



Returning To Our Roots Asian American Studies 294, Spring 2016



Returning To Our Roots

This anthology is a project of the University of Massachusetts Boston's Asian American Studies 294 course, "Resources for Vietnamese American Studies," in the Spring 2016 semester. It is a collection of recipes, poems, and short stories that students in the class created throughout the semester to express their emotions, experiences, and thoughts on the topics we covered in this course. The entries are divided into themes of war and migration to the U.S., the challenges of resettlement upon arrival, and of what it means to have a sense of "home." These stories are written with love and dedication to our families, loved ones, and to anyone who has desired to retrace their family footsteps, chase their dreams, and find their home.

We owe special gratitude to these individuals for their support throughout the semester: Viet-AID staff Hang Pham, Hung An Nguyen, Thanh Nguyen, and Carro Hua; Vietnamese elder poets Dr. Chung Nguyen and Dr. Thanh Tran; Performance artist, actor, and filmmaker Leon Quang Le; UMB Asian American Student Success Program's Pratna Kem; and UMB Asian American Studies Program Director Dr. Peter Kiang.

Finally, we were honored to share our stories with the Viet-AID after school youth program and listen to the members' thoughtful, beautifully written poems. This anthology is especially dedicated to them!

With appreciation,
Professor Loan Thi Dao & ASAMST 294 class

Lost in Land

Why would they care
To bring a bag of soil?
The meaning of soil,
That depends on the person.
Blood, flesh, bones, sweat, and tears
Generated the high fertility of the land.
Our ancestors
Sacrificed their lives
To explore, defend, preserve, and nurture.
Like the loss of water bottle,
Much is lost in immigration.
My inescapable bond
Unable to come
Is really gone.
No matter where
A part of my body
Always remain in my land of birth.

Written by: Dalena, Anna, Winnie, Hung, and Lily

Những gì ta đã mất

Tại sao họ lại bận tâm
Mang một nắm cát từ quê nhà
Ý nghĩa của nắm cát
Nó phụ thuộc vào chính người đem đi.
Máu, thịt, xương, mồ hôi và nước mắt
Đã xây dựng nên đất nước này
Tổ tiên của chúng ta
Đã hi sinh cuộc sống của họ
Để khám phá, bảo vệ và gìn giữ nước nhà.
Giống như những giọt nước đã bị cuốn mất
Nó đã chảy theo một dòng nước khác.
Những người thân của tôi
Sẽ không thể nào tới
Vì họ đã đi xa mất rồi.
Dù ở bất cứ nơi nào đi chăng nữa
Tâm trí của tôi
Luôn luôn hướng về nước nhà.

Sáng tác bởi: Dalena, Anna, Winnie, Hung, and Lily

Untitled

By Tin Nguyen and Lilly Nguyen

Hỡi anh bộ đội ngày xưa
Mình xanh đôi lá, gương mặt lấm bùn
Hỡi anh bộ đội anh hùng
Hai tay cầm súng, bảo vệ nước nhà
Hỡi anh bộ đội xa nhà
Đi xa anh có nhớ về quê hương
Hỡi anh bộ đội còi xương
Thân anh đau ốm, vì nước no đầy
Hỡi anh bộ đội hao gầy
Đất nước an lành đó là nhờ anh

Vì lợi ích hoà bình,
Bọn họ gào thét vì chiến tranh
Gửi bộ đội ra biên
Đến từ vùng đất có 50 vì sao
Kẻ thù của chúng ta không phải Việt Cộng
Nhưng tất cả là vì chế độ
Bây giờ tôi ở trên một vùng đất xa xôi,
Cầu xin bọn họ đừng bán nơi tôi đứng trên

Kim Khuu
Mily Thanomsaksri
Tiffany Elle
Tin Nguyen Huu
Geraldine Saint Gilles
Le Trang
2/11/16
Group Found Poem

Home

Never forget, the land of birth
Dat nuoc, fatherland or nation
Everything seem so strange
I become a foreigner
Feeling of loss and emptiness
Blood, flesh, sweats and tears
Soil in memory no longer exist
Beneath all changes, same soil remains
Soil of Vietnam has swallowed me
My body will always remain in my land of birth.

Lilly Nguyen



My name is Lilly Nguyen. I'm currently a Sophomore at U. Mass Boston. My major is undecided liberal arts. My favorite hobbies are going out to eat, and buying make up. This Vietnamese American class is important to me because you get to learn about your culture. Plus, it gave me opportunity to get to know more about my family and ancestors.

Pho Recipe

Lilly Nguyen

If someone asked me what my favorite food is, I would most likely say Pho. Pho is a vietnamese traditional noodle soup, that is well known nationwide but a lot of others. Pho is an important meal in Vietnam, because it is served as a known dish.

There are many reasons why I like Pho, the big reason why I like it is because it brings back a lot of memories, different traditions, and our culture. My mom or grandmother would always make a huge pot of Pho on a Sunday for the whole family to come over and enjoy in the morning or lunch. Now, that I live on my own, when I go out to get a bowl of Pho it brings back all those memories. I miss all those gatherings that the family would have on a Sunday, especially in the winter when we would be snowed in.

Pho can also be made in a lot of different ways, and upon others preferences, which makes it unique. Not everybody's bowl of Pho will be the same, we can adjust the flavoring, and the different meats, vegetables that we want. Plus, in different nationalities and cultures, they make it differently. Different nationality, would put a different type of spice in the soup.

Ingredients:

BROTH

- 5 pounds beef marrow or knuckle bones
- 2 pounds beef chuck, cut into 2 pieces
- 2 (3-inch) pieces ginger, cut in half lengthwise and lightly bruised with the flat side of a knife, lightly charred
- 2 yellow onions, peeled and charred
 - 1/4 cup fish sauce
 - 3 tablespoons sugar
- 10 whole star anise, lightly toasted in a dry pan
- 6 whole cloves, lightly toasted in a dry pan
- 1 tablespoon sea salt

NOODLES

- 1 pound dried 1/16-inch-wide rice sticks, soaked, cooked and drained

GARNISHES (OPTIONAL)

- onions, sliced paper thin
- scallions
- bean sprouts
- asian basil
- lime
- ground black pepper
- sriracha sauce

War

By Lilly Nguyen

For the sake of peace
We scream for wars
Send our men overseas
For the 50 stars
My enemy isn't the "Vietcong"
But the system that sent us off
Now i'm on a foreign land
Praying they don't shoot me where I stand

The Journey

by Lilly Nguyen

It all started on a bright early morning, when my husband was getting to leave for war. That's when everything hit me quickly... I'm leaving on a boat to America on my own with my three kids without my husband, what am I going to do... I'm so nervous that my husband won't be there, and i'm also nervous that he's leaving for war for his safety. The kids was not ready for their father to leave. I have many doubts in myself, cause how am I going to raise three kids on my own for a lengthy time while he is gone.

The next day comes, my kids are already packed and ready to do.. My husband left the day before and left me a couple of letters before he left. But I haven't had the time to read them yet, will take them along on the boat so I can read them. My kids are super excited to start a new beginning in another country. As we are arriving I can feel my emotions come out, cause I will miss Vietnam, and it would be awhile before I can come back and visit.

It was a long boat ride... We had finally arrived to New Orleans, and my sister is picking me and the kids up.... My sister was so excited to see me, cause it has been 5 years since we seen each other because she came to America first with her husband.

The first couple of days has been very difficult, not knowing the language, the american culture, area, and what my next move would be. I been looking at apartments because I can't stay here for long with 3 kids with me and my sister's full house. But first, I had to get the kids situated with school. My kids has always been excited to go to school, but now they

Trang Le



have second thoughts because they're nervous. They have been telling me that they don't know the language, therefore they feel like they would be looked at differently.

My oldest daughter, first day of school wasn't the greatest. She came home crying... She felt that she didn't fit into the culture and how the society is set up here. When my kids are down, it makes me sad also. But I told her everything will soon work out in our favor. Without my husband being here, it has definitely been a lot harder on me to raise 3 kids, mentally and financially.

My husband sent me a letter... Reading it made me become so emotional, from him tell how much he misses the family and that he doesn't know when he's going to be able to reunite with us again. I have so many self thoughts, I honestly, don't know how much more I can be able to handle. Everyone back in my country always talked about how going to America is a great opportunity for my family, but everything that has been going on lately, is a downfall.

One year later..... A LOT has changed within the year, I am finally pretty comfortable with the way I am and the family. The kids are doing adapting well at school, and their english is progressing as time goes by. I found a job at the factory, where we package candles. The other big news, is my husband is coming home after a full year finally. After all the stress, everything is coming along, and we as a family can continue this American Dream that we had before we came to America.

My name is Trang Le, and I am currently studying Criminal Justice at University of Massachusetts Boston. I'm third-generation Vietnamese-American. I moved to the U.S. in 2000 at the age of six, and have been reside in Boston ever since. Currently, I'm in my second year of school and hope to graduate in 2018. My family moved to the U.S. in hope of a better future, but another part of the reason was because of my grandfather. Grandfather served as a soldier for the South during the Vietnam's civil war. Thus, his decision to migrate out of Viet Nam was also to escape imprisonment in the "re-education camps." The picture on the cover of the book is to signify our roots, and that we don't lost it. It's also a symbol of old and new culture blending to create something new and wonderful. You can take the picture of me wearing traditional *Ao Dai* as an example. The *Ao Dai* is style in modern design, but still hold the essence of traditional look. There is also a lot of my food pictures on the book cover. Food is essential to our life and culture. It represents our childhood, memories, and our identity.

Hoa Phượng

Hoa Phượng đỏ rơi khắp sân trường
Tiếng trống vang vọng khắp phố phường
Tôi hỏi đời sao tiếng trống quá đổi bi ai
Đời trả lời với tiếng khóc tang thương,
Của người mẹ tiễn con ra chiến trường
Một lần đi la không bao giờ trở lại
Bỏ lại bao nhiêu tiết nủi đau thương
Trang sách hồng không bao giờ thấy tên người nữa
Còn lại chẳng là tên người trên tấm mộ bia
Hoa Phượng vâng nở, nhưng cảnh còn người mất
Tiếng trống vang thây cho lời tiễn biệt người xưa

--Trang Le

Kẹo tơ hồng (kẹo chi)

Trang Le

The food that I pick for this assignment is kẹo tơ hồng (kẹo chi). Anyone who went to school in Viet Nam would know about this snack, because they was widely make near the entrance of school. This snack is considered by many a childhood snack, and one you can't miss trying. Keo Chi did disappear from popular culture for a time, but it just made a re-appearance recently on the streets of Viet Nam. Keo Chi is make of condense, cool down sugar (Which I am going to call caramel sugar). You usually take a proportionate junk out of the whole caramel sugar. (The amount depend on the one who make it) You then shape the caramel sugar into a circle then stretch it out. While stretching out the caramel sugar, you also need to make a circular rotation motion with your hand. You did this while dipping it in cook flour wheat, and keep doing this till the caramel sugar separated into very thin string. You put the string-like caramel sugar on rice paper. The rice paper you use is different from the once you use to make spring roll. The rice paper is smaller and a bit thicker. When you have done that, you can put adds-on like shredded coconut, condensed sweet milk, and roasted peanut.

Once you done with that, fold the whole thing in half and now you can enjoy it. The amount of adds-on is depend on individual tastes.

Aside from being a childhood snack, it also represents my memories as a student in Viet Nam. Eating the snack is more than just enjoyment. It is proof that I had a childhood there. It reminds me that whatever experiences I had there truly existed, not just in my imagination.

Ingredients:

- Caramelized Sugar
- Rice Paper
- Cook wheat flour
- Shredded Coconut
- Roasted Peanuts
- Condensed Sweet Milk

The Hope of Plumeria

By Trang Le

“Stop!! You little brat!!!” yelled a middle-age man.

“Haha, stop kidding old man. No way in hell would I do that!” yelled back a jubilant young man, and in his arms you spotted assorted of fresh fruits and a chicken.

Yes, the young man that just showed us such excellent behavior is my uncle. He is also the fourth oldest child in the family and my grandparent greatest headache. This is his story.

“Hah! I’ve done this million of times. You think I get caught this easily?” said my uncle.

“Not easily but it doesn’t require a lot of work either.” said a shadow that is looming over my uncle.

“(Gulp) Oh...hey mom..how’s the weather today~...ah ha..ha..ha” my uncle replied nervously.

The shadow that just appeared is my Grandmother!! She is probably the only one that can reign in my uncle. Can’t you see the way he looked? Like a balloon just popped. Looks like my uncle is getting an earful from her again.

“Why can’t you be like other men of your age? A lot of your friends are already married, have children, and jobs! I didn’t give birth to you so you become a petty thief. Where on earth have all those lessons of self-respect gone?” Grandmother berating. As usual the only answer she is getting from him is a blank face. My grandmother was about to go into another tirade when my aunt came in and interfered.

“Mom, he is still young and learning. It’s also getting late, so Nam go gather some plumeria near the beach, the funeral house needs them. I’ll go get our ration for this month before the office closes,” said my aunt as she shooping my uncle out the door. I find that action a bit useless because my uncle already jetted off.

~At the Beach~

“Why do she always repeat the same thing over and over again? It’s not like I don’t want to get a job! But she needs to know our current situation too!” my uncle complained as he was gathering the flowers. After a while, he angrily throws the basket away. He sat down the tree trunk and stared at the ocean. While he was feeling aggravated, Mother Nature’s presence could be felt. Once he sat down, a breeze carried the scent of plumeria washing over and approaching around him like a lover’s embrace. Yet, that peaceful moment didn’t last long. Over in the horizon, carrying the scent of regret and death were piles and piles of dreams and hope that washed up on the shore.

"Why even bother..." my uncle said while he pursed his lip. He stood up and resumed his work.

"I guess I got my work cut out for me, we need more plumeria at this rate." my uncle grumbled. He quickly pick out the rest of the plumeria flowers and rushed to the funeral homes.

"Nam! Just the person I'm looking for! I need more Plumeria flowers, we just got tons of new--Oh! You got what I urgently need right now! Thank you! Here is your pay for the day." With that being said, the funeral-home director rushes off to tend to his "new guests". My uncle, without even looking at the money, shoves it into his pocket and headed home.

He arrives back in time for dinner. Uncle took his place on the dirt floors alongside with his siblings. While everyone was chatting happily sharing what they been doing all day, he just stare coldly at the food. The metal tray contained couple of flimsy fishes, some wild vegetables, and half a bowl of rice. He pick up his chopsticks and ate a couple of small bites then excused himself to his room. When my uncle stood up and left, my aunt has wanted to say something to him but my grandmother stops her.

"Let him go for now. I have something to talk to you all. As for Nam, I will talk to him privately later." said my grandmother.

Meanwhile, back at the room, my uncle is not on the bed but he is actually scaling the window to get on top of the roof. He lies down on the roof and just stared into the night. His eyes was unfocused and glazed over, seemingly not a soul there. He just stays like that for a while, until my grandmother calls out for him.

"Nam, your dad come to see me a couple of day ago. He wanted to take you and your brothers across the sea, to find a better future. What do you think about that?" my grandmother asks quietly. She waited a while for an answer but the only response she got was an annoying chirping cricket.

"I know you are on the roof and if you don't answer me I take that as a yes!" said my grandmother.

"Why?...WHY NOW DID HE DECIDES TO RETURN, HE SHOULD CONTINUE PLAYING A TURTLE AND KEEP HIDING IN THAT SHELL OF HIS?!? And the first thing he did WHEN HE FINALLY DECIDES TO RETURN is to run away again! He ditched the family to join in that stupid war that got nothing to do with us! We gain nothing from that dumb conflict! Oh wait...we did gain something. It's poverty with no end in sight! A future of nothing but death, despair, and hunger. I'm sorry, but I don't have that kind of blessing to have such a great dad." My uncle bitterly laughs.

