

Get stuffed

Eating and drinking in Hanoi - 2001

Western food

Alfresco's 23L Hai Ba Trung

Rock 'n' Roll and **BIG** food. Famous for the jumbo ribs. This place also does probably the best Fish 'n' chips in Hanoi and better than a lot from back home. They deliver, but the chips might be a bit soggy by the time they get to you...

Moca Café 14-16 Nha Tho

Hip to the groove old town hang out for the great and the glamorous. Always onto a winner with their Eggs Benedict. Some of the other food is a bit bollocks although they do a mean coffee.

Cyclo Bar 38 Duong Thanh

Favourite with the frogs, but most nationalities are welcome. Duck Livers are superb, the steaks can be a little chewy. The ribs compete with Alfresco's in size and tastiness. Coupled with all the great food you get to sit in a cyclo and look like a prat.

Luna d'autunno 11b Dien Bien Phu

All the best in Italian dining. Great Pasta, great pizza and great Italian people. Particular highlights are Scampagnata Pizza and the Quattro Formaggi Pizza. Plus, they deliver so just add a few mates, a crate of beer and a game of footie on VTV3 Sunday night 9pm - sorted.

La Salsa 25 Nha Tho

All the best in Tapas, good atmosphere and friendly staff. Does a mean Paella once a month by appointment only. They deliver too.

Le Café Des Arts 11B Ngo Bao Khanh

All that's fine in the frog world can be found on a plate here. Occasional singers and performances add a certain atmosphere. The food is good and they do have a fairly extensive wine list.

Il Gril 116 Ba Trieu Street Tel: 8227720

Excellent Italian food on a plate at a price. I've only been here a few times, but I've never left feeling empty, both in my stomach and in my wallet. The restaurant boasts a well

stocked cellar

Le Splendide
44 Ngo Quyen Street
Tel: 8266087

High class French dining, very good food it must be said. You won't find a bowl of pho inside these walls.

A Little Italian
78 Tho Nhuom Street
Tel: 8257812

Bloody enormous fat pizza, topping dripping all over the shop. Basically, if you fancy a bit of Italian, but the wallet won't stretch to Il Gril then this is a good second best. Free delivery service.

Dolce Vita
10 Bat Dan Street
Tel: 8286411

By all accounts this is a rocking place for spot on Italian, one of the best in Hanoi. Do they deliver? They sure do.

Asian

Thai

Tam Tu 'street Thai' restaurant 84 Ly Thuong Kiet

Does great Chicken laab, squid and papaya salad. In fact pretty much all the food here is great. I guess that's why it's so popular and it's much cheaper than the one on Cha Ca street.

Bangkok Hanoi Restaurant 52A Ly Thuong Kiet street

A bit further along Ly Thuong Kiet from the street Thai restaurant this one is going for that bamboo, grass hut type effect. The staff wear Thai costumes and serve up great Thai food, but for my money I'd go for the street one, but if it's pissing it down you can always call in here.

Baau Thai Restaurant 3b Cha Ca Street

Slightly pricey Thai, but the tucker packs a punch in this quiet old town restaurant.

Chinese

Silk Road - Chinese restaurant Daewoo Hotel

Great service, great food at a reasonable price as here you get to eat all you can for around \$12. And as there are around 180 dishes to choose from you are certain to get a proper stuffing. There are two menus including everything you've ever heard of and then some. The Dim sum menu should keep fans of this delicate art happy. I particularly enjoyed the deep fried crabs and that old fave the Peking duck.

Dim Sum Nikko Hotel

There is an excellent dim sum buffet at the Chinese restaurant in the Nikko Hotel on Sundays. It is also very reasonably priced, which is nice.

Japanese

KY - Y

29 Phu Dong Thien Vuong

Pieman's fave hang out for cheap 'n' cheerful Japanese. Downstairs there's an excellent Japanese style bar to prop up. Upstairs you've got a choice of going native on Tatami mats or good ol' fashioned tables and chairs. The manager of this restaurant holds the world record for the number of bows in a single minute. Menu hits - Maguro sashimi, deep fried Devil stinger fish and fish bones. If you become a regular the manager will hit you with a few on the house freebies every now and again. Great place.
NB. I understand this restaurant has moved to Trieu Viet Vuong street

Anh Khoa Restaurant

322 Ba Trieu

Excellent sashimi and sushi, extensive menu. But, it is very expensive compared to the one mentioned above.

