

## PROMOTE CULINARY CULTURAL VALUES IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN VINH LONG PROVINCE

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### **Abstract**

Exploiting the potential of agriculture and local culture in order to diversify tourism products in the Southwest region is one of the key objectives of the socio-economic development policy in Vinh Long province. Vinh Long is also a land of multi-ethnic people, creating a colorful picture, in which the Vietnamese play the role of subjects. The appearance of the Vietnamese community with the indigenous Khmer and Chinese groups over the past three centuries has contributed to the richness and uniqueness of the culinary and cultural picture of the Southwest region in general and Vinh Long province. Long in particular. However, the application of culinary cultural values to tourism activities has not been properly exploited to promote the inherent resources of the locality. Therefore, the exploitation of cultural resources of the province in general and culinary culture in particular in order to diversify and characterize tourism products is an urgent issue today.

Keywords: culinary culture; promote culinary cultural values; Vinh Long tourism.

### **1. Overview**

#### **1.1 Geographical location and natural conditions of Vinh Long province**

Vinh Long is adjacent to 7 provinces/cities: the North and Northeast borders Tien Giang and Ben Tre provinces; the North West and the East border with Dong Thap province; the Southeast borders with Tra Vinh province; The Southwest borders the provinces of Hau Giang, Soc Trang and Can Tho city. It is this geographical location that has partly shaped the typical nature and cultural exchange of food here. Total natural area is about 152,000 ha, of which

agricultural land is 119,000 ha (accounting for 78% of the total land area of the province).

Vinh Long belongs to the tropical monsoon region, it is hot and humid all year round, the average temperature is over 27°C. There are two distinct seasons in the year: the rainy season and the dry season. The rainy season starts from May to November and the dry season lasts from December to April next year. Along with climate change in recent years, it has damaged the production and daily life of local residents, especially in agricultural production.

Vinh Long's topography is quite flat with a slope of less than 20, shaped like a basin in the center of the province and gradually rising in two directions towards the Tien River, Hau River, Mang Thit River and major rivers and canals. With the terrain being quite low compared to sea level, in the future, global climate change will affect the Southwest region in general and Vinh Long province in particular. With the scenario of sea level rise of 1m, through calculations, Vung Liem and Tra On districts will be affected by saline intrusion and about 606 km<sup>2</sup> (nearly 40% of the area) of land in the central area of the province will be flooded. affect agricultural production; aquaculture and fishing activities... All these factors will directly affect the local culinary culture. Besides, Vinh Long is likened to a "floating island" between the two tributaries of the Tien and Hau rivers. Because the surface is distributed about 46 interlaced systems of rivers and canals, creating an overall picture of the water area affecting the life and culinary culture of Vinh Long province.

It is these unique geological and topographical features that create diversity in freshwater flora and fauna populations, leading to an abundance in Vietnamese culinary ingredients in Vinh Long, serving the needs of Vietnamese people. the lives of local people and create attraction for domestic and foreign tourists.

## 1.2 Historical, social and economic conditions

Historically, Vinh Long was originally a large land belonging to Long Ho palace including Vinh Long, Sa Dec, Long Xuyen, Chau Doc, Can Tho, Soc Trang, Bac Lieu, Rach Gia, Tra Vinh and part of Ben Tre today. Vinh Long was founded in 1732 under Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu with the name Chau Dinh Vien. As a part of Long Ho Dinh, Vinh Long used to play the role of a cultural center, where the headquarters, economic, political and military administration apparatus of the Southwest region were gathered at that time.

The place "Vinh Long" appeared in the 13th year of King Minh Mang (1832). Vinh Long town at that time consisted of present-day Vinh Long and

An Giang provinces, dominating 4 palaces, 8 districts, 47 cantons, 408 communes and villages (Huynh Minh, 23). Along with the ups and downs of history, Vinh Long's administrative boundaries have also changed many times and been completely shaped since 1992 by the establishment of two provinces, Vinh Long and Tra Vinh, which were separated from Cuu Long province.

