



Culinary Institute  
of America

# Vietnamese Cuisine

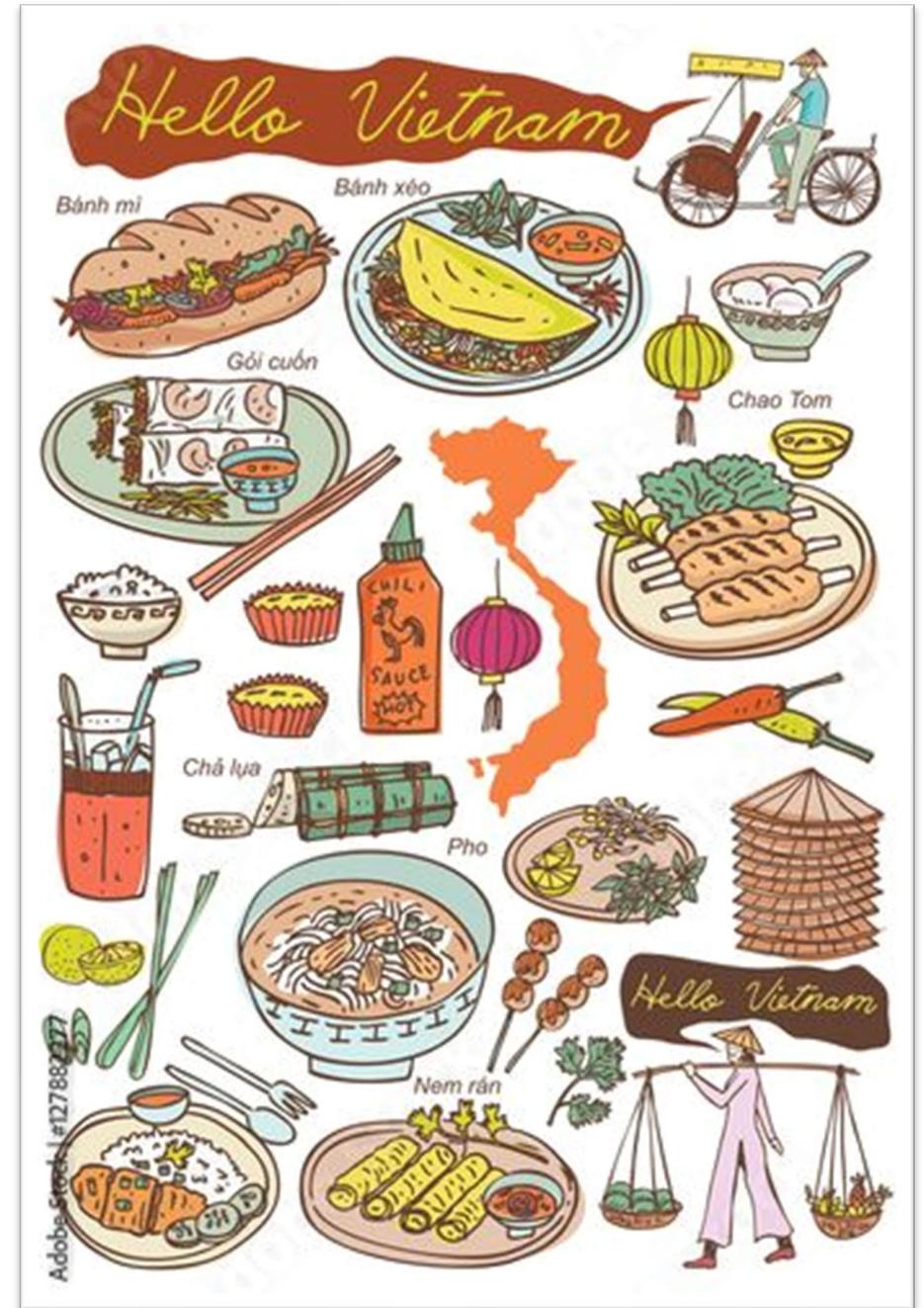


# Learning Objectives

- Understand the basic characteristics of Vietnamese cuisine.
- Distinguish the culinary traditions of different regions of Vietnam.
- Recognize the primary flavor profile of Vietnamese cuisine.
- Identify the key herbs, spices, and ingredients of Vietnamese cuisine.
- Recognize popular Vietnamese dishes.
- Prepare a variety of Vietnamese dishes following standardized recipes.

