

VIETNAMESE FOOD



I. COM

It's basically the khao gaeng (rice and curry in Thailand) or nasi campur (rice and curry of Malaysia), style dining experience of Vietnam.

Com binh dan is one of the most filling meals you can buy in Saigon on a budget – easily the best stomach filling meal for value. At any com binh dan stall you'll first see a glass cabinet filled with the day's supply of pre-cooked dishes, all waiting to be ordered.

The food usually ranges from braised pork belly, any number of fish dishes, and one of my favorites, tofu stuffed with minced pork and covered in tomato sauce.

To order your meal at a com binh dan street food stall, you can simply point and choose to whatever dishes look good.



Address: Right of Vuon Chuoi on So 2

Open hours: About 11 am

Prices: 30,000 – 35,000 VND



Ca kho to



Canh chua ca loc



Canh mong toi tom kho



Rau muong xao toi



Thit kho tau (Caramelized Pork and Eggs)



Thit ram cay



Thit kho



Canh cua



Canh kho qua



Ga kho gung



Ca ro kho khe



Dau phu sot ca chua

II. BANH MI AND NOODLE DISHES

1. Bánh mì

Banh mi can mean a variety of different things, and in Vietnamese it actually just means bread, sometimes the term can be used to refer to any type of the beautiful Vietnamese personal baguette sandwich. There are many different varieties of banh mi, and here's a good resource for seeing the different types, but the basic sandwich starts with a crusty baguette that's sliced in half (sometimes using a scissors) and stuffed with layers of pork, luncheon meats, shredded cured pork skin, pâté, mayonnaise, Vietnamese radish and carrot pickles, a handful of sliced cucumbers, sprigs of coriander (cilantro), and last but not least, an optional, yet in my opinion necessary, scoop of fresh pounded chilies.



Address: 37 Nguyễn Trãi, Ho Chi Minh City
(though the address is 37, it's right at Hem 39)

Open hours: From around 4:30 pm – 7:30 pm
each day

Price: 16,000 - 20,000 VND

2. Phở

Pho is the combination of soft rice noodles in a soup broth, normally prepared with either bo (beef) or ga (chicken) – both of which can be extremely delicious, but I'm normally more of a beef kind of guy. The noodles are flash boiled until soft, topped with your choice of meat, and often finished with a sprinkle of chopped green onions and sometimes sweet onions as well.



Address: 413 – 415 Nguyễn Trãi, P. 7,
Quận 5, TP. HCM

Open hours: 6 am – 1 pm daily

Prices: 38,000 – 55,000 VND for bowl

3. Bún riêu

The broth is made from a crab base stock, and another key ingredient are tomatoes, which create a broth that's slightly seafood tasting, yet has a beautiful natural sweet and tartness from the tomatoes. I think there's also often some rice vinegar included in the recipe to give it a lovely sour and well-rounded flavor. Along with the wonderfully flavorful broth in a bowl of bun rieu, the noodles are often similar in shape and size to spaghetti noodles, except soft rice noodles.

Topping the noodles are pieces of golden fried tofu, sometimes meatballs, hearty chunks of pork, squares of congealed pig's blood, and finally a slab of rich crab paste.



Address: 18/5 Nguyễn Cảnh Chân, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open hours: 11 am – 7 pm daily
Prices: 45,000 VND (\$2.08)

4. Hủ tiếu Nam Vang

Nam Vang is the Vietnamese word for Phnom Penh in Cambodia, and Hủ Tieu has connections to Teochew in China.

Hủ Tieu Nam Vang is a Cambodian and Chinese pork based noodle soup, that contains slices of all sorts of organs, and a shrimp or few, plus an assortment of other additions.



Address: 72 Nguyễn Thượng Hiền
Open hours: About 5 pm – 10 pm
Price: 65,000 VND (\$3)

5. Bánh canh cua

Banh canh is likely noodles but hearty and thick.

Banh canh is quite similar to Japanese udon noodles, except I thought the noodles, which are typically made with a combination of rice and tapioca starch, were more sticky and a little chewier than udon, which are typically made with wheat flour.



