



Designed to help foreigners understand Korean cuisine more easily and with greater accuracy, our <Korean Menu Guide> contains information on 154 Korean dishes in 10 languages.



<Korean Restaurant Guide 2011-Tokyo> introduces 34 excellent Korean restaurants in the Greater Tokyo Area.



<Korean Restaurant Guide 2011-Western Europe> (5 volumes in total) introduces Korean restaurants in 25 cities in 11 Western European countries with the purpose of sharing with the rest of the world the wonderful variety and flavors of Korea's unique cuisine and culinary culture.

A Tableau of a Diamond Wedding Anniversary

This is a picture of an older couple from the 18th century repeating their wedding ceremony in celebration of their 60th anniversary. This painting vividly depicts a tableau in which their children offer up a cup of drink, wishing them health and longevity. The authorship of the painting is unknown, and the painting is currently housed in the National Museum of Korea.



GREAT FOOD, GREAT STORIES FROM KOREA

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GREAT FOOD, GREAT STORIES FROM KOREA

This book tells the many stories of Korean food, the rich flavors that have evolved generation after generation, meal after meal, for over several millennia on the Korean peninsula. A single dish usually leads to the creation of another through the expansion of time and space, making it impossible to count the exact number of dishes in the Korean cuisine. So, for this book, we have only included a selection of a hundred or so of the most representative. We hope an increasing number of people from all over the globe will develop a better understanding of the naturally rich flavors of Korean food and of the culinary culture of Korea.

GREAT FOOD, GREAT STORIES FROM KOREA

The Korean Food Foundation is a specialized private organization that searches for new dishes and conducts research on Korean cuisine in order to introduce Korean food and culinary culture to the world, and support related content development and marketing.



GREAT FOOD, GREAT STORIES FROM KOREA



THE TASTE OF KOREA
H A N S I K

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

The legendary Indian poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore once described Korea as “a bright light of the East.” His intention was to highlight the splendid culture, as well as the national characteristics of creativity and courtesy.

The tradition of Korean food (Hansik) developed over 5,000 years of human habitation in the Korean Peninsula, driven by a large variety of foods available over the four distinct seasons. This tradition embodies the cheerfulness and grace of the Korean people. The diverse types of Jang (salted and fermented pastes or sauces) that make up the core seasonings for preparing Korean food are healthy fermented foods created through a long period of fermentation, known in Korean as “Jangdokdae” culture.

In his book «The Third Wave», Alvin Toffler described the first flavor as salt, the second flavor as sauce, and projected that the third will be fermented food. In its March 2006 issue, the American monthly magazine «Health» designated kimchi, Korea’s most famous fermented dish, as one of the world’s five healthiest foods.

«Great Food, Great Stories from Korea» lists a selection of over 100 Korean foods that we are proud to introduce to the world. This broad selection from the even vaster Korean menu explains the origination, taste and functionality of each dish, along with Korean food culture in general. These representatives of Korean cuisine have been consumed by people from all walks of life, from the royal family to the general public, and are enjoyed today by K-pop stars, the main drivers of the Korean Wave, and contemporary Korean citizens.

I would like to conclude this message by expressing my hope that this book will serve as an opportunity for people across the globe to develop a deeper understanding of Korean food culture.

Thank you very much.

Chairperson, Korean Food Foundation

Il-Sun Yang

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FROM KOREA



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All Dishes Served At Once

Balance and Harmony

Korean meals, unlike western course meals, are served in a single setting. We call this Bansaeng charim, where the rice (Bap) and side dishes (Banchan) are set together on the table. A bansaeng can be very simple, consisting of rice, soup, soy sauce, kimchi, grilled fish, and a vegetable dish. But it can also be extravagant with so many dishes spread out on the table that the table legs figuratively 'bend.' Regardless of the scale, the key point is that the combination is balanced and harmonious in terms of taste and nutrition.

Abundance in Variety

Korean cuisine certainly does not lack variety. There is such a vast range of cooking methods that one rarely sees the same cooking method used twice on a given ingredient. For starters, cooked rice (Bap) has countless variations: Huinbap (white rice), Jabgokbap (mixed-grain rice), and Seokkeum bap (rice mixed with vegetables or seafood). There are over 350 varieties of Jusik (main starch dish), including Bap (cooked rice), Juk (rice porridge), Guksu (noodles), Mandu (dumpling), Tteokguk (sliced rice cake soup) and Sujebi (Korean pasta soup). There are also over 1,500 varieties of Banchans (side dishes) which accounts for more than half of all Korean dishes.

Fermented Foods for Flavor and Nutrition

Sauces and Kimchi, Fermented Over Time

Fermented foods are central to the Korean diet, including several well-known examples: kimchi, salted seafood (Jeotgal), and fermented condiments such as soy sauce (Ganjang), soybean paste (Doenjang) and red chili paste (Gochujang). Oftentimes, the phrase 'a deep flavor' is used to describe many Korean dishes. The expression refers to the complex taste that comes from seasoning with sauces that takes years to ferment and mature. Kimchi, which has over 350 known variations depending on ingredients and taste, has recently gained international recognition as a great source of lactobacilli and dietary fiber. The same Kimchi will undergo subtle changes in flavor and texture with the passing of the seasons.

Health Food from Ancestral Wisdom

Fermented condiments, including soy sauce, soybean paste and red chili paste, not only provide flavor but also significant nutritional benefits. As they are made mainly from protein-rich soybeans, these fermented sauces add protein to the side dishes which mainly consist of grains and vegetables. Amino acids created in the breakdown of proteins add a subtle flavor that envelops the palate, while microorganisms from the fermented condiments improve health through their digestion regulating and anti-oxidant properties. All fermented condiments are 'live foods' packed with enzymes. Kimchi is a well-known health food rich in fiber and lactobacilli which promote digestion and physiological well-being.

THE CULINARY CULTURE OF KOREA

Food embodies the past, present and future of a nation and its people. There are many stories to be told about Korean cuisine, which is an amalgamation of the way of life and beliefs of our ancestors. It is a story of flavors, colors, and well-being. Here is the story.





Using Local, Fresh, and Seasonal Ingredients

Foods Mirror the Change of Seasons

The natural conditions of the land - facing the sea on three sides and having four distinct seasons - provided Koreans with a large variety of ingredients. People could also harvest seasonal wild herbs and plants from the mountains and hills. Hence, Korea's culinary tradition evolved around the seasons: Patjuk (red bean porridge) for the winter solstice; piping hot soups on the three dog days of summer; and Ogokbap (five grain rice) and Namul (seasoned vegetables) to celebrate the first full moon of the year. The foods offered to our ancestral spirits on Lunar New Year or Chuseok (fall harvest festival), are also made using the freshest ingredients in season.

Indigenous Regional Cuisines

Korea's indigenous regional cuisines reflect the geographical and climatic characteristics of that region. Made from cooking methods which are exclusive to that region and inherited from ancient times, regional cuisines are an intangible cultural heritage of immense value. Seasonal customs, rites of passage, and regional foods that reflect local customs all account for the great diversity and variety of Hansik.



Spices and Garnish for Taste, Aesthetics, and Nutrition

Food as Medicine

Korean cooking employs a variety of spices (Yang-nyeom) and garnishes (Gomyeong). The principle of Euisik-dongwon - 'food in the mouth becomes medicine in body' - was practiced by combining ingredients and adding spices. Chili, garlic, green onion and ginger were used often not simply because of the flavor, but also because of the health benefits. Spices (Yang-nyeom) is 藥念 in Chinese characters: the first character means 'medicine' and the second one means 'in mind.' The word indicates that when using various spices one must 'keep in mind that spices can be medicine to the body.'

Garnishes with Philosophic Meanings

Korean dishes are frequently topped with garnishes (Gomyeong). The ingredients used as garnishes in Hansik follow the principle of Five Cardinal Colors, which consist of white, black, green, red, and yellow. Gujeol pan (platter of nine delicacies) and Sinseollo (royal hotpot) are composed of color blocks, while Japchae (glass noodles with sautéed vegetables and beef) and Tangpyeongchae (mung bean jelly with vegetables and beef) mix the colors together. The multi-colored garnish and natural food colorings show the great care Koreans put into preparing food. Garnishes balance taste and color, and represent the principle of Five Cardinal Colors which correspond to the five cosmic elements.

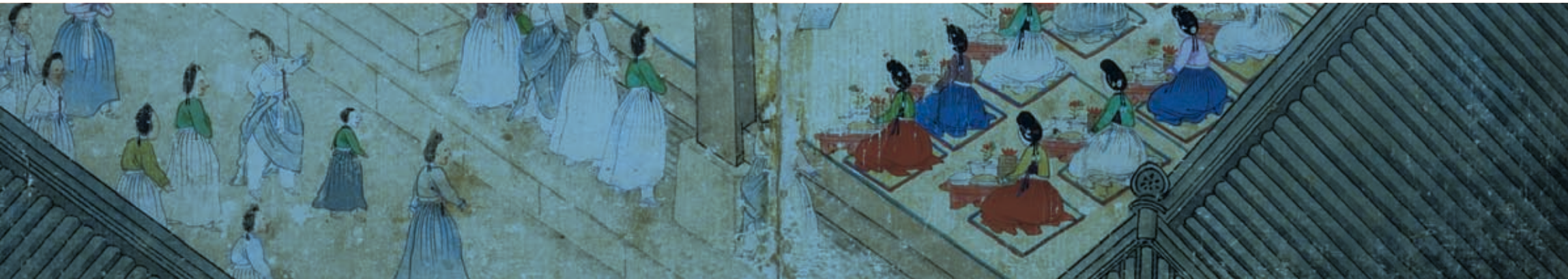




Table Manners and Tableware

Soup Bowl and Rice Bowl, Spoon and Chopsticks

In a traditional Korean table setting, the rice bowl is placed to the left and the soup bowl to the right. Both the spoon and chopsticks are to be used. The spoon is a useful utensil, since Hansik includes hot soups and stews, and chopsticks are ideal for handling dishes made with chopped or sliced ingredients. It is proper to use the spoon for rice and soup, and chopsticks for side dishes. Everyone must wait until the eldest person at the table picks up his/her chopstick or spoon. The utensils also represent the balance of yin and yang: the round spoon symbolizes yin and the chopsticks yang.

The Number of 'Cheop'

The size of a traditional Korean meal is measured by the number of cheop. There are 3-Cheop, 5-Cheop, 7-Cheop, 9-Cheop tables, and a 12-Cheop table (Surasang) which was reserved for kings. Cheop actually refers to the vessel used for side dishes. The basic 3-Cheop table serves a vegetable dish, a grilled dish, and pickled vegetables. Since the rice, soup, kimchi, potstew (Jjigae), and sauces are not included in the count, even a simple 3-Cheop table offers plenty of flavorful dishes.

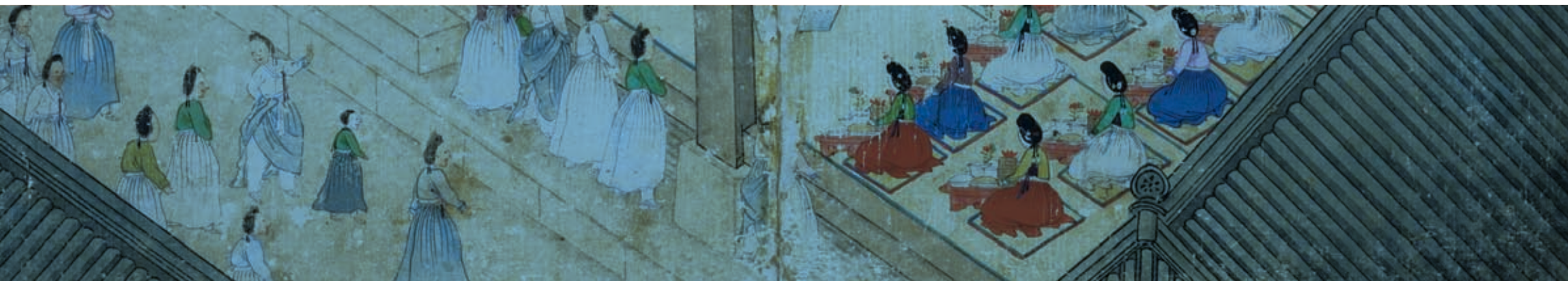


Yugi and Onggi

Yugi means brassware, sometimes called Notkgeureut in Korean. There is also Bangjja, a type of brassware hand-shaped by hammering a molten blend of 80 percent copper and 20 percent tin. Anseong in Gyeonggi Province has long been famous for its Yugi. Making quality brassware by order of high-ranking officials or Yangban was called as 'Mochum' or 'Machum'. Hence, came the expression 'Anseong-machum' which Koreans use to refer to a 'perfect fit'. Onggi are vessels made by coating earthenware with lye and firing it at a high temperature. An Onggi's surface has countless microscopic holes which allow the vessel to breathe and keep its content fresh. It is ideal for preserving fermented foods such as kimchi, soy sauce, soybean paste, and Gochujang (red chili paste). Ttukbaegi is an Onggi stew pot that can go over direct fire, as it can withstand high temperatures and cools slowly.

Soban

Soban refers to a low table. Gaksang-charim is typical of traditional Korean table settings, meaning that each person eats from his or her own personal Soban. Soban is known by different names depending on the material or the shape of the legs: Goimok-ban is made of zelkova wood; Haengja-ban is made of ginkgo; Gaedari-soban has curved legs like a dog (Gae means dog and Dari means leg); and Samjok-ban stands on only three legs (Sam means three and Jok means foot). Also famous is the Tongyeong-ban from Tongyeong, South Gyeongsang Province; the Naju-ban made in Naju, South Jeolla Province; and the Haeju-ban crafted in Haeju, Hwanghae Province.