Akatonbo

V-Tower, 646 Kim Ma

Friends from the Land of the Rising Sun tell me this is the place to go for a good dose of Japanese tucker.

Chie Restaurant

73 Trieu Viet Vuong

Good, little Japanese restaurant this one and its been here for a long time and is still popular. You'll get a decent dish of Salmon Sashimi here along with a whole host of delicious Japanese nibbles. At the back there is a private dining room a la Japanese style which can accommodate around 8 people. For my money KY-Y is better, but this is a nice alternative.

Benkay

Nikko Hotel

84 Tran Nhan Tong Street

The pinnacle of Japanese cuisine in Hanoi. There is a canteen style dining area or private rooms. This place is not cheap, but the sashimi is as good as you'll get in Japan.

Korean

Hankook Kwan B2 Nguyen Chi Thanh

Kimchi crunchers should alight at this restaurant, very popular with Korean expats from the Embassy just up the road. This is a no-nonsense Korean joint. Fancy getting hammered on Soju? This is the place for you. Bulgogi's not bad and the Kimchi chigae will put a fire in your belly. While not quite the same as Mrs. Kim makes, it'll do for a quick fix. Does a good hearty lunch time Bibimbap.

Nha Hang Seorabyul C6 Giang Vo

Good honest Korean fare here, but the service can be a bit shoddy. For Kalbi lovers you can't always get to cook it on the table, which is a bit of a shame. Basically a similar affair to the Hankook Kwan.

Indian

Tandoor 24 Hang Be

Hanoi's premier curry house - just like home. Extensive menu, including such hits as Chicken Jalfrezi and Dhaal. Reasonable prices and they deliver. The restaurant needs a lick of paint, but it's not bad. They can also arrange a home catering service if you're organising a party and you're too bone idle to cook for your guests.

Vietnamese - Classy

Emperor 18b Le Thanh Tong

Upmarket Vietnamese dining in a superb setting. Many a patron has been heard to say, 'This is the most beautiful restaurant I have ever seen.' And the food's not too bad either, but it's not 'amazing'. Don't forget to bring a fat wallet. To be honest you can get the same stuff on the street at a tenth of the price.

San Ho 58 Ly Thuong Kiet

This place has a good array of seafood as you walk in the door unfortunately the food itself is not that great considering the price. However, they do have traditional Vietnamese music live. If you really want a bit of Vietnamese seafood and you don't want to shell out, you might want to check out To Hien Thanh street which is mentioned later in this guide.

Vietnamese - Comfortable

Cha Ca 31 Duong Thanh

Not the one in the guide book, but a damned sight better. A much-needed move to Duong Thanh street in the Spring of 2001 has boosted not only its popularity, but the standard of the decor. This is the place to enjoy the fresh fried fish with cold noodles, greenery and fish sauce. Friendlier service than the 'famous' one on Cha Ca street.

Quan Com Pho 29 Le Van Huu

This restaurant (like the Pumpkin Café on Giang Vo and Dong Phuong restaurant on Tong Dan) seems to be the way that Vietnamese restaurants are going. They're not as classy and expensive as the Emperor, but the food is great and affordable.

Out of the recent batch of restaurants catering for the middle class Vietnamese consumer I'd say Quan Com Pho is the best. Well located in what is 'street food central' Le Van Huu street. This is a great place for lunch, a relaxed dinner or to introduce friends to the variety of Vietnamese food. I particularly liked the spring rolls, the deep fried soft shell crabs and the fish.

Seasons of Hanoi 95B Quan Thanh

Pleasant restaurant, which almost made it into the 'Classy' section, but the prices are more realistic. Still, if girls in ao dais are your thing, then you'll be happy eating here. The food is just OK, nothing more.