"Nam! Stop! You know your father doesn't want to get involved in the war, he was drafted! He doesn't want to leave us! He have to leave or else the government would

have send him to concentration camp, and most definitely our whole family," snapped my grandmother.

"If he doesn't care for you all, he could have disappeared completely without a word. Nor would he come backs asking me if he can took you with him. He knows the struggle we are facing and that is the more reasons for him to leave Vietnam and take you with him."

"He knows we don't have enough foods, that why he is secretly sending money to our neighbor to let you steal their foods. How on earth do you think those neighbors let you get off so easily along with the foods? And how do you think you got the jobs at the funeral-house? He knows all about our hardship, but he can't openly supported us. All he can do is secretly working in the background to better our life." said my grandmother.

"You are a smart child and I know you also noticed that too. Your little tirade against your father was just a fuss. You want me to openly admitted that your father is still alive and is secretly helping us?" my grandmother replied softly.

"You know me well but that doesn't change the fact that he did leave us for a while to fend for ourselves and I won't go along with his crazy idea" said my uncle.

"I know he left us when we needed him the most, but he has try his best to compensate. As for your reason not for leaving, my guess is that you fear of losing your life."

"Who wouldn't mother?" my uncle questioned.

"But what you fear most is if you die, no one would be able to take care of me."

"..."

"I still have your aunts and I know the ratio of making it to a new world isn't that great. But we as human beings, we need to know how to have hope my son. Only with hope can you live on and create a better future for yourself. Help those souls that got lost in sea to realize their dreams. Live it for them, and live it for us." said my grandmother gently.

"Think about it my son. I'll retire for the night, give me an answer tomorrow. Also, how did you find out about your father deeds by the way?" asked my grandmother.

"Moonless night, perfect to be a thief," replied my uncle.

He embraced the fighting spirit my grandmother passed to him. Which now is passed on to me, and to my future generation to come.

Tiffany Lou



Hello! My name is Tiffany Lou. I'm a student at the University of Massachusetts Boston. I'm currently studying Finance in the College of Management program and will be graduating in 2016. My favorite activities on my free time are to go to exercise at the gym and to do make-up! I believe it is important to educate others on the history of Vietnamese/Vietnamese-Americans because it is often neglected in most history classes. You often learn about the Vietnam War but not the hardships it caused families.

Spring Roll Celebration

By Tiffany Lou

Eating spring rolls weren't just eating any ordinary spring roll. It was a family activity that my family and I would make when we felt like we all wanted to get together. I moved to several different houses before in my life. I lived in about five different houses in the past six years. Never really settling in one house because I knew we were going have to pack our stuff and eventually move again. My parents were just never satisfied by the town we are living in. The dining room in our home was often being abandoned. I don't know why we never used the dining room table, even since I was a child. The only time I remember gathering around it is when cousins, relatives, or close friends came to visit. But in our family we cooked dinner every night but every one of us would either bring our food to our rooms and eat there or eat on the couch in the living room while watching television. Whenever my aunt told me they were making spring rolls a week in advance I get very excited. That means we will be having spring rolls for that entire week. Making spring rolls is the only time our entire family is around the dining room table. I love the feeling of actually sitting down with everyone like a traditional Asian family. This is why I love when my aunt makes spring rolls, oh and they're very tasty too!

Spring Roll Ingredients

- ★ Rice paper
- ★ Rice noodles
- ★ Basil
- ★ Boiled shrimp
- ★ Aunt's special peanut sauce
- ★ Hoisin sauce
- ★ Sriracha
- ★ Cucumber
- ★ Carrots
- ★ Roasted pork with honey glaze
- ★ Lettuce

Mother and Brother

By Tiffany Lou

No place to hide silent and still, the night surrounds
in the forest, the trees washing the horizon.
Beneath the fall of rain and sun,
I don't see anything but mother and brother.
As I tread through the tall grasses, hearing nothing but
Missiles and bombs exploding,
I don't see anything but mother and brother.
Through sorrow and distress
I still see bright lights and clouds and think of
Us at home, in peace.
Now our home is just debris and dirt.
Home is being close to mother and brother.
They are the soil underneath my home.

Không có nơi nào để ẩn, màn đêm lại bao quanh,
Trong rừng cây lá phủ che ánh bình minh.
Dưới những gió mưa và ánh mặt trời
Tôi chỉ thấy mẹ và anh.
Những bước chân qua hàng cò héo cao to,
Tôi không nghe thấy những gì khác,
Ngoài trừ bom và đạn nổ,
Nhưng tôi vẫn thấy mẹ và anh.
Qua những nỗi buồn và đau khổ,
Tôi vẫn thấy ánh sáng và tia hy vọng.
Và nhớ tới gia đình đang ở nhà trong bình yên
Mặc dù nhà tôi chỉ còn mảnh vụn và bụi bẩn,
Nhưng nơi ấy vẫn là nhà vì lúc nào cũng có mẹ và anh.
Những mảnh bụi và đất phủ dưới ngò nhà,
Luôn luôn đem lại cho tôi cảm giác bình yên.

The Boat

By Tiffany Lou

I. I Couldn't Breathe

I remembered clearly it was a Wednesday morning in Cholon, Saigon when I heard the loud booms came down from the sky. Our city was being interrogated by the community of North Vietnam. There were villages that were already destroyed prior from the city, so we got lucky. I can't imagine how all those people suffer from watching their family and community be destroyed by napalm bombs. I never heard any bombs being dropped near our city until that morning. The loud booms left a ring in my ear for several days. I quickly panicked and grabbed my prized possessions from my chest from under my bed. I grabbed my family photos of little brother (Michael), middle sister (Anita), Ma and Pa. After I ran to little brother's room and told him to shelter under the table until I gather ma and pa. I grabbed a little sewed pouch and filled it with dry rice grains. I knew we would need it.

Little brother asked me, "Are we going to stay alive?" I hugged him tightly and said "I will never leave your side no matter what happens. Just promise me you will listen to everything I ask you to do." He nodded his head and I can see his eyes getting glossy. I see Ma and Pa pick up Lucky from the ground as he shivers from shakes of the ground and screaming from outside. We couldn't leave our dog that's been there with us since we were children. He was part of our family. We gathered our last belongings to put in our knapsack and ran outside.

When I first opened the door I have never seen so many paranoid faces, but it was hard to see from the cloudy skies. A wiff of the smoke from the napalms made me choke and gag instantly. I seen numerous children run alone from the bombs nearby, I tried directing the most I can towards the dock for safety. We followed the crowd to the docks near the ocean where people were being evacuated on. The soldiers were getting closer and closer, I heard the sirens from the trucks. I told everyone to hold each other's hands and run to the dock to get on a boat as soon as possible. Everything seemed so surreal to me. Mothers on their knees on the dirt ground as they hug their children covered in blood close to them. I have never had so much anxiety in my life. I felt my heart racing out of my chest and the sprinting and pollution from the bombs didn't help.

As we arrived to the dock, there was a large crowd of people pushing and yelling to get on the boat. It was being directed by police officers, children were allowed on first. I saw one family being pushed into the deep water by the crowd and no one attempted to save them. We finally got second in line after waiting a couple hours, that's when I seen the 23 foot boat awaiting us. There were approximately 250 people crammed onto our boat. We sat in a tight space shoulder to shoulder. I didn't care how cramped we were, I was just happy that we escaped Vietnam.

II. Our Luckiest Night

I would never in a million years picture myself saying "I'm happy we escaped Vietnam." Saigon, Vietnam is my homeland. Why would I

ever want to leave here? I will feel a heavy burden leaving my home where I was raised. Before we got on the boat, a woman tells us, "Be careful with the Thailand pirates out there." Although I was petrified on the boat, I felt secured and safe knowing my entire family is around me. The moon was beginning to turn bright as our boat treads from the dock. We didn't know what direction we were heading, we're going to sail until we see an island in sight.

"I'm hungry big sis" Little brother says.

"I'm hungry too!" Anita says right after.

"We're gonna have to save the rice we have until a little later until we're really really hungry." I told them.

I felt a strike on my heart telling my little brother and sister I couldn't give him food until his stomach was eating itself. Ma always taught me to always feed your younger siblings food before you feed yourself. And to never let your little brother and sister ever feel like they're starving. But I knew I had to preserve the pouch of rice I packed because we had no idea how long we would be out in the sea.

Falling asleep on the boat was difficult. There was very little room to work with and the boat would constantly rock back and forth. I felt very seasick for the first night, I had to puke in the ocean. During sunrise it was finally time to eat for the first time after 24 hours. Everyone was starving. We all passed around a big pot of salty seawater that was heated up by twigs. I took out my pouch of rice and handed poured about 5 grains in little brother and Anita's boiling water.

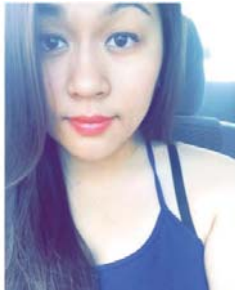
"This is all the rice we get to eat for now, we don't know how long we will be on sea. So we have to save as much as we can." I told them.

That night I fell asleep on Ma's shoulder. I was startled by loud yelling, "Look out there! There's a boat of men trying to follow our boat!" I then remembered the woman telling us to be careful of pirates at sea. I wondered to myself, "what else can go wrong?" This moment this was scarier than the napalms bombs in Saigon.

The boat was being pushed by a motor, we didn't have any oars to speed up our boat. Everyone hugged their family close, and a man told suggested everyone to say their prayers to keep the pirates away. After saying all my prayers as an hour passes by the pirates are still chasing us. Sobs and tears as their parents held their children close to them. It was at a point that we all thought we were going to be doomed. The pirates are going to take all of our prized possessions, jewelry, clothing, and food. I would give up everything much my pouch of rice because my little brother and sister needs it. At one point they got so close to us I could see their wicked gold teeth smirking at us. They had a lot of guns and knives on the boat. Luckily, after 8 hours of chasing our boat, they gave up.

Everyone on the boat cheered and shed tears of joy. I felt like a big weight was lifted off my shoulders, my stomach felt back to normal. After the long and dreadful 3 days of sailing, we finally see a land behind the foggy clouds in sight.

Dalena Nguyen Thai



My name is Dalena Nguyen Thai, and I was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. I am a senior at University of Massachusetts, majoring in Sociology and Criminal Justice. I plan on being involved in a lot of community work, working with different groups of people in our society who needs support and guidance. I choose this path because I am a people person, so I have the skills to communicate and improve the situation for myself and others in our community. I also love being involved in social issues and making a difference. Like many other human being, I enjoy the simple things in life. I like long walks by the beach and traveling to see different parts of the world.

Seafood Hot Pot

By Dalena Nguyen Thai

One of my favorite food in the Asian culture is hot pot. Hot pot refers to several East Asian varies of stew. It consists a metal pot of stock in the center of the dining table where its kept simmering. While around the dining table consist different ingredient that are placed into the hot pot to be cooked. Hot pot is made in all sorts of perspective based on the different countries in East Asia. The only difference between the hot pots are the ingredients and the soup base that's being used. The food that are used to put in the hot pot varies from chicken, pork, beef, seafood, and vegetable. The best part about hot pot is you have options and is able to eat what you want and how much you want.

One of the reason why hot pot is considered to be one of my favorite meal because it tastes and looks delicious. Every time I make it at home or go to a restaurant to have hot pot it would come out exactly the same and would always taste different and better. It all depends on how you make it or how the restaurant makes it. I also love the nature of hot pot because it brings everyone together therefore its perfect for bonding with family and friends. The best time to eat hot pot is during the winter time. Hot pot lovers like myself enjoy it more in the winter time because it warms up the body during the cold months. The best

part of eating hot pot is your able to self service yourself, which means you can eat all you want for as long as you want. I love eating hot pot because it makes my heart and my stomach happy. It brings the joy to my life and my appetite.

The Seafood Hot Pot Recipe

Ingredients

10 cups rich seafood or chicken stock
1 tablespoon ginger, minced
1 tablespoon garlic, minced
6 green onions, chopped finely
4 ounces dried bean thread noodles, soaked and cut into bite-size pieces
1 pound leafy greens, such as spinach/bok choy/ Napa cabbage, chopped into bite-size pieces
8 sea scallops, sliced
4 small squid, cut into rings
1 (16 ounce) package soft tofu, drained and cut into 1-inch cubes
12 shrimp, peeled, deveined and butterflied
8 shucked oysters
Garlic Mustard, recipe follows
Ginger Soy Sauce, recipe follows

Garlic Mustard:

3 tablespoons garlic, minced
2 tablespoons sugar
1/4 cup water
3/4 cup dried mustard powder
2 tablespoons sesame oil
3/4 teaspoon cooking oil
2/3 cup rice wine vinegar

Ginger Soy Sauce:

1/4 cup ginger, minced
2 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon sesame oil
3/4 cup soy sauce

Directions

Place the stock, ginger, garlic and green onions in a large pot; bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes. Soak the noodles in warm water until softened; drain. Cut into bite-size lengths. Cut the greens into bite-size pieces. Cut the scallops into thin slices. Cut the squid into rings. Cut the tofu into cubes. Arrange the noodles, seafood, vegetables and tofu on a large platter. Cover and chill until ready to cook. Reheat the broth to simmering. Set a Mongolian hot pot or electric wok in the center of a table. Pour the broth into the pot and adjust heat to a gentle simmer. The guests use chopsticks or Chinese wire strainers to cook the seafood, vegetables and tofu slices in the boiling water and then dip into the sauce of their choice. Any remaining greens can be added at the end with the noodles to make the soup.

*Note: the success of this dish depends on starting with a full-flavored stock or broth.

Garlic Mustard:

Place garlic in a mortar. Mash with the heel of a cleaver or pestle. Add sugar and stir until it dissolves. Add water, mustard powder, oils and vinegar stirring between each addition.

Yield: about 1 1/2 cups

Ginger Soy Sauce:

In a small mixing bowl combine ginger and honey and stir until combined. Add the sesame oil and soy sauce, stirring between each addition.

Yield: about 1 cup

Mất nước

Đất nước bị chia làm hai, chiến tranh vì quyền lực, sự bảo vệ và sự điều khiển
Họ đã sẵn sàng chiến đấu để dành thắng lợi
Súng bắn, đạn rơi, những chiến sĩ chiến đấu đến giọt máu cuối cùng
Những chiến sĩ bị tra tấn, những người vô tội chết
Và cả thành phố đã bị tiêu hủy
Việt Nam của tôi nay đã trở thành kẻ thua cuộc.
Nhà bị tàn phá, người chết không tìm thấy xác,
Gia đình bị chia cắt bởi chiến tranh
Và bạn bè thì bị mất liên lạc với nhau.
Người đi, người ở nhưng vẫn có những điếm chung
Họ sợ hãi, lo lắng về tất cả những gì đã xảy ra.
Nhìn thấy người chết, những kí ức tội tệ không thể nào quên
Nhưng cũng không thể nào xóa bỏ,
Cũng không thể nào đánh mất,
Và cũng không thể nào quên.

