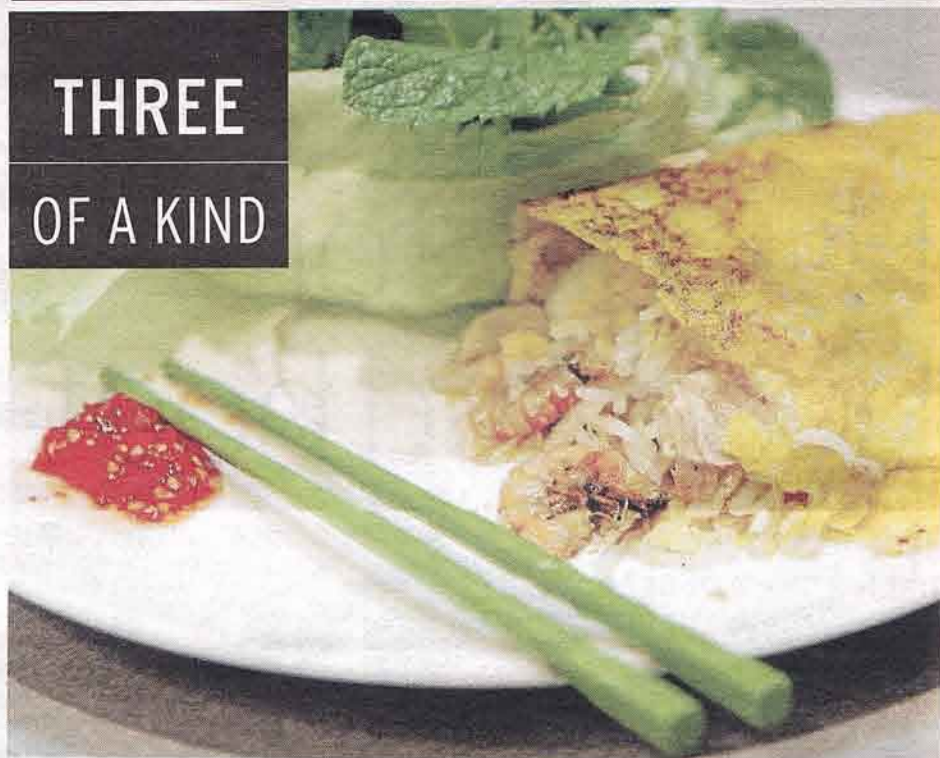


# THREE OF A KIND



## Banh xeo (crisp Vietnamese pancakes)

BY STEPHANIE CLIFFORD-SMITH

### BAU TRUONG

42 John Street, Cabramatta, 9727 4492

CRISP, crunchy and packed with juicy fillings, banh xeo are almost as common as spring rolls in Vietnamese restaurants.

Served with nuoc cham, a sweet, tangy dipping sauce, they are more crepe than pancake and have links to the Indian dosa, which is unsurprising because Indian Khmers once colonised Vietnam.

Banh xeo is also sometimes referred to as an omelette, which is misleading because there are no eggs in the batter; just rice flour, coconut milk and sometimes turmeric and cornflour.

At one of Cabramatta's poshest-looking eateries, with chocolate-leather upholstered

chairs and muted metallic, albeit laminated, tabletops, the banh xeo (\$12) comes with a thick wedge of iceberg lettuce, perilla, mint and laksa leaves. The bean sprouts, which sometimes form part of the salad, are cooked inside the crepe here with school prawns, slices of pork belly and onion.

The dipping sauce is a refined affair with finely grated carrot adding texture to its base of fish sauce, sugar, lime juice and vinegar. There's also salty chilli sauce.

It's hard to resist rubbernecking all the other dishes whizzing down the halogen-lit runway, pausing between mouthfuls to compare fabric-shopping bargains.

Also at 250 Canley Vale Road, Canley Heights.



### THUY HUONG COFFEE LOUNGE

252 Illawarra Road, Marrickville, 9558 4022

THERE'S nothing flash about this busy little spot perched on the corner of an arcade and the street but nobody, including the largely Vietnamese clientele, seems to mind. Their version of banh xeo (\$10) is filled with school prawns and little chunks of pork belly and has a mountain of salad to the side with butter lettuce, perilla, mint, coriander and bean sprouts. Wrap a wedge of pancake in a lettuce leaf and plunge it into the nuoc cham, which is chunky with pickled radish, carrot and garlic.

### BAY BUA

2 Springfield Avenue, Potts Point, 9358 3234

THE family behind this elegant restaurant has moved on from its humble digs in Marrickville and now works with elegant stemware, cocktails and a chandelier. Banh xeo (\$10.50) comes with long batons of pickled daikon radish and carrot, mint leaves, coriander and a little iceberg lettuce. There is an appealing creamy, mealiness to the inside of the crepe not found elsewhere, the source of which owner Mai Tran says is a guarded secret. It seems pulse-like, however, perhaps from mung beans. Try the heavenly little rice cakes.



(StephanieCliffordSmith@gmail.com)

## NEED TO KNOW

goodliving@smh.com.au

Have you despaired at finding an ingredient? Good Living's new Need to Know feature provides a forum for readers' food queries. Each week it will publish a question and an answer (to a previous week's question). If you have a question or know an answer, email [goodliving@smh.com.au](mailto:goodliving@smh.com.au).

**Q** I'm from Auckland, New Zealand, where most decent fish shops sell smoked roe - snapper or hapuka, I think. It has a superb flavour and texture - a bit pricey at about \$30-plus a kilogram but I only need about \$5 or \$6 worth to feel "at home" again. Does anyone sell it?  
Julian Faigan, Marrickville