



"Source the Best. Cook the Truth. Serve the Soul."™ — Cook with a purpose.

A Little Taste of Saigon

Vermont Wagyu Bavette, Vietnamese Herb Salad & Nước Chấm



THE STORY

I put a fish sauce dressing on a \$35 Wagyu steak. Before you wince — hear me out.

I'd made a fresh Vietnamese nước chấm to go with some fish, and it was good. Really good — bright, sharp, the kind of dressing that makes you want to find something else to put it on. I don't like wasting a good sauce, so instead of letting it sit in the fridge until it turned into a science project, I gave it a second job.

I pointed it at a bed of fresh garden herbs and a gorgeous Vermont Wagyu bavette. I seared the steak hot and fast — just sixty seconds a side — so it still held a beautiful pink center when it left the pan.

Now, beef isn't the everyday protein in Vietnamese cooking, but it's far from a stranger either (phở bò exists for a reason). So this wasn't as far outside the lines as it sounds. The bright, acidic crunch of the dressing is actually the perfect foil for the rich, buttery melt of the Wagyu.

Plus, the herbs made the decision easy. My garden is having an absurd summer, and a dressing this vibrant deserves leaves this good.

When the meat hit the pan with that first sharp hiss, the kitchen filled with garlic and shallot. By the time I flared out a scallion for the top, the whole plate smelled like a Saigon street stall had set up shop in my dining room. Even the one thing I got slightly wrong barely mattered — the crispy shallots went about fifteen seconds past where I wanted them, but I still couldn't stop eating them.

That's the real test of a dish: does a small mistake ruin it, or does the flavor carry it through anyway? This one worked. Beautifully.

That's the whole idea behind King Street Kitchen — don't follow the rulebook, follow the ingredient. It'll usually tell you exactly where it wants to go.





Ingredients

VERMONT WAGYU BAVETTE

- ~1 lb Vermont Wagyu bavette (sirloin flap)
- Kosher salt, to taste

NUỐC CHẤM DRESSING

- 3 tbsp fish sauce
- 3 tbsp fresh lime juice (about 2 limes)
- 2 tbsp water
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 Thai chili or serrano, minced
- 1 tsp coconut palm sugar

CRISPY SHALLOTS

- 2–3 shallots, very thinly sliced
- Neutral oil, for flash-frying

HERB SALAD

- Green leaf lettuce (ruffled/curly variety), torn
- 1/2 red cubanelle pepper, finely diced
- 1/4 medium red onion, thinly sliced
- Fresh mint leaves, a generous handful
- Sweet Italian basil, chiffonade (Thai basil preferred, if on hand)
- ~2+ tbsp fresh cilantro leaves, stems removed — some mixed in, some reserved for garnish on top
- Golden cherry tomatoes, halved
- Sugar snap peas
- Radish, thinly sliced
- Cucumber, sliced
- Crushed peanuts, for garnish
- Green onions/scallions, for garnish and flared garnish

EQUIPMENT

- Cast iron skillet or heavy carbon-steel pan
- Sharp chef's knife & cutting board
- Small saucepan or pot, for frying shallots
- Mixing bowls & whisk
- Tongs
- Paper towel-lined plate (shallot draining)
- Citrus juicer
- Paring knife or scallion-flaring tool (for garnish)





Method

SEAR THE BAVETTE

1. Slice the whole bavette against the grain into thin strips BEFORE cooking — this is the reverse of the classic order, and it's deliberate: more surface area, faster and more even sear.
2. Salt the sliced pieces. No marinade needed — the marbling on Fullblood Wagyu does the tenderizing work a marinade would do on lesser beef.
3. Get a cast iron pan screaming hot. Sear each side for 60 seconds — it should still be pink at the center when pulled. Don't walk away; this goes fast.
4. Rest briefly before plating.

CRISP THE SHALLOTS

1. Slice shallots paper-thin and pat dry.
2. Flash-fry in hot oil until golden and crisp.
3. Pull about 15 seconds earlier than looks done — they carry over and darken fast once out of the oil.
4. Drain on paper towel.

DRESSING & BUILD

1. Whisk together fish sauce, lime juice, water, garlic, chili, and palm sugar until the sugar dissolves. No cooking required. Try to do this at least 30 minutes before serving. Bonus if you can make it and let it rest a couple hours or even a whole day.
2. Build the salad: lettuce, cubanelle, red onion, mint, basil, most of the cilantro (leaves only, no stems), cherry tomatoes, snap peas, radish, and cucumber.
3. Stack the salad on the plate first, then dress it lightly on its own.
4. Layer the seared bavette slices on top, shingled rather than piled, so the sear stays visible.
5. Scatter fresh herbs — including the reserved cilantro leaves — over the meat, then finish with crushed peanuts, crispy shallots, and a second drizzle of nước chấm over the top layer.
6. Garnish with a flared scallion.

