



# “Sonoma”

Private Hotel



Alfred Street,  Opposite Albert Park  Auckland

Telephone 725

Telegraphic Address : “ Sonoma,”

✻ FIRST-CLASS ACCOMMODATION ✻

MRS. NAIRN .: PROPRIETRESS

## A STORY OF NUOC MAM.

### ROMANCING THE EVOLUTION OF VIETNAMESE STREET FOOD IN NZ

*Jennifer Collinson*

This is a story about how *nuoc mam* (fish sauce) from Phu Quoc Island, off the south west coast of Vietnam came to Shortland Street, Auckland. It is a story of a condiment and seasoning ingredient that really didn't exist in kiwi pantries until the millennium.

You hear the distinctive sound of a noodle knocker, the clap of bamboo on a wooden block echoing in rhythm to the street hawker calling out that her fresh, fragrant *pho bò* (beef noodle soup) is ready for you to inhale.

My Vietnamese love affair began in September 2000. It proved to be a profound and steamy mix of food, chefs, books and culture. I took many lovers of Vietnamese cuisine. It shook my very being, they appeared from nowhere. I was completely seduced by the exotic headiness that Graeme Greene wrote of so intricately in the *Quiet American*. I set up my office in the courtyard of the Hotel Continental in the middle of Saigon, and so my journey to understand Vietnamese taste and flavour dynamics began. Friends and family were still asking whether the country was a safe place to visit. I was more worried about whether I had left it too late to discover the essence of its cuisine before it was buggerised by the introduction of Western fast foods. When I arrived, McDonald's and K.F.C. didn't exist there. Boy has it changed and the rate of change extreme.