Vinh Long now has an area of about 147,912 hectares and a population of about 1.05 million people (Vinh Long Provincial Party Committee, 20). The whole province has 08 administrative units including 01 Vinh Long city, 01 Binh Minh town and 06 districts: Binh Tan, Tam Binh, Vung Liem, Mang Thit, Tra On and Long Ho.

Vinh Long is a land of multi-ethnic people creating colorful pictures, in which Vietnamese, Chinese, Khmer and Cham are the main colors, but Vietnamese people play the main role (accounting for about 96% of the province's population). This contributes to the richness and uniqueness of culinary culture as well as tourism development. Over time, these ethnic groups have together created a separate culture for the Southwest region in general and Vinh Long province in particular.

From the beginning of the land reclamation, agricultural economic activities of the Vietnamese people here are very rich with many production methods: growing wet rice, crops, fruit trees, raising livestock, poultry, catching water. products, commerce, services... The handicrafts: making rice paper, puff pastry, vermicelli, tofu, pressing peanut oil, pressing cane sugar, cooking wine, soy sauce, fish sauce... were formed and developed. . It can be said that in the 18th century, trade in agricultural products in Vinh Long gradually expanded, the main products were rice and famous specialties at that time: areca, mango, watermelon, dried shrimp... This specialty was used by Nguyen Anh to exchange weapons and military supplies with foreign countries.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century to 1867, the work of reclamation and establishment of hamlets was further accelerated and completed. Long Ho Dinh was chosen by the Nguyen Dynasty as a key position to establish a plantation to provide food to ensure political security at that time. The agricultural structure of Vinh Long in this period includes:

Cultivation (rice cultivation): an area of about 57,000 hectares, accounting for 66% of the cultivated area.

Cultivation (gardening): an area of about 29,000 hectares, accounting for 34% of the area, including diverse agricultural products that are typical of the garden economy of Vinh Long province and Gia Dinh land at that time: rice,

cotton , tall, sweet potato, coconut, banana, orange, tangerine, grapefruit, custard apple, longan...

By the time of French colonial rule (1867 - 1945), Vinh Long province's socio-economic status had many changes: Vinh Long province's population increased significantly, from 127,000 people (1908) to 180,000 people (1928). Vietnamese, Chinese, Khmer, European and Indian (Nguyen Dinh Toan, 320). The focus of economic development in this period was still agriculture, but handicrafts had many changes, developed in both quantity and quality on the basis of absorbing advanced processing techniques from Western culture. : making fish sauce, making sugar, making rice paper... During this period, Vinh Long's economy expanded internationally. During this period, the Vietnamese received the periphery culture through the trade of goods: silk, food, worship items (China); dishes (Japan); condiments (India); food, wine, consumer goods (France)...

Currently, the socio-economic situation of Vinh Long province has undergone many significant changes, but agriculture still plays the leading role. In 2017, the total product in the province was estimated at 31,035 billion VND. In which, agriculture - forestry - fishery accounts for 35.56%, tourism revenue is estimated at 340 billion VND. In recent years, tourism has been identified as a key economic sector of the province as shown in Resolution 01-NQ/TU of the Vinh Long Provincial Party Committee on Tourism Development 2015 - 2020 and a vision to 2030. Outstanding image of Vinh Long tourism development: “taking homestay as the main strength, taking care of and enriching the surrounding entertainment services; At the same time, it breathes life into the dishes rich in Southern flavors, creating an unforgettable impression in the hearts of tourists.

## **2. Methodology**

In this study authors will use observations, together with experiences, and other qualitative analysis methods such as: inductive, explanatory and synthesis methods.

