

Location:	1612-1616 International Boulevard (APN020-0145-015-00)
Proposal:	Allow Beer and Wine Sales in Full Service Restaurant on a Restricted street
Contact Person/Phone Number:	Tra Dickerson Jr. (510) 990-7600
Owner:	Tra Dickerson Jr.
Case File Number:	PLN 15-0411
Planning Permits Required:	Major Conditional Use Permit for a Full Service Restaurant within 200 Feet of a Restricted Street Pursuant to OPC 17.103 (International Boulevard) to sell alcoholic beverages
General Plan:	Urban Residential
Zoning:	RU-5 Urban Residential Zoning District
Environmental Determination:	Categorically Exempt, Section 15301 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines; Existing Facilities; 15183, Projects in Conformance with Adopted Plans
Historic Status:	Not a Potential Designated Historic Property
Service Delivery District:	3
City Council District:	2
Action to Be Taken:	Approve Staff Recommendation
Finality of Decision:	Appealable to City Council
For Further Information:	David Valeska at (510) 238-2075 or dvalueska@oaklandnet.com

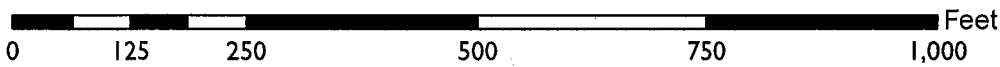
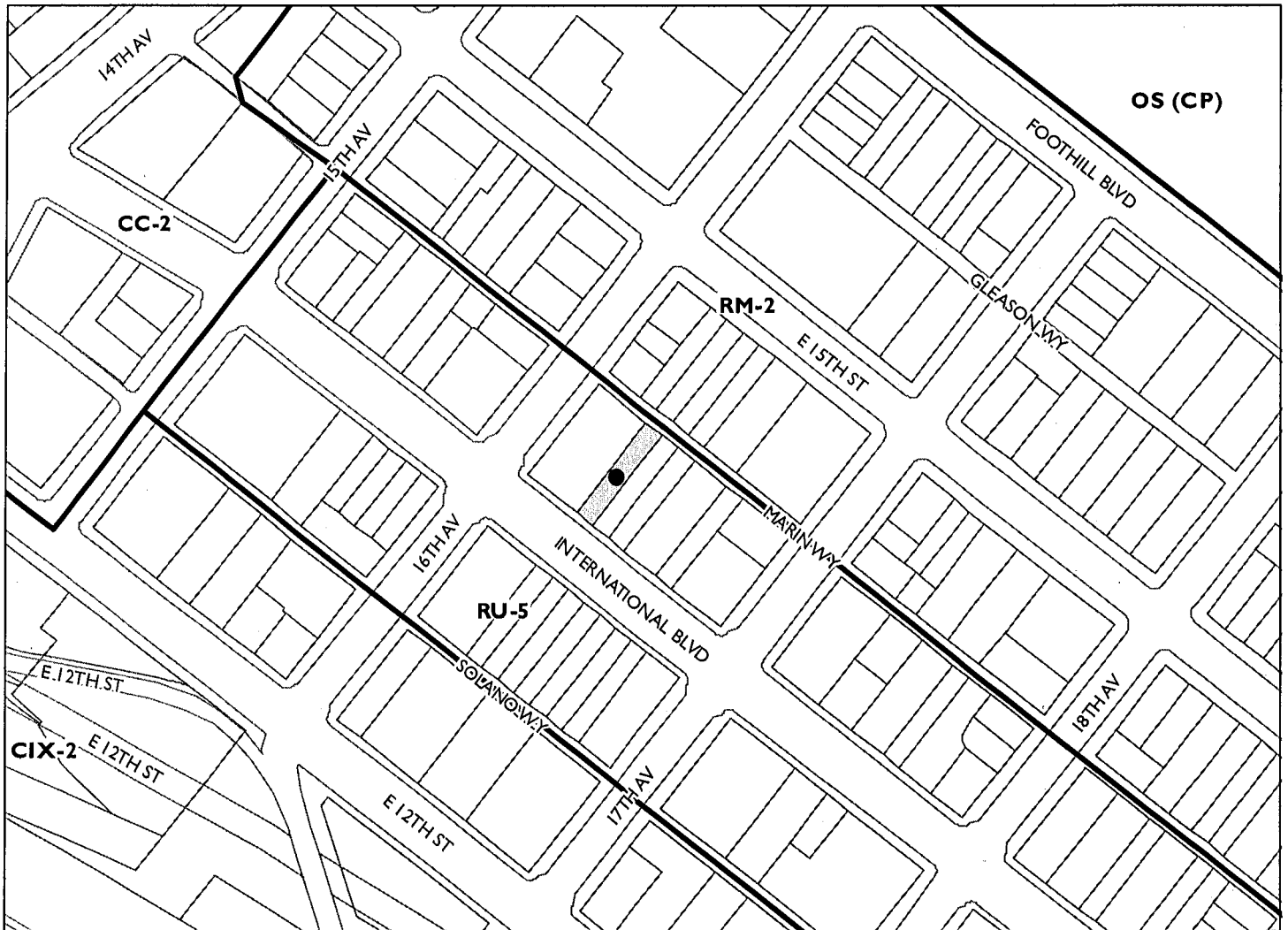
SUMMARY

This proposal involves a request to establish a Full Service Restaurant serving beer and wine in an existing commercial building located on International Boulevard in the San Antonio neighborhood. Section 17.103.030.B of the Planning Code requires a Major Conditional Use Permit (CUP) in order to allow alcoholic beverage sales as part of a Full Service Restaurant, on a Restricted Street, including areas within 200 feet of International Boulevard.

The CUP requirement in the City's Zoning Code recognizes that on certain streets (MacArthur Boulevard, International Boulevard, San Pablo Avenue, etc.) the combination of concentrated alcohol uses and history of street crime increase the risk to the public from certain added alcohol vendors. Few new liquor stores, bars and similar uses have been approved in these areas. However, Full Service Restaurants, however, are generally not considered to be crime generators. Therefore, the CUP process allows such restaurants to locate within the limitations of applied conditions intended to minimize potential negative impacts. The current application at 1612-1616 International Boulevard is considered in this context.

The merits of the project include providing family oriented quality restaurant service, with alcoholic beverage sales, in a part of San Antonio known for restaurant selection. Providing alcoholic beverage service allows the restaurant to compete in this location. Staff recommends approval because this restaurant will enhance the concentration of dining choices and will help to support pedestrian traffic in one of the City's main shopping districts. Full Service Restaurants have been demonstrated in other neighborhoods to provide stability and contribute to cultural identity. Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission affirm staff Environmental Determination and approve the proposed CUP to allow beer and wine sales within a Full Service Restaurant.

CITY OF OAKLAND PLANNING COMMISSION



Case File: PLNI5411
Applicant: Tra Dickerson, Jr.
Address: 1612 International Boulevard
Zone: RU-5

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to utilize an approximately 4,000 square foot space in an existing building, with service of beer and wine as part of a Full Service Restaurant menu. Any alcohol service at a Full Service Restaurant requires a Major Conditional Use Permit, when located within 200 feet of a Restricted Street as defined in Oakland Planning Code (OPC) Section 17.103.030.B-2. The business, Oakland Café, will operate with 5 employees and would be open daily 9 am to midnight, with room to serve up to 112 customers at once. The dining area and a large kitchen demonstrate that this is a Full Service Restaurant and not a bar.

The attached site map and plans further describe the project (See Attachment C).

GENERAL PLAN ANALYSIS

The site is located in the Urban Residential district of the General Plan Land Use and Transportation Element. This designation provides for a wide variety of activities including a few commercial activities serving neighborhood residents. Providing gourmet alcoholic beverages with food will enhance the tourism and resident-supported gourmet food and drink area of San Antonio.

ZONING ANALYSIS

The site is located in the RU-5 Urban Residential Zone. In this district, sales of alcohol in a Full Service Restaurant located within 200 feet of a Restricted Street (International Boulevard) requires a Major Conditional Use Permit. This requirement was enacted primarily to control nuisance-type alcohol sales. The applicant's request is for a small upscale gourmet Full Service Restaurant also serving alcohol. Since this is a Full Service Restaurant, a Variance and Findings of Public Convenience and Necessity are **not** required by the Oakland Planning Code. The request is consistent with the theme of San Antonio as a gourmet business concentration, in essence a small satellite downtown to serve the neighborhood.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

Staff has evaluated the project according to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and determined it is exempt from environmental review for the following reasons: Section 15301 of the CEQA Guidelines exempt from environmental review existing facilities. The alcoholic beverage use area (dining tables serving beer and wine) is about 1,000 square feet within an existing building, which does not change the floor area of the building, and is not likely to produce measurable physical or other environmental effects. Therefore, the project is determined to be exempt from further CEQA review. This project is consistent with plans and zoning subject to CUP approval, and is therefore also exempt from further CEQA review under Section 15183 (projects consistent with a community plan, general plan, or zoning).

