

Search Quotes and News

Anywhere | Professional | Solutions | About

Log in



Related News: [Dining](#) · [Travel](#)

Soho Spiced Up as Vietnamese Food Escapes East London Enclave

By Richard Vines - May 11, 2011 12:00 AM GMT+0100

Recommend 19 | 14 | Share | More

Email | Print



Hieu Trung Bui is opening Cay Tre restaurant in London this week. The restaurateur was born in Hanoi. Photographer: Keiko Oikawa/84 public relations via Bloomberg

Audio Download: [Restaurant Owner Hieu Trung Bui Interview on Cay Tre](#)



Ratnesh Bagdai is one of the backers of the new Cay Tre restaurant in London. He previously worked for Caprice, the owner of the Ivy. Source: 84 public relations via Bloomberg

There's a stretch of street in east London where just about every restaurant is Vietnamese and the smug food lover might feel justified in thinking that this is a city rightly famed for its culinary diversity.

The trouble is that once you leave Kingsland Road and head into the West End, establishments serving this south-east Asian cuisine are few in number. Even out east, standards vary greatly and some venues hedge their bets with a range of Chinese dishes.

Hieu Trung Bui, 35, the Hanoi-born restaurateur who owns Viet Grill on Kingsland Road, and Cay Tre and Keu! on nearby Old Street, is hoping to change all that with a Cay Tre -- which means "bamboo" in English -- in the heart of the nightlife area of Soho, right next to the Groucho Club, on Dean Street. The restaurant is scheduled to open on May 13.

"We will do some staple, key dishes of the Vietnamese but also something new," Hieu said in an interview. "The point is to try to use local supplies such as English beef and good chicken from here. So it's Vietnamese cooking but with as many good-quality local ingredients as possible. But all the herbs and the spices will be from Vietnam, of course."

Bui moved to Ho Chi Minh City -- the former Saigon -- when he was two years old and was raised there. At the age of 25, he traveled to London to study. He earned money in his spare time by working in Vietnamese restaurants.

"The food wasn't really what I was used to eating in Vietnam," he said. "Many of the Vietnamese in the U.K. fled from the country after the war with the Americans, and at that time we didn't have so many things to eat. So they brought over here all that street food, just a few dishes, and they had to fill up their menu with something else.

Spring Rolls

"Most of them stayed in a camp in Hong Kong for a couple of years and learnt about Chinese food and thought that is the food to have for a big meal and Vietnamese is like a starter. So they opened restaurants that way. They have 10 or 15 Vietnamese dishes, like noodles or pho or spring rolls, and the rest is chicken with black bean sauce, crispy duck, things like that."

Bui is being backed by Ratnesh Bagdai, an accountant by training who formerly worked for the Caprice Group, opening J Sheekey and then became the business partner of the chef Mark Hix, among others. Bagdai also provides accountancy services for Russell Norman, whose Polpo, Polpetto and Spuntino are among London's most successful new restaurants. He started working with Bui two years ago.

More Stories

[Canadian TMX Bid May Trumpet Nationalism to Thwart LSE's Deal From London](#)

[Merkel Risks Revolt Over Greece as FDP Ally Divisions Surface](#)

[Galaxy Opens \\$1.9 Billion Casino in Macau After 2-Year Delay](#)

[Sony Resumes Partial Operation of Its PlayStation Network in U.S., Europe](#)

[+] Rate These Stories

[More News](#)

Advertisement

Try FXCM's CFD Platform

Free Demo Account

FXCM

CFD Trading Involves Significant Risk of Loss.

Market Snapshot

U.S. Europe Asia

DOW	12595.80	-100.17 (-0.79%)
S&P 500	1337.77	-10.88 (-0.81%)
NASDAQ	2828.47	-34.57 (-1.21%)

Stocks on the Move

Most Popular Stories

[Sony Resumes PlayStation Network in U.S., Europe](#) Updated 3 hours ago

[IMF's Strauss-Kahn Held Over Alleged Sexual Assault, New York Police Say](#)

“Looking around internationally, -- New York in particular-- I’m surprised that London hasn’t quite grasped Vietnamese food,” said Bagdai. “I’m really excited. I love the food anyway. Vietnamese food, for my taste, fits all purposes: light, seasonal, great ingredients and great, great flavors. In Soho, there is a way of eating these days and it is light and it is sharing.

