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THE MEKONG CANVAS GỎI (Infinite Nước Chấm Salad)

Vermont Wagyu Bavette • Garden Vegetables • Five-Element Nước Chấm Dressing



When you start with extraordinary ingredients, dinner doesn't need to be overcomplicated — it just needs to honor the truth of what's on the plate. This dish is built around one of the most brilliant inventions in Southeast Asian cooking: Nước Chấm. Dating back centuries to Vietnam's coastal seafaring tradition, this dressing balances all five fundamental flavors — salty, sweet, sour, spicy, and umami — in a single bowl. In a traditional Vietnamese home, that bowl sits at the center of the table as the universal conductor, pulling every part of the meal together.

Nearly everything on this plate came straight from the late-afternoon garden harvest — crisp blanched long beans, English cucumber, sweet cubanelle peppers, sun-ripened cherry tomatoes, garden mint, and thin-sliced serrano chilies. The one thing that didn't come from the backyard? A stunning cut of Vermont Wagyu bavette (sirloin flap) — sliced thin and seared fast for this version, though it's just as at home cooked whole and rested for a steak-forward centerpiece. Page 3 walks through both.

What makes this plate a King Street Kitchen cornerstone isn't just how it tastes — it's how endlessly adaptable it is. Swap in flash-seared wild fish, pan-roasted chicken, or crispy tofu for the beef. Want more heat? Trade the serranos for Thai bird's-eye chilies. Going vegan? Replace the fish sauce base with a mushroom or soy umami alternative and lose none of the bright, punchy bite.

On the metabolic side, this plate does the job without compromise — sirloin flap is fat- and protein-forward, and the vegetables and dressing keep total carbohydrate well under our 30% ceiling for the whole plate (this one lands closer to 14%). The coconut water and coconut palm sugar in the dressing are flavor rounding, not requirements — swap in filtered water and a zero-glycemic sweetener like monk fruit if you're running strict keto, and you'll barely notice the difference.





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INGREDIENTS & SOURCING



Straight from the late-afternoon garden harvest



Vermont Wagyu bavette, sliced thin against the grain

For the Salad (Serves 2)

- 1 lb Vermont Wagyu bavette or beef sirloin flap
- 1 medium English cucumber, sliced into coins
- ½ medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 6 long beans, cut into 2–3" pieces (or a handful of snap beans)
- 3 sprigs mint, roughly torn
- 12 cherry tomatoes, any color, halved
- 2 medium serrano chilies, thinly sliced
- ½ red cubanelle pepper, seeded and sliced
- ½ orange cubanelle pepper, seeded and sliced
- Kosher salt
- Optional: crushed peanuts, for crunch

For the Nước Chấm Dressing

- 3 tbsp fish sauce
- 3 tbsp fresh lime juice (about 2 limes)
- 2 tbsp coconut water (or filtered water)
- 1 garlic clove, through a microplane
- 1 Thai chili or serrano, minced, seeds and all
- 1 tsp coconut palm sugar (or monk fruit, 1:1 swap)
- Optional: pinch ground white pepper

Sourcing & Variation

The King Street Kitchen crowd is diverse — carnivore, pescatarian, plant-based, vegan, low-carb, and beyond. With this dish, the King Street Kitchen Crowd can have it all!

- Protein is meant to move: wild salmon, broiled and flaked; thin-sliced chicken or tofu; or vegetables.
- Make the dressing fresh each time rather than storing it — it's a five-minute job and tastes brighter.
- Fish sauce: treat it like butter or olive oil — an everyday product for cooking, a genuinely excellent one for dressings like this, where the flavor can take center stage!
- Skip the bottled lime juice if you can — fresh is a different food.
- Cubanelle peppers aren't mandatory — bell peppers work fine, cubanelles are sweeter.





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METHOD

This dish moves in two tracks — prep everything ahead, then the beef sears fast and hot at the very end.

CHOOSE YOUR BEEF STYLE

Quick-Seared: Slice the bavette before cooking for browned, dressing-friendly bites cooked through.

Whole-Seared: Cook the bavette whole for a crusted exterior and juicy pink center, then rest and slice across the grain.