ANALYSIS

The applicant chose this location due to its proximity to an emerging expansion of San Antonio's restaurant and shopping district. Nearby restaurant choices include several Asian cafes, a Burger King and similar restaurants. Although the site is not visible from potential customers on the 880 Freeway, this is a desirable location for a business which depends on regular neighborhood patronage. There are other restaurant and retail businesses serving alcohol in the area. One type of business which is rare among the spectrum of existing gourmet food and beverage uses in the area is an upscale Vietnamese menu restaurant with specialty alcoholic beverage service and fills this gap.

The applicant's proposal requires a Major Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for Alcohol Beverage Service. It is reasonable to expect that the small size, midnight closing time and family-oriented customer base of the proposed restaurant will result in no adverse impacts. Further, the immediate neighbors are mainly commercial uses on a busy street; the nearest residential units are on backstreets which do not front toward this activity.

Overall crime statistics for the subject area (three months prior to April 27, 2016, in a half mile radius) showed crime reports similar to other central East Oakland shopping areas. The subject area had approximately 100 reported crimes, mainly thefts, burglaries, robberies, graffiti cases, and assaults in 3 months. This crime rate is consistent with other non-hillside areas of Oakland, and is less than the rate further east in the City. People from other neighborhoods and from San Antonio feel safe patronizing the variety of businesses on the busy sidewalks of the area. While crime does occur in the Police Beat area, staff and the applicant believe the proposed cafe is small and will not significantly contribute to crime levels.

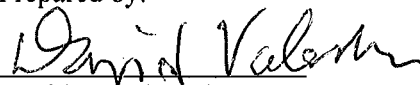
CONCLUSION

The applicant plans to sell beverages in a Full Service Restaurant setting, and the Conditional Use Permit would run with the property. If this specialty vendor moves out, a replacement business would be required to comply with the project description and conditions of this CUP. In the central San Antonio commercial area, the proposed Full Service Restaurant activity with alcohol would reinforce the emerging gourmet and shopping concept and help to bring customers to neighboring commercial uses. There were no letters of concern from the neighboring community filed as of June 8, 2016. Staff concludes that the Findings for the Major CUP are fulfilled, as further explained in Attachment A (Findings) and through the proposed Conditions of Approval.

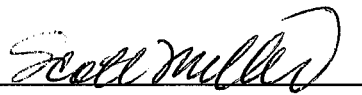
RECOMMENDATION:

1. Affirm staff's environmental determination;
2. Approve the Major Conditional Use Permit at 1612 International Boulevard, based on the attached findings and conditions.

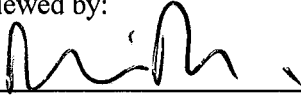
Prepared by:


David Valeska, Planner II

Reviewed by:

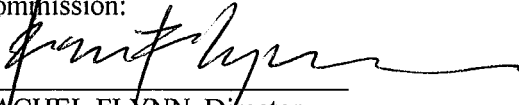

SCOTT MILLER
Zoning Manager

Reviewed by:



DARIN RANELLETTI, Deputy Director
Bureau of Planning

Approved for Forwarding to the Planning
Commission:



RACHEL FLYNN, Director
Planning and Building Department

Attachments:

- A. Findings
- B. Conditions of Approval
- C. Plans and Photographs
- D. Applicant Menu

ATTACHMENT A: FINDINGS

FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL (ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE SALES)

This proposal meets the required findings under the Oakland Planning Code. Required findings are shown in **bold** type; explanations as to why these findings can be made are in normal type.

Section 17.134.050 (General Use Permit Criteria):

- A. That the location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed development will be compatible with and will not adversely affect the livability or appropriate development of abutting properties and the surrounding neighborhood, with consideration to be given to harmony in scale, bulk, coverage, and density; to the availability of civic facilities and utilities; to harmful effect, if any, upon desirable neighborhood character; to the generation of traffic and the capacity of surrounding streets; and to any other relevant impact of the development.**

The proposed business would satisfy a community need which does not affect livability of the surrounding neighborhood, and will be operated in a small scale which is compatible with San Antonio's neighborhood character. The proposed Full Service Restaurant will offer gourmet food and alcohol selections in a neighborhood which is becoming known for gourmet food and drink facilities, retail and nightclub activities. Conditions of approval will limit noise, light, trash/litter, loitering, late hours and similar factors to offset any potential for negative effects of alcohol sales related activities.

- B. That the location, design, and site planning of the proposed development will provide a convenient and functional living, working, shopping, or civic environment, and will be as attractive as the nature of the use and its location and setting warrant.**

The proposed business will promote availability of gourmet alcoholic beverages with meals and enhance the convenience and functional living environment of its customers. The small size, reusing a rebuilt space, will create an attractive facility as warranted by location and setting. This area of San Antonio would form more gourmet food/beverage/entertainment related businesses where such uses are appropriate.

- C. That the proposed development will enhance the successful operation of the surrounding area in its basic community functions, or will provide an essential service to the community or region.**

The proposed business will function to meet the community's café needs including hospitality or celebrations. This facility would have less traffic, noise and light than a similar business might have offered in a larger format. This facility complements the offerings of existing International Boulevard restaurants and other Alcoholic Beverage Services in San Antonio.

- D. That the proposal conforms to all applicable design review criteria set forth in the design review procedure at Section 17.136.070.**

The building to be utilized by the Full Service Restaurant at 1612-1616 International Avenue is existing. No major changes in the building are proposed from the façade which has been compatible with designs of neighboring facilities, therefore additional Design Review is not now required.

- E. That the proposal conforms in all significant respects with the Oakland General Plan and with any other applicable plan or development control map which has been adopted by the City Council.**

The General Plan allows for review and approval of Alcoholic Beverage Sales uses through the Conditional Use Permit. The General Plan also allows for businesses that will not cause undue nuisance activity. The Urban Residential land use category envisions a wide range of retail, restaurant and specialty stores along with promoting mixed-use developments. An attractive and well-managed gourmet café with alcohol at this location will conform to adopted plans.

Section 17.103.030 (A) - Special Use Permit Criteria, Alcoholic Beverage Sales:

- 1. That the proposal will not contribute to undue proliferation of such uses in a area where additional ones would be undesirable, with consideration to be given to the area's function and character, problems of crime and loitering, and traffic problems and capacity.**

The proposed business is not envisioned to contribute to the same types of loitering and other problems as do some other Alcoholic Beverage Sales locations. City crime statistics for recent months show that overall alcohol-related crime rates near the applicant's site are similar to commercial areas elsewhere in San Antonio. The neighborhood streets have sufficient capacity to support this small facility without causing undue traffic or other problems. Much of the traffic is foot traffic due to its location, from the neighborhood, and the site lacks loitering areas.

- 2. That the proposal will not adversely affect adjacent or nearby churches, temples or synagogues; public or parochial, or private elementary, junior high, or high schools; public parks or recreation centers; or public or parochial playgrounds.**

The proposed business is in a neighborhood central district which includes park and school sites. The restaurant is unlikely to adversely affect them or small uses such as daycare centers in the area. Likewise, houses of worship would not experience effects, since most restaurant hours do not overlap hours of houses of worship. This facility design has built-in sound attenuation characteristics within the structure. Staff believes that the small scale and dining-focus of the use will protect nearby uses from adverse effects. Such Full Service Restaurants serving alcohol are typically compatible with schools and churches.

- 3. That the proposal will not interfere with the movement of people along an important pedestrian street.**

The facility entrance will include ADA disabled access. The 100 to 200 projected daily customers would be arriving throughout the day and evening, which minimizes the crowd management issues of the building tenant. The building entry does not impede pedestrian corridors.

- 4. That the proposed development will be of an architectural and visual quality and character, which harmonizes with, or where appropriate enhances the surrounding area.**

The building's façade shares a scale with nearby sales facilities for which CUP's have been approved, and has details similar to some of its neighbors, including color and shape. The facility is of an architectural character that harmonizes with and enhances the area.

5. **That the design will avoid unduly large or obtrusive signs, bleak unlandscaped parking areas, and an overall garish impression.**

While not proposed for Design Review of signage at this time, future signage would be similar to past signage for this commercial building, and would not be overly large or obtrusive. No parking is provided on-site, which is consistent with the Oakland Planning Code standard for reuse of existing commercial buildings. The site is walking distance to parking lots and has excellent bus service including Bus Rapid Transit nearby, which supplements on-street parking in the area.

6. **That adequate litter receptacles will be provided where appropriate.**

As conditioned, there will be non-flammable trash containers installed proximate to the entrance of the facility and litter will be removed from the sidewalk and gutter in front of and to twenty feet beyond the premises.

