammy for my debut album was something that I really did not expect, so that first one will always be the most impactful for me.

Tell us more about you and where you came from and how you got where you are today.

I grew up musically here in Miami. I left Cuba between 8 and 9 years old and I lived in Spain first, for almost 2 years and then my father got a visa to go to Costa Rica. I didn't come to the US until I was 13 years old so musically everything I have done has been here but I have loved the fact that I have been able to travel and enjoy success in my career in places that I lived when I was a kid, especially in Spain. But Miami was the place where everything started for me where I met everybody that I have ever worked with who was really important in my career and where I have recorded most of my hit songs. It also gave me the chance to be bilingual to have the best of both cultures. That has been a big part of who I am but luckily, I was able to have a lot of other experiences as a kid and those were a big part of life as well.

### **How did your latest project with Soraya come about?**

That happened through our representatives I did a show in Seville last year and then with the production company we talked about maybe doing a brand new song and then through her people I heard the song that she worked as a duet. It got to my ears and I loved it from day one. I mean it's a great song that she co-wrote with another writer from Spain a great writer and I fell in love with the song. So we got to know each other and then it turned into us recording the song and she came to Miami to record it and then eventually I made a wonderful couple trips to Spain to promote it. I am happy that the song was accepted so good and she is a great artist, great singer song writer and it has been wonderful working with her and making plans to hopefully do things later and maybe to perform together later on.

### **You spent time living here in Spain. What made you move to Miami, professional reasons or personal ones too?**

I was just a kid; I didn't really get interested in music until well into my teens when I was here in the states and I decided to study music. I went to college and have a bachelors and a masters in music and jazz music. So, my true interest to be a professional happened much later. Probably I already had the idea deep down inside because I always enjoyed listening to the radio and many different artists but I never really actively thought about it til I was like maybe 15/16 years old.

### **You recently performed at the Divinity concert CADENA IOO Por Ellas (for**

### **women). How did you get involved with that project?**

I was doing a promotion in Spain last month and visiting the radio station and the idea came up and I was very honoured to be asked and to be a part of such a wonderful cause needless to say benefiting the cancer foundation in Spain and especially that the show focused on breast cancer. So, it was an amazing show. So, it started with a visit to the radio station and it turned out to be a great thing that I was able to go back this month and do it and I'm glad that I did. It was an amazing night.

### **You have also written for other singers such as Ricky Martin and Jennifer Lopez. Do you often work on projects of that kind?**

At the beginning of my career I spent so much time in the studio and I got the opportunity to meet so many great artists. I was always in the studio writing songs and even if I was writing songs for myself then other artists would hear some of them and so that's how some of those opportunities came along. I'm always open minded to collaborate. I started as somebody working as a musician in the studio, writing, production work, doing background vocals, vocal production or whatever it was, but the song writing and production I have always enjoyed, that's number one for me. And then the performing comes after that.

### **How did it make you feel when you wrote these songs for those other artists?**

**Amazing! Again I didn't expect it to work out that way, but you know it's what they do and these artists they enjoy your songs. It's a blessing it's a wonderful gift and I'm flattered that they enjoyed it so much that they wanted to record my songs that I was working on and so it was a wonderful time for me.**

### **In 2016 you were acknowledged as humanitarian of the year by the Mohammed Ali foundation.**

### **Are you still actively involved with this foundation? And any other Foundations or organizations?**

They approached me and I was very honoured. They approached me based on my career and the stuff that I've done attached to my efforts and with different charities. To be honoured by an organization that has the name of Muhammad Ali for me meant a lot especially with his career and his life and so I was very honoured that they came to me with it. It was a wonderful night and a wonderful opportunity to be a part of that awards ceremony.

### **You have also worked on Movie sound tracks for example Pocahontas or Dance with me. Can you tell us more about these projects?**

Those projects were brought to a manager's office to work with Disney. It was amazing especially those animated films and working in any movie project that has any type of great music attached to it for me was also amazing. I've done several movies and they've been great opportunities and the fact that people think about me and my music or me being

involved is always very flattering.

