SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE

To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture

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A COUNTRY STAYS ALIVE WHEN ITS CULTURE IS ALIVE. HOPE NEVER DIES IN THE INDOMITABLE VIETNAMESE MIND

- **SACEI Newsletter updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.**
- **It serves as a LINK between SACEI members and those who are interested in the Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American culture.**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Happy New Year

In South Vietnam, people celebrate the New Year by decorating their homes with a branch of the Yellow Mai (*Ochna Intergerrima*). In the wild, it is a small tree with five-petal yellow flowers. A variant, the mountain Mai, has between five and ten petals. The yellow Mai blooms in late January or early February making it a convenient and ideal flower for the Tet festival. As a matter of fact, it has been suggested that the tradition of decorating homes with the Yellow Mai came from villagers who on the occasion of Tet visited the graves of their relatives in faraway places like mountains and forests, and brought home with them branches of flowering Yellow Mai. In North Vietnam, located in a more temperate climate, people use the white or pink plum blossom (*Prunus mume)* for decoration. When the Vietnamese came to the US some four decades ago, they did not have the yellow Mai—which is a tropical plant—to enjoy with. On the other hand, what they found was an abundance of Forsythia, which grew as hedges on the side of the roads. The Vietnamese then adopted the Forsythia in place of their Yellow Mai and called it the American Mai.

Now four decades later, through the introduction of the Vietnamese-Americans, the American Mai made a reverse trip to Vietnam. Florists in Vietnam this year ordered a few hundreds of branches of forsythia for sale in the country. The world seems to be a smaller place to live in.

Ochna Intergerrima or Yellow Mai

Forsythia or American Mai

2019: The Year of the Pig

The Pig is the twelfth of all zodiac animals. According to one myth, the Jade Emperor said the order would be decided by the order in which they arrived to his party. Pig was late because he overslept.

Recent years of the Pig are: 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019.

Pigs might not stand out in a crowd. But they are very realistic. They love entertainment and will occasionally treat themselves. They are a bit materialistic. They are energetic and are always enthusiastic, even for boring jobs. If given the chance, they will take positions of power and status.

Men born in the Pig year are optimistic and gentle. They are very focused. Once they decide on a goal, they'll put everything into it. They are gullible. They trust others easily and are often scammed.

Women born in the Pig year are full of excitement. They attend social events whenever possible and treat everyone genuinely. They also have good fortune with wealth.

Pigs are gentle and rarely lose their temper. Even when they do, it's never a dramatic commotion. They'll always try to compromise and settle things quickly. They are also very tolerant and understanding. If someone makes a mistake, they'll try to help the person fix it. They are patient and want the best for everyone. This makes them great teachers and coaches.

Pigs mostly have a great build and a resilient body. They are always spirited, as if they will never run out of energy. But sometimes they can be overconfident and overlook some minor symptoms. Pigs are never one to give in to difficulties.

Victims of War, Now Victims of the Trump Administration

By Eric Tang and Viet Thanh Nguyen

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/03/opinion/vietnam-refugees-trump-immigration.html

Dec 03-2018

What is an appropriate punishment for a crime? The plight of thousands of Vietnamese refugees convicted of crimes in the United States and now threatened with detention or deportation demands an answer to this question.

For most of the four decades since the Vietnam War ended, refugees fleeing the Communist government in Vietnam have been treated differently from those refugees from most other countries. If they committed felonies, they would not be deported.

This exception tacitly acknowledged the weight of history: These refugees came here because American forces fought a devastating war in their home country, the Republic of Vietnam, or what Americans called South Vietnam. The exception recognized that America owed a measure of compassion to those who lost their homeland in the wake of the Communist invasion of the South, and the United States military intervention to resist it.

All that began to change under Donald Trump. Mr. Trump has set his sights on deporting more than 8,000 permanent residents from Vietnam, most of whom had fled the war and had been protected from removal despite their crimes. Mr. Trump's efforts drew sharp criticism not only from Vietnamese-Americans, but also his own ambassador to Vietnam, Ted Osius, who eventually resigned from the State Department in protest.

