

International Affairs Department

Dear Friends,

How are you? How was your summer?

My fourth Vietnam Journal as a JICA expert introduces my counterpart and reports, "Cooking class for men."

1. MY COUNTERPART

"Counterpart" here is someone who does the same job on the Vietnamese side as me. We will work together on the program from now.

My counterpart, Mr. Do Manh Quan (Photo 1), used to work for a private company for a couple of years after college graduation and then started a new career at the Ministry of Construction (MOC) of Vietnam. This single young man spends his weekends doing sports, drinking and talking with friends, and enjoying nature travels. While a Vietnam food lover, Mr. Quan, who has been to Japan, also seems to like Japanese food such as Sashimi and Sake or Japanese rice wine.



Photo 1: Mr. Quan

Mr. Quan told me about VOC Project as follows:

"I feel the sewage works situation in Vietnam is like that of the 1970s-80s in Japan. When I visited Japan, people's lives and the natural environment were in excellent condition. In the training program, I joined, I learned Japan made a significant effort to improve its environment.

I believe Japanese knowledge and experience will contribute to improving the environment in Vietnam through the VSC Project.

I'm happy to work and learn together and discuss much with Japanese experts for the project's success. I want to contribute to developing sewage works and improving the public health in Vietnam."

Mr. Quan and I take care of "Project implementation support" as counterparts. I will have many chances to see him.

2. COOKING CLASS FOR MEN

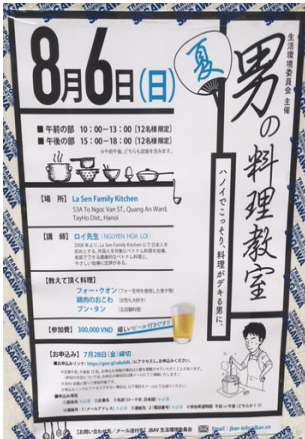


Photo 2: Cooking class flyer

On August 6, I joined a “Cooking Class for Men” sponsored by the Japan Business Association in Vietnam.

I was lucky to join it since I had time on that day. I could even say I wanted to learn Vietnamese cooking, but as you already know, the program bribed me with a glass of beer.

The three dishes we learned that day are *Pho cuon*: Fresh rice noodle rolls with fried beef or herbs, *Xoi Thap Ca*: Sticky rice with chicken, and *Bun Thang*: Noodle soup with boiled chicken and shredded egg. The cooking teacher is Ms. Roi (Photo 3), who has been running the class for ten years.



Photo 3: Ms. Roi

In the class, the first mission of participants was “shredding.” On a table, there was a tray that already had



Photo 4: Bun Thang

marinated beef, egg crepes, boiled chicken, and vegetables.

We felt something was wrong, but we challenged cutting them into strips and tearing the chicken with our hands. After shredding, we rolled the pieces with rice papers, and that’s it. *Pho cuon* was an effortless dish just by rolling stuff already prepared. We did neither make marinated beef nor boiled vegetables.

And then, we made a sauce. To be exact, we “watched” Ms. Roi make it.

Now we know the system of the “Cooking Class for Men.” Different from many cooking classes in Japan, it was a “Tasting party with a little try.” After *Pho Cuon*, we cut chickens into strips for *Xoi Thap Cam* and prepared egg crepes and steamed chicken for *Bun Thang* (Photo 4 & 5).

While we were not required to set food on dishes, they were excellent.

All participants had complicated feelings, but we immensely enjoyed a “cross-industry social event with cooking experience” named “cooking class.”



Photo 5: Pho Cuon & Xoi Thap Cam