



## What About Vietnam - 2-19

# Discover the culture and history of Vietnam through its food

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:00:35] Xin Chau, and welcome to What About Vietnam?

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:00:38] Look, when someone tells you they think Vietnam has put a string around their heart and brings them coming back for more. Year after year, you know, you have to have them on the show. That's just it.

Have you ever heard that saying “you can feel the love” or “you should listen to your heart?” Both those sayings speak directly to my guest today when she talks about her love and her genuine knowledge of Vietnamese cuisine and the Vietnamese people.

Monika Czerveniak is my guest today. And as an enthusiastic traveller of South East Asia, she has worked in the hospitality industry for many years as a consultant. She's a food blogger and she runs Chow Down Vietnam Food Tours. And in her spare time, she is the face and creator behind fearless cooking classes and workshops in Hoi An and Vietnam. Vancouver, B.C., Canada, where we're talking to her today. And, you know, she pretty much goes wherever her taste buds will let her.

Being born and raised in Austria to a family of restaurateurs. Monika speaks of the importance of fresh food; ingredients that burst with simple flavours and yet delight the palate. The smells and excitement of growing up in a restaurant inspired her further education and training in Austria and to her broader travels throughout Europe and Asia.

She tells me a few years ago she felt completely in love with Vietnam's magical culture and people while crisscrossing the country several times and indulging in their amazingly fresh and healthy cuisine. Finally settling in Hoi An for eight years, her beloved tours and experiences of food in Vietnam will not only open your ears, hearts and imagination to Vietnamese food you can experience during your stay, but I'm betting it may be the subject that you talk most about when you get home.

So let's jump in and hear what this fun loving, fearless chef has to tell us about Vietnamese food and what you can expect on your visit.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:02:55] Monika, it's great to have you on the show. Welcome.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:02:59] Welcome. Thank you for having me.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:03:02] It's absolutely delightful to have you on. We've got a lot to get through. So I'm going to start by asking something I've been meaning to ask you when we began chatting. What inspired you to visit Vietnam that very first time?

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:03:22] Well, that's very simple. In 1980, and 1992 a movie came out in the U.S. and in that movie was Catherine Deneuve. And I was crazy, crazy about this woman. She was beautiful. I mean, she still is today.

Anyway, the movie has really touched me not only for herself as an actress, but the whole thing about the story of Vietnam or in the scene and the French and so on, so forth. So it really inspired me all these years. That's what I want to do one day. So and that's what happened. So I was working in Beijing and Singapore and all of a had to leave for about 30 for 30 days of working to leave and go somewhere and come back after a week with a visa requirement. And so I went everywhere except Vietnam and it never happened.

So after I retired, I finally did go to Vietnam for five weeks and I travelled the entire country and I totally fell in love with the country and thus came "chowdownVietnam". Well a little later. But yes, through my travels and through my interest and my passion, which is food, people said, well why don't you do a full tour.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:04:56] Ok, and I think we said you'd been there about eight years. So that's quite a long time to get around Vietnam.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:05:05] Yes. And I still don't know everything.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:05:09] Now, it's an ever-changing landscape, that is for sure. So before we get tangled up in in too much of that, I mean, we've got some stories to cover. I don't want to get caught up in noodles and sticky rice just yet.

But look, try it if you can, to just give us a little bit of history about the influences that make Vietnamese cuisine quite unique, amongst other Asian cuisines. You know, sometimes it gets kind of put in the Asian food general bucket. And you and I both agree that's not the case.

But talk to us, if you can, just a little bit about what the influences are that make, Vietnamese food so special, so unique.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:06:05] Well, I think I need to start with a little bit of history of the occupation of Vietnam. They have been occupied for over thousands of years by the Chinese, the Japanese, the French and the British were there for about a year.

So they had a lot of influences coming to them. And after the war, all I would say more, less 20th century, 20th century, their cuisine has sort of come about and changed completely because of the French influence, the French when they occupied. They were almost 70 years in Vietnam when they occupied Vietnam. In that time they created beautiful buildings, streets and sidewalks and beautiful houses. And they brought their cuisine. They brought their Pho, which is a chicken soup with vegetables in France. They brought their pate, they brought the breads & baguettes and all these things they brought into the food.