Nearly a dozen Vietnamese refugees were sent to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam beginning late last year. But last month, the Trump administration was forced to temporarily back away from its plans to deport thousands more in response to a class-action lawsuit and resistance from the Vietnamese government. Refusing to concede defeat, the administration is using long-term detention as a means of punishing those it cannot immediately remove.

Dozens of Vietnamese refugees with felony records are being held in immigrant detention centers. Under a Supreme Court ruling, immigration officials are permitted to detain refugees for a maximum of six months when deportation is considered possible "in the reasonably foreseeable future." But the Trump administration has held some Vietnamese for 180 days and

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longer, even though it has acknowledged that their removal to Vietnam is "not reasonably foreseeable." Though it has promised to release some refugees, it has said it has the right to detain them indefinitely and to confine them again in the future.

According to Tung Nguyen, an activist who is in regular contact with Vietnamese detainees, the goal of indefinite and repeated detention is to "psychologically torment and break these people."

"They're in lockdown 23 hours of the day," Mr. Nguyen told us. "It's worse than prison where at least you know what you did and when you're getting out."

A spokeswoman for the Department of Homeland Security, Katie Waldman, said that such a policy was necessary to "protect our communities by ensuring we can detain convicted violent criminal aliens and keep them out of American communities."

Yet these refugees were thoroughly punished for their crimes at the state or federal level, and most of them moved on to find stable employment and to raise families, Mr. Nguyen says. Now, they face a second and indeterminate sentence, though they have not committed new crimes.

The plight of these Vietnamese refugees may seem unsurprising in an era defined by Muslim bans, deep cuts in new refugee admissions and the separation of families at the Mexican border. But it also stands out for how radically this administration has departed from the bipartisan consensus supporting Cold War refugees since the end of the Vietnam War.

From the fall of Saigon in 1975 until 1995, the United States did not recognize the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and so it was impossible to deport people there. Even after diplomatic relations were restored in 1995, the American government chose not to deport Vietnamese refugees with felony records, and the Communist government in Hanoi showed no interest in receiving refugees whom it considered citizens of a country that no longer existed.

In 2008 President George W. Bush signed an agreement with Hanoi stipulating that Vietnamese refugees who entered the United States before 1995 would not be sent back to Vietnam, even if they had committed crimes that normally would have led to deportation. Only those who entered after the 1995 normalization of diplomatic relations — in other words, those who were clearly citizens of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam — were deportable.

Now the Trump administration is attempting to reinterpret that agreement — and effectively erase the intimate history of the Republic of Vietnam and the United States, countries linked by a brutal war and promises of friendship. Indefinite detention for anyone seems inhumane. But it seems uniquely cruel to imprison — with the intention of expelling — people who were America's allies in the war that ravaged their homeland.

During the Cold War, accepting refugees from Vietnam was an important symbol of America's humanitarian largess. Today, punishing Vietnamese refugees symbolizes the new American doctrine: deportation for deportation's sake.

Trump Moves to Deport Vietnamese Refugees

Charles Dunst. The Atlantic Dec 12, 2018; https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/trump-moves-to-deport-vietnam-war-refugees/ar-BBQRpss?ocid=spartandhp

The Trump administration is resuming its efforts to deport certain protected Vietnamese immigrants who have lived in the United States for decades—many of them having fled the country during the Vietnam War.

This is the latest move in the president's long record of prioritizing harsh immigration and asylum restrictions, and one that's sure to raise eyebrows—the White House had hesitantly backed off the plan in August before reversing course. In essence, the administration has now decided that Vietnamese immigrants who arrived in the country before the establishment of diplomatic ties between the United States and Vietnam are subject to standard immigration law—meaning they are all eligible for deportation.

The new stance mirrors White House efforts to clamp down on immigration writ large, a frequent complaint of the president's on the campaign trail and one he links to a litany of ills in the United States.

The administration last year began pursuing the deportation of many long-term immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, and other countries who the administration alleges are "violent criminal aliens." But Washington and Hanoi have a unique 2008 agreement that specifically bars the deportation of Vietnamese people who arrived in the United States before July 12, 1995—the date the two former foes reestablished diplomatic relations following the Vietnam War.