BAP & JUK

[COOKED GRAINS AND PORRIDGE]

Bap (cooked Grains) is an integral part of Korean life. Koreans often say, 'We live on Bap,' or 'Bap is the best medicine.'

We also ask 'Have you had your Bap?' as a friendly greeting.

And the word Bapsang ('rice table') refers to a meal in general.

Juk (rice congee or porridge) is the first thing a baby is fed when weaning, and a warm bowl of Juk is believed to be the best food for people who are feeling weak or under the weather.



The Korean Staple

Bap

[Cooked Rice]

Bap (Cooked Rice) can be made entirely of white rice (Huin-bap), but it can also be combined with other grains such as soy bean or red bean (Jabgok-bap), with vegetables such as potatoes or sweet potatoes (Chaeso-bap), or with seafood such as oysters or mussels (Haemul-bap). Heat control during cooking determines the taste of Bap. Even if the rice is stale or lacking in quality, savvy Koreans know how to cook delicious Bap by adjusting the cooking temperature.

The Meal Will Only Taste as Good as the Bap

Bap, or rice is Ban (飯) in Chinese characters. It is also called by many names depending on the person eating it: Jinji for the elderly; Sura for royalty; and Me or Jetme for ancestral rites. The Korean meal is incomplete without Bap. Koreans can have a meal without side dishes if the Bap tastes good enough, but not the other way around, no matter how tasty the side dishes are. That is why the side dishes and rice are served all at once, unlike Western course meals. One might wonder how the different tastes can be appreciated this way, but the charm of Korean food lies in the fusion and harmony of different flavors on the palate.

Rice Prevents Adulthood Diseases

Rice is highly effective in preventing obesity, because while it is rich in carbohydrates and protein, it contains 33 percent less fat than wheat flour. Blood sugar levels spike after eating bread or potatoes, but rise only moderately after consuming rice. Rice also contains peptide, which suppresses hypertension, as well as powerful natural antioxidants such as vitamin E, folic acid and tocotrienol which slow down the aging of cells. The most common and fundamental Korean food is Huin-bap (white rice), which is softer, more delicious and more digestible than any other type of Bap. Hyeonmi-bap (brown rice), which is made from unpolished rice and thus contains even greater amounts of important nutrients, is also popular as a health food along with Jabgok-bap (nutritious grain rice) and Chaeso-bap (rice with vegetables).



How to Cook Delicious Bap

Perfectly cooked rice is lustrous, soft and has a sweet aroma. People of the Qing Dynasty used to praise the flavor of Korean-style cooked rice, saying, 'The fire should be weak and little water should be used to cook rice. Joseon people are experts at making well-cooked glossy rice.' Perhaps it was due to the important role of rice that we can find many literatures of the Joseon period elaborating on the art of rice-cooking.



The Scrumptious Crust **Dolsot bap**

[Stone Pot Rice]

Dolsot-bap is rice cooked in a stone pot (Dolsot) with chestnuts, ginkgo nuts, pine nuts, pyogo (shitake) mushrooms, soybeans and vegetables. Because it has to be served piping hot straight off the stove, Dolsot-bap was only made for special guests or the patriarch of the family.

A Special Rice Dish for One

There are several theories about the origin of Dolsot-bap. Some say that it was first cooked for dignitaries visiting the royal palace. Some believe that it was created when the Joseon royal family went to the Beopju Temple in Sokri Mountain for a Buddhist prayer ceremony, and the monks cooked rice with ingredients available in the mountains. Still others claim that talc stone pots (Gobdol-sot) were used to cook rice ever since the Choi clan from Jangsu - an area famous for natural talc - offered talc stone pots as tribute to King Sukjong of Joseon Dynasty.

In the royal palace, Bap for the King and the Queen was cooked separately in small talc stone pots over hardwood charcoal. First, they made a charcoal fire in a large brass brazier, placed two flat iron rods across the brazier, set a talc stone pot on the rods, boiled water for some time, added the rice, and finally simmered it slowly until it was thoroughly cooked. This process guarantees a soft taste that literally melts in the mouth.

They served both Huin-bap (white rice) and Pat-bap (rice with red beans) to offer the King and Queen a choice, but only two servings were prepared for each. This illustrates how Dolsot-bap was served only to the very privileged. These days, Dolsot-bap has become popularized, and many restaurants serve Dolsot-bap rather than regular Bap in a bowl. It is said that famous Dolsot-bap restaurants still had burgeoning businesses even during the economic downturn during the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

Getting to the Bottom

Dolsot-bap is a gastronomic experience where the best comes last. After removing the cooked rice, water is poured into the stone bowl. The burnt layer of rice (Nurungji) is cooked in the water by the residual heat from the pot and becomes Sungnyung (browned rice tea). By the time the meal is finished, the Sungnyung is ready. Dolsot-bap enthusiasts claim that no meal is complete until they have washed it down with hot Nurungji and some salted seafood or pickled vegetables. In order to make the best tasting Sungnyung, the added ingredients should not leave any unpleasant odor. Thus, chestnuts, jujubes and beans are commonly used, occasionally with fresh ginseng root, for a subtle aroma. Dolsot-bap is also good when mixed with sesame soy sauce. The combination of chewy rice and roasted sesame oil is heavenly. Seafood or mushroom may be added to make Songi-dolsot bap (stone pot rice with pine mushroom) in the autumn, and Gul-bap (stone pot rice with oysters), Honghap-bap (stone pot rice with mussels), or Mu-bap (stone pot rice with white radish) are commonly prepared in the winter. Chopped garden or wild chives may be added to the sesame soy sauce for enhanced flavor. Lastly, the delicious crusty rice layer at the bottom of the stone pot is not to be missed even if it takes some serious spoon work to scrape it off.



An International Health Dish

Bibim bap

[Bibimbap]

Bibim-bap, cooked rice mixed with vegetables, sautéed beef and Twigak, (dried seaweed or vegetables fried in oil) is one of the definitive Korean dishes in the eyes of both Koreans and international enthusiasts. Once called Goldongban by the public and Bibim in the royal palace, Bibim-bap has been one of the most popular in-flight meals around the world since it was first introduced by airlines in the early 1990s.

A Product of Ancestral Rites and Communal Labor

There are three common beliefs about the origin of Bibimbap. First, it is said to be derived from traditional Korean ancestral rites. Koreans prepare Bap (cooked rice), meat, fish and vegetables for a table offered to the ancestors. The ritual they perform after holding an ancestral rite is called Eumbok, the partaking of sacrificial food and drink, and Bibimbap is believed to have stemmed from the practice of mixing Bap with other dishes for Eumbok. Some say that Bibimbap originated from the ancient custom of mixing leftover cooked rice with all the remaining side dishes and eating it as a midnight snack on Lunar New Year's Eve.

Lastly, Bibimbap could have been inspired by the simple meals farmers consumed in the fields. Koreans have a custom of communally pooling labor when planting rice or harvesting crops. In order to save time and work, everyone would bring some food which would be mixed and shared out on the fields. Every local variation of Bibimbap has its own unique characteristics depending on the region where it comes from. Bibimbap from Jeonju and Jinju is particularly famous.

A Botanical Garden inside the Bowl

Jeonju is very famous for its Kongnamul-bibimbap (rice with soybean sprouts), an elaborate dish requiring approximately 30 different ingredients. The rice itself is boiled in a stock made with beef brisket, and the dish is topped with a mung bean starch jelly tinted with yellow gardenia juice. Jeonju Bibimbap traditionally has Yuk-hwe (Korean beef steak tartare) as one of the mixing ingredients, but those unaccustomed to eating uncooked beef can have it with regular sautéed beef. Jinju is famous for its Kkot-bap (flower bibimbap), which conjures up images of a beautiful botanical garden. This version of Bibimbap is served with a broth made with chopped littleneck clams sautéed in sesame oil.

Heotjesat-bap, an Indelible Taste

Heotjesat-bap (faux-sacrificial Bibimbap) is a famous local dish in the Gyeongsang Provinces. It is basically a sacrificial Bibimbap without the actual memorial service. The name comes from tales of Yangbans (gentry class) faking ancestral rites just to eat this dish. Others say that commoners, who were not allowed to hold memorial services of this style, cooked sacrificial foods just to eat them. The Bap in Heotjesat-bap is mixed with soy sauce instead of Gochujang (red chili paste) and served with a beef and radish broth, Sanjeok (seasoned beef brochette), Bugeo-jjim (simmered dried pollack), Dubu-buchim (pan-fried tofu), Dombaegi-sanjeok (shark meat brochette) and Namul (vegetable side dishes).

Sanchae-bibimbap and Dolsot-bibimbap

Sanchae-bibimbap (mountain vegetable Bibimbap) was created when Buddhist monks mixed rice with wild-grown mountain herbs and vegetables. The dish is light and fragrant due to the ingredients which are wild-grown in the mountains.

Dolsot-bibimbap (stone pot rice with vegetables and beef) is characterized by the Nurungji (crisped rice) that sears at the bottom of the pot. It is especially popular because people can listen to the sizzling sound of the residual heat of the pot continuing to cook the rice. The best part of eating this dish is scraping the Nurungji - the bottom crusty layer of rice – off the stone pot. Dolsot-bibimbap is popular among foreigners who sometimes compare the crusty layer to the Socarrat of Spanish paella.

Bibim-bap and Hollywood Celebrities

Bibimbap has won the hearts of many Hollywood celebrities. Gwyneth Paltrow referred to Bibimbap as a personal secret on a TV show featuring Hollywood celebrities' weight-loss tips. It caused quite a stir when Paltrow uploaded instructions for making Bibimbap on her website. Other self-proclaimed Bibimbap fans include the late Michael Jackson, Paris Hilton and Nicholas Cage.

Bibim-bap as Comfort Food

Nothing is more comforting to Koreans than rice mixed with fiery Gochujang (red chili paste) and all the leftover dishes rummaged from the refrigerator. Koreans say that the moment a spoonful of Bibimbap enters your mouth, the bitterness and resentment in your heart starts to melt away. Bibimbap is the ultimate comfort food for Koreans, which magically provides relief for heartaches, pent up frustrations, and even stress and anxiety.

Bibim-bap Ad in Times Square

In the autumn of 2010, a Bibimbap advertisement appeared on the electronic billboard in New York's Times Square. The colorful ad was eye-catching and featured a variety of Korean cultural items, such as 'Nanta,' taekwondo, Samulnori (percussion quartet), circle dance (Ganggangsuewolle), masked dance and the Bukcheong lion dance.

It is a long-standing tradition for Koreans to eat Bibimbap during the rite called Eumbok (partaking of sacrificial food and drink) following a memorial service. (A rite held for greatly-honored ancestors at an esteemed family's residence called Gyeongdangjong-taek)





A Full Meal in a Single Roll

Gim bap

[Dried Seaweed Rolls]

Gim-bap (Korean-style rice rolls) is made by spreading white rice on a sheet of Gim (dried laver), layering it with spinach, pickled radish, carrots, egg and beef, and rolling it up. It is similar to the Japanese Maki roll but differs in that the rice is seasoned with sesame oil and salt rather than with vinegar, sugar and salt.

Different Fillings, Different Names

It was in the 1960s and 70s that Gimhap as we know it - rolled up into a cylindrical form - became popular. The rice-roll was the default picnic lunch for annual spring and autumn school outings. Many Koreans fondly remember eating the end pieces of the rolls while their mother prepared Gimhap on the morning of school picnics. In the mid-1990s, Gimhap became an everyday food with the launch of the successful Gimhap franchise, 'Jongno Gimhap.' Their take on Gimhap was a thick roll with generous portions of rice and novel fillings such as kimchi, sliced processed cheese, perilla leaves, and anything else one fancied. Thus, Gimhap became ubiquitous, and multiplied into many variations: Cheese-gimhap, Tuna-gimhap, Kimchi-gimhap, etc.

Fat Granny's Chungmu-gimhap

A unique variation of Gimhap is the Kkoma-gimhap, finger-size rolls of rice wrapped in dried laver sheets without any filling and eaten with spicy squid salad and radish kimchi. Its origins date back decades to days when ferries were preferred as a form of transportation over the relatively underdeveloped roads. Passengers used to bring their own Gimhap to tide them over the long ferry ride. However, the regular Gimhap with fillings spoiled easily. One elderly woman saw this and started to sell plain rice rolls served with a separate side dish. It was an instant hit. As roads improved and fewer ferries operated, the woman settled down and opened her own place named 'Chungmu Gimhap' in Chungmu city. Although Chungmu later merged into Tongyeong as a result of administrative reorganization, the place is still called Chungmu Gimhap and has become a famous tourist stop.

A Slice of the Ocean on the Dinner Table : Dried Laver

Called nature's greatest gift, laver is a remarkably nutritious food packed with protein and vitamins. It has been cultivated for ages and is considered at its best when it shows fewer impurities, a darker color and a fuller sheen.





Fortune and Health Wrapped in One

Ssam bap

[Rice with Leaf Wraps]

Ssam-bap is cooked rice and condiments wrapped in fresh greens or seaweed leaves. Koreans have always been extremely skilled at bundling and wrapping things in cloth. It's no wonder Koreans enjoy wrapping food at the table. Wild vegetables, herbs, seafood... Nothing is 'unwrappable' as long as it can be placed on a leaf and held in the palm.

