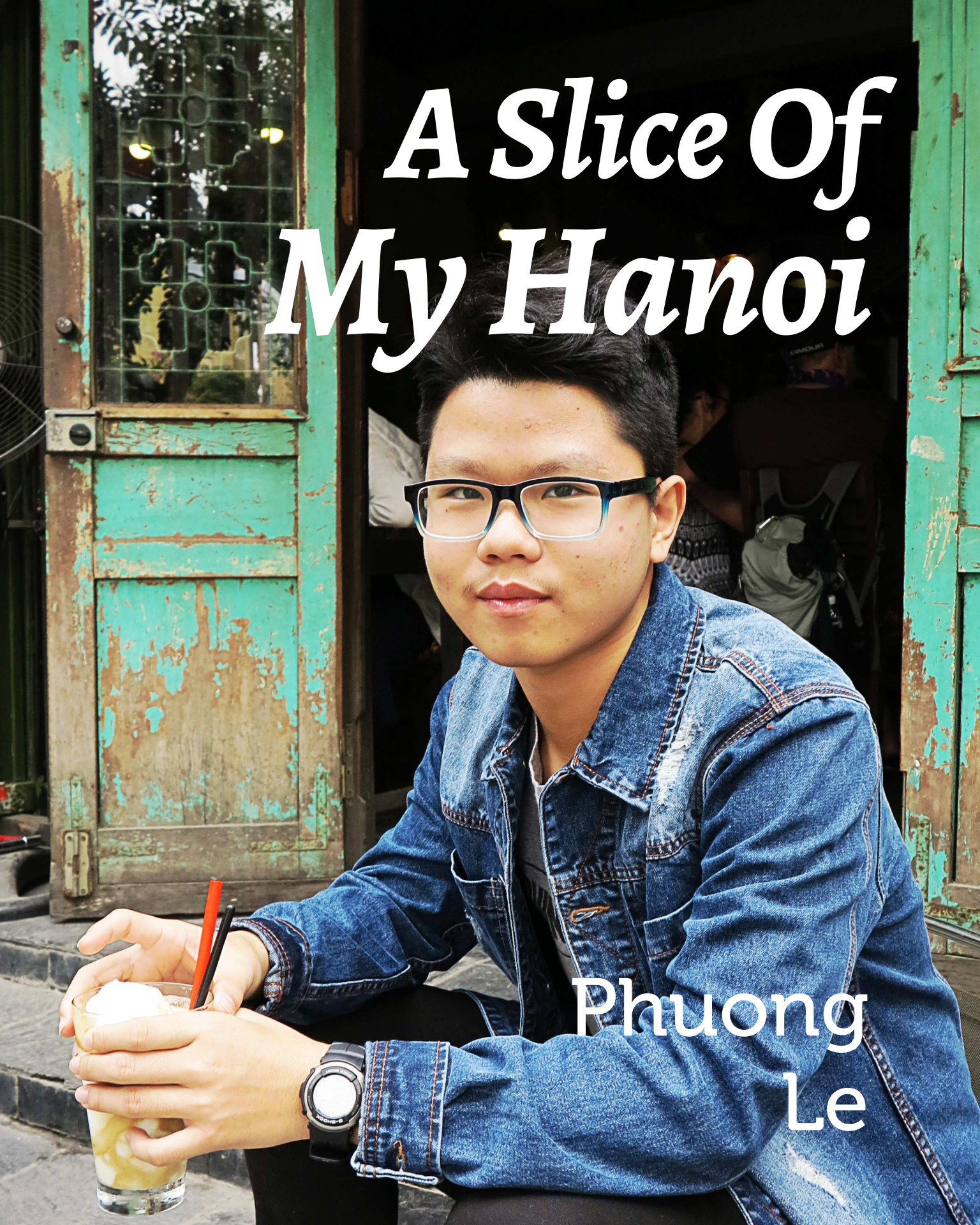

A Slice Of
My Hanoi
Phuong
Le

A Slice Of
My Hanoi


REGINA
PACIS

About this book...

Cooking has been my passion since I was very young. As I grew older, I became more of a chef who likes to think about how to incorporate flavors, how to present my dishes well, and even how to work fast and productively in the kitchen. Eventually, I came up with an idea that not only represents myself as a chef, but also as an artistic person.

The goal of this project is to explore and reinvent the food cuisine of Hanoi. In order to achieve this, I have been experimenting and desigining to produce content in these three areas: food stories, food photography, and recipes. Each food story aims to discover and express my exploration and personal history with a dish. After gaining a deeper understanding of Hanoian food, I recreated popular recipes by adding elements of foreign cuisines. The type of food that I am introducing is fusion foods, dishes that combine elements of different culinary cultures.

"A Slice of My Hanoi" is intended for audiences who are interested in cooking, and are striving to understand more about the culture of Hanoi. Not only do the food stories reflect Hanoi's culinary traditions and heritage, but also they reflect the personality and characteristics of the people. This book is also intended for aspiring young chefs and food-writers like myself - I hope you can find a piece of yourself and some inspirational moments in this book.

Through "A Slice of My Hanoi", I hope I've managed to show my passion for cooking and for understanding more about my cuisine and culture. I also hope you will have a lot of fun while reading this book, and greatly encourage you to try making these dishes at home!

Warm regards,
Phuong

For my family,
who are always there for me.


AVALON BBQ garden
MÌ HÀN QUỐC
서울 식당
HIGHLANDS COFFEE
LEGEND BEER
ALDO
SWAROVSKI
SAMSUNG
SAMSUNG
SAMSUNG

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Chapter 1

Pho Ha Noi







A pure extract of Hanoian culinary culture is how I would define a bowl of Pho. Unfortunately, the precious bowl of Pho that I grew up with is not the version that the world knows. Placing beef meatballs and onions in Pho is such a common occurrence in restaurants that serve this dish overseas, but ironically, the original recipe doesn't require any of these elements. The internationally famous version of the dish is actually Southern Pho, a "Westernised" version of the original. As a true Hanoian, I cannot find Southern Pho familiar to my taste buds, as it is far from the intricate flavors of the original dish. That is why I will be introducing to you Hanoian Pho: the dish that will surprise you with its unfamiliar and unexpected taste.

You might wonder why Pho has such an interesting history, and the answer lies in three various events in Vietnam's history. The first is the unification of Vietnam under the French rule, which is when Pho was created in the Northern region of Nam Dinh and Hanoi. Pho was then kept the same for many years, but a great change to the dish occurred in 1954, when the country divided itself into the North and the South. Due to this split, immigrants brought Pho to the South. Then, the fall of Saigon in 1975 reunited the taste of Pho, although still leaving a big difference between the tastes of Pho in the two different regions.

While there is not one specific recipe for Pho, it is commonly known that the flavors are purely taken from beef. The soup that goes along with the noodles has a rich, fatty and marrowy flavor from the beef bones. The star of the Pho, thin slices of beef belly, gives you the perfect taste of both lean meat and layers of fatty flavors. However, the expectation of two bowls of Pho from different kitchens sharing a similar taste is delusional. There are so many secret recipes of Pho from famous restaurants that have never been revealed. They are kept secrets and passed down from generation to generation. Like the recipe of Coca Cola, you can identify certain ingredients that it uses, but you will never be able to reach the perfect ratios and combinations of ingredients to fully replicate it. This explains why it can be very difficult to recreate the dish at home.

In order to write this chapter, I visited three famous Pho shops to fully experience the taste of Hanoian Pho. Pho Bat Dan, one of the oldest shops located in Old Quarter, was the first one I visited . My parents have always described to me the long waiting line in front of this shop, which actually excited me since it's an experience I've never had before.

Although the wait was long, my first spoon of purely the soup of Pho guaranteed that I would come back again. My first taste of the soup was able to bring up my spirits, as it was extremely pleasant. The soup was surprisingly delicious despite the fact it has a more intense smell and taste compared to what I'm used to. I could clearly taste the richness of the bones and beef, and the signature flavors from the scent of fish sauce and pepper in the soup.



Pho Bat Dan is also unique in the Pho noodles that it uses. In my opinion, the component of Pho that surprisingly gets the least attention for preparing and also tasting is the noodles. Yet when I visited Pho Bat Dan, I could never forget the taste of the noodles. They were thick enough that they didn't become too soft or soggy, and remained chewy as well. This is because the noodles were very condensed, which was due to the amount of rice powder the chef used for making them.

One popular theory agreed upon Vietnamese culinary experts is the origin of Pho's name. It is a variation of the French word "feu" , meaning fire, but could also be understood as an adaptation of the French soup "pot au feu". Because Vietnamese people love to adopt foreign words into their own cultures by using their accents, the word was modified into what it is today. I related this to the taste of Pho Bat Dan, because I can remember the coal and fire which were used to keep the soup steaming hot. It was literally "pot au feu", or a "pot on fire." In this broth are some ingredients such as star anise, cinnamon, and whole green peppers. Each ingredient has its own purpose. While star anise and cinnamon help enhance the marrow flavor of the beef broth, whole green peppers are used to intensify the taste and balance with the fatty flavor of the beef.

The second famous restaurant I visited is Pho Ly Quoc Su, a Pho shop not only very popular among Vietnamese people, but also foreigners. The special quality of this shop is that it is opened like a franchise, so there are many locations unlike like Pho Bat Dan. But the Pho served in Pho Ly Quoc Su is a moderately "Westernised" version of Pho. Fresh coriander and onions are the biggest difference I noticed, and I was also aware of the fact that it has a transparent broth which usually signifies a flavorless soup.

I am writing this at the end of the chapter to comment on Pho's diversity. As previously mentioned, authentic Pho originated from Hanoi, but through the visits of restaurants I can see how that is slowly changing. Although shops with traditional tastes like Pho Bat Dan are still very prominent, changes can be seen in the way Pho is made right here in Hanoi. As an aspiring chef who highly values creativity in food, I think it's a good change for Pho to continue its evolution. Therefore, the taste of Pho is not only a pure extract of Hanoian cuisine as I mentioned before, but also the true flavors of Vietnam.


SOUVERNIR SHOP ANH QUÂN
Fine
18 B NHÀ THỜ
CÔNG TY CỔ PHẦN THƯƠNG MẠI & PHÁT TRIỂN XÂY DỰNG
TÙNG BÁCH
18B
I AM UNLIKE ANY OTHER
THẺ ĐIỆN THOẠI

Chapter 2

Cha Ca La Vong

Although most dishes of Hanoian cuisine are popularly made in many restaurants, some are most famous at only one location. Cha Ca La Vong falls into this category because it was created and initially sold at only one restaurant. Many years later the dish became one of the most well known dishes of Hanoi. Roaming through the streets of Old Quarter, I could not hide my excitement when standing in front of Cha Ca La Vong. It has been more than a hundred years since the dish was created, but the ancient style of the French-Vietnamese architecture hasn't changed. At that moment, I couldn't stop thinking about the tastiness of the dish and decided to write a chapter about it.

Cha Ca La Vong is located on a street with the same name. However, in the 19th century, the Cha Ca Street had a different name: Hang Son. "Son" means wall paint in English and that was the main material the street sold. The owners of House 14 invented a unique dish that had the same elements of Bun Cha, but uses fish as the main ingredient instead of pork. Enjoyed by local people and food critics, the dish instantly became popular, and the owners officially opened a restaurant to sell this dish exclusively. Simply the fact that the street's name was changed to Cha Ca proves its favorability and tastiness. Even though many streets of Old Quarter have famous Hanoian dishes, none has changed its name due to a single dish. So what has made the dish so popular?

There are many reasons behind why the dish became so popular, but in my opinion, it is the harmony of flavors. The harmony lies not only in how the flavors complement each other so well, but also in the texture and temperature of each component. While the rice vermicelli has a chewy texture and is eaten cold, the fish is soft, smooth and sizzling hot. While the fish has a rich and fatty flavor, the shrimp paste sauce is sweet, savory and slightly tangy. But the most creative component of the dish is the toasted peanuts. They perfectly compliment the dish with incredible richness and crunchiness. All together, the harmy of flavors have made Cha Ca La vong one of the most original, appealing, and delicious dishes in Hanoian cuisine.

Cha Ca, to me, is the perfect dish to eat on a cold winter day with family and friends because it is always eaten hot on the stove. The sizzling sound, the smoke and the fragrance that is released make the dish attractive and appealing. I have read the commentary of the dish by a famous children's author named To Hoai, and learnt that the servings of Cha Ca isn't very large, but guests who are familiar with the dish never order two servings in one go. It is because only when the dish is sizzling hot will the taste be the best. The restaurant prepares the fish by cutting it into thin slices, just thin enough that after being cooked, the size is increased to a perfect thickness. After it is marinated with pepper, some salt and a light dash of fish sauce, the fish is massaged with turmeric powder, giving it a vibrant yellow color. However, the dish would taste significantly different without some toasted nuts and shrimp paste sauce. Rice wine is a matching drink and a spectacular compliment for the dish.

The restaurant is very particular about the type of fish that they use. In Vietnamese, this type of fish is called 'cá lăng', and in English it is called Hemibagrus. Cá lăng is an ideal choice as it has very little bones and can be bought very fresh. Every afternoon, the restaurant buys fish from Viet Tri market, and leaves the fish in tanks of fresh water. For families like mine who want to cook it at home, it is not always easy to buy this type of fish. But there are similar types that can taste equally as good as cá lăng', and no matter what type of fish is used, the dish would still remain as flavorful. The signature flavors are varied and replicated in many other restaurants today, but Cha Ca La Vong has left a huge legacy. It is genuinely a unique beauty of Hanoian cuisine with a special story that's hard to find among other dishes.



Chapter 3

Cháo



Growing up, my family has always told me that I am a fast eater when it comes to burning hot food, especially porridge. Even when I was a toddler, the porridge in my bowl would always disappear in mere seconds because my mom would keep feeding me spoon after spoon! Although the memories aren't clear to me, I know that I am still very fast at eating porridge today. I guess it is because Vietnamese porridge is such an exciting and delicious dish. But some people might say, "Isn't it is just a bowl of porridge? What's so special about it?" In Vietnamese cuisine, this dish isn't plain like most European-style porridges. It is so fascinating that you could potentially write a whole book about it.

A simple bowl of Vietnamese porridge begins with either a handful of rice grains or some day old rice. My mom, who has plenty of experience with Vietnamese cooking, told me the secret to making great porridge: day old rice. This ingredient has a lot of flavors and aroma, and will also give your porridge a smoother texture. The method of making white porridge is simple like most Vietnamese dishes: boiling water, some stock and rice. But always watch out while cooking because rice grains have lots of foam like pasta when they are being boiled. Let your bowl of porridge slowly simmer to unlock each rice grain's essence and sweetness. Slowly the porridge will thicken and have the pure white color of the clouds. This will be the base for many great dishes of porridge, and for my own recipe that I have written.

Porridge comes in a myriad of styles and uses a variety of ingredients. Some people like to eat porridge with pork, while others like it with chicken, fish, or even clams. There is, however, a type of porridge that is enjoyed everywhere: green bean porridge. This dish always reminds me of porridge hawkers of old Hanoi.

Even though I was not born in the time when a hawker's bowl of porridge is a luxury to children, I have heard about it from my parents. It reminds me of a lady who used to come through our neighborhood every morning with the call, "Cháo đê... Cháo đê... Ai ăn cháo nào?" If it had been the time of my parents, children would surround the lady and view her for a bowl of porridge. Green bean porridge along with white porridge were popular dishes sold by street hawkers back in the time. It is my mom's specialty to eat green bean porridge with crispy fried tofu and some Vietnamese pickles. On the other hand, my favorite type of porridge is white porridge with pork meat and crispy Chinese crullers. This is why I like to visit a famous porridge hawker in the streets of Old Quarter, whose version of pork porridge greatly impresses me.

