

The Truth about Eating Dogs in Vietnam and China

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While we lovingly look at the breeding of dogs as a pet-based practice, not all countries have considered breeding as a way to obtain companionship. Instead, some countries such as [Vietnam](#) and [China](#) have bred dogs for the dinner table, too. Even now dog meat is included on menus in these countries. Either the meat is eaten by itself or included in other meat dishes to enhance their flavor. The lard or meat of dogs is also used medicinally. So, eating dogs may be taboo in certain areas of the world. However, it is still practiced, even if [consumption in China, for instance, has been banned](#).

Eating Dog Meat in China

Again, the sale of dog meat to eat is banned in mainland [China](#). However, that does not keep people from consuming the meat of dogs. According to news reports, about ten million canines are killed for consumption annually. That is because the eating dog meat is an ancient practice. In fact, dog meat, or *gǒu ròu*, has been a food source in certain areas of the country since around 500 BC.

Because the meat is believed to have medicinal attributes, it is particularly popular in [northern China in the wintertime](#). That is because the meat is believed to elevate the body temperature, thereby keeping people warm. Historical records also show that dogs were eaten during wars or as an emergency type of food.

In the Mandarin language, dog meat is called *dì yáng*, which means *mutton of the earth*. It is also called *xiāng ròu*, or *fragrant meat*. Currently, the consumption of this meat is more prevalent in the locales of [Yunnan](#), Guangxi, and Guangdong. Dog meat is also consumed in the northern provinces, especially Liaoning and Heilongjiang. You can also find dog meat served in the south of China in restaurants. In this area, dogs are raised on farms for consumption.

However, that still does not mean the meat necessarily comes from the farms. In

2014, a number of [people were sent to prison for poisoning over 1,000 dogs](#) in order to sell their meat to restaurants in the Hunan province.