Right Concept

“In terms of borrowing, if you’ve got the right concept, the right person behind it, a little bit of financial guidance, I can take most people to the bank and get the money. It’s a great state of affairs in London: Restaurants are doing very well.”

Cay Tre won’t have the field entirely to itself. Caprice Holdings Ltd. owns Bam-Bou, an Indochinese venue in Fitzrovia, while Nam Long Le Shaker, on the Old Brompton Road, treads a similar culinary path, albeit one illuminated by the Flaming Ferrari, a cocktail the sober might approach with trepidation.

“I was supposed to leave the country after I finished my degree but I thought these dishes I have here are not the ones I have in Vietnam and I like food,” Bui said. “I was eating out all the time, so I asked my mom and friends and we found a place in Old Street and we opened Cay Tre in 2003.

“For the first six months we had to stick with a couple of Chinese things but then Mark (Hix) -- he was at the (nearby) Rivington Grill then -- came in and said, ‘Get rid of it.’ So I took all the Chinese food off the menu. I opened Viet Grill in 2006. If you come to Kingsland Road on a Saturday night, you have about 15 restaurants and all are busy. You go to Chinatown for a Chinese meal and come to Kingsland Road for Vietnamese.

“Authentic Vietnamese food isn’t new in Australia, or America or France but we want to change the perception in London. There’s a much more delicate cuisine in the cities in Vietnam -- much less basic -- and I want people to try it.”

(Richard Vines is the chief food critic for Muse, the arts and leisure section of Bloomberg News. Opinions expressed are his own.)

To contact the writer on the story: Richard Vines in London at rvines@bloomberg.net or <http://twitter.com/Richardvines>

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Mark Beech at mbeech@bloomberg.net.

[Geithner Says Default Damage May Be 'Irrevocable'](#)

[IMF Chief Strauss-Kahn Charged With Attempted Rape, Police in New York Say](#)

[More Most Popular Stories »](#)

Advertisements

FREE \$50K

Sponsored Links

[Maths Teacher Training](#)

Qualify as a maths teacher. Register for more information. www.tda.gov.uk/recruit

[SureStock](#)

Stocktaking/Consultancy That Counts The Home of the BII Business Doctor www.surestock4bars.co.uk

[Buy TVs From Us](#)

Visit Us Today When You Want Copying Services In Soho. www.kalkwik.co.uk

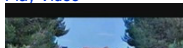
Ads by Google

Recommend 19 | Share 14 | More | Email | Print

Videos You May Like

Prev 1 of 3 Next

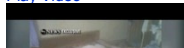
Play Video



Play Video



Play Video



by Taboola

[Immediate roofing service](#)

Free gutter clearance with all roof repairs 0800 567 7663 www.London-Roof.co.uk

Ads by Google

Related News Dining · Travel

Rate this Page

Go to the old version of Bloomberg.com

News

- Exclusive
- Worldwide
- Regions
- Markets
- Industries
- Economy
- Politics
- Law
- Environment
- Science
- Opinion

Market Data

- Stocks
- Rates & Bonds
- Currencies
- Mutual Funds
- ETFs
- Commodities
- Economic Calendar

Personal Finance

- TV
- Radio
- Video
- Podcasts
- Personalities
- Keene On Demand
- Mobile
- Leaders
- Technology

More from Bloomberg

- Bloomberg Businessweek
- Business Exchange
- Bloomberg on Twitter
- Bloomberg on Facebook
- Bloomberg Briefs
- Bloomberg Government
- Bloomberg HT
- 日本語サイト
- Bloomberg Law
- Bloomberg Link
- Bloomberg Markets Magazine

Company

- About Bloomberg
- Solutions
- Careers
- Contact Us
- Press Room
- Help
- 关于彭博中国
- Sitemap
- Trademarks
- Feedback

Muse: Arts,
Culture &
Spend
Sports

Bloomberg New Energy Finance
Bloomberg Open Symbology
Bloomberg Press
Bloomberg Sports

©2011 BLOOMBERG L.P. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. [Terms of Service](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Advertising](#)
Unless indicated otherwise, intraday market data is at least 15 minutes delayed.