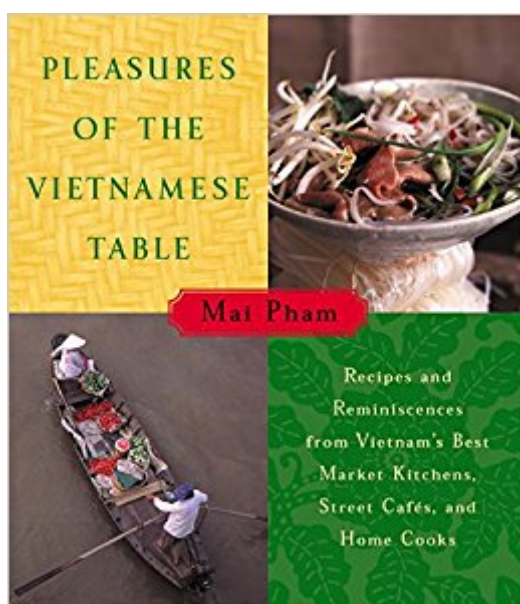


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Pleasures Of The Vietnamese Table: Recipes And Reminiscences From Vietnam's Best Market Kitchens, Street Cafes, And Home Cooks



Synopsis

A land of vibrant cultures and vivid contrasts, Vietnam is also home to some of the most delicious and intriguing food in the world. While its cooking traditions have been influenced by those of China, France, and even India, Vietnam has created a cuisine with a spirit and a flavor all its own. Chef and restaurateur Mai Pham brings to life this diverse and exciting cooking in *Pleasures of the Vietnamese Table*. Born and raised in Saigon before emigrating to the United States, Mai has often returned to her native land to learn the secrets of authentic Vietnamese cooking, from family, friends, home cooks, street vendors, and master chefs. Traveling from region to region, she has gathered the simple, classic recipes that define Vietnamese food today: Green Mango Salad with Grilled Beef, Stir-Fried Chicken with Lemongrass and Chilies, Caramelized Garlic Shrimp, and especially pho, the country's beloved beef-and-noodle soup. With more than 100 recipes in all, *Pleasures of the Vietnamese Table* offers home cooks the chance to create and savor the traditional flavors of Vietnam in their own kitchen. Filled with enchanting stories and stirring black-and-white photos of life in Vietnam, *Pleasures of the Vietnamese Table* provides a captivating taste of an enduring culture and its irresistible cuisine.

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Customer Reviews

When Mai Pham--chef and owner of the renowned Lemon Grass Restaurant in Sacramento, California--left her home and her grandmother in Saigon in 1975, just days before the city fell to communist rule, she never thought she'd see either again. Happily for her, she returned 20 years

later to rediscover her roots and reconnect with her 100-year-old grandmother. Happily for us, she's written *Pleasures of the Vietnamese Table*, in which she shares that journey--and the vibrant cuisine of her homeland. She weaves a stirring tale of rediscovery; of visiting with cooks in market stalls and street cafés and home kitchens; and, perhaps most importantly, of rediscovering her "favorite food on earth," pho, the noodle soup often referred to as the national dish of Vietnam. Pham begins with a chapter on dipping sauces, condiments, and herbs, which, she explains, are the true backbone of Vietnamese cooking. She explores culinary variations: the "rice bowl" of the southern peninsula and the French- and Indian-inspired foods of Saigon; the more robust style of the cooler central region of Hue; and the straightforward style of the mountainous north. And she shares the simple, classic recipes that define Vietnamese food. Green Mango Salad with Grilled Beef is at once salty (from the ubiquitous fish sauce), sweet from the fruit, and tangy and spicy from Chili-Lime Sauce. Ginger Chicken is bright with the flavor of ginger and spicy with dried chilies; caramel sauce adds body and an intriguing sweet and smoky element to the dish. And of course, one can't forget the beloved pho, which gets a whole chapter to itself. The traditional Hanoi-style Vietnamese "Pho" Rice Noodle Soup with Beef is fragrant with anise and ginger and thick with velvety noodles and delectably rare beef suspended in the hot broth. Featured throughout the book are black-and-white photographs of the country and its people, stories of Pham's childhood, and enchanting tales of the history and people of Vietnam that, taken together, highlight a rich and vibrant picture of the ancient cuisine of this complex country. Helpful guides to the Vietnamese pantry and cooking techniques, along with a glossary, menu suggestions, and a list of resources for the more exotic ingredients make the book extremely useful to even the uninitiated. --Robin Donovan