Ms. La, a middle-aged woman, is a porridge hawker on the streets of Ly Quoc Su. My first impression of Ms. La was how youthful and friendly she seemed. She shared with me that she has been selling porridge for more than 20 years, but I accidentally mistook her for being the daughter of the owner when I first came to the shop. As we continued on with our conversation, my respect and admiration for her grew even more.



“Everyday, I work from early morning to late at night. That is when I prepare the porridge.”

Doing two jobs at a time and working for long hours each day was Ms. La’s routine when she first started. Ms. La was a lunch lady at a local school at that time, so selling porridge was hard to fit in with her schedule. She would have to work in the morning and at noon at the local school, then return home and sell the porridge. Thankfully, porridge is a relatively easy dish to make compared to other Vietnamese dishes, so she doesn’t have to prepare a lot. However, Ms. La’s recipe is not similar to how my mom and I cook it at home, making it more difficult for her to prepare.

"It all starts with simmering pork bones for many long hours, so the broth can extract all of the bone’s sweet flavors," Ms. La suggests that the longer you boil the broth, the more flavorful it will be. The consistency of the porridge fascinated me because it was thick and smoothly blended - something I’m not accustomed to. The secret behind this is to soak the rice with water and let it sit in water for about thirty minutes to one hour. Before cooking the rice with the broth, Ms. La has to blend the rice into a cakey and powdery mixture. She said the consistency all depends on how much water you add to the rice mixture while cooking it.

When I took my first spoonful of the porridge, which I have good memory of due to its exquisite taste, the porridge just melted in my mouth. The consistency was soothingly pleasant as if it were a background to help the mince pork stand out. But the pleasure of eating didn’t stop there. Tasting another spoonful of the porridge, I could feel the crunch and the fattiness of the Chinese cruller. This lovely garnish compliments and blends in so well with the shredded pork's flavors.



“I chose to sell porridge because everyone loves it!”

To little children, a bowl of porridge is the perfect snack to eat after school. To older people, it is comfort food for cold winter days. Porridge is such an easy dish to make and is loved by many, which is exactly why Ms. La sells it. But when I asked her, “Why did you start selling food anyway?” - that is when Ms. La shared the situation of her family from back when she started. With an ill husband who had to enter the hospital and quit his job, Ms. La had to take care of her whole family. She has a total of four people to take care of, so it was necessary, and obvious, that she had to become the main income of the family. Her business went pretty well when she first started selling pork porridge, but she would constantly be warned by the police for selling food in a public spot. Also, she faced a loss of customers when she moved to her new location.

“Selling porridge helped me send my kids to college.”

But things also went well for Ms. La as she was able to make more money and financially support her family. Not only so, she now has customers who frequently visit her shop. These customers also asked about her new location and came to this new place to buy pork porridge and support her. This motivated her to develop the dish by adding the fried pork cartilage and selling more pork porridge everyday. She also asked her children to help her sell more porridge by promoting the shop online through Facebook. Hearing this made me so happy because I could understand the pressure she must have went through to be this successful on this day. My encounter with Ms. La has helped me to not only understand the true flavors of Hanoian Chao, but to also understand the different obstacles and hardships that a food seller might have to go through in order to achieve success. It was more than an honor to talk to her and I am definitely going to visit the shop more regularly from now on!





Claypot Ocean

Serves 3 porridges
Preparation 15 mins
Cooking 30 mins

Braised salmon

200 grams of salmon
2 sticks of lemongrass
10 grams ginger
10 grams galangal
5 dried Thai chilies
3 tbsp of hoisin sauce
2 tbsp soy sauce
25 mL water
1 tbsp sugar
1 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp white vinegar

Porridge

150 grams day-old rice

Pinch of salt

500 mL vegetable broth

Spring onions

"Cháo" with Singaporean braised salmon







1. In a large pot add in your day old rice, broth and some salt. On low heat, bring the pot to boil and let simmer for around 15 minutes.

2. While the porridge is cooking slowly, prepare the marinate for your salmon. Slice the ginger, galangal and lemon grass into thin slices. Then add these spices and the Thai chilies at the bottom of another pot.

3. Layer your salmon on top of these ingredients, then add the rest of the marinating spices to the pot.

4. Cook the salmon on low heat for around 5 minutes, keeping the lid on so the liquids won't escape the pot. Then flip the fish and cook for another 5 minutes.

5. In a small bowl add glutinous rice flour and 10 ml of water. Mix thoroughly until there are no lumps of flour left.

6. Then, pour the mixture into the porridge. Stir the porridge quickly then turn off the heat after another 5 minutes.

7. The salmon porridge tastes best right after the porridge and salmon are done cooking. Serve with sprinkles of pepper and chopped spring onions.

"Claypot Ocean" is one of my personal favorites in this Food Journal. It is among the tastiest dishes, and has a flavor profile of hot and spicy, but also sweet and savory. My main inspiration for this dish is Singaporean frog porridge, which explains the way I've cooked my salmon. Frog porridge is always cooked in a claypot and eaten separately with the porridge. This is why I've named the dish "Claypot Ocean" - to express the Singaporean porridge style and seafood protein combination. But the flavors of braised frog is more savory than sour and spicy, which is why I've added more ingredients like Thai chillies and white vinegar to my dish. Salmon was chosen thanks to its fattiness and soft meat, which in my opinion goes really well with the plain flavors of porridge. I used my mom's original recipe for cooking the porridge by adding a raw flour liquid mixture. This keeps the traditional thick texture - my favorite quality of Hanoian porridge. But a major difference between my recipe and normal Chao is the way the salmon is eaten with porridge. Usually, the protein would be cooked directly with the porridge, but this method was not used because the salmon would not be as flavorful.





Chapter 4
Nom



Eating is a big part of Tet celebrations, as it is what unites families and friends together. However, this is a source of worry for our family as the food we eat may be overpowering for our stomach; therefore, the perfect solution that my family found was to eat lots of chicken salad. With Tet coming up, I have been thinking about salads, or Nom as we call it in Vietnamese, and realized the specialness of Nom in Hanoian and Vietnamese cuisine. It is one of the very few dishes in this food journal that is regularly made at home. Nom is the representation of a homemade Hanoian meal; of course there are many other delicious dishes but Nom stands out as the most easy to make and most commonly known by everyone.

My family's chicken salad recipe starts with a boiled chicken. It is one of the ingredients that must be cooked and left on the altar, which means that every Vietnamese family during Tet would have boiled chicken. The reason why my mom started making the dish so often is that boiled chicken can taste boring after you eat it every single meal during Tet. The chicken breast is usually the least enjoyed part of the chicken, so my mom shreds it into thin strips then turn it into Nom. No more bland chicken pieces are served at each meal, but rather Nom which bursts with sweetness and tanginess. Our recipe includes raw onions and fresh herbs which are massaged with vinegar and some sugar. Many families also prefer a banana blossom, which tastes just as good with the chicken.

However, no matter what type of vegetable is used, the key to a successful Nom is the sauce. The sauce of Nom is very refreshing as it combines all flavor profiles: sweet, savory, sour, spicy. When people eat this dish, I often hear them say, “The lightly sweet and sour flavor of the dish makes it really easy to eat”. That is when I realized all types of Nom have the same flavor profile. No matter what type of protein or vegetable is used, a traditional Vietnamese dish of Nom has the same signature sauce that makes everyone love the dish. The sauce itself is very easy to make and only requires a few ingredients such as fish sauce, vinegar and sugar. My family loves to eat spicy, so we include a lot of chili powder and fresh chilies.



Hanoi is particularly famous for dried beef salad which is not easy to make at home. That is why I frequently visit Long Vi Dung, a restaurant which is famous for this kind of Nom. Even though I have visited the place many times, I still documented every little detail as I tasted the dish. My first bite of the salad was like visiting an amusement park because there was so much flavor bursting in my mouth. The first flavor I sensed was the signature smell of Kinh Gioi, or Vietnamese balm in English. Then the nutty flavor of roasted nuts, the sweetness of the lean beef, and lastly the sourness and spiciness of the sauce. It was a party full of flavors and also different textures: the crunchiness of the papaya and beef tendons, and the softness and moisture of the meat. The documentation of all of this led me to conclude the importance of the sauce. It is what “holds” the salad together - the true “soul” of the salad. All elements of the salad are intriguing in their own way, but without the sauce then their combination will not work.

In an article I read, Mr. Hao, a beef salad seller, said he was inspired by his father when he started selling Nom. His father had the same job as him but didn’t have a very successful business which pushed him to stop selling food. Mr. Hao didn’t have an easy start either, but he loved his job despite many risky factors that might have stopped him from doing it. Selling salad was not easy as the money made is very little, and the money seems even more unworthy because of how dangerous it is to cut the vegetables. Mr. Hao said he got so many scars to the point of having to prepare the band-aids beforehand each time he cuts the papaya.

“I remember an old guest who was a Vietnamese living abroad in France. After eating, he solemnly payed me with two hands and said, ‘It has been a long time since I’ve eaten a salad this good.’ He had been gone from home for a long time and finally found the taste he once knew in the salad.” Before coming back to his country, he ordered some salad to bring to France and later sent back a letter to Mr. Hao saying that one of his friends cried while eating the salad. To this 70 year old man, biking everyday to Old Quarter and selling Nom is more of a hobby which allows him to meet his usual customers, rather than a profession for profit.

Reading the article strengthened my idea of the homemade quality of salads and also broadened my view about the history of Nom. The dish might seem like a new invention but it was actually created and integrated into Hanoian cuisine a long time ago. Like I previously mentioned, I have also uncovered the key element to Nom which is its tangy sauce - it is the “soul” which holds the rest of the dish’s flavors together. My family and I will never stop carrying this "soul" to the next generation and continue our traditions of this lovely dish.





Rosemary Steak Garden

Serves 3 salads Preparation 20 mins Cooking 20 mins

"Nộm" with beef steak and roasted carrots

Salad

2 large carrots

1 ½ tbsp honey

Olive oil

300 grams white banana blossom

Handful of mixed herbs:

Vietnamese balm, perilla,

Vietnamese mint, Thai basil

Salad Dressing

1 clove of garlic

1 red chili

3 tbsp fish sauce

3 tbsp vinegar

2 tbsp steak juice

1 tbsp lime juice

3 tbsp sugar

¼ cup of water

Beef Steak

300 grams rib eye

½ tsp dried rosemary

Salt and pepper

2 large cloves of garlic

20 g butter and some olive oil



1. On a chopping board, tenderize the rib eye until the beef is about 2 cm thick. Use olive oil to rub the dried spices evenly on the beef.

2. Cut the garlic into thin slices, then fry with olive oil for 2-3 minutes until they start to become golden brown.

3. Add more olive oil then cook the steak on each side for around thirty seconds or just when the color starts to change. Make sure that your stove is on medium heat, not too high or too low.

4. Add the butter and let it rest on the beef for around 1 minute. Then, flip the beef so all of the melted butter is at the bottom of the pan.

5. Cook the beef for another 30 seconds then remove the beef from the pan. Let the beef rest then slice into 1 cm thick strips. Place the beef back in the pan to soak up all the juice.













6. Cut the carrots into 3 cm strips and put on a baking pan. Drizzle with olive oil, honey and season with salt and pepper. Bake the carrots in 200°C for 15 minutes, occasionally stirring them to cook all pieces evenly.

7. Finely mince the garlic and chili then combine with the rest of the ingredients for the dressing. Stir the dressing until the sugar has dissolved.

8. In a large bowl, combine the fresh vegetables with vinegar. Mix the vegetables well and let rest for about 5 minutes.

9. Take your carrots out of the oven and straight away pour into the pan with your beef steak. Stir the two together and let them rest for 5 minutes.

10. In the same bowl with your fresh vegetables pour in the dressing, beef steak and carrots. Mix the salad well then serve 15 minutes after. This dish can also be eaten cold and can be stored in the refrigerator up to 3 days.





While "Rosemary Steak Garden" may sound like an item found in a five star restaurant, it is just a simple Vietnamese salad with a twist. You can find the meaning of the dish through its name, which also explains its difference compared to the traditional Nom. When mentioning “garden”, the emotions and imagery created are vividly calm, gentle and colorful, expressing the uniqueness of the flavor profile which is a combination of the tanginess of the sauce, the sweetness of the carrot, and the richness of the steak. I used the traditional Nom’s sauce in this dish because it is harmonious to the flavors of the steak. Buttery and rich, the steak makes the perfect “flavor background” to the dish - it blends in extravagantly with other elements to create the calmness and gentleness. The use of fresh Vietnamese herbs and banana blossom enhances and softens the fattiness of the dish, giving it a balanced set of flavors. "Rosemary Steak Garden" was also influenced by Western cuisine’s use of honey to grill food, and this boosts the sweetness of the carrots. Not only does the honey add flavor, but also it highlights and emphasizes the colorfulness of this dish, undeniably creating a “garden” full of flavors.





Chapter 5

Mien va cac loai My

Hanoian cuisine is special due to the way it appropiates ingredients that are native to foreign countries. Noodle dishes are a perfect example of how we adapt and change flavors to match with our palate. In this chapter, I will introduce to you this aspect of our cuisine through cellophane noodles, instant noodles and egg noodles dishes.

Cellophane noodles or Mien is a Chinese ingredient which was brought to Vietnam during the Chinese colonization. It is used in many dishes in both traditional and modern Vietnamese cuisine. Specifically, the traditional meal placed on the altar during Tet always has a hot bowl of Mien Ga or glass noodles with chicken organs. Also, one of the main ingredients of spring rolls, another important dish during Tet, is Mien. But as time passes, many new and innovative Mien dishes have been created. One example of a refreshing dish is Mien Luon, cellophane noodles with crispy fried eel. The heart of the dish lies in its very simplistic flavors, and the aroma that comes from the use of fresh herbs. Another very popular Mien dish is Mien Ngan, which is completely different to the tastes of mien luon. Mien Ngan is made with bamboo shoots and green onions cooked in delicious duck broth. While Mien Ga and Mien Luon have a very delicate and subtle flavor profile, Mien Ngan is all about the tanginess and the fattiness of the soup. Up to this point, you might be thinking "Well, creating new flavors is something all cuisines can do." However, not only do we change the flavors of a dish, but also the way to eat and enjoy it - that is why I will be introducing to you Mi Van Than.

Mi Van Than, or Wonton noodles in English, is originally from China. Chinese people often create captivating stories about the history of their food, which was the case for Mi Van Than. Duong Minh Hoang, is an infamous king under the Duong dynasty known for being indulging in pleasures and one who loves to eat. One day, the king dreamt of eating clouds. When he woke up, he hurriedly told his chef to replicate the wonderful dish from his dream. The chef created dumplings with a secret meat filling recipe, and shaped them into clouds, turning them into soft, white and alluring pieces of melting sweetness. The egg noodles also have an uplifting flavor to it, making it the perfect compliment to the "clouds". During the colonization, the dish integrated into Vietnamese cuisine, creating a wave of new Mi Van Than shops owned by Chinese descendants in the 1960's. But upon knowing the heavenly taste of Mi Van Than, we have developed our own way of eating this dish. This revolutionary invention has become so popular that it is now seen in all types of noodles - not just egg noodles. The simple and short way to understand this invention is that we take out the broth of a dish, and replace it with a sweet and sour sauce.


EGG
EGG
laVie


SINH NHẬT
PHỞ BÒ

Mi Van Than Tron, Banh Da Tron, Mien Tron are just some of the many dishes eaten with the sauce. The word “tron” has a meaning of “mixing”, which brings a playful feeling for the dish. Unlike normal dishes with broth, Mi Van Than “tron” have more components and condiments. These include roasted peanuts, crispy fried onions, Vietnamese sausage, fried dumplings, bean sprouts, fish cakes, and a million other things. Eating “tron” dishes bring a completely different experience compared to the dishes with broth. It is, in a way, a "party" full of flavors and textures that will wake up your senses. The way we enjoy each flavor and ingredient at the same time is very different to the normal verison of these dishes. This only proves how experimental Hanoian cuisine can be and how creative it can become.