### **You come to Spain quite often. Would you like to spend more time working on projects in this market?**

I'm working on the next single which actually I recorded before I left this last time and so hopefully that single will come out at the beginning of 2020 and then after that we are preparing a tour for next summer. That's really our next set of goals with my people in Spain and to work towards that. And the next thing that's immediately important to us is the next song on the radio. So we'll see.

### **You have obviously achieved many goals and dreams already in your life but do you have any dreams pending?**

You know if I can keep doing what I'm doing. I mean at this point I've tried and I've been a part of so many different opportunities. I have taken advantage of everything from theatre to television shows to everything that deals with working in the studio. I really have taken as many opportunities in my life as I can. I want to continue to do so. But nothing that I can pinpoint to say something that I haven't done or not; just to enjoy when the opportunities come up and they make sense to me and to be able to take advantage of them if I can. That's it.

### **Have you had to make any important sacrifices in your life to achieve your goals?**

Yeah I mean there's a lot of sacrifice, discipline and the balance of having to make hard choices and then sticking to them. The moment that my parents and me as an only child left Cuba and came to the States and started from the bottom up. To be able to put in the time and the energy and to rise above and make a commitment to myself and that's something that is the most important thing when you try to make a commitment to what it is that you feel is what you want and you stay with it and you make the sacrifices and hopefully have the discipline to make it happen.

### **Is there anything in your life that you would like to rewrite?**

You know even with the tough times I've always looked at them as positive because that's the only way that you learn from your mistakes and you can pass on a piece of advice to somebody else that maybe is based on what you've been through. And that's the way that I've always looked to my career and my life in general. And I think that kind of goes along in my personality as well actually.

### **Do you have any future projects which you are currently working on?**

This next song for me in Spain is really important to me. There are some other projects that I'm going to be doing here in the States at the beginning of the year. But the truth is I'm really focused on the next single for next year and we are looking forward to what that's going to be like and also the tour next summer and that's something that means a lot to me. So, we focus on that and then see what happens. I'm looking forward to what's coming over the next few months and I'm ready for whatever is coming my way.

**Abi Lindsay Clark**



# BOB SANDS AT THE CAFÉ BERLIN



**1. What do you play?**

I play mostly tenor and alto saxophone but also soprano saxophone, flute, clarinet and what I call functional piano as well.

**2. What brought you to Spain?**

I just came to visit a friend living in Barcelona and another one here in Madrid. I had wanted to live in Paris for a year so after visiting Madrid, I thought it would make a good transition for 6 months or a year. In May it'll be 28 years!

**3. Who did you listen to when growing up?**

Dexter Gordon, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Joe Henderson and Stanley Turrentine were my biggest influences in my early formative years.

**4. Whose Aranjuez versión was better?**

Chet Baker or Miles Davis? - Miles' hands down.



**5. When growing up were you aware of Spanish popular music?**

Not even a little...

**6. How would you rate the Madrid live music scene in general and jazz in particular?**

There are many more players at a high level than in '92 but sadly, There are less places to play. Jazz in Spain is generally very under

appreciated in my view.

**7. Who have you worked with?**

Lionel Hampton, Dizzy Gillespie, The Glenn Miller Orch., Gary Smulyan...Lots more

**8. What was the origin the band?**

I had directed student bands for many years and thought it would be fun to put a professional band together for my birthday in 2000. It was supposed to be a one-off but everybody wanted to continue..

**9. What do you like about living & working in Madrid?**

The people mostly but also it's a more relaxed lifestyle than New York

**10. What do you dislike about living & working in Madrid?**

Not nearly enough live music for such a big city and I'm still not used to the lack of punctuality..



Be our guest.

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# HASTINGS NEW CAMPUS OPENING

On 1st October, Hastings School, a British and International School located in the centre of Madrid, officially opened the Hastings Nexus, a new campus for British education which introduces students to their first pre-university experience.