Temper the beef

- 1 Take the Wagyu out of the fridge about 90 minutes before cooking — cold protein hitting a screaming hot pan is a shortcut to toughness.
- 2 Give it a light dry brine with kosher salt while you prep everything else.

Blanch the beans

- 3 Bring a pot of well-salted water to a boil.
- 4 Boil the beans for about 5 minutes for a tender, well-dressed bite — our tested favorite. Prefer more raw crunch? Pull them 60–90 seconds earlier. Either way, shock them immediately in ice water to stop the cooking.

Make the dressing

- 5 Combine all dressing ingredients in a bowl and whisk together.
- 6 Move it to a jar with a tight lid so you can give it one more good shake right before serving.

Option A — Quick-Seared Slices

- A1. Slice the bavette thin and let it rest a few minutes after the dry brine.
- A2. Get a cast iron skillet very hot, turn on the exhaust fan, and sear the slices about 60 seconds per side, working in batches so the pan stays hot. Work quickly — this is not the moment for a glass of wine while you cook.

Option B — Whole-Seared Bavette

- B1. Get a cast iron skillet very hot and turn on the exhaust fan.
- B2. Sear the whole bavette hot and fast on both sides, a few minutes per side, until a deep crust forms.
- B3. Rest it 5–10 minutes, then slice thin against the grain.

Plate & serve

- 7 Arrange the vegetables, beef, mint, and chilies on the plate so the colors stay distinct and the layout is pleasing to the eye.
- 8 Douse with the Nước Chấm dressing right before serving.

Why the ice bath matters: shocking the beans stops the cooking instantly, so they keep their bite instead of going soft and army-green.

CHEF'S NOTE—ONE CANVAS, TWO DIFFERENT DISHES

As written, the bavette is sliced before searing, producing fast-cooked, deeply browned pieces with plenty of surface area for the nước chấm. For a steak-forward version, sear the bavette whole, rest it 5–10 minutes, then slice thinly across the grain. The first version integrates the beef into the salad; the second makes it the centerpiece. Same ingredients and dressing — two distinctly different plates.





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NUTRITION & THE DETAILS

Macros — per serving (serves 2, as the main course)

COMPONENT	AMOUNT	% CAL
Calories	750 kcal	
Protein	47 g	25
Carbohydrate	26 g	%
Fat	51 g	14

This is one of the cleanest macro profiles in the KSK library — Wagyu bavette drives the fat and protein, and the whole vegetable-forward plate stays well under our 30% carbohydrate ceiling.

61
%

Key Nutrients Beyond Macros

- Iron & B12: Wagyu beef is a dense source of both — easy to under-eat on a plant-heavy diet.
- Potassium: cucumber, tomatoes, and cubanelle peppers all contribute, supporting fluid balance and blood pressure.
- Vitamin C: cherry tomatoes and peppers bring a real dose — color on the plate is a good clue to nutrients on the plate.
- Sodium: fish sauce carries the load here, roughly 1,000–1,050 mg per serving from the dressing alone — in the same range as soy sauce, and worth planning around if you're salt-sensitive.
- Selenium & healthy fat: Wagyu's marbling brings monounsaturated fat along with flavor, alongside antioxidants from the fresh garlic and chilies in the dressing.

Equipment

- Cutting board & sharp chef's knife
- Cast iron skillet
- Microplane / zester, for the garlic
- Small mixing bowl + jar with a tight lid
- Small pot, for blanching the beans
- Bowl of ice water
- Whisk

Approximate Cost

Whole recipe (serves 2): ~\$37.50

~\$18.75 per serving

Vermont Wagyu bavette, \$35/lb, is nearly the whole cost here. Most of the produce — beans, cucumber, tomatoes, mint, cubanelles, serranos — came straight from the garden, so it carries no grocery cost in this tally. Onion, fish sauce, lime, coconut water, garlic, and coconut sugar add roughly \$2.50 combined. Swap in a wild-caught fish or chicken thigh and the whole-recipe cost drops well under \$15.



The rainbow — and the beef — up close