Soho 57 Ba Trieu

This place is basically exactly the same as Seasons only it is more centrally located, but still not quite classy enough to be 'Classy'. It has a pleasant balcony to sit out on in the summer and the ao dai girls are here too. The Fish in a clay pot is great and their Aubergines with a sweet velvet sauce have become very famous.

Vietnamese - It's rough out there

Please note:

Vietnamese people eat early, quickly and sometimes noisily. You should aim to get to the following places before 9pm, otherwise you could be disappointed. Also, realize that hygiene standards are invariably low and occasionally downright disgusting.

Lets face it, you're in Vietnam for a long stretch you've gotta give the local tucker a fair crack of the whip. You might not become a total convert, but you might find a few tasty morsels along the way. Unfortunately, a lot of Expats leave after three years or so having never once tried the real deal i.e. street food.

Below you'll find a few highlights on the street scene and a few indoor affairs too. I am a convert and therefore incredibly biased. So, enough blethering about foreign muck and posh Vina-nosh. Here it is the Pieman Guide to where it's at on the street.

Beef - Bo

Bun Bo - Bun Nam Bo 67 Hang Dieu

This place in the old quarter is the place for your bowl of beef, peanuts and noodles. No problems with the lingo either as there's only one dish and so within a couple of minutes of arriving your tucker's right in front of your eyes.

There are two Bun Bo restaurants right next to each other on this street. The one on the right, as you look at them is the pucker one.

Bo Tung Xeo Upstairs at 47 Mai Hac De (Look out for the Red Cow sign)

Fantastic grilled beef and you get to grill it at your table. This place is an absolute must for all carnivores in Hanoi. It's spit and sawdust, noise and grime all the way, but the beef is some of the best you are ever likely to taste anywhere. Just stick to the grilled beef as the other offerings are not nearly as satisfying. Downstairs does a hearty Pho Bo.

Bo Tung Xeo 12 Thai Ha street

Another Bo Tung Xeo worth checking out is this one just behind the big cinema on the Lang Ha/Thai Ha junction. This doubles as a bia hoi and you can sit outside, probably a better option than the Mai Hac De restaurant in the summer. However, the beef is not quite up to the same standard, although the menu is much more extensive.

Bittet 70 Hoa Ma

A sizzling, piping hot, metal plate of beef, eggs, couple of chips and greens is what you'll get in this joint. There are several bittet places in Hanoi, notably at 4 Ly Thai To. But the Hoa Ma joint is certainly the largest and the most popular.

Pho bo 13 Lo Duc Street

Some people love it and some don't, but if you want to try the genuine article this is the place for the ubiquitous Hanoi beef soup.

There are other good pho street stalls in and around the Lo Duc, Han Thuyen, Le Van Huu area.

Pho Xao Bo Bat Dan Street

Beef and noodles fried up together, dollop of chilli sauce and that's dinner. Basic, but effective. The 'famous' one is on Bat Dan street.

Fish - Ca

Eel soup and Eel with fried noodles

Mien Luon
87 Hang Dieu

Cheap, scuzzy restaurant on Hang Dieu street for a good basic hit of Vietnamese eels. The soup is popular with Vietnamese but to my taste the Eel with fried noodles (Mien Xao Luon) is the winner on this menu. I am reliably informed that similar stuff can also be found at the corner of Ly Thai Tho and Lo Su street.

To Hien Thanh Street

This street is packed with seafood restaurants all selling the same stuff. I usually only go to this one as there's a lot of hassle down this street with people pulling your arms and shouting at you to come to their restaurant. However, I'm sure they all do much the same food and so, whichever one you choose you're sure to leave stuffed and satisfied.

Thuy Sinh 3A To Hien Thanh

Live seafood cooked the Vietnamese way. The salted crabs are excellent as are the cockles and a kilo of Tom Nuong (grilled prawns) can go a long way among friends. Don't expect any fanciness and don't be scared of throwing anything on the floor in these places. The bright neon lighting takes some getting used to, but the tucker is top notch. Generally better and far cheaper than the equivalent in, say, the Emperor restaurant. But don't expect a romantic atmosphere.