The White House unilaterally reinterpreted this agreement in the spring of 2017 to exempt people convicted of crimes from its protections, allowing the administration to send a small number of pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants back, a policy it retreated from this past August. Last week, however, a spokesperson for the U.S. embassy in Hanoi said the American government was

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Trump Moves to Deport VNese Refugees... again reversing course.

Washington now believes that the 2008 agreement fails to protect pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants from deportation, the spokesperson, who asked not to be identified by name because of embassy procedures, told *The Atlantic*.

"The United States and Vietnam signed a bilateral agreement on removals in 2008 that establishes procedures for deporting Vietnamese citizens who arrived in the United States after July 12, 1995, and are subject to final orders of removal," the spokesperson said. "While the procedures associated with this specific agreement do not apply to Vietnamese citizens who arrived in the United States before July 12, 1995, it does not explicitly preclude the removal of pre-1995 cases."

The about-turn came as a State Department spokesperson confirmed that the Department of Homeland Security had met with representatives of the Vietnamese embassy in Washington, D.C., but declined to provide details of when the talks took place or what was discussed. Spokespeople for the Vietnamese embassy and DHS did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

But the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, a Washington, D.C., advocacy group, said in a statement that the purpose of the meeting was to change the 2008 agreement. That deal had initially been set to last for five years, and was to be automatically extended every three years unless either party to it opted out. Under those rules, it had been set to renew automatically next month. Since 1998, final removal orders have been issued for more than 9,000 Vietnamese nationals.

When it first decided to reinterpret the 2008 deal, Donald Trump's administration argued that only pre-1995 arrivals with criminal convictions were exempt from the agreement's protection and eligible for deportation. Vietnam initially conceded and accepted some of those immigrants before stiffening its resistance; about a dozen Vietnamese immigrants ended up being deported from the United States. The August decision to change course, reported to a California court in October, appeared to put such moves at least temporarily on ice, but the latest shift now leaves the fate of a larger number of Vietnamese immigrants in doubt. Now no pre-1995 arrivals are exempt from the 2008 agreement's protection. That means all such people are subject to standard immigration law, rendering them eligible for deportation.

Many pre-1995 arrivals, all of whom were previously protected under the 2008 agreement by both the administrations of Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, were refugees from the Vietnam War. Some are the children of those who once allied with American and South Vietnamese forces, an attribute that renders them undesirable to the current regime in Hanoi, which imputes anti-regime beliefs on the children of those who opposed North Vietnam. This anti-Communist constituency includes minorities, such as the children of the American-allied Montagnards, who are persecuted in Vietnam for both their ethnicity and Christian religion.

The Trump administration's move reflects an entirely new reading of the agreement, according to Ted Osius, who served as the United States ambassador to Vietnam from December 2014 through October 2018. Osius said that while he was in office, the 2008 agreement was accepted by all involved parties as banning the deportation of all pre-1995 Vietnamese immigrants. "We understood that the agreement barred the deportation of pre-1995 Vietnamese. Both governments—and the Vietnamese-American community—interpreted it that way," Osius told *The Atlantic* in an email. The State Department, he added, had explained this to both the White House and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

News of the Trump administration's renewed hard line quickly made the rounds on Vietnamese American social media, with advocacy groups warning of potentially increased deportations.

"Forty-three years ago, a lot of the Southeast Asian communities and Vietnamese communities fled their countries and their homeland due to the war, which the U.S. was involved in, fleeing for their safety and the safety of their families," said Kevin Lam, the organizing director of the Asian American Resource Workshop, an advocacy group. "The U.S. would do well to remember that."

In Orange County, A Republican Fortress Turns Democratic

By Adam Nagourney, Robert Gebeloff

Dec 31, 2018

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/31/us/orange-county-republicans-democrats-demographics.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage

WESTMINSTER, Calif. — To appreciate the vast cultural and political upheaval across Orange County over the last 40 years, look no further than Bolsa Avenue. The auto body shop, the tax preparer, a church, a food market, countless restaurants — all are marked by signs written in Vietnamese.

Or head seven miles west to Santa Ana, where Vietnamese makes way for Spanish along Calle Cuatro, a bustling enclave of stores and sidewalk stands serving an overwhelming Latino clientele.