7. **That where the proposed use is in close proximity to residential uses, and especially to bedroom windows, it will be limited in hours of operation, or designed or operated, so as to avoid disruption of residents' sleep between the hours of ten PM and seven AM.**

The nearest dwellings are primarily behind the site in this commercial district and are sufficiently distant to limit noise effects. Existing roadway noise creates an ambient level which will mask any of the business's noise effects. Attached conditions are provided to ameliorate some of the potential noise effects, including reduced hours of evening operations and lighting controls.

Conditions of Approval, 1612-1616 International Boulevard,

Case No. PLN15-0411

1. Approved Use

The project shall be constructed and operated in accordance with the authorized use as described in the approved application for on-site sales (with meals) of beer and wine in a Full Service Restaurant at 1612-1616 International Boulevard; and the approved plans dated April 27, 2016 as amended by the following conditions of approval if applicable (“Conditions of Approval” or “Conditions”).

2. Effective Date, Expiration, Extensions and Extinguishment

This Approval shall become effective immediately, unless the Approval is appealable, in which case the Approval shall become effective in ten calendar days unless an appeal is filed. Unless a different termination date is prescribed, this Approval shall expire two calendar years from the Approval date, or from the date of the final decision in the event of an appeal, unless within such period all necessary permits for construction or alteration have been issued, or the authorized activities have commenced in the case of a permit not involving construction or alteration. Upon written request and payment of appropriate fees submitted no later than the expiration date of this Approval, the Director of City Planning or designee may grant a one-year extension of this date, with additional extensions subject to approval by the approving body. Expiration of any necessary building permit or other construction-related permit for this project may invalidate this Approval if said Approval has also expired. If litigation is filed challenging this Approval, or its implementation, then the time period stated above for obtaining necessary permits for construction or alteration and/or commencement of authorized activities is automatically extended for the duration of the litigation.

3. Compliance with Other Requirements

The project applicant shall comply with all other applicable federal, state, regional, and local laws/codes, requirements, regulations, and guidelines, including but not limited to those imposed by the City’s Bureau of Building, Fire Marshal, and Public Works Department. Compliance with other applicable requirements may require changes to the approved use and/or plans. These changes shall be processed in accordance with the procedures contained in Condition #4.

4. Minor and Major Changes

- a. Minor changes to the approved project, plans, Conditions, facilities, or use may be approved administratively by the Director of City Planning.
- b. Major changes to the approved project, plans, Conditions, facilities, or use shall be reviewed by the Director of City Planning to determine whether such changes require submittal and approval of a revision to the Approval by the original approving body or a new independent permit/approval. Major revisions shall be reviewed in accordance with the procedures required for the original permit/approval. A new independent permit/approval shall be reviewed in accordance with the procedures required for the new permit/approval.

5. Compliance with Conditions of Approval

- a. The project applicant and property owner, including successors, (collectively referred to hereafter as the “project applicant” or “applicant”) shall be responsible for compliance with all the Conditions of Approval and any recommendations contained in any submitted and approved technical report at his/her sole cost and expense, subject to review and approval by the City of Oakland.
- b. The City of Oakland reserves the right at any time during construction to require certification by a licensed professional at the project applicant’s expense that the as-built project conforms to all applicable requirements, including but not limited to, approved maximum heights and minimum setbacks. Failure to construct the project in accordance with the Approval may result in remedial reconstruction, permit revocation, permit modification, stop work, permit suspension, or other corrective action.
- c. Violation of any term, Condition, or project description relating to the Approval is unlawful, prohibited, and a violation of the Oakland Municipal Code. The City of Oakland reserves the right to initiate civil and/or criminal enforcement and/or abatement proceedings, or after notice and public hearing, to revoke the Approval or alter these Conditions if it is found that there is violation of any of the Conditions or the provisions of the Planning Code or Municipal Code, or the project operates as or causes a public nuisance. This provision is not intended to, nor does it, limit in any manner whatsoever the ability of the City to take appropriate enforcement actions. The project applicant shall be responsible for paying fees in accordance with the City’s Master Fee Schedule for inspections conducted by the City or a City-designated third-party to investigate alleged violations of the Approval or Conditions.

6. Signed Copy of the Approval/Conditions

A copy of the Approval letter and Conditions shall be signed by the project applicant, attached to each set of permit plans submitted to the appropriate City agency for the project, and made available for review at the project job site at all times.

7. Blight/Nuisances

The project site shall be kept in a blight/nuisance-free condition. Any existing blight or nuisance shall be abated within 60 days of approval, unless an earlier date is specified elsewhere.

8. Indemnification

- a. To the maximum extent permitted by law, the project applicant shall defend (with counsel acceptable to the City), indemnify, and hold harmless the City of Oakland, the Oakland City Council, the Oakland Redevelopment Successor Agency, the Oakland City Planning Commission, and their respective agents, officers, employees, and volunteers (hereafter collectively called “City”) from any liability, damages, claim, judgment, loss (direct or indirect), action, causes of action, or proceeding (including legal costs, attorneys’ fees, expert witness or consultant fees, City Attorney or staff time, expenses or costs) (collectively called “Action”) against the City to attack, set aside, void or annul this Approval or implementation of this Approval. The City may elect, in its sole discretion, to participate in the defense of said Action and the project applicant shall reimburse the City for its reasonable legal costs and attorneys’ fees.

- b. Within ten (10) calendar days of the filing of any Action as specified in subsection (a) above, the project applicant shall execute a Joint Defense Letter of Agreement with the City, acceptable to the Office of the City Attorney, which memorializes the above obligations. These obligations and the Joint Defense Letter of Agreement shall survive termination, extinguishment, or invalidation of the Approval. Failure to timely execute the Letter of Agreement does not relieve the project applicant of any of the obligations contained in this Condition or other requirements or Conditions of Approval that may be imposed by the City.

9. Severability

The Approval would not have been granted but for the applicability and validity of each and every one of the specified Conditions, and if one or more of such Conditions is found to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction this Approval would not have been granted without requiring other valid Conditions consistent with achieving the same purpose and intent of such Approval.

SPECIFIC PROJECT CONDITIONS

10. Hours

The business may be open to the public for business from 9 am to midnight daily. Any work outside of these hours shall solely be for purposes of staff preparation and the business shall not be open to the public during these hours.

When Required: Ongoing

Initial Approval: N/A

Monitoring and Inspection: Code Compliance

11. Facility Management

Requirement:

- a. Lighting shall be maintained providing enough illumination to identify loiterers standing in front of the store and in the parking lot. Such illumination shall remain lit during all hours of darkness when the business is open.
- b. The licensees/property owners shall clear the gutter and sidewalks twenty feet beyond the property lines along these streets of litter twice daily or as needed to control litter (sweep or mechanically clean weekly). The licensee shall clean the sidewalk with steam or equivalent measures once per month.
- c. Graffiti shall be removed from the premises within 72 hours (3 days) of application.
- d. No pay phones are permitted outside the building.
- e. The owner, manager, and employees of this establishment shall make appropriate efforts to discourage loitering from the premises including calling the police to ask that they remove loiterers who refuse to leave. Persons hanging around the exterior of the establishment with no apparent business for more than ten minutes shall be asked to leave. Techniques discussed in the

manual entitled "Loitering: Business and Community Based Solutions" may be used and are recommended by the Alcoholic Beverage Action Team.

When Required: Ongoing.

Initial Approval: N/A

Monitoring and Inspection: Code Compliance

SPECIFIC CONDITIONS RELATED TO ALCOHOL SALES

12. Conformance with State Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control regulations

Ongoing.

This use shall obtain and maintain an ABC license type 41 only and conform to all provisions of the State ABC license. The state license and state conditions shall be posted along with these Conditional Use Permit conditions in a place visible to the public. This use shall also conform to all State Retail Operating Standards, Section 25612.5 of the Business and Professions Code and local Performance Standards, Section 15210, where applicable including any future changes in the above regulations. The intent of these standards is to reduce nuisance, litter, loitering, and crime associated with alcohol outlets. The City Conditions of Approval shall be forwarded to the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.