West Lake Fish - Ca Tay Ho

Search around West Lake (Tay Ho) and you will find a multitude of places all selling the same kind of stuff. It's definitely worth a visit. Nothing like a romantic evening on the lake, eating catfish, crabs and Chinese medicinal snails while you watch the rats crawling up the trees.

Hai Vuong Quan

One of my faves is Hai Vuong Quan on Duong To Ngoc Van street at the very, very end of the road when it becomes a track. Here you get to eat the usual West Lake stuff only on tatami mats a la Japanese style. Nice array of ruou too.

Phuong Nguyen Quan

Just a little down the road from Hai Vuong Quan you'll find this spot. A massive three tier restaurant, recently upgraded with non-nursery school chairs and fluorescent lights. Scintillating Ca nuong (grilled carp), Stupefying Ga nuong mat ong (grilled Chicken in honey) and screamingly good Khoai Tay (chips). Good place to take a few mates, get pissed and eat loads.

Banh Tom restaurant

On the Duong Thanh Nien 'Lovers Lane' causeway is a popular spot too. 'Famous' for its deep-fried shrimps, hence the name Banh Tom which means errrr... deep fried shrimps. Vietnamese restaurants are not known for their imaginative names. It's a bit naff and the food ain't fab, but after dinner you can nip outside and join the locals for a snog on Lover's Lane...

Thuy Khue street

Thuy Khue street is another one of those streets where the restaurants are all the same. There are six or seven in this area and having tried most of them I would say that Cay Bang does the best food.

Cay Bang

4 Thuy Khue

Extremely popular with Vietnamese, expect to see tables of roaring drunken men and a floor strewn with empty shells and serviettes.

Pork and noodles - Bun Cha

You'll find Bun Cha served all over Hanoi from 11 am - 2pm(ish) lunchtime. Barbecue grilled pork balls in a spicy fish sauce with a mountain of varied interesting greens and a plate of cold noodles all for around 5-8000 Dong. Having tried and tested in the region of 25 ++ different Bun Cha in Hanoi here below are some of the addresses you might want to check out.

61 Ly Thai Tho just south of the junction with Lo Su you'll find one of the more popular Bun Cha hangouts.

20 Ta Hien street, near the Ngoc Quyen end. It's a tiny little front room affair, fantastic Bun Cha. One of the best sauces I have found in Hanoi.

Bottom of Hang Manh in the old quarter. This is the 'famous' one, but it's not that good. In fact, this place is bollocks, compared to a lot of the street stalls knocking out the same stuff,. If a Vietnamese friend recommends a Bun Cha spot they invariably choose this one but the good days went a long time ago.

Hang Da market, near Hang Da street in the old quarter also has a good Bun Cha and many other interesting eating joints. Be warned this place is grubby in the extreme, you wouldn't want to take a hot date here.

The best way to discover your fave Bun Cha is to try a whole bunch of them. They are all slightly different and it's all in the fish sauce. My personal favourite is a women sitting next to a tree on Phung Hung street.

Chicken - Ga

'Street Chicken'

Down the alley opposite Pho Pham Boi Chau street on Tran Hung Dao

Some of the best chicken in Hanoi at this grubby alleyway streetstall. Point at what you want - Wings, legs, and don't forget the livers (Gan) - take a seat and the goods will soon arrive. Some of the best chicken you are ever likely to come across, all washed down with a cool beer from your friendly Fosters girl. The pork ribs are not bad either, also does a great Pho Xao Bo (fried noodles with beef).

Trinh Hoai Duc Street

Just near the British Council there is a whole street of chicken restaurants which are great, but the Tran Hung Dao number is grubbier plus it also boasts the best marinade. However, here you get to sit inside and they also serve potatoes.

Pigeon - Chim

Ta Hien Street

Ta Hien IS 'Pigeon street'. It's packed with restaurants all selling the same kinda stuff. There are a couple of backpackery-type ones, but the rest are wholly Vietnamese. This street was known as the Chinese street many years ago. Good honest and cheap fare.