Address: 87 Trần Khắc Chân, Ho Chi Minh City
Open hours: 2 pm – 9:30 pm daily
Prices: 35,000 VND (\$1.62) per bowl

6. **Bún mắm** Bun mam is specifically a southern Vietnamese dish, and just like most other noodle soups, you'll find it at both sit down restaurants and portable street food stalls around town – though it's not nearly as common to spot as some other noodle dishes on this blog.

The base of any bowl of bun mam (bún mắm) is a dark colored broth prepared with fermented fish sauce (which I believe is similar to Thai pla ra). The fermented fish sauce gives the soup broth a well rounded, balanced flavor, and it's honestly not nearly as fishy as it might sound or smell. Along with the broth, bun, or rice vermicelli noodles, are loaded into the bottom of the bowl, before the entire assortment of meats like squid, prawns, and pork are all scattered on top of the noodles. Finally, a slice or two of eggplant, which soaks up all the broth, is another essential component of a bowl of southern Vietnamese bun mam. In addition to the glorious fish flavor, the broth of a bowl of bun mam is usually sweetened with tamarind juice and sugar.



Address: 22 Phan Bội Châu, across from Ben Thanh market, Saigon
Open hours: Not sure exactly, but they are open for breakfast, lunch and throughout the afternoon
Price: 65,000 VND (\$3) per bowl

7. Bún thịt nướng

The dish normally begins with a handful of chopped up herbs and lettuce at the bottom of a bowl, then in goes fresh rice vermicelli noodles (similar to Thai khanom jeen noodles), then a few skewers of grilled pork are layered on that, and finally a sweet and salty fish sauce, and a scoop of oily chives and green onions, and pickles are all added on top.



Address: 195 Cô Giang, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open hours: 7 am – 10 pm daily

Prices: 40,000 VND (\$1.85)

8. Bún bò Huế

Alright, bun bo Hue is not actually from Saigon, it originates in Hue – a city on the coast of central Vietnam, which unfortunately I haven't been able to visit yet – but I included it on this Vietnamese street food guide because it's one of the most beloved noodle soups in Saigon as well.

Bun bo Hue is beef based, and in Vietnam it's known for being spicy and flavorful. The broth, which if made to specification, should be full of beef bone flavor, and fragrant with lemongrass, has a wonderful taste, like a citrusy beef soup. The noodles are normally rice vermicelli noodles, of the spaghetti size, and a bowl of bun bo Hue is often served with slices of beef, a hunk of either ox tail or pork knuckle, cha lua (Vietnamese sausage and ham), and a handful of green and sweet onions. Again just like every other noodle dish, the extra herbs, fresh boiled vegetables, and chilies, give bun bo Hue an added dimension of deliciousness.



Address: 300 Võ Văn Tần, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City or 88 Hồ Tùng Mậu, District 1, HCMC.

Open hours: 6 am – 10 pm daily

Price: 60,000 VND (\$2.77) per bowl, a bit expensive, but extremely generous on the meat

9. Mì Quảng

Ingredients often vary, but dishes most often consist of wide rice noodles served with little broth, pork chops, chicken, shrimp, vegetables, peanuts, and bánh tráng.



Address: 67/1 Mạc Đĩnh Chi, District 1, HCMC

Open hours: About 9 am

Prices: 35,000 – 50,000 VND

10. Bún chả

Bun cha is a dish that uses bun, fresh rice vermicelli noodles, the same noodles used in bun thit nuong, which are soft and easy to chew. The next component of bun cha, are little seasoned pork patties (kind of like pork sliders), that are grilled over charcoal. A plate of bun is served alongside a bowl of grilled pork patties, which after being grilled, are served in a smokey sour soup, and finally a plate of herbs and green vegetables are served to accompany everything.

The main way I saw most Vietnamese eating bun cha, was to add a bit of rice vermicelli to the pork patty soup, garnish with garlic, chilies, and herbs, and then repeat. Bun cha is an absolute sensational dish, and if you don't visit Hanoi, even though that's definitely where the best is, you can still try it in Saigon.



Address: 140b Lý Chính Thắng, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Open hours: 6:30 am – 8 pm daily

Prices: bowls of normal sized bun cha combinations are 38,000 VND (\$1.75)

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III. PANCAKES, SOUP AND DESSERT

1. Bánh tầm bì

Bánh tầm bì is a food that's only available in the south of Vietnam, and if you love the flavor of coconut milk, you're going to fully enjoy banh tam bi. Just like banh canh cua (food featured above), banh tam bi is a dish that uses a similar thick noodle – yet the flavor and the toppings are much different.