The last section where a lot of creativity and modern culinary ideas are seen is Mi Tom or instant noodles. Instant noodles first appeared in our country after 1975. It was typically liked by students who studied abroad because of its convenience to cook and eat. Later on, instant noodles became a very popular food that was not only eaten at home but also served in food stores. Usually, food shops that make Mien related dishes also prepare some instant noodles so customers who prefer this type of noodle can enjoy it. This type of Mi Tom dish, with chicken broth, chicken organs and whole spring onions, is becoming more popular. Regarding the cooking technique, our type of noodles only needs to be blanched through boiling water for 30 seconds to 1 minute. We don’t cook it for a long time like ramen because that will make the noodles soggy. Vietnamese instant noodles is much alike to the Indonesian version - it is thin and is supposed to be chewy once cooked. With just some blanched noodles, a lot of dishes can be created from it. My most favorite dish which I often cook at home is spicy noodles with water spinach and poached eggs.

In conclusion, Hanoian cuisine is not only famous for its original dishes, but also through how it changes and makes unique food from other cuisines. These dishes have made important impact on modern Hanoian cuisine, and is a big part of my personal food heritage. More importantly, the way in which we change our food is not only the taste, but also the way we enjoy each ingredient and flavor.


eken

Cellophane Crab Island

Serves 4 noodles Preparation 20 mins Cooking 20 mins

Sit-Fried Glass Noodles

250 grams glass noodles

2 onions

1 large carrot

50 grams celery

1 large green bell pepper

2 shallots

Tamarind sauce

100 mL of water

30 grams tamarind paste

1 clove of garlic

2 tbsp brown sugar

5 grams tapioca flour

½ tsp salt

Creamy Crab Meat

200 grams boiled crab meat

4 tbsp mayonnaise

1 tbsp lime juice

½ tsp pepper

½ tsp chilli flakes

"Miến xào" with creamy crab meat and tamarind sauce

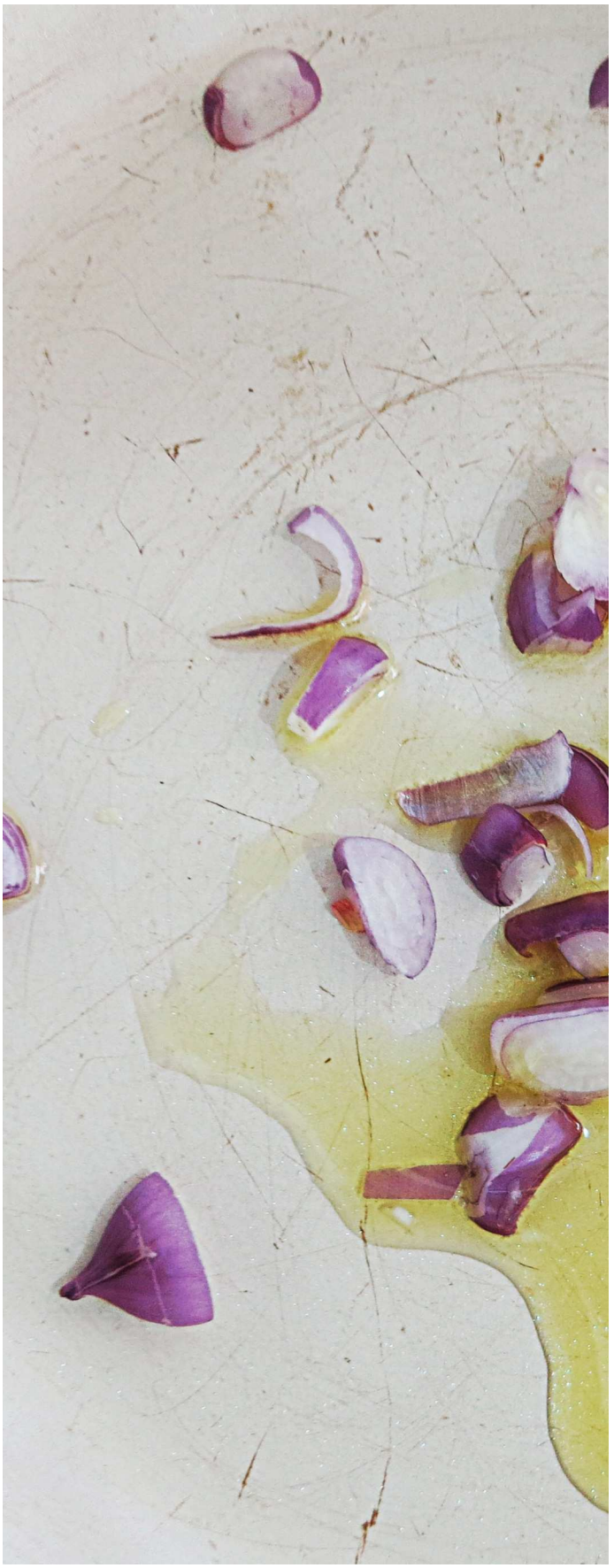
1. Prepare your glass noodles by rinsing them with water then soaking them for 5 minutes. Cut the glass noodles into 20 cm strips and let rest.

2. Chop your onions into 8 pieces or until they turn into wedges. Then, chop your carrot in half and slice thinly. For your celery cut into 3 cm strips and for the bell pepper cut into small triangular pieces.

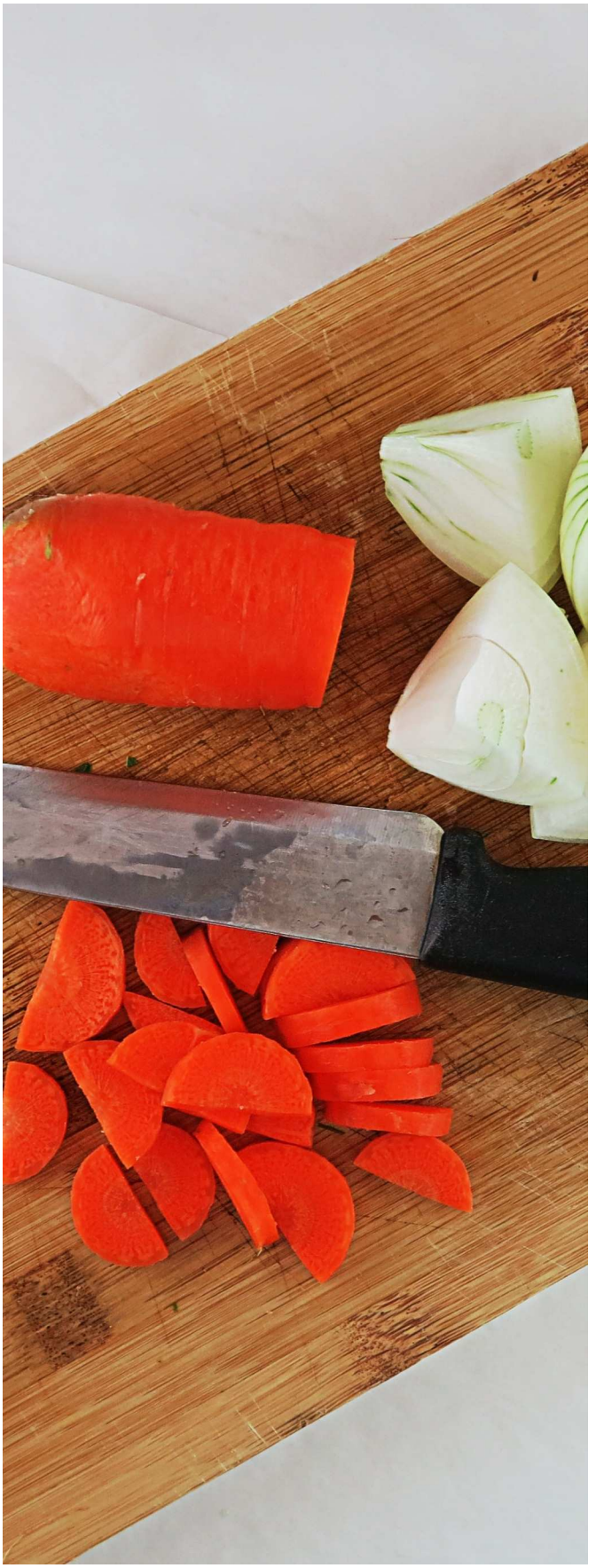
3. Crush and mince your garlic and slice your shallots thinly. Leave the garlic for the tamarind sauce and fry your shallots with olive oil, for 2-3 minutes on high heat.

4. Then add in your carrots then fry for another 3 minutes. Add the rest of the vegetables leaving out the celery then fry for another 5 minutes.

5. Finally add in your celery then season the vegetables with salt and pepper. Turn off the heat and leave the vegetables on a plate to reuse the pan.









6. Lightly fry your glass noodles with some olive oil for about 1-2 minutes. Make sure to scrape the bottom of the pan so the noodles don't stick.

7. Add in 50 mL of water then stir quickly so the noodles can absorb evenly. Season your noodles with salt and pepper then fry for another 5 minutes.

8. Add in the vegetables with the glass noodles and fry for another 1-2 minutes.

9. Combine your tamarind paste and water. Microwave the mixture for 1 minute to soften the tamarind paste.

10. Mix the tamarind well until when the water has turned into a dark brown color. Strain this mixture and only keep the water that was strained.

11. In a pan fry your garlic with olive oil until it has turned golden brown. Add in the tamarind water and the rest of the ingredients and stir well.

12. Cook the sauce for about 5 minutes or until it has thickened and is slowly starting to simmer.

13. To make your creamy crab add all of the ingredients together and mix gently. Be careful of mixing too hard or else the crab meat might turn all mushy as a result.

14. To serve the dish, plate your noodles then add on top some tablespoon of the creamy crab. Then top with some fresh coriander and some tablespoon of the tamarind sauce.





One type of popular noodle dish that I haven't introduced is stir-fried cellophane noodles and crab meat. The specialness of this dish is it uses actual crab meat, unlike other parts of the crab for most Vietnamese dishes. Inspired by the famous Lobster Roll, I have transformed the meat into delightful spoons of creamy and soft crab. Compared to the original dish, the crab has a much richer flavor and pleasing texture. Juxtaposed with the crab's taste is the tamarind sauce, which is traditionally used in crab stews. It enhances and softens the flavors of the creamy crab, making the dish more coordinated than the original version. I have also named the dish "Cellophane Crab Island" to create a playful summer vibe and remind the audience of a tropical island vacation. The summery feel is generated by the use of colorful vegetables, especially the uncommon use of celery in Vietnamese dishes, which adds freshness and a different texture to the dish.



Noodles of the Clouds

Serves 4 noodle soups Preparation 20 mins Cooking 1h40 mins

"Mì vắn thắn" with braised beef and enoki mushrooms

Braised beef

10 grams ginger

3 shallots

2 sticks of lemongrass

200 grams lean beef

50 mL water

2 tbsp sugar cane syrup

1 tbsp fish sauce

Salt and pepper

Sauce

2 tbsp beef juice

1 tbsp soy sauce

1 tbsp white vinegar

1 tsp sesame oil

1 tsp Vietnamese Chilli sauce

½ tbsp sugar

Shrimp Soup

50 grams dried shrimp

20 grams jelly ear

20 grams shiitake mushrooms

20 grams mint leaves

10 grams coriander

Salt and pepper

1 tbsp fish sauce

200 grams egg noodle

Vegetables

150 grams spinach

100 grams enoki mushrooms

100 grams tofu skin

Handful of fresh herbs:

Vietnamese mint, garlic chives

Vietnamese balm, mint leaves

1. Cut the ginger, shallots and lemon grass into thin slices, then lay at the bottom of a large airtight pot.

2. Put the uncooked beef on top then add fish sauce, salt and pepper. Drizzle the beef with sugar cane syrup and add water to the pot. Braise the beef on low heat for around 1 hour.

3. Drain the beef from its juice after braising, then slice the beef thinly but keeping the large and thick size of each piece.



4. To make the broth add the shrimp, mint leaves, coriander, shiitake, jelly ear and mushroom into a pot. Pour in 500 mL of water then bring to a boil on medium heat.

5. Season the broth with fish sauce, salt, and a lot of pepper. Bring down the fire then let the broth simmer for 30 minutes.









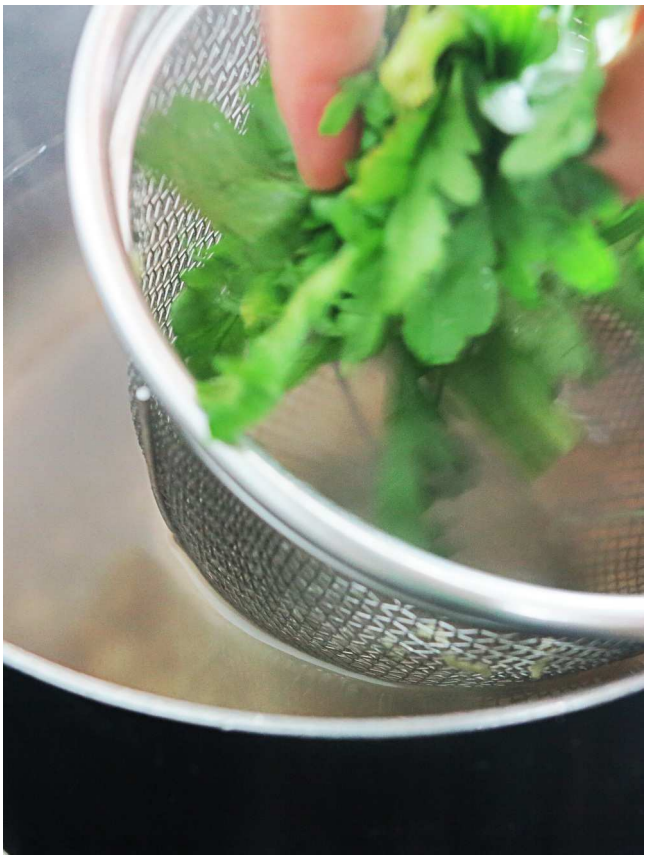
6. In another pot, bring to boil 500 mL of water and add a pinch of salt. Then use a strainer to cook the noodles, spinach and enoki mushrooms. Cook the noodles for around 2 minutes and blanch the vegetables for only 10 seconds.



7. Leave the noodles and vegetables in a bowl while preparing the sauce and the broth. Add a teaspoon of sesame oil so the noodles won't stick together.

8. Divide the tofu skin into 3 cm squares, try not to cut them too small because they can burn easily. Then, fry these for around 40 seconds each side or until they are golden brown and crispy.









9. Return to the pot with the braised beef and take out two tablespoons of the juice. Pour this into a bowl and mix in the rest of the ingredients for the sauce. Stir the sauce well for the sugar to dissolve.

10. After your broth is done simmering, drain the shiitake and jelly ear to a clean chopping board. Then thinly slice the jelly ear into 3 cm strips and the mushroom into half.

11. To serve the dish add some noodles, beef, shrimp, shiitake and jelly ear from the broth into the bowl of noodles. Add some ladle full of broth or the sweet and sour sauce. If you're eating this dry with the sauce, then add a handful of fresh Vietnamese herbs.

Wonton noodle soup possesses a sophisticated taste, which is why I've named the dish "Noodles of the Clouds". For my own version of the soup, I kept the flavor profile and concept of the dish the same while making small changes to elevate the its delicacy. Beef was used as a replacement of pork as it is leaner, which accompanies well with the clear broth. The use of dried shrimp in the broth makes the soup sweet and light, acting as the "flavor background" which helps the smell of the shiitake mushroom and jelly ear stands out. I was also inspired by a popular Japanese ingredient: enoki mushroom. Often used in Japanese hot pots, the ingredient exquisitely compliments the dish while also symbolizes the "clouds" of my dish due to its soft texture and bubbly appearance. However, since "tron" dishes are becoming increasingly popular and tastes equally as spectacular, I have also created this version of the dish, highlighting a deliciously rich and sweet beef-flavored sauce.