Pigeon restaurant

11 Ta Hien

Not only pigeons to be had at this place, but they are superb. I guess you could call it Vietnamese style-Chinese food. Crabs and Squid all come highly recommended. They do like to ladle on the oil a bit, but the Chim Quay (Roasted Pigeon) - are succulent, juicy and all in all, a taste sensation.

Careful how you order your 'Chim'. The word has another meaning which may not be quite so appetizing or legal come to think of it.

Snake - Ran

Le Mat Village, Gia Lam

Le Mat Village in Gia Lam **IS** Snake Village and you'll find it just over the other side of the Red river. There are literally lots of snake eateries over there. To be honest they are all much the same, but my personal favourite being Mr. Nguyen Van Duc's restaurant.

A good, fun and inexpensive night can be had at this place. You'll get to see the slaying should you so choose, drink the blood, the live heart, grilled, steamed, stewed and fried snake, snake rice, ground snake bones, snake soup..... You name it and, within reason, the chefs here have done it to the snake.

Each table comes with a very interesting selection of ruou. I particularly recommend ruou ong (Bee ruou) which certainly has a bit of a sting in its tail. Although the proprietors will encourage you to try snakes penis ruou with all kinds of sexual innuendo, the fact is it doesn't taste very good. And after a few shots of it you'll be no use at all to the missus let alone the over friendly hostesses at the numerous Karaoke bars conveniently situated nearby.

Goat - De

Lang Ha Street

And yet another street littered with the same restaurants. Lang Ha **IS** Goat Street. There are four or five fantastic places along this stretch of Lang Ha and I've just listed a couple of them.

Lau De Quan 87 Lang Ha

Good place for a winter Lau De (Goat soup) also, does a mean grilled Goat. And for the adventurous the Marinated Goats Udder is quite pleasant. This place gets really noisy and packed around 6 or 7pm. A great place to introduce friends to the 'real Vietnamese' dining experience. And if you need warming up, then you really should imbibe in a shot of Goats bollocks whisky, sure to put a fire in your belly.

Lau De Loc Tho I 27 Lang Ha

Much the same as the one above and just a little further up the road. A little smaller and lacking in all-important atmosphere, but still an interesting dining experience. This place is otherwise known as 'The bear on all fours with its tongue hanging out in a huge tank of alcohol restaurant'. One of only two spotted in the city so far. It must be said that their ruou ho chua is particularly rank, but then what do you expect if you put a dead cat like creature and a snake in a bottle of rice wine and leave it to soak?

Com Binh Dan

Com Binh Dan literally means 'food for the working people'. So, if you're unemployed you can bugger off somewhere else. If you're a slave to the system, on the other hand, you will be welcomed with open arms. These places are where you will find arguably the best Vietnamese food in Northern Vietnam. They are noticeable by the tables laid out with an assortment of goodies for you can pick from. Eat in or take away - 'Mang Di Ve nghe'

There are so many of these places it would be stupid to even attempt to list them as in just about every area there is one to be found. However, the best are, by all accounts, to be found on **Le Van Huu street**. In fact Le Van Huu street is an all round 'famous' eating street. While **Dang Thai Than street** also has good reports.

Night food

Ton Duy Tan Street

You'll find this street/come alleyway at the end of Hang Bong Street and it's packed with restaurants which keep going for 24 hours. It is also the place the Vietnamese government would like to preserve as the 'street food area' for years to come. The food is good and you can get almost any Northern Vietnamese dish down here. The only hassle is the hassle. There is so much competition that the guys outside the restaurants literally try and pull you off your still moving motorbike and inside their eatery which can really piss you off. Do what I do, find one you like and stick with it and if you go regularly you'll get great service. But, it must be said this street can be a bit of a nightmare.

I haven't listed any restaurants from this street as there are so many, just search one out that takes your fancy. There is one on a corner, which is clean and popular.

Night stalls on Hang Dieu street

on the street next to the Mien luon restaurant.

By day a couple of nondescript shops ply their trade, by night this 10 metre stretch of pavement is home to a variety of street food that is actually on the street. Eel is the popular bite, but Banh Cuon is the one you might want to have a crack at here. Banh Cuon is seasoned porkmeat wrapped in a delicate wafer of rice flour, looks like a sheet of wet paper, dip it in fish sauce and away you go. Very light and so ideal for a quick nibble, but not for a proper stuffing.