The Democratic capture of four Republican-held congressional seats in Orange County in November — more than half the seven congressional seats Democrats won from Republicans in California — toppled what had long been a fortress of conservative Republicanism. The sweep stunned party leaders, among them Paul D. Ryan, the outgoing House speaker. Even Gavin Newsom, the Democratic governor-elect of California, won the county where Richard M. Nixon was born.

But the results reflected what has been a nearly 40-year rise in the number of immigrants, nonwhite residents and college graduates that has transformed this iconic American suburb into a Democratic outpost, highlighted in a Times analysis of demographic data going back to 1980, the year Ronald Reagan was elected president.

The ideological shift signaled by the most recent election results, on the heels of Hillary Clinton beating Donald J. Trump here in 2016, is viewed by leaders in both parties as a warning sign for national Republicans, as suburban communities like this one loom as central battle grounds in the 2020 elections and beyond.

Those new swing suburban counties were one of the central factors behind the 40-seat Democratic gain in the House in November. Many of them have been changed by an increase in educated and affluent voters who have been pushed toward the Democratic column by some of Mr. Trump's policies. That partly accounts for what is happening here in Orange County, but the political shifts can also be explained by the rapidly changing cultural, political and economic face of the region and are on display in places like Bolsa Avenue, which is known as Little Saigon.

"There are so many of us here and that is what is contributing to these changes," said Tracy La, 23, who is Vietnamese. Ms. La helped organize a rally in Westminster in mid-December to protest an attempt by the Trump administration to deport thousands of Vietnam War refugees. It drew hundreds of people to the Asian Garden Mall, one of the largest and oldest Vietnamese-operated malls in the nation.

"This is where the future is heading," said Mark Baldassare, the president of the Public Policy Institute of California. "I don't see anything that took place in these elections or the demographic trends that are ongoing, to make me think this is a one-time incident."

That said, the critical question for Democrats — and for Republicans eager to get back in the game — is how much of the November outcome, and the large turnout of younger Latino and Asian-American voters, was because of Mr. Trump.

Kyle Layman, who ran the Southern California congressional campaigns for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, said this election had apparently begun to cement long-term changes in voter behavior — an assessment that is not disputed by California Republican leaders.

"I think what we have done is built a foundation that is going to be sustainable," he said. "These seats are going to be swing seats moving forward. They are going to be very, very tight. But this is part of a long-term trend."

Indeed, even if the dramatic shift on display in 2018 was in reaction to Mr. Trump — and particularly the immigration policies he has embraced — analysts said that he had only accelerated political movements that were well underway.

"Because it's becoming more diverse it's becoming more Democratic, because the Democratic Party is more inclusive," said Gil Cisneros, a Democrat from Yorba Linda who captured a House seat held by Representative Ed Royce, a Republican. "This is no fluke at all. It's been this way for a long time and it's going to continue to trend this way for a long time."

There was a steady decrease in white voters in the seven congressional districts that are in and around Orange County between 1980 and 2017, according to census data. In 1980, whites made up 75 percent of the population in the district where Mr. Cisneros won. By 2017, that number dropped to 30 percent.

The county's immigrant population grew five times as fast as the general population between 1980 and 2000, and while the pace of immigration has slowed, the Latino and Asian populations continues to increase, driven by the children of immigrant families born in the United States.

"The Republican Party in Orange County has been traditionally all white," said Carlos Perea, 25, who moved to Santa Ana from

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In Orange County, ...

Mexico to join his parents 11 years ago. "The party has pushed for policies that are very harmful to those communities: 2018 was a referendum on that old Orange County."

In the 48th Congressional District, which voted out Representative Dana Rohrabacher, a fixture of Orange County Republican politics for nearly 30 years, the Latino population jumped to 145,585 in 2017 from 38,803 in 1980, or 8 percent, accounting for 21 percent of the district's population.

In another corner of Orange County, where Representative Mimi Walters, a Republican, was upset by Katie Porter, her Democratic challenger, the Asian-American population jumped from 14,528 in 1980, or 4.4 percent, to 175,540 in 2017, making up just under a quarter of the total population.

Marcia Godwin, a professor of public administration at the University of La Verne in Los Angeles, said the once-solid Republican Party registration advantage over Democrats has narrowed dramatically as the makeup of the region changed over the decades.