**H**astings Nexus was created with the aim of providing a more effective environment where pupils can develop not only their autonomy as students but also the so-called “21st century skills” (communication, critical thinking, teamwork, resilience) required in a rapidly changing world.

The 3,500 m2 campus encompasses 24 classrooms, 3 STEM laboratories (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), 4 Art laboratories (photography, Maker Space, drawing, painting and sculpture), 1 library/study area and 1 cafeteria. There are 1000m2 divided into areas for group work and rest, and even a hydroponic vertical garden.

At Hastings Nexus, they offer a British curriculum based around a core of A levels, a highly personalised programme that allows students to tailor their studies by choosing subjects that best suit their interests. It is a Sixth Form education that looks beyond school to help ensure young people are ready for the challenges and opportunities of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

During the opening event, presentations and talks about the world of education and its role in society were given by Stuart Rolland (CEO of the Cognita Group in Europe), Guy Claxton (recognised educator and creator of the Learning Power Approach), Derek Browne (CEO of Entrepreneurs in Action), and Simon Camby (Cognita Education Director). Fernando Furones, an ex-pupil of Hastings School, also took part in the institutional act and emphasized that he could take on and achieve not only his professional objectives, but personal challenges too, thanks to the tools provided by the school.

Tim Hemmings, the Deputy British Ambassador in Spain, closed the ceremony praising the opportunities that educative formulas, like the Hasting Nexus, provide to strengthen the connections between Spain and Great Britain, educating students with an international profile who are able to develop their studies in both countries. This event hosted numerous guests from the British scene in Madrid, such as representatives of the British Council or the British Chamber of Commerce.

Hastings Nexus is the second pre-university centre opened by Cognita in Spain, following the same educational concept as BSB Nexus, the Sixth Form pupils' campus at The British School of Barcelona which opened its doors in 2008.



# Gastro Experiences

with Catalina Brennan



Hello all!! So, it's Autumn, again, and I'm back in Madrid after all my travels....time goes by so quickly!!

It's cold but beautiful, specially in the Sierra Madrileña, you should try it. I recommend el Hayedo de Montejo. It's an amazing landscape, natural heritage of humanity, a forest of beeches, with elves and fairies. Visits are controlled, to encourage conservation, buy you can prebook your pass here [www.sierradelrincon.org/reservas](http://www.sierradelrincon.org/reservas)

Back in cold Madrid, I bring you a comfy recipe and the best place for a Cocido Madrileño. Let's start with the recipe

## AUTUMN CREAM A LA BRENNAN

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 fennel bulbs • 2 granny smith apples
- 150 grs of chesnuts • Butter • Extra virgin olive oil

Let's boil the fennel, cut in half, just covered with water. Not too much, we want to concentrate the flavor, and use the water when blending. Until it's soft.

Roast the apples in the oven until soft, with a bit of butter and salt. Also, the chesnuts, making a cut in each with a knife. TIP: you can microwave the chesnuts, although the result is not the same, but for the crème, it will do. Make a cut in each and microwave for not more than 1 minute. Careful, they go hard easily...wait until you have apples and fennel ready in the blender, then mw, peel quickly and add to mixture. Blend until you get the

texture desired, adding water form coction and extra virgin olive oil.

Decorate with small bits of chesnut and green form fennel, and voilà, you have a beautiful, tasty and very original crème you can serve for Christmas dinner! And, I promise, you will be very surprised with the result...fennel and green apple are very happy together, and chesnuts, will add the smoky touch and texture.

\*\*\*\*\*

As a Chef and foodie, I like to discover new restaurants, talk to Chefs and try out new dishes and ingredients, which I will share gladly with you every month!