Sáng tác: Dalena Nguyen Thai

Vietnam is Lost

By: Dalena Nguyen Thai

A divided nation fighting for power, protection and control,
Both ready to exchange physical blows until the opposite direction is out of sight.
Guns are being fired, bombs are being thrown, bodies are dropping, bloods are
spilling,
Prisoners are being tortured, innocents are dying, and cities are being destroyed.
Vietnam has now become broken, interrupted, torn and troubled.
Homes are wreck, lives have been lost, families are separated and friends have lost
contact.
Those that left and those that stayed have a couple of things in common, the fear
that still feel like it's near, the feeling of great distress of the mind and body. The
trauma from what they saw and the discomfort memory they once experienced.
A memory that can't be erased, a memory that can't be lost a memory that can't be
forgotten.

The Stamp

By Dalena Nguyen Thai

A bomb strikes and people are screaming for their lives. People are crying
and running in all sorts of directions. There is smoke everywhere in the sky and the
whole village burns down.

As the oldest in the family of 7 children, Thi was old enough to witness what
the Vietnam war was and what it has done to his home. It destroyed years of hard
work, time and investment that his parents have put into it to building a home for
this generation and the future generation. His mother and father was very heart
broken and was mourning because it was a big loss. The house was all they had and
because of this destructive war, they had no choice but to let go of it. His 4
sisters and 3 brothers were too young to understand the reality of what was going
on. All they did was cry the whole time and made things harder then it was.

Discovering the home was destroyed, Thi and his family travel far away from
the war zone to protect themselves from the communist and the destructed
bombs. For the family safety it was the best thing to do at the time. After
traveling for days, they found a village with a few people who also escape and now
is living there. Settling in the new location was very hard for his mother and
father. They tried their best to act like nothing is wrong so it doesn't overwhelm

Thi and the rest of his siblings. They went on with their lives and did their daily routines until it was time for them to relocate again.

In order to eat his family had to go out and buy food, and pick vegetables from a garden nearby. Thi decided to go fishing at the river near his temporary house to see if there was any luck of bringing home fresh organic fish for the family. While he was fishing he met a boy name Cung who was around the same age as Thi. They were both 14 years old and went through the same struggle of relocating. They would meet each other everyday at the river to fish and from there they built a tight bond. They were no longer strangers to one another but they became the best of friends. They did not only fish together but help one another find ways to provide for the family. When they had free time, they both would play cards, climb trees and tell stories to one another. By keeping themselves busy with house duties and free time, it was a way to keep them distracted from the war that was going on in Vietnam.

One day after fishing for hours, Thi and Cong saw a boat on the other side of the river. They got curious and walk over to see why so many people were going on the boat. When they got there, they were pushed and rush into the boat with a bunch of strangers. They had no time to ask why people were leaving or where they were going. Everyone was pushing them onto the boat and screaming to leave. As

the boat drift off into the water, they realized that they have become boat people who left Vietnam and their family behind.

Its been 4 days since they've been on the boat. The sun was beaming, and everyone was sweating. Everyone was hungry and dehydrated from not having enough fluids. Nobody thought about carrying food or water on this boat, all they carried was themselves and their family members. Those people who brought the resources were willing to share because everyone was in desperate need. Thi and Cung worried that if they don't get to shore, they will soon run out of resources. They were also afraid that this boat might not make it to shore due to it being so small. It was overcrowded and everyone was cramp in every corner of the boat. Thi told everyone on the boat to hold hands and pray, pray that we will make it to shore alive. Everyone then decided to hold hands and pray to the lord, pray that he will guide this boat in the right direction. All Thi had left was hope, and he wanted everyone else to have it too. Having hope was the only way to stay calm.

After days of being on the boat, they finally made it to shore. They made it to the shores of the Philippines, where they were welcome by the refugee camps. As they got off the boat, everyone ran and drag themselves from the water onto the sand. They were then required to get in line to be check and stamp for their identity. Soon everyone was located in a small tent where they share it with other

families. Thi and Cung were able to stay together in a small tent with another family. The family was very nice and treated them like they were their own children. Seeing this family everyday made Thi very sad because it made him miss the family he left back home. For Cung, it wasn't easy either but he wasn't the type to express his feelings like Thi. He keeps a lot of things to himself because he doesn't want to come off as weak but strong. When Thi mentions anything about his family, Cung just smile and stay quiet. When Cung doesn't speak about his family, it makes Thi think that Cung doesn't miss or care about them. But in reality he does, he just doesn't want to worry about his family too much because it might distract him from relocating and dread the whole escape process.

As the days went on, Thi and Cong was able to experience the grounds of the refugee camps. There was a lunch room where everyone had to get in line to get served. There is an education center where they were taught to read and write in English. There was also employment for those who wanted to earn a little money for themselves. It was another world out here in the Philippines because everyone was all to themselves or their family. The people, the location, and the whole environment was different from Vietnam. It took Thi and Cung some time to adapt to a new place especially when they've been in Vietnam all of their life.

After a couple of days of adaptation, a mailman came to the camp and told everyone to meet near the shore. When everyone came to the shore, the mailman announce that he would mail any letter to Vietnam for those who want to each out to their families. He said they had one day to write the letter and he will come back tomorrow to pick them up. This announcement made many people happy because it was the only way to contact the family members that were left behind.

Cung then started to write a letter to his family, as Thi watches him. Cung asked, "Why don't you write a letter to your family?" Thi looked at the ground and said, "I can't. I've never been to school so I was never able read or write. My family was too poor and wasn't able to provide me an education." Cung smiled and said he will help him after he was done writing his. Thi didn't want to bother him but if he was willing to help, Thi will take that offer.

Dear, Mom & Dad,

It's me Cung, I know you must be very worried about me. But I wanted to let you know that I escaped on a boat and fled out to a refugee camp in the Philippines. I am safe and I can be the first to say that I survived the boat journey. I didn't mean to leave the family back in Vietnam, but I was destined by fate to be where I am. I don't know what god has in store for me but I won't know until I find it out on

my own. I will continue to write letters so you'll hear from me often. Take care of the family, take care of my brothers and sisters and I hope one day soon, we will unite again.

I love you Mom & Dad,

Cung

Dear Mom & Dad,

It's me Thi, your oldest son. You must be very worried about me. You must now know I have escaped on a boat with the next door neighbor boy, *Cung*. I write this letter to you guys to let you know that I am alive and safe. I am very sorry for leaving you behind. I wish you could have come too but it was so sudden. I feel guilty, sad and lost without you and my siblings. I write this letter as proof that I am still alive and you don't need to be worried. I will try to write as many letters as I can, so I will say good-bye for now only.

I love you Mom & Dad,

Thi

After *Cung* wrote a letter from himself and a letter for *Thi*, they waited until the next day for the mailman. Once he picked the letter up and left, a bunch of American people came to the camp. Nobody knew why they were here and what they were about to do. As everyone got to the shore from their tents, the Americans announced that they would be doing interviews. *Interviews with every individual to see if they are qualified to come to America.* They said some will leave the camp and some will stay here until they relocate somewhere else. *Thi* was very nervous, he couldn't believe he's about to be interview and have a 50/50 chance of coming to America. *Cung* on the hand thought if he was accepted to go to America, that would mean he would be farther from his family. But if it means starting a new life and coming back for his family one day, he's willing to take that chance.

After the announcement was over, everyone being to get in a line to be interviewed. Those who were interview and got accepted got a stamp on their hand, those who didn't pass the interview received no stamp. As the line got shorter and it was getting to their turn, they began to get more and more nervous. *Thi* was interview first and he was in there for some time. *Cung* became anxious because *Thi* was taking too long. When *Thi* finally came out, he smiled and showed *Cung* the stamp of approval.

Now it was Cung's turn to be interviewed, and his hands were shaking. He was stuttering on every question they asked of him. Cung did not get the stamp. He walked out of the interview room crying and felt ashamed. Ashamed that he wasn't able to go to America, start a new life and come back for his family. He was very disappointed in himself and ran off to his tent and cried. Thi ran after him and did all that he could to make him feel better. Cung was the closest friend he had on this journey. He told Cung that even though he got the approval he would not leave him behind. Cung argued and told him don't hold back because he didn't get approved.

As Cung continued to cry, Thi looked at the stamp on his hands. He realized the stamp was still wet, so he took Cung's hand and pushed it against his. Thi then said, "You no longer have to cry because you're coming with me." Cung replied, "What happens if they find out?" Thi was confident that Cung would make it to America with him as long as he had the approval stamp on his hand.

After the interviews ended, those who got approved had to get in line and get on the plane to come to America. Thi and Cung waited in line with everyone else but Cung was worried that they might get caught. As Cung approached the plane, his hands were sweating, so the officer thought the stamp was smeared from his sweat. He got on the plane with Thi.

Cung was so grateful that Thi sacrificed his freedom to have him come to America with him. If it wasn't for this friend, he would still be stuck at the camp. As the plane began to take off, they both looked out the window and said to each other, "We made it."

Winnie Nguyen



Hi, my name is Winnie Nguyen. This is the fourth semester that I have been at University of Massachusetts Boston. My major is Finance because I want to work as a financial analyst in the future. What I am studying is a study of how money is managed and the actual process of acquiring needed funds. For this semester, I took the course Vietnamese American Resources because I'm a Vietnamese International student, and I also want to learn more about Vietnamese American Resources themes that were hidden when I was studying in Vietnam. After taking this class with professor Loan Dao, my knowledge about Vietnamese American has been enhanced throughout all the short stories, poetry, movies, and memoir that I have seen and watched in class. I think this course is very helpful for me to understand more about Viet Kieu and their lives in the United States.

Banh Trang Tron

By Winnie Nguyen



To some Vietnamese people, *banh trang tron* is just a normal street food in Saigon, but to me, it is my special food. When eating *banh trang tron*, it reminds me of my childhood memories. I still remember the image of a woman with her basket of *banh trang tron* waiting in front of my school gate. After hearing the school's drumbeat to end class, I always ran as fast as I could to get in line for my favorite food. The faster I ran, the less time that I needed to wait. Each *banh trang tron* package is not expensive, it is about 10,000 vnd (~50 cent). Therefore, students can afford to buy it easily. There are many ingredients or food options that we can pick from, such as dried squid, dried shrimp, beef jerky, mango, quail eggs, or vegetables. All of them mix together with rice paper and different sauces to create a very delicious food as its name: *banh trang tron*. I have a fun☺, but also a bad memory☹ with *banh trang tron*. When I was in middle school, my mom usually gave me 10,000vnd to buy breakfast. But I didn't do that because I spent her money for my *banh trang tron* every day. It meant that I skipped my breakfast in order to have money for my favorite food.

One day, my stomach got hurt badly, and I had to go to a doctor. She told me and my mom that my stomach got damaged because I hadn't eaten breakfast for a long time. Thanks to the problem, though, my mom gave me *more money* to

buy breakfast as well as *banh trang tron*. From that, I could have a healthy breakfast in the morning and enjoy my *banh trang tron* in the afternoon☺. Now, it is very difficult for me to find *banh trang tron* in the U.S., but whenever I eat *banh trang tron*, it still reminds me of my beautiful childhood in Vietnam.



This is me with my favorite food "Banh trang tron"

I know that after reading my story, some of you will be curious about how to make a very delicious *banh trang tron* as I described. And here it is!!!! Today, I will show you how to make it.

Recipe for *banh trang tron*



Ingredients:

1 green mango (200g)
200g beef jerky
2 tablespoons dried tiny shrimps (is absorb spices)
Rice paper
1 cup of chopped Vietnamese mint (rau ram)
5 - 6 quail eggs, boiled and peeled
Sauce: 1 tablespoon soya sauce + 1 tablespoon red vinegar + 1 teaspoon sugar
Chili paste/sauté
Dried squid (is absorb spices) - Optional.
Crushed peanuts (optional)

Process:

Step 1: Peel off the cover of green mango, slice into long pieces.
Step 2: Cut rice paper into long pieces.
Step 3: Tear small beef jerky. Making sauce: mix well soya sauce + sugar + red vinegar together. This sauce is the important part to create an amazing food.
Step 4: Mix sliced green mango + beef jerky + dried tiny shrimp into big bowl.
Step 5: Add more quail eggs and rice paper into bowl.

Step 6: Next, add more chili paste/sauté (depend on your flavor) into the sauce in step 3. Mix well, season again to suit your flavor. Then, pour into mixture rice paper, mix them together with chopped rau ram and peanuts.

Finally, your dish is ready to serve. Eating immediately after you mix rice paper w the sauce is perfect. And if you still do not eat this time, do not mix them together. Here is my tip to create a delicious snack for yourself and family. How do you feel about one of **Easy Vietnamese Recipes** like this one? It is really interesting, right? Hope you love it and Good Luck for your Cooking.

Resources: The recipe was taken from:

<http://www.vietnamesefood.com.vn/vietnamese-recipes/easy-vietnamese-recipes/mixture-rice-paper-recipe-banh-trang-tron.html>

If you think the writing recipe is very difficult to follow, I have found a video on YouTube that show you how to make *banh trang tron*. This video is English version, so don't worry if you are not Vietnamese☺

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eS5OHLx9cOE>

Gánh nặng người lính

Balô trên vai, tay vác súng nặng
Đi từ vùng này sang đến vùng kia,
Chân cứ bước đều dù bao hiểm trở
Gánh nặng nước nhà có ai hiểu chăng.
Nặng ở đây là gì có ai hay?
Dù bao giông tố vẫn ngày ngày đi
Nặng không phải xách nặng mà ra
Nặng ở đây là từ chính tâm hồn của ta
Đạn rơi bom nổ khắp chân ta
Ngày đêm ta vẫn thức canh nước nhà.

Sáng tác bởi: Winnie Nguyen

The burdens of soldiers

Packs on shoulders, heavy guns in hands
He walked from this place to that place,
His foot step by step going through dangers
Who can understand the burden of the country.
Burden. What is burden?
Despite dangers, he kept going
Burden here is not the meaning of weight
Burdens are come from his spirit
Bullets and bombs were falling around his feet
He was still guarding even day or night.

Written by: Winnie Nguyen

Câu Chuyện Của Người Mẹ (Mom and her daughter) by Winnie Nguyen

Chiều tháng tám năm Mậu Thìn (1988), trời thì đang đổ mưa rất to. Từ xa, tôi đã thấy bóng dáng của đứa con gái bé nhỏ của mình chạy vội về nhà mà không có gì che chắn. Chỉ đến khi con bước vào nhà, tôi mới nhận ra rằng nó đang khóc. Những giọt mưa đã che mờ đi những giọt nước mắt của nó, khiến tôi không thể nào biết là con mình đã khóc từ xa. Con tôi, bé Nhã, đến tháng 11 là nó sẽ tròn 12 tuổi. Con bé học giỏi lắm, lúc nào cũng đứng nhất nhì lớp. Nhìn nó thật hồn nhiên, lúc nào cũng chỉ vui cười và quạu phá với lũ bạn. Thế nhưng chính ngày hôm đó, chỉ vì tôi mà con bé đã bắt đầu có những suy nghĩ mà tôi không thể ngờ tới. Nhã vừa khóc tút tít vừa quay sang nói với tôi:

Mẹ ơi, mẹ cho con đi vượt biên đi. Con không muốn học ở đây nữa đâu. Con học giỏi môn toán như vậy mà nhà trường không cho con đi thi môn toán ở tỉnh chỉ vì bố mẹ từng làm cho chế độ Việt Nam Cộng Hoà.

Tôi ôm lấy con, nghĩ thầm: "Chả lẽ mình sẽ là một trở ngại trên con đường học tập của con mình sao?"

Mẹ ơi, mẹ. Mẹ đang nghĩ gì vậy? Mẹ cho con đi vượt biên đi. Con Hương bạn con nó vượt biên với anh nó thành công rồi mẹ ạ, nó mới gửi thư về cho mẹ nó đó.