"You went from a solid Republican county to one in which Republicans were just barely the majority, and it fell pretty quickly in the past two years," said Ms. Godwin. "You have had continued demographic changes. This is a county that went from majority-white to having a majority that are Latino and Asian-American. So that has gone hand-in-hand — particularly with the rising Asian-American population — to voting more Democratic."

By every measure, this is a far different place than it was in the 1980s. The population of Orange County has grown from 1.9 million in 1980 to nearly 3.2 million in 2017; it is the third largest county in the nation's most populous state.

The defense industry — once the dominant economic driver for much of Orange County — has given way to more high-tech and service industry jobs. The population in much of the county is better educated than it was in 1980 — in Mr. Royce's district, the percent of college graduates nearly doubled.

Median income in many parts of the county has also gone up: In 1980, the district represented by Darrell Issa, a Republican who stepped down after 16 years rather than face a tough re-election fight, was composed mostly of farms and modest subdivisions. Today, according to census data, there are nearly four dozen neighborhoods with a median household income above $100,000, including 11 where half of all households earn at least $150,000. Indeed, income growth in Orange County has outpaced the rest of the nation since 1980.

This change in income and education has had a particular influence on the voting patterns among younger Asian-Americans.

"As the Cold War has gone away, you have a shift from families who worked for the defense industry to high-tech workers," Ms. Godwin said. "It's a much more urbanized population, much more liberal and progressive."

Republicans said the party had failed to accommodate the changing demographic makeup in a part of California they could once take for granted.

"Everybody is surprised," said Jim Brulte, the state Republican leader. "Like Orange County is immune to the demographic changes?"

Tom Tait, the outgoing two-term Republican mayor of Anaheim, who saw the county change before him as he grew up here, said the party had failed to keep up.

"The local party has dropped the ball with immigrant communities," he said. "Anaheim is now one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the United States."

The Republican losses in this election were driven by a big turnout among Latino voters, who have historically voted in low numbers, and Asian-Americans, particularly younger one, analysts said. Latino voters are increasingly Democratic.

Many first-generation Asian-Americans have tended to vote Republican, particularly Vietnamese, but many of their children have moved toward the Democratic Party, because of issues like health care, immigration and education, said Karthick Ramakrishnan, a professor of public policy and political science at the University of California, Riverside. Until this year, younger Asian-Americans, like younger voters in most demographic groups, turned out in low numbers.

"What happened in Orange County has to be seen in the context of this being a high-turnout election," said Mr. Ramakrishnan. "There is a big generational divide in terms of party identification. If this had been a typical midterm election, it would have been a more conservative older turnout that came out."

"From all the evidence we can see so far it looks like Asian-Americans were part of the blue wave," he said.

Ms. La, who grew up in the San Diego area and moved to Westminster six years ago, said the demonstration on Saturday took just 36 hours to organize — in a part of the world that was once known for being politically apathetic.

"The federal government and the issues that they are targeting has helped stir the mobilization — as well as the need for action in our community," she said. "That's the first time the Vietnamese community has come out to protest. A lot of things are changing."

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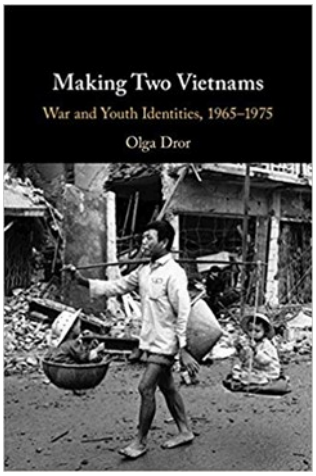
In Orange County, ...

Mr. Ramakrishnan said Mr. Trump had made the situation markedly more difficult for Republicans. He suggested that had Mr. Trump had not engaged in "so much anti-immigrant rhetoric," Young Kim, a Republican who was seeking to become the first Korean-American woman in Congress, would likely have won in her race against Mr. Cisneros.

"All she had to do was win white Republicans because turnout among Asians and Latinos would have been relatively low," he said. "Trump made a difference. But it's going to be really tough to get back to what the Republican Party looked like before Trump."