13. Compliance with City of Oakland Special Regulations for Alcoholic Beverage Sales Commercial Activities.

a. Prior to the Commencement of Operations and Ongoing

At least one sign (one square foot maximum) shall be posted and maintained in a legible condition at each public entrance to the building prohibiting littering and loitering. Required signage prohibiting open containers and drinking in public shall also be maintained in legible condition near each public entrance to the store. The "No Open Container" signs are available from the cashier located on the second floor of 250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza.

b. Ongoing

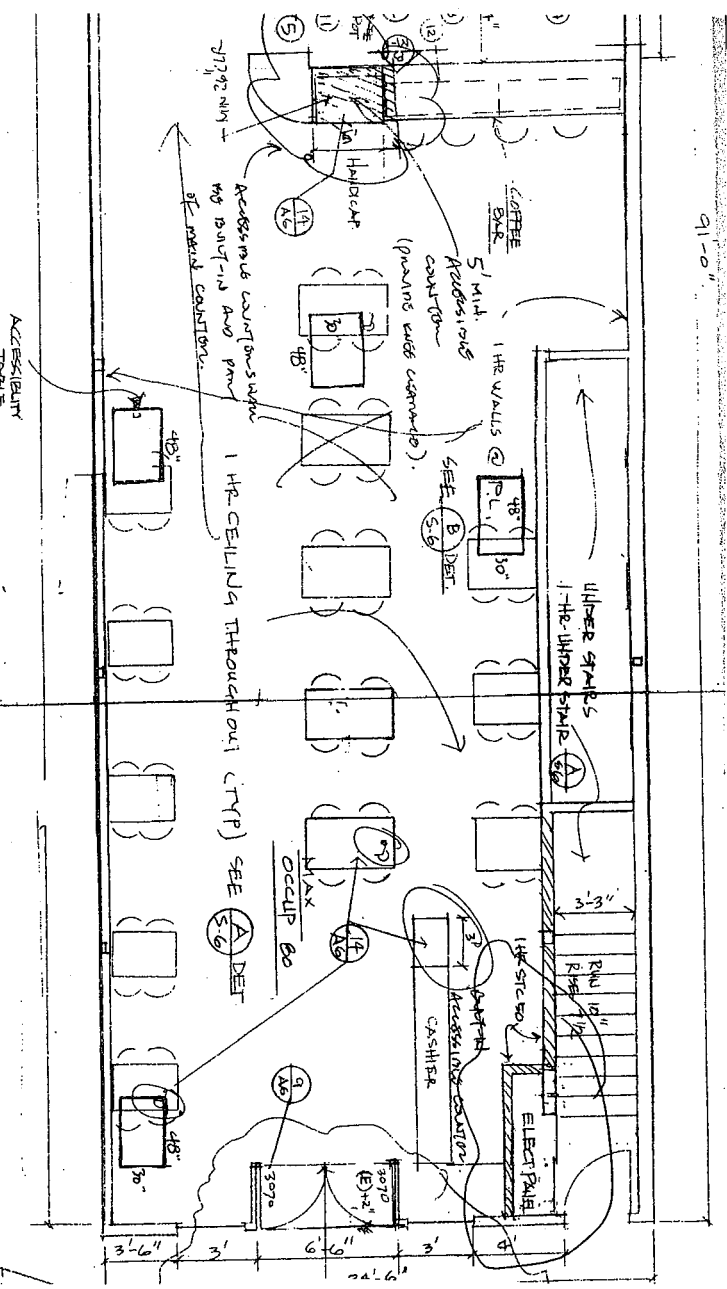
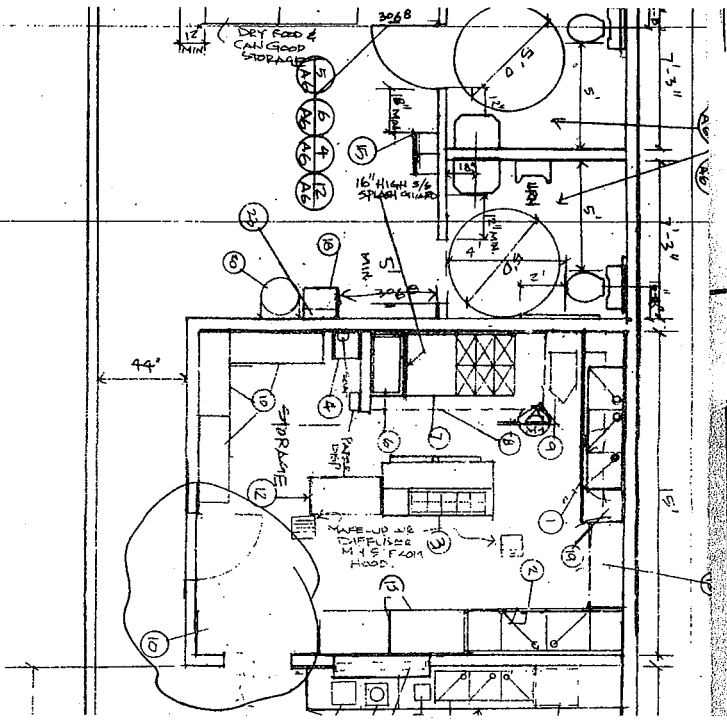
Beer and wine consumption is for on-site consumption only in conjunction with a Full-Service Restaurant. Food must be served during all hours that alcohol is served.

14. Compliance Review

After six months of commencement of activity.

The applicant shall return to the Bureau of Planning to report progress and to have an evaluation of compliance with Conditions done. Should any complaints regarding on-sale provision or other issues regarding full-service restaurant with sale of beer and wine be identified, staff may refer the item back to the Planning Commission under a Director's Report. In that case, the applicant shall submit for a Compliance Review, and pay all appropriate fees consistent with the current Master Fee Schedule at that time (currently \$382.12). The Compliance Review shall provide an opportunity for the Commission and the public to provide comment on the operation and determine whether there is a violation of any term, Conditions or project description relating to the Approvals or if there is violation of any provision of the Planning Code or Municipal Code, or the project operates as or causes a public nuisance or there exists adverse impacts caused. As a result

of the hearing, the Commission may direct staff to initiate enforcement proceedings pursuant to Condition of Approval 5C, and/or may impose additional conditions related to the operation, including restriction of hours of operation.



FLOOR PLAN (1ST. FL.)

1/4" = 1'-0"

314004 608
REV 004 67

REVISION NO.	DATE	BY	DESCRIPTION
1			REVISED PER AS BUILT
2			NO FRONT ELEVATION

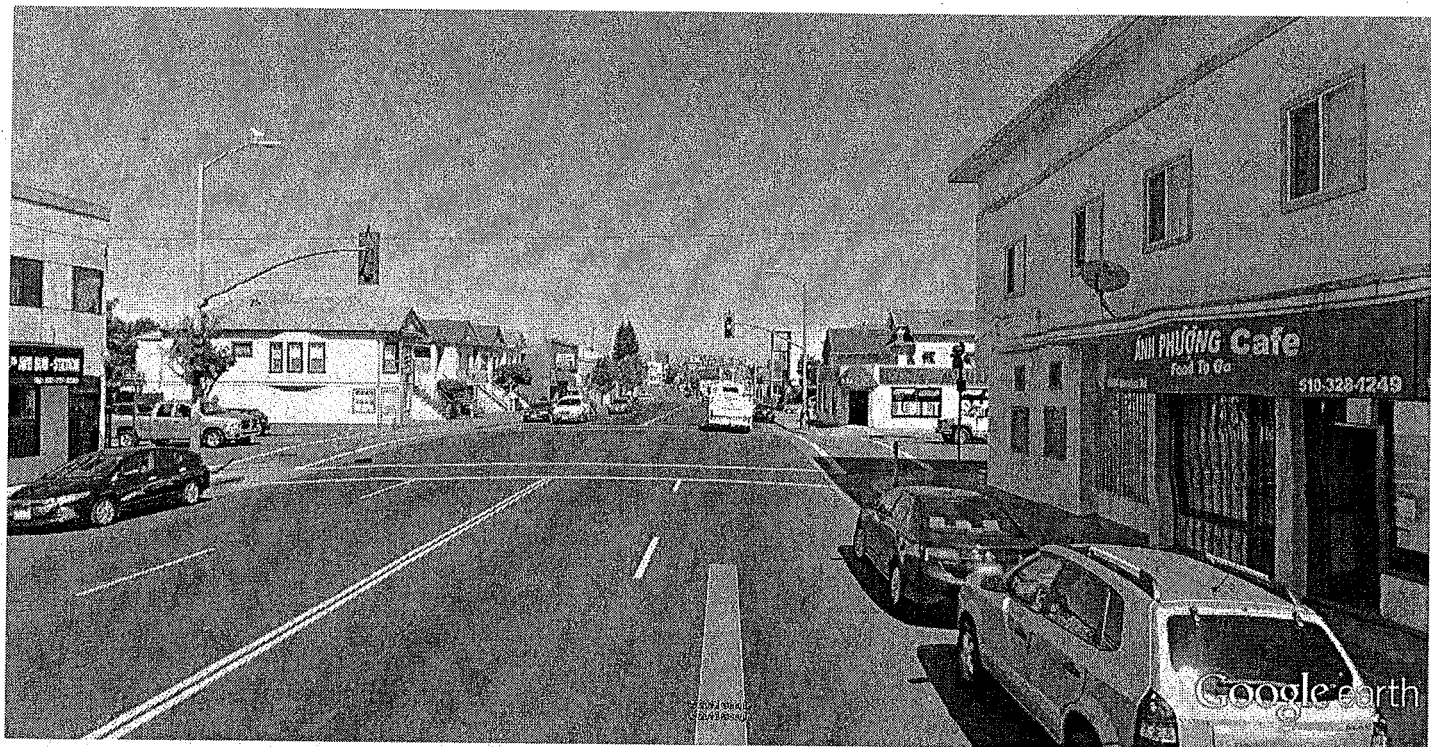
REV 12/25/15
REVISED PER AS BUILT
1. ELECT PANEL
2. NO FRONT ELEVATION