Pham (*The Best of Vietnamese and Thai Cooking*) recently began making a yearly visit to her relatives in the Mekong Delta and found treasures in the culinary heritage of her homeland. She already had plenty of experience cooking Southeast Asian food (she co-owns and cooks at the successful Lemon Grass Café and Restaurant in Sacramento and has taught at the Culinary Institute of America), but this was a chance to reconnect with her family. Artfully arranged with beautiful photographs, this collection of recipes is a celebration of family traditions as well as the popular national dishes of Vietnam. A list of basic pantry elements describes important tools, such as the clay pots used for making Kho (braised meats), condiments and the intricacies of rice paper, including how to make your own with an improvised fresh-rice-wrapper cooker. She also offers recipes for salads, steamed rice cakes, delicacies such as Rice Rolls with Shrimp and Wood-Ear Mushrooms and a variety of noodle dishes with fresh herbs, grilled pork, shrimp and shaved beef. In

addition, the book includes many steamed, poached, simmered and grilled seafood dishes and a whole chapter of vegetarian specialties inspired by Pham's grandmother, all enlivened with the keen flavors of shrimp paste, lemongrass, fish sauce and lots of ginger and garlic. An excellent introduction to Vietnamese food for all skill levels. B&w photos and illus. (Aug.)Forecast: Vietnamese cooking is increasingly popular, with restaurants opening nationwide, and Vietnam is a tourist destination for many Americans. Author appearances in five major cities will help this book find the commercial success it deserves. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

I found this book to be an excellent introduction to Vietnamese cooking. I enjoy the author's vignettes about the history of and ways of enjoying the food / recipes, her family and the country. The recipes are accessible, clear and easy to create, especially for those without a lot of time and this also makes them easier to remember, freeing one from over reliance on the book when making the dishes later. Although there are no pictures of finished dishes, nor am I very familiar with how the finished dishes 'should' appear, I do not find this to be a detriment as it seems to be fitting for the particular style of cooking to allow one to add their own interpretation of the dishes. Also, one can always Google photos on the web for dishes, if desired. It seems too many modern cookbooks are chock full of full page pictures that have absolutely nothing to do with the recipes. Thankfully, Pleasures of the Vietnamese Table is not one of them.

I returned from my second trip to Vietnam with a hankering for pho that the local restaurant could not satisfy. After several hours of online research, I purchased this book, along with a pound of star anise and pho noodles at a local Asian grocery store. I made the quick chicken pho (someday I will have time for the traditional beef pho) and was really impressed with the delicate and balanced stock for a relatively easy and quick version of pho. Toasting the star anise and cloves, as well as charring onion and ginger, contribute beautifully to the flavor. I moved on to a few other soups - a beef noodle soup similar to pho, but with 5 spice powder. Really good. Then, the ramen noodle soup with crispy skin duck. I got 1/2 of a Pekin duck delivered from a local restaurant for this one, and it was SO good. I will make all of these again, but the quick chicken pho is my favorite so far. I've also tried the sweet potato curry, which is homey and nice for cold weather. I couldn't find Thai curry powder. The lemongrass tofu is excellent and now one of my favorite tofu recipes. Also, it looks beautiful. I am looking forward to making the street crepes and some of the salads. It's been a joy to peruse this book and it has inspired me to spend more time creating in the kitchen. Thank you.

As a Vietnamese-American, I wanted a cookbook that would help me recreate a lot of sauces that I grew up eating. I find that compared to most other Vietnamese cookbooks, this one is quite authentic, especially when it comes to sauces. The only recipe I didn't like much was the one for banh mi. The quick-pho recipe is spot-on and great pho to make when you don't have 24 hours to make a pot of pho but still want a delicious broth.

great cookbook for those of us not too familiar with vietnamese cooking (though we all know we love to eat it!!!). lots of personal information makes this cookbook feel like a couple of old friends sitting down to tea and cooking together. Two things stand out for me in this book: first, she has a great selection from easy to more involved recipes so you can use this as a weeknight cookbook as well as a special occasion cookbook. secondly, there is a wonderful section in the front which has drawings of the different vietnamese greens. I have been frustrated on so many occasions shopping in asian markets and not knowing how to use the greens! this is the first time i have seen them explained in english. so, thank you mai pham!

LOVE this book of amazing recipes. I have had them authenticated by a Vietnamese friend and they are the real deal, The Pho was a process but so worth the work.

more of a read than cookbook

This a new. adventure for me. I love noodles and that about pho. Need to cruise the Asian market to get supplies. Recipes really look good. Beef or chicken are my most favorite. I thought I would make some pho and then go to a Vietnamese restaurant and see how that tastes. Highly recommend. Try something new.

Nice

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