Tôi thì thầm trả lời:

Tại sao con lại muốn vượt biên? Tại sao con lại có cái suy nghĩ như vậy? Con có biết là vượt biên nguy hiểm lắm không.

Con bé vẫn cứ nét mặt hồn nhiên, hỏi tôi:

Vượt biên có gì phải sợ hà mẹ? Con Hương nó vượt biên có sao đâu. Nó bây giờ còn được học trường Mỹ sướng lắm kìa. Con muốn đi Mỹ học với nó lắm, mẹ cho con đi đi.

Không hiểu vì sao mà nó cứ khăng khăng đòi vượt biên. Trong khi nó không hề biết rằng vượt biên là một nỗi ám ảnh với tôi. Tôi hôm đó, tôi không thể nào ngủ được vì trong đầu luôn nghĩ tới hai từ "vượt biên" được nói ra bởi chính miệng con bé. Rồi mọi kí ức lại trở về với tôi. Tối hôm đó, trời tối đen như mực. Xung quanh tôi chỉ toàn là

biển và biển. Tiếng gió đêm và tiếng sóng biển chưa bao giờ khiến tôi sợ hãi đến thế. Chỉ có chiếc thuyền vượt biên của tôi mặc bao sóng gió mà tiếp tục đi trong biển đêm. Những con người ngồi đây cùng với tôi, có người thì co rún trong cái gió lạnh, có người thì nằm ngất đi vì quá mệt và đói, có người thì lúc nào cũng khóc lóc vì lo sợ sẽ bị Cộng Sản bắt. Thế là đã hơn một đêm lên đênh trên biển. Mọi thứ như trở nên bất lực với tôi ngay lúc này. Tôi không thể làm gì để có thể quên đi nỗi sợ này. Tôi cố gắng nhắm mắt để qua ngày nhưng cứ nhắm mắt thì tiếng sóng biển dữ dội cùng tiếng người khóc xung quanh khiến tôi càng thêm sợ hãi. Một đêm trên biển tôi có cảm giác như là một tháng trời. Tôi chưa bao giờ cảm thấy biển bao la và đáng sợ đến như vậy. Khi tôi đang dần ngủ thiếp đi vì quá mệt thì tôi bỗng nghe một tiếng hô lớn từ một người đàn ông:
Dậy đi, chạy lên khoang trên nhanh lên, thuyền sắp chìm rồi.

Tôi cứ mơ mơ màng màng tưởng mình đang nghe nhầm gì đó. Nhưng đến khi thấy mọi người nháo nhào chạy lên trên mũi thuyền, tôi mới biết là những gì mình nghe là chính xác. Chồng tôi vội lay tôi dậy và nói:

Em ơi dậy đi, mình phải chạy lên trên nhanh lên, thuyền sắp chìm rồi.

Khi lên trên mặt thuyền tôi mới biết là chiếc thuyền có một vết nứt lớn, nó khiến nước tràn vào thuyền và khiến thuyền của tôi chìm dần dần. Với kinh nghiệm nhiều năm đi biển, thuyền trưởng đã rất cố gắng gieo neo vào một cái đảo hoang gần đó. Khi đó trời cũng đã dần sáng, mọi thứ trở nên dễ dàng hơn khi di chuyển từ thuyền vào đảo. Tất cả mọi người lúc này chỉ biết khóc lóc la lớn cảm ơn trời đất đã cứu mạng họ. Và tôi cũng vậy, lúc thuyền gần chìm, tôi chỉ biết đọc kinh để mong không có chuyện gì xảy ra. Trên đảo hoang, chúng tôi chỉ biết chờ đợi có chiếc thuyền khác ghé qua giúp đỡ. Đến giữa trưa, thật may mắn khi có một chiếc thuyền đánh cá nhỏ ghé qua hỏi thăm. Khi biết tin thuyền tôi bị chìm, họ chỉ đồng ý giúp đỡ chúng tôi trở về đất liền vì thuyền của họ không đủ lớn để vượt biên. Cứ ngỡ như qua kiếp nạn này thì công trình vượt biên sẽ không còn xa, nhưng nào ngờ qua bao vất vả, chúng tôi lại phải trở về với đất liền. Những nét mặt thất vọng đã bắt đầu hiện rõ trên mặt của rất nhiều người. Nhưng có điều tôi không thể ngờ rằng, đã có vài người thả nài xuống biển từ từ chứ nhất quyết không trở về lại đất liền. Lại một đêm nữa rờn rã trên biển để trở về đất liền. Trong lòng tôi vừa lo sợ và cũng vừa tiếc nuối. Cứ ngỡ một cuộc sống tốt đẹp sẽ được mở ra khi vượt biên thành công, nhưng giờ đây tôi lại trở về một nơi đã không

còn là nhà của mình nữa. Sau ngày hôm đó, tôi đã biết thế nào là sợ và tôi cũng đã biết thế nào là sự thất vọng tột cùng. Trải qua bao nhiêu sóng gió trên thuyền, tôi mới nhận ra rằng cuộc sống của mình đáng quý biết bao và tôi không muốn mất nó một lần nữa. Một năm sau đó, tôi mang thai bé Nhã. Từ khi có bé Nhã, cuộc sống của hai vợ chồng cũng khá hơn nhiều. Với lại thấy con bé còn nhỏ, nên từ đó tôi và chồng cũng không còn mong muốn đi vượt biên nữa. Nhưng đến ngày hôm nay, hai từ đó đã lại một lần nữa hiện về trong tâm trí tôi từ chính đứa con gái bé bỏng của mình. Rồi bỗng nhiên tôi giật mình bởi cái lay nhẹ của chồng, chồng tôi nói khẽ:

Em bị sao vậy? Có mệt gì trong người không? Anh thấy em này giờ cứ xoay người qua rồi xoay người lại, làm anh cũng không ngủ được luôn.

Tôi định để sáng mai dậy mới bàn với chồng, nhưng thấy chồng hỏi vậy, tôi cũng đành nói ra hết những suy nghĩ của mình.

Anh ơi con Nhã nó đòi đi vượt biên đó.

Cái gì? Em nói sao, con Nhã muốn vượt biên à? - Chồng tôi ngạc nhiên hỏi lại.

Nó nói nó không muốn học ở Việt Nam nữa, ở đây tài năng của nó không được coi trọng.

Nó nói cũng đúng em ạ. Con của người chế độ Sài Gòn như mình thì khó mà thành công lắm. Anh cũng chả biết sau này con gái của mình sẽ như thế nào nữa - chồng đáp khẽ.

Tôi trầm ngâm suy nghĩ về những lời chồng nói, rồi buồn bã đáp lại:

Tội cho con bé quá, hôm qua thấy nó khóc đòi vượt biên, em thấy thương lắm. Nó cứ năn nỉ em cho nó đi. Em cũng không biết sao nữa. Nhưng cứ mỗi lần nhớ lại hôm vượt biên của hai vợ chồng mình, em sợ lắm.

Hay là mình cho con bé đi một mình. Trẻ con nên Cộng Sản nó không bắt đầu, với lại cơ hội thành công cũng cao lắm em ạ. Nhà mình cũng chả khác hơn trước là bao, tương lai con bé chắc cũng chả tốt đẹp gì hơn đâu. Hay là mình cứ thử đi, biết đâu thành công thì lại đổi đời.

Nghe những gì chồng nói, tôi thấy cũng có lí. Nhưng trong đầu tôi vẫn cứ lo lắng, sợ sệt. Tôi nói nhỏ với chồng:

Anh ơi em vẫn lo cho con bé lắm. Lần trước thuyền mình bị chìm, may mắn thoát chết. Nhưng nếu không may xảy ra với thuyền của con bé thì chắc em không sống nổi. Với lại con bé đang tuổi dậy thì, nghe đâu vượt biên gặp nhiều cướp biển lắm, họ hãm hiếp, cướp bóc thì sao hả anh? Em lo lắm.

Chồng vội vã khuyên tôi:

Đừng lo em, anh biết thằng bạn chạy thuyền vượt biên, nó nói thuyền nó chắc chắn lắm. Với lại nó cũng biết đường để tránh tụi cướp biển nên em đừng lo. Nó đi mấy chuyến rồi, đều trốn lọt hết, không sao đâu. Nó nói nếu muốn đi thì cứ nó nói một tiếng, nó sẽ giúp nhiệt tình.

Anh nói thật chứ, vậy thì em cũng an tâm nhiều rồi. - Tôi đáp lại chồng.

Vậy em tính sao, muốn cho con bé đi không?

Anh cứ để em suy nghĩ thêm.

Chiều hôm đó, tôi lại ngồi ngoài cổng chờ bé Nhã đi học về. Tôi trầm nghĩ, liệu ngày mai tôi có còn được nhìn thấy con bé đi học về nữa không. Nước mắt tôi bắt đầu rơi. Tôi chưa bao giờ có một vấn đề khó giải quyết như vậy. Tôi nữa muốn cho con đi, nữa thì không. Tôi muốn con có một tương lai tốt đẹp hơn, được sinh sống ở một đất nước phát triển. Nhưng sẽ ra sao nếu như trên đường đi con gặp vấn đề gì. Từ xa, tôi đã thấy bóng dáng bé Nhã, nó chạy thật nhanh và sa vào lòng tôi hỏi:

Mẹ ơi, mẹ cho con đi vượt biên nhé?

Tôi ôm con khóc và thù thì:

Mẹ xin lỗi con nhé, mẹ sẽ cho con đi nhưng bố mẹ không thể đi chung với con được.

Không sao đâu mẹ, con lớn rồi. Bạn con nó cũng đi một mình thôi, có gì đâu. - con bé hồn nhiên trả lời.

Tôi giờ mới hiểu, hình như bé Nhã không biết là chặng đường vượt biên khó khăn như thế nào. Nó cứ nghĩ đó là đi nước ngoài nên nó vô tư lắm. Thấy con như vậy, tôi cũng không muốn làm con sợ nên chỉ khuyên con bé:

Vượt biên khổ lắm con ạ, con phải cẩn thận. Ráng nghe lời chú Đức, bạn của bố nha con.

Chú Đức chính là người sẽ hứa giúp đỡ hai vợ chồng tôi. Chú hay ghé nhà chơi, và cũng thương bé Nhã lắm. Nên lúc nào chú ghé nhà là đều có quà cho con bé, nên nó cũng quý chú lắm. Tôi đang suy nghĩ thì nghe con bé hỏi nhỏ:

Chú Đức cũng đi vượt biên nữa hả mẹ.

Không con, chú Đức làm trên thuyền, chú sẽ giúp con đi tới đảo. Rồi từ đó, con phải tự mình đi một mình. Con có đi được không?

Con đi được mà, mẹ đừng lo. - con bé thân nhiên trả lời.

Ở nhà bị té hay bị đánh là con bé đã la rầm trời. Nhưng không hiểu vì sao hôm nay nó gan đến vậy, ngay cả đi vượt biên nó cũng không sợ. Có lẽ do ước mơ về một tương lai tốt đẹp đã tiếp thêm động lực rất nhiều cho con bé. Tối đó, tôi và chồng gói một túi đồ nhỏ cho con. Tôi đã may sẵn một sợi dây chuyền vàng vào chun quần của con bé, để phòng ngừa bị cướp, bọn nó cũng không tìm thấy. Tôi gọi bé Nhã lại dặn dò:

Mẹ may cho con cái quần này, trong đó có sợi dây chuyền vàng, đến đảo con cứ tháo ra bán mà lấy tiền mua đồ ăn nhe con. Nhớ đừng cho ai biết nhé. Mẹ cũng ghi tên tuổi và số hiệu quân đội của bố và mẹ dưới áo của con, tới đảo gặp lính Mỹ, con cứ đưa cho họ xem là được con nhé. Tới nơi, phải gửi thư về cho bố mẹ nha con. Thôi bây giờ con thay bộ đồ này đi rồi bố mẹ dẫn con ra tàu.

Con bé tuy nhỏ nhắn nhưng khôn lanh lắm, tôi dặn gì là nó nhớ rõ, rồi con trêu tôi đọc lại những gì tôi dặn nữa chứ. Nhìn thấy con vui cười như thế, lòng tôi cứ thắt lại vì không biết rằng bao giờ mới được thấy nụ cười bé nhỏ của con mình nữa.

Tối đó, chồng tôi chờ cả nhà ra bến tàu. Đến đó, chú Đức đã vội chạy ra giục hai vợ chồng tôi:

Anh Tiền, chị Lý, đưa bé Nhã cho em lên, thuyền sắp đi rồi.

Thế là anh ta vội nắm tay bé Nhã lôi đi và cũng không quên nhủ nhủ lại:

Anh chị đừng lo, có em chăm sóc bé Nhã rồi, tới nơi bình an rồi em sẽ báo cho anh chị.

Nhìn con cứ ngày càng xa dần tôi, lúc này vợ quá tôi còn chưa kịp nói một lời nào với con. Ngay cả chữ "mẹ yêu con" tôi còn chưa kịp nói thành lời. Tôi cứ đứng đó đến khi không còn nhìn thấy bóng dáng của chiếc thuyền nữa tôi mới chịu về.

Ngày qua ngày, một tháng rồi đến hai tháng, tôi vẫn chưa nhận được một tin tức nào từ con. Tám tháng sau đó, mọi thứ dường như vỡ òa khi anh Đức ghé nhà tôi, đưa cho tôi một lá thư nói là của bé Nhã. Đọc thư tôi mới biết là con bé đã tới Mỹ an toàn. Nó được một gia đình người Mỹ nhận nuôi, được cho đi học tiếng anh và được ăn uống đầy đủ. Con bé nói nó nhớ bố mẹ lắm. Nó còn hỏi tôi khi nào mới qua Mỹ với nó. Đọc đến đây, nước mắt tôi đã bắt đầu rơi vì những lời con bé nói. Trước khi nó đi, tôi đã hứa là sẽ đi chuyến sau và sẽ gặp nó ở đảo nhưng tôi đã không làm được. Tôi vừa vui vì con đã bình an, nhưng cũng cảm thấy có lỗi vì không thể vượt biên được nữa. Thấy tôi như vậy, anh Đức liền hỏi:

Con bé bình an rồi sao em lại khóc. Nếu em nhớ nó, anh còn một chuyến tàu ngày mai, anh sẽ giúp hai vợ chồng qua Mỹ với con bé.

Tôi âm ừ trả lời:

Em cố thai rồi anh Đức ơi, thai được sáu tháng rồi, em không dám đi anh ạ.

Thì ra là vậy, chúc mừng hai vợ chồng em nhé. Thôi thì cứ đợi con bé nó lớn, rồi nó bảo lãnh hai vợ chồng vậy.

Giờ đây, khi nhìn thấy con mình hạnh phúc chơi đùa cùng với những đứa con của nó, tôi mới thầm trách mình tại sao không thể ở bên cạnh con bé chăm sóc nó khi nó đang ở tuổi ăn, tuổi lớn. Nhưng lúc nào cũng là câu nói đó, con bé đều nói nó không hề trách tôi, vì nhờ có sự quyết định của tôi ngày hôm đó, nó mới có một gia đình hạnh phúc và sung túc như thế này ở Mỹ. Nếu cho nó lựa chọn một lần nữa, nó vẫn sẽ chọn đi vượt biên dù cho có bao nhiêu khó khăn và thử thách đến mấy.