Chapter 6

Bánh

...nhieu loai

Banh is such a special category of food as the word itself can represent multiple ingredients and hundreds of dishes, including savory, snacks, and desserts, from numerous places in Vietnam. In this chapter I will be introducing to you five types of Banh that originated from and are very popular in Hanoi.

Bánh mì Pâté

Adapted from French cuisine, Banh Mi is a type of bread that is commonly used for making the popular Banh Mi Pate. It is one of the dishes I have known all my life and remains as one of the most regular food that I eat. With such a strong connection to the original flavors of Banh Mi Pate, I have found it more difficult to create a fusion recipe of the dish.

Banh Mi is made from plain flour - that means no extra sugar, salt or oil. Inside the bread is a light and fluffy dough, so light to the point it seems like you're holding nothing. Remember the movie "Ratatouille" and its dialogue about bread: "Oh, symphony of crackle. Only great bread sounds this way."? Well, this statement is very true when it comes to Vietnamese Banh Mi! It is that sound when you hold the Banh Mi, the small crackle sound that will tell you the "fresh out of the oven" quality. And when compared with the more textured Banh Mi from the West, Vietnamese Banh Mi is less densed and more airy, like soft bundles of buttery clouds.

There are many Banh Mi stores in Hanoi, but in the winter days people aren't motivated to visit them. Therefore, Banh Mi hawkers who sell them at small streets and valleys have more customers. If a hawker wants to be successful at selling Banh Mi in front of a school, they have to constantly move around the gate or else the police might come and shoo them away. Despite running around all day with huge baskets of bread on their heads, these hawkers are always friendly and cheerful, always waving and smiling at their customers. Through time, a Banh Mi hawker has become a signature image of Hanoian cuisine.

Even though Banh Mi Pate is a popular type of Vietnamese sandwich, it is not very easy to make at home, which is why the dish has become such a popular street food. A Banh Mi Pate is made with normal bread sold by hawkers, complemented by moist pieces of pork meat and Vietnamese sausage, loads of delicious Pate and pickled vegetables. However, the meat is not the highlight of the recipe; it acts as background for the Pate stand out. The vegetables that go along with the Banh Mi Pate is very much alike Nom, but with a reduced flavor profile to avoid overpowering the sandwich.

Vietnamese Pate is different than Western Pate in the way that it is heated until warm and spreaded on crunchy bread. Doing this intensifies the richness of the flavors and the allure of the smell. A delicious Pate already takes up 70% of the successfulness of a good Banh Mi, as it is the most memorable taste that would bring back more customers. My mom is a big fan of this component of the dish, which is why she so often makes it at home. Even though my mom's version is tasty with its intense peppery smell, it can't achieve the uniqueness of street Pate.

Despite being inflexible in adapting ingredient changes, the older version of Banh Mi has changed from only having cucumber and chopped corriander to having balanced carrot and papaya pickles. Together, with the signature Banh Mi chilli sauce, the sandwich's components are perfectly complementary to each other.





Bánh đúc

In Hanoi, there are not many soup-based Banh dishes like Banh Canh - a delicious rice-cake soup that originated from Southern Vietnam. But Hanoi has two very special Banh dishes which are Banh Duc Thit and Banh Duc Nom.

One of my favorite food shops to visit is a Banh Duc shop near my house on Lac Long Quan street. The special aspect about this shop is that it serves both types of Banh Duc, which is not usual since most restaurant specializes in only one type. Everytime I visit this place, the owner is busily scooping Banh Duc out of a large pot bursting with rice's earthy aroma. Banh Duc Thit starts off with a thick paste made from mainly rice flour that is slightly similar to Aligot - classic mashed potatoes with cheese. Then, the owner puts on top beautifully cooked minced pork and jelly ear. And last but definitely not least is the sauce of Banh Duc, which is much alike to Bun Cha's dipping sauce. My favorite thing of the Banh Duc is actually the sauce, because its mild sourness and intense spiciness from the chili powder just makes you keep on scooping and gently eating bite after bite. This type of Banh Duc is actually not very popular amongst other snacks even though it originated from Hanoi. In my opinion, the dish is no less delicious and delicate in comparison to Hanoi's most iconic dishes.

Banh Duc Nom follows the concept of "Nom", but instead of mixing vegetables, you mix Banh Duc. Everything about Banh Duc Nom is different to Banh Duc Thit. The Banh Duc used in this dish is solid and has a firm jelly-like texture. It is usually made in flat circle pieces, then cut into thick strips prior to mixing. Banh Duc Nom is also eaten cold, unlike Banh Duc Thit which tastes best on winter days. My favorite type of fresh vegetable is also the only herb that is used in this Nom recipe: Vietnamese balm. It is a popular type of herb used in almost every dish that requires fresh vegetables. The reason why I love it so much and used it so many times in my recipes is because of its subtle minty and acrid flavors. But the most special thing about Banh Duc Nom is the sauce. The ingredients needed to make the sauce, super-fine crushed nuts, sesame seeds and fresh bean sprouts, create a unique taste like the rain, a delightful feeling that makes you feel relieved and calm. It is so unique that you'll never find the same type of sauce in Hanoian cuisine ever again.

Bánh tôm

In Hanoian cuisine, most dishes require simple and accessible ingredients. Banh Tom is different due to its requirement of tricky and hard-to-find ingredients. Small shrimps, the star of the dish, have to be caught from Ho Tay; sweet potatoes have to be harvested from farms near the Mekong River. These ingredients are then mixed with a pancake-like batter and fried until crispily golden.



Banh Tom is a creation of the early 1900's, beginning as as a fancy snack for the wealthy near Ho Tay. But later on, it became one of the most famous dishes of Hanoian cuisine. A partial reason for Banh Tom Ho Tay's popularity is its location - a midly brisk area with a relaxing view of the West Lake. "Banh Tom Ho Tay" has become a familiar term to not only Hanoians but also to people from different regions of the country. Whenever I talk to my relatives who aren't from Hanoi, they would express their love towards Banh Tom Ho Tay, praising its lovely taste and presentation. Nowadays, the quality of Banh Tom Ho Tay is not as good compared to the beginning days of the restaurant.

With the fading fame of a famous restaurant comes a charming gem in the middle of Old Quarter that sells inexplicably tasty Banh Tom. This Banh Tom shop is located in front of a small alley in Hang Chieu, which is very famous for selling many kinds of food. Whenever I visit the shop, the energy that revolves around me is very lively - a signature atmosphere that can't be missed from the oldest streets of Hanoi. The humble area of the shop, which is reduced to only 5 meters squared, makes me feel better treated, and the energy of more shops inside the valley makes the experience even more exciting. The sounds, the smells, the tastes are all a magical experience that makes this place more unique than all others.



Watching the owner makes Banh Tom is the first joy that this shop has brought me. First, she scoops a paddle full of pancake-like batter, then she adds in the sweet potatoes and finally the small shrimps, using a frying technique of leaving the paddle to float in the deep frying pan for some seconds then flipping the cake. This helps the cake to solidify and form the circular shape that it has. Although I don't think the ingredients that this shop use are from Ho Tay, considering how polluted it has recently been, I can still definitely sense the taste of Banh Tom Ho Tay. The small shrimps that are used and the julienned sweet potatoes reminds me of my childhood with Banh Tom Ho Tay.



Despite not possessing the delicacy it used to have, Banh Tom Ho Tay still stands out through its eating traditions. 40 years ago, Banh Tom Ho Tay was an ideal restaurant for students to celebrate their graduation. It was also a place where relationships are bloomed, and even a place for a wife to say goodbye to her husband leaving for war... This is a special case in Hanoian cuisine as I've never encountered a dish that attracts customers not only through its tastes but also through the beauty of its location.





Bánh rán

Banh Ran is a fried rice cake with two different types of filling: sweet and salty. Both of these types originated from Hanoi, and are popularly sold in other regions of Vietnam. In this chapter, I will only focus on the salty version of Banh Ran, a heartwarming crispy snack that greatly impresses me.

Made with minced pork and jelly ear, the filling of Banh Ran Man is much alike to the filling of Banh Duc Thit. A difference still lies between the two dishes: the gooey dough used in Banh Ran in contrast with the softer rice paste of Banh Duc Thit. I have always thought that Banh Ran dough is simple to make. It was only until one experience that made me realize how difficult it can be to master this dough.

While discovering the many food shops for visiting, I stumbled upon various websites that reccomended a famous Banh Ran shop located on Lac Long Quan street. It has gained popularity through the since its opening 28 years ago. My family was really excited to taste their Banh Ran, and together visited the shop during one weekend. The more excited we became for this dish, the more disappointed we were after tasting it. I have visited so many shops for creation of this food journal but none of them went against my expectations. The ironic thing about this restaurant is that it has greater reputation than all of the shops I visited, but turns out to be the most disappointingly untasty.





My favorite elements of Banh Ran are the filling and the crispy shell. The filling of Banh Ran in this restaurant is innovative through using thin pork slices instead of minced pork. But the flavors are lacking with almost no hint of salt or pepper. The shell of the Banh Ran here might have saved the taste, but it is so hard that your jaw can feel tired after chewing. However, the element that needs the most improvement is the sauce. Even though I have only introduced some dishes in this cookbook, it is obvious the important role that a sauce plays as the element which "pulls" everything together. Yet, my sister commented on the sauce as having “irrelevant flavors”. In this shop, the sauce is made from combining the basic dipping sauce, a type of sweet and sour sauce, and chili paste. The concept behind the sauce fascinates me, but the actual flavors are bland and not dominant in any of the five flavor profiles: sweet, sour, spicy, salty, bitter.

The experience I gained in this food shop helped me realize the qualities of a great Banh Ran. Perhaps, the contrast in this shop's version compared to the shop near my house is a reminder that not every famous shop will have good quaity food. Sometimes it is the less well-known that serve some of the most spectacular food. The Banh Ran shop near my house is perfect example of this. With its crunchiness on the outside and perfectly soft filling on the inside, the intense flavor of the pepper, the sweet and sour taste of the sauce, the memories that I have with this Banh Ran will be cherished forever.

Bánh giò

The most vivid connection I have with Banh Gio is enjoying it on afternoon trains to my hometown. It has been a part of my life before I can remember. Although I don't usually go on trains anymore, the taste of Banh Gio still lingers in my mind, like a childhood friend whom I want to reunite with.

Banh Gio is a type of cake made from rice flour, with the filling of pork and jelly ear. In comparison to other Banh's, Banh Gio is not very easy to make and requires much technique from the chef. The difficulty lies in making the gooey, melty and translucent rice dough. Not only is the technique hard to perfect, but also is the particular selection and wrapping of the banana leaves. The leaves used have to be from a tree which produces small bananas - the type of banana we often refer to as "chuối tây" in Vietnamese.

The use of leaves is not a special method of Banh Gio, since it is seen in so many dishes of Hanoian cuisine. Specifically, traditional dishes that are served during Tet like Gio and Banh Chung are always wrapped in banana or other kinds of leaves. But unlike most other dishes, the banana leaves in Banh Gio is used as a plate for the cake. On trains, where Banh Gio is often served, plates are usually not provided, only a plastic bag to leave the Banh Gio on. Therefore, the leaves of Banh Gio become a self-made cute little plate. This is a very unique concept because not only does it reflect our food culture but also our history. Before the times when food containers were invented, leaves had to be used in order to wrap food and easily transport it. Additionally, the leaves also provide an earthy aroma, which is why the tradition is still kept until today.



Upon learning new ideas about the use of banana leaves, I have thought about an interesting aspect connected to this topic. The banana leaves give a sense of "home" which no other elements in Hanoian or Vietnamese cuisine can give. Whenever the image of chartreuse green leaves is brought up, any Vietnamese person would immediately think of their "hometown". And that is why, when eating Banh Gio on a train, I would think about my parents' childhood home, a rural place with an enriching scenery. Even today when I don't ride trains anymore, I am still reminded of my hometown whenever I see a Banh Gio wrapped in banana leaves.

If I were to recommend one of the Banh dishes to a Western friend of mine, Banh Gio would be one of my top choices. The dish is made of ingredients that are familiar to everyone, and the flavors of it are easier are more likely to satisfy people's palate. Writing about Banh gio helped me understand a lot more about the use of leaves in our cuisine. It also makes me reminisce my childhood memory of riding on a train and eating Banh Gio. The image of the it, lying next to the windows of a train, is still clear in my mind. But the flavors of Banh Gio is slowly fading from me, which is why I have noted to myself to go back someday and re-try my most favorite childhood treat.





Vietnamese Taco Bell

Makes 20 dumplings Preparation 40 mins Cooking 25 mins

"Bánh gối" with beef taco filling

Dumpling Dough

2 cups all-purpose flour (260 g)

2 large eggs (100 g)

50 mL of olive oil

30 mL of water

Pinch of salt

Beef Filling

70 grams quail eggs

300 grams minced beef

100 grams glass noodles

70 grams of Taco seasoning

50 grams Chinese sausage

50 grams Jew's ear

1 large onion

2 large cloves of garlic

½ tsp chilli powder

½ tsp dried thyme leaves

Salt and pepper

Cilantro Yogurt Sauce

100 grams yogurt

30 grams quail eggs

1 tbsp lime juice

1 tbsp minced cilantro

Pinch of Salt

Salsa

1 large tomato

1 small onion

1 green bell pepper

3 tbsp lime juice

1 tbsp olive oil

Dumpling Dough

1. In a large bowl, sift the flour and salt together. Use a whisk to mix the salt with the flour, then create a well in the middle of the bowl.

2. Break the eggs and add water and olive oil, use a fork to gently beat the eggs with the liquids.

3. Slowly mix in the flour with the eggs using your hands. Try to avoid touching the liquid because your hands can become sticky.

4. As the mixture forms a dough, knead it by pressing on the dough, then stretching it out using both hands. If the dough is too hard then add a little bit of olive oil, and if too soft then add more flour.

5. Roll the dough into a ball then seal it in a bowl. Let the dough rest in room temperature for 30 minutes.





Beef Filling

6. Fill a small pot with 300 mL of water and all of the quail eggs. Bring the pot to a boil with medium heat then lower it down. Cook the eggs for 10 minutes and let them rest in cold water for another 10 minutes. Peel the eggs and use a knife to cut them in half.

7. While the eggs are boiling, soak your glass noodles with cold water. Wait for 10 minutes or until the noodles are soften then cut them into 2 cm strips.



8. To prepare your vegetables, dice the onions into 0.5 cm cubes and finely mince the garlic. Cut your Jew's ear into thin 3 cm strips after soaking in water for 10 minutes.

9. Chop the Chinese sausage into oval shapes by placing the knife diagonally on the sausage.

10. Add all of the ingredients above into a large bowl, mix them well with the Taco seasoning and spices or until all turn into the color of the seasoning.





11. Knead the dough for 1 minute after it has rested, then use a small ball of the dough to roll out into a circular shape. Use a spoon to place the filling in the middle of the dough, then close the dumpling and secure it with a fork.

12. Deep fry the dumplings for about 5 minutes, with roughly 2 minutes on each side. If you want a chewier dough then fry it only once, a crispier then fry it twice.











Cilantro Yogurt Sauce and Salsa

13. Use a spoon to mash the eggs, add the lime juice if this makes the process easier. Add the rest of the ingredients and mix thoroughly.

14. For the salsa, chop the vegetables into 1 cm cubes, then mix them well with the rest of the ingredients. The salsa tastes the best if eaten after a day, after storing it in the refrigerator.