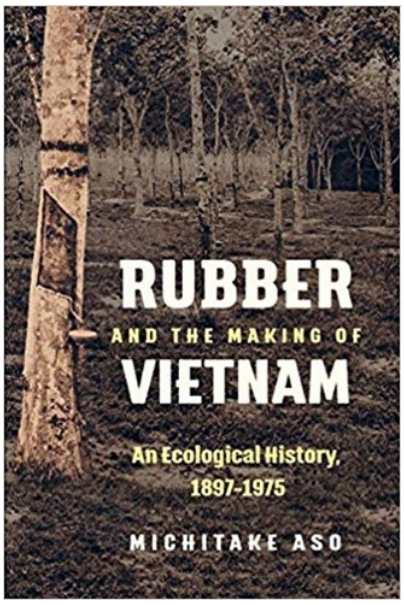
Making Two Vietnams *Olga Dror*



North and South Vietnamese youths had very different experiences of growing up during the Vietnamese War. The book gives a unique perspective on the conflict through the prism of adult-youth relations. By studying these relations, including educational systems, social organizations, and texts created by and for children during the war, Olga Dror analyzes how the two societies dealt with their wartime experience and strove to shape their futures. She examines the socialization and politicization of Vietnamese children and teenagers, contrasting the North's highly centralized agenda of indoctrination with the South, which had no such policy, and explores the results of these varied approaches. By considering the influence of Western culture on the youth of the South and of socialist culture on the youth of the North, we learn how the youth cultures of both Vietnams diverged from their prewar paths and from each other.

Available on Amazon:
https://www.amazon.com/Making-Two-Vietnams-Identities-1965-1975/dp/1108470122/

Rubber and the Making of Vietnam. An Ecological History 1897-1975 *Michitake Aso*



Dating back to the nineteenth-century transplantation of a latex-producing tree from the Amazon to Southeast Asia, rubber production has wrought monumental changes worldwide. During a turbulent Vietnamese past, rubber transcended capitalism and socialism, colonization and decolonization, becoming a key commodity around which life and history have revolved. In this pathbreaking study, Michitake Aso narrates how rubber plantations came to dominate the material and symbolic landscape of Vietnam and its neighbors, structuring the region's environment of conflict and violence. Tracing the stories of agronomists, medical doctors, laborers, and leaders of independence movements, Aso demonstrates how postcolonial socialist visions of agriculture and medicine were informed by their colonial and capitalist predecessors in important ways. As rubber cultivation funded infrastructural improvements and the creation of a skilled labor force, private and state-run plantations became landscapes of oppression, resistance, and modernity.

Available on Amazon:
https://www.amazon.com/Rubber-Making-Vietnam-Ecological-Migrations/dp/1469637154/

A Wintry Braise Inspire by a Warmer Place: Vietnam

By David Tanis Jan. 18, 2019
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/18/dining/bo-kho-recipe.html

In Vietnam, whatever the weather, breakfast might look like what Westerners would choose for a wintry day's supper: piping hot soups and long-simmered stews.

When I visited a couple of years ago, my guide began nearly every day with a steaming bowl of pho, the traditional beef and noodle soup found throughout Vietnam. In that regard, it was no hardship to follow his lead.

But one day, instead of pho, we had a breakfast of bo kho, a hearty dish of braised beef and vegetables, another popular morning option. As a lover of all things stew, I was thrilled.

Bo means beef and kho means simmered. The dish's lineage is most likely Gallic in part, since beef was introduced to Vietnam by French colonists. It is also commonly served with crisp baguettes, another French contribution..

It may even resemble the classic pot-au-feu or boeuf aux carottes, but it is undeniably Vietnamese, heavily perfumed with lemongrass, star anise and cinnamon, along with plenty of ginger, a touch of Chinese five-spice powder and just the right amount of hot pepper. These aromatics infuse both meat and sauce with heavenly flavor. Tomato is added for depth and color.

Bo kho is not at all difficult to make, however. And like most stews, it can be cooked a day or two in advance without suffering. On the contrary, it only improves.

A word or two about lemongrass: The kind you find in grocery stores in the United States tends to be a bit dry. You must peel away and discard the tough outer layers and finely chop the center to release its aroma. Bashing it a bit before chopping also helps, as does adding a few extra chunks to the pot to fish out later.

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