

Recipes – provided by Smiles on Wings

Cà Phê Sữa Đá
(Vietnamese Iced Coffee)

Ingredients:

French roast, medium/coarse ground coffee.
Fine ground coffee will fall right through the little holes of the coffee press. Many Vietnamese use Café du Monde French Roast Chicory coffee.

Sweetened condensed milk (not evaporated)

2 Glasses - one filled to the brim with ice



Directions:

Pour 2 tablespoons sweetened condensed milk in one glass.
Put 2 tablespoons ground coffee into the base of the coffee press*. (Note – for stronger coffee, wet the grounds to let them expand. About a spoonful of water should do the trick.)
Screw the press on tightly. The coffee should be packed well.
Pour boiling hot water into the coffee press, and cover. The coffee will drip very, very slowly – only a few drops per second. The longer it takes, the stronger the coffee. If the coffee is dripping too fast, use a small spoon or tip of a knife to screw the press on tighter - one turn clockwise. If it's dripping too slowly, unscrew one turn counterclockwise.
While it's dripping go get some ice in a glass. Once it's finished, stir well. You can set your coffee maker on top of its overturned lid to prevent dripping. Pour over ice and enjoy.

*Vietnamese coffee press – found at any Asian market or purchase from Amazon (<http://amzn.to/1bFXaTr> \$2.45-\$6.85)

Vietnamese Chicken Salad

Ingredients:

1 Whole Chicken
Salt
Ground Pepper
2 limes
Vietnamese Coriander (*rau ram*)*

*Spicy, tangy, and hinting of fresh cilantro, *rau ram* is usually served, when tender and young, as whole sprigs in a table salad; otherwise, the leaves are added to salads or used as garnish.



Directions:

Wash the chicken, then boil on high for 15 minutes or until cooked. Let cool for 7-10 minutes. (Alternate: use a store-bought, cooked rotisserie chicken – unseasoned.)

After the chicken has cooled a bit, tear or cut into small strips.

Wash and drain the Vietnamese Coriander (*rau ram*). Cut into fine strips. Wash and cut each lime in half. Squeeze lime juice into a small bowl. In a larger bowl, mix the chicken with salt and ground pepper. Add the lime juice and mix in the *rau ram*.

Bo Luc Lắc - “Shaking” Beef Salad

3 lbs. New York Strip Steak, cubed
1 tablespoon oil for frying

Marinade:

4 cloves garlic, minced
3 tablespoons oyster sauce
3 teaspoons sugar
3.5 teaspoons fish sauce
Black pepper to taste

2 white onions, thinly sliced
1/4 cup white vinegar
½ cup water
2 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt

1 bunch red lettuce, chopped
1 tomato, sliced

Directions:

Mix all marinade ingredients together, stir in beef cubes and let set in the fridge for 1 hour.

Mix vinegar, water, sugar and salt in a shallow bowl. Add onions and ensure the vinegar mixture covers all onion slices. Let sit for 15-20 minutes.

Heat oil in a large frying pan on high and sear the beef in small batches until medium rare – it needs to be tender and sweet inside and slightly burned outside. (Note: if you add all the beef at once it will be steamed and soggy.)

Spread the lettuce and tomato slices on a large plate and place the seared beef on top.

Stir fry onions for 2-4 minutes or until soft. Pour onions and vinegar dressing on top of beef and serve right away.



Chè Bắp (Coconut Sauce over Sweet Corn Dessert)

Sweet Corn Soup

5 cups water
¼ cup sweet rice (also called sticky rice – available in Asian groceries)
4-5 ears of corn, or 1 24-ounce bag frozen
¼ cup small tapioca pearls (about 1/8" diam.)
6.5 tablespoons sugar
½ teaspoon salt
4 large or 6 medium pandan leaves*, rinsed and tied into a knot
½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Bring the water to boil over high heat. Stir in the rice and the tapioca. Return to a boil, stirring occasionally, for about five minutes or until the rice is nearly cooked or the tapioca pearls are halfway clear. The water will seem slightly thick. Add the sugar, salt, and pandan, stirring to dissolve the sugar. When the mixture comes to near boiling, add the corn. Lower the heat to simmer and cook for about five minutes until the corn is cooked and the flavors are blended. Remove from the heat and stir in the vanilla.