Taco is a popular Mexican dish that usually comes in two main forms: hard-shell taco and soft-shell too. My creation of “Vietnamese Taco Bell” is a combination of these two types, thanks to its unique Banh Goi egg shell. It is crunchy and crisp on the outside, but perfectly chewy and soft on the inside. Although the shell is kept the same, there were a lot of bold changes made in order to turn Banh Goi into a taco. The biggest difference is the sauce. Vietnamese dipping sauce is very important in the original dish, but I have created a yogurt lemon sauce as it brings a refreshing taste. The sauce’s flavors comfortingly combine with the fattiness from the beef and Chinese sausage. In my opinion, moist and juicy beef is the most matching with tacos, and this brings out the signature flavors of the dish. But the most special component is the Chinese sausage. It has a very distinct sweet taste. Not only does the sweetness separate this dish from normal tacos, but it also reminds the reader of Hanoian cuisine, as Chinese sausage stands out the most in Banh Goi. I highly value the use of this ingredient because I don’t want people to forget that this dish is still Banh goi, and still belongs to Hanoian cuisine.



Sun Cakes

Makes 12 cakes
Preparation 30 mins
Cooking 40 mins

"Bánh rán" with salted egg filling and cinnamon/green tea sugarcoating

Cake Dough

100 mL water

50 grams sugar

250 grams glutinous rice flour

50 grams rice flour

Filling and Sugarcoat

3 salted egg

50 grams white sugar

20 grams cinnamon powder

10 grams green tea powder







1. On medium heat bring to boil a pot of water with the salted eggs. Turn the heat down once it has reached a boil and let the eggs cook for 20 minutes.

2. To prepare your cake dough, dissolve all of the sugar in water without leaving any lumps.

3. Sift both types of flour into the sugar water and stir slowly using a whisk. The dough should be thick enough that it feels heavy to move your whisk, but not too thick that you cannot use the whisk at all.

4. While the dough is resting, peel the egg shells and remove the egg whites by using a knife and chopping board. You can keep the egg whites if you like but I prefer just having the egg yolks in my fried cakes.



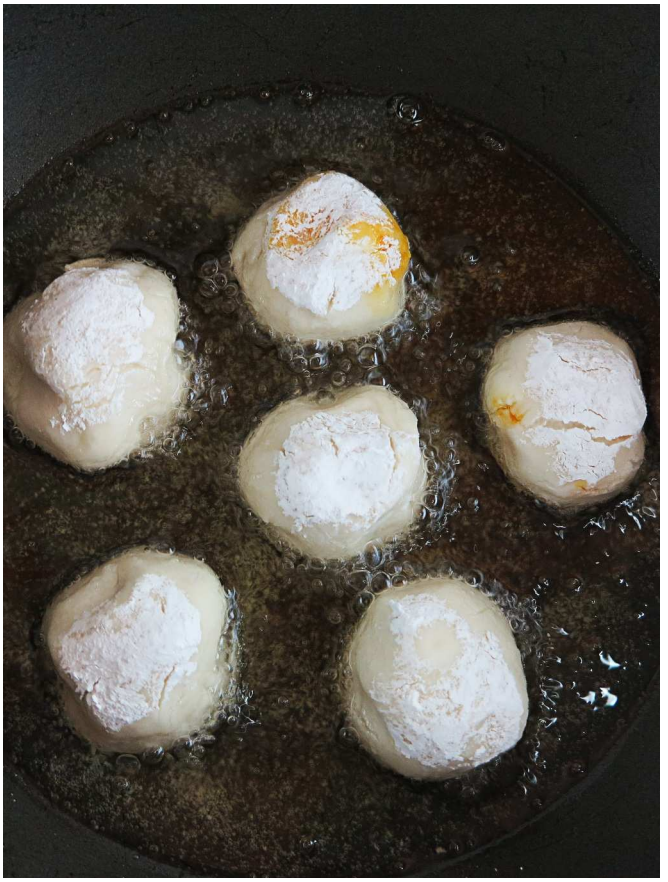
5. Then, cut each of the eggs into 4 equal quarters. Use a thin knife to cut so the egg yolks will stay in shape after cutting.

6. Powder your hands with rice flour before shaping the cakes. Flatten a small ball of the dough then lay one quarter of the egg on top. Carefully roll the cake into a ball and coat with flour before frying.













7. Make your sugar coating by dividing your sugar equally into two bowls. Add the cinnamon powder and green tea powder to the different bowls and stir them well.

8. Heat up your pan and oil on low heat to prevent any burning of the oil. Turn up the heat once the oil is ready and fry your cakes for about 3 minutes. Then, turn the cake and fry for another 3 minutes.

9. Take each cake out individually then roll in the sugar coating right away. The fried cakes taste best on the day that they are made.

Desserts with added salt like caramel are hard to find in Hanoi as we usually prefer lightly sweet treats. My creation of “Sun Cakes” is different and unique in the way that is has a balance between savory and sweet. It is a variation of the original Banh Ran, with inspiration from Churros from Spanish cuisine. I have used Churros’ sugar coating method of directly rubbing the sugar in order to create a thick sugarcoat. However, I kept the frying dough the same as Banh Ran, because it has a chewy and gooey texture that is hard to find in any other fried desserts. The use of rice flour is what creates the dough’s playful texture. I’ve named the dish “Sun Cakes” because of the egg’s bright yellow color, creating a warm feeling for the dish. Not only is the warmth mesmerising, but also is the salty and rich taste of the egg. It has a very signature aroma from the egg, which is much stronger than the smell of Vietnamese egg coffee. When eaten along with the sugar coating, the saltiness of the egg is not at all overpowering, just enough so the taster can recognize this flavor profile. “Sun Cakes" tastes even better with a hot cup of tea, making it the perfect treat for a relaxing and calm afternoon.



Pâté de foie gras sandwich

Makes 3 sandwiches
Preparation 20 mins
Cooking 40 mins

Duck Pâté

200 grams duck liver
100 grams duck meat, with skin
20 grams bread crumbs
3 cloves of garlic
3 shallots
2 tbsp fish sauce
Salt and pepper
½ tsp dried rosemary

Roasted Duck

300 grams duck meat, with skin
5 grams ginger
3 shallots
5 tbsp BBQ sauce
2 tbsp Vietnamese chilli sauce
1 tsp cocoa powder
Salt and pepper
2 tbsp butter

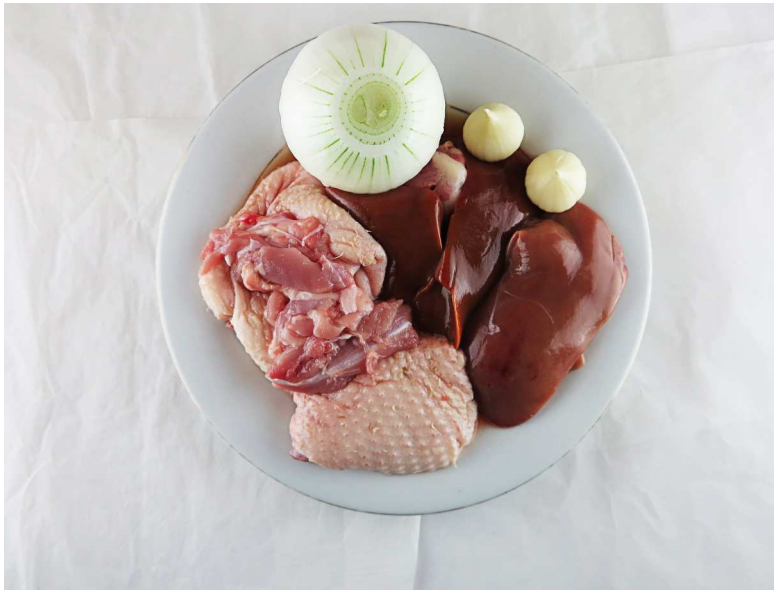
Vegetables and Sauce

20 grams of celery
Fresh coriander
Mayonnaise

"Bánh mì" with roasted duck and Pate



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BARS
WITH A VIEW
COFFEE SH
Cong Caphe
The Kitchen
Joma
Onbeery
2B
2B



1. Carefully wash the duck meat and liver with a little bit of milk or water. Let them dry for 5 minutes then cut the liver and meat into 0.5 cm cubes.

2. Cut your bread into smaller circles then soak them in water for 5 minutes. Drain the bread well and let rest while preparing other ingredients.



3. Mince the garlic and cut your onion into small 1 cm cubes. Then, use a blender or food processor to blend all of these ingredients together.

4. Season the Pate with fish sauce, dried rosemary, salt and pepper. Pour into a glass bowl or container then cook using the bain-marie method for approximately 20 minutes. The Pate is done when it turns into a light greyish brown color.





5. Mince the garlic and ginger to marinate the uncooked duck. Pour the remaining ingredients, excluding the butter, directly on the duck and rub it evenly.

6. Roast the duck in 200°C oven with the duck skin facing down for about 10 minutes. Move the duck on the pan occasionally to prevent the skin from sticking to the pan.

7. Flip the duck then add the butter onto the duck's skin. Roast the duck for another 10 minutes then take it out of the oven. Let the duck rest for 15 minutes.

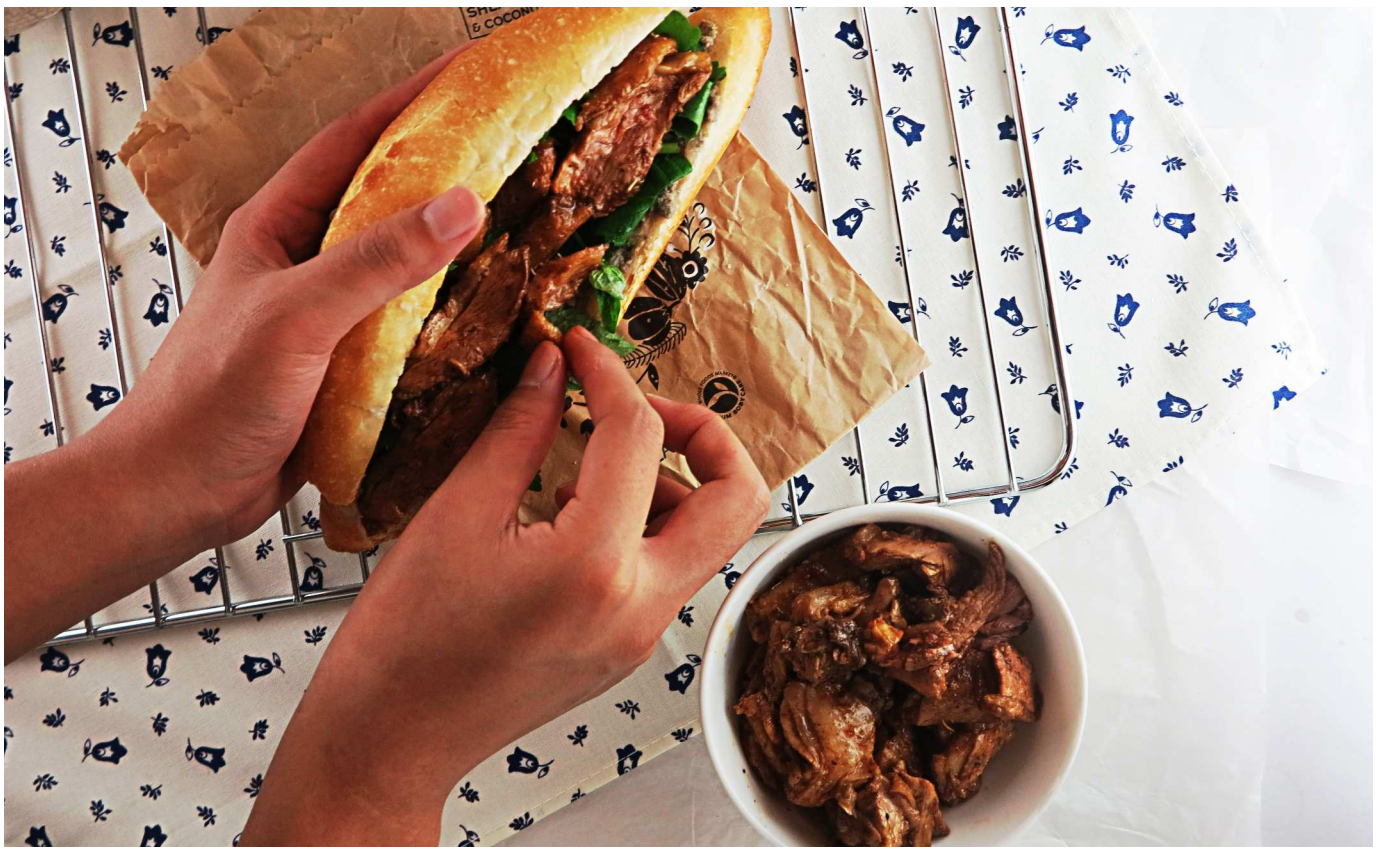
8. Use a scissor to cut the duck into small pieces, making sure the bones are completely removed. Put the duck back onto the pan to soak up the juice.


WITH FAIR TRADE
SHEA BUTTER
& COCONUT OIL



9. Chop the celeries into 3 cm strips and corriander into smaller pieces.

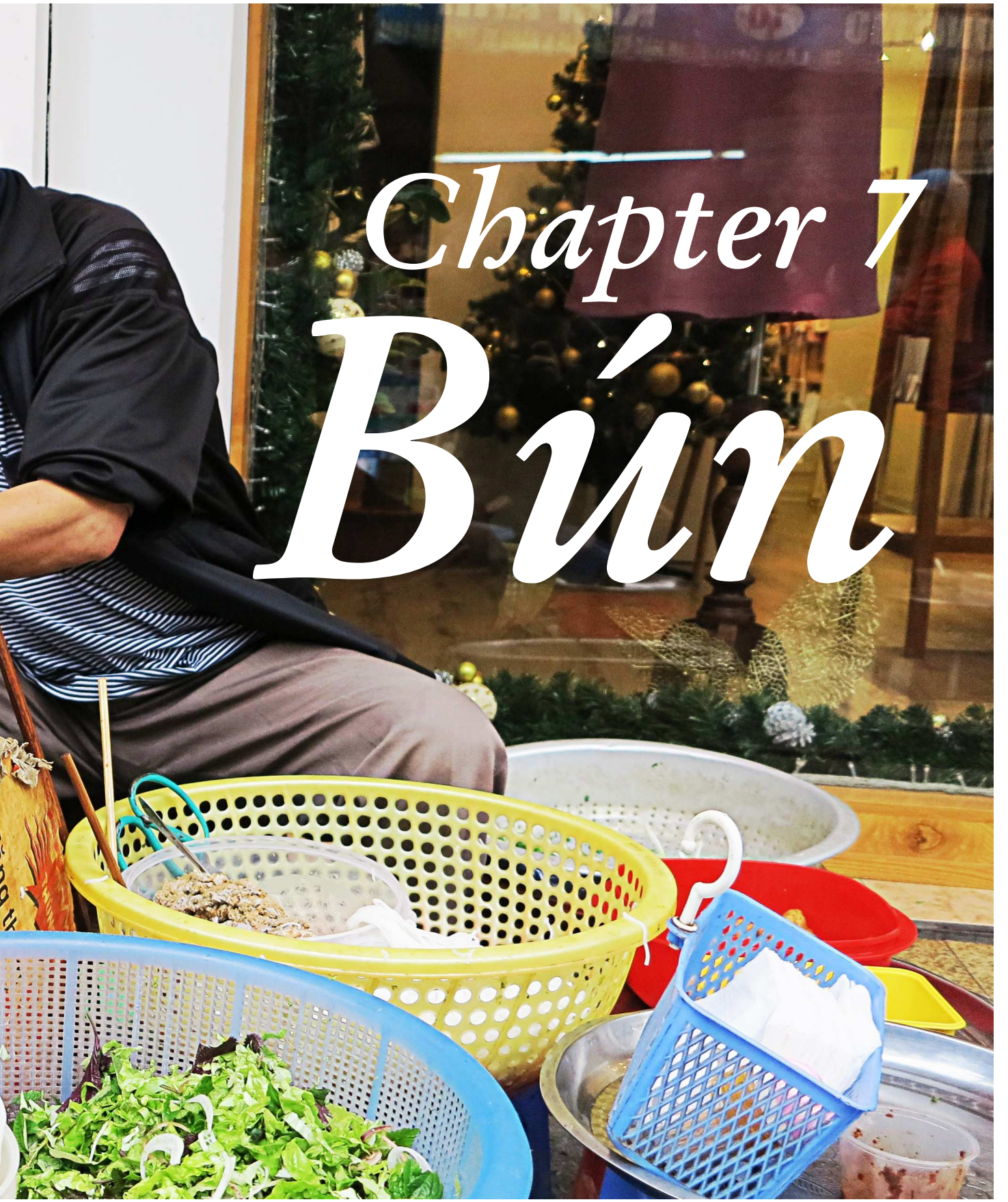
10. To assemble your sandwich, first put a thin layer of the Pate and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Then, layer your vegetables and roasted meat on top of the Pate. The sandwich tastes the best with mayonnaise or chili sauce.