SIDE
ELECT
MAX
502.4



Google earth





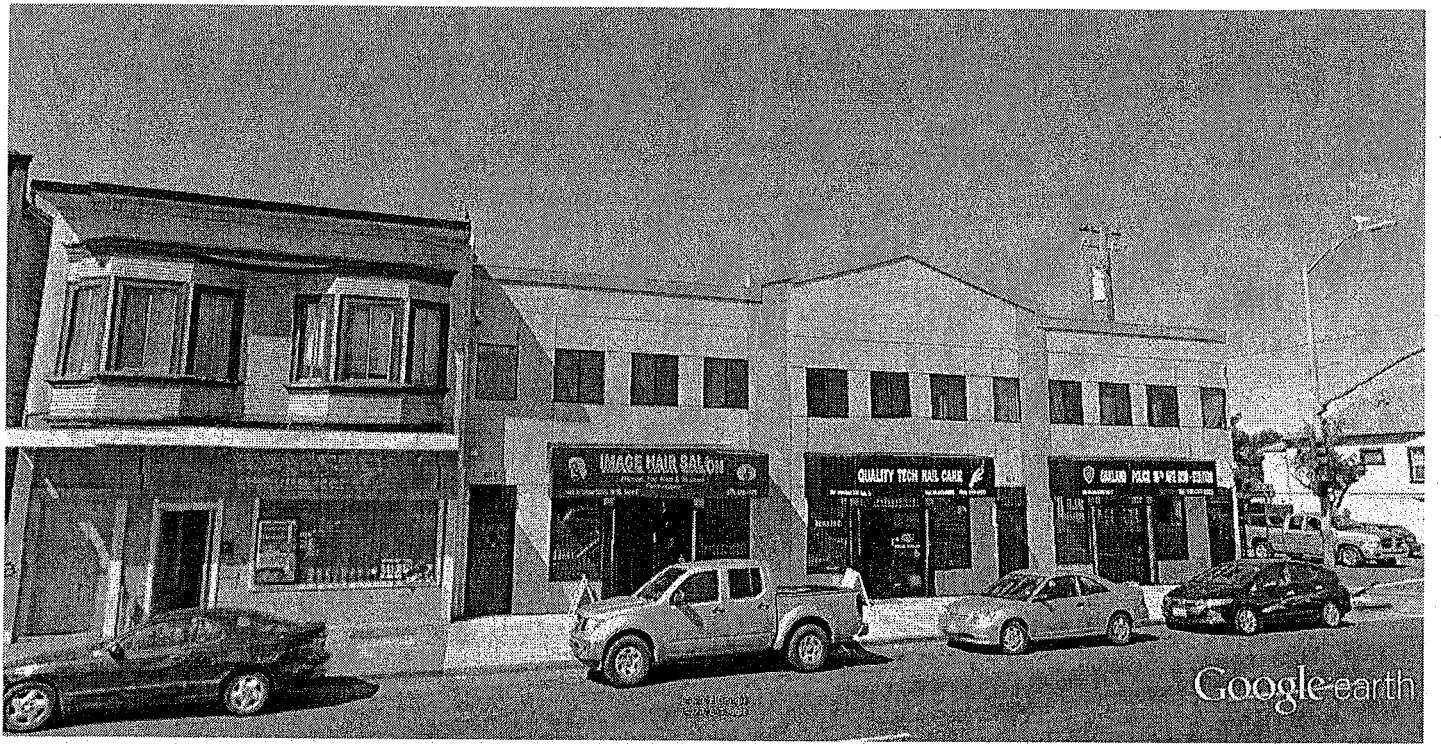
Google earth

feet
meters

10

5





Google earth

feet
meters





1. Cheap can be tasty too.

1. Pho

What list of Vietnamese cuisine would be complete without pho? It's almost impossible to walk a block in Vietnam's major cities without bumping into a crowd of hungry patrons slurping noodles at a makeshift pho stand.

This simple staple consisting of a salty broth, fresh rice noodles, a sprinkling of herbs and chicken or beef, features predominately in the local diet -- and understandably so. It's cheap, tasty, and widely available at all hours.

Just look out for a mass of people on plastic stools -- or try a tried and tested favorite: Pho Thin, 13 Lo Duc, HaiBa Trung District, Hanoi; +84 43 821 2709

Also on CNNGo: [World's 50 most delicious foods](#)

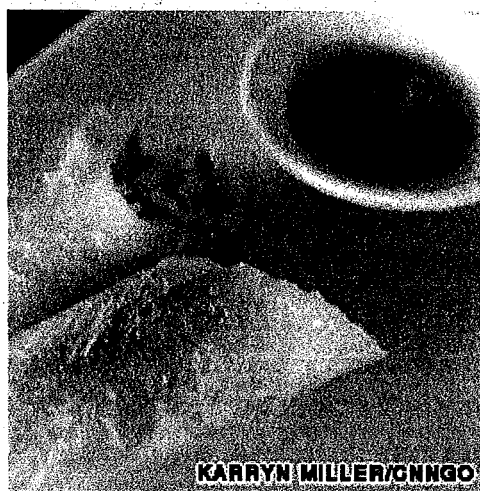


2. A food so good they named a street after it.



2. Cha ca

Hanoians consider cha ca to be so exceptional that there is a street in the capital dedicated to these fried morsels of fish. This namesake alley is home to Cha Ca La Vong, which serves sizzling chunks of fish seasoned with garlic, ginger, turmeric and dill on a hot pan tableside. *Cha Ca La Vong may be the busiest but the service is a bit gruff and the food overpriced. Instead make your way to Duong Than in Hanoi's Hoan Kiem district, where you'll find plenty of more affordable but just as tasty options*

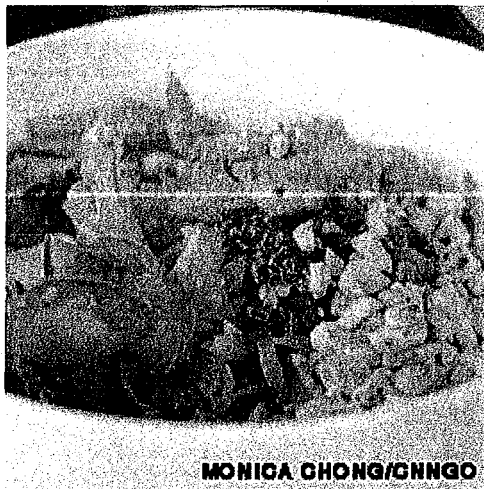


3. A Crepe you won't forget.

3. Banh xeo

A good banh xeo is a crispy crepe bulging with pork, shrimp, and bean sprouts, plus the garnish of fresh herbs that are characteristic of most authentic Vietnamese dishes. To enjoy one like a local, cut it into manageable slices, roll it up in rice paper or lettuce leaves and dunk it in whatever special sauce the chef has mixed up for each night they must be doing something right. *Banh Xeo, 46A Dinh Cong Trang, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City (HCM)*





MO HING CHONG/GHNGGO

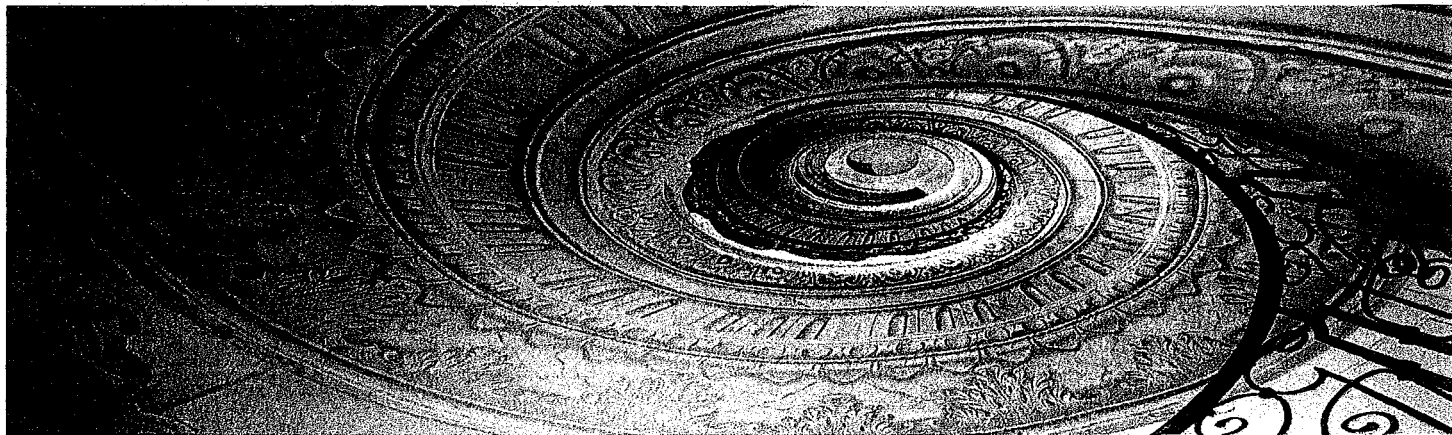
4. Soft, crunchy, sweet, spicy -- A bowl of contrasts.