Drinking - Bia Tuoi

Bia Tuoi is the more expensive draught beer on offer in Vietnamese haunts throughout the land. Although at around 8-10,000VD a pop you still won't break the bank. Bia Den is the less common dark version of Bia Tuoi. Worth searching out if you're missing a stout from home.

Bia Tuoi 124 Hai Ba Trung

An oldie, but a goodie. Two level Bia Tuoi, very popular with the 'just left the office, gagging for a beer' crowd. From upstairs you get a great view of the traffic below, a must for accident voyeurs. The food isn't bad either; Bo Luc Lac and Muc Xao being a couple of the highlights. Not a bad place to watch the football on VTV3.

Bia Tuoi Long Linh 47 Lien Tri Tel: 8227112

An alternative to the one on Hai Ba Trung street. It may not be as central, but it is more relaxed and more comfortable. There are three levels to this attractive Bia Tuoi and you could quite happily idle away a few hours drinking and eating with friends on the top floor. And there's the added bonus that there are no backpackers. Try the Nem Hai San (seafood spring rolls).

Bia Tuoi PACIFIC 2 Nguyen Chi Thanh

Quite possibly the largest bia tuoi in Hanoi if not the world. You'll find this mammoth drinking den nestled next to Ngoc Khanh Lake near the Daewoo Hotel. Also has some fresh seafood and a lunchtime Calf on the barbie.

Nha Hang 60 Ly Thuong Kiet

Another popular watering hole for those just out of the office with the added bonus of plastic stools on the street. A good meeting spot on a Friday before moving on to bigger, but not necessarily better places. If you get there early enough there is a woman who serves up a mean bit of grilled chicken.

Drinking - Bia Hoi

Fantastic 'street beer' and cheaper than Bia Tuoi at 2000 Dong a glass and served all over the streets of Hanoi. Some very good ones can be found towards the bottom end of Phan Chu Trinh Street and you could always visit 'Bia Hoi land' which can be found somewhere between Tran Thanh Long and Tang Bat Ho, search and you shall find.

Drinking - Ruou

Ruou (pronounced 'zeeoh'). As mentioned in several of the restaurant reviews, ruou is the Vietnamese take on alcohol that embodies the age old Asian belief that consuming something living, disgusting, decaying or harmful turns even the biggest loser into a sexual behemoth for the night. This has never really convinced me, but I have been willing on a couple of occasions to imbibe for the purposes of research. If you like your alcohol in a large jar with something dead inside, then you definitely came to the right country. All ruou come with the same promise of added potency. So often have I heard this that I am now convinced that all local food and drink should come with a 'Sexual satisfaction guaranteed or your money back' sticker.

Tien Tuu Quan 55 Trieu Viet Vuong

For the genuine article this is the spot. This place gets the prize for Hanoi's most interesting tipple.... Check out the bear, yes a real grizzly one, in the humungous vat of alcohol. Legend has it a couple of snifters of that stuff can turn even the most ungenerously proportioned male into John Holmes for the night.... probably does wonders for women too... Nice little spot for a nightcap on the way home to see the missus (or hubby of course) however, it must be said that not many woman have ever seen the inside of this place).

NB. I believe this place has moved to the opposite side of the street.

Quan Nguyen Hoi

Not easy to find, but you'll be rewarded with some fantastic ruou. He 'double-distills' for an extra clean taste. Especially recommended is the deer's antler ruou. But, he has the usual animal penis, seahorse, and ginseng ruou all of which you can find at any old ruou bar. And suprisingly there is reputedly no hangover induced from Hoi's ruou. But, of course I wouldn't have any knowledge about the validity of that statement. A real vina-experience this one.

Quan Ngoc 7A Ngo Thi Nham

A veritable ruou pub with an interesting array of tipples and a friendly landlord. Quite pleasant as ruou bars go with the added bonus that this guy serves up bia hoi too. He has a particularly fine Sea horse Ruou (Ruou Ca Ngua).

