

## Vietnamese Cuisine

PR Log (Press Release) – Nov 20, 2008 – Dining on traditional Vietnamese cuisine is part of total immersion into the culture. Vietnamese food is quite unlike any other food in Southeast Asia. It's even quite different from China. Overall it's a blend of Malay; Indian; French and influences and incorporates baguettes and pate from France; and curries and chilies from India.

Foreign visitors consider Vietnamese food quite healthy. It is neither spicy nor oily. Vietnamese eat mainly rice and noodles. Bread is not daily family food. Delicious bowls of noodle soup with vegetables and meat can be purchased everywhere inexpensively for breakfast or even lunch. Each average meal consists of three to five dishes. Tourists can enjoy Vietnamese food everywhere at deluxe restaurants or even at street cafes.

As you travel up or down the country; you will notice sharp differences in both main dishes and snacks eaten by locals. It's one of the joys of traveling in the country; and it's a good idea to ask your guide to point out interesting things to eat.

Once you are in Vietnam; you immediately fall in love with Vietnamese Food. Vietnam is also a coffee-lover's dream. It seems like every street cafe sells the thick coffee preferred by locals. We try to introduce here some typical Vietnamese food that no tourist can ignore when they come to Vietnam.

### Pho (Noodle Soup)

For Vietnamese; Pho is life; love and all things that matter. In Vietnam; Pho is mostly a restaurant food. Though some people prepare it at home; most prefer going to noisy soup shops. Here are a few tips:

Pho comes with a variety of toppings including rare beef; well-done beef and slices of brisket; tendon; tripe and even meatballs. If you're a novice; try pho Tai Chin; which includes the rare and well-done beef combination.

Sprinkle some black pepper; then add bean sprouts; fresh chili and a little squeeze of lime to your bowl. Using your fingers; pluck the Asian basil leaves from their sprigs and; if they're available; shred the saw-leaf herbs and add to the soup. Add little by little; eating as you go. If you put the greens in all at once; the broth will cool too fast and the herbs will overcook and lose their bright flavors.

### Nem

One of the best Vietnamese foods! The Vietnamese Version of the egg roll; Cha Gio is a seasoned mixture of eggs; ground pork; and sometimes crab or shrimp rolled tightly in rice paper and deep-fried. It is served accompanied by lettuce; cucumber and Nuoc Mam.

The proper way to eat these delicacies is to roll them in a piece of lettuce with a slice of cucumber and dip it into the Nuoc Mam.

### Banh Chung

Banh Chung or square rice cake is a Vietnamese traditional dish most commonly found during the "TET" New Year celebration. Every Vietnamese family must have "Banh Chung" among their offerings to be placed on the ancestors' altars.

One or two days before Tet; the family gathers to prepare and cook the rice cakes around the warm fire. "Banh Chung" is made of glutinous rice; pork meat and green bean paste; and is wrapped in a square of "Dong" leaves (rush leaves) giving the rice a green color after boiling for ten hours. During "Tet" New Year; the rice cakes are served with "gio lua" or lean pork pie; and "hanh muoi" or salted sour onions.

#### Coffee

Vietnam is also a leading coffee exporter in the world. You can easily find many coffee houses in the streets of all cities. Please remember that Vietnamese coffee is quite "strong". If you take as many as four cups of coffee in a day; you may be sleepless at night. Vietnamese coffee is a very good gift from Vietnam for your family member after a visit to Vietnam. One of the most favorite trademarks is Trung Nguyen.

#### Mam (Salted Fish)

Mam originally comes from the South because it is newly cultivated land and there are plenty of fish. Mam made from trout can be consumed with rice or with boiled pork and fresh vegetables and it's considered an undeniable food of the Daily life in Mekong Delta. Fish caught from rivers or ponds are carefully salted. It can be reserved in months or even years.

#### Com (Green Rice)

In a clear autumn morning, when the Northeast wind lightly blows; green-rice from Vong village (a famous village in Hanoi) travels with young country girls to the corners of the city. Green rice is said to be the quintessence of the earth and sky, the milk of rice paddies in buds. Vong villagers now pick and choose the right kinds of rice to make green-rice. Traditionally, green-rice is an offering indispensable on engagement day of the couple, from the bridegroom's family to the bride's family.

#### Xoi (Glutinous Rice)

Rice is categorized in two: normal rice and sticky rice. The second is indispensable in people's daily life as well as on holidays. Sticky rice is plentiful in types: banana flavor, coconut-leaf, sesame and coconut, sausage, black-peas, green-peas, maize and mixed sticky rice...are just a few in 3 parts to name. "Nep than", "Nep cai hoa vang" are best flavors to make rice and wine.

What a wonder it's on a winter day! Dressed in warm clothes, we drop in a little shop at night and have a bowl of white sticky rice consumed with pork or eggs. On New Year's days or holidays, sticky rice is what must be on the family altar.

#### Ca Ca La Vong (La Vong Fish-Pie)

The inventor of this fish-pie came from Doan family on Hang Son Street, Hanoi. In 19th century, Hanoi people normally baked pork, but he baked fish - unstinking fish to make

fish-pie. Hanoi people then soon got infatuate it and his eating-house turned prosperous. Henceforth, the name of the street was changed into Cha Ca (fish-pie) from its former name Hang Son (Paint Street) due to success of his eatery.

To Hanoi people, the taste of Cha Ca remains as it was. To have tasty pie, shopkeepers have to select good fish with solid fresh, less bones and good scent. Processed fish is mixed in fish sauce, pepper, galingale, saffron and rice-ferment. Then put on a fire-tongs and grilled right on the eaters' table. Eaters, while eating, have to fan the fire, turn upside down to make both sides baked. Then they put the fish into a bowl of boiling fat and consumed with rice vermicelli, groundnuts, spices, dried rice-cake, sliced onion leaves, some drops of lemon juice and a little coleopteran.

Hanoi people try fish-pie only in Autumn, when the cold wind is blowing outside, spices are in season and a group of friends slowly drink and enjoy the food in a small restaurant on Cha Ca street, what a wonder it's!

#### Bun Bo Hue (Hue Beef Vermicelli))

All over Vietnam, you can find and enjoy beef-vermicelli and it seems tastes from all parts in the country meet and make up special flavor of Hue vermicelli. Hue people enjoy beef-vermicelli in their own way and the food here is a combined art of something fashionable, something very popular. Hue connoisseurs rarely enjoy the food in well-decorated restaurants, and an eating place frequented by tourists is opposite to city post-office on Ly Thuong Kiet Street. Beef-vermicelli is consumed here day and night, the broth-pot is kept boiling but this is not the most visited one because Hue city folks only have beef-vermicelli in the morning and they have their own choice.

#### Cake in the Central Part

Central part, a sunny and rainy area is a bridge that links North and South and rich in wet-rice, maize, sweet potato, corn and manioc. These agriculture crops have enriched their life and the people in the central part have created kinds of cakes made of skillfully prepared would be a shoe in people hard-working life and aptitude in food invention.

There are hundreds kinds of cakes: dumpling, boiled dumpling, coconut-cake, rice-wafer, rice-pie, corn-cake, steamed cake, pan cake, white rice cake...are just few to name. Separate cakes are made of certain ingredients. Each cake needs certain skills to prepare, for people in the central part, especially in Hue, cake are synonymous with decorative to their highly tastes daily meals.