HẾT

Pacharamon Thanomsaksri (Mile)



My name is Mile. I am from Thailand and I am nineteen years old. I am a junior, studying International Management at University of Massachusetts Boston. My pictures for the cover of the book are at the left top of the tree. First is the picture of my family and my grandfather, who is an idea of my anthology. Second is a picture of Thai food, "Bua Loy." Last is the picture of eyeglasses, which reflect to my grandfather and food picture. When three picture are together, it represents that when you look through the eyeglass, it flashbacks to your past and your memories that you may have lost.

Bua Loy

Pacharamon Thanomsaksri (Mile)

Since I do not have a special dish that I like, I asked my close friend what is her favorite dish. My friend doesn't really like to eat the main course much, but she loves to eat dessert. She can have a dessert for 3 meals a day. The dessert that is her favorite is Sticky Rice Balls in Coconut Milk, which we call in Thai as a "Bua Loy". The reason that she like this menu because this dessert refers back to her family. Since she has to travel around the world because she works as a flight attendant, she can be back home once in three months and only 2-3 days. When she was young she sometime fights with her sister and every time they fight, they will not talk for a week. So her mother decides to do something that will make sisters get along again. Her mother decides to make this desert because when she have to do the sticky rice balls it will take lots of time to do. So she will call two of them to help. The way of making this is like we play clay doh. The two sisters have to make the powder doh into the ball shape. While they making it they will forget that they are madding at each other. So every time she misses her family, she will cook this menu.



This is the picture of the dish that I made with my

Bua Loy Recipe

Dough

- 1 cup (100 g.) Glutinous rice flour
- 1/2 cup cooked and mashed taro root, or other colorful juices such as pandan juice or beet juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water, as needed

Sweet Coconut Milk

- 2 cups coconut milk
- 1 cup water
- 3/4 cup chopped palm sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt
- 1/2 pandan leaf, optional

Instructions

For the dough: Mix the glutinous rice flour and mashed taro or squash using your fingers until well mixed. Add water, a little at a time, and knead until a dough forms. The dough should be soft but not sticky or tacky. If it becomes sticky, just add a little more flour and knead until it no longer sticks to your fingers.

Roll the doh either between the palms of your hands or the tips of your fingers so you have little balls. Now is the time to get your kids and friends involved!

When all the balls are rolled, keep them wrapped tightly in plastic wrap if you are not ready to cook them immediately so they don't dry out. Bring a pot of water to a full boil, and while waiting for the water to boil, make the sweet coconut milk.

For the sweet coconut milk: Put the coconut milk, water, pandan leaf, 1/2 cup of chopped palm sugar and salt into a pot and cook over medium heat, stirring until all the sugar is dissolved. Taste and add more sugar as needed. Turn off the heat and remove the pandan leaf.

After the sweet coconut milk is boil, put the cook doh in to it for about 2-3 min. Some people will put the egg too. If you put the egg just crack it into the put while boiling the sweet coconut milk. Do not stir until the egg cook into shape.

Life of War

Pacharamon Thanomsaksri (Mile)

Vietnam is a land of mine.
When the war makes life impossible at home.
Our family head toward what is rumored to be a safe refugee camp.
The camp made us felt safe, but not like our home.
Vietnamese need help on the war.
Some soldiers visit the camp, trying to recruit men.
I lost half of my family because of war.
My brother wants to go home, not fight.
My mother plan to escape and go back to Vietnam.
Vietnam still not safe, but it our home.
At least we will die in our land, not someone else.
We belong to Vietnam.
No matter our home is safe or not, but it's our home.
I believed Vietnam protect us.
Our home and our life belong to Vietnam.

Cuộc sống trong chiến tranh

Việt Nam đất nước tôi.
Mảnh đất nơi chiến tranh tàn phá.
Giờ đây gia đình tôi tới trại tỵ nạn an toàn.
Trại tỵ nạn là nơi an toàn nhưng không giống như quê.
Việt Nam cần sự hỗ trợ trong chiến tranh.
Binh sĩ đến thăm trại để tuyển dụng thêm quân lính cho trận chiến.
Chiến tranh đã lấy đi một nửa gia đình tôi.
Anh trai tôi muốn rời khỏi trận chiến về nhà.
Dẫu rằng không an toàn nhưng Việt Nam là quê hương tôi.
Cho dù chết thì cũng chết trên mảnh đất mình sinh ra hơn là nơi nào khác.
Chúng tôi là người Việt Nam.
Cho dù nơi khác an toàn hơn nhưng cũng không bằng quê hương tôi.
Tôi tin rằng Việt Nam sẽ bảo vệ chúng tôi.
Việt Nam là nhà và là cuộc sống của chúng tôi.

The Dragon From Pluto

By Pacharamon Thanomsaksri (Mile)

No one knew that on our planet that aliens are living on it. Pluto is made up of aliens that can transform into anything that around them, and some of them live amongst us. As a child, Jessy would see her mom, Susan, using a mug that had dragon clay design on it. She used this mug everyday. One day, Jessy asked, "Mom, why do you only use this mug? I never see you use another mug." Then mom looks at her daughter, then at the mug. With a soft smile, she began her story:

John was an alien who came from Pluto. He can transform himself to look similar to the people around him. At that time, people on Pluto heard that there will be an attack from Mars. Some of the people decided to leave Pluto but the cost of transportation was very high. There also different spaceships that traveled to many places. John knew he had to escape. He did not care about his appearance or the language he spoke, he just had to restart his life somewhere peaceful.

He decided to sneak into a spaceship since he had no money. He had to stay in a luggage storage room for a month. At that time, he had no food or drink. He was very thirsty and hungry. He can hear his stomach grumbling every night and he felt that his body is dry out of the water. His body started to look thin with no energy. It was a hard time for him but he has to survive. He looked around the storage room and saw that there was some milk for babies and plants that other aliens brought with them.

He felt sorry for them but he had no choice. He sucked out the milk like he had never tasted milk before. The milk was all over his body because he was thirsty. Then he used his hands to absorb the leaf from the plant. He absorbed every single leaf and there was not a single one left.

He said to himself, "I feel sorry for the owner of these things but I need to survive to restart my life. *I need to survive.* I have sacrificed too much already." Then he cried very hard because he didn't know what his future would be. He missed his family and his planet. While he was crying, he thought about his memories when he was younger. He began to focus on the good memories.

After two months, the spaceship got attacked from space pirates. By that time, the spaceship is near Earth. John saw a gravity suit in the storage room and puts it

on to try to board another spaceship. He believed he can't die just yet. There were many things that he wanted to do in his new life. He jumped out of the spaceship and shuts his eyes tight!

After what seemed like eternity, he opened his eyes, and saw nothing around him. The gravity suit seems to be running out of oxygen. His face was turning to green and the sound "beep beep" just go on and on. He cried out again because he thought he would die soon. He regretted not telling his parents he loved them one more time before he escaped.

Suddenly, Tim, a pilot from the other spaceship, saw him and allowed John to climb on his spaceship! How lucky of John! Tim shared with John that they will be landing on Earth.

John wants asks Tim what should he do when he arrive there, "Hey Tim, do you know anyone on Earth? What should I do when we arrive there? I have no one that I know, and I only come by myself."

Tim reassured him, "Yes, I know someone there. I think I can ask him to find you a job to work. Do you have any good skill that you think you can do?" John takes a time to think... "Yes, I am good at carving. I had a real skill of carving dragons, the dragon is an important symbol of my culture."

So after they arrive on Earth, Tim took John to see Mr. Kent, who was the owner of the mug factory in the Los Santo. Mr. Kent was also a person whose parents were from Pluto, but he was born in Los Santo so doesn't speak Plutonese.

In Los Santo, no one spoke Plutonese. John felt like he didn't belong with the people around him even though transformed himself to look like people on the Earth. He felt like alone since he could not speak the Santonese language. He didn't know it wasn't just him who came from Pluto, but many people are here from other planets as well.

People in Los Santo try to speak with foreigners by communicating with their hands. At John's workplace, Mr. Kent decided to teach the language to all the workers because he knew how hard it was to not being able to communicate with others. John thought that he had to learn the language as soon as possible because he needed to restart his new life here. He went to Mr. Kent to ask for extra time

with Mr. Kent to learn this language. John went over to see Mr. Kent before and after work. He spent six months learning the language. In the morning, he woke up before the sun rising to recall what he had learned. After eight-hours of working, he goes to Mr. Kent to learn more. Before he would go to sleep, he looked over what he had learned again before heading to bed. Slowly, he became exhausted and was running out of energy. But he was determined! He knew learning the language was his way to feel at home and a part of this new planet.

After two years of working with Mr. Kent, John decided to leave from the factory to fulfill his dream of having his own carving company. He was able to sleep for only one or two hours a night. Although he was always tired, he spent lots of energy to fight for his future. He still smiled though sweat was dripping all over his face and body. He never felt fear because he had a chance to make his dream come true.

John designed a special mug with a dragon from Pluto. He tried to make his mug brand well known. He wanted to make a new home for himself in Los Santo, but he never wanted to forget his culture and his life on Pluto.

After hearing this story, Jessy wonders what became of John. Susan reveals to her, "He had everything more than he had in Pluto. He has a home where it's safe. He had money to send back to Pluto. Last but not least, he had us. He had us as a family—you as a grandchild." Jessy smiled and has held on to this mug ever since.

Kim Khuu



Hi my name is Kim Khuu, and I am a sophomore at UMass Boston. I am from Vietnam, and I have moved to the United State with my mom and dad when I was 10 years old. Growing up in Vietnam, I had a lot of relatives who were my age. When I came here, I didn't have family I could hang around with. It took me a few years to really adapt myself in America, but sometimes I feel like I am losing part of my Vietnamese identity. Since I came to UMass Boston, I have learned how value and how important my Vietnamese culture is to me. I took Asian American Studies for 3 semesters and I definitely have never regretted it. In each class, I learned about many things that I have never come across. I see how important I am and how I am a very lucky girl to have both Vietnamese and American cultures as part of me.

Bun Bo Hue (Spicy Hue Style Noodle Soup with Lemongrass)

By Kim Khuu

When it comes to foods I can most likely eat anything. However, my all-time favorite's food is soups, especially noodle soups are my go-to bowl of comfort. There's are many different types of delicious soups, but the one bowl I love the most is bun bo hue. Every time my mom cooks it, I would have to go for seconds. It is that good.

Bun bo hue is very meaningful to me as a kid because every bite reminds me of my childhood back in Vietnam. When I was growing up in Vietnam my family normally just ate at home because we could not afford to eat out. However, every time we did have a chance to, my parent would take me to eat bun bo hue in a Vietnamese foods market because it is affordable for us and my favorite. Bun bo hue soup takes a lot of time and also lots of ingredients to make a huge pot, so when we do cook it, it deserves second helping.

I remember as a kid, I always got so excited ever time my mom took me to the foods market with her. I knew that we would likely pass the bun bo stand. Even if I already eat at home, I asked my mom to buy me a small bowl of bun bo hue on our way home. She usually stopped there just for me. We both sat down on old, rusty chairs, and my mom would start chatting with the owners, who knew my obsession so well. When the bun bo hue was ready, my face filled with joy and my mom just smiled at me. "Make sure you eat all the meat, you want extra meat honey?" my mom asked every time. I never answered because I was too busy slurping away my noodle soup. Most of the time, my mom never ordered for herself because she was always "too full," even if she hadn't eaten all day. I did not think nothing of it then, but now I realize that all those times she is saving the money for me to eat.

Since we moved to the US, my mom had learned how to make bun bo hue because where we live now is so far from all the Vietnamese restaurants. It took her many tries to nail it down. Now she's definitely an expert at cooking bun bo hue. Now, nothing can compare to my mom's bun bo hue since she always puts extra extra meat for me, And, of course it made out of her love for me.

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds oxtail, cut into 2- to 3-inch pieces
- 2 pounds beef shank bones, cut into 2- to 3-inch pieces (ask your butcher to do this)
- 2 pounds pork neck bones
- 1 pound beef brisket
- 8 lemongrass stalks
- 8 quarts water

Soup

- 1 1/2 teaspoons red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon annatto seeds*
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 large shallots, sliced
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/4 cup finely chopped lemongrass
- 2 teaspoons shrimp paste*
- 2 teaspoons fish sauce, or to taste
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- fresh rice noodles (round)

Garnish

- Thai basil
- sliced green onions
- Lime wedges
- white onion, thinly sliced

Direction:

This recipe is off Charles Phan's Vietnamese Home Cooking. So start the cooking in your largest pot (make sure it's big enough to fit the bones and water to cover by 1 inch) bring a pot of water to a rolling boil. Carefully add in the bones and boil for 3 minutes. Remove the bones and pour out the water. Rinse the bones under running water. This is to force out impurities and will make it so you're skimming your broth less and will ensure a clearer stock.

When the bones are rinsed clean, return them to the pot (make sure you wash the pot first) and add in the brisket.

Cut the lemongrass stalks in half and discard the leafy tops. Bruise the remaining lemongrass and add it to the pot. Add 8 quarts of water and bring to a boil over high heat. When the stock comes to a boil, turn the heat down so it's at a simmer. Skim off any scum as needed.

After 45 minutes of simmering, prepare an ice bath. Check the brisket to see if it is cooked through. Remove from the stock and poke it with a chopstick; the juices should run clear. (If needed return to the stock and cook for another 10 minutes.) When the brisket is cooked, plunge into the ice bath until cool. Remove from the ice bath, pat dry, wrap tightly and refrigerate.

Continue to simmer the stock with the bones for another two hours, skimming as needed. When the 2 hours are up, remove from the heat and scoop out the bones and set aside. Carefully strain the stock through a fine mesh sieve into another large stock pot. If desired, skim off the majority of the fat and then set the pot to a simmer over medium-low heat.

Cool the bones and remove the meat from the oxtails, set aside and reserve in the fridge. Discard the bones.

With a mortar and pestle, grind the red pepper flakes and annatto seeds into a coarse powder. Heat up the oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Add the ground red pepper flakes and annatto seeds and cook, stirring, for 10 seconds. Add the shallots, garlic, lemongrass, and shrimp paste and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes more, until the mixture is aromatic and the shallots are just beginning to soften.

Add the contents of the frying pan to the simmering stock along with the fish sauce and sugar and simmer for 20 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning with fish sauce and sugar as needed.

Get ready to plate! Arrange the basil, lime wedges, sliced green onions, and onion slices on a platter and place on the table. Thinly slice the brisket against the grain.

Cook the noodles according to the package and then divide among deep soup bowls. Top with brisket slices and a bit of oxtail meat. Ladle the hot stock over the noodles and beef and serve immediately, accompanied with the platter of garnishes.

Brothers in War

By Kim Khuu

The war has exploded in our home,
We all have go to fight to protect our country.
Days and night guns are being fire,
Airplane drop bomb smoke filled up the air.

Its hard to believe you have left this battlefield,
Now I am here missing your presence.
I am sitting here waiting and waiting for you,
But my brother where are you now.

Years, months, and days,
We all shared the same faith together we stay.
Can't believe guns have no heart,
It took away the lives of our hero in war.

Mercy to all the heroes in war,
They give up their future for the people, for their country.
Yet why faith is so cruel,
We were brother in the same foot step but now I am here alone.

The road is long and tiring,
But your presence is will always be my side.
Together we were in pain, cry and laugh,
Even though we are don't share the same blood but we are family.

Our brothers soldier,
Together we stay for our country peace.
Peace is almost here,
But my heart still ache from missing you.

Lòng Người Chiến Sĩ

Chiến tranh bùng nổ quê nhà,
Mình đi chiến đấu giữ gìn quê hương.
Ngày đêm súng nổ ngang tai,
Máy bay thả đạn khói bay mịt mù.