## **3. Main findings**

Features of culinary culture in Vinh Long province

### **3.1 Spices**

Spices are considered as auxiliary ingredients used to prepare dishes. Thanks to the spices, the dish stimulates the senses, adding attractiveness and characteristic flavor. In cuisine, Vietnamese people in Vinh Long province use

spices: ginger, galangal, onion, shallot, turmeric, lemongrass, pepper, chili, garlic, coriander, coriander, basil, basil, guise leaves, cilantro, coriander braised, laksa leaves, perilla, lemon, kumquat, lime leaves, fish sauce, preliminarily processed fish sauce, salt, sugar, vinegar, cooked rice, hummus, coconut milk, soy sauce, soy sauce, coco... Spices It is also the most important ingredient to create sauces and sauces associated with Vietnamese food. Particularly, the processing of dipping sauces to accompany the main dishes is very diverse and rich.

Sour soup with dried cotton fish used with pure chili pepper fish sauce;

Fried giant fish dish served with chili garlic fish sauce (mixed with sugar, lemon) or seasoning fish sauce;

Porridge imitation civet used with dipping sauce made of chao, peanuts, crushed soy sauce mixed with coconut milk (also known as absorbent);

Mixed Boiled Vegetables with Braised Pork, Chao;

Goi roll dish with ground soy sauce (including: white bean soup + soy sauce + peanuts).

The color and taste of food and drink create visual attraction, stimulate taste, create a psychological desire to enjoy in people. In order to make the dish "eye-catching", Vietnamese people have the custom of using coloring herbs to process food, especially sweet dishes. Nowadays, the trend of using herbs as medicine, food processing instead of using chemicals is becoming the needs and tastes of many people. The Vietnamese use fragrant pandan leaves, and the leaves create a green color; lilac leaves create purple color; yellow saffron pistil; butterfly pea flowers create blue color; Gac fruit rice, red cashew nuts; Beetroot creates purple color... The above coloring plants are grown on Vinh Long land and are widely used by Vietnamese people in cakes, sticky rice, and tea.

The harmonious combination of main ingredients, spices and colorants in each dish is the conclusion of a process of practical experience, constantly creative in culinary activities since the Vietnamese foot on this land to this day. This is not only a combination to make it more appetizing but higher, showing a principle of "mutual coexistence, yin and yang development" creating the typical characteristics of the cuisine of the nation and region. This is one of the vivid and flexible expressions of Vietnamese culinary culture in Vinh Long.

It can be affirmed that the ingredients for processing Vietnamese cuisine in Vinh Long are extremely rich. To get this result, the ancestors had to refine their dining experience during the exploration of the Southwest region in

general and Vinh Long province in particular. Writer Son Nam has described very "innocent" when talking about the eating habits of the Southern people: "Our ancestors three or four centuries ago entered the Southern land, met something, what animals could eat but didn't die. then just eat. They eat all kinds of herbs first, then try them and then become a habit" (Vo Van Thanh, 66). It is the Vietnamese people's attitude to take advantage of natural products from wild animals and plants that have created the unique culture of the Southwest region, not to be confused with other regions. That is why, when writing about the cuisine of regions in Vietnam, writer Vu Bang used the phrase "Southern strange dishes" when describing the typical cuisine of this region.

### 3.2 Nutrition in cuisine

Nutrition is the provision of substances necessary for organisms to maintain and develop life. Many health related problems stem from one's diet. There is a folk saying: "Painting comes from the mouth" including both literal and figurative meanings. Literally matters related to material life, including food. The figurative meaning leans to the spiritual element, in which words are very important in communication and behavior. Both meanings speak to the impact, affecting the health, even life of people.

For Vietnamese people, the question is: What to eat for nutrition? Or the answer: Eat whatever is nutritious! It is a common saying in daily life. So, what to eat healthy? Through interviews with elderly Vietnamese, the author found that the majority believed that the basis for producing foods for culinary processing did not have too many harmful substances. For example: "Now the food and drink are not of the same quality as in the past because of the increasing population, they have to plant trees and raise animals to harvest quickly. In the past, when I worked as a seasonal rice crop, it took only 6 months to harvest, so the rice grain was very delicious. Now, with three crops of rice, it's like an immature young woman who gets married and gives birth to a child, so how can the child be healthy. At that time, the breed pig Thuoc Nhieu in Tien Giang who raised well would only gain 1 quintal in 8 to 10 months. However, now the pig raised for 3 and a half months has gained more than 1 quintal, all of which are raised with drugs. How can I be healthy if I eat rice and pork pieces like that!" (Interview document)

