



The New

Although Joma Bakery & Café started in Laos in 1996, it's a new player on the Hanoi café scene. In contrast to Puku's laid-back, quirky charm, Joma provides an experience you'd expect from a chain - quick, clean and uniform.

According to Ginny Coleman, Joma's Marketing Manager, 'Joma's style is more 'fast casual.'

'We're not going for the dark, moody coffee shop,' Coleman explained. 'Our look and feel is more light and airy.'

With Canadian founders, it's not surprising that the service and food is definitely more North American. Coffees come in large and small sizes, and the bakery and food items are on the large if slightly generic side.

Unlike Puku, Joma doesn't serve alcohol and thus bustles more in the morning and afternoon than in the evening. Although it may seem more sterile and less artsy than other Western-style cafes, Joma works with the local community in a different way.

Through its '2% People and Planet' programme, Joma donates 2% of all sales to various causes in Laos and Vietnam. It is currently collaborating with organisations like Transformation, Inc., which trains young men in vocational skills while helping them recover from drug addiction, and HAGAR, an anti-human trafficking organisation in Southeast and Central Asia.

And at least at its West Lake location, it is certainly one of the most child-friendly cafes in town. With its separate play area on the second floor, it caters to the expatriate mothers who often meet there during the day.

The Artsy

In complete contrast to Joma's almost Starbucks-like feel is Tadioto. Art comes first at this 'alternative space' café & bar.

Nguyen Qui Duc, a Vietnamese-American writer, artist, journalist, and founder of Tadioto, created it because he

felt that there was no space where Vietnamese working in the arts could share ideas about art and just 'hang out'.

With its exposed brick and contemporary art gracing the walls, Tadioto had a style all its own; this in an area where karaoke joints and scruffy backpacker bars predominate. Open for two and a half years on Trieu Viet Vuong St., Tadioto has moved to a converted house on Hang Khay with wooden floors and high ceilings directly overlooking Hanoi's famous Hoan Kiem Lake. It will re-open in late April.

'I hope to re-create Tadioto in the same spirit as the old one,' said Duc on keeping it in the Old Quarter rather than moving to a more 'expat-heavy' area like West Lake.

'I'd rather stay in this area because it's more real' Duc said. 'There are more local people. It's not just for expats - it's for everyone.'

Duc may be one of those rare people who can wear the hat of both an artist and a businessperson. Although wearing both hats will always be challenging, the focal point of Tadioto will always be the art.

In fact, he would like the new Tadioto to be more of a meeting space for art and less of a café and bar. Like the old Tadioto, he will continue to invite artists from Vietnam and around the world to exchange ideas and speak on art. There will still be poetry readings and installations by well and lesser-known contemporary artists in Vietnam, along with an array of other arts-related events.

In spite of its prime location for tourists, it won't be immediately visible from the street. But with its unique mix of artists, expats, youth and local journalists, word-of-mouth will surely spread when the café re-opens.

Visitors to Hanoi shouldn't miss the experience of sipping some powerful, traditional Vietnamese coffee on a small chair while watching life on the streets go by. But if a modern twist on this is what you're after (or wifi for that matter), Hanoi's got a range of cafes for discerning tastes - and plenty more are sure to come. □

Citylife



TADIOTO