Không ngờ anh bỏ cuộc chơi,
Mình tôi ở lại nhớ nhung bóng người.
Ngồi đây trông ngóng ngóng trông,
Hỏi người bằng hữu anh giờ nơi đâu.

Bao năm, bao tháng, bao ngày,
Đi chung số phận một lòng bên nhau.
Nào ngờ súng đạn bạc tình,
Lấy đi mạng sống anh hùng chiến binh.

Xót thương cho những anh hùng,
Vị dân, vì nước chôn vùi tương lai.
Ngồi buồn số phận đắng cay,
Anh em cùng bước sao giờ lẻ loi.

Đường đi chân gót mồi mòn,
Bóng người thuở ấy vẫn hoài bên tôi.
Cùng đau, cùng khóc, cùng cười,
Không chung dòng máu nhưng chung một nhà.

Anh em chiến sĩ chúng ta,
Kề vai sát cánh vì hòa bình chung.
Hòa bình đã sắp tới rồi,
Sao tôi vẫn thấy lòng buồn nhớ nhung.

Can The Clock Stop Yet?

By Kim Khuu

It's a beautiful day in the middle of the summer and I am still lying here on this cold white bed staring at these four walls glaring straight back at me. The room is so small and clean to the point that not even a germ could pass through alive. As I look up, women and men are running back and forth in their white and blue scrub with such serious looks on their faces. They probably don't even realize my existence in the room. They are just too busy.

As I move to the edge of the bed to get up, I realize my mom has been sitting beside me and holding on to my hand while she slept. I feel so close to her. A feeling that I have missed so much. I took a good look at her while she is sleeping next to me. Her eyes were all puffed up from all the tears. Some of the teardrops are still wet, balancing on top of her aging cheeks. "Where did the time go?" I ask myself. Until now I could not believe how times have turned my mom's hair into half grays. It looks like she has ombre hair now, from silver to gray to jet black. I pause, suddenly thinking back to what has happened to my mom over the course of years. I could still remember the first day we both landed in America, the land of hope and dreams. Back then I was just a little boy who knew nothing, just happy to follow my mom's footsteps wherever she went. I was stuck to her

like super glue; we were inseparable. She was my guardian angel. She was someone who I went to for everything, knowing that she would always make things better.

As a new immigrant from Vietnam, my mom and I were like aliens to people around us. Where we lived there was no one who looked like us. We were different. I would wonder how others thought of us because it seems like they don't like us. Only my dad did, yet, he was different than us too. My dad was very handsome with his light fair skin, blue eyes, and light brown hair. My mom met him while working as a cook for the army back in Vietnam. Back then, my mom was a young fearless, courageous, intelligent, strong, kind, loving, caring and most responsible woman. My mom came from a very poor family in the countryside and she was the eldest out of eleven kids. Growing up, my mom knew exactly what responsibilities she had. No matter the kind of struggles she faced, she had to endure in order to take care of her family. When she had me, she chose to leave everything behind. She took me to the US for a better opportunity and to help her family back home.

Moving to the US was one of the hardest things for my mom. She could not communicate with anyone because of the language barrier. However, the responsibilities on her shoulder did not end. She forced herself to overcome obstacles because of how many people depend on her. I learned English quickly because my dad would teach us English everyday, to the point that only English

spoken in the house. After couple years, my relationship with my mom became distant because we only spoke English to each other or didn't speak at all.

My mom was a workaholic, she juggled three different jobs. The sun and the blue clear sky was non-existent to her. She left the house when everyone is still snuggling in bed and returned home when everyone else is getting ready to go to bed. My mom was like a super woman. She sacrificed her whole life for everyone else. But at that time I did not understand. I would always question her and get angry when I hear the same answers over and over again.

"Mẹ đi coi con chơi đá banh với ba được không?" I asked, hoping she would say yes and come to my soccer game for once.

"Không được con ơi, hôm nay mẹ đi làm rồi. Ba đi với con nha, mẹ đi cũng vậy thôi." My mom answered then rushed out the door to work.

Every event is the same to my mom; she never has time for anything because she is too busy working. She thought that my dad's presence was all I needed, but what I needed *her* to be by my side. Our relationship drifted further and further away. I felt as if I was non-existent to my mom. She never showed me that she cared what I was up to. All she cared about was work, work, and work. Nothing else seemed to matter.

"Mẹ, tại sao mẹ làm nhiều vậy? We have a house, a car, and you and dad both have a job, so why do you have to work all the time for? Today is Christmas, you can't at least take a day off today to be home with us, mom?" I asked her furiously while staring at the ceiling trying to hide my tears.

"Con biết gia đình mình ở Việt Nam nghèo lắm mà, mẹ phải làm nhiều để gửi tiền cho gia đình ở Việt Nam. Plus today is a holiday. They are going to pay me double time. That's a lot. I'll just take another day off then okay, con?" She replied with a sad and hopeless face that made me feel guilty every time, which made me more upset.

Holiday after holiday it would just be my dad and me. The distance between us kept growing to a point it was just too difficult to connect like we use to. I became silence toward both my parents, but it seem like she did not even notice. I remember sometimes we would go for days without talking because we never saw each other. "What happened to us? Where is mom when I need her? Does she love me? Did I do something wrong? Does she even care that I existed, or she only cares about her family in Vietnam?" These questions would always float in my head, and each time it made me so angry at myself.

My friends became everything to me. I always put them first because I felt like I am not invisible to them. I hated going home. I would go to school then go straight to my friend's house or sometimes even skip school all week.

"Dude check this out!!! You should try it, everyone is using it now and it feel awesome. After you take it you'll be the happiest person in the world. Trust me," My friend said while handing me a small bag.

"What is that? Drugs? Are you out of your mind. No way! My mom would kill me if she find out!" I responded furiously.

"Dude calm down. Whatever, it's your lost. HA. Yeah right, how is she going to find out when you never see her?" he asked while smirking at the other guys. That really bothered me how even my friend knew about my mom's neglect, so I said, " I guess your right, its not like I see her anyway. Matter of fact she probably don't even care."

After that day I changed. I did not care about anyone or anything. School became a joke to me, I just skipped to smoke pot and just hang out. My addiction got worse and worse to the point I had to steal money from my mom's safe to buy drugs. As time went by, I completely lost myself. I did not know who I was anymore. I felt like I was shaming my own family. I had put my mom's hard work to waste. I

had ruined her hopes and dreams. I did not turn out to be the person my mom wanted me to be. These thoughts kept haunting me to the point I just wanted to forget everything. I just want to forget feeling unwanted, feeling that I was not important. *That feeling of how I was not good enough, and of being alone in this world.* If only my mom knew how I felt and what I had been doing. Would she still love me and pay more attention to me? Or would she be ashamed that I was her son? Or would she just put it aside and kept on working like nothing happened?

It was too late. I could not control my drug addiction anymore. I just wanted more and more. The other day, I took one pill after another until my heart was beating so fast it felt like it was ready to burst any second. I was very cold and nauseous and began to shiver. I could feel my eye start rolling back to the point I collapsed to the floor. I heard nothing, nothing at all from my surrounding. Everything was black.

Now here I am waking up in a hospital bed looking at my mom resting her head beside me, thinner than before, and aging. What happened? How did my mom find out? Why is she here? What is she going to do when she sees me awake? Is she going to yell at me and tell me that I am have shamed the family? My head is pounding with questions nervously.

A doctor rushes in with four other nurses behind him and my dad was behind the nurses crying. I sit up and say to my dad, "Why are you crying dad? I am fine. Don't cry. I am sorry." He just stared at my mom, who just woke up next to me, and started crying even more like he hadn't heard me. I turn to my mom as she stands from the chair and tell her, "Mẹ ơi con khỏe rồi mình đi về được rồi, con không muốn ở đây nữa. Can we all go home? Tell dad I am fine. Don't cry."

My mom completely ignores what I say, too, and turns to the doctor, "Is my son okay? Why isn't he awake yet? It's been two days. Why is he still not waking up? Doctor, please tell me is he going to be okay? He is my only son. Please, please save him," she begs while falling down on her knees to the floor. My dad ran over to catch my mom from falling, while the doctor just looks at her and shake his head back and forth and said, "I am so sorry Mrs. Cooper, but we have tried our best. Your son has passed away from his overdose on drugs. I am so sorry." After hearing what the doctor said, my mom's face extremely becomes pale, and she starts crying uncontrollably.

"What happened! No, this would not happen to me," I said to my self. "Mom!! I am right here. Look at me. What does he mean that I passed away? This doctor doesn't know what he is talking about. I am still sitting right here!" I am yelling as loud as I can. I try to reach for my mom's hand while dad is holding on to her but I

could not. My hand was invisible! Am I really dead? I try and try to get their attention, yet no one could see me.

I slouch over, realizing I am no longer alive. If only I could go back in time, I would tell you how grateful I am to have you as my mom. If only I could tell you that I am proud of all your hard work for the family. If only I could tell you that no matter how far away you are from me, you'll always be my mom. If I could choose my next life, I would still want to be your son. Because now I know that, no matter what, you always put your family first. I wish you knew that I love you so, mom. I'll be watching over you everyday.

Tin Nguyen



Hi my name is Tin. I'm an international student. My hometown is Ho Chi Minh City. My major is Art. I am really involved in creative activities. I can draw really well. I'm also interested in movies. I want to act. I want to be a director, even a writer. One thing that can differentiate me from the rest is that I have a passion for food. From Vietnamese tradition cuisine to Italian, even dessert. You name it; I can make it!

Bánh Cẩn

By Tin Nguyen

If someone asks me what is my favourite food, my answer would definitely be bánh cǎn. First, let me assure you that this is not bánh canh, a lot of people mistake bánh canh with bánh cǎn because of the way they are pronounced. However, bánh cǎn is a completely different food.

Bánh cǎn is one of the important aspects in the life of the people in the central area of Viet Nam, because it's served as the primary dish that people in the central area use for breakfast. Sadly, this is not popular in the whole nation, because it has been overshadowed by phở, hủ tiếu, and cơm sườn, for the sole reason that it has been known for a long time as a rustic dish for the poor. Even though, bánh cǎn is not popular like the other ones, and hold the aesthetic in term of look; but in term of flavour, it's a killer dish, and it will remain one of my favourite dishes.

Bánh cǎn can also be called Vietnamese pancake. The reason why it is compared with pancake is that similar to pancake, it contains two parts. One is the actual cake; the other is the dressing. The cake is made out of grinded rice seed, mixed with flour and water. Then you put the mixture into a specialized charcoal stove to create a small circular cake. Because of the mixture, the result will be a very creamy and soft texture on the

top of the cake; and a solid texture on the bottom because it is closer to the stove. In addition, you can also put egg when you bake the cake, to create a yellow hue on the top of the cake. However, as you may notice, the cake doesn't have any flavour at all. It's just flour and water. It's very bland. But, that is to be expected, because the main focus of the dish is the sauce that comes along with it.

One of the unique things about this dish is that the cook will never made the sauce; instead, you, the customer is the one who make the sauce. The cook only provides the things that you need to make it. And this is by far the most interesting and fun part in this dish, because you have the power to decide what the taste your sauce is going to be. As mentioned above, the sauce is the hero of the dish due to the flavors is highly emphasized in the sauce, so you need to know what you like in order to make an enjoyable taste for the cake. Usually the sauce is a combination of fish sauce, shrimp sauce, spicy sauce eggs (optional), scallion, a piece of fish. But the proportion of them is entirely up to you, you can have a lot of fish sauce and a touch of spicy sauce, or beat down the boiled egg to create a creamy texture sauce. In short, from looking at the sauce, other people can see little bit about you.

The reason why I chose this as my favorite dish is because you can only find this dish in the central part of Viet Nam. Living mostly in the

southern part of Viet Nam, I cannot have it for most of the year unless I go to my grandmother home. It usually takes 6 hours to travel there, so it's very hard for me to eat bánh căn. But whenever, I have the opportunity to go there, I would never miss having breakfast with bánh căn. It reminds me about all the trip that I went to my grandmother home when I was young. Moreover, I like the rustic and simple feeling that bánh căn brings. Something about being in a place where there is no people, no complication always appealing to me. Lastly, I enjoy the idea that you can create your own version of sauce based on your taste. It gives a little bit of freedom, and characteristic in bánh căn.

Ingredients for Banh can:

$\frac{1}{2}$ Cup of rice

300g rice flour

1 scallion

1 can of coconut milk

Fish

Oil, sugar, fish sauce, shrimp sauce

Homesick

By Tin Nguyen

"Seven days from now, you are going to be on a plane, travel across continents to pursue your dream; how cool is that, Dung?" His mother says to him with her best-delighted tone. However, her voice doesn't hide from him the despair that she has held recently; because he knows that seven days from now, he will be gone away to a new frontier, catching his ambition, and dream. He's focused, and nobody going to hold him back from achieving it, not even his own mother.

"Go to your room, Dung, it's late. I'll do the packaging, but you need to rest for your exciting, and challenging days ahead" she says.

"Yes, mom"

Seven days from today marks an important chapter in his life. After seven days, he will go to America to study, to experience the best food, the highest standard of living, the most civilized people, and to see if this country the greatest nation in the world like everyone has been telling him. Skeptical, yet very excited to witness all after seven days.

As he goes to his room, he jumps on his lovely bed. In his bed, he looks around and tries to remember all the things that he keeps in his bed. He looks at the closet where he hangs all the stickers, he could find, on it; because each of the stickers is a memory that he sticks into

his heart. It looks like a mess but he likes it. He also looks at the Tv right in front of the bed, as he tries to remember all the shows he used to watch, like X-men, Powerpuff girl in the CN channel, or Wizard of Waverly place on Disney channel. He smiles as he remembers how anxious he would be when the new movie High school Musical was coming out. Those memories are in his heart, he would never forget them; however, seven days from now, there will be a void in his heart because all those memories are what he and the bedroom share. Leaving his bed is like a missing piece of the puzzle, you only full if you are close to each other. Now, all the beautiful memories turn into a haunting sorrow, thinking of it makes him sad, thinking of it makes him dumbfounded to the realization that only seven days he would leave all behind.

But eventually, that day will come because this is what he has chose. In the darkness of sorrow, suddenly there is a light that permeating in his mind. He thinks that, "Maybe I can take picture of all the thing that I like, so that I can be reminded when I misses home. And just like the stickers on the closet, these pictures will be on the new closet, and it will fill the missing part of the puzzle for me."

Even though he hated the idea of taking picture so much, he is very shy in front of camera, he felt so awkward to stand there and smiling to

the camera. But taking picture is fine if he isn't in the picture. So, he has set up his mind that for the next week before going to America, he will take picture of all the things that he loves.

Tomorrow is the last day before the special day, he looks at the checklist of all the things he would save in the camera history. He got through a lot of them, his friends, his favourite food like phở, hủ tiếu, bánh căn, bún riêu, bánh tráng trộn..., his favourite places, Parkson Plaza, Đầm sen park, and a lot more. But the list is incomplete, the last thing he needs is taking the picture of his beautiful home, his dog, his bike, his family and his bedroom.

One the last day, he felt as ready as possible because he has all the thing pack up, all the picture in his pocket. He finally step his foot in Tan San Nhat airport. He looks at the sky, he looks at the silhouette of the plane as it soars its wing to the sky, he looks down to the airport, at the door that will be the final destination of his parents. This is where he will parts away with his family and goes to pursuit his dream. He'll be alone, he will misses all the things that he's loved from home. But he's ready to start a new chapter, a new challenge, he feels comfortable that nothing will hold him back from achieving his future, because inside his pocket there will always be home.