4. Cao lau

This pork noodle dish from Hoi An is a bit like the various cultures that visited the trading port at its prime. The thicker noodles are similar to Japanese udon, the crispy won-ton crackers and pork are a Chinese touch, while the broth and herbs are clearly Vietnamese. Authentic cau lao is made only with water drawn from the local Ba Le well. *Try Morning Glory, 106 Nguyen Thai Hoc, Hoi An; +84 510 224 1555 Also on CNNGo: [40 delicious Singapore foods](#)*

5. Rau muong

Some might call it river weed -- with good reason -- but that doesn't stop the masses from scarfing down platefuls of morning glory, usually stir-fried and seasoned with slithers of potent garlic. Rau muong is common at Vietnamese restaurants and beer gardens. *Chung Den Bia Hoi, 18B Hang Cot, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi*





KARRYN MILLER/GNNGO

6. A spring roll that jumps out.

6. Nem ran/cha gio

Vietnam's bite-sized crunchy spring rolls might not enjoy the same popularity as their healthier fresh equivalent, but they deserve a special mention.

The crispy shell with a soft veggie and meat filling dunked in a tangy sauce gets the gastronomic juices flowing before a main course. In the north these parcels go by the name nem ran while southerners call them chagio.

1 Hang Manh, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi



KARRYN MILLER/GNNGO

7. Roll, dunk, bite, repeat.

7. Goi cuon

These light and healthy fresh spring rolls are a wholesome choice when you've been indulging in too much of the fried food in Vietnam. The translucent parcels are first packed with salad greens, a slither of meat or seafood and a layer of coriander, before being neatly rolled and dunked in Vietnam's favorite condiment -- fish sauce.

Quan An Ngon, 18 Phan Boi Chau, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi; +84 43 942 8162

8. Bun bo Hue

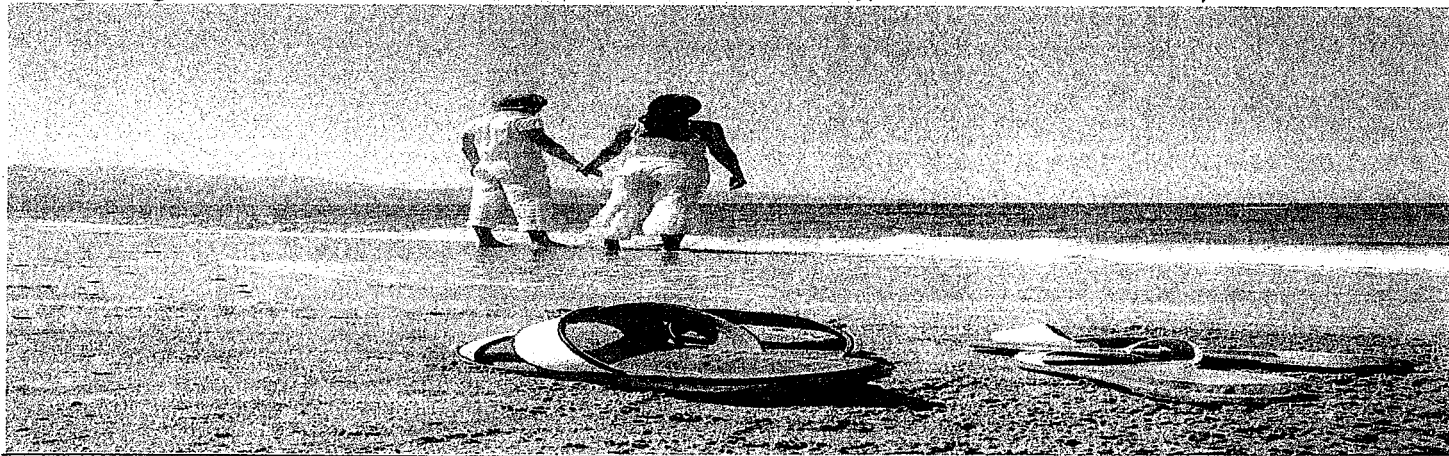
Central Vietnam's take on noodles caters to carnivores with its meaty broth and piles of beef and pork. The thick slippery rice noodles also make for a heartier meal than noodles found in the north and south. *You don't have to go to Hue to enjoy this dish; if in Ho Chi Minh City try Tib Express, 162 NguyenDinh Chieu, District 3, HCMC; +84 8 3822 5038 Also on CNNGo: [40 of Indonesia's best foods](#)*

9. Banh khot

This dainty variation of a Vietnamese pancake has all the same tasty ingredients but is a fraction of the size. Each banh knot can be scooped in one ambitious but satisfying mouthful. The crunchy outside is made using coconut milk and the filling usually consists of shrimp, mung beans, and spring onions with a dusting of dried shrimp flakes on top. *Co Ba Vung Tau, 59B Cao Thang, District 3, HCMC*

10. Ga tan

Got the sniffles? Opt for ga tan, a broth that's Vietnam's answer to the proverbial cup of chicken noodle soup. Sure it's not quite how your mother used to make it, with its greenish tinge from the herbs and hunks of chicken parts, but it's worth a try if you're needing a Vietnamese tonic. *Try this at one of the street stalls on Hanoi's Tong Duy Tan aka Pho Am Thuc, or "Food Street"), Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi*





KARRYN MILLER/GNNGO

11. Yes, bananas have flowers, and they taste great.

11. Nom hoa chuoï

Vietnam's banana flower salad packs a much bigger punch than a typical plate of mixed greens. Banana flowers (thick purple lumps that will later turn into bunches of bananas) are peeled and thinly sliced then mixed with green papaya, carrots, and cilantro along with chicken and a heavy-handed pour of a salty fish sauce dressing and crunchy peanuts.

Highway 4 restaurant, 3 Hang Tre, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi; +84 4 3926 4200



MONICA CHONG/GNNGO

12. Dry, but not dreary.

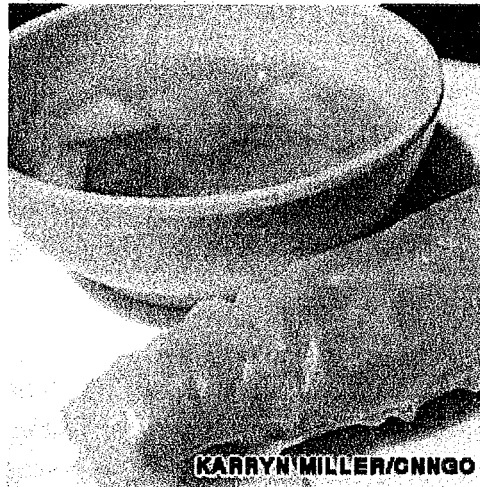
12. Bun bo nam bo

This bowl of noodles comes sans broth, keeping the ingredients from becoming sodden and the various textures intact. The tender slices of beef mingle with crunchy peanuts and bean sprouts, and are flavored with fresh herbs, crisp dried shallots, and a splash of fish sauce and fiery chili pepper. *67 Hang Dieu, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi*

13. Hoa qua dam

This chunky blend of fresh tropical fruit in a cup is the perfect local treat when the heat of Vietnamese summer starts to wear you down. It could be considered a healthy alternative to ice cream -- if you stick to the shaved ice variation -- but for the full experience it's best had with diabetes-inducing condensed milk mixed in.