In Hanoian cuisine, various types of liver are eaten in all sorts of dishes. To me, duck liver has the best taste out of all due to its velvety texture and nutty, rich flavor. Inspired by French cuisine, specifically the fancy Foie Gras, I have combined duck liver and skin to create duck Pate. However, the method of making this is not alike Foie Gras', but rather a basic Vietnamese Pate recipe. The flavors which stand out are the hearty taste of garlic, fish sauce and pepper. By doing this, I was keeping the signature taste of a Vietnamese sandwich. At the same time, I was changing the traditional flavors by adding celery. This vegetable has a lot of juice and a slight bitter flavor, which is why it complements the mayonnaise sauce. I also chose roasted duck over fried or boiled duck because it gives the most juicy and tender meat. This cooking technique was actually inspired by a new trend in Hanoian sandwiches: Banh Mi Thit Nuong or grilled pork sandwich. Despite this influence, “Pate de Foie Gras Sandwich” has a much softer and different taste compared to the traditional one. Its flavor profile is more centered around the richness of the duck, unlike the sweet and sour taste of Banh Mi Pate.


WITH FAIR TRADE
SHEA BUTTER
& COCONUT OIL
REDart FO-0707
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FILA
1140102
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Chapter 7
Bún



Hanoian food has a diverse culinary culture due to the influence of many other cuisines such as French and Chinese. A classic example is the Baguette, or Banh Mi in Vietnamese, which was brought to Vietnam under the French colonization. On the other hand, some dishes are original creations by our people, such as rice vermicelli. With this single ingredient named Bun, many new and creative dishes have been made, contributing heavily in the creation of not only Hanoi's signature dishes but also Vietnam's.

Prior to writing this chapter, I was certain that research would be unnecessary as I am already very familiar with the ingredient. In fact, my favorite breakfast whenever I eat near my house is Bun Ca, which consists of rice vermicelli noodles served with crispy fried fish and blanched spinach. But I was struck by the amount of research that I have discovered, realizing that all I knew about Bun was its tastiness... but not its origin and history. I concluded that my thought of not needing research was inaccurate, as there is so much for me to delve in and know more about Bun.

The word "Bun" itself is a native Vietnamese word. In the time of old logographic language, it combines the letters of the word “rice” and “four” to create the pronunciation of Bun. This explains how Bun is an original ingredient created in Vietnam and has its own name under our own language. It fits into the category of traditional foods, which includes food that was created by our ancestors and passed down to the next generations. This makes it hard for us to identify where and how Bun came to be. Although it is not easy to decide how or where Bun originated, an idiom helps us understand that Bun was created a long time, up to a thousand years ago:

"Nghìn năm bảo vật đất Thăng Long
Bún chả là đây có phải không?"

The idiom is a comparison between the treasure protected by the capital Thang Long, or Hanoi one thousand years ago, and Bun Cha, which is traditional Vietnamese street food. It reveals to the us the long history of Bun, and how Bun Cha is one of Hanoi's oldest Hanoian creations.

Speaking of Bun Cha, it is impossible to not mention the story of Bun Cha Obama, or the shop that Obama visited when he came to Vietnam. It became instantly famous and was crowded with guests afterwards, despite the fact that it was already well known before Obama visited. However, because I haven't visited the place, I cannot comment on the quality of the food. But I was, and still am, fascinated with the photos of Obama eating this national dish. He looks like a normal citizen, just eating Bun Cha with a bottle of beer after a long day of work. This has made me realized the simplicity in our way of eating. We don't need fancy restaurants, but just a couple of tables and chairs. That is what I love the most about Hanoian food: the "street food" quality that is still maintained from hundreds of years ago. This is also a very signature Hanoian style because it is harder to find in other places of Vietnam. The aforementioned description also reminded of my experience at one of the most famous Bun shops in Hanoi – Ms. Duc's Bun Thang on Cau Go street.

The first things I noticed when entering the shop were the big piles of shredded chicken, Vietnamese sausage, and fried eggs. The visual appeal was strong due to the bright golden color of the chicken skin which signified fatty and juicy chicken meat. I visited the shop not because I knew about it, but because many people recommended it to me, including a friend from Ho Chi Minh who loves to come here when she visits. Located in Old Quarter, right on Cau Go street where there are a myriad food shops, it is understandable that the shop is very small. Just like my previous observation, the shop is an epitome of a street food shop with just some chairs and table. But unlike its "modest" area of selling food, the taste of the Bun Thang is spectacular.

The bowl of Bun Thang at Ms. Duc's shop is filled with slices of chicken breast, green onions, Vietnamese sausage, dried radish, and chicken broth. However, the component that stood out the most to me was the rice vermicelli. Trust me, I am not saying the this ingredient was the "star" of the dish just because this chapter is all about it. The reason why I chose it is because of the texture that it had: rubbery but smooth, soft but firm. Eating Bun made me understand why it became such a popular ingredient in Hanoian food. Not only is it so fun and enjoyable to chew and feel the softness of the Bun, but also it gives such a light and exhilarating feeling after you've eaten it. It doesn't make you feel full, but rather like a comforting hug that you would want on a cold winter day.





Many foreigners are intrigued by the similarity of the Bun vermicelli and Pho noodles, but they have several distinctive characteristics that separate the two. Obviously, the most noticeable difference is their appearance. The tastes between the two are also very different thanks to the different methods of making them. Because the vermicelli dough is fermented before cooking, the taste of it is slightly sour, unlike Pho which has a plainer rice taste.

There are so many different dishes which use Bun, making it the type of ingredient most popularly used in our cuisine. Right at Vinh Phuc market next to my house, I could name at least ten different shops that sell different rice vermicelli dishes. Bun Ca, Bun Cha, Bun Rieu Cua, Bun Oc, Bun Dau Mam Tom are just a couple of dishes sold in this market. Ranging from grilled pork meat to crispy fried fish and snails, there is a wide variety of ingredients that can be paired with Bun. This proves the importance of Bun in our culinary culture, since so many famous dishes and locations are related to Bun. More importantly, the dishes don't follow the same style, they are actually very unique compared to each other. The soup from each bowl of Bun is never the same - they can be broth of pork, or chicken. Furthermore, Bun dishes are not always eaten with soup. They are also eaten with a variety of sauces which amazes me greatly as much creation and innovation goes into designing and cooking each dish, making Bun an important part of the food evolution that shaped the Hanoian cuisine of today.

Although I had a lot of prior knowledge about rice vermicelli, this chapter helped bring me new ideas and reinforced what I already know to help me create a new Bun dish. But in the end, the idea that I got from exploring Bun is how versatile and rich of culinary culture it is. Bun works well with so many ingredients and has its own unique taste which cannot be replaced by Pho noodles or rice. This only makes me more excited about creating my recipe, another unique dish to add to the Bun collection!


Sauvignon
Terroir Selection
2018

Vermicelle soupe à l'oignon

Serves 5 noodle soups Preparation 25 mins Cooking 50 mins

"Bún mọc dọc mùng" with French onion soup

Vietnamese Meatballs

20 grams jelly ear

20 grams mushroom

200 grams fine pork meat

1 tsp fish sauce

Salt and pepper

½ teaspoon dried rosemary

French Onion Soup

5 large onions

1 tbsp olive oil

5 tbsp butter

100 grams Indian taro

2 tbsp white vinegar
or white wine

1 tbsp tapioca flour

½ tomato

½ tsp dried rosemary

Salt and pepper

500 mL meatball stock

400 grams rice vermicelli

50 grams parmesan cheese









1. Store your fine pork meat in the fridge for at least 1 hour before making the meatballs. First chop your mushroom into tiny squares and your jelly ear into 2 cm strips.

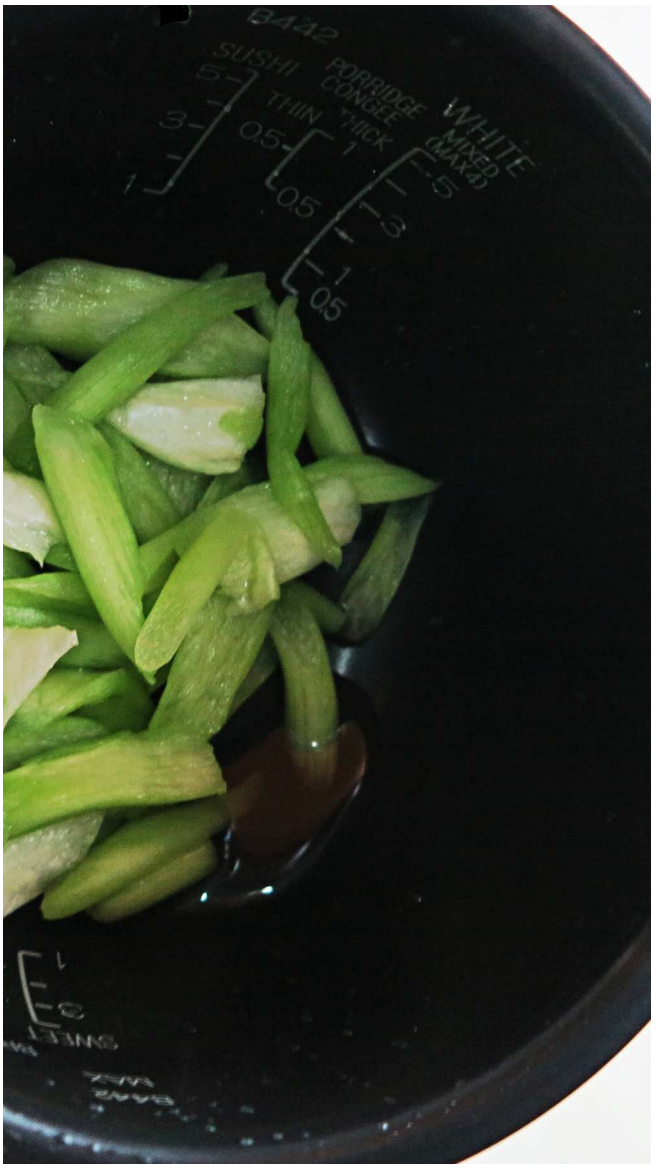
2. Put the mushroom and jelly ear into the fine pork meat and add your spices. Mix the meat well and store in the refrigerator for another 15 minutes.

3. Start making your French onion soup by chopping the onions into halves then thinly slicing them. Sweat the onions with olive oil for about 5 minutes, leaving the lid on.

4. Season the onions then add in your butter. Leave the butter as a whole and let it melt slowly (on low heat) with the lid on. This will take about 7 minutes.







5. While the butter is melting, bring a pot of water to boil then use two spoons to add in small balls of the fine pork meat. Let the meatballs cook in boiling water for about 10 minutes.

6. Prepare your Indian taro by cutting it into thick and long pieces. Put it in a bowl then add in 2 tablespoons of vinegar. Use a glove to massage elephant's ear until when the vinegar has soaked them and they are reduced to half of their original size.

7. After the butter has melted, add in your tomato, white vinegar, flour, spices and the stock from the meatball. Let the soup cook for about another 10 minutes.

8. Bring to boil another pot of water, then blanch your rice noodles for about 30 seconds. Leave the noodles on the plate or bowl which you are serving the dish with.

9. Add in the parmesan to your soup then cook for another 10 minutes. Make sure to stir the soup constantly so the cheese won't stick to the bottom of the pot.

10. Take the soup off the heat then pour half of it into a blender. Put the lid on but make sure you don't completely seal the blender or else the lid would blow up because of the hot steam. You can do this slightly lifting the lid up from its normal position.

11. Pour the blended soup back into the pot then cook with the meatballs and elephant ear for about 15 minutes.

12. Remove from the heat then pour the soup on the blanched rice noodles. Serve the dish when it's still hot with some fresh coriander.





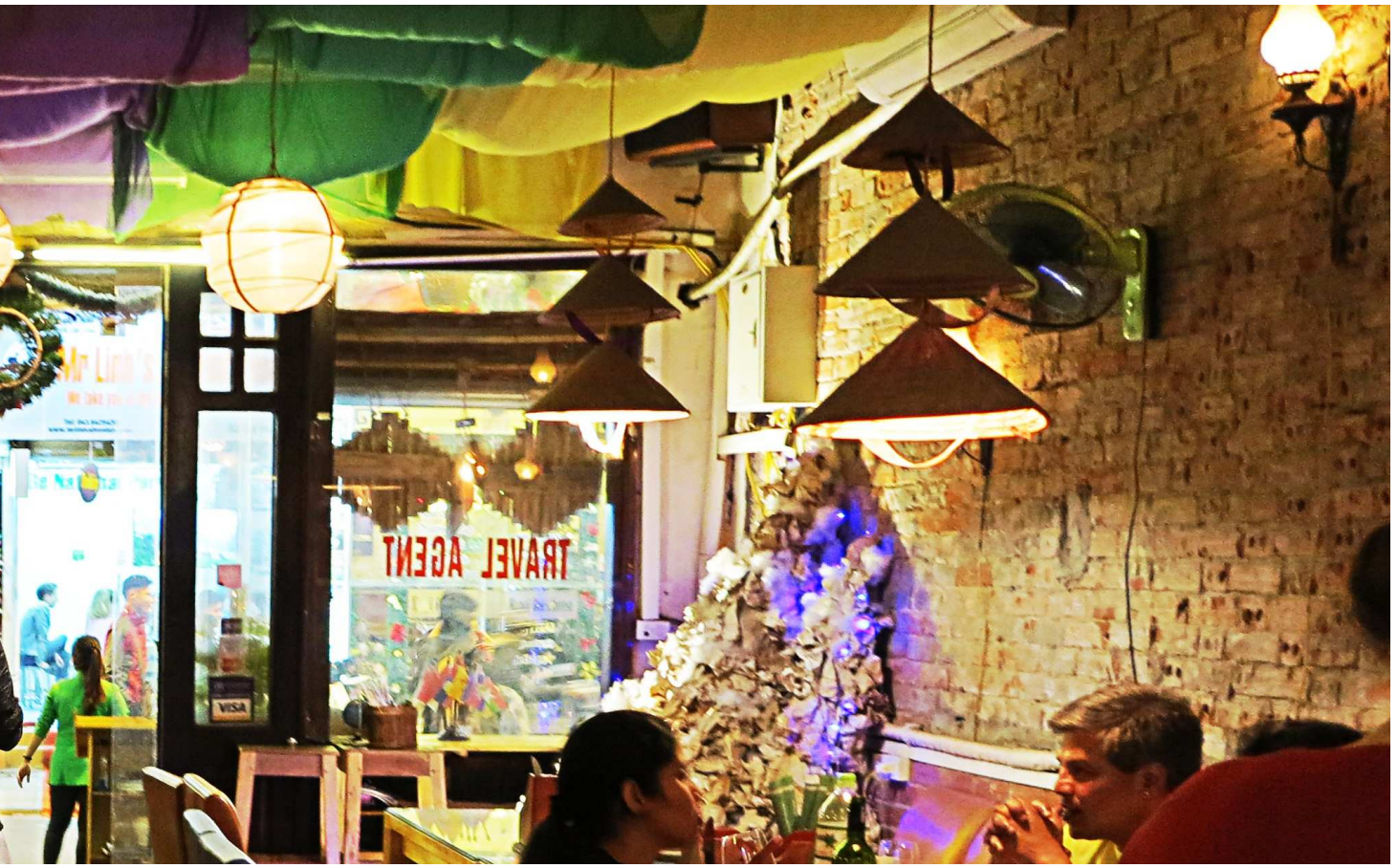
Bun is a versatile ingredient of Hanoian cuisine, as there are so many dishes created from this single ingredient. But none of these dishes are eaten with a thick soup, only with broth. Therefore, I wanted to create an original dish which combines my favorite soup, French onion soup, with Bun. While Bun is slightly sour due to the fermented rice flour, French Onion soup is rich and creamy. They are a balanced set of flavors which is exactly what Hanoian food tries to achieve. Secondly, French Onion soup to me has an elegant and “restaurant-like” quality. It is unlike the traditional Bun which is more of a “street food” style. Recreating the flavors of a dish is already very hard, but changing its “context” or the style it is eaten in is even harder. That is why accompanied with the dish has to be some red wine. Despite completely changing the feel of the dish, I still added Indian taro and meatballs to keep a signature Vietnamese style. This type of vegetable has a crunchy texture and sour taste, which contrasts with the softness of the meatballs, making the dish pleasant to taste and more visually attractive.