Anything Goes

Leafy greens for Ssam (wraps) often appear on Korean tables: grilled beef is invariably served with Ssam greens, as well as sliced raw fish (Saengseon-hwe), which is wrapped with bits of chili pepper or garlic. Pork belly barbecue restaurants always serve Ssam greens on the side. When the price of greens spikes in the dead heat of summer, sales at pork belly restaurants plummet. No one will go when these restaurants skimp on the greens, because piling up layers of fresh leaves and wrapping it up is half the fun.

Ssam-bap: Crunchy or Soft

The most common Ssam wrappers are leafy vegetables, including lettuce, perilla leaves, crown daisy, napa cabbage, and kale. More than ten kinds of lettuce can be used as wraps. Cabbage and curled mallow, which are too tough to eat raw, can be blanched or steamed.

Seaweed such as kelp (Dashima) and sea mustard (Miyeok) are also popular ingredients for Ssam. Boiled meat can be wrapped with kimchi, which is called 'Bossam.' As Ssam-bap employs a variety of seasonal raw vegetables, it conserves all the precious nutrients that help prevent lifestyle diseases such as calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C, which might otherwise be lost in the process of cooking. Since kelp, soybean paste and cooked brown rice are all alkaline foods rich in minerals, eating them helps to neutralize acids and aids digestion.

The Extravagant Version: Royal Ssam-bap

It's allowed to disregard table manners when eating Ssam-bap. Even the King would eat this dish with his bare hands. The Royal ssam-bap was served with a wide variety of fillings, ranging from Jang-ttoktogi (stir-fried julienned beef) and Byeongeo-gamjeong (pomfret braised with hot pepper paste) to Borisaeu-bokkeum (small shrimp stir-fry), accompanied with a special sauce of Gochujang, sautéed ground meat, sesame oil and pine nuts.

Lettuce-ssambap for a Good Night's Sleep

Bitter-tasting lettuce usually leaves one feeling drowsy. This is due to a slightly sour substance called lactucarium which is helpful in treating insomnia, jaundice and anemia. Lettuce also helps reduce bloating, urinary difficulties, achy joints, and turbid blood.



Easy and Delicious
Kimchi bokkeum bap

[Kimchi Fried Rice]

Koreans have long savored the combination of Bap (cooked rice) and kimchi at the table, but it was only after the 1930s that kimchi fried rice emerged on the culinary scene. This was because modern frying pans made it possible to fry finely chopped kimchi and rice in oil.

Bap, Kimchi, Oil and the Frying Pan

Korean-style fried rice was born after Chinese fried rice and Japanese Omurice became popular in Korea. Inspired by these foreign dishes, Koreans created Kimchi-bokkeumbap by making use of their national dish. A simple plate of Kimchi-bokkeumbap on its own, cooked with aged, sour kimchi, balances the greasiness of the oil and results in a delicious one-dish meal. This is part of the truism that Bap and kimchi alone can serve as a meal for Koreans. Kimchi-bokkeumbap is the perfect answer when nothing else is in the fridge, when you're feeling lazy, when nothing seems appetizing, or when there's leftover rice lying around.

If a meal consists of just rice and kimchi, it might be too bare. But Kimchi-bokkeumbap transforms two basic items into a complete stand-alone dish with great flavor and visual appeal. This is why Kimchi-bokkeumbap enjoys an enduring popularity in Korea.

Kimchi-bokkeumbap in Full Extravaganza

In early 1990s, Cheolpan-bokkeumbap stands were all the rage. The customer selected a few ingredients, and the chef fried them with rice on a flat iron plate, drizzled some sauce on top, and served it on a plate. Kimchi was the ingredient of choice for a majority of customers.

So kimchi became the default ingredient, and customers simply picked out the additional ingredients from a selection of meats, vegetables and seafood.

The Master Key to Hansik Pantries : Kimchi

Kimchi appears as a side dish in nearly all Hansik settings and serves as a culinary silver bullet, freely crossing the border between main courses and side dishes. When used as an ingredient, it can be converted into a variety of new dishes, harmonizing together with Bap, Guk, Jjigae, Tang, Jeon, Jjim, Jorim, Bokkeum and Jeongol.





Bulgogi for the Single Diner
Bulgogi deop bap
[Bulgogi with Rice]

Topping steamed rice with Bulgogi (grilled marinated beef) gives you Bulgogi-deopbap. Similar to the Japanese Donburi, Bulgogi-deopbap is the solution for single diners who don't want the fuss of table-top grilling. It is a convenient dish and very popular among busy urbanites.

An Accessible and Convenient Version of Bulgogi

In the old days, meat was so precious that it was only served at banquets or on special occasions. This idea still remains in modern day Korea where the minimum order of Bulgogi or pork belly is for two - unless it is an extra order. Bulgogi-deopbap broke this pre-conceived notion and made Bulgogi a more accessible dish served in neighborhood restaurants or food stands, as well as a convenient dish for single and/or busy diners.

Reinvented: Bassak-bulgogi-deopbap

Bulgogi-deopbap has a juicy sauce that can be mixed with rice. But mixing at the table can become messy. Bassak-bulgogi-deopbap solves this problem by draining the juice from the cooked Bulgogi, stir-frying the rice in it, and serving the two together. This dry Bulgogi is also good for picnic lunchboxes or for making Bulgogi sandwiches. Skewered Bassak-bulgogi is also great for dinner parties.

Bulgogi-deopbap Recipe

Bulgogi-deopbap is surprisingly easy to prepare. All you need is sliced beef, onions, and rice. First, prepare the marinade with 5T soy sauce, 1T sugar, 1T malt syrup (Mulyeot) or honey, 1/2t crushed roasted sesame seeds, and 1t sesame oil. Mix the marinade with 400g beef and 1/2 onion, both thinly sliced, and let marinate for 30 min. Cook the meat adding 1C water, and pour over a bed of cooked rice.



A Sweet and Spicy Low-fat Dish
Ojingeo deop bap

[Spicy Stir-Fried Squid with Rice]

At restaurants, Jeyuk-deopbap (spicy sautéed pork with rice) is the favored one-dish rice meal for hungry men. But most women who want to watch their figures will opt for Ojingeo-deopbap (spicy sautéed squid with rice). This is because Ojingeo-deopbap is filling yet surprisingly low in calories.

Cabbage and Squid, a Perfect Combination

Compared to red meat, squid is richer in proteins but lower in calories. Ojingeo-deopbap, in addition, is Ph-balanced, because it combines squid, an acidic food, with alkaline vegetables such as cabbage, onions and carrots. Cabbage is an additional boon, because it is also low-cal and rich in dietary fiber. With the addition of hot pepper powder and Gochujang the effect is doubled, because the abundant capsaicin in red pepper helps break down fat. Ojingeo-deopbap has every reason to be loved by people trying to stay in shape.

Osam-bulgogi

For those who are torn between healthy squid and satisfying pork, there is a perfect solution called Osam-bulgogi. It is a dish combining squid and pork belly slices which is stir-fried in a spicy sauce. Koreans commonly face the 'Jajangmyeon - Jjamppong dilemma' where one must choose between black bean noodles or spicy soup noodles at a Chinese restaurant. The same dilemma arises with squid and pork, and Osam-bulgogi solves this problem. It is also good served over steamed rice.

Red Pepper Tea for a Healthy diet

Making a dish with generous addition of red pepper lowers the total calories by 10 to 20 percent. Thus, red pepper tea is also an effective diet tea. After steeping barley, green or black tea in the normal fashion, add a couple of dried red peppers and boil for approximately three more minutes. It can be stored cool in the refrigerator and drunk like water. It stays fresh for several days.



A Soothing Soup for the Morning After **Kongnamul guk bap**

[Bean Sprout Soup with Rice]

Kongnamul-guk (soybean sprout soup) is the first soup the novice cook learns to make. It is also the easiest dish for singles to make. Water, soybean sprouts, salt and scallion are all that is needed. This soup is simple to cook but tricky to get it to taste exactly right. This clean, mild and refreshing soup is the best breakfast on a morning following a wild night on the town.

Mild and Refreshing Soup

Mung bean sprouts are widely used in Japan and many Southeast Asian countries, but soybean sprouts are only found in Korea. It is well-known that vitamin C, which soy bean lacks, is abundant in the sprouts. One plate of soybean sprouts contains half the recommended daily intake of vitamin C. Soybean sprouts are also rich in asparaginic acid, a type of amino acid, which helps break down alcohol (alcoholysis).

Jeonju is famous for its Kongnamul-guk soup, because, the city's water is exceptionally clean and fresh. To prepare Jeonju-style Kongnamul-gukbap (soybean sprouts soup with rice), cook rice using less water than normal, spoon rice into an earthen bowl and pour in the soup. Thick-stemmed soybean sprouts should be used. Immediately before eating, season it with the clear juice from salted shrimp (Saeujeot).

Kongnamul-guk as a Cold Remedy

Some Koreans add an egg to Kongnamul-gukbap, and the soup is soon muddied with the broken yolk. In Jeonju, only the egg white or a pre-cooked poached egg (Suran)* is added. Drinkers often claim that the best way to enjoy Kongnamul-gukbap is eating it with Moju, a crude liquor made by thoroughly boiling Makgeolli (Korean rice wine) with ginger, cinnamon and jujubes. Alternating between the hot soup and sips of Moju is supposed to induce sweat and effectively cure any hangover. This is, however, a micperception. Drinking Moju in fact only raises the alcohol level in the body.

Other than curing hangovers, Kongnamul-guk is also good for colds. The plentiful vitamin C in the soup does wonders for a heavy cold or 24-hour flu. Since the old days, Koreans have eased their cold symptoms by slurping hot Kongnamul-guk spruced up with a generous sprinkling of red chili powder.

* Suran (poached egg) is an egg dropped into boiling water and soft-boiled without breaking the yolk.



Bean sprouts contain a substance that enhances the supply of oxygen to the brain, and the improved nourishment then boosts brain function.



Rich and Nutty Taste

Jatjuk

[Pine Nut Porridge]

Everyone loves Jat-juk (pine nut porridge) because of its velvety texture and fragrant smell. This porridge was once reserved as a restorative food for the sick or elderly, or as breakfast for important guests, not only because of its aromatic and nutty flavor, but also because pine nuts were a rare and expensive ingredient.

Velvety Smooth with Pine Nut Fragrance

In the royal palace, the King and the Queen were served with a bowl of different Juks in bed as a pre-breakfast (Jari-joban) on days they did not receive herbal tonics. Jatjuk was considered to be the best of all porridges. Although this dish often appears in documents from the Joseon Dynasty, its origin has never been traced. Two or three parts pine nuts to one part rice is used to make Jatjuk. In order to enhance the flavor of the pine nuts, the pine nuts and rice should be finely ground beforehand. When boiling, a wooden spoon or paddle must be used for stirring, because otherwise the porridge can quickly turn watery. This will also happen if salt is added before serving.

Pine nuts are already rich in protein and healthy fats, but some people add roasted sesame seeds to further enhance the flavor. Buddhist monks who are on vegetarian fasts or go days without sleep often eat Jatjuk, served with Dongchimi (radish water kimchi), to increase energy and restore lost appetite. When making Jatjuk, the rice and pine nuts should be separately puréed with water. The clear liquids from the rice purée and pine nut purée are poured off, combined, and boiled together. Then the rice sediment is added followed by the pine nut sediment. The mixture is cooked until it reaches a thick consistency.



Heugimja-juk, the Elixir of Youth

Along with Jatjuk, Heugimja-juk (black sesame and rice porridge) is another popular breakfast dish. It was also served as a pre-breakfast to the King. Black sesame is rich in vitamin E and lecithin, which are antioxidants and help keep the skin youthful. Perhaps this was why Heugimja-juk was an important diet of the Hwarang (elite youth corps) warriors of the Silla Kingdom, as they placed great importance on grooming.



A Sweet Dish Served as Appetizer or Dessert

Hobakjuk

[Pumpkin Porridge]

Although summer squash and winter squash can both be used, Hobak-juk (pumpkin porridge) is typically made with winter squash, or 'pumpkin.' The bright orange color and soft sweetness of the pumpkin makes Hobak-juk a visual and gastronomic delight, and a popular dish that can be served either as a first course or dessert.

The Pumpkin Rolls In, Vine and All!

Squash was introduced to Korea after the Japanese invasion of 1592. Its original name was Seungso, which means 'vegetable of the monks.' This was because Buddhist monks often cultivated squash on the temple grounds. There were no dedicated squash fields in old times, since the plants grew so well along the walls or any corner of the back yard. Each part of the squash plant is edible, including the flesh, leaf, and sprout. Hobak-namul (sautéed zucchini), Hobak-kimchi (winter squash kimchi), Hobak-jeon (pan-fried zucchini), and Hobak-jjim (steamed winter squash) are all dishes made from squash. Dishes made from winter squash, or pumpkins, include Hobak-tteok (pumpkin rice cake), Hobak-beombeok (pumpkin and mixed grain porridge), and Hobak-juk (pumpkin porridge) which mostly consumed as snacks. The value of squash, or pumpkin, led to the Korean expression 'A whole pumpkin rolled into the house, vine and all!' which means to be blessed with a great prize or catch. Hobakjuk has long been a favorite wintertime source of vitamins. There is even a saying, 'Eat pumpkin on the winter solstice to prevent having a stroke.'