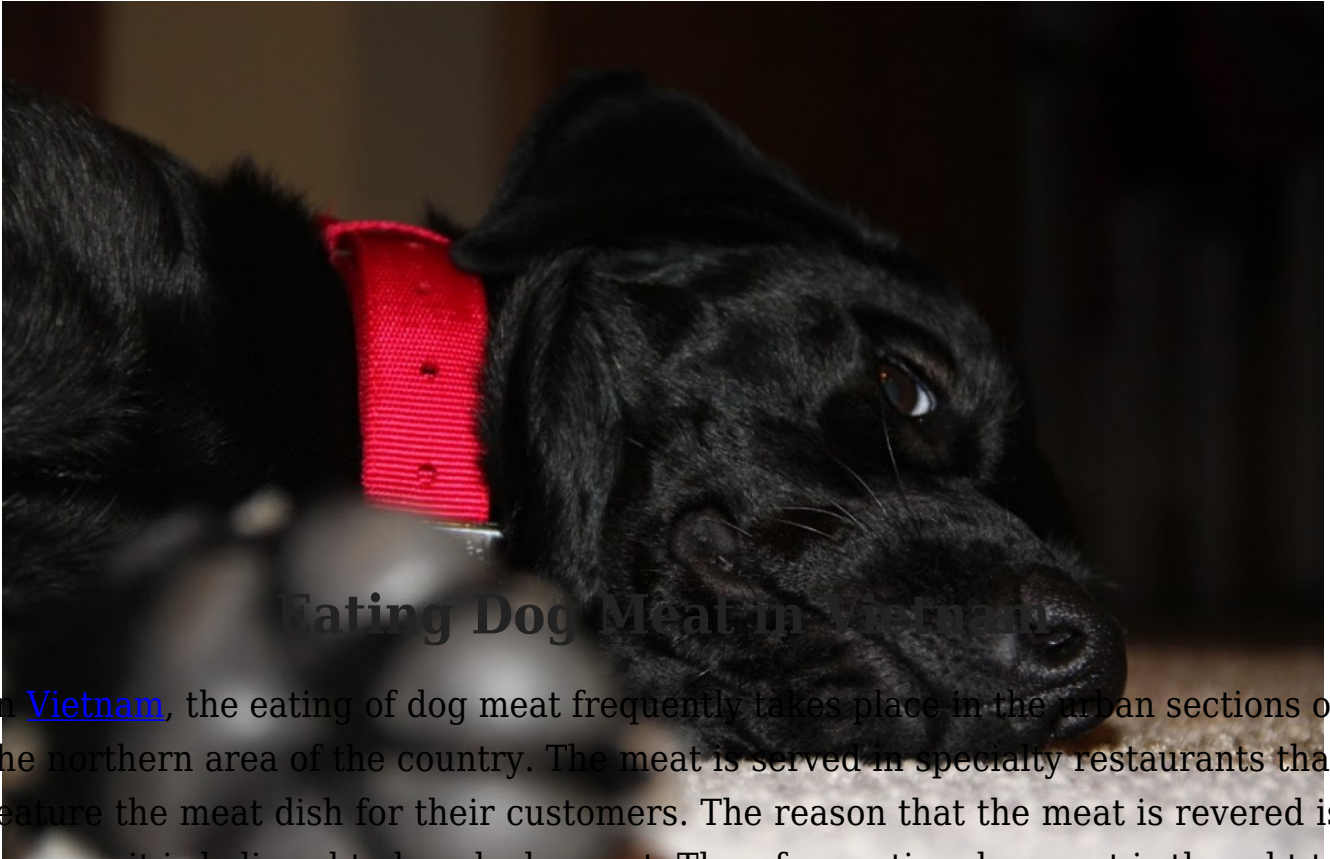


In addition, Yulin, Guangxi has celebrated the summer solstice by holding an [annual festival](#) where the main fare on the menu is dog meat. This celebration has taken place since 2009. A variety of dog entrees are consumed, all of which are eaten with wine. During 2011, the festival lasted ten days and the meat of around 15,000 dogs were consumed at that time.

While officials declare that only dogs bred for food are eaten, reports still trickle in that some of the “food” came from stolen pets or stray dogs. Animal advocates certainly would not like to hear that some of the “food” was burnt or boiled while the dog was still alive.

If we won the euromillions lottery we would save all of the dogs in Asia. Joking aside, there are organizations and movements that are making strides to stop the eating of dogs. For example, the [CCAPN](#), or Chinese Companion Animal Protection Network, is one such organization. In 2006, the CCAPN set up protests against the practice of eating dog meat, beginning in Guangzhou and expanding to other Chinese cities. In fact, before the onset of the Olympics in [Beijing](#), dog meat was excluded from Olympic restaurant menus so visitors to the 2008 games would not be put off by the serving of this meat.

While legislative moves have been made to jail people who eat dog meat, some of the festivals that are held still defy these kinds of rulings. Nevertheless, the practice is beginning to fade in the twenty-first century. For example, a popular eatery was recently closed in [Guangzhou](#) due to the tightening of regulations. That particular restaurant had featured dog meat on its menu since 1963.



Eating Dog Meat in Vietnam

In [Vietnam](#), the eating of dog meat frequently takes place in the urban sections of the northern area of the country. The meat is served in specialty restaurants that feature the meat dish for their customers. The reason that the meat is revered is because it is believed to be a lucky meat. Therefore eating dog meat is thought to bring people prosperity and luck. The Vietnamese people view eating dog meat the same as consuming chicken or pork.

In the urban areas, dog meat restaurants are “staple” restaurants. For example, in [Hanoi](#), one street in the city showcases many restaurants that offer dog meat on their menus. Customers—mostly men—sit on mats and consume alcohol and the food. The consumption of canine meat is also part of a ceremony that begins at the conclusion of the lunar month. Therefore, eateries that serve dog meat may only open their doors during this time period. Reports also reveal that dogs are smuggled from [Thailand](#) so that their meat can be sold in restaurants.



However, with that being said, the desire to eat dog meat, as in China, is not as pronounced today as it has been in the past. Before 2014, over five million dogs were slaughtered annually for their meat in [Vietnam](#). However, as the incomes of the people have risen, their need to eat the meat of dogs has waned. Now, many of the higher-income Vietnamese are keeping dogs as pets, some of which are imported from Japan, China, or other nearby countries. In fact, a pet dog can cost as much as US \$4,700.

Needless to say, eating a dog for its meat has not completely stopped in China or Vietnam. However, as the world becomes more globalized and people make higher incomes, the practice will hopefully finally subside. Part of the reason that the practice is acceptable is because the people have been eating the meat of dogs for thousands of years. Also, as noted, the Vietnamese believe that eating the meat promotes luck and prosperity.



However, as people become more educated and live more sophisticated lifestyles, the desire to eat this meat lessens. According to one animal rights organization, Yulin, which holds the aforementioned annual dog-eating festival, is home to over 100 slaughterhouses. These facilities process between 30 and 100 dogs, on average, each day. However the Center for Animal Disease and Control in the city reports that Yulin now only has eight slaughterhouses, all of which sell about 200 dogs. Nevertheless, this number rises tenfold when the city holds its yearly festival.

The only way to keep this type of practice in check then is to introduce legislation that more stringently penalizes the activity and makes the selling of dogs less attractive. While dogs fetch a high price as pets, they also fetch a high price as food.