15B To Tich, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi. Also on CNNGo: [40 Hong Kong foods we can't live without](#)



14. Don't let the sea-slug appearance put you off.

14. Phocuong

Pho cuon packages the flavors of pho and goi cuon in one neat little parcel. This Hanoi take on fresh spring rolls uses sheets of uncut pho noodles to encase fried beef, herbs and lettuce or cucumber. *The best place to find them is on Ngu Xa island on the capital's Truc Bach Lake -- specifically at 26 Nguyen Khac Hieu, Ba Dinh district, Hanoi*

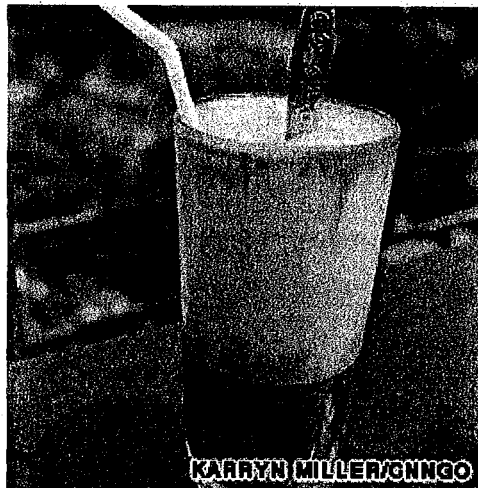
15. Ga nuong

KFC may be everywhere in Vietnam these days, but skip the fast food for the local version. Honey marinated then grilled over large flaming barbecues, the chicken legs, wings and feet served are unusually tender, while the skin stays crispy but not dry. *Viet Ha on Ly Van Phuc, Dong Da district, Hanoi*



16. Pho xao

Pho xao may just be a slightly healthier take on my xao -- but the beauty is in the details. The flat, smoother phonoodle doesn't crisp up like its pre-boiled instant cousin. When done well the outer edges acquire a browned crunchiness, whilst the center stays soft and glutinous. This dish tastes best with a fried egg and seasoned with chili or soy sauce. *26 Nguyen Khac Hieu, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi*



17. Egg coffee? Kind of like a glass of breakfast.

17. Ca phe trung

Vietnamese "egg coffee" is technically a drink but we prefer to put it in the dessert category. The creamy soft, meringue-like egg white foam perched on the dense Vietnamese coffee will have even those who don't normally crave a cup of joe licking their spoons with delight. In Hanoi, follow the tiny alley between the kitschy souvenir shops at 11 Hang Gai into the clearing, and up several flights of increasingly dicey stairs to pair your ca phe trung with an unbeatable view of Hoan Kiem Lake. Also on CNNGo: [40 Mumbai foods we can't live without](#)

18. Bo la lot

Vietnamese are masters of wrapping their food. Bo la lot is neither raw nor deep-fried, but flamed on an open grill to soften the exterior and infuse the betel leaf's peppery aroma into the ground beef inside. *3T Quan Nuong, 29-31 Ton That Thiep, District 1, HCMC; +84 8 3821 1631*



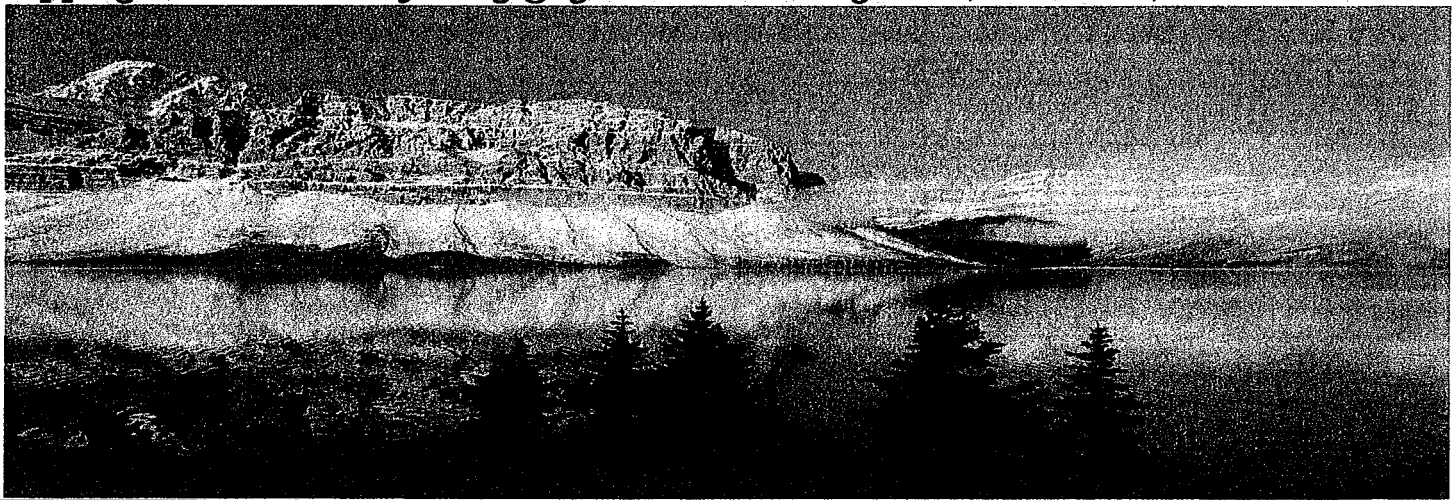
19. Rice that sticks ... in the memory.

19. Xoi

Savory sticky rice is less of an accompaniment to meals in Vietnam, more a meal itself. The glutinous staple comes with any number of mix-ins (from slithers of chicken, or pork to fried or preserved eggs), but almost always with a scattering of dried shallots on top. *Xoi Yen, Nguyen Huu Huan, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi*

20. Banh cuon

These rolled up rice flour pancakes are best when served piping hot, still soft and delicate. Although seemingly slender and empty they have a savory filling of minced pork and mushrooms. Zest is also added by dunking the slippery parcels in a fishy dipping sauce. *Corner of Cong Quynh and Pham Ngu Lao, District 1, HCMC*





KARRYN MILLER/GNNGO

21. The humble egg plant comes good.

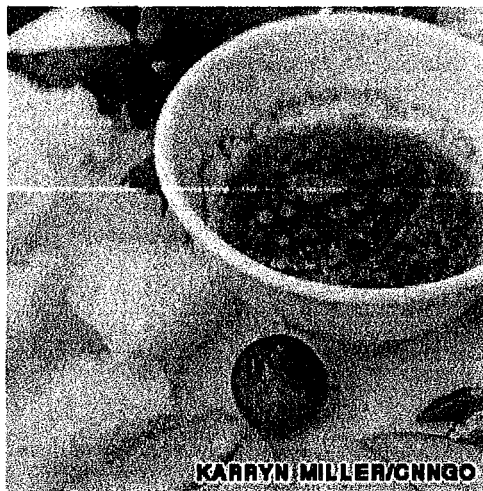
21. Ca tim kho to

Eggplant alone tends not to get us excited. Although when it's diced and sautéed in a clay pot along with tomatoes, soy sauce, sugar, and (depending on the recipe) minced meat, the once bland vegetable redeems itself. *Pineapple Restaurant, 35 Hang Buom, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi; + 84 43 935 2316*

22. Bot chien

Saigon's favorite streetside snack, bot chien, is popular with both the afterschool and the after-midnight crowd. Chunks of rice flour dough are fried in a large wok until crispy and then an egg is broken into the mix. Once cooked it's served with slices of papaya, shallots and green onions, before more flavor is added with pickled chili sauce and rice vinegar. *Nighttime food vendors sell this at the corners of Pham Ngu Lao and Cong Quynh, District 1, HCMC*





23. Sometimes it's the sauce that makes the meal.

23. Bun dau mam tom

This plain-looking tofu and noodle dish is served with mam tom sauce -- the Vegemite of Vietnam. The pungent purple dipping sauce is used to flavor the slabs of deep-fried fofu that are at the core of the meal. *Corner of Hang Be and Hang Bac, Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi* Also on CNNGo: [40 Shanghai foods we love](#)

24. Banh goi

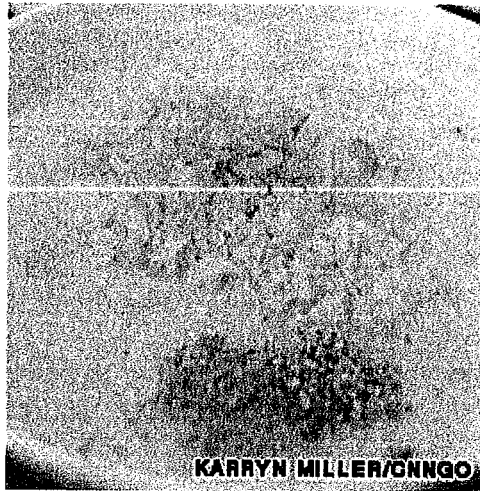
These pockets of deep-fried goodness are often described as the equivalent of a Cornish pastry or as a Vietnamese samosa, depending on the nationality of the person explaining.

Inside the crispy exterior you'll find that it's similar to neither description, with its filling of finely minced pork, mushrooms and vermicelli noodles.