# Vietnamese Cuisine

- **Freshness:** Most meats only briefly cooked; vegetables eaten fresh, boiled, or briefly stir-fried
- **Contrasting textures:** crisp with soft, watery with crunchy, delicate with rough
- Generous use of herbs
- Layered flavor profiles
- Broths, soup-based dishes
- Fish sauce and paste



# Regional Variations

## Northern

- Less spicy, sour flavors: tamarind, limes
- Light + balanced flavors highlight natural taste of ingredients

## Central

- Intensely spicy: chili peppers, shrimp sauces

## Southern/ Mekong Delta

- Pronounced sweetness: palm sugar, coconut milk
- Melting pot of regional, foreign flavors



# Flavor Profile

**Five fundamental flavors** for a well-balanced Vietnamese meal:

- **Sweet:** sugar, fruits, and certain vegetables; add a pleasant taste and provide balance to sour and bitter elements
- **Sour:** vinegar, lime, tamarind, unripe mangoes, fermented foods; add a refreshing tanginess
- **Salty:** salt, fish sauce, soy sauce; deepens the taste of dishes; provides depth, enhance the other elements
- **Spicy:** chili peppers, ginger, garlic; add heat and pungency
- **Bitter:** herbs like cilantro, mint, and basil, vegetables like bitter melon, dark chocolate; cleanse the palate

# Key Ingredients

- Banana blossoms
- Tamarind
- Fish sauce (*Nước Mắm*)
- Oyster sauce
- Hoisin sauce
- Soybean sauce
- Salted black beans
- Light soy sauce
- Peanuts



# Herbs

- **Vietnamese coriander:** mix of citrus + pepper, slightly spicy
- **Thai basil:** savory with a spicy licorice flavor
- **Perilla/ Shiso leaf:** citrus flavor, hints of cinnamon, cloves, mint
- **Lemongrass:** lemon, hints of ginger, floral + minty notes
- **Culantro/ Sawtooth:** strong cilantro flavor, slightly citrus
- **Fish mint:** unusual fishy flavor



# Rice



- **Jasmine:** fragrant aroma; soft, fluffy texture; used for steamed rice, *pho*
- **Glutinous (Sticky):** chewy texture; used in desserts, snacks, traditional dishes
- **Brown:** unmilled with its bran layer; provides fiber and nutrients
- **Purple:** deep purple hue; nutty flavor; used in desserts, ceremonial dishes
- **Red Cargo:** long-grain; reddish-brown; firm texture; for savory dishes

# Noodles

- Many types, colors, textures
- Served wet or dry, hot or cold, fried
- **Rice Vermicelli** (*Bún*): thin, white round noodles
- **Rice Sticks** (*Bánh Phở*): flat rice noodles
- **Yellow Wheat or Egg** (*Mì*): thin or wide noodles
- **Glass** (*Miến*): thin, cellophane cylindrical noodles
- **Tapioca and Rice Flour** (*Bánh Canh*): thick tapioca or mix of tapioca and rice



# Dipping Sauce (*Nước Mắm Chấm*)



- Salty, sweet, tangy umami flavor, subtle heat
- Made from fish sauce, garlic, lime juice, sugar, chilis, vinegar
- Thinned with water to mellow/meld elements together
- Used as dressing, dipping sauce, or marinade

# Summer Rolls (*Gỏi cuốn, Nem cuốn*)

- Delicate rice paper wrappers
- Fill with fresh herbs, vegetables, protein, vermicelli noodles
- Protein: pork, sausage, egg, shrimp, fish, squid, beef, or tofu
- Serve fresh at room temp.
- Dipping sauce (*nước chấm chấm*)