Hobakjuk contains a lot of carotene, which converts to vitamin A when absorbed by the body. Pumpkins are also low in calories, thus good for weight-control. The many vitamins and minerals in pumpkin have anti-aging properties, while the dietary fiber helps to prevent constipation and keeps the skin clear and smooth. Contrary to the Korean expression that compares unattractive women to 'pumpkins,' pumpkins are actually wonderful for promoting youth and beauty.



Hobak-juk Recipe

Rinse sweet pumpkin well, place in a pot, pour in just enough water to cover it, and boil until soft. Remove from heat and scrape out the flesh. Mix with sweet rice powder and simmer for a while. Add soaked beans and continue to cook. This smooth and sweet-tasting porridge is beneficial for the elderly or recovering patients. Another interesting variation is made by thickening the porridge by adding Saelsahims, (rice balls) which are made by mixing sweet rice powder with hot water and shaping them into small balls.



A Jewel from the Ocean **Jeonbokjuk**

[Rice Porridge with Abalone]

The Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huang, who desired eternal life, is known to have consumed abalone as an elixir. Abalone was precious in old Korea and was always one of the tribute goods offered to the King. Nowadays, farmed abalones are more readily available. And Jeonbok-juk (abalone porridge) is still the first thing people will make when a family member falls sick.

A Source of Many Nutrients

Abalones feed on mineral-rich seaweeds such as sea mustard and kelp. Thus, the abalone is believed to embody 'the vitality of the ocean.' Abalone is a popular health food, rich in proteins and vitamins as well as minerals such as calcium and phosphorus. The milky soup of Jeonbokjuk combined with the firm texture of bits of abalone flesh tastes wonderful, and has a savory flavor that envelops the palate.

Abalone Entrails, a Delicacy the Color of the Ocean

Jeong Yak-jeon, a Joseon Dynasty scholar, introduced abalones in 1814 in his book *Jasaneobo**: "The succulent flesh of the abalone tastes good both raw and grilled, but the best way to enjoy it is to slice and dry it. Abalone entrails can be boiled and salted."

Jeonbok-hwe (sliced fresh abalone) or grilled abalones have a chewy texture that tantalizes the mouth. When grilled or parboiled in shell, the flesh shrinks slightly and becomes tender. The abalone entrails are loved by gourmets who appreciate the intense flavor. Abalone entrails, called Gaut or Geu in Korean, have a green tint when the abalone is male and a yellow tint in the case of females.

When preparing Jeonbokjuk, the addition of entrails is the only way to obtain the deep ocean flavor. Another way to enjoy the entrails is to mix it with vegetables and season it with vinegared Gochujang. The result is a unique, fishy flavored dish. Salted abalone entrails were considered a rare delicacy reserved for important guests. Unshelled abalones can be put in a kettle of Soju to produce a green-tinted abalone liquor which is known to stimulate the appetites. Nevertheless, the first and foremost abalone dish in Korea is Jeonbokjuk. It is so tasty that some say the dish was created to allow as many people as possible to savor the taste of precious abalones.

* *Jasaneobo* (Fishes of Heuksan Island) is the oldest surviving record of marine life in Korea, written in 1814 by the Joseon scholar Jeong Yak-jeon, who personally compiled the name, appearance, behavior, usage, etc. of 155 different species of marine life from the coastal waters surrounding Heuksan Island, South Jeolla Province.

Yellowish Wild Abalones and Greenish Farmed Abalones

Wando Island and Jeju Island are both famous for abalones. Wild abalone refers to those hand-harvested by traditional female divers. They are yellowish in color, while farmed ones tend more greenish. The flesh of wild abalones, about the size of an adult's palm, is very elastic and firm, difficult to chew unless you have strong teeth. Nevertheless, this unique texture has captivated the palates of gourmets.



GUKSU & MYEON

[NOODLES & DUMPLINGS]

In Korea, we have a saying 'noodles instead of rice'
This shows how noodles, or Guksu, were an integral part of our diet.
Guksu is enjoyed on auspicious occasions such as birthdays,
the 60th birthday celebration, and weddings,
and denotes a message of congratulations.
It is a light and simple food that is easy to prepare and consume.



Icy Cold and Exhilarating **Mul naengmyeon**

[Chilled Buckwheat Noodle Soup]

Koreans usually cite Bulgogi as their favorite wintertime dish and Naengmyeon (cold buckwheat noodle soup) for the summertime. There are two main types of Mul-naengmyeon: Pyeongyang-style and Hamheung-style. Pyeongyang Naengmyeon is characterized by softer noodles due to a larger content of buckwheat, and a clear and mild-flavored broth. Hamheung Naengmyeon noodles contain a higher percentage of potato or sweet potato starch, resulting in a more firm and stringy texture. The taste is enhanced by adding generous dollops of vinegar and mustard to the broth.

Cold Noodles, Warm Toes

Nowadays, Naengmyeon is considered a summer food, but in the old days, the Naengmyeon experience was a combination of a warm Ondol (underfloor heating system) floor, freezing winter temperature, and icy-cold Naengmyeon. The broth was made with Dongchimi (radish water kimchi) brine scooped out of the earthenware crock which was half-buried in the ground for winter storage. No one knows exactly when Koreans started to eat Naengmyeon. However, based on the fact that buckwheat was introduced by the Mongol Empire during the Goryeo Dynasty, one can assume that people living in the mountainous northern region first began eating it around that time.

A Taste of Home

For the older generation Northerners, Naengmyeon is a nostalgic reminder of the home left behind. Naengmyeon was initially a specialty of the northern regions, but became popular across the country when Northerners fled to the South during the Korean War. Having few means to support themselves, many displaced Northerners began to make and sell Naengmyeon. It is common to see a number of elderly Northerners gathered in Naengmyeon restaurants. They are regular customers who come to savor the taste of 'home' to which they will probably never return. That is why Naengmyeon restaurants are bustling with the loud sound of people talking in thick northern accents, something that is hard to hear elsewhere.

North Korea, the origin of Naengmyeon, still maintains its reputation. In North Korea, they say, 'You can't claim to have been in Pyongyang unless you've tasted Naengmyeon at Okryugwan. The Okryugwan is a landmark restaurant famous for its Naengmyeon, and is always on the list of places to visit for dignitaries and even South Korean visitors. It is said that the late Kim Il Sung, the former 'Great Leader' of North Korea, instructed that the distinctive taste of Okryugwan Naengmyeon be preserved forever.

Mild Pyeongyang vs. Sweet & Spicy Hamheung

The broth used in Pyeongyang Naengmyeon is made by simmering beef, pheasant, or chicken and combining it with the brine of well-fermented Baechu-kimchi (cabbage kimchi) or Dongchimi (radish water kimchi). The noodles are served with garnishes such as Pyeonyuk (pressed boiled meat), julienned cucumbers and pears, and hard-boiled eggs. To fully enjoy the subtle-flavored broth, only a small amount of vinegar and mustard should be added. Meanwhile, Hamheung Naengmyeon is served with a spicy sauce that goes well with the stringy noodles. Adding ample vinegar and mustard can even enhance the taste further. It's always a good idea to eat the boiled egg first, in order to soften the blow of the fiery sauce.



Spicy with Lasting Flavor Bibim naengmyeon

[Spicy Mixed Buckwheat Noodles]

Among the many variations on Bibim-naengmyeon (buckwheat noodles mixed with spicy sauce), Hamheung Naengmyeon topped with Hwe (sliced fresh fish) is the most famous. Northerners usually like their food mild, but this Naengmyeon is an exception. Hwe-naengmyeon (spicy chilled noodles with sliced raw fish) tastes best with plenty of vinegar and mustard. An integral part of the meal is to intermittently sip the steaming hot beef broth (Yuksu) to soothe the burning mouth.

Stringy Noodles and Hot Sauce

The coastal Hamheung area has long provided bountiful fishing for brown sole (Gajami). People around the region enjoy sliced raw sole with spicy Gochujang (red chili paste) sauce. When the so-called Hwe-muchim (seasoned sliced fresh fish) is placed on Naengmyeon, it creates the popular Hwe-naengmyeon. Stringy noodles made with potato starch harmonize perfectly with the spicy seasoned fish. After the Korean War, Hwe-naengmyeon was introduced to South Korea by North Korean refugees. As the available ingredients differed from those of Hamkyeong Province, the noodles were made with sweet potato starch from Jeju Island instead of potato starch, and sole, the original ingredient for garnishing, was replaced with skate or stingray.

War refugees who had to flee south to Busan from the North returned to Seoul after the war and settled in Ojang-dong near Jangchung-dong where the government building for North Koreans was located. Since then, Hamheung Naengmyeon restaurants opened one after another, and the area is now dubbed the 'Hamheung Naengmyeon Alley.'

Myeonsu and Yuksu

One of the key differences between Pyeongyang and Hamheung Naengmyeon is whether they serve noodle broth or meat broth. After taking an order, authentic Pyeongyang Naengmyeon houses serve Myeonsu (water in which noodles were boiled) in a teacup. The hot water brimming with the toasty aroma of buckwheat is one of the best parts of going to a Naengmyeon restaurant. Meanwhile, Hamheung Naengmyeon restaurants serve hot Yuksu (meat broth) rather than Myeonsu. Many elderly people will order a bottle of Soju (distilled spirit) with Suyuk (boiled beef slices) and sip on the hot broth as an accompaniment to their drinks.

Saekkimi

Bibim-naengmyeon is divided into two classes: Naengmyeon with pressed boiled meat (Pyeonyuk) and sliced fresh fish (hwe). Falling between the two, there is an interesting dish known as Saekkimi-naengmyeon (cold buckwheat noodles with boiled beef and fresh fish). The word Saekkimi is from North Korean dialect and means 'mixing several things together.' It is topped with beef and slices of fresh fish (Hwe) and allows people to taste both in a single bowl of Naengmyeon.



Originally, Hwe-naengmyeon was garnished with fresh sole, but today stingray is commonly used.



A Special Dish for Special Days

Janchi guksu

[Banquet Noodles]

Janchi-guksu (banquet noodles) is noodles in a hot clear jang-guk, or beef broth. Although janchi-guksu is now commonly available, it was originally served only on special occasions due to the scarcity of wheat flour. Noodles were also served at auspicious events because the long strands symbolized longevity.

Janchi-guksu for Wedding Days

Janchi-guksu has long been a classic food for serving guests on special occasions. In particular, noodles were invariably served at weddings to wish the newlyweds lasting love. Koreans will often say “I’m going to eat Guksu” instead of saying they are going to a wedding. And if one asks “When will you treat me to a bowl of Guksu?” it actually means “When are you planning to get married?”

There was a time when people considered it more prestigious to serve wedding guests Galbitang (short rib soup) rather than Janchi-guksu. This was because people started to prefer expensive beef from the 1980s. These days, however, people have gone back to Janchi-guksu out of respect for the original meaning of celebration and longevity. At home, Janchi-guksu is served with seasoned soy sauce and sautéed zucchini. The banquet janchi-guksu, however, is more elaborate with colorful garnishes such as sautéed meat, pan-fried egg garnishes, sautéed stone ear mushrooms (Seogi), and Korean parsley (Minari).

Dried Anchovy Stock Replaces Meat Broth

As its alternate name ‘Jangguk guksu or janggukguksu’ demonstrates, Janchi-guksu was originally made with Jangguk, or a meat broth. Recently, however, Myeolchi-guksu (noodles in dried anchovy stock) has been enjoying greater popularity. Here ‘Jangguk’ refers to a broth resulting from stir-frying finely-chopped beef and boiling it in water. Janchi-guksu is easy to consume and the clear broth is pleasing to the palate. Together with Gukbap (rice in soup), noodles served in Jangguk used to be the most popular food eaten in the outdoor markets that opened every five days. Hundreds of bowls of noodles could easily be prepared as long as you had plenty of broth in the pot, pre-cooked and drained noodles, and a few garnishes at hand. The broth is poured into the bowl and drained three times to heat the pre-boiled noodles. This action is called ‘Toryeom.’



How to Cook Perfect Noodles

The texture of noodle can best be enjoyed immediately after the noodles are boiled.

To make the tastiest noodles, pour plenty of water into a large pot or cauldron, add the noodles, and keep stirring until it boils. Once it boils, add a bowl of cold water to cool it down. After boiling a little longer, strain and rinse the noodles in cold water. The more you rinse in cold water, the smoother and the more elastic the noodles become as the starch is washed away.

A well-prepared and delicately arranged garnish can make janchi-guksu suitable for even the finest table or special guests.



A Spicy Meal that Wakes up the Senses

Bibim guksu

[Spicy Mixed Noodles]

Bibim-guksu (Spicy mixed noodles) was originally made with soy sauce. It was a dish of the royal cuisine, and thus made with lavish ingredients. The *Dongguksesigi* (Korean Almanac)*, compiled in 1849, introduces the original of modern Bibim-guksu and describes it as ‘buckwheat noodles mixed with a variety of vegetables, pear, chestnut, beef, pork, sesame oil and soy sauce, and called by the name of Goldongmyeon.’

Spicy Bibim-guksu Appears Only after the War

The word Goldong contains a meaning of ‘mixing different things together.’ *Sieuijeonseo**, a cookbook first compiled in 1919, describes how to cook Goldongmyeon: ‘Marinate minced beef and stir-fry. Parboil mung bean sprouts and Korean parsley and then mix with jelly (Muk) and seasoning sauce. Mix everything with cooked noodles and place in a bowl. Garnish with stir-fried beef, and sprinkle with red pepper and crushed roasted sesame seeds. Set dish on the table with clear beef broth.’ Both *Dongguksesigi* and *Sieuijeonseo* indicate that Bibim-guksu made with beef, vegetables, and seasonings, was a special treat. Even so, Goldongmyeon was made of buckwheat, which means that wheat flour was not easily available even in the royal palace. It was only when wheat flour became widely available after the Korean War that we began to eat wheat flour noodles mixed with Gochujang and kimchi, as a dish today known as Bibim-guksu.