COOK'S NOTES

No lemongrass made it into this version — it should have. Next time, steep a bruised lemongrass stalk in the warm nước chấm and strain before dressing, to pull real flavor into the sauce instead of just gesturing at it with the garnish.

STAY CURIOUS, QUESTION ASSUMPTIONS & COOK WITH A PURPOSE

This is a fat-forward plate, and that's on purpose — 47g of protein and a serious dose of monounsaturated fat from Fullblood Wagyu, with carbs held to just 10% of calories. That's a genuinely fat-adapted meal, not a salad wearing a diet costume.

One honest caveat, if you're chasing strict ketosis rather than general fat-adaptation: that single teaspoon of coconut palm sugar in the nước chấm is still sugar. It's spread across the whole batch of dressing, so the actual carb hit per serving is small — but if you're the type who tracks ketone strips and gets annoyed by small ripples, swap it for allulose, which won't move the needle at all. For everyone else, one teaspoon of palm sugar in a shared dressing isn't something to lose sleep over.





Nutrition & Details

Per serving — recipe serves 2

MACRONUTRIENTS

Nutrient	Amount	% of Cal.
Calories	~880 kcal	
Protein	47 g	21%
Fat	68 g	69%
Carbohydrates	20 g	10%

Macro percentages are calculated from raw calorie contributions per gram (protein & carbs at 4 cal/g, fat at 9 cal/g) and sum to 100%. This is a fat-forward, low-carbohydrate plate by design — consistent with a fat-adapted approach, not a mistake to correct.

KEY NUTRIENTS

- Iron: ~5 mg (28% DV)
- Zinc: ~9.6 mg (87% DV)
- Vitamin B12: ~4.4 mcg (>180% DV)
- Selenium: ~46 mcg (84% DV)
- Cholesterol: ~150 mg — dietary cholesterol has been dropped from most current guideline limits; it is not treated here as a nutrient to minimize.
- Choline: beef is a meaningful, underappreciated source — not captured in standard macro panels, but worth noting for anyone tracking it.

HONEST NOTES

Pre-slicing before the sear exposes more surface area to the pan than searing whole, which means slightly more fat renders off in the process. That's a real tradeoff for faster, more even crust — not a free lunch. Fat-adaptation itself takes time for most people; this plate is rich, and portioning matters even on a low-carb framework.

APPROXIMATE COST

Total recipe: ~\$48–\$50 (dominated by the \$35 Wagyu bavette). Approximately \$24–\$25 per serving, serving 2 as a full entree salad. Not exactly an inexpensive meal. But it is less expensive than an airplane ticket to Saigon and a hotel room in the city.



FINDING IT, SUBSTITUTING IT, AND WHAT TO POUR

Where to Find It

The bavette is cut from the sirloin, so ask a butcher specifically for “sirloin flap steak” or “bavette” — it's not always sitting in the standard case, but most full-service butchers can pull it or special-order it. Real butchering is a bit of a lost art at this point; many Whole Foods locations still keep trained butchers on staff and can special-order it for you. Plenty of online sources carry it too — Vermont Wagyu among them, obviously.

Does It Have to Be Wagyu?

No — and this is worth saying plainly rather than implying Wagyu is required. Conventional bavette works with this exact method. But here's the honest caveat: the “no marinade needed” claim in this recipe is specific to Fullblood Wagyu's marbling. On a conventional bavette (or substitutes like flank, skirt, or hanger steak), the marbling isn't doing that tenderizing work for you. So marinating a conventional version of this cut isn't just optional — it's genuinely more useful, maybe necessary. That's a real distinction, not a hedge: the technique doesn't fully transfer without acknowledging why it worked here. Plainly stated: if you're not using Wagyu, you'll want to marinate or otherwise tenderize the steak first.

Why I Didn't Marinate

“Buy the farm and farmer first.” I wanted to taste the hard work these farmers put in — and I'm glad I did. Since this cook, I've ordered four more. They're that good, and price tag aside, I'd argue it's a genuine value.

The Wine Pairing

We need to talk about wine, and this may surprise a few of you: the best pairing for this dish is a nice, dry rosé. A big red — or even a light one — won't hold up against the fish sauce. White can work, but rosé works better.