And what happened was the Vietnamese sort of adapted it to their style and they created something out of it. So this is why they have a fabulous spread. This is why. They have amazing coffee, amazing noodles and rice, because, you know, they had nothing, especially after the war. There was not much rice in the north. So in the south, there was a lot of rice, rice paddies coming up in order to feed the country. So as it is of the day, it has really been influenced by all these different cultures, But, especially the north, the north has very much

been influenced by the Chinese over these years, so the cuisine in the north is over; taste is a little bit different than from the south. So there's quite a difference in that because of agricultural ways in the north. So it's colder there, so there's more noodles, whereas the South is doing the rice because there's plenty of food and lots of fruits and vegetables and herbs and they've grown all that in the south. So to do that, whether because of the weather as well, the South is always heart and soul is rice.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:08:43] And so things are going different. So everything tastes a little bit different. And it's almost like two cultures, both doing the same thing.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:08:54] Yeah. And, you know, it's something that I learnt very early on in my trips back and forth was that, you know, I tried to get one dish in Saigon, and then try to order the same dish in Hanoi and either, I couldn't get it, or be it just tasted totally different. And I was like, what have I missed here? Like, yeah. Can you explain?

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:09:24] Well, it is because of the Chinese influence in the north. So they are more into. And it's the fish sauce in the south, the focus is on fish.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:09:33] So, the Chinese influence is very strong in the north.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:09:38] Even you don't mention that word of it, but you know, it is their cuisine.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:09:45] So they're very proud of that. But I think and I know that this is the main concern or the main difference that the weather and what they're growing, that's what it is all about.

So in the north, they have more pork and chicken and more proteins basically, and not as many vegetables and not as many fresh foods as the South has. It's because of that also the way that basically their own cuisine that's what happens. If you have a buncha, for instance, which is a national decision in Hanoi, which you must have if you have it in Hanoi, it will taste completely different.

It's the same as spring rolls or just noodles or whatever it is, it's all a little bit different. And also in the north, they don't serve their food spicy. You will get spicy condiments that you use yourself. But they don't add them in. You put it yourself into the soups or into the things, but they're not making the dishes spicy, is they do in the south. You get a little bit more "Umph"

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:11:05] Yeah.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:11:05] Well what is happening with the food is incredible harmony about flavours. It's very important. It's like, you know, the four or five senses of cooking. It's sweet, sour, spicy, pungent and salty. So and they also have the little marny flavor because of the fish sauce.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:11:28] So I know it does.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:11:33] And it makes sense to me when I did some street food tours and certainly also when I did some cooking classes to just say the additives of when you mentioned, I think you said sweet, sour and punchy, which is chili and things like that, but the amount of sugar that goes in some and the amount of salt and the amount of chili does

vary quite dramatically in each area. And I mean, to me, that kind of adds some of the excitement about it.

If you let your taste buds take you to various locations, it's never the same.

I want to talk a little bit about street food, and I want to do that because it comes up a lot. And some people, I think, have a little bit of a reservation about eating street food. I mean, I I've been a fairly game traveller, I suppose so I will eat it. No matter what country, if they're serving something that's cooked. If that smell and that aroma is drawing me in, I'm there and I'm buying that shish kebab or that stick of pork, you know, something to try. Much to the amazement of who I'm traveling with. You don't know what's in that. And that could be this and that could be that. So talk to us a little bit about street food and Vietnam to me.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:13:21] The first thing I would like to suggest to anyone who visits Vietnam, take a food tour, don't be cheap, good food to eat because you learn a tremendous amount and your eyes will be open.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:13:38] And the guys, which is all speaking really well, English, and they see they know everything and they know where to go. I highly suggest that, you know, if you walk around the first few days and see what's going on, but your curiosity will get the better of you, because you see food everywhere and you just ache to try it.