A plate of banh tam bi often begins with a handful of roughly cut herbs, including lots of sweet basil and Vietnamese coriander on the bottom, topped by a pile of thick sticky rice noodles, a scoop of both finely shaved pig skin and pork meat, a garnish of green onions, and finally a ladle of thick coconut cream sauce.

The noodles are sticky and soft, the herbs add a nice fresh touch, and the gravy is typically sweet and buttery from the coconut milk.



Address: 352 Nguyễn Trãi, District 5, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Open hours: 9 am – 11 pm daily

Prices: 30 – 35,000 VND

2. Bánh cuốn

Banh cuon, which directly translates to rice cakes, are sort of like noodle wrapped, non-deep fried spring rolls, packed full of savory ingredients.

To prepare the recipe for banh cuon, a thin layer of rice and tapioca flour batter is steamed into a noodle like crepe. It's then filled, often with a combination of lightly seasoned minced pork, small dried shrimp, and wood-ear mushrooms, and served with finely shaved lettuce and blanched bean sprouts on the side.

Finally, you can't eat banh cuon without dipping it into sweet fish sauce, known as nuoc cham, the stuff many people say is the lifestream of Vietnamese cuisine, and I personally can't live without chilies.



Address: 11A Cao Thắng, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Open hours: 7:30 am – 10:45 pm daily

Price: A normal plate of banh cuon is 30,000 VND (\$1.38) here

3. Bánh xèo

Sort of like a crepe, and sort of like a Thai oyster omelet, a Vietnamese banh xeo is a crispy savory snack that's a favorite for many. Just like banh mi sandwiches, banh xeo is a bit of a French inspired Vietnamese culture creation.

A thin layer of batter is fried in a lot of oil, then combined with your choice of ingredients, often including slices of pork belly, shrimp, and onions, then folded over with a handful of lightly cooked bean sprouts in the middle.

Source: Internet

By far the best part of eating banh xeo for myself is getting to dress and garnish each bite with a bounty of herbs and toppings (are you seeing the pattern with herbs and vegetables in Vietnamese cuisine!?).

You can really eat banh xeo however you want, but the common method is to take a few leaves of lettuce or mustard leaves, load in a piece of the golden crispy crepe, top it with some more herbs like sweet basil and perilla leaves, add some chili (or a lot of it), roll it up like a green spring roll, and then dip the entire treat into the sweet Vietnamese fish sauce dressing.



Address: 46 Đinh Công Tráng, Tân Định, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open hours: 9 am – 9 pm daily

Prices: We ordered the giant special banh xeo which was pretty big and pretty expensive at 110,000 VND (\$5.09) – prices are very high here due to fame I think

4. Bánh tráng trộn

Banh trang tron is a relatively recent Vietnamese creation, a snack of shredded rice paper, seasoned with a chili sauce, and filled with herbs like Vietnamese coriander and basil and supplemented with pieces of squid, salty fish, and quail eggs.



Address: 38 Nguyễn Thượng Hiền, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Open hours: 3 pm – 9 pm daily

Prices: 20,000 VND (\$0.92)

5. Súp cua (Crab soup)



Address: 521 Sư Vạn Hạnh,
District 10, HCMC

Open hours: About 9 am – 9 pm

Prices: 20,000 – 30,000 VND

6. Chè khúc bạch (panna cotta jelly dessert)



Address: 521 Sư Vạn Hạnh,
District 10, HCMC

Open hours: About 11 am –
10h30 pm

Prices: 20,000 – 30,000 VND

IV. OTHER DISHES

On the An Dương Vương street or Bàu Sen Market , you can try many dishes as Bắp xào, Bánh Tráng Cuốn, Mực nướng, Bạch Tuộc nướng bla bla ... You can simply point and choose to whatever dishes look good.



Bắp xào – fried corn



Bạch tuộc nướng – grilled octopus



Gỏi cuốn - Soft vermicelli summer roll



Cháo vịt (congee made with duck)



Miến gà



Gỏi bò - Vietnamese green papaya salad



Hen xao sa ot



Bò bía