The resulting sweet soup will be thick like Italian risotto. Taste and add more sugar or salt to taste.

Coconut Sauce

1-1/2 cups coconut milk
2 pinches of salt
1 tablespoon sugar
1 cup water
2 tablespoons cornstarch dissolved in a tablespoon of water

Combine the coconut milk, salt, sugar, and water in a small saucepan. Place over medium heat and bring to simmer, lowering the heat if the coconut milk spits or pops. Give the cornstarch mixture a good stir and add it to the sauce, mixing well. Cook, stirring, for about 30 seconds, until the sauce thickens. Remove from heat.



To serve, ladle the soup into small bowls and top with coconut sauce.

*Known as “the vanilla of the east,” pandan leaf (or screwpine leaf) is an indispensable ingredient in many desserts. The plant is very easy to grow, and home cooks just cut the leaves as needed for cooking, then tie into a knot to infuse dishes with the sweet fragrance of the leaves. You may find pandan leaves or extract in Asian grocery stores.



Customs and Cuisine of Vietnam

Because kitchens are typically small (meals may be cooked over only one burner and ovens are not common), meals are prepared and served in courses. Ask how many dishes are coming so you will have room for those served last. Great care is taken selecting chopsticks (many tourists bring their own to insure cleanliness) and wiping them on the small paper napkins that may be available is customary. A damp cloth in a small plastic bag is often provided to wash face, neck, hands and chopsticks. Slamming the bag between one's hands, creating a loud pop to open the bag, is perfectly acceptable, and discreetly using a toothpick after a meal is considered a tribute. The small napkins mentioned above are frequently thrown on the floor in small local restaurants and not picked up until the restaurant closes, somewhat disconcerting to many Westerners.

Because Vietnamese food is somewhat complicated to make and takes a long time to prepare, many Vietnamese frequent street food stalls or small restaurants where the entrepreneur may only prepare one dish and sell it very cheaply. It is almost a guarantee that a street vendor who is surrounded by a swarm of people sitting on little stools on the street has worked long and hard to perfect one or two dishes.

Dining Etiquette

- Place food from serving plate into your rice bowl to eat. The bowl can be brought up close to your mouth.
- Chop sticks should not be left sticking out of a bowl, but set horizontally across the top of the bowl or on the side.
- Leave a bit of food on your plate so your host will feel she/he has been generous and provided enough food.

General Etiquette

- A slight bow of the head and "cam on" (thank you) is always appreciated.
- Vietnamese traditionally gently grasp with two hands when greeting each other accompanied by a small bow to show respect.
- Don't pat babies or children on the head, but they are to be admired with a touch elsewhere.
- Motion for someone to come to you with the palm facing down with fingers moving toward the palm.
- Women should not wear short skirts, shorts or have bare shoulders unless at the beach or hotel.
- Take off shoes when entering a pagoda or someone's house.
- It's not uncommon for friends of the same sex to hold hands, but public displays of affection with the opposite sex are inappropriate.
- Vietnamese commonly ask foreigners personal questions such as, "How old are you?"

Vietnamese cuisine features a combination of five fundamental taste elements in the overall meal. Each dish has a distinctive flavor which reflects one or more of these elements. Common ingredients include fish sauce, shrimp paste, soy sauce, rice, fresh herbs, and fruits and vegetables. Vietnamese recipes use lemongrass, ginger, mint, Vietnamese mint, long coriander, Saigon cinnamon, bird's eye chili, lime, and basil leaves. Traditional Vietnamese cooking is greatly admired for its fresh ingredients, minimal use of oil, and reliance on herbs and vegetables. With the balance between fresh herbs and meats and a selective use of spices to reach a fine taste, Vietnamese food is considered one of the healthiest cuisines worldwide.

Annie Corapi (2011). "The 10 Healthiest Ethnic Cuisines". *CNN Health*. <http://cnn.it/lle6ro>
"Vietnamese Ingredients". *WokMe*. 2011. <http://bit.ly/llecPy>