Chapter 8





Chè



Desserts and sweet dishes are not the most popular types of food in Hanoian cuisine. However, desserts that originated from Hanoi are very still famous due to their traditional methods of cooking and unique flavors that cannot be find anywhere else. A famous sweet dish of Hanoi that was created a very long time ago is Xoi Che. You might have heard of Che as it is a well-known dessert that can be found across all Asia, but Xoi Che is strictly a Hanoian dessert. Researching and writing about Xoi Che brought back my childhood memories, as it is my grandmother's favorite dish to cook. Watching my grandmother cook Xoi Che, I was exposed to an aspect of cooking that I haven't thought much about: emotions. This chapter helped me understand this new aspect in cooking and apply what I've learnt to create my own version of Che.

"Xoi" is sticky rice and "Che" is like an Asian version of pudding. As simple as its name, the dish combines these two ingredients together. It is considered a very delicate and classic sweet dish of Hanoian cuisine because the unique ingredient combination. With its simplicity in cooking, and the traditional sweet taste that is seen in other Hanoian desserts, Xoi Che is among the most favorite sweet dishes out of all.

Although Xoi is translated into sticky rice in English, the type that is used in Xoi Che is not sticky at all. The sticky rice cooked in Xoi Che is mixed with a lot of green beans so its color is lightly yellow. Each grain of rice is separated from the others because of the powdery texture from the green beans. I clearly remember the nutty, earthy smell of the green beans spreading throughout the whole house whenever my grandmother cooks this dish. The image of my grandmother cooking this dish is implanted in my mind, and the warmth I feel each time I smell or taste the dish is one of my happiest childhood memories.



Choosing the ingredients to make Che is an important part of the process. When cooking green bean Che, the beans have to be vibrantly yellow and very small in size. The beans play an important part in the representation of Che. The small yellow dots in a bowl of Che are what makes foreigners curious about the dish's taste. Traditionally, the taste of Xoi Che is not complete unless there are fresh grapefruit flowers which were boiled with sugar syrup. But for as long as I can remember, my grandmother uses extract of grapefruit flowers to make the Che – I guess the tradition of using fresh flowers was before my grandmother's time. The flavor of grapefruit released in the Che leaves an alluring taste on the tip of your tongue.

When talking about this famous dish, people often expect some sort of complicated cooking method or at least a dish with very complex elements. The truth is far from this assumption: Xoi Che is one of the simplest and easiest dishes to make in Vietnamese and Hanoian cuisine. But eating Che is a whole different story. Xoi Che has to be eaten in Hanoi on a cold winter day, or at least when there is a cold breeze. The special thing about Xoi Che that separates it from other types of Che is that it always has to be eaten warm. That explains why it only tastes good on colder days. When eating Che, the color of the soup has to be transparent brown and the consistency has to be thick enough so that it doesn't feel liquidy, and can melt in your mouth. Only with this thickness will Che's taste be perfect when eaten with the the sticky rice.





Although the cooking of Che is very simple, it requires a lot of sophistication from the person cooking it. The effort that the chef puts into cooking the dessert, or simply how they expect the dish to be and how they feel about the dessert itself will all decide the tastiness of the dish. I haven't thought much about this aspect of cooking, but to me it is important how the chef applies their feelings to the process of cooking. When putting this in context of my grandmother's cooking, I envision a lot of personal connection. My extended family doesn't lack culinary talent, but only my grandmother can make delicious Che. My grandmother has a deep passion for cooking this dish, and this must have started from the simplicty, the heartiness, and warthm that this dish brings. When she cooked later for her grandchildren, there was a deepened sense of experience and affection. My grandmother always loves to see her grandchildren eat her food. Of course she would love to hear our praise, but in my mind she is sharing a part of her history with me, because the food she grew up with is now becoming mine

Back in my grandmother's days, the amount of food given to or bought by each family was very limited. Therefore, in order to make a pot of Che, a month of preparing ingredients had to be done. That is why Che is usually cooked on special occasions such as someone's birthday. I want to conclude the chapter with this detail to express how precious this bowl of Che is to Hanoian cuisine and how it can bring back emotions of the generations before us. It is one of the very few sweet dishes that originated from Hanoi, and is still being kept very traditional today.





La La Land

Serves 6 soups
Preparation 50 mins
Cooking 30 mins

"Chè" with tempura pineapples and cream cheese jelly

Cheese Jelly

7 grams gelatin sheets
100 mL milk
100 grams cream cheese
100 mL whipping cream
30 grams white sugar

Deep fried pineapple

100 grams flour
1 tbsp white sugar
1 large egg
20 mL water
20 mL milk
70 grams fresh pineapple

Coconut soup

250 mL coconut milk
100 mL water
50 grams sugar
4 pineapple leaves
100 grams grass jelly
20 grams roasted walnuts

Meringue Buttercream

50 mL water
100 grams sugar
3 egg whites (100 mL)
2 tbsp butter





Cream Cheese Jelly

1. First prepare the cheese jelly by cutting up the gelatin sheets into 3 cm pieces. In a small bowl, soak the gelatin sheets with 50 mL of milk for about 15 minutes.

2. Soften up your cream cheese in another bowl by using a whisk. Add in the sugar and mix for around 5 minutes. Stop whisking until all of the cream cheese has soften up and there aren't any lumps left.

3. Add in the rest of the milk and whipping cream and mix for another 4-5 minutes or until a smooth mixture is formed.

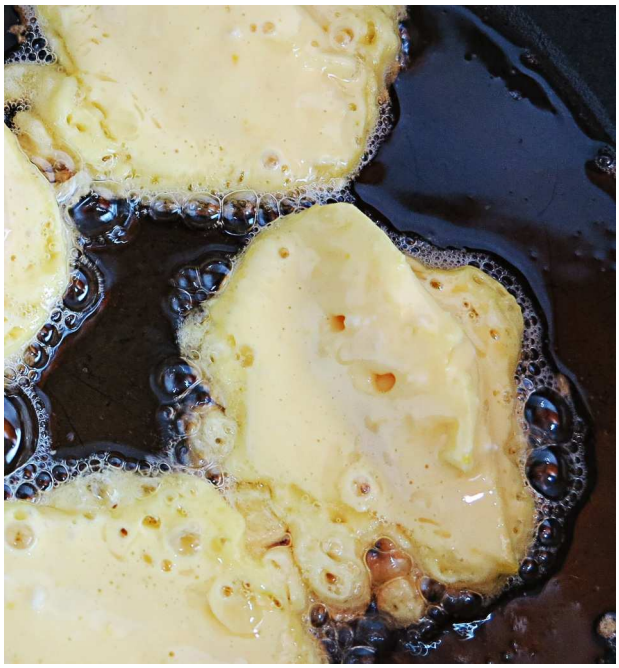
4. Heat up the gelatin leaves using the bain-marie method and let all of the gelatin dissolve.

5. Then, pour in the cheese jelly base and stir for around 4-5 minutes. Let the mixture cool down for about 15 minutes then pour into a small container. Leave the jelly in the refrigerator for at least 6 hours before serving.

6. After refrigerating, take the cheese jelly out of the container then cut it into 1 cm cubes. If you prefer a softer jelly, then scoop it out before it has completely firmed.

Tempura Pineapples

7. In a large bowl sift your flour and the rest of the ingredients excluding the pineapple. Stir your frying batter thoroughly, make sure that there aren't any lumps of flour.





8. Cut the pineapple diagonally into fan-shaped pieces, cut in thick slices so they will stay in shape when frying. Then put these pieces into the frying batter for about 2-3 minutes.



9. While the pineapple rests in the batter, heat up your pan with the oil. Test your oil by putting in a drop of the batter. When the batter rises slowly and has a small sizzling sound the oil is ready.

10. Fry the pineapple with a thick coat of the batter for around 2-3 minutes on each side. Take them out when they have a lightly golden and leave them on some kitchen towel to soak up all the oil.







Coconut Soup

11. In a small pot pour in the coconut milk, add in your water and sugar, then stir for the sugar to spread through the pot.

12. Chop the pineapple leaves in half after washing them carefully with water. The put them into the pot with the coconut soup.

13. Bring the coconut soup to a boil on medium fire, then lower the heat down and simmer the sauce for about 15 minutes.

14. While the soup is cooking, cut the grass jelly into 1 cm cubes or thin slices. Soak them in sugar water for 15 minutes before serving.

15. Refrigerate the coconut sauce for at least 2 hours or a day before serving the dish.

Meringue Buttercream

16. To prepare your meringue buttercream, first melt the sugar in water on low heat. Let the sugar water simmer for around 1 minute before beating with the egg whites.

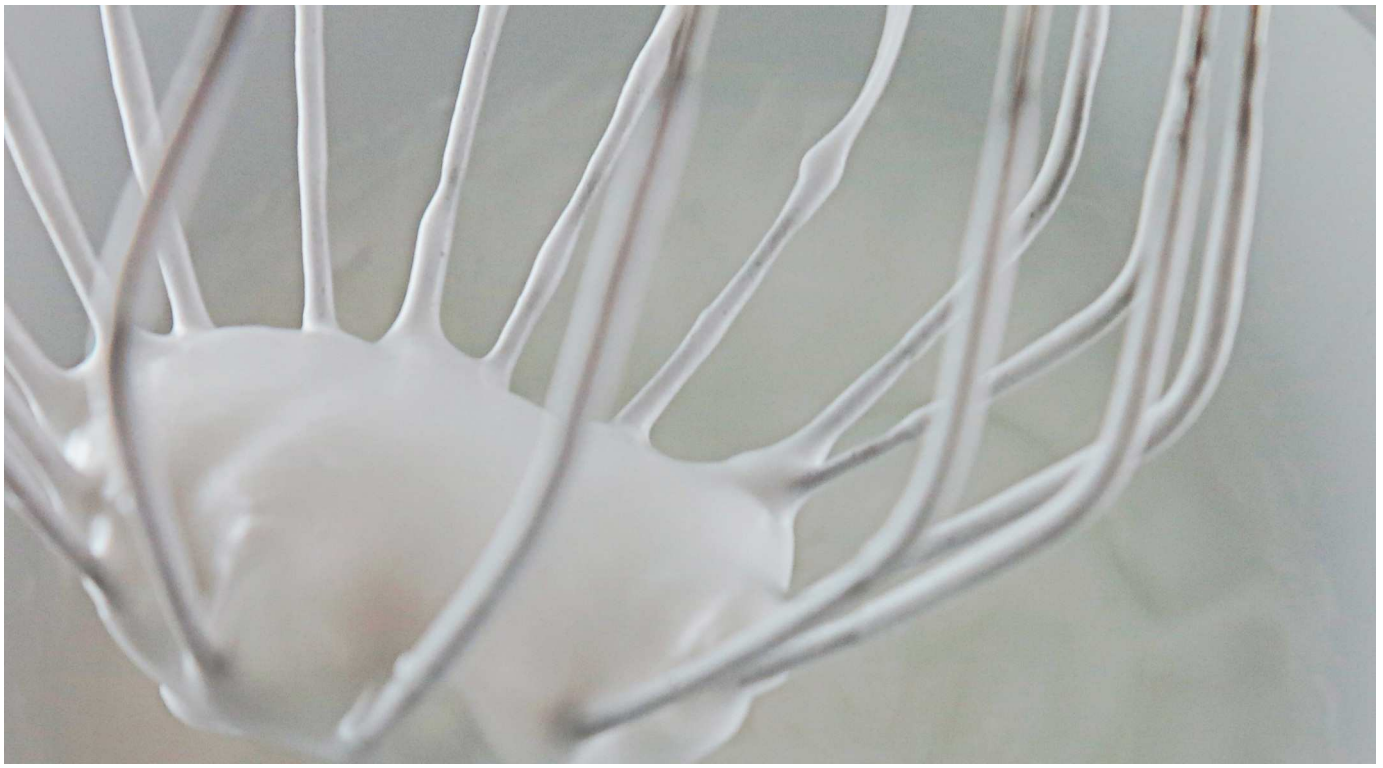
17. Cut the butter into small 2 cm cubes and let cool at room temperature.

18. Separate the egg yolks from egg whites, then pour the egg whites to a whipping bowl. Use the whisk attachment to beat the eggs for around 1 minute on medium speed to foam up the eggs.

19. After the sugar water is made, take it off the heat then pour slowly into the egg whites while beating on the highest speed. Beat the egg whites for around 6-8 minutes or until the egg whites doubled in volume and becomes really pale and thick.

20. Add in the butter cubes and mix very slowly using a spatula or a whisk, being careful of mixing too fast or the egg whites might deflate.

21. To serve the dish, scoop the meringue onto a plate. Slice the fried pineapple into smaller pieces then top them on meringue buttercream. Add the cheese jelly, grass jelly, and walnuts. Lastly, slowly pour in some coconut sauce beside the dish to not deflate the buttercream.

