

WHAT THEY'RE EATING IN

HANOI

In the Vietnamese capital, dishes are full of flavour, whether it's delicate scallop tarts or punchy banana blossom salad

Scallop tarts dotted with tangy calamansi curd at Tanh Tach

TUNG DINING

THE CARABINERO

The seasonal menus at TUNG Dining are meticulously crafted journeys. Chef Hoang Tung combines Vietnamese flavours with contemporary culinary techniques he picked up working at Michelin-starred restaurants in Finland, Denmark and Estonia. The Carabinero reflects Vietnam's affection for seafood, in this case, prawn cured in sugar and salt, topped with smoked scallop mousse. The charcoaled prawn head served alongside is stuffed with smoked trout roe and accompanied by fermented cabbage crackers. tungdining.com

TANH TACH

SCALLOP TART

The restaurant's onomatopoeic name, Tanh Tach, is Vietnamese for the clickity sound apparently made by freshly caught seafood. Chef Bernard Nguyen's menu is a celebration of these gifts from the sea, and the diverse and zesty flavours of the mon an nhe (light snacks akin to Basque pintxos) are practically a meal in themselves. The headliner is the banh tart so diep, or scallop tart, featuring velvety but sharp calamansi curd and pop-in-the-mouth red caviar. The restaurant sits within Hanoi's picturesque French Quarter, occupying a colonial villa adorned with local art. tanhtach.com

CHAPTER GRILL

STEWED TOOTHFISH

Squeeze past the kitchen team on the ground floor at Chapter before making your way up to the restaurant's dining room. Vietnam's northern mountains inspired the 13-dish summer tasting menu, which ranges from cured pork with foraged greens to black chicken with mustard leaves. The standout, however, is Patagonian toothfish with fermented soybean paste stewed in a clay pot. Chef Quang Dung learnt traditional clay-pot cooking from his grandmother, but he's added international touches here, including a soy glaze, braised green banana and guanciale (Italian cured pork). chaptergrill.vn

CHA CA THANG LONG

CHA CA

At Cha Ca Thang Long, turmeric-spiced freshwater fish is stir-fried with spring onion and dill to make the restaurant's eponymous dish, cha ca. Staff do the cooking, but you can assemble your own bowl by adding vermicelli noodles and garnishes including roasted peanuts and fresh herbs. Once limited to just a handful of traditional establishments, cha ca has experienced a boom in popularity over recent years, with a slew of competing chain outlets opening up. But the decades-old restaurants, like this Old Quarter spot, still do it best. chacathanglong.com.vn

LUK LAK

BANANA BLOSSOM SALAD

With crunchy vegetables, flavours of fresh herbs and just a few morsels of meat, Vietnamese salads are all about texture. Banana blossom salad features the pink and purple tear-shaped banana flower, shredded into a curly tangle and combined with pieces of chicken breast and other seasonal herbs and vegetables. A sprinkle of red chilli slices and a sweet and sour dressing give it a kick. Chef Binh serves the salad alongside other dishes from far-flung corners of rural Vietnam, such as smoked pork belly and fried rice with lotus seed, in a casually furnished dining room informed by Indochinese design. luklak.vn *Joshua Zukas*