* *Dongguksesigi* is a record of seasonal customs by Hong Seok-mo, a scholar from the late Joseon Period. The book details the annual events and customs of Joseon Society.

* *Sieuijeonseo* is a cookbook from the late 19th century. Its author is unknown. The book categorized and organized the traditional Korean food of the late Joseon period and is known as the literature where Bibimbap appears.

Particularly Good for the Sweltering Days of Summer

Bibim-guksu is popular mainly in the summertime. It’s generous portion of cucumbers cools down an overheated body and quenches thirst, helping relieve swelling by serving as a diuretic.



A Heap of Noodles on a Large Platter

Jaengban guksu

[Jumbo Sized Buckwheat Noodles]

Jaengban-guksu (cold buckwheat noodle platter) has been popular since the 1990's when mak-guksu (mixed buckwheat noodles) restaurants first began to offer 2~3 portion of Mak-guksu on large platters, with mounds of delectable garnishes. The noodles, mixed with spicy sauce, fall somewhere between Bibim-guksu and Bibim-naengmyeon.

Mixing and Sharing – the Korean Way

Jaengban-guksu literally means 'platter noodle.' One may wonder why noodles are served on a platter instead of individual bowls. But that's the key point. Jaengban-guksu is basically Bibim-guksu on a platter. Mixed with several kinds of vegetables, Jaengban-guksu epitomizes the Korean style of dining: mixing and sharing. The Korean practice of eating from the same dish signifies trust and intimacy. Another merit of Jaengban-guksu is that individuals can eat as much or little as they want.

The Jaengban-guksu Diet

Jaengban-guksu is best described as a dish made of 'half noodles, half vegetables.' The vegetables include lettuce, crown daisy, cucumber and carrot. Boiled beef and eggs are also tossed in, but the main ingredient is definitely vegetables. It is a low-fat, low-calorie meal and perfect for weight-watchers. No one can know who ate how much vegetables or noodles. Jaengban-guksu is definitely the best way to diet without letting others know.



Buckwheat, the main ingredient in jaengban-guksu noodles, contains ten to twelve percent protein. Most of all, the abundance of essential amino acids such as lysine and tryptophan, which are lacking in most other grains, makes it one of the most nutritious foods.



Made with the Loving Care of a Mother

Kalguksu

[Noodle Soup]

The noodles used for Kalguksu (handcut noodle soup) are made by rolling out wheat flour dough and cutting it with a knife. It is an interesting dish with various styles, taste, and even different degrees of formality. Traditionally, chicken was used for broth in the farmlands, while littleneck clams were used in coastal areas, and dried anchovies in mountainous regions.

Hot Kalguksu, Originally a Summer Meal

In the past, wheat was so scarce that people had to wait for the wheat harvest to eat Kalguksu. Wheat was usually harvested in the middle of the sixth lunar month, thus Kalguksu was a seasonal delicacy for mid-summer. Potatoes and zucchini are almost always included, since they are also in season at that time of the year. The broth is usually made with ox bone, dried anchovies, or chicken, but can also be made with mushrooms or littleneck clams. In the Jeolla provinces, Pat-kalguksu (handcut noodles in red bean porridge) is very popular.

Geonjin-guksu, a Specialty of the Andong Gentry Households

‘Geonjin-guksu’ (drained noodles) was a summertime delicacy formerly made in the Andong region of North Gyeongsang Province. The name comes from the fact that the cooked noodles are rinsed in cold water and then drained. The Yangbans (gentries) of Andong, who particularly concerned themselves with formalities and saving face, customarily served Geonjin-guksu to guests. Andong was a relatively secluded area without much commerce with the outside world. The land produced little, and families were generally impoverished. But the yangban families could not afford to lose face by neglecting the many houseguests that came and went. And Geonjin-guksu was created to as a way to be hospitable with what they had. It is made by mixing three parts wheat flour with one part bean flour, rolling it out until it’s paper-thin, and meticulously cutting it into thin noodles. The boiled and drained noodles are served in a broth made from sweetfish (Euneo) or beef.



Kalguksu, the President's Favorite Meal

There was a period when Kalguksu was frequently served at Cheongwadae (the presidential office and residence). President Kim Young-sam, who held office from 1993 through 1998, relished Kalguksu so much that they had to bring in the chef from the President's favorite Kalguksu restaurant to teach the Cheongwadae cooks how to make the dish. During President Kim's term, guests to official functions at the presidential residence were often dined on a steaming bowl of Kalguksu.



A Special Dish that Dates Back to Goryeo Dynasty

Mandu

[Dumplings]

Mandu (dumplings) is made by placing a filling of ground meat and vegetables onto a round, thinly rolled wrapper and sealing the edges. They were initially prepared for ancestral rites or banquets and enjoyed as a special dish for the cold of winter. Mandu boiled in beef broth is called Manduguk (dumpling soup); Mandu steamed and served without broth is called Jjin-mandu (steamed dumplings); and Mandu served in chilled beef broth is called Pyeonsu (summer dumplings).

Invented by an Ingenious Military Strategist

Mandu is a Chinese dish attributed to Zhuge Liang.* When Zhuge Liang was returning to his homeland after the conquering the southern regions, he and his troops were prevented from crossing a river by strong currents and high winds. He was advised that the god of the river was expressing his anger, and they would be allowed to safely cross the river if 49 human heads were offered as a sacrifice. Zhuge Liang refused to sacrifice innocent people and instead made balls of wheat dough stuffed with beef and mutton in the shape of human heads. He offered them to the god of the river, and before too long, the river became calm. The people of southern China came to believe that the offering of Zhuge Liang appeased the river god, and they gave it the name of Mandu, which means 'deceptive head.' Another theory claims that mandu means 'heads in south China.' Either way, after that event, the dumplings in the shape of human heads spread to the northern regions and became one of the most representative Chinese dishes. It also spread to Korea and Japan, and now dumplings are enjoyed in all three countries.

Mandu, Much Loved by the Goryeo People

When discussing the origin of Korean dumplings, a famous folk song called 'Ssanghwajeom' (dumpling shop) from the Goryeo Dynasty is frequently mentioned. The song describes how a group of Uighurs arrived and opened dumpling shops, and how the people of the day greatly enjoyed the dish. However, the lyrics of the song are somewhat suggestive. One verse from the song can be translated as 'A woman went to the dumpling shop to buy some dumplings. The Mongolian owner grabbed her hand. If this story gets around, I'll assume that you, the errand boy, spread it. If this gets around, other women will want to go there to sleep with the owner. The place the woman lay down was really cozy and packed.'

Some people refer to the song and joke that the Mongol who opened the dumpling shop in Gaeseong (the capital of the Goryeo Dynasty) in 1279 during the rule of King Chungryeol may have been the first foreign direct investor in Korea.

* Zhuge Liang (181–234) was a military strategist and statesman from the state of Shu Han during the Three Kingdoms period in Chinese history. Zhuge Liang helped Liu Bei to totally defeat Cao Cao's forces in an alliance with Sun Quan at the battle known as the 'Battle of Red Cliffs.'



GUK & TANG

[SOUPS]

Enjoying a soup or stew together with rice is one of the most fundamental features of Korean dining.

There is a unique expression describing the taste of piping hot soup, which is 'Shi-won-ha-da'. The term literally means 'It's cool', but it describes the feeling of hot soup soothing the throat and clearing the chest. Guk and Tang (soups), can taste clear, spicy, refreshing and savory.

Along with rice and Banchan (side dishes), soups are an essential component of a Korean meal.



Soup Made with Healthy Soybean Paste

Doenjang guk

[Soybean Paste Soup]

Doenjang-guk (soybean paste soup) is a soup made from a special fermented bean paste (Doenjang) and meat, seafood, or vegetables. It is a marriage of healthy soybean paste with nutritious vegetables rich in fiber and vitamins. Also called Tojang-guk.

Doenjang from the Birthplace of the Soybean

Soybeans are believed to have originated in the southern part of Manchuria, in the historical territory of Goguryeo (one of the ancient Korean kingdoms). This means that Korea is most likely birthplace of the soybean. The cultivation of soybeans in Korea dates back to at least 4,000 years ago. Koreans also enjoy a long history of eating Doenjang, made by fermenting soybeans. Our ancestors believed that the tastiest Doenjang is made on the Malnal (the day of the horse according to the Chinese zodiacal signs) of the first month of the lunar calendar. It might seem that there is some profound source behind this belief, but as a matter of fact, the reason is rather simple: they believed that Daknal (the day of chicken) and Malnal (the day of horse) must be the best days for making Doenjang because Daknal is pronounced similarly to 'Dal-da' (sweet in Korean) and Malnal sounds like 'Mat-it-da' (delicious). These days were chosen from among the first twelve days of the Lunar New Year. If they missed the first Malnal, they waited for the next Malnal to come around. There are also other theories as to why Doenjang was made on the day of the horse. Some say it's because soybeans, the main ingredient in Doenjang, is a favorite food of horses. Others claim it represents the hope that the color of the Doenjang appear as rich as horse's blood. Doenjang was not just a foodstuff; it was a sacred thing. Therefore, people avoided any impurities starting three days before making it and washed themselves thoroughly on the day of preparation. It is said that women even made Doenjang with their mouths covered with paper in order to keep the sauce from being tainted with any negative energy coming out of their lips.



The Centenarians' Secret to Longevity

Recently, soybean paste has been a focus of global attention as a healthy condiment rich in functional compounds that are anti-cancerous. In a survey taken among Koreans over 100 years old, 94.9 percent of the respondents said they eat Doenjangguk at least once per day.



The Traditional Birthday Treat

Miyeok guk

[Seaweed Soup]

Miyeok-guk (sea mustard soup) is a symbol of birthdays for Koreans. By custom, it is the first meal mothers eat after giving birth, so it has become a food representing birth. Even those who dislike Miyeok-guk usually eat it on their birthdays.

The First Meal after Childbirth

It is said that when a baby whale is born, Miyeok (sea mustard) becomes scarce in the ocean, because the mother whale eat up all the seaweed in order to recover her strength. In Korea, there is a custom of serving mothers Miyeokguk and rice as their first meal after childbirth. This soup, which is known as 'Cheot-gukbap' (the first soup), is clear and seasoned only with soy sauce and sesame oil, as opposed to ordinary Miyeokguk which contains beef. When buying dried Miyeok to make soup for a new mother, one should choose wide and uncut sheets of Miyeok and not quibble over the price. Due to a popular belief that folding and cutting the long sheets can cause a difficult labor, Miyeok for post-partum recovery is customarily carried without folding and is bound with a straw rope.

A Popular Dish at the Jjimjil-bang

Rich in calcium and iodine, Miyeok helps the womb contract and stimulates the production of new blood cells. Ever since this benefit was first proven scientifically, the Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center, a well-known Los Angeles hospital, has started to offer Miyeokguk as a post-partum meal. At the hospital, the soup has become popular not only among women recovering from delivery, but also with breastfeeding mothers and other patients. Miyeokguk is also believed to promote a more radiant appearance. The soup can be found in nearly every Jjimjilbang (Korean-style spa/sauna).

A Taboo on Exam Days

When someone says 'I ate Miyeokguk,' it can be translated in two ways. One is 'it was my birthday,' and the other is 'I failed an exam.' Miyeokguk can represent failure because the seaweed's slipperiness brings to mind 'slipping up' and failing an exam.



Miyeok-ongshimi

A one-dish meal called Miyeok-ongshimi can be made as a variation to Miyeokguk. It is prepared by adding Saealshim to Miyeokguk. Saealshim are small balls made from sweet rice kneaded with hot water. From ancient times, the elderly have enjoyed warm Miyeok-ongshimi as a way to stimulate the appetite and invigorate the body. Saealshim are also often added to Pat-juk (red bean porridge) or Hobak-juk (pumpkin porridge).



A Tasty Hangover Cure
Bugeotguk
[Dried Pollack Soup]

The soup most popular with Korean partygoers also happens to be one of the easiest to prepare for home chefs on a hectic morning. It is Bugeot-guk (dried pollack soup). People who have overindulged love it, as the clear stock immediately soothes a stomach upset with alcohol. It is a quick dish and only requires some well-dried pollack.

Take It Out on the Fish

The key to making delicious dried pollack soup is to thoroughly beat a whole dried pollack with a mallet or rolling pin to soften the dried flesh. After this tenderizing process, the fish is descaled and deboned, and torn into pieces, macerated, and boiled. In Korean soap operas, wives are often portrayed cooking Bugeotguk early in the morning for a hungover husband. The wife's mixed feelings toward her husband are dramatized as she vents her anger by pounding the fish with all of her might, while endeavoring to ease his hangover with the warm soup.

Air Dried Pollack

In Korea, there is no fish with as many names as the pollack. Freshly-caught pollack is called 'Saengtae', frozen pollack is 'Dongtae', the salted version is 'Yeomtae', and the one that has been frozen and thawed over twenty times during winter is called 'Hwangtae'. Even dried pollack has multiple names: a fully-grown pollack dried for roughly 60 days is called 'Bugeo', a young dried pollack is called 'Nogari', while a half-dried fish is referred to as 'Kodari'.