*Taberna Sabe a Gloria  
Calle de las Huertas, 53, 28014 Madrid*

Gloria (Chef) and Julian (sumiller and jefe de sala) make a great couple. They settled in Madrid not long ago, in the Barrio de las letras, in the romantic and literary center of town. Coming from Valencia, where they used to have their restaurant, you cannot miss their tasteful rice dishes, traditional from Alicante area with a modern twist. Another must, are their patatas bravas, very original and highly demanded and their special dessert Crema Pasiega (14 hours in the oven!!!)

The Chef, Gloria, will come out to take your order, so you will get recommendations first

hand! Every Thursday you can enjoy the yummiest Cocido Madrileño in town, for only 15€. Cooked for 24 hours, and served in 3 vuelcos as tradition demands...Soup, chickpeas and veggies, and meats, together with some pickles. Sensational!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

Now, let me tell you about our traveling foodies club. We are a group of like-minded people, who try out new places, meet Chefs, in Madrid and abroad, cook with them, shop in their markets and indulge in great wines and food. Our last trip was to Granada. Wineries, great tasting menu by Javier Feixas, "espetos" workshop in the beach, lots of tapas and lots of laughs.

Our next trip, 22 to 24th November: Rías Baixas, in Galicia, the capital of Albariño wine. 2 Michelin star restaurants, boat on the Ría with seafood, wineries and lots of laughs. More info:

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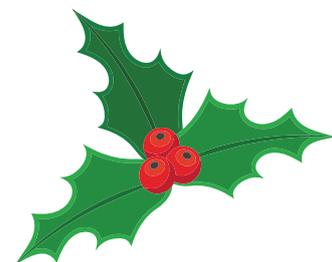
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# Chris Webb's Festive Tips

## One kind of hangover is enough...

If you're anything like me, you'll be busy planning Christmas. Anything from where to see the best festive displays in Madrid, to trying to get your family EVERYTHING they want.

Christmas is an exciting time of the year for all of us. As a parent I still love that my children think Santa will make a personal appearance to our house and that he will be parking his sleigh right in the back garden (I have some doubts that they're now just stringing me along, but I will continue to enjoy it while I can).

We're all busy fitting in lots of social occasions, handing out gifts and cards and trying to squeeze in a party or two. However, there is also a serious side to the festive season: it's very easy to overspend and overindulge and end up paying for it well into the new year.

Statistics show that most of us use credit cards to fund Christmas present purchases and to attend occasions we might not normally attend. Unfortunately, many people have problems paying back that debt after Christmas.

I have put together some tips to make sure you start 2020 on the right financial foot, and hopefully this will help you get through the festive season without a financial hangover.

### Plan your shopping

Always write a list! My wife will laugh aloud at this as I am useless at writing lists BUT it is one of the most important things to do. Never just hit the shops; always write a list of who you want to buy for, an idea of what you want to buy and how much you want to spend. Without your list you'll shop aimlessly and make purchases on a whim. You'll lose track of your budget and spend unnecessarily.

Planning and making a list also means you can do some internet research to

see what shops have the best sales, or if you could buy the gift online cheaper and save some money.

Research shows that people spend more than they can really afford on Christmas presents each year and end up with a credit card debt they didn't anticipate after the "silly season" ends, so it is important to plan and make sure you know how much you can afford to spend.

### Establish some ground rules

This is an important tip. Too many people get caught up gift giving. It's nice to give and receive gifts, but it's helpful to have ground rules. Have the conversation up front with family and friends to make sure everyone is on the same page. Agree on spending limits and who you will and won't be buying for. This avoids offending anyone or any awkward moments at the Christmas table.

Being part of a big family, we decided to make it about the kids. If we didn't it would mean buying a lot more presents and spending a whole lot more. When the whole family do get together for Christmas, which is rare due to the geographical situation of our family, then we do a Secret Santa for the adults where limits are set so everyone is on the same page.

### Focus on personal value rather than financial value

All too often, people get caught up in spending money on gifts at Christmas and focusing on the financial value of those purchases. Instead, focus on the personal value.