You'll be watching the food being cooked and then three minutes later, there's some fabulous things in there and there's all this. So, add in salads and, you know, with one second you have this amazing noodle dish that you have no idea. A minute ago it was there and I was there and now you're eating it and the flavors and the taste of it and the freshness of it. So that's what needs to be seen in the midst of the experience.

But the most important thing is, yes, there's a bit of a problem. I mean, food safety, we're not in North America. When I was in Australia, when you go to Asia, you have a certain bit of resistance in your stomach to what you eat. Mind you, you can get a food safety program, even in the best hotels.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:15:00] It can happen. Absolutely.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:15:02] So when you see what was one of my philosophy, I always go where there are people. So the more people, more are on the street in that place. So, you know, lounges. And I'm going to say this fast. Well, I know the pork's been out all day, but it's unheard of in our country that that is what you have this out on the council.

So, yeah, you need to go, to know where to go and what to do. The thing is about three, four days. And when you watch this and I've watched so many, many times and I love watching it is when you go to the markets and you see all these little shops and these little LB's and there is not much food around, the food comes constantly fresh. There's fresh chicken coming. It just killed is around the corner that is coming.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:15:54] And, you know, it's just everything it's fresh and it's coming to you live with these guys on the motorbike vespa's and got all the chicken hanging up a little bit and just five minutes ago.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:16:05] And you get the freshest of the freshest and you get the first chance and maybe to drive once. So, you know, there's a lot to watch. But I think you just

have to let go and try everything. If you don't go to Vietnam to experience the food, I would say don't waste your time to go there.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:16:25] I fully agree, I think it is.

[00:16:29] And I think there's always some lovely characters that come with that. and some experiences like the people or the vendors that are selling it. You know, you can kind of strike up some kind of communication with them. You know, the stories told sitting on little red chairs. They absolutely fascinated me when I first came to Vietnam. I thought, my God, this country has just had a bulk sale in red chairs, what's the story behind the red chairs.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:17:03] I don't know where they came from.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:17:06] Well, I always make up the stories as the French left a little chair from the kids playground. Or something and like that.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:17:12] And they wanted to open up the shop.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:17:15] There's not much room and they want to get as many people into their little shop. So, you know, they are perfect for that.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:17:24] And then I always feel like I'm playing house like a ten year old again, that, you know, it's like I remember the first time I was in taking a hike up in Sapa in the northern parts, and we had this fabulous tour guide. This woman with a baby on the back. And the walk was for, you know, six, seven hours a day. And at the end of the tour, she said, I would like to invite you to my house. It wasn't really a house, it was a little contraption, a shed kind of thing where you could look through the walls and it was like two by fours kind of put together. And she said, sit down and I'm making you some dinner.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:18:09] And there she is on the floor chopping up cabbage and putting boards there. And she's kneeling on the floor. And as they do and then chopping up the leaf.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:18:22] And in a half an hour later, it's amazing you know. I will never forget that. And then how much they put in to show you how much they love their country is unbelievable. And they will do anything for you. Food to love it.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:18:38] Yes. Well, yes. Yes, I agree.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:18:42] I think I mean, I purposely did cooking classes and took food tours because I think the best way to get to know a country is definitely through their food.

And as you say, they are very proud of their food and their cuisine, the spices, everything that they put into it. They do it with such love that, you know, you feel like you're a part of their family almost when they are serving a dish, which is absolutely just delightful.

But tell us, like you run ChowDownTours, which is a fabulous concept and I know very successful. Talk to us a little bit about some of the experiences along those tours with people, because obviously, people listening to us are saying, oh, gee, you know, is that me or not?