Among all of these, the one used in making hangover soup is Bugeo. Nowadays, Hwangtae, the flesh of which becomes yellowish and swollen due to the multiple temperature changes, is commonly used for the soup as well. Dried pollack can sometimes taste plain because it is less fatty than other fish. However, with a surplus of methionine that supports the liver, it helps restore livers damaged by excessive drinking.



To make the richest possible Bugeotguk, beat a whole pollack with a mallet or rolling pin to soften the dried flesh, pull apart into coarse strips, and bring to a boil. Make sure to include the head



Sweating Brings Out the Flavor

Yukgaejang

[Spicy Beef Soup]

Along with ginseng chicken soup, and croaker, Yukgaejang (spicy beef and scallion soup) is one of the most popular dishes enjoyed on hot summer days. A bowl of hot and spicy Yukgaejang on a summer day will bring out the sweat, but it will leave one feeling satisfied and invigorated. Yukgaejang has always been served to recovering patients.

Sweat Induces Energy

The Korean expression, 'yi-yeol-chi-yeol,' means 'fight fire with fire.' Koreans savor steaming hot, spicy dishes such as Yukgaejang in the belief that it helps them endure the heat of summer. The tender meat is easy to digest, and the spicy flavor wakes up the tired taste buds. Originally, Yukgaejang was a local dish of Seoul. In the early 1930s, Daeyeongwan, a restaurant located in Gongpyeong-dong, first began selling a soup loaded with scallions and very similar to the modern day Yukgaejang.

In Daegu, deemed to be the hottest region in Korea, they have a dish called Daegutang, also a spicy beef soup. The word 'Daegu' in this case does not refer to the name of the city, but means 'large dog.'

The generous addition of scallions rids Yukgaejang of any unpleasant smells from the animal fat. It's the perfect soup for summer.

Dakgaejang instead of Yukgaejang

Yukgaejang becomes Dakgaejang when it is cooked with chicken in place of beef. The term gaejang in both names is derived from Gaejanguk (spicy dog-meat soup). Gaejanguk was converted to Yukgaejang when beef was used to replace dog meat, and Dakgaejang when chicken was used.

Boknal

A boknal is one of the three hottest days of midsummer: Chobok, Jungbok, and Malbok. These three days are collectively referred as Sambok. The Boknals are spaced at ten-day intervals during June and July of the lunar year. The heat during this season is called 'Sambok-deowi.' In the Joseon royal court, the king granted his subjects 'Bingpyo (ice tickets)' with which they could draw ice from the royal icehouse. On Boknal, mineotang (croaker soup), Samgetang (ginseng chicken soup) and Yukgaejang (spicy beef and scallion soup) were popular to restore physical stamina sapped by the hot weather.



The Good Luck Soup on New Year's Day

Tteokguk

[Sliced Rice Cake Soup]

Tteok-guk, a soup with sliced rice cakes in a clear beef broth, is the traditional dish of Seolnal (Lunar New Year's Day). Korean people commonly use the expression 'I ate a bowl of Tteok-guk' to mean he or she has grown one year older. This soup is cooked in a broth made by simmering beef brisket or bones.

Hoping for Great Fortune

The custom of eating white rice cakes on New Year's Day originated from the ancient practice of worshipping the sun. The white color of the rice symbolizes the bright first day of a year, while the round form of the rice cake represents the orb of the sun. The long shape of Garaetteok (cylindrical rice cake) also holds a special meaning: the long coils of the steamed tteok embodies the hope that one's wealth will grow in the same fashion, while the round profile of the sliced rice cakes symbolizes a round coin.

In the Gaeseong area, a northern region of Korea, there is a custom of eating Joraengi-tteok-guk. Joraengi-tteok is a three-centimeter-long white rice cake. With its pinched middle it looks like a gourd, but it is said that its shape was inspired by a silkworm. Since silkworms traditionally symbolized good luck, it appears to reflect the wish for good luck all year round.

Tteok-mandutguk of the Colder Regions

There is another popular New Year's Day soup: Tteok-mandutguk (sliced rice cake soup with dumplings). Tteok-mandutguk is made by adding Mandu (dumplings) to the soup. Northerners make Mandu the size of a baseball and add it to the rice cake soup. Mandu is not eaten very much in the warm southern regions. This could be because the ingredients, such as tofu or mung bean sprouts, can spoil easily. But it's more because Mandu tastes so much better in cold weather. Mandu is a delight to eat, but also fun to make. In Korea, it was a long-held custom for family members to make Mandu together to celebrate the New Year.

As the old saying goes, 'The best part of Songpyeon (half-moon rice cake) is the skin, and the best part of Mandu is the filling.' The secret to tasty Mandu is a generous amount of filling.



Fallen Snow in the Dining Room : Garaetteok

Rice flour is steamed in an earthen vessel and rolled into cylindrical pieces of Garaetteok, from which regular ones are cut into coin-shaped slices for tteokguk and those smaller in diameter are used for Tteoksanjeok brochette, Tteokjjim and Topokki



A Hands-on Soup Galbi tang

[Short Rib Soup]

Galbi-tang is a soup made with beef ribs, sometimes called ‘Gari-tang.’ Ribs have always been one of the priciest beef cuts in Korea. The soup made from this expensive cut is, of course, a special treat and nourishing meal for anyone. No Galbi-tang meal would be complete without taking the ribs with your hands and biting the succulent meat right off the bone!

Short Ribs, the Prime Cut

There are many nourishing dishes made by simmering meat or bones, but Galbitang is the most sumptuous of them all. For these reasons, it became a favorite dish served to wedding guests. Traditionally, Galbitang is cooked with only ribs, but the modern versions experiment with various ingredients and recipes. ‘Yeongyang-galbitang’ (nutritious rib soup) is made by adding medicinal ingredients such as ginseng, jujubes and pine nuts. ‘Wang-galbitang’ (jumbo rib soup) is made with extra ribs for more meat-picking and finger-licking. Unlike ox leg bone soup or oxtail soup where water is continuously added to extract the flavor multiples of times, galbitang is only simmered until the meat is cooked just right.

Ugeoji-galbitang: A Popular Lunch Menu for Office Workers

Ugeoji-galbitang is soup made with green cabbage leaves (Ugeoji) and soybean paste in a short rib broth. It is popular as a hangover-soup as well as a lunch menu for office workers. The word ‘Ugeoji’ originated from the word ‘Utgeoji,’ meaning ‘remove the top layer.’ When we see someone with a worried expression, we say ‘stop making an Ugeoji face.’ But, a much friendlier Ugeoji-comment would be ‘Hey, want to go grab a bowl of Ugeoji-galbitang?’ Ugeoji, which refers to the boiled outer leaves of napa cabbage, is rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber and serves as the perfect dish for weight loss and skin care.

Soy Sauce for Galbi-tang, Salt for Seolleong-tang

Galbitang and Seolleongtang (ox bone soup) differ in terms of the ingredients used to make the broth. While bones are used for Seolleongtang, the broth for Galbitang gets its flavor from the meat on the ribs. Soup made from meat stocks like Galbitang or Gomtang (thick beef bone soup) tastes best when seasoned with soy sauce, while Seolleongtang tastes best when seasoned with salt.





Simmered Bone and Meat, All-in-one

Gom tang

[Thick Beef Bone Soup]

Gom-tang (thick beef bone soup) is representative of Korean soup dishes along with Seolleong-tang (ox bone soup). It combines the flavors of beef bone stock and boiled beef. Gom-tang nourishes the body and soul with its high protein and calcium content.

The 125 Traditional Beef Cuts

The more cuts of beef used, the more savory the taste of Gomtang. This is because the subtly different flavors of each cut fuse to produce a complex taste. Koreans are unrivalled when it comes to butchering the animal into intricate cuts. There are over 125 named cuts of beef such as Geollang, Gogeor, Godeulgae, Gonjasoni, Kkuri, Dadae, Dalgisal, Daejeopsal, Do-raemokjeong, Dungdeongi, Ddeokshim, Manhatabang, Manhwa, Myeokmire, Balchae, Saechang, etc. This is a larger number compared to that of other countries, such as the Bodi tribe in East Africa which has 40 cuts, or the UK which has 25.

The Koreans do not let any part of the animal go to waste: they even used to scrape off the gums for cooking!

'Gom' Means 'Slow Simmer'

A Korean cookbook titled Sieuijeonseo*, written in the late 1800s, describes Gomtang as follows: "Goeum should be made by slow-simmering beef leg bones, shank, knuckles, tail, tripe and chitterlings with abalone and sea cucumber, which are simmered in a generous amount of water over a low flame until the soup becomes thick and milky white." The word 'Gom' of 'Gomtang' means 'soup made by slowly simmering meat or fish.' It is an abbreviation of 'Goeum,' which originally meant 'fatty food.' By adding the suffix Tang or Guk, which mean simmered stew or soup, we arrive at 'Gomtang' or 'Gomguk' (another name for Gomtang).

* Sieuijeonseo is an anonymous cookbook written at the end of 1800s. It recorded the traditional Korean food in the late Joseon Dynasty and is known as the first literature to mention Bibimbap.



This thick soup, cooked by boiling down a meat broth over an extended period, is an excellent and nourishing dish with a wide variety of nutrients. As an easily digestible health food, it contains an anti-aging effect and is helpful for recovering from fatigue and preventing anemia.



A Local Specialty that Pleased the King

Seolleong tang

[Ox Bone Soup]

Seolleong-tang (ox bone soup) is made by slow-simmering the cow's head, feet, meat, bones and innards for hours. It is a popular lunch menu for office workers and tastes of the succulent and savory taste of beef. Add plenty of sliced scallions and eat it with Kkakdugi (diced radish kimchi) for a nutritious one-dish meal.

Ttukbaegi, Scallion and Kkakdugi

In the late Joseon period, there were a number of famous Seolleongtang houses scattered around Seoul. At these spots, every part of the ox except the skin and a few byproducts would be immersed in a large cast iron pot and simmered from the early morning until one o'clock the next morning. The soup reaches a very thick stage by midnight. And this is when the regular customers would start to flock to the restaurants.

Adding some tangy Kkakdugi juice into the thick white soup is a fantastic combination and a great way to enjoy Seolleongtang. The taste of Seolleongtang is described in Byeolgeongon, a popular magazine from the 1920s: "A hearty soup is served in an earthen bowl with Kkakdugi. Spoon in some scallion and red pepper flakes, season with salt and enjoy! Words cannot express the taste and nothing compares to the flavor. Even the pickiest eaters will not be able to resist Seolleongtang."

When you order a bowl of Seolleongtang at a restaurant, it will arrive almost instantly since it is simply ladled out of the pot into the bowl. No wonder the dish is a favorite among busy office workers.

'Seonnongdan' becomes 'Seolleongtang'

During the Joseon period, the most admired king in Korean history, King Sejong the Great, once performed a sacrificial rite at Seonnongdan (the altar of agriculture) and ploughed the field as a demonstration to the people. Suddenly, a heavy rainstorm struck and the king was unable to return to the royal court. To relieve the king's hunger, the local people butchered an ox and served a soup made by boiling it in plain water. It is said that this later evolved to become 'Seolleongtang.'

Gom-tang vs. Seolleong-tang

In Shikgaek (The Gourmet), a popular Korean comic book, the difference between gomtang and seolleongtang is summarized in a short sentence: "Gomtang is a meat soup whereas seolleongtang is a bone soup." Seolleongtang is milky white as the broth mainly comes from bones, whereas gomtang is clear as the broth mainly comes from meat.



A Restorative Food Harmonizing Chicken with Ginseng

Samgyetang

[Ginseng Chicken Soup]

Samgyetang is made by simmering a whole young chicken stuffed with ginseng, hedysarum root, jujubes and sweet rice. Considered an energy-boosting dish best eaten during Sambok (Chobok, Jungbok, and Malbok), the hottest days of the lunar year, it is a classic Korean dish that has become popular among international diners as well.

A Must-eat Dish in the Summer

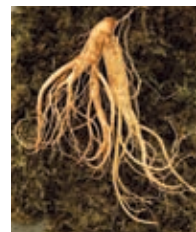
Samgyetang (ginseng chicken soup) is made by stuffing the cavity of a young chicken with sweet rice, ginseng, hedysarum root, and jujubes, trussing it and then simmering it in a stone pot or earthen bowl for about an hour. It became a popular dish once ginseng was made more widely available. The hot summer is the season for chicken. It is common in Korea for many restaurants which do not have Samgyetang on their menu to offer it in the hot summer season, which demonstrates the tremendous popularity of this soup.

Samgyetang is well known to foreigners as well. Murakami Ryu, a renowned Japanese author, praised Samgyetang as the best Korean dish in his novel, while Zhang Yimou, a famous Chinese film director, said he enjoys it every time he visits Korea.

The Mother-in-law's Samgyetang

Riding on the popularity of Samgyetang, 'fusion' Samgyetang using unorthodox ingredients has become a growing trend. The new ingredients start with deer antler chips, chestnuts, and pine nuts and even include whole abalones (with shell) or whole red ginseng roots. There is the 'Medicinal samgyetang' seasoned with oriental medicinal herbs, the 'Seafood samgyetang' with baby octopus and blue crab, and the 'Bamboo samgyetang' that is served inside a hollow bamboo stalk. Regardless, nothing can beat the classic mother-in-law's homemade samgyetang. In the old days, it was customary for a mother to kill one of her back-yard hens and prepare Samgyetang to welcome the son-in-law into her house. The mother-in-law's Samgyetang will always be special, because it was made with love and affection.

