



VIETNAM

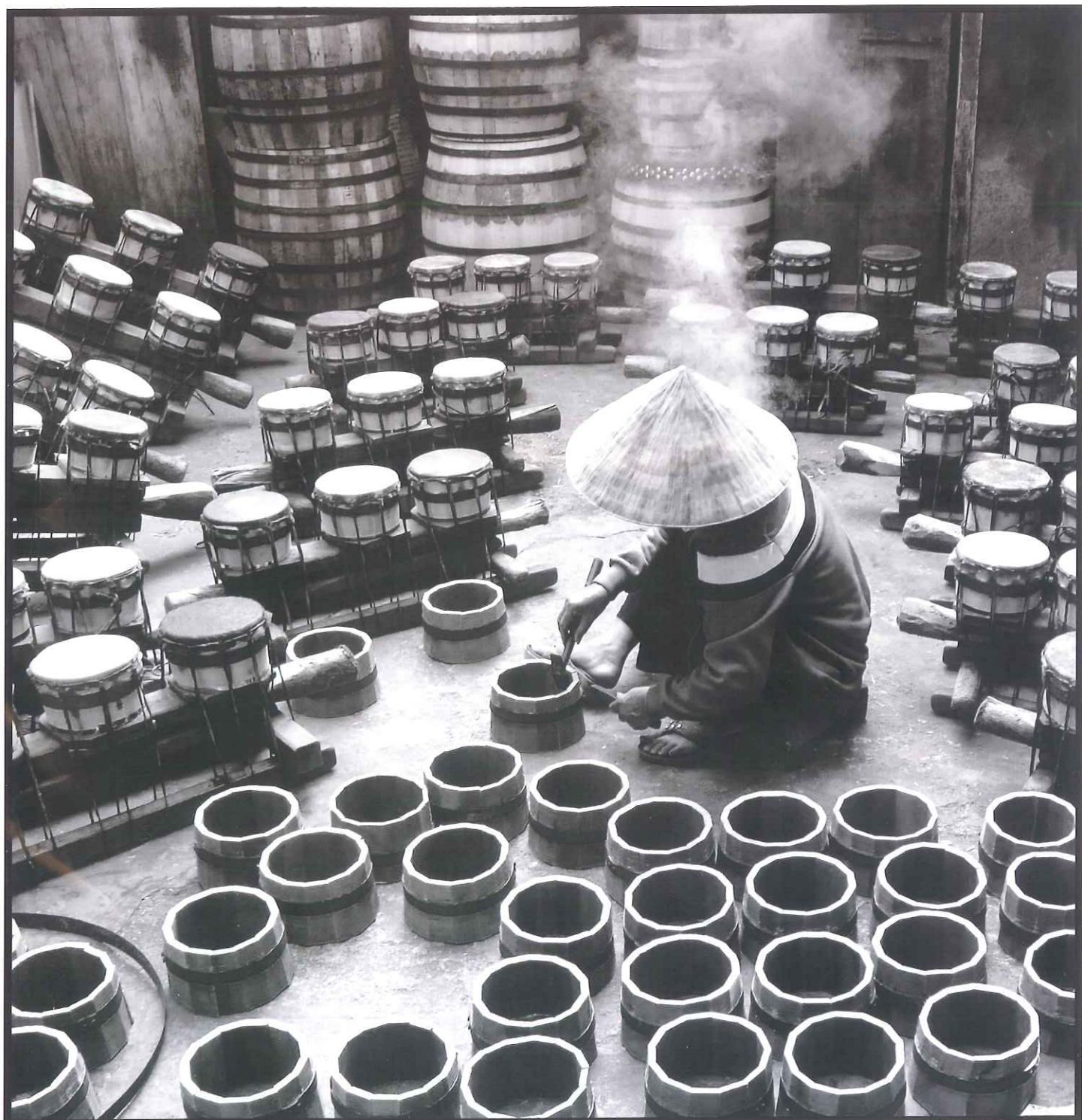
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# THE GUIDE