You know, people have expectations or some preconceived ideas. Talk to us a little bit about some of the experiences that you've enjoyed with people on your tours.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:19:57] Well, first, I want to say no to tours are ever the same. Everything I do is a little bit different. So different areas, different food, different things that we do, mainly because I have to say I'm very selfish.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:20:12] I like to be excited about things that I do. So I don't like doing the same thing all over again. So during my tours, I mean, I will take people and always start in Hanoi because that's where you need to start, in my opinion, in order to get to know Vietnam, to see the difference and everything else and see how people are. But we usually start in Hanoi. We went up to Sapa before this year.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:20:40] Now we're adding in Phong Nha is where we go. My last tour in Vietnam was two years ago.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:20:54] And I've taken 16 people on the Ho Chi Minh Trail for five days. So we did that on a motorbike. So everybody was sitting on the back of a motorbike. And some of us were driving our own little bikes. But it was an amazing tour. And to this day, and this has been two years now, people are still in touch with me. And they say it was the best trip they have ever had in their whole life.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:21:21] So seeing Vietnam in a different way, different areas, it's just amazing. So and then we're going down to Hoi An, which is why I decided it's the most beautiful part of all of Vietnam. And my idea of beautiful beaches.

So there we are. We do bike rides. We find how rice is cultivated. What they're doing with it in April, then in April, October, we'll be watching a rice harvest and how they're processing the rice and what's involved and actually showing them the real hard work that's involved.

And they have earned five cents on a bowl of rice to feed the family. We also go to cooking classes and I do two, three, day cooking classes sometimes where it's not only Vietnamese, but it's also very, very much into fresh food and also not wasting food. So this is where fearless cooking comes out of Chowdown Vietnam. So, that's what I'm continuing at the moment here in Canada, because, you know, we're kind of stuck.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:22:41] Yes, I'm right with you on that one. When we talk about fresh, speak to us a little bit about the freshness side. And they don't waste anything. That was the thing. I think we started cooking something with the pumpkin plant, and I couldn't believe that they used absolutely every part of the pumpkin, the flower, fruit, the vegetable. So talk to us a little bit about the freshness side and, and just about their need to not want to waste anything.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:23:20] Well, that's I think that's the number one thing about Vietnam is the Vietnamese food is the freshness and one of the reasons everybody has their own voice.

They have a community, community gardens, community-wise is that they share in the villages. The government has given them all of so much land that they can harvest. It's theirs. And then the community goes together. So everything is fresh. They don't go to the supermarket, you know, I mean, the bigger cities they have, but they don't have

supermarkets, so they don't have processed food, even though I have to say that's coming in and the children are young people is getting into that, unfortunately.

But the freshness is there because they live right there, and they put it right there in their own house. They got the rice outside and they harvest the spinach and herbs and they're selling it goes to the market and making the news in the morning or the rice gets cooked in the morning off they go to the market and it so that's a very natural thing.

They don't understand that. And nothing gets leftover. Everything gets eaten and then they start all over again. And, you know, when they have dinner, they're about six or eight dishes or whatever, you can just have fun like we do spring rolls. And that's our dinner. No, no. There's a whole lot of vegetables and herbs. The whole is incredibly important to Vietnamese cuisine.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:24:52] And, you know, I mean food. So you have amazing flavors in there. This is unbelievable. So it's always for them.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:24:59] It's awesome. It's always if I can just interject that it's always amazed me because they have in some ways a high vegetarian but high carb diet, which, you know, because of the noodles and because of the rice etc. But they're so tiny as people.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:25:19] What is in their rice and their noodles that isn't in ours?

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:25:29] I think it's the combination of there's never just rice, it's all this rice goes with vegetables. And you must have this. I mean, the amount of vegetables that the amount of greens that they are eating, that's what makes them really healthy.

We don't eat that amount of wheat. When you look at, you know, the spinach and the herbs and there's a plate of green on the table. This is enormous. It's huge. And they're not eating like us. A whole big bowl of rice, even though they are. But it's mixed and slowly and enjoying it. We are rushing our. - Breakfast, lunch and dinner. For them its an art form. You don't just throw all of that away and not care.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:26:14] You know, you're enjoying it and you are meeting your friends. You're talking to your family.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:26:20] Food is the most important thing for Vietnamese kids. I mean, there's nothing else but food, you know, money. We want to make money and make a living. But food is the priority. And when they need you, they will give you food.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:26:36] You must have food. You must take food, food for them. This is an extension of who they are. And I think they're sharing it with us. And it's fabulous. It's really is an amazing thing.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:26:51] And it took me a while to grab that concept because, you know, I have very dear friend, she's Vietnamese. And I actually met her when she delivered a cooking class. And we just got on so well and have been friends for years.