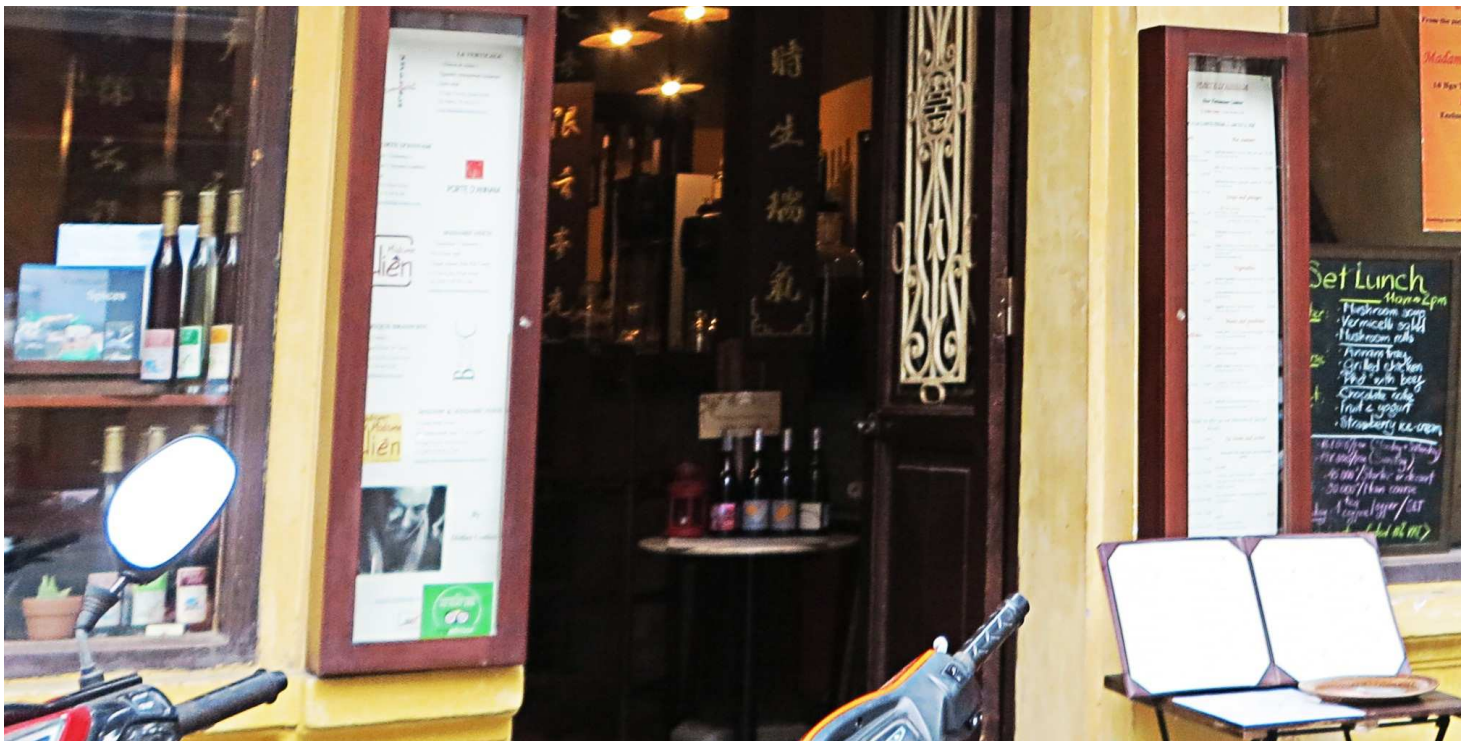


The definition of “La La Land” provided by the Merriam-Webster dictionary is: a euphoric dreamlike mental state detached from the harsher realities of life. Never in my life have I ever heard of such a romantic word and movie title, which is why I used it as my main inspiration for this dish. The mood and atmosphere that this dish brings is exactly like “La La Land” - it makes you lose yourself in a stream of thoughts, and to become poetic and hopeful. I have greatly changed the ingredients used in a normal Che dish - the only ingredient which is kept the same is black grass jelly. I chose to fry my pineapple because this creates a more infused and softer flavor. Many different elements are eaten together, creating a party full of different textures - soft, hard, crunchy, chewy,... which represents the different stages of life. In the movie, the character Mia had ups and downs throughout her journey, and this dish is a representation of her life. Contrast was also seen in the different flavors of the dish: sourness of the pineapple, richness of the cheese jelly,... The purpose is not so all flavors can stand out, but to blend together - creating the “dreamlike” sensation of “La La Land”. Very much alike the movie, the dish is a moment of “bliss”, one which is soft and not triumphant. A daring, unimaginable work of art that makes one speechless, and lost in their own world...





Tao Pho & Ke





Chapter 9

m Trang Tien





Understanding the food culture of Hanoi can be difficult at times due to the dynamic range of influences, creations and changes in the way we perceive and enjoy food. But in some areas, Hanoian food is very simplistic and easy to understand. Two perfect examples are Tao Pho and Kem Trang Tien, which are famous desserts of Hanoi. Through my exploration with these dishes, I have observed that the common factor between these desserts is their relationship between the enjoyment of eating and the weather of different seasons.

The first dessert does not originate from Hanoi, as records of its origin was not kept in detail. But like dishes from the chapter “Mien va cac loai Mi”, what Hanoi has done is added its own uniqueness to the dish. Tao Pho is a common Vietnamese dessert made from fermented soybeans, having a taste nearly similar to tofu. Accompanying the dish is a lightly sweet sauce created from white granulated sugar. The type of sugar used cannot be substituted because the clarity and mild sweetness all depends on it. But the most special component of the dish is grapefruit flower extract, which is claimed by many the unique element of Hanoian Tao Pho. This has helped me realize the importance of grapefruit flower extract in Hanoian desserts, as it is also used in Xoi Che and many other desserts.

Tao Pho tastes best when eaten on a hot summer day. The reason is because the dish can provide “coolness” and relief of the heat. Slowly eating and enjoying the Tao Pho, you will feel your body temperature drop and become cooler. When the coolness spreads around your body, you will feel calm and exhilarating at the same time. Tao Pho doesn’t require any ice which means the taste is nothing alike to the piercing coldness of iced drinks. The coolness comes slowly and leaves suddenly, making you want to keep on eating spoon after spoon. Strangely, despite being a summer dessert, the emotions that this dish can bring belong to autumn. You can almost “feel” the coolness of the breeze, and the mild scent of grapefruit flowers in autumn while eating this dish. The dish can also be eaten in the winter, which is the most special quality of this dish: it can be eaten in any season. The enjoyment and “feeling” when eating the dish is often nostalgia - in the summer, one can feel nostalgic about the cool wind of the autumn season, while in the winter, one can feel nostalgic about that sensation of cooling your body that Tao Pho can bring in the summertime.

The second dessert is none other than the famous Kem Trang Tien. “Kem Trang Tien” is a famous food chain known for its various types of ice cream, but mostly for its popsicles. Since its establishment in 1958, Kem Trang Tien has always maintained its reputation due to its unique taste in ice cream. Kem Trang Tien is never lacking customers, and is the fullest late at night. Despite producing about 30,000 ice creams per a day, the demand is not always met. But thanks to its reasonable price and trustable quality, Kem Trang Tien is the number one ice cream shop in Hanoi for the past 60 years.

In the summer, the shop is always filled with customers, so full that it can take about 30 minutes just to buy some ice cream. But even in winter, there are still a lot of people visiting the shop. Eating Trang Tien ice cream in the cold and breezy wind has become such a common trend among Hanoians, who greatly enjoy the brainfreeze that the ice cream might give them. Strangely, as I observe and compare Kem Trang Tien to Tao Pho, I realized the most similar thing between them is no other than how they are enjoyed in every season. The reason behind the enjoyment of these desserts are actually exactly the same. Nostalgia. It might seem like the most abstract idea in this book, but it is exactly what makes the people “Hanoian”.

Nostalgia is not always a positive way to exercise our feelings, but it is what keeps the old traditions and culture the same despite however long it may be after their creation. What I have learnt through this chapter, however, is that sometimes there are certain reasons why these traditions are still being kept exactly the same. One of those reasons, is the strange and beautiful idea of the connection between a dessert’s enjoyment and weather of different seasons.


PHỐ
HÀNG GAI
NIỆM TÍN
VIỆT HƯNG
ĐỒNG HỒ ĐỨC LONG
QUANG HƯƠNG

Ice Cream You Scream

Serves 4 ice creams
Preparation 30 mins
Cooking 1h10 mins

"Kem xôi" with mint and chocolate flavors

Sticky Rice

50 grams uncooked glutinous rice

50 grams mint leaves

75 mL of water

Chocolate ice cream

50 grams dark chocolate

1 cup heavy whipping cream

2 cups milk

3 tbsp cocoa powder

4 egg yolks (100 mL)

½ cup granulated sugar

1 tsp vanilla extract

Oreos









Sticky Rice

1. Prepare the sticky rice by first rinsing it in the pot of a rice cooker. Rinse the rice with clean water twice and change the water after each time.

2. In a blender blend your mint leaves and water on high speed. Stop blending when the liquid turns to a foamy green color.

3. Use a strainer to get rid of the foam and tiny bits of cut up leaves. Repeat this process another time before pouring the liquid into the glutinous rice.

4. The amount of water used for cooking the rice usually varies based on how well-done you like your rice and also the rice cooker that you are using. This means you can add more or less water to your rice cooker.

5. Set the rice cooker to its normal cooking option, then, cook the sticky rice for around 1 hour (or for however long your rice cooker might take).

6. Let the rice rest for 15 minutes after cooking without opening the lid. Then take the rice out and let rest in room temperature before serving.







Chocolate Ice Cream

7. To make your ice cream, chop the chocolate bar into smaller pieces and place in a large bowl. Let the chocolate rest in room temperature prior to melting with the ice cream base.

8. In a small pot pour in your whipping cream and milk. Add the chocolate powder and mix until the cocoa powder has dissolved. On low heat bring this pot to a small simmer.

9. Separate your eggs and add sugar to your egg yolks. Use an electric beater or whisk to beat up the eggs until it turns into a bright and pale yellow color. This will take about 5-7 minutes





10. Once the chocolate milk starts to simmer, add a ladle-full of the liquid to your eggs to temper them. Stir the eggs very quickly with a whisk then add in another ladle-full and repeat the process.

11. Pour your egg and milk mixture back to the pot and let it simmer on low heat again. The ice cream base is ready when it sticks the back of the spoon like in this photo.

12. Carefully transfer the hot liquid to the bowl with your chopped chocolate bar using a strainer to get rid of any lumps.

13. Pour the ice cream base into a container and let cool for about 30 minutes. Then, freeze the ice cream in the refrigerator for 1 hour.

14. Take the ice cream out and use a whisk to stir the ice cream, breaking the more frozen parts and mixing it with the unfrozen liquids. Freeze the ice cream for another hour.

15. Repeat the process one more time then freeze the ice cream completely for 6 hours before serving. The ice cream tastes best on the day after it was made.

16. To serve the dish, scoop a bowlful of sticky rice and top with multiple scoops of ice cream. A couple of Oreos will compliment the dish well.





A popular dish in modern Hanoian cuisine I haven't introduced is Kem Xoi - vanilla ice cream eaten with young sticky rice. This recipe is a replication of the dish, but is influenced by Western cooking techniques and ice cream flavors. I chose the classic flavor combination of chocolate mint because of its refreshing taste. The mint cooked with the sticky rice gives it a very attractive aroma; you can feel the mint flavors by slowly chewing the rice. I also developed an original method of using mint water to cook rice. But cooking and freezing my ice cream required Western techniques and recipes. While Vietnamese ice cream relies more milk powder rather than fresh milk and heavy cream, my dish uses ingredients seen in gelatos like heavy cream and eggs - adding richness to create a velvety texture. Both the ice cream and sticky rice are easy to make, and when put together, they are a heavenly combination. After cooking and tasting this dish, I think it can become a very successful Vietnamese dessert. This is the reason why I named it "Ice Cream You Scream" - a rhyme which expresses the feeling when ice cream tastes too good, it'll make you literally scream!




càfê
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café
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ORIGINALLY FROM
VIETNAM

Cà Phê

Chapter 10


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Although coffee isn't a native plant from Vietnam, drinks made from coffee are an essential part of both old and modern Hanoian cuisine. More importantly, Vietnamese coffee is prepared and served very differently compared to coffee in other countries. Compared to Western favorites such as cappuccino, our coffee is a lot more "heavy" and concentrated, and it is this quality of Vietnamese coffee that makes me come back for more.

Recently, I discovered two surprisingfacts about a popular coffee drink in Hanoi: Vietnamese egg coffee. In our language, this type of coffee is called Ca Phe Trung. At first, I was curious with the fact many articles kept on calling this drink "Vietnamese egg coffee" and not just normal "egg coffee" - I had thought this popular drink was adapted from French cuisine because of its egg-beating method. It turns out the this is a completely original and "native" drink that came from Ca Phe Giang, a coffee shop not so far from my house. The next and even more surprising fact is Vietnamese egg coffee was rated by Buzzfeed the most delicious coffee drink around the world! I was very proud to know that many foreigners are familiar with the drink, and even more proud knowing I have made it before. Speaking of making it, the birth of this drink was actually caused by a "fortunate" accident.

Many coffee drinkers reading this book will know about Ca Phe Giang - a famous coffee shop that has been opened since the 1940's. Even today, the shop still has high reputation among people of all ages. But little do they know that this was actually the birthplace of Vietnamese Egg Coffee. Mr. Giang, the owner of the shop, was a bartender of Metropole Hotel Hanoi. During one night at the hotel, he ran out of milk to make his coffee, and had to come up with a substitution. In replacement of fresh milk, egg yolks were beaten up with condensed milk to create a delicious and fatty cream. The drink later became very popular among the public and food critics; this has motivated Mr. Giang to open his coffee shop on Cau Go street - an ideal location at Old Quarter.



My hypothesis for Mr. Giang's invention is he was influenced by the French method of beating air into egg yolks. But there is a certain level of creativity and sophistication in what Mr. Giang has done. Simply the addition of condensed milk to the eggs was a completely new combination that has never been seen before. The egg cream is such an elusive component - it is thick, creamy but at the same time foamy. The taste of egg coffee is delightfully sweet, not overpowering and full of strong black coffee flavors like tiramisu. But in my opinion, the taste of tiramisu is different to egg coffee as it uses mainly cheese and not beaten eggs. Vietnamese egg coffee has a much more signature egg yolk smell and coffee flavor. My favorite moment when drinking this coffee is the foam that stays on the edge of your lips. This to me signifies that you have fully tasted and enjoyed the flavors of the drink.

Although Mr. Giang's story helped me understand about the birth of egg coffee, I still wanted to know more about the history of Vietnamese coffee. The first coffee plant was brought into Vietnam in 1887, but only got planted starting in the 20th century, near the living areas of the French colonials. In 1930, the area of coffee plantations was 5.900 hectares, and this number continued to increase. However, during the period from 1960 to 1970, when coffee was grown at some Northern regions, a lot of problems surfaced like harmful insects and unviable environments. Through having conversations with my dad - a coffee lover - I found out that coffee was more produced more in the Southern region. After 1975, coffee was heavily grown and production increased in the Tay Nguyen or central Vietnam region. Surprisingly, the first coffee shop in Vietnam was actually opened on Tho Kham street in 1883, long before the first coffee plant was brought in the country. The following years witnessed newly opened coffee shops owned by French colonials, and a period of time where the Vietnamese population became familiar with coffee and the method of drinking it.

Even though coffee might be popular throughout Vietnam, the style and flavors of it are not always similar. While Hanoian coffee is very condensed with black coffee flavors, Southern Vietnamese coffee is more diluted. In fact, these flavors of Hanoian black coffee are what created the "national" coffee drink of Vietnam: Ca Phe Sua Da. The drink is usually served with traditional black coffee, ice, and condense milk.





Another two big differences between our coffee are the location and the way we enjoy coffee. Cong Ca Phe is a perfect example which identifies both of these aspects. In my opinion, a part of why Cong Ca Phe became such an iconic name among locals and foreigners is its interior design. Cong Ca Phe has a style of the old Hanoi, which is created using furniture and items that were popular back in the time before Doi Moi. My favorite two items would be the metal cups and the pillows. Both have very colorful and unique stencils printed on them. The atmosphere that these items gives marks the difference between the way Hanoians and Saigonese enjoy coffee. Hanoians like to drink coffee in simplistic shops that usually follow the old Hanoian style. Coffee by the street is also common among Hanoians. And when we drink coffee, we like to drink slowly and enjoy the emotional journey a cup of coffee may bring with it. We consider drinking coffee a fun hobby, but one that is sophisticated and artistic.

I never knew that Hanoian coffee has so much history to it, and was even more surprised to know about the origin of Vietnamese egg coffee. This chapter has been one of the most enjoyable to write, and I am happy to have discovered and learned more about the coffee rituals of Hanoians. It is my hope for these rituals and heritage of Hanoi to be eternally cherished, and passed down to the careful but creative hands of the future generations.

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With love,
Phuong

"The banana leaves give a sense of “home” which no other elements in Hanoian or Vietnamese cuisine can give. Whenever the image of chartreuse green leaves is brought up, any Vietnamese person would immediately think of their “hometown”. And that is why, when eating Banh Gio on a train, I would think about my parents’ childhood home, a rural place with an enriching scenery...."

- Chapter 6 -
"Banh...nhieu loai"