From my own experience, I've had many a "nice" item bought for me, but the one present that means more to me than anything else is a framed picture where my kids used their hand prints to make a picture of two robins



sitting in a tree (it has a very personal meaning). It has pride of place in my office and is appreciated far more than anything new, shiny or tech related.

Remember, it's the thought that counts.

### Avoid the financial hangover of festive season events

Festive season events can cause more than one hangover and let's be honest, we don't really enjoy any hangover.

Additional and sometimes unexpected events can really hurt the finances, as we never tend to factor them in to our regular spending habit's but everyone thinks it's ok to do it because it's Christmas. It's amazing how these additional costs add up. Tickets to events, food & drinks, transport, new outfits...the list goes on and on.

If you are planning on being a social animal, think about the event before you go. Plan your whole evening and understand the whole cost of the event, not just the ticket price.

If your budget is a bit tight, be selective and choose the events you can afford to go to. You don't have to go to everything. Don't be pressured into attending something just because it's Christmas. And remember, it's ok to say no and you don't need a new outfit for every event!

Finally, if you're the host don't be afraid to ask people to bring something to share. Whenever we plan an event, we always ask people to either bring

a plate or bring a bottle. People are more than happy to help and generally aren't expecting a free ride.

## Make room for the new by getting rid of the old

This is probably more important when kids are involved. Why? Because they seem to have everything already and as they get older it becomes a struggle to know what to buy them. Generally, kids are going to get a lot of gifts. If you have children, you'll know exactly what I mean. Don't be afraid to ask them what they don't play with anymore or what they don't want anymore.

Look to see what you can dispose of. That's a harder job before Christmas but can help financially if you can offload unused toys to offset new toys. I had this exact conversation with my daughter, Christmas 2018. All she wanted was a new iPhone, so after first agreeing with the wife to splash out on a new model, we then agreed that the old one was ours to do what we wanted with. A quick online sale gave us €200 which made the new purchase a lot less painful.

We also donate some items to charity; whilst that doesn't help us financially, it makes a huge difference to others.

## January sales

Post-Christmas sales can be a great opportunity to get a bargain, but they can also be a good opportunity to get sucked in and enhance the Christmas hangover. Do you really need to go out splurging cash just because there's a sale? If so, then it's important to go into the sales with a plan, just like in tip 1. Have a list of what you need so

that when you go to the sales you go looking for specific things.

And remember, if you're planning on hitting the shops with your credit card, you have already put pressure on that pre-Christmas.

## Survive the school holidays with budget-friendly activities

This is important throughout the year but is still a big part of the silly season. Kids are about to start school holidays and it's important to budget for entertaining them during that time.

There are so many free things to do with kids in and around Madrid. Most of this can be researched online and within our many local Facebook groups. You don't need to spend a fortune. We're lucky enough to have some fantastic parks nearby, some amazing countryside within a short drive and all at no cost.

Planning is crucial. If you plan the money you have available for the period it needs to last, you are less likely to feel the strain of not having enough money.

No Financial Hangover!

## Plan now for 2020

Planning for 2020 and next Christmas is very important. Talk to your family early about the plan for next year and get the ball rolling straight away so you can be prepared well in advance. Plan birthday and Christmas presents so you can buy in advance and save spending more on less just because it was last minute.

The most important thing to take away

from all our tips is to PLAN. Planning plays an important part in being in control of your finances and aware of what you can afford and how much you are spending.

I make no apologies for writing a sensible guide to avoiding the Christmas hangover. Most of us are too focused on the here and now, ensuring we have a great time, only looking at the implications of that good time when the bills start to roll in come January. I hope this will help you to enjoy the festive season, allow you to spend what is right and celebrate without any financial regrets.

Wishing you all a great Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

To book your personal financial review call me on 639118185 or drop me an email at [chris.webb@spectrum-ifa.com](mailto:chris.webb@spectrum-ifa.com)

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We catch up with Tricia Audette, Canadian born Madrid sensation!