The final moment has come, he is nervous but excited for the new adventure. He looks around one last time, he looks at his parents. To his surprise, he sees tears streaming down his mother face. He's shock because this is the first time he sees his mother cry. She said as she look at his face dearly, "Dung, you going to USA, a beautiful country to pursuit your dream, but I wont be there to help you through every hardship. This is a test for you, and I know you will pass it. Only four years, you only need to be brave in the next four years, and I will be waiting for you". He listen closely to every single words, but he tries to look away because this is so new with him, he has never seen mom cries or talks to him like that.

He feels awkward, and the only thing he can response is to comfort her. After that, she asks him to take a family picture, but he refuse to do it. He says, "Mom, you know that I have never like to take picture, I don't want to do it. Beside, I don't think we have time to do it, I have a flight to catch."

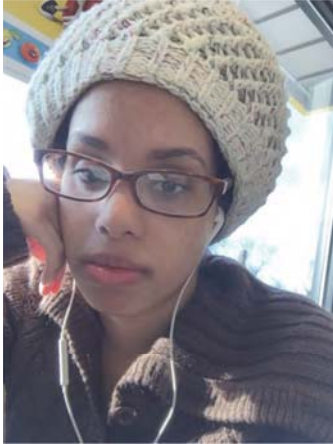
His mom look at him and say, "Fine, go catch your flight, and be safe okay?" He replies, "I'll mom. I will be back, I promise."He says as he went through the door.

From inside, he waves at his family, then he turns and the new chapter begins. After three days living in Boston, even though he was excited to come here, but something seems off to him. He doesn't felt

well, he doesn't like to eat, and he's never like to go outside even though he promised himself that he will go and explore new places. He doesn't know what is happening to him, the only thing he can feel is a sadness that he couldn't explain why. He thinks that he is homesick, so he takes the pictures that he took to ease his sadness. However, going through that doesn't help him at all. He still feels sad. He doesn't miss them. That makes him think that homesick is not the case.

While looking through the pictures, one after another and over again, he realizes that some are missing—pictures contain his family. All of the sudden, two stream of tears roll down his face. He's never cried like this before. He realizes that none of the pictures that he took matter as much as a picture with his mom. It's not the food, his friends, his home, that makes him homesick. It is his parents that he misses the most. And then he remembered how his mom wanted to take a picture with him. But he refused to do so. He felt guilty because he didn't let his mom take a picture of him. Now, he and his mom both have a missing piece in their memories. At that moment, he hit the call button on Skype.

Geraldine Altagrace Saint- Gilles



My name is Geraldine Altagrace Saint- Gilles and I'm currently a senior studying Art at Umass Boston. I'm a first generation Haitian American born and raised in Massachusetts. I've had interest in Asia ever since I was a little girl. Hopefully in the future I'll accomplish my dream of working overseas in the fashion industry.

Strawberry milk

By Geraldine Saint-Gilles

Even though I don't have a favorite food, my favorite memory was all about drinking strawberry milk. I remember, one time during Kindergarten, I didn't bring in lunch. My mother showed up with a glass of warm strawberry milk, and I loved it!

I used to drink milk almost everyday as a child. Strawberry milk was my favorite flavor; I barley drank chocolate milk. When I got sick, my mother would make me salty strawberry milk to make me feel better.

Recipe for Strawberry milk:

One cup of warm milk(I usually drank milk from a cup)

****heat milk in a microwave for over a minute****

A couple tablespoons of powdered strawberry flavor mix

Salty milk:

One cup of warm milk

One tablespoon of salt

Lucky cat toy

By *Geraldine Saint-Gilles*

As the Lucky cat moves it's right paw,
I wonder if good luck actually exists.

Overtime things change,
different consequences
erupt.

Wanting to escape the situation,
Some people have it easier than others.

Struggling,
believing things will get back to normal.

I'm always dreaming that things will get better, where I don't
need to worry about what happens next.

Anna Nguyen



Hello my name is Anna Nguyen. I am a Vietnamese-American girl born in Louisiana. I am currently a freshman at UMASS Boston and my major is Undecided. I decided to enroll in an Asian American Study class to reconnect with my Vietnamese roots. For the book cover, I included two photos. One photo is of me enjoying a bowl of pho, and the other is a photo of me and my best friend named Sandra Tran. Pho is a significant meal that I have been eating all my life. It represents my relationship to my family and to my culture. Sandra is my best friend and she is also Vietnamese-American. Compared to me, Sandra is significantly more in touch with Vietnamese language and culture. With her help, I am improving and preserving to learn my Vietnamese heritage. Everything I contributed to this anthology is dedicated to her. Thanks Sandra!

Dreaming of Home

By Anna Nguyen

This mirror hides the truth
Behind these eyes there are dreams
Countless dreams
Dreams that are terrified to break free

I dream of that home
Not the place where I was born
Not the places I grew up in
But the place I am most afraid of

The unfamiliar streets that should be familiar
Where the feeling of family is weakened by these strangers
Where my words are too shy to escape my tongue
Despite all, I long for you

I long for your hot embrace on my shoulders
Your sweet scent of exotic fruit
The thrill of a thousand motorcycles
I can almost feel you

The bridge between us was created by war
But I am thankful for being given a chance
A chance to either cross or burn this bridge
I choose to cross, wait for me Vietnam

Mơ về nhà

Sự thật đã bị che khuất bởi chiếc gương
Đằng sau những ánh mắt đó là những giấc mơ của tôi
Những giấc mơ không thể đếm được
Và những giấc mơ đó cũng chẳng thể rời bỏ tôi.

Tôi luôn mơ về ngôi nhà đó
Không phải là nơi mà tôi đã được sinh ra
Cũng không phải là nơi mà tôi lớn lên
Mà đó chính là nơi mà tôi sợ hãi mỗi khi nghĩ về.

Con đường quen thuộc mà ngỡ như rất xa
Đây chính là nơi mà cái cảm giác đó đã không thể trở về
Là nơi mà tôi không thể nào cất thành tiếng
Nhưng sau tất cả, tôi vẫn luôn mơ về nó.

Tôi cần một cái ôm thật chặt từ nơi ấy
Nơi có mùi hương thơm nồng của trái cây miền nhiệt đới
Nơi có tiếng ồn ã của những chiếc xe tay ga
Và đó là những gì tôi cảm nhận được.

Chúng ta dù đã bị chia cắt bởi chiến tranh
Nhưng tôi luôn thấy đâu đó có một tia hy vọng
Sự lựa chọn giữa kết nối hoặc từ bỏ tất cả
Tôi thà rằng kết nối để giữ được tình yêu nơi nhà.

Sáng tác: Anna Nguyễn

Pho

By Anna Nguyen



Pho is an extremely popular Vietnamese dish that I could honestly eat everyday for the rest of my life. This dish is so well known and loved that everyone I know adores it. My favorite has to be chicken pho because of its simple but deep flavors. Pho is basically a noodle soup filled with meat and vegetables. The broth is made from the bones of either chicken or beef, and unique spices such as star anise and cinnamon stick. To add more flavor, garnishes such as bean sprouts, cilantro and thai basil are also added. For a spicy flavor, jalapenos and siracha hot sauce can be added. I've always enjoyed my pho with extra lime and a few jalapeno slices. In my opinion, the best time to eat pho is when the weather is cold so the hot meal can warm up your belly. But honestly, pho is so delicious that it is eaten year round. Everyone is familiar with pho and although it is a popular Vietnamese dish, Americans love it too. Whenever I go to pho restaurants, it is always a pleasure to see people of other cultures enjoying pho too.

I remember eating pho since I was a child. My job was always to help my aunts clean the vegetables while they prepare everything else. I remember being so excited to set the table with chopsticks and spoons, making sure everything looked pretty. Pho to me was always a family meal. All of my family members would sit around the table slurping up rice noodles and hot broth. Eating pho together as a family was always a bonding experience.

When there is pho you know that everyone would feel so satisfied and happy. Pho always put me in a good mood that I do not mind washing the huge pile of pho bowls at the end of dinner. I hope one day I can make pho as good as my aunts so I can feed them in the future too.

Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken (4-5lbs)
- 1 whole onion
- Ginger
- Broth spices
- 2 tbl whole coriander seeds
- 2 whole star anise
- 2 tbl sugar
- 2 tbl fish sauce
- Cilantro
- Rice noodle
- Bean sprouts
- Thai basil
- Red onion
- Limes
- Sriracha hot sauce
- Hoisin sauce
- sliced jalapeno

Directions

1. Place ginger and onion on a small baking sheet. Set to broil on high for 15 minutes. Turn the onion and ginger occasionally, to get an even char. The skin should get dark and the onion/ginger should get soft. After cooling, rub to get the charred skin off the onion and use a butter knife to scrape the skin off the ginger. Slice ginger into thick slices.
2. In a large stockpot, fill with water and boil. With a sharp cleaver, carve the chicken breast meat off and reserve. With the rest of chicken whacking hard through the bones to get sections about 3" big. The more bone that is exposed, the more marrow that gets in the broth. You can even whack several places along the bone just to expose more marrow. When the water boils, add chicken sections (not breast) and boil on high for 5 minutes. You'll see lots of foam and

- "stuff' come up to the surface. Drain, rinse your chicken of the scum and wash your pot thoroughly. Refill with about 4 quarts of clean, cold water.
3. Add chicken, chicken breast meat, onion, ginger and all of (A) in the pot and cover. Turn heat to high - let it come to boil, then immediately turn heat to low. Prop lid up so that steam can escape. After 15 minutes, remove the chicken breasts, shred with your fingers when cooled and set aside (you'll serve shredded chicken breast with the finished soup). With a large spoon, skim the surface of any impurities in the broth. Skimming every 20 minutes ensures a clear broth. Simmer a total of 1-1/2 hours. Taste and adjust seasoning with more fish sauce and or sugar.
 4. Strain the broth, discard solids. Prepare noodles as per directions on package. Ladle broth, add shredded chicken breast and soft noodles in each bowl. Have remanding ingredients set at table for each person to add to their bowl.

Change of Heart By Anna Nguyen

It is autumn of 1990 and the air is so different here. I question if I'm still on the same earth. Where is my hot bright sunshine, what do all these clouds mean? I see my parents approaching along with some man. All I can think about is running back to the plane and going back to where I belong. I snap out of my thoughts and realize how annoying this man is. He keeps smiling at me and talking about useless things. Who is he anyways and why does my parents know him?

"Van, this is Bay. He helped us with the paperwork to get you on a plane here." Mom said with a bright smile.

"Thanks for helping my parents," was the only thing I could force through my teeth and I somehow also managed a smile. All I can feel is the fire building up inside me. This is the man who caused me to leave my home and he's just standing there smiling at me. My blood is boiling and my jaw tightens. I just want to knock out all of his stupid teeth. He doesn't even realize the damage he has done.

Summer of 1990, I received a letter. I always felt special receiving a letter. Nothing is more touching than someone spending their time to

personally send you a letter. This letter came from my parents who are living in the states. Why couldn't this letter just get lost and delivered to another country. I loved my parents but I refuse 100%. There was no way they can make me go to America. Mom and dad can convince me to do anything but I was not giving in. I love it here and there is nothing more that I need. I have a home, food to eat, brothers to protect me, and the love of my life. Why leave a place that already makes me happy and the person who makes me the happiest. I may be only 19 but I know what I want. Why can't mom listen to me for once and let me have my way. Why does it have to be me, I did not ask for this. I hate this, I hate everything, nothing is going the way I want it. I already have my life planned out. I just want to marry Huy, have a family with him, and raise our kids here in Vietnam. At this point, if mom was not going to agree with me then I am just going to run away with him.

I go over to Huy's house and I caught him right before he enters his house. I run to him and he is already smiling. I always thought he looks so good in his white shirt. I hug his tan skin and rub his dark thick hair.

"Huy we need to talk," I softly say.

"Oh no, why so serious?" He laughs as he rubs my back.

"Because we need to talk about something serious," I reply. We walk around the neighborhood for a bit until I finally let it all out.

"Huy, my parents are forcing me to come to America. I really don't want to go and I really don't want to leave you." I cry. Huy looks stunned and then his eyes look empty.

We stand there in silence. I let out a huge breath and Huy wipes my face.

"I really don't want you to leave either, but this is a good thing. America is the best place on Earth, anyone would be lucky to have the opportunity to go there," he says.

"Wait what? You want me to go? You're not even going to fight for me to stay?" My entire body is on fire. I don't know what to think anymore and nothing is making sense. So many emotions hit me at once that the only thing I can do is just cry.

"It will be selfish of me to keep you here. I don't want to hold you back." He hugs me and we stay in each other's arms. I try to memorize the feeling of his embrace, the outline of his arms around my body and the smell of his skin. I am going to miss him so much.

I think about Huy as I'm in this new land. Although I hate to admit it, I know he's right. I hear so many success stories of Vietnamese people here

who also give back to their families back home. I want to be that person. I want to make something of myself here and give back to people in need. I look at my parents and they look so excited that I'm here. I know that they love me and I just want them to be happy.

"Now let's go see my new home." I take a deep breath as I smile at my parents and Bay. I feel a burst of energy run through my body, and for once I feel excited to be here.

20 years go by and I still I still remember every detail so clearly. Bay starts dying of laughter. "Your story was so dramatic."

"Even to this day you're still so annoying!" I snap back.

"Yeah whatever, we all know you thought I was super handsome when you first met me!" We both start dying of laughter. I couldn't even deny what he said. I look at his smiling face and I feel so grateful. It's been 20 years since I left Vietnam and since I met Bay. I can't believe how much I grew up and changed since then. Vietnam feels like a dream to me but my life here in America is real. I became a woman here in the United States and I am happy with my life. My change of heart was the start to my beautiful life. I have my parents, friends who support me, four beautiful kids and a lifetime with my best friend, Bay.

Hung An Nguyen



Hung An Nguyen is a fierce gaysian who has been involved in organizing and activism in the LGBTQ and Asian-American community since he was 16. He can often be seen dancing to one of Beyoncé's songs!

Banh Bot Loc (Clear Vietnamese Dumplings)

By Hung Nguyen

My mom comes from a family of seven children and never got finish third grade in Vietnamese because she had to support the family. She was in charge of taking care of her siblings. For those who grow up Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American, we know that some of the best food are not in restaurant but at home where the food is made with pride and love. I tried Banh Bot Loc one time at my aunt's house and I told my mom that I really like it. A few days later, she went to get the different ingredients and made it for me. Banh Bot Loc is a Vietnamese specialty that is made of tapioca flour, shrimp and pork belly filling. The chewy and sticky consistency texture is what made me fall in love with it. There are two variation of this fish, one where the dumpling is wrapped and steam in a banana leaf. The second variation is where the dumpling is steamed without the banana leaf.

The reason why this dish means so much to me is that, My mom worked at a Nail Salon for about 18 years of her life here in America. In 2011, she fractured her hip which forced her to retire. Through all the hardship and struggles of being handicapped, she finally recovered and wanted to regain her pride. My mom has always been an independent person who often takes care of other people before she does herself. She sells the Banh Bot Loc that she makes to collect the small amount of money she receives to send it back to Vietnam. An order of 100 Banh Bot Loc will cost her customers \$40. I remember one time she had an order of 600 Banh Bot Loc. It took her the whole week to complete the order. I remember asking her, "Me, how come you work so hard just for a little bit of money? We provide for you so you don't have to work anymore." Although she was under a lot of stress and she was tired and losing sleep, she answered in the most calmest voice "Hung, I appreciate all that you and your siblings do for me. I do these catering jobs is because I still hold the responsibility of taking care of our family in Vietnam. We have all that we need and your Grandma is getting old. I want to make sure that she can have just as much as we do up until the day she leaves us. \$40 may seem like a small amount here in American but it could be so much more than you know in Vietnam"

Regardless of what my mom is going through, she will always put someone before her. Ever since my mom told me her side of why she makes them, I do not eat anyone else's Banh Bot Loc. My mom makes her banh bot loc with so much pride and love. The stickiness represents the resilient spirit my mom has. The flavoring and marination of the shrimp/pork belly represents the extra spice that my mom continues to bring to people's lives. The banana leaf that is wrapped around the

dumpling represents the constant protection my mom provides. Banh bot loc is often at every Vietnamese party and it shows that my mom is the life of the party!