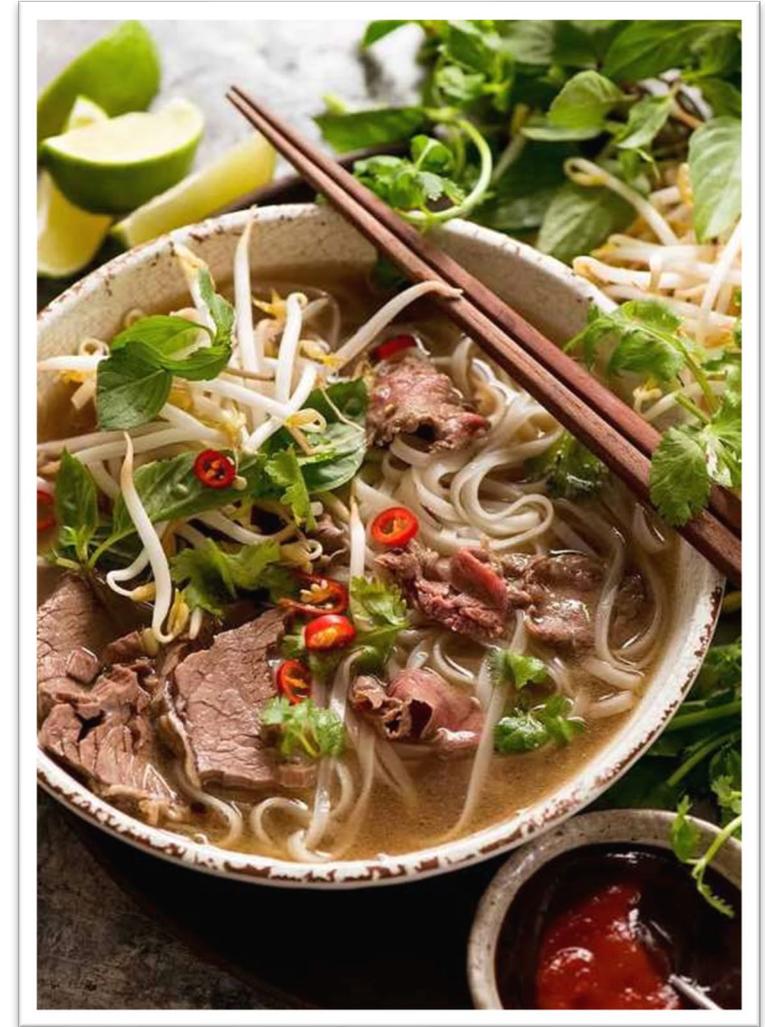
# Vietnamese Sandwich (*Bánh mì*)



- Sandwich of one or more meats, vegetables, condiments
- Short baguette with thin, crisp crust, soft, airy texture
- **Protein:** Sausage, barbecued pork, or minced pork
- **Spread:** French Pâté, mayonnaise
- **Topping:** Cilantro, red chili, cucumber, pickled carrots and daikon

# Rice Noodle Soup (*Pho*)

- Salty broth with rice noodles, herbs, meat
- Noodle width, broth sweetness, herbs, sauce varies by region
- **Protein:** thin-cut beef, tendons, tripe, meatballs, or chicken
- **Garnish:** scallion, onion, cilantro, Thai basil, bean sprouts
- **Accompaniments:** Thai chiles, lime, fish sauce, chili oil, chili sauce, pickled garlic, or hoisin sauce



# Grilled Turmeric Fish (*Cha Ca*)



- Specialty of Hanoi
- White, firm-fleshed fish like snakehead or Vietnamese catfish
- Marinated in galangal, turmeric, fish sauce, lemon juice
- Meticulous seasoning-- a tiny change may imbalance the dish
- Serve with rice vermicelli, basil, peanuts, scallion, dill
- Dipping sauce: fermented shrimp paste (*mam tom*)



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Any Questions?