

Discovering Vietnam Through Food

The Stories Behind Each Dish

For the people of Vietnam, food is not simply something to fill one's stomach. Every dish carries the history, culture, nature, and daily lives of the people who create it. Behind every delicious meal lies a story that has been passed down through generations.

Pho – Time and Harmony

In the morning, as restaurants and street stalls begin to open, the aroma of pho spreads through the streets together with the rising mist. The fragrances of cinnamon, star anise, and roasted ginger blend with the rich flavor of beef bones, gently welcoming people into a new day.

At first glance, pho may appear to be a simple dish, but creating a truly delicious bowl requires great care, effort, and time. The broth is slowly simmered for many hours to bring out its natural sweetness. The soft noodles are made from rice, and the beef is carefully cooked to preserve its rich flavor.

The true charm of pho lies in the harmony between its ingredients. Rather than one ingredient overpowering the others, each element complements the rest, creating a deep and balanced taste.



Goi Cuon – Nature's Gifts

In contrast to the warm and comforting pho, goi cuon is a dish that allows people to enjoy the natural flavors of fresh ingredients. Inside transparent rice paper are colorful vegetables, shrimp, pork, and rice noodles.

Because they are not fried and use very little oil, fresh spring rolls are a healthy dish that allows the original flavors of the ingredients to shine. The savory taste of shrimp and meat, the refreshing aroma of herbs, and the gentle texture of rice noodles come together with fish sauce based dipping sauce or peanut sauce to create an even richer flavor.

At Vietnamese dining tables, herbs and fresh vegetables are not merely side dishes. They represent the wisdom of people who have lived in harmony with nature, a value that continues to be reflected in Vietnamese food culture.



Banh Mi – Cultural Exchange

Banh mi is a uniquely Vietnamese dish that was created from a combination of different cultures. Although its origins can be traced back to the French baguette, Vietnamese people transformed it through their own creativity and developed it into something uniquely their own. It is known for its thin, crispy crust and light, fluffy texture.

Inside, it is filled with a variety of ingredients such as pate, grilled meat, pickled vegetables, cucumber, and herbs. Each ingredient has its own character, yet they come together beautifully within a single sandwich.

Crispy yet light.

Full of flavor yet never overwhelming.

Somehow nostalgic, yet refreshingly new.

Banh mi represents the creativity of Vietnamese people in embracing outside influences while transforming them into something that reflects their own identity.



Banh Xeo – Sharing and Connection

Banh xeo first captures people's attention through sound. When the batter is poured onto a hot pan, it creates a lively sizzling sound. It is said that this sound is where the dish's name, "xeo" originated.

Inside the golden, crispy batter are generous portions of shrimp, pork, bean sprouts, and other ingredients. The fillings and size vary depending on the region.

When eating banh xeo, it is cut into bite-sized pieces, wrapped in rice paper together with plenty of fresh vegetables and herbs, and dipped into a sweet and sour fish sauce. The crispy texture of the batter, the savory flavors of the fillings, and the freshness of the vegetables spread throughout the mouth.

In central Vietnam, smaller and crispier versions are popular, while in southern Vietnam, larger versions with more fillings are common. Although each region has its own style, the tradition of enjoying banh xeo together with family and friends remains the same.



The Dining Table – A Place Where Stories Continue

Many dishes from around the world have gained international fame, but the true foundation of Vietnamese cuisine can be found at the family dining table.



In Vietnam, it is common to place many dishes in the center of the table and share them together among family members.

Mealtimes are not only about eating. They are also precious moments when family members share stories about their day, care for one another, and strengthen connections between generations.

For this reason, the most unforgettable flavors for Vietnamese people are not always famous dishes. They may be the taste of a soup prepared by their mother, a simple plate of boiled vegetables, or the memory of a family meal shared after a long time apart.

*Pho – Time and Harmony
Fresh Spring Rolls – Nature's Gifts
Banh Mi – Cultural Exchange
Banh Xeo – Sharing and Connection*

*Each dish carries the history, lifestyles, and emotions of the people of Vietnam.
However, I believe this kind of charm is not unique to Vietnam.*

Every country and region in the world has its own culture and values. The beauty of each place can be found throughout many aspects of people's daily lives. Food is one of them. Sharing a meal and experiencing the flavors of another country means encountering the history, feelings, and everyday lives of the people who live there.

Learning about and respecting each other's differences creates new discoveries and stronger connections. Through Vietnamese cuisine, why not explore the charms of countries and regions around the world and begin a journey to experience the stories woven into each culture?

Written by: Hoang Mai – Vietnamese Coordinator for International Relations



Coordinators for International Relations working for Mie Prefecture introduce different cultures each month through various themes. We hope you enjoy reading and discovering more about the world's diverse cultures.