Others believe that eating healthy must be in harmony with the body. When asked what is harmony and sufficient quality, an elderly person replied: "In my opinion, a meal should at least have rice, fish or meat and vegetables. If you're poor, then braised fish, vegetable soup with rice can be fine. Better than that, there are 3 dishes: soup, stir-fry, salty stock. Only then will it be

harmonious and qualified” (TLPV). However, an opinion from a young chef: “In my opinion, you should read books or go online to find out to eat a balanced diet of yin and yang and enough calories for the body. Most Vietnamese dishes have a balance of yin and yang. As for the amount of calories provided to the body, it depends on age, occupation and gender. A small child cannot eat and drink like an adult; a worker who does hard labor is different from a woman of the same age who works at a desk” (TLPV). And another opinion: “The word “delicious” should mean “nutritious” as well. But now in eating and drinking, there are delicious foods because the way they are processed stimulates the taste buds but is not nutritious, even eating too much can be harmful. There are things that are very nutritious but only suitable for one person's body, not for another person's body” (TLPV).

In addition, the concept of nutrition in cuisine is also influenced by the aesthetic concept of the times, especially for women. Especially at present, the foods that are raised and grown to increase weight and increase production have significantly affected human health and physical health. Therefore, not only eating for nutrition but also for skin, beautiful body and anti-aging is very interested in Vietnamese women and elderly people. Grasping this demand, in Vinh Long appeared all kinds of: beauty tea, nutritional porridge, herbal drink, fruit to beautify the skin... Besides, the concept that what you eat is not always good. Right and sometimes harmful to health still exist in the thoughts and actions of Vietnamese people. For example, for people with high blood fat disease, the restriction of eating foods such as organs, brain, marrow of cattle and poultry; types rich in starch, sugar of all kinds. It also means that if you don't have to eat animal brains to help nourish your brain, increase your intelligence, or hurt your kidneys, you have to eat kidney... Therefore, besides the limited understanding of the meaning of the sentence " Eat whatever you want to eat", many women today still have a deeper awareness of this concept: "When we were young, every time we studied for our final exam, my mother used to cook green bean soup, spread ear with me. beef blood cockle porridge to eat. My mother said that in the summer, eating green bean tea is cool to cool off and study comfortably. And eating beef scallop porridge is nutritious, giving the mind a clear exam results. Later, growing up, I found out that my mother was right” (TLPV).

### 3.3 Healing through food

The meaning of nutrition is not only to be nutritious but also to minimize the harmful effects of food on human health. The Southwestern folk song has a saying: "Love your husband and cook porridge le le. Cook pumpkin soup with

lotus seed tea". Le le, also known as mallard, is a wild type, living in flocks, abundant in Dong Thap and Long Xuyen Quadrangle. Le le meat is rich in nutrients, used to cook porridge with lotus seeds or green beans is very delicious. This species is currently invested in breeding, developing livestock and supplying to the market. In Vinh Long, there are a few places that have applied this breeding model to bring high economic efficiency.

According to folk medicine: "Chim le le is processed into many delicious and nutritious dishes. According to Oriental medicine, eating meat helps people stay healthy and energetic, and reduce fatigue in daily life" (Minh Phuc, 2015). There are dozens of dishes prepared from le le for the purpose of promoting health. Such as:

The dish Le le contains lotus seeds: helps men regain their vitality when working hard and tired;

Le le dish cooked with taro - straw mushroom: cure weak physiological male, dilute sperm;

Le le stew with mugwort: cures frigidity, irregular menstruation;

Green bean porridge: cure psychic, cold, cough phlegm;

Le le dish cooked with pumpkin cotton soup: cures blood damage, headaches, dizziness...