## “LIVE STORY” – THE SHOW

I always had a penchant for entertaining so after graduating high school it made perfect sense to study accounting. Which, I will say, I ended up being really good at despising. A great career choice, just not a match for me. If I were to be honest, I felt more alive telling bathroom jokes at the dinner table. At the time, comedy did not feel like a realistic option so I put out that flame and went with the next best thing. I became a teacher.

After graduating from Masters of Teaching at the University of Calgary, I moved to Spain. The year was twenty-ten, the economic crisis was in full swing and there I was all starry eyed with a one-way ticket. There was no real plan in place, just a strong desire to do something interesting with my life.

I easily found work teaching English. Educating is one of my vocations so things were looking good. Every day I had a stage and an audience (I mean students), along with a creative outlet and job security. There was only one minor pesky detail:

the teaching of English part.

You see, while I am highly qualified at being born in an English-speaking country, I know very little about the language itself. Did you know there are four conditionals? That just feels excessive and what is the deal with people asking me about the relative clause? I am not even related to Santa. The situation was clear, I did not want to teach English and I was adamant about living in Madrid. To stay, did I have a choice?

Unbeknownst to myself, teaching was actually bringing me closer to my dream career: Comedy Woman (yes, it is a job). You see, I used the skills I developed in the classroom to launch onto stage. Education led to stand up which led to hosting a weekly open mic which developed into sketch comedy shows. Everything leads somewhere when you are open to the possibilities.

Turns out, we all have choices and when we create our own opportunities we have even more! Plant seeds in the field you want to work and trust me, one day they will grow and thrive in unexpected ways. Like the surprise encounter with Sevillian comedian Fernando García-Torres. Enroute to New York City, he reached out to practise his monologue in English. After fifteen years mastering comedy in Spanish, he was ready to up his game and venture into another language.

One thing led to another and before we knew it, we became TYF Comedy (Tricia & Fernando) with a brand-new show on Gran Vía! Live Story: Comedy Shorts in English is a mix of sketches and stand up based on experiences lived here in Madrid. To top things off, Live Story is the very first show in English at La Chocita del Loro, one of Madrid's most celebrated comedy clubs.

This city is primed and ready for more comedy in English. Now that that flower is in full bloom, onto watering the next - guiding people past their fear of English and what better way than with the international language of laughter.

Tricia's next shows are on 4th & 11th December  
For more information about Tricia visit: [www.tyfcomedy.com](http://www.tyfcomedy.com)

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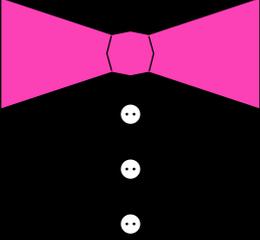
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12:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

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**FEATURING**

- 60+ vendors selling handcrafted gifts, jewelry & accessories
- Raffle and Tombola
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- Visit with Santa Claus 12:00 - 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.
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ENTRANCE: 4€  
KIDS 2 TO 12 YEARS OLD: 1€

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# Christmas Spirit

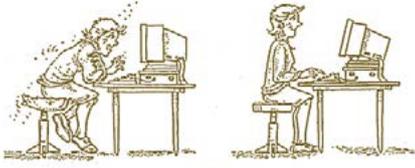
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NUÑEZ DE BALBOA, 43  
FRIDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER AT 8 P.M.

CHRISTMAS SONGS AND CAROLS  
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Sábado 23 Noviembre 2019 | 21:00

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14 DICIEMBRE  
11-20 HRS

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Entrada 2€, niños gratis.

30 artesanos para elegir tu regalo ideal!  
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**DECEMBER 2019**  
 FRIDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> 19:30 H.  
 SATURDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> 16:00 & 19:30 H.  
 SUNDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> 12:00 & 16:00H.  
**COLEGIO CARDENAL SPÍNOLA**  
 CARDENAL MARCELO SPÍNOLA, 34  
 DUQUE DE PASTRAMA  
 BUS: 16, 29, 70, 14, 107, 150

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