But it's kind of almost ritualistic, isn't it? It's celebrating. Yes. It's being respectful of the food, grateful for the food and their appreciation of your company to enjoy it. And they slow

down. As you say, they're not like us that are just gobbling food and shoving it down our throat. They do it meticulously. They do it very artfully, almost how they will set it up and they will bless the food and then eat it.

And it really forced me to take a real look at just, you know, what I do when I come home. When I am back home cooking food, as we do with a family or whatever, and, you know, I've sat at the table and I've said to people, just slow the heck down. You know, we can enjoy this food and we should be more grateful for that. We have it.

So I'm glad you brought that up. But where should a traveller start and finish and what locations and maybe dishes they should try? Geez, there are a lot questions.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:28:48] I'll make it firm, you know me!

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:28:50] I mean, first of all, I know, You need to start in Hanoi, and I know it has amazing food.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:29:02] And as I mentioned, you need to first of all, have Pho, you need to have the food, the soup for the food, whatever you want to call it is an important start. It used to be in the old days. It used to be for Vietnamese that it would only be available in the morning if that was a breakfast and so forth because of the influx of the tourists of wanting more and more and more. Now it's getting served 24 hours.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:29:33] I mean, you can have Pho anywhere and that's where you need to have that in order to try to sit down in the south. Right. In order to see the difference. The other thing is Buncha, it is Bún chả it is ground PORK it comes with noodles and it comes with special sauces. And it's just an experience. So you just you might look at it and say, oh, that looks like burger patties, but it is so much love and taste and flavor in these things and how they ARE making. And it comes with very special spring rolls. So that's another dish that you need to try and over the other one IS CHA CA LA VONG, which is a fish DISH. And there's a whole street dedicated. It's actually called CHA CA LA VONG in the old QUARTER dedicated to that. And some restaurants, there are some of them over a hundred years old and you don't have to order anything.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:30:30] It's just sit down and they'll bring these COOKERS and they bring you a big frying pan. And the thing is sizzling on it and you start cooking it yourself and turning everything and dipping it here and adding the noodles. And it's fish. And the sauce is a very special dish. It's a white fish. It's very tasty. It's not a FATTY FISH. It's very, very, very, very good fish, very tasty. And it comes in a DILL sauce. And that's that's an amazing, amazing dish that a lot of people don't know about. And it's very, very important that they TRY that. And of course, you want to have your first introduction to a BANH MI, which is A BAQUETTE with various things. And you can have is one of the first words I learned was Op LA and Op LA means eggs and so is you in the morning, walk around, you see these people with these BAQUETTE'S selling you stuff. You just go Op LA and they give you some eggs and amazing herbs and special sauces that they make. Everybody makes a little sauce and it's something to die for. So you start off with that and then you make your way down to the to the middle part of the southern part and things start to change a little bit there. But again, go for the BANH MI -one of the best BANH MI in the whole world is IN HOI AN. And there's nothing better than that.



**Kerry Newsome:** [00:32:03] Yeah. Yeah, you do. And once again, as you say, the baguettes, as in the bread that they make is, is just as you say....to die for..