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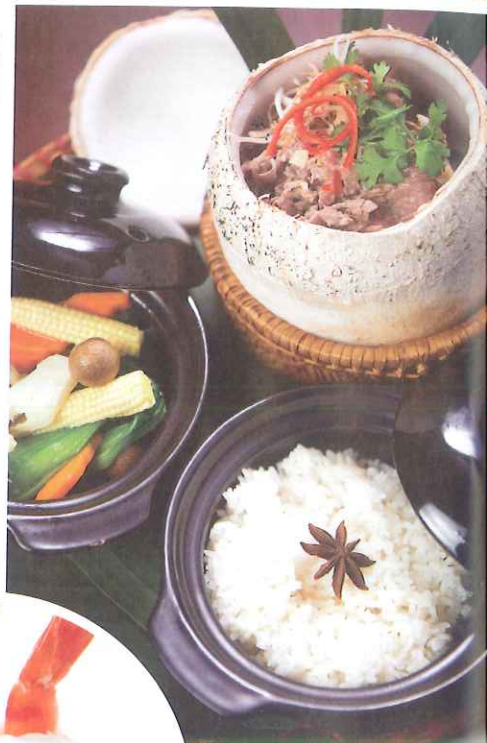


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VND 40,000



Story: Jessica Nguyen



## Deliciously humble

**If** you're seeking somewhere to experience the diversity of Asian cuisine or perhaps somewhere luxurious but romantic or even just a quiet space to chat with friends, be sure to head to the Red Bean Restaurant. Located on the ground floor of the Hanoi La Siesta Hotel & Spa, right by reception, the restaurant impresses from the outset.

It's been described as a 'chic restaurant within the heart of the backpacker's area in the Old Quarter, serving fine fusion cuisine in a truly Vietnamese atmosphere'. My friend and I decided we needed to find out for ourselves, and we weren't disappointed.

The midday heat was beating down as we entered the cosy, dimly-lit and packed restaurant, with wooden furniture, old French-style ceiling fans, bird cage-like bamboo lamps, and multi-coloured simulated silk rolls adorning the walls. Together, these elegant decorative elements evoke scenes from Hanoi's bygone colonial era in the 1930s.

Named after the nickname of the hotel owner's son (Red Bean is 'Đậu đỏ' in Vietnamese), the restaurant is a reminder of the humble but versatile ingredients in cuisine from Vietnam and elsewhere in Asia. Đậu đỏ is also believed to be a symbol of love and delity fidelity and is featured in legends and poems about love

and romance.

As soon as we settled down for lunch, Eric Giang, our friendly waiter, recommended some favourites from the menu, to which I added a few choices of my own. Red Bean's extensive menu boasts some 100 dishes, including authentic and fusion Vietnamese cuisine, high-end international dishes, kid's choices, set menus for a quick lunch, some vegetarian options, and, of course, desserts. There are the usual Vietnamese favourites, such as Hanoi-style deep-fried spring rolls, grilled beef in banana leaves, and Chả cá (grilled fish with turmeric and dill).

For the starter I opted for one of the restaurant's signature dishes - the deep-fried spring rolls (VND155,000/ four pieces). The Hanoi specialty at Red Bean is so so good! Its rice paper is as crispy as can be and the stuffing flecked with fragments of mushroom, the sweetness of lean meat, and the freshness of vegetables, creating a perfect blend of flavour and almost perfectly executed.

The mango salad with seafood (VND155,000) bore an exceptional flavour - the green mango and seafood were very fresh, with the sweetness of sugar, the sourness of vinegar, and the



saltiness of fish sauce all working in harmony.

For the main, we chose beef in coconut (VND245,000), with thin slices of beef cooked in coconut milk and seasoned with lemongrass, garlic, chili, pepper, salt, oyster sauce, and other elements. The coconut shell is baked to keep the food inside warm.

The dishes all tasted as good as they looked. The beef was succulent and tender with the rich flavour of fresh coconut and lemongrass. Aromatic and flavoursome, the steamed rice perfectly accompanied the beef in coconut and our bowls were empty in a flash!

'Fresh' is the word at Red Bean, according to its manager, 'It's the only way to truly respect the flavour of the dishes,' he said. 'We strive to present Vietnamese dishes in the most delicious way.'

Red Bean is open from 6.30am to 10am for buffet breakfast, at VND260,000 (\$12) for outside guests, and from 11.30am to 10pm for set menus and a la carte. ☐

### Red Bean Restaurant

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