Recipe

Dough

- 1 package of banh bot loc mix (we like the 4 Elephant brand- about 20 dumplings)
- 1.5 cups of boiling water

Stuffing

- 1/4 lb shrimp cleaned and deveined (we like black tiger shrimp - you can use larger shrimp cut into 1/4 inch small pieces, or use whole small shrimps--some people like to keep the head and shell on)
- 2 tbs fish sauce
- 1 tbs black pepper
- 1/2 tbs sugar
- 1 tbs minced shallots

Optional

- 1/4 lb pork belly, cut into very small strips about 1/4 inch.
- 2 tbs cooking oil

Fried onion/Onion oil

- 1/4 cup chopped onions, fried.
- 8 tbs olive oil

A bit of all purpose flour to prevent dough from sticking

Method:

Marinate the shrimp with fish sauce, shallots, sugar and peppers for about 1/2 hr.

Heat 2 tablespoons of cooking oil, when hot, add about 1 ts annatto seeds. Continue heat to allow color to steep into oil. Once red, strain seeds. Fry the small peices of pork belly in annatto seed oil until cooked. It will be a nice red color. Drain off excess oil from the pork belly. (My mom does not add the pork belly and uses shrimp only as she thinks it's too fatty)

Fry onions in oil until golden brown and drain. Save onion infused oil and set aside. (If you want to skip this step, just buy the pre fried onions and use plain olive oil)

Now you're ready to make the dough. Making the dough the proper consistency is the hardest part of this dish. Do not follow the instructions on the back of the package. It's the directions for making banh bot loc in banana leaves. Add flour package to mixing bowl. Bring 1.5 cups of water to boil and add mixing bowl. Immediately begin stirring with spatula. After about 1 minute when the water is less hot, use your hands to knead and mix the flour well. The dough should be a bit pliable, sort of the consistency of playdough--add a bit more water if it is too dry. Pinch all ball of dough about the size of a quarter and flatten to make into a small circle. Make sure the center of the dough is slightly thicker than the edges. Add a piece of shrimp and pork belly to the center and fold over, pinching the edges together. Use a fork to crimp the edges for a nice decorative touch. Keep hands dusted with a bit of flour for easier handlings of dough.

Bring a large pot of water to boil. Add the banh bot loc and boil for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. The banh bot loc will float to the top. Strain and place in a cold water bath about 2-3 minutes. Drain well in colander and place in container. Now add about 3-4 tbs of onion infused oil and generous amounts of fried onions and gently mix well.

Your banh bot loc is ready to serve with spicy fish sauce. In my family, we also eat it with lettuce. We wrap the bank bot loc in the lettuce and dip it in the fish sauce and enjoy our dumplings!

Imprisoned

by Hung An Nguyen

Inspired by Leonard Matlovich's tombstone "*When I was in the military, they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one*"

As the bombs are dropping and bodies are burning
Where do we go now?
I know that my safety can be concerning
But just hold on to our vow
I remember that there was only room for one in the place that I hide
It's where I must reside if I continue to fight
The closet
Not the Physical
My state of mind
My head is my prison cell
Always had a different vision from the sentence I was given
I feel like I am a prisoner and property of America
Would I feel more safe if I was trapped 6 feet under
What are we fighting for? Is it all worth it?
I miss your smile
The warmth of your hugs reminds me of Vietnam's sun beaming on me
The closet that was built for me, there is finally room for two. The love that
you bring reminds me of
the innocent laughter of these brown children that brings me peace
How long can that peace last when...
BOOOOOOM!

Khi quả bom được thả và các thân thể đang cháy
Chúng tôi nên đi về đâu?
Biết rằng sự an toàn của tôi rất đáng lo lắng
Nhưng vẫn xin người dữ nguyên lời thề
Tôi nhớ chỗ tôi chôn chỉ đủ cho một người
Tôi phải ở lại nơi đó nếu tôi tiếp tục tham gia vào cuộc chiến này
Cái học này
Không phải là hiến thề
Mà là một trạng thái của tâm trạng
Suy nghĩ của tôi chính là nhà giam, giam cầm tôi
Luôn luôn có một tầm nhìn khác nhau từ những mệnh lệnh đã được đưa ra cho
tôi
Tôi cảm thấy tôi như là một tù nhân và tài sản của Mỹ
Tôi sẽ cảm thấy an toàn hơn nếu tôi bị chôn sâu tít dưới lòng đất
Chúng ta đang đấu tranh cho những gì ? Nó có đấn chấn?
Tôi nhớ nụ cười của em
Cái ôm ấm áp của em làm tôi nhớ về ánh nắng mặt trời của Việt Nam đang bao
quanh tôi
Cái học đã được xây dựng riêng cho tôi, cuối cùng đã có chỗ cho hai người.
Tình yêu mà bạn mang lại, làm tôi nhớ về tiếng cười ngây thơ của những đứa trẻ
màu da nâu đã mang lại cho tôi sự bình an.
Sự bình an đó sẽ duy trì được bao lâu khi...
BOOOOOOMM!

Mother To Son

By Hung Nguyen

As I walk through the hospital doors, my heart is racing. The thought of losing my mother is scary. I am a product of how amazing my mom raised me. It been two years since the doctors told me that she was diagnose with cancer. Through the many visits, I began to bond with my mom. I learned more about my family history, like how we came to Boston, MA. It all started in a war-torn country Vietnam. During the Vietnam war, my dad fought with the United States and South Vietnamese side. When we lost the war, my dad was sent to a reeducation camp. My mom raised three children while my dad was away. Seven long years has passed and my Dad was getting released. Through an operation called HO(Humanitarian Operation), they were on their way to some weird place called Boston, MA.

It was exciting for my family to come to the United States, we would have two cars, go to school for free, have lots of money and there are stores with food stacked the ceiling. America was not the land of Milk and Honey that it was advertised to be. Luckily we had enough food to eat and a roof over our head. Once my family came to Boston, my mom was pregnant with me! I was excited for my first steps, first words, seeing how beautiful my mom was. Eventually, I was born in the brutal winter that New England is known for.

My family started to slowly fall apart. My parents divorced. My brothers were going away to college. My sister started her own family across the country. Ironically, a family that was fighting hard to come to America to stay together eventually started to leave each other. It was just my mom and me. We have managed to stay alive after 20 years with each other. The relationship that my mom and I share has always been important to me because we only have each other. But two strong personalities can butt heads.

There is a side to me that mom does not know. I didn't know what this feeling was but it didn't feel unnatural. It wasn't until the kids in my classes started to tease me about being different. Being different came with a term called gay. "Gay" used to mean happy and then people started to say "That's so gay" to mean dumb and stupid which is pretty insulting to gay people(not the happy people).

It's complicated. For someone who identifies with both being gay and Vietnamese identities, coming out to our family can be a very stressful thing. The stressful situation goes the other way as well. For family members to find out that their sibling/child is gay can be a very stressful thing. His/her family has to go throughout the process of dealing with their internalized homophobia. The most

important thing to remember is that finding a right time to come out (sharing your sexuality with people).

As my mom is lying in the hospital bed, I'm not confident about coming out to her. But I feel like, I am taking away the opportunity for my mom to get to know the real me. I feel like my friends knew me better than my mom. I was slowly approaching the door to my mom's room. I couldn't stomach how nervous I was feeling. Do you know the feeling of having a lump in your throat, tears start to form, dryness in your voice? Yeah, that is how I was feeling.

I gathered up with my courage and opened the door. My mom was watching "Family Feud," she loved watching other people win money. She feels like she's won something especially if the team she was rooting for comes out the victors. This visit was starting off like every other hospital visit, we asked each other about our days. I sat down next to her and she would just talk about what goes on in the hospital. She's much skinner from the last time I saw her though. The medication is supposed to be helping her but it seems like it's deteriorating her. It doesn't stop her from laughing and smiling though. I began to start tearing up. I walked to the window so she doesn't see my eyes.

I turned around and she's still watching her tv show. I took one big breath and asked, "Mom, what if I told you I was gay?" My mom seemed more focused on Steve Harvey cracking jokes. So I repeated, "Mom, what if I told you I was gay?" She's fighting back the tears as she's trying to laugh through the hurt, eyes glued to the television. "Mom did you hear me?"

MOM: Yes, I heard you. Could you do me a favor and tell the nurse it's time for my medicine. I'm starting to feel some pain.
Có, mẹ có nghe. Lâm phiền con gọi Y Tá đến cho mẹ, mẹ đến giờ uống thuốc rồi. Mẹ cảm thấy có chút đau.

ANDY: Do you need it now? Can we finish talking about this?
Có cần gọi Y Tá ngay bây giờ không? Con với mẹ nói chuyện xong trước không được ah?

MOM: Please, just get the nurse right now...
Con làm ơn, gọi Y Tá ngay bây giờ giùm cho mẹ...

I quickly dried my eyes and went to get the nurse. As we came back, my tears were coming back and my heart sank. Everything was moving in slow motion and all I can hear is the sound coming from the electrocardiogram, the heartbeat was flatline...

Beep, beep, beeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeep

The nurse escorted me out the room while she called for help. What did I just do? Did I just kill my own mom? Am I the reason why I won't see her laugh again or smile? Your words were supposed to get me through this heartache before my heartbreak. There is an emptiness. Maybe I didn't deserve you or maybe I just couldn't cure you. Maybe I'm too much to manage, every gaysian needs a mother and dammit, I needed you. I feel like I have been shattered into a million pieces and I'm not sure if there is enough glue, tape, or staples to put me back together.

NURSE: Andy, your mom's heart rate is back to normal, and she's slowly getting better. She's resting now. You can still spend some time with her. Just remember that visiting hours are ending soon.

ANDY: Thank you.

My mom was sleeping. I figured this took a toll on her. I went over to my same seat and talked to my mom as she was sleeping.

ANDY: Mom,

I love you, I appreciate you, and I am sorry. I'm sorry for making you cry... a lot. I made you cry as you gave birth to me. Different cries with different emotions. Happiness, Anger, Fear, Sadness. I am sorry for always wanting the last piece of cake. I did not realize how much it hurt you when I kicked you from in the belly. I am sorry for making you feel afraid. I know that you are not perfect. You were always aware of your flaws and how you can be your worst critic. I am thankful that you carried me longer than nine months. You were always there to hold me. Through your numb arms, and tired back, you would still hold me and loved me. When you are not with me, I can hear your laugh as it rings through our hallways. I can see your smile because it gets me through my hard days. Please don't leave me...

Mẹ,

*Con yêu mẹ, con cảm kích mẹ, con cũng xin lỗi mẹ, vì đã làm cho mẹ khóc...
khóc rất nhiều. Làm cho mẹ khóc lúc sinh ra con. Mỗi lần mẹ khóc là mỗi một xúc
động khác nhau. Vui vẻ, tức giận, kinh hoàng, đau khổ. Con xin lỗi vì đã lấy đi miếng
bánh cuối cùng. Con không hề hay biết là mẹ đau bao nhiêu khi con còn ở trong bụng
mẹ, đập mẹ. Con xin lỗi mẹ vì đã làm mẹ hoãn sự. Con biết mẹ không phải là người
thập toàn thập. Mẹ luôn biết khuyết điểm của mình là gì, và mẹ cũng chính là người
phê bình chính mình ngắc ngao nhất. Con cảm ơn mẹ đã mang con hơn chín tháng trời
ngày. Mẹ luôn ở bên cạnh con, điều đặc con. Dù cánh tay đã tê rần, lưng có đau đi
chần nữa, mẹ vẫn ôm và yêu thương con. Lúc mẹ không ở bên con, con vẫn nghe thấy
tiếng cười của mẹ vang vọng cuối hành lang. Con luôn thấy mẹ cười bởi vì nụ cười của
mẹ luôn giúp con vượt qua khó khăn trong cuộc sống. Xin mẹ đừng bỏ con mà đi*

I went to gather my things so I can leave, as soon as I approached the door,
I heard my mom's sweet voice call my name. She told me to sit down next to her.

MOM: People used to talk about you and I didn't believe them. They said, 'If
you continue to buy him girly things, he'll turn out to be gay' I always protected
you and just let them know that it's okay for you to be feminine. That's just the
way you are. I didn't think too much about it. Today, once you told me that you
were... you know, I was angry. I was angry with God and angry of why you turn out
this way but as I was thinking, my duty is to protect you and if I'm sad about this,
you would be sad too. If this is how you're destined to be, then so be it. There are
times where I sit in this room, I think about how proud I am of you. Everyone may
have known before me but they see you as a wonderful person. I am proud of who
you have become. You continue being you and keep on shining and hopefully you will
find someone who will be lucky enough to love you. When I'm no longer here, you
are strong enough to take care of yourself. Everyone loves you and no one will leave
you. Remember to keep a good head on your shoulders. I'll care for you forever, I
will love you always, my baby you will be...

Người ta thường nói sấu con với mẹ, nhưng mẹ không tinh. Họ nói, 'Nếu
mẹ cứ mua đồ nữ tính cho con, thì con sẽ thành người đồng tính luyến ái' Mẹ luôn bảo
vệ con và luôn nói với họ là dù con có chút nữ tính đi chần nữa thì cũng chần sao. Cái
đó, chính là con người thật của con. Mẹ không suy nghĩ nhiều về điều đó. Nhưng hôm
nay, lúc con nói con là...con biết không, mẹ rất là tức giận. Mẹ giận ông trời và cũng
giận con tại sao thành ra nhưng vậy, nhưng mẹ suy nghĩ lại, trách nhiệm của một
người làm mẹ là bảo vệ con cái của mình, nếu mẹ buồn thì con cũng sẽ buồn theo. Một

khi số phận đã định sẵn cho con là người như vậy, thì cứ như vậy đi. Có lúc mẹ ngồi
trong căn phòng này, nghĩ đến những lúc mẹ hạnh diện vì con. Mẹ biết có rất nhiều
người biết trước tình này, nhưng họ vẫn nghĩ con là một người tuyệt vời. Mẹ hạnh diện
vì con người con đã trở thành. Con hãy tiếp tục làm chính con và tỏa sáng, mẹ cũng hy
vọng con kiếm được một người may mắn thương yêu con. Đến lúc mẹ không còn nữa,
mẹ hy vọng con có thể dùng cảm ma sống tiếp. Con nên sống bằng lý trí. Mẹ sẽ mãi
trăm sóc cho con, mẹ sẽ vẫn mãi yêu thương con, con luôn là bảo bối của mẹ...

END

Coming out isn't a one time event,
it's a series of doors you never stop opening.
It is not a brave act,
it is a brave life.
It's both liberating and dangerous.
It is a tiny battle in a long war
of love and body.
To all those who are searching
for the courage to open that first door,
whether for yourself or for those you love
or for those who dare not love you,
know that you have a choice
how and when to come out,
know that you are mighty
for simply being
yourself.