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:32:14] It is to die for myself. And one of the ways it's made with white flour, there's a little bit of wheat flour.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:32:21] I had the pleasure of working in a bakery for the night and it was quite interesting. None of them spoke in English. And my Vietnamese is yes, no, not the non existing, but it was amazing.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:32:36] I thought it was just flour, but yeah, no, it's rice mixed with a little bit of wheat flour, and it's unbelievable.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:32:45] One more thing. I like to add is that people need to try in Hanoi, and that is an egg coffee. Vietnamese is very famous for their coffee. And you need to try any kind of coffee, its like a coffee that is black, with AN egg THAT IS WHIPPED on top, which is like you know, when you whip up some eggs , with some wine, which is not in there, it's called SABAYON. So that is put on top ONTO THE COFFEE.. And so the affect to the coffee is unbelievable. Forget the 5000 calories, but it's fabulous.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:33:25] Yes, I know, I'm one of these people that even when I order a juice, I say no sugar because I can get a bit sugared-up over there if I didn't love the sugar or sugars or something.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:33:41] Yes.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:33:42] So we finish up. We finish up, we stop and we go to Hanoi. And I think another thing that I've enjoyed, I'm sure you have to in Hoi An and Danang is seafood and being able to eat just beautifully freshly caught seafood when you're selecting it out of a bucket. Pretty much, aren't you? Yeah. Yeah.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:34:13] No, they're great with the mussels. With the clams in this fabulous thing with clams. They just throw them on the barbecue. But they have a different system that we have on barbecue deal, making it steamy hot and they're waving something around. So in order to put the heat to go right into it, I mean, you will see a lot of men on the street that are actually barbecuing in front of the house and selling it. And they're taking great pride in that. And that's a whole system of holiday barbecue and how they're fattening it and how which way to do it. But the seafood, yes, it's it's fabulous.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:34:51] It's really fresh.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:34:54] So with everything so we do Banh Mi and we definitely do seafood in Hoi An and then we head down further down south and we end up I mean,

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:35:10] If I may interrupt for a second, there's Cau Lau in Hoi An.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:35:14] Oh, How did we forget Cau Lau it's a very, very special dish that's is only going to get in Hoi An. And so this is your chance. If you get it somewhere else, I can tell you it's not going to be the same. So that is there is a very special well in Hoi An, that they are taking the water in order to cook from the water from the well.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:35:40] And that's right. Ba Le Well. Well, and it's very important.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:35:45] So is that true?

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:35:48] I thought that was a myth!

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:35:55] Some of them are not. But the myth is this is the water and that's the only way of getting the right flavors. So they are cooking the dinner. So it's a broth and it has some herbs in it. And, you know, it's basil and all kinds of things. And it's just a very aromatic soup that with noodles and meat and very thin slices of pork.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:36:21] And it's just so delicious too. It's all about the broth, isn't it? It's the most important thing. And the crunchy pieces of pork.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:36:33] Oh, yes. I can't say enough about what to do with pork bellies, that's for sure.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:36:41] I sure do, but absolutely do. So if we leave Hoi Am, where would we go to next, do you think?

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:36:49] Well, you can go straight to Saigon but if you want to have some really experience, that is completely different. I'd like everybody to go into every part of the country but you should go to Dalat, as it is completely different which is in the mountains, which is of oh my goodness.

French friends used to go and build mansions in the mountains for the summer and just enjoying themselves and the nice cool temperature and the last. And it's beautiful, beautiful agriculture is they have a lot of silkworms where they make silk out of it. So you can watch them. You can eat silkworms there. You can eat silkworms anywhere. But if you were to eat silkworms, I would say you have to do it in Dalat with a little bit of garlic and white wine sauce is absolutely delicious.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:37:45] I know a lot of people go big in the in the in the U.S., but it is a delicacy

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:37:53] They also believe in love and have crackers and all kinds of animals up there, because let's remember the war, there was nothing to eat. So after the war, there was nothing there .No rice. So they were starving. So they went with insects and all kinds of things. Yes. Have been using in the past cats and yes. Is still using dogs in some special areas, unfortunately. But we have to also understand the culture and that out of necessity they come from them. And a lot of these old timers, especially men like that kind, can't change.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:38:35] But anyway, it's an interesting, very beautiful monastery up in the last beautiful coffee country. It's lovely. Strawberries, flowers, all the flowers from Vietnam have come from the lot.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:38:51] So it's very good. It's a beautiful place. And they have everlasting flowers and strawberries the size of eggs. I've never seen such big strawberries. Yes, you can actually taste them. Exactly. Yeah.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:39:10] So then would we go to I want to grab you before we finish up, because I know you've got a little bit to tell about Phu Quoc, but I want to just grab from you in Saigon. What dish would you pick to make sure that you try.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:39:30] Well, there you go again. You have to have seafood's in Saigon. You get the best fox and the best the best seafood anywhere. I mean, I would highly suggest you go on on a food tour with a motorbike, you know, several tour companies and I mentioned my favorites to accompany there.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:39:55] If I go on Vespas, which I go in Saigon. This visit is an adventure that you can have in every town. But if you don't have time up north, I highly suggest Saigon to do it. It's an experience you will never forget on the back of a motorbike at six o'clock is rush hour. You have about nine million motorbikes out there and going all in one direction. And then people go and they stop in various places in order to have frog and crab and very delicate things, and the stuffed squid and things like that. Then you go to to drive around and you see the town, the city lit up.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:40:45] And it's just beautiful seeing it like this and everything.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:40:48] And then you go into a nightclub but don't actually go into a bar. They take you to a place where you go down some back alley and it goes to show, some people's houses and you go upstairs, and you up on some top floor and you find a great jazz band playing. And it's just the most intimate, beautiful kind of music. There's no microphones. It's organically done, and it's an experience of it's own.