Samgyetang contains many healthy ingredients. Garlic and ginseng are the two main side ingredients, and jujubes and pine nuts are frequently added as well. Sometimes, ground peanuts or perilla seeds are added for flavor and body.



"Ginseng"

Attempts to trace the English word "ginseng" to its origin have been divided between two arguments. One is that it was derived from the Japanese pronunciation for the name of the plant, the other claims from the Chinese. However, it is today widely accepted that the word originated from the scientific name of the plant, "Panax Ginseng," registered with the World Botanical Associates (WBA) by the Russian botanist Carl Anton von Meyer in 1843.



Fish Simmering in Spicy Red Chili Broth

Maeun tang

[Spicy Fish Soup]

Maeun-tang refers to a fish stew with a spicy broth made of red pepper powder or paste. The whole fish is used to create a thicker broth, including the head and entrails. Although the stew can be prepared from both fresh and saltwater fish, freshwater fish such as catfish, Mandarin fish and yellow Mandarin fish are considered to be best.

Freshwater Fish Maeun-tang for Taste and Stamina

Maeuntang featuring freshwater fish grows tastier the longer it is simmered, as the plain broth becomes richer and thicker. Plenty of ground black pepper and ginger can be added to eliminate the fishy smell, while seasoning it with salt rather than soy sauce. Avid fans of freshwater Maeuntang will go fishing when the weather has cooled down and the crops have been harvested. This is the time when the fish are jumping, and in shallow spots where the water is clear and the riverbed is pebbled, fish buckets fill up quickly with the fresh catch. Freshly caught fish is simmered on the spot with summer squash, onions, green chili peppers, perilla leaves, crown daisy and tofu in broth spiked with red Gochujang (red chili paste).

Freshwater fish vary widely in size. Small fishes the size of a finger will fall off the bones after a while, at which point, chewy Sujebi (korean pasta soup) or Somen noodles should be added so that the broth thickens to a perfect consistency. A bowl of Maeuntang is filling and energizing. The addictive nature of the dish keeps the fans coming back to the river for more.

The Last Course in at Hwe Restaurants

Many Koreans always round off a meal of Hwe (sliced raw fish) with spicy Maeuntang stew. So the final course at a Hwe specialty restaurant is invariably a steaming bowl of spicy Maeuntang served with rice. While it is cooked quickly and the eating is without much gusto; nevertheless, the meal would not be complete without the last Maeuntang course. It would be like missing the dessert of a course meal.



Haemul-tang: The Delight of Mixed Seafood Flavors

The word 'Haemultang' is a compound of 'Haemul', meaning seafood, with 'Tang', soup. As the name indicates, it is a spicy stew made by boiling a wide variety of seafood, including fish, blue crab, baby octopus, shrimp, short-necked clams, and anything else that is in season. In short, the dish is a hodge-podge of ocean products. Seafood is rich in essential amino acids and taurine, which adds a deep and rustic flavor while combating adult diseases such as hypertension and heart disease.



Tender Meat that Falls off the Bone

Gamja tang

[Pork Back-Bone Stew]

Gamja-tang (Pork Back-Bone Stew) is made by simmering pork backbones with potatoes, green cabbage leaves (Ugeoji), perilla seed powder, perilla leaves, scallions and garlic. It is great fun to pick the meat off of the pork backbone. And when the meat and potatoes are finished, a bowl of rice is added to the leftover broth and cooked for serving.

Pork Backbones and Whole Potatoes

Most people mistakenly believe that the soup is named after potatoes (Gamja in Korean). But that is a misunderstanding. There are two main theories on the origin of the name. One is that the name refers to the marrow in the pork spine bone, which is also 'Gamja' in Korean. The other is that the name comes from the section of the pork backbone called 'Gamja.' There are also many different opinions as to the origin of the dish itself. Among them, the most plausible theory is as follows. When construction to build the railway between Seoul and Incheon started in 1899, a large number of workers flocked to Incheon harbor. These workers, who needed to keep up their strength, frequently ate a soup which was made of pork bones, potatoes and dried radish leaves (Siraegi). Seeing this, a man named Han Dong-gil got the idea to open the first Gamjatang restaurant called 'Hamba Jip' in 1900 in the Noryangjin area, where the final stage of construction of the Han River railway was underway.

A Cheap, Plentiful, and Nutritious Dish for All

Gamjatang originated in the Jeolla Provinces. Since oxen were indispensable for farming, people cooked soup with pork instead of beef, by simmering vegetables in pork bone stock. This soup was fed to sick people or people suffering weak bones. Later, the soup spread to other regions and became a popular dish among commoners, especially the workers at Incheon harbor. Gamjatang could enjoy such popularity due to several factors: it was a good accompaniment to drinking; it was a hearty food that filled the stomach; it was cheap in price but strong in flavor; and it was easy to prepare for large numbers of people.

As it became known that pork backbones were high in protein, calcium and Vitamin B1, Gamjatang, a dish once relished by dockworkers, has become widely popular among Koreans regardless of age and occupation.

Perilla Seeds, Good for the Skin and Brain

Perilla seeds, an indispensable taste-enhancer in Gamjatang, are rich in Vitamins A and C which makes the skin smooth and promotes brain functions. Thus, it has always been a part of the diet for brides-to-be and students.





JJIGAE & JEONGOL

[STEWES AND HOT POTS]

Jjigae (pot stew) is made by boiling a variety of ingredients together in a pot. It is seasoned and flavored with soybean paste, red chili paste (Gochujang), or dry-fermented soybeans (Cheonggukjang). Jeongol comprises of meat, vegetables, or other ingredients simmered at the table in a casserole pan, adding broth when necessary. Jeongols can simply consist of tofu or mushrooms, but also be prepared with meat, beef innards, Jeon (pan-fried delicacies) or other elaborately prepared ingredients for a more colorful dish.



An Everyday Stew that's Hard to Resist

Doenjang jjigae

[Soybean Paste Stew]

Doenjang (soybean paste) is an essential fermented condiment and a definitive ingredient of Korean cooking. This places Doenjang-jjigae at the top of the list of dishes Koreans never tire of eating on a daily basis. An earthenware bowl of bubbling hot Doenjang-jjigae is the perennial soul food that reminds Koreans of home and family.

Doenjang-jjigae: The Joy of Simplicity

The taste and name of Doenjang differ according to the characteristics and conditions of the region, such as Makdoenjang, Tojang, Makjang, Dambbukjang, Jeubjang, Seanghwajang, Cheongtaejang, Patjang, Dubujang, Jiryejang, Saengchijang, Bijijang, Mujang, Jinyangdoenjang, Miryangdoenjang, Jejudo-jopijang, and countless more. While Doenjang is undoubtedly a uniquely Korean product, similar soybean pastes are found in neighboring countries such as the Japanese Miso or the Chinese Huángjiàng or Dòujiàng (or Tauchu). In the old days, people fermented their own Doenjang at home. Now, the vast majority buy commercially manufactured products. But homemade and store-bought Doenjangs must be cooked differently in order to bring out the desired flavor. Homemade doenjang tends to have a stronger, richer flavor, and has to be cooked slowly over low heat. Mass-produced Doenjang, however, tastes best when boiled rapidly over high heat, because overcooking will give the Jjigae an acidic taste and much of the flavor will be lost. Cooking time is proportionate to how long the Doenjang was aged; the more mature the Doenjang, the longer it should be cooked.

Gangdoenjang-jjigae: A Late-summer Dish

A pot of thick, chunky Gangdoenjang-jjigae is a versatile dish. It is made with minced meat or anchovies, crushed garlic, chopped scallion, sesame oil, and Doenjang which are boiled in Ssaltteumul (water left over from rinsing rice). It is the ultimate summertime dish to accompany a bowl of rice. Another summertime favorite is Gangdoenjang bibimbap, which is rice mixed with a spoonful of Gangdoenjang stew, young radish kimchi, and sesame oil.



The Simple Process of Making Doenjang

In late autumn, soybeans are boiled, compressed into blocks called meju, and hung to dry for the winter. This dried Meju becomes the base ingredient for Doenjang. In early spring, the Meju is placed in a crock, which is then filled with brine, and after approximately one hundred days, the remaining solids are separated from the liquid, mashed into a paste and stored in a separate crock to ripen into scrumptious Doenjang. The dark remaining liquid is aged separately to create soy sauce.



Pork Chunks Round Off the Taste

Kimchi jjigae

[Kimchi Stew]

One of the most beloved lunch menu for Korean office workers is kimchi-jjigae. It is a safe choice at any restaurant, never disappoints, and is always served in generous portions. The same is true at home. All you need is sour, fully-ripe kimchi and water. Pork and anchovies are the two most favorite ingredients added to enhance the flavor of kimchi-jjigae.

Pork, Anchovies, Tuna, or Mackerel

Along with kimchi fried rice, Kimchi-jjigae is one of the best ways to use up sour kimchi. Even a small addition of pork, tuna, mackerel or anchovies neutralizes the sourness of kimchi, and tastes unbelievably good with rice. Recently, Mugeunji, or aged Kimchi, has been gaining popularity. When Kimchi is matured at low temperatures for over six months, it becomes Mugeunji, which is less sour and sports a stronger fermented flavor. Boiling Mugeunji with large chunks of pork or a generous portion of mackerel or mackerel pike turns it into a 'rice thief,' because the resulting Jjigae is so delicious that rice literally seems to disappear in plain sight. Adding soybean paste or Gochujang to Dongchimi (radish water kimchi), Kkakdugi (diced radish kimchi) or leftover kimchi will intensify the flavor, while adding pork chunks or pork ribs instead of anchovies results in a nutritious and hearty dish suited for winter.

How to Boil a Delicious Pot of Kimchi-jjigae

Boiling kimchi in water from the start leaves it soggy, depriving the interesting crunchy texture of the napa cabbage. One must first stir-fry the kimchi in a small amount of oil over high heat, add water when the kimchi has turned soft, lower the heat, and then leave it to simmer until the desired consistency. This is the secret behind a rich broth and crunchy kimchi pieces. The Jjigae may be seasoned with fresh kimchi liquid instead of salt for an even more intense flavor.

A Long-awaited Delicacy : Mugeunji

Aged kimchi is known as Mugeunji when it has ripened over a long period but not grown sour. Mugeunji is used for making Jjigae when it has matured for a shorter period and for making Ssam or Jjim, after being lightly washed, when it has been aged for longer periods. The deeper its flavor grows as it ages in buried earthenware crocks, the more fantastic the Mugeunji dish will taste.





Pungent but Delicious

Cheonggukjang jjigae

[Rich Soybean Paste Stew]

Cheonggukjang-jjigae is stew made by boiling beef, tofu, kimchi and other ingredients in water together with a Cheonggukjang (dry-fermented soybeans). Using the water left over from rinsing rice instead of plain water helps minimize any unappetizing smells and brings out the mouth-watering flavor. Cheonggukjang is enjoyed throughout the nation, but it is especially popular in North Chungcheong, Jeolla and Gyeongsang Provinces.

Soybeans Fermented with Rice Straw

Cheonggukjang is a special type of Doenjang (soybean paste) prepared by fermenting boiled soybeans in a warm room. Despite the similarity in appearance, Cheonggukjang is completely different from the Japanese Natto. While Natto is usually made by artificially inoculating bacteria, Cheonggukjang develops through a natural process of fermentation or with microorganisms drawn from rice straw. In the past, Cheonggukjang blocks used to be fermented for a longer time to create a more pungent paste, but today, less odorous products are more popular. It is not that difficult to make cheonggukjang: boiled soybeans are placed in an earthenware container, covered with rice straw, and stored in a warm room while the bacteria *Bacillus subtilis* propagates, creating a thick liquid. When the fermentation is complete, minced garlic and ginger, coarsely ground red chili peppers, salt and other spices are added. It is then crushed into a coarse paste and stored in the refrigerator. The necessary amount can be spooned out any time you feel hungry for Cheonggukjang-jjigae.

Originally Fermented Under a Saddle

Because 'Cheongguk' is the term for Qing Dynasty in the Korean language, many people tend to believe Cheonggukjang was introduced from China. In truth, it is a uniquely Korean condiment that was invented in Goguryeo, an ancient Korean kingdom. It is said to have been first produced by the people of Goguryeo, as they kept boiled soybeans underneath their horse saddles when crossing Manchuria and removed handfuls whenever they were hungry. Due to the horse's body heat (37 to 40°C), the beans would undergo a natural fermentation process and transformed into a nutritious paste that could be stored for extended periods. The constant temperature maintained between the saddle and horse turned out to be ideal for making Cheonggukjang.



Cheonggukjang: More Than Food

In every ten grams of Cheonggukjang, there are roughly thirty billion beneficial microorganisms which, once consumed, act as a natural digestive aid by making their way to the intestines and aiding bowel functions. *Bacillus subtilis*, the bacteria responsible for the sticky strings found in Cheonggukjang, is one hundred times better at aiding digestion than is *Lactobacillus*. Cheonggukjang also contains thrombolytic enzymes that decompose protein, and therefore helps ward off heart diseases and strokes.

Cheonggukjang is great in Jjigae, but it is even healthier when consumed uncooked. To offset the pungent smell, Cheonggukjang can be eaten wrapped in dried laver or kimchi.