Highway 4 5 Hang Tre

The new kid on the block. Is this the way ruou bars are going to go? If so, then we're all on to a winner. Upstairs you'll find a pleasant sitting area with tatami mats, low tables and a great menu which will basically explain ruou to the beginner. At present this is the only ruou bar I know of with a menu in English and an equal balance of clientele, roughly half Vietnamese, half foreign. A little antiseptic as ruou bars go and the drinks aren't quite up to standard compared to the other bars on this list. But, this is a great introduction for the clueless foreigner. Oh, and you can get a decent Lau - big soup dish - there too.

NB. I believe this place has expanded with another branch or two and/or moved to a new

location

Quan Ly
82 Le Van Huu
Tel: 8225276

One of the oldest ruou bars in Hanoi with a vast array of brews packed into a small alleyway bar. Ly's ruou is rather famous throughout Hanoi and you'll often find a few guys nipping in for a dose of medicine on the way home.

Quan Tac Ke
28B Nguyen Binh Khiem

This bar apparently used to be in a classier part of town in a classier establishment. Times are clearly hard as this place is covered in Chinese graffiti and the walls really could do with a lick of paint. However, the reason for coming here is the lizard whisky, ruou tac ke. Apart from a lonely looking bottle of snake and one of Chinese medicinal herbs all you're gonna get served here is the finest in lizard whisky. I find the ruou smooth with a curious afterburn 20 seconds later at the pit of your throat. Recommended for big lizard ruou fans.

Soft Drinks

Mia Da

All over Hanoi in the summer time and a really superb, refreshing drink. Basically squeezed sugar cane and a lemon for 2000 Dong. If you put this in a can and sold it in London you'd make a fortune.

For a shot of this 'Number one summer soft drink' look along Hang Dieu just down from the Bun Bo restaurant at number 67. Otherwise look out for the signs on the street and the cane mangle machines

Coffee

96 Le Van Huu

Vietnamese coffee is strong, if not that sophisticated. A good place to buy supplies for home is Café Mai. There you'll find an Espresso bean together with Arabica, Mocha and specialities from the coffee growing region of Daklak.

Fanny's Ice cream

East side of Hoan Kiem Lake

Fanny's great. Not only gorgeous French ice cream, but also one of the best Espresso coffee in Hanoi. Everbody loves Fanny.

Che

Thai Nguyen Che (tea) is the best, so the locals say. And it is worth getting a taste for this stuff as it can do all sorts of wonderful things for your health. The very best stuff is a long leaf which comes from one of the highest mountains in Vietnam, not easy to find, but it's worth asking a Vietnamese friend to track it down as the taste is quite a step up from the already excellent, bog standard jasmine number.

The other kind of Che can be found during the summer months and is nothing like tea at all. This is more of a dessert and you'll find it on various street corners. It is a mix of soya milk, coconut, black jelly, some kind of fruit, beans and ice. It's quite sweet but, very pleasant on a hot summer day.

Get Stuffed

This is only meant to be the briefest (and roughest) of introductions to the delights of eating in Hanoi. For a much longer list of (mainly popular and/or foreign restaurants) look in 'The Guide' and 'Time Out' or one of the travel guides.

There are many, many other places and many other dishes to sample that I haven't even mentioned; Bun Oc, Mi Van Than, Thit Cho..... the list is quite literally endless. However, included here are some of the places never listed in any guides or magazines and are more often than not only frequented by Hanoians and people in the know. It would be a shame to say you'd lived in Hanoi for a period of time and never tried ruou bimbip, for example.

So, get out and get stuffed.

Pieman
Hanoi, 2001

Sept 2004 update

Places change, close, get burnt down, trashed etc. It's now well into 2004 and over three years since I lived in Hanoi. I have no idea if these places still exist or if they're still any good, or still crap for that matter. So, take this guide with a pinch of fish sauce, but at the same time don't let it put you off checking places out. However, be a dear, and post a comment at **www.noodlepie.com** and let folk know what's hot, what's not blah, blah, blah. If there are enough updates, I'll blog up the lot for readers to chew over.

In the meantime, happy scoffing and get stuffed

Pieman
July 2004