Before people had the conditions to go to doctors and hospitals for treatment, common diseases that were treated with food that had been proven in real life were protected by elderly Vietnamese. saved to this day also brings certain effects. Although it does not work as quickly as Western medicine, the treatment with food has few side effects and meets the nutritional requirements. Specifically, the dishes treat some common diseases such as:

Snakehead fish porridge with spices, ginger, pepper, and onions: nourishing the body of the sick and relieving colds;

Water with honey, kumquats, and fenugreek seeds in a water-proof way: to help clear phlegm, sore throat, and cough;

Golden roasted pumpkin seeds: help children deworm easily...

Bone broth of lotus root: strengthens the health of the elderly and patients with long-term illnesses...



From the stories through interviews, the author found that the Vietnamese people's concept of nutrition is different due to the common knowledge level of each person, but they have 2 things in common:

1. The processing and use of cuisine towards the health of people (self and family). Because only health can survive and maintain the race is the eternal purpose of human life.

2. Cuisine must have nutrients, suitable to conditions (natural, social and family), and not cause harm to health. Therefore, the food source must be clean and free from bacteria; Depending on individual and family conditions (financial, age, need for active energy supply) the meal structure and processing of dishes are appropriate.

3. Promoting the value of culinary culture in tourism development in Vinh Long province

In order to build and develop the type of cultural and culinary tourism in Vinh Long province, it is necessary to have an experimental period. Through a number of additional tours (attached to the main tour) to initially survey the needs and tastes of visitors for food, drinks, processing techniques and enjoyment space. From these experimental activities, it helps to expand the scale and scope related to the culinary culture of the Vietnamese people in exploiting tourism activities of the province. Also through this experiment, the team of instructors, chefs, business owners (collectively referred to as professionals) gain experience, improve skills and understanding in participating in cultural activities. culture and tourism. The experiment is a "trial application" to measure the satisfaction of tourists' needs in the roadmap towards building a tour of Vietnamese culinary culture. In the actual conditions of Vinh Long, the author proposes a few specific programs (which can be applied to tourists, locals or any request of delegations coming to work in Vinh Long city).

Program "One day as a chef in the alluvial land"

This is one of the programs in the tour about Vinh Long (1 tour has as many days as there are many programs). To implement this program, it is necessary to arrange the menu and ingredients to prepare one or two dishes of the local cuisine: Banh Xeo, Cong cake, Vinh Sang chicken hot pot, Vinh Sang coconut jam, candy nuggets, tofu tofu. ky My Hoa, Luc Si Thanh spring rolls, mussels pancakes, Braised toad fish with minced mango, Pomelo tea, Tet cake, It's cake, Sour and sour soup with batched rice, Sour and sour soup with cork fruit... Go to a traditional market to choose ingredients for cooking. At the

experience site, with the guidance of the guide and chef, visitors cook by themselves, then enjoy the food on the spot. During the instruction, the guide and the chef must convey the true values of Vietnamese food: traditional cultural values, historical values, nutritional, scientific, and nutritional values. , taste, characteristics of ingredients, spices...

#### Experience the culinary tour "Taste of the countryside"

Building a short-term tour experiment demonstrating the connection between agriculture, culture and tourism in Vinh Long. Thereby, promoting culinary culture through experience activities on the area of processed materials, and local clean specialty fruit orchards. Visitors can enjoy local culture and cuisine at the same time in a cozy and friendly space to feel the unique and typical cultural values of the Vietnamese people in Vinh Long province.

#### **4. Conclusion**

With an abundance of raw materials, favorable natural conditions, a gentle, hospitable personality, fond of creativity and dynamism in labor and production, the Vietnamese in Vinh Long have all the conditions to have can bring their own culinary culture to participate in the sustainable economic, cultural and social development of the province through the tourism development roadmap.

Therefore, the recommendations and some specific suggestions are conclusions based on actual conditions in Vinh Long. From the establishment of a legal system to ensure the rights and obligations of the subjects (industries, tourism business establishments, farmers, professional teams ...) to the construction of relevant models Experience on the route of building specific products Cultural tourism of Vietnamese people in Vinh Long is not far from the actual conditions that have been and are present in Vinh Long land.

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#### **Conflicts of interest**

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