

SAIGON

crosswise and quarter them lengthwise, transfer to a large bowl, and cover with water; soak for 2 minutes. Drain lotus stems and transfer to a large bowl. Add pork, shrimp, pickled carrot and daikon, pickled shallots, rau răm or cilantro, celery leaves (if using), and peanuts. Toss salad with the reserved dressing and season with salt and more fish sauce and lime juice, if you like. Transfer salad to a platter, leaving excess dressing in the bowl.

**GIÒ HEO HẦM MĂNG**

(Pork Hocks Simmered with Bamboo Shoots)

SERVES 6

If you can't find fresh pork hocks, you may use pork shoulder, cut into 2" cubes, instead. This dish is traditionally prepared with dried and rehydrated bamboo shoots, but we found that canned ones are a worthy stand-in. (See THE PANTRY, page 100, for hard-to-find ingredients.)

- 2½ lbs. fresh pork hocks
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 small onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 3 tbsp. fish sauce
- 1 ¾" piece golden rock sugar
- 6 canned bamboo shoot tips, cut lengthwise into sixths
- 2 dried wood ear mushrooms, soaked in hot water, drained and cut into ½"-wide strips
- 4 large dried shiitake mushrooms, soaked in hot water, drained, stemmed, and quartered
- ½ lb. dried round bún rice noodles, boiled until tender, drained, and rinsed

12 scallions, white and pale green parts only

1 Season pork with salt and transfer to plate. Heat oil in a 6-qt. dutch oven over high heat. Add the pork and cook, turning occasionally, until lightly browned, 5 minutes. Add the onions and cook, stirring frequently, until soft, about 6 minutes. Add the fish sauce and 10 cups water and bring to a boil, skimming any foam on the surface. Add sugar and bamboo tips, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, uncovered, until pork is tender, about 2 hours. Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 10 minutes. Season the broth with more salt and fish sauce, if you like.

2 Divide noodles between 6 bowls. Transfer pork to a plate; cut off and discard skin. Slice the meat off the bone, and divide between the bowls. Return broth to a boil; add scallions and cook for 30 seconds. Ladle broth over noodles and pork; serve.

**ĐỐ CHUA**

(Carrot and Daikon Pickle)

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

This crunchy pickle can stand alone as a snack or an appetizer, or you can add it to Asian dipping sauces, bánh mì (the spicy Vietnamese baguette pork sandwich), or salads like the lotus stem salad shown on facing page.

- ½ lb. carrots, peeled and cut into matchsticks
- 1½ lbs. small daikon, peeled and cut into matchsticks
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. plus ¼ cup sugar
- ½ cup plus 2 tbsp. white vinegar

1 In a bowl, combine the carrots, daikon, salt, and 1 tsp. sugar. Let sit until the vegetables have wilted slightly and liquid pools at the bottom of the bowl, about 30 minutes. Drain vegetables; rinse and pat dry with paper towels. Transfer vegetables to a medium bowl.

2 Whisk together the remaining sugar, the vinegar, and ½ cup warm water and pour mixture over the vegetables. Stir to combine. Set mixture aside to let marinate for at least 1 hour or refrigerate, tightly covered, for up to 4 weeks.

**CHÈ CHUỐI**

(Banana, Coconut, and Tapioca Pearl Soup)

SERVES 4

This creamy, sweet dessert is a favorite Vietnamese street snack.

- ¼ cup small tapioca pearls (about ⅛" in diameter; see page 100)
- 1 lb. firm-ripe bananas, peeled and cut crosswise into ¾"-thick slices
- 1 cup coconut milk
- ¼ cup sugar
- ⅛ tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp. unsalted roasted peanuts, for garnish (optional)

1 Bring 2½ cups water to a boil over high heat in a 2-qt. saucepan. Stir in the tapioca pearls and cook, stirring occasionally, until the pearls are translucent and the liquid has thickened, about 12 minutes. To check tapioca pearls for doneness, look for a tiny white dot in the center of the pearl; if you don't see one, continue to cook.

2 Add bananas, coconut milk, sugar, and salt and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, stirring occasionally, until the bananas are just soft and the flavors have melded, about 2 minutes. Remove pan from the heat, stir in the vanilla, and let soup cool for 10 minutes. Ladle soup into small bowls and top with peanuts, if you like.

MUNG BEANS

Mung beans—used in the making of the bánh xèo, or sizzling rice crêpes, on the facing page—come from the plant *Vigna radiata*, which likely originated in India some 3,000 years ago. Unhulled, the small, round beans have an olive green skin; husked and split, they reveal a golden flesh possessed of a subtly sweet flavor and a surprisingly rich texture. In this country, we're the most familiar with the bean's crunchy white sprouts, but in Vietnam and other Asian countries, the beans themselves form the base of countless sweet and savory dishes. Prized for their versatility, the beans, also called green gram beans, are used in soups, porridges, and rice dishes; they can also play a role in desserts like jin doi, a doughnut-like Chinese pastry filled with sweetened mung bean paste, and lend their starchy character to the cellophane noodles used in many Asian soups. What's more, mung beans cook relatively quickly, in roughly half the time needed for legumes like yellow lentils. Look for the beans at Asian, Indian, and Middle Eastern markets, usually labeled "peeled split mung beans". (See THE PANTRY, page 100, for a source.)

—Katherine Cancila