And afterwards you go to a nightclub and there is something else. Vietnamese like to dance. They all like to dance and they love music. They're great musicians, and they're just having a good time enjoying life so much, so much more than we do in reality every day.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:41:38] Absolutely. I'm out with my friends.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:41:41] Yeah. There's no weekend. I'm going with my friends. So it's always every day, they are out and about. So highly recommended is the highlight of my summer and it's an experience they will never forget and you will be able to do the things that you've never used before.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:42:00] All right. Well, knowing how you and I can get we could be here for hours, but I'm trying to be aware of time. Can you just talk very quickly? I just want to finish up with a little bit about Phu Quoc, because not many know much about it. But I know we talked about Pepper and we also talked about fish sauce. And I just thought very quickly, you could tell the importance of that and just how it relates to Phu Quoc, the island in the South China Sea.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:42:44] So what it's really famous for, is for the fish sauce. And it's in all the other parts of Vietnam, fish sauce is made with squid. This one is made with anchovies. And it really sets it apart from any other fish sauce that I've ever tasted. Firstly, I

like Red Bull fish sauce, which is amazing. And I realized it is now in a lot of different countries and I was finally able to export it. And it's really made a name of itself.

But also, it is a pristine beautiful island with fabulous beaches. There are some parts where, you know, the Sheridan and all those big conglomerates have appeared. But there's also a jungle there that you can get lost in a very easy. But if you're looking for food, seafood, it is.

I've never in my life seeing prawns like this. They were like some of them were like, you know, 10, 12 inches long. I've not ever seen one. So huge, they're like little crayfish, almost little lobsters. That's how big.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:44:17] Wow. So are you. And tasty. Oh, fantastic. Fantastic. And you know, in Vietnam they have this very special dipping sauce. Everything goes into it.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:44:27] And it's it's basically made from water, sugar, lime juice and of course, fish sauce and chili. And so this is unbelievable. But in Phu Quoc, because it has such fantastic pepper, it's one very, very aromatic pepper. And unfortunately, I just ran out the other day, so I need to go back.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:44:52] We definitely have to go back.

**Monika Czerveniak:** [00:44:54] Yeah, absolutely. But what they are doing is taking the beautiful pepper. ....they grind it up with a little bit of salt and then they're mixing it in a little bit with lime juice. And that's what you dip, your giant prawns and shrimps in. Oh, my God, I'm salivating right now as I speak. But it's unforgettable, an unforgettable taste. Its just Vietnam.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:45:27] Monika, look, this is definitely going to be an unforgettable episode because we've covered so much and I'm so thrilled to have done it with you. Maybe might kind of grab you for another episode down the track. We might even get you to talk about a recipe maybe that people can try at home. Maybe we do something like that.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:45:51] What do you think?

**Monika Czerveniak:** Id love to love to do that. Yes. Fantastic. OK, Monika, I'm going to have to say farewell. Thank you for your time. And I hope to be in Vietnam with you very soon. . Thank you for listening.

**Kerry Newsome:** [00:46:16] Check out the episode notes for more information. What about Vietnam? Don't forget to subscribe, write and review and stay tuned for more on adventures in Vietnam.