52 Ly Quoc Su, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi; +84 4 3828 5922

25. Com suon nuong

This simple meal is the Saigonese equivalent of bun cha -- with rice in place of noodles. A tender pork cutlet is barbecued over hot coals to give it a rich, smoky flavor, and laid over the fluffy white com. *Com Tam Cali has a number of branches across HCMC. Try Tam Cali 1 at 32 Nguyen Trai, District 1, HCMC; +84 8 3925 2222*



26. Just looking at this rice porridge dish will ease your stomach pains.

26. Chao

With its thick and creamy texture Vietnam's rice porridge is the best pick when your queasy stomach can't handle much else. If you want to jazz it up you can always add slices of chicken, fish, beef, duck or pork ribs, along with a sprinkling of herbs and shallots. *Chao Ca specializes in fish chao, 213 Hang Bong, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi; +84 43 829 5281*

27. Bo luc lac

Cubes of beef are tossed around a steaming wok with garlic, pepper, and some vegetables to make shaking beef. There's nothing special about the beef that makes it shaking. The name is just a literal translation that refers to the process of mixing the beef around while cooking. *Nha Hang Ngon, 160 Pasteur, District 1, HCMC; +84 8 3827 7131 Also on CNNGo: 40 Thai foods we can't live without*

28. Hat de nong

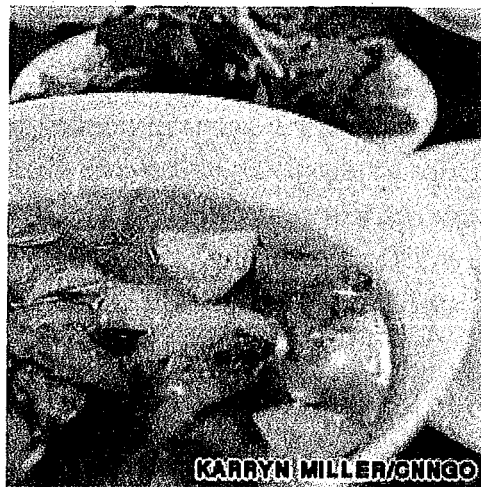
The smell of chestnuts roasting on an open fire can bring back fond memories of Christmas carols -- until a moped transporting a giant blow-up Santa whizzes by. Pick the street vendor with the most enticing smell. *To Tich, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi*



29. Anything served on a stick can't fail.

29. Banh uot thit nuong

It's all about the marinade when it comes to the grilled pork in fresh rice paper rolls that are popular in central Vietnam. The typical mixture coats the meat in a blend of sugar, salt, chili, lemongrass and fish sauce. Cilantro, basil and mint are added when it's served up to add some green to the appetizer. *Morning Glory, 106 Nguyen Thai Hoc, Hoi An; +84 510 224 1555*



30. Hanoi's lunch-crowd favorite.

30. Bun cha

Pho might be Vietnam's most famous dish but bun cha is the top choice when it comes to lunchtime in the capital. Just look for the clouds of meaty smoke after 11 a.m. when street-side restaurants start grilling up small patties of seasoned pork and slices of marinated pork belly over a charcoal fire. Once they're charred and crispy the morsels are served with a large bowl of a fish sauce-heavy broth, a basket of herbs and a helping of rice noodles. *Hanoi's most famous bun cha outlet is 1 Hang Manh, Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi*



FLICKR/THEDELICIOUSLIFE

31. The baguette, upgraded and improved.

31. Banh mi

The French may have brought with them the baguette, but Vietnam takes it to a different level. How exactly depends on what end of the country you're in. In the north chefs stick to the basic elements of carbohydrate, fat and protein—bread, margarine and pâté—but head south and your banh mi may contain a more colorful combination of cheese, cold cuts, pickled vegetables, sausage, fried egg, fresh cilantro and chili sauce. *One of the better baguette vendors in Saigon sets up shop beside the Cherry mini-mart on DoQuang Dao, District 1, HCMC*

32. Lau

Eating this hodgepodge hotpot dish is a communal affair with everyone digging in to the oversized boiling pot. We've found that just about anything can (and will) go into this soup from tofu to frogs. It's best to stick to one main protein rather than opting for the mix of meat, poultry and seafood together. *On the northern edge of Hanoi's Truc Bach lake you'll find a number of restaurant staff crossing the street to deliver lau to lake-side diners*

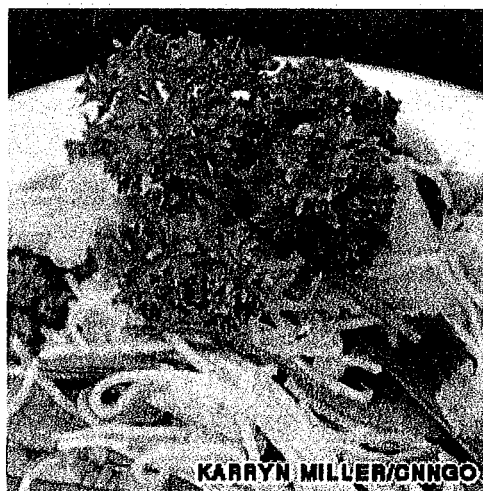


36. Veggie food for meat lovers.

33. Banh bao

Steamed pork buns aren't traditionally Vietnamese but that doesn't stop the spongy rolls from being sold by street vendors and in traditional Vietnamese restaurants. The best buns have a hard boiled quail egg buried within the minced meat, while the cheaper ones come without any filling at all. Remember the lower the price the less stuffing, so you might not be getting the good deal you thought you were. *Often sold by wandering vendors patrolling Hanoi's Old Quarter at all hours. In the south try Banh Bao Tho Phat, 78 Nguyen Tri Phuong, District 5, HCMC*

Also on CNNGo: [40 great Tokyo foods](#)



38. World's best "instant" food.

34. Com rang

Fried rice may not be the most adventurous option, but sometimes you just want some familiar grub done right. Baby sized chunks of meat and colorful vegetables are mixed with soy and fish sauce in a wok streetside to create a rice dish that is still moist but slightly smoky. Make it Vietnamese by supplementing with Bia Hanoi. Try one of the vendors on Tong Duy Tan (aka "Food Street"), Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi



39. Tofu + tomato sauce, but greater than the sum of its parts.

35. Bo bit tet

Vietnam's equivalent to steak and eggs fills the void when you're hankering for some greasy pub tucker. The thin flank steak is usually served with eggs, thick potato wedges, and Vietnamese meatballs on a sizzling cast iron plate.

Le Hong, 489/29/18 Huynh Van Banh, District 3, HCMC

36. Com chay

Com chay refers to two things in Vietnam: vegetarian food, or Vietnam's homemade rice crispies that are popular with children. Unlike the sweet treats in the United States, Vietnam's version of a crispy comes with meat instead of marshmallows. Vietnam's vegetarian restaurants use mock meats to create all the traditional dishes and usually do a pretty good job. Although some places include artificial creations we would rather not try. Fake rubbery snails anyone? Try *Hoa Dang vegetarian restaurant, 38 Huynh Khuong Ninh, District 1, HCMC; +84 8 3820 9702*

37. Che

This dessert can be served in either a bowl or a glass. The latter is the more enticing option with the visible layers of bean jelly, coconut milk, fruit, and ice.

Best had when you're craving something sweet on a scorching day in Saigon.

Nha Hang Ngon, 160 Pasteur, District 1, HCMC; +84 8 3827 7131. Also on

CNNGo: Your pick -- readers' favorite world foods

38. My xao bo

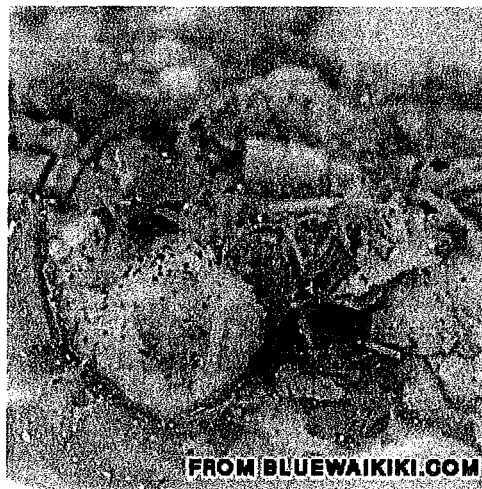
Mix noodles with a dollop of oil, then add beef, onions, garlic, morning glory and some tomato for color and you have a platter of my xao bo. The whole dish takes about as long to make as instant noodles -- but oh so much more flavor. *Any bia hoi establishment serves this dish, but the eateries on Tang Bat Ho, Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi, have perfected it*

39. Dau phu sot ca chua

The English translation of "tofu in tomato sauce" doesn't really do this dish justice.

The slabs of deep-fried soy are doused in a rich fresh tomato and spring onion coating, and seasoned with a speckle of fresh herbs. *Chim Sao at*

65 Ngo Hue, Hai Ba Trung district, Hanoi; +84 43 976 0633



40. Got crabs? Cook 'em up and devour.

40. Canh bun

Another hearty soup that's high on the lunchtime agenda, this is a crab and morning glory noodle soup. Canh bun is similar to the more well-known bun rieu crab soup, but has a small handful of variations -- including the type of noodle used. *Look for street food vendors with Canh Bun on handwritten signs surrounded by lunchtime crowds, or visit Bun Saigon at 73 Ly Tu Trong, District 1, HCMC*