Simmering Stew in Earthenware **Sundubu jjigae**

[Spicy Soft Tofu Stew]

A pot of Sundubu-jjigae (soft tofu stew) fresh off the stove is a mouth-watering sight. The bubbling sound of the stew, seemingly about to boil over the rim, stimulates the taste buds. A spoonful of Saeujeot (salted shrimp) is the perfect seasoning for a mild Sundubu-jjigae made from silky smooth Sundubu (soft tofu). As for the spicy version, nothing beats the taste of a raw egg cracked into the pot and eaten with bits of meat and seafood.

Sundubu: The Best Source of Soybean Nutrients

Sundubu starts out being made in the same manner as ordinary tofu, first boiling soymilk then coagulating it by adding a little brine. But it skips the later steps of draining and pressing the lumpy bean curds. The silky texture makes this lightly flavored delicacy easy to digest. The key to producing delicious sundubu lies in using the proper type of brine. In Chodang-Maeul, a village famous for its Sundubu, clean water from the East Sea is used. It all started when Chodang Heoyeop, a civil official of the mid-sixteenth-century Joseon government, was appointed as the magistrate of Gangneung. He discovered that the water from a spring in the front yard of his office tasted so good that he made tofu from the spring water and used sea water instead of brine. The name 'Chodang' was adopted from Heoyeop's pen name. Chodang Sundubu calls for a labor-intensive process with only a small output, but long-standing restaurants still insist on preparing their own Sundubu in this traditional way. Sometimes, sundubu is served plain and hot with a soy sauce mixture on the side for seasoning, but it is also delicious when boiled together with sour kimchi or seafood such as oysters or clams.

Praised by the New York Times

An article in the New York Times featuring tofu dishes attracted great attention in Korea when it praised sundubu-jjigae as "the ideal winter meal." Featuring a picture of sundubu-jjigae, the review of tofu restaurants in Manhattan included Book Chang Dong, Cho Dang Gol, Li Hua, and Seoul Garden. The article described sundubu-jjigae as "a hearty brew of spicy broth and silken tofu that is served in cast-iron bowls. Topped with scallion and nuggets of tender oxtail or crisp kimchi, it's the ideal winter meal."



No Need to Add Water

Sundubu-jjigae can be made without any adding broth or water since the Sundubu itself releases water when boiled. In an earthenware bowl, place minced pork fat, Sundubu, seasoning paste, shelled and drained clams in that order and boil over high heat. It is essential to continue stirring while it boils to keep the Sundubu from burning.

Seafood Sundubu-jjigae



A Tasty Mix of Ham, Sausage and Kimchi

Budae jjigae

[Spicy Sausage Stew]

First created during the Korean War, Budae-jjigae has a relatively short history. Kimchi and Gochujang (red chili paste) are mixed into a broth and boiled with bits of ham, sausage, and baked beans to create this spicy 'army base stew.' The stew, despite its names, was enjoyed not by the GIs living on the US Army bases but by those residing in the surrounding areas.

Budae-jjigae: Born in the City of Uijeongbu

In the depths of the Korean War, it was relatively easy to find sausage or ham near US Army bases. When such preserved meats, collectively known as 'army base meat,' were boiled in a Gochujang broth together with kimchi, the displeasing taste of the excessive fat was minimized and a rather tasty meal could be had. Also dubbed 'Jonseun-tang' (Johnson Stew) after the U.S. president, Lyndon B. Johnson, Budae-jjigae is a good example of the Koreans' particular fondness for spicy broths. When people first tasted ham and sausage, they were fascinated by the taste of these meat products that was so unlike any meat they had ever experienced, but they still found them to be somewhat lacking as an accompaniment to steamed rice. After much painstaking effort, a technique was developed to convert them into a piquant stew, and the rest is history. It is said that Budae-jjigae started out as a buttery stir-fried snack of sausage, ham, cabbage and onions to accompany Makgeolli (Korean rice wine), but later on, Gochujang, kimchi and broth were added to create the taste that is cherished today.



Uijeongbu's Budae-jjigae Alley

The birthplace of the original Budae-jjigae was Uijeongbu, a city defined by its US Army base. One after another, Budae-jjigae restaurants opened and created what is today known as the Uijeongbu Budae-jjigae Alley. Nowadays, the alley has become a tourist spot that even attracts foreign visitors to Uijeongbu.



A Court Dish of Regal Splendor

Sinseollo

[Royal Hot Pot]

Originally consumed only in the royal palace, Sinseollo (royal hotpot) was so lavish that it also became known as *Yeolguja-tang*, or 'a stew that enchants the mouth.' There are roughly 25 principle luxury ingredients in Sinseollo, including beef, beef liver and tripe, pork, pheasant and chicken meat, abalone, sea cucumber and gray mullet.

The Meal of a Vagabond

The origins of Sinseollo trace back to the reign of King Yeonsangun in 15th century Joseon. A man talented in poetry and prose and knowledgeable in the nature of yin and yang, who went by the name of Jeong Hui-ryang, cast his own fortune. Aware of his fate and the moment of his own death, he decided one day to renounce the secular world and live the rest of his life in seclusion. After falling on the wrong side of the king and being forced to live in exile, Jeong left to reside deep in the forests, but is said to have wandered the peninsula like a *Sinseon*, or a Tao Immortal. Wherever he went, Jeong carried a brazier he had made himself and cooked a blend of vegetables in it all together. When he left the world to become an actual *Sinseon* (a Tao Immortal), people began to call his brazier Sinseollo.

A Stew that Enchants the Mouth

As lavish as the ingredients required to make Sinseollo are, preparing the dish is a similarly elaborate task. First, lay out the slices of raw and boiled meat at the bottom of the brazier and spread an evenly-proportioned layer of various *Jeon* (bite-sized meat or vegetables pan-fried in egg batter) made from fish, beef, pork, *Cheonyeop**, Korean parsley (*Minari*), eggs and mushrooms. Pine nuts, walnuts and ginkgo nuts are sprinkled on top to complete it, and then a broth is poured over the entire preparation and boiled on the spot. In the center of the Sinseollo pan is a round cylindrical compartment, where glowing charcoal is placed to cook the ingredients and keep the food at the proper temperature.

*Cheonyeop (omasum) is the third stomach of ruminant animals such as cattle, sheep or deer, which is consumed raw, as fresh slices dipped in sesame oil and salt, or pan-fried in egg batter as *Cheonyeopjeon*, either separately or as an ingredient for a Jeongol hotpot.

Sinseollo and State Banquets

With its visually pleasing and colorful arrangement, Sinseollo is a favorite menu for state banquets. The First Lady Kim Yoon-ok is said to have dimmed the lights during a state banquet to serve Sinseollo because the floating procession of Sinseollo pots, each glowing red with a burning piece of charcoal, in itself served as a visual performance.



Chewy Beef Chitterlings in a Hot Spicy Broth

Gopchang jeongol

[Spicy Beef Tripe Hot Pot]

Jeongol is a hotpot of seasoned bits of meat and a blend of vegetables, consumed as it boils while continuously topping it up with broth to prevent it from boiling dry. Among the many different Jeongols, the type with beef chitterlings, or Gopchang-jeongol, is considered the best. When the weather turns cold, many Koreans' thoughts turn to sharing a hot and spicy pot of Gopchang-jeongol seasoned with a generous scoop of red chili powder.

A Gourmet Dish Made with Beef Chitterlings

Gopchang(chitterling) is the sometimes-odorous small intestines of cattle. Because of the high fat content, coiled shape and wooly villi lining the insides, Gopchang is not a simple ingredient to prepare for cooking. Strangely, once cooked, it satisfies the palate with its chewy texture and buttery taste. Gopchang is ideal either boiled in a Jeongol or grilled. High in protein, Gopchang is known to be a healthy food that protects the stomach's lining and breaks down alcohol. The enzymes found inside the Gopchang aid digestion. It may appear to be overly greasy, but Gopchang is actually easy to digest and can be consumed even by those in poor health. While the high price prevents most people from enjoying it on a daily basis, a boiling jeongol of well-prepared Gopchang is ideal for special occasions or family gatherings. A rich broth is essential for a proper Gopchang-jeongol, and light soy sauce for soup (Gukganjang) is always added for flavor. The addition of fragrant crown daisy leaves right before serving helps cleanse and refresh the palate.

Gopchang: a Fatty yet Savory Meat

The outer surface of Gopchang is covered with a considerable layer of fat. This fat has to be removed to get rid of the gamy taste and allow the full enjoyment of Gopchang's flavor. The best way to purge the unwanted odor is to use flour. After the fat is removed, Gopchang should be scrubbed with flour and the odor will vanish.



As a high-protein/low-cholesterol food, beef tripe protects the stomach lining, breaks down alcohol and promotes digestion, making it a suitable accompaniment to alcohol and an especially efficacious food for post-partum recovery.



Noodles Served in Simmering Broth

Guksu jeongol

[Noodles Hot Pot]

Guksu-jeongol literally means 'hotpot with noodles,' meaning that the main ingredient is noodles. Beef, mushrooms, assorted vegetables and noodles are all boiled in a broth extracted from dried anchovies or Dashima (dried kelp) to create this relatively affordable and therefore popular Jeongol.

A Simple yet Hearty Jeongol

Surprisingly, most people never attempt at preparing Jeongol because they think that it's too difficult to make at home. But depending on how one looks at it, there are few dishes simpler to prepare than Jeongol. If you want to enjoy something bubbling hot, there is no need to dine out; just open your refrigerator. Simply fill a casserole pan with plenty of mushrooms and leftover bits of carrot and onion, and you will have a hearty broth. Guksu-jeongol (noodle hotpot), in particular, is a low-budget meal. Normally with a Jeongol, the meat and vegetable bits are eaten first, leaving a rich broth still simmering in the pan. Only then are the noodles cooked in the broth and consumed. In Guksu-jeongol, however, a generous portion of noodles are cooked from the very beginning. Myeon-sinseollo (royal noodle hotpot), was a traditional dish that resembles today's Guksu-jeongol. It appears in *Jinchanuigwe*,* published in 1868, and is recorded as "pieces of beef, sea cucumber, shrimp, clam, thin scallions, Korean parsley (Minari), and bamboo shoots placed in a circle and boiled with wheat noodles in a broth." This shows that Jeongol doesn't necessarily have to be lavish with toppings such as meat or pan-fried fish. By featuring noodles as the central ingredient, it can become a very frugal and humble dish.

The flavor of Jeongol hinges on the meat broth. However, seafood such as squid or blue crabs can take the place of beef. Jeongol can be cooked with ease once the main ingredients have been selected from among meat, seafood or mushrooms, along with vegetables as essential side ingredients to dip and boil together.

*Jinchanuigwe is a record of protocols for the Jinchan royal court banquet for the king, queen and queen dowager in the late Joseon Dynasty.

The Origin of the Jeongol Pan

The casserole pan used for making jeongol was also called beonggeojitgol or gamtugol because it looked like an upside-down soldier's (beonggeoji) or official's hat (gamtu). The form is said to have been derived from ancient times when soldiers, who did not have proper tools for cooking during campaigns, would flip their helmets (jeollip) upside down and cook food in them.





An Excellent Source of Nutrition

Dubu jeongol

[Tofu Hot Pot]

Originally, Dubu-jeongol (tofu hot pot) was only consumed in the royal court. Flat squares of tofu are pan-fried until yellow. Then, a thin slice of beef seasoned with various spices is sandwiched between two squares of tofu, and tied with a strand of thin scallion like a small wrapped gift. These tofu sandwiches and sliced vegetables are arranged in a circle in a pot, topped with garnish and simmered.

Tofu: One of the Most Ingenious Human Inventions

Bean curd, better known by its Japanese name 'tofu,' was first made in ancient China. It spread to Japan via Korea, and then to most parts of East Asia. Wherever Buddhism and its emphasis on vegetarianism prevailed, so did tofu. There are three main theories about the origins of tofu. The first suggests that it was initially an accidental creation of Líu Ān, King of Hunainan in northern China around BC 164, during the Han Dynasty, when he was making soy milk for a sick mother who could no longer chew whole soybeans. The second version claims that sea salt was accidentally spilled into a boiling pot of ground soybeans. It says that as soon as sea salt, which contains calcium and magnesium, both necessary for tofu coagulation, dropped into the boiling soybean liquid, it caused the liquid to congeal into a firmer gel, and thereby gave birth to tofu. This theory is plausible because ancient literature also records that soybean was used to make stews. The third theory states that the ancient Chinese drew upon the cheese-making methods of the Mongols. While there is no evidence of how such techniques propagated to ancient China, this theory is based on the similarity between the Chinese words for Mongolian fermented milk, 'Rufu' and, 'Doufu' (tofu). In the West there is cheese, and in the East we have soft and savory tofu. However, tofu is considered a healthier food because unlike cheese, an animal product high in fat, tofu is high in protein and low in calories and fat.



Tofu is made from soybeans, sometimes called the 'beef from the fields.' High in protein and low in calories, soybeans are good for health. Eat as much as you want without worrying about developing lifestyle diseases.



A Nutritious, Healthy Hotpot **Mandu jeongol**

[Dumplings Hot Pot]

When morning and evening winds start to become chilly, it is the season for Jeongol. Mandu-jeongol is served in generous portions, with plenty of Mandu (dumplings) in each bowl. It is a highly nutritious and filling meal. Add meat Mandu for a milder taste, or kimchi Mandu for a spicy version of this versatile hotpot.

A Winter Dish that fills the Stomach and Soul

There is probably no dish that is as satisfying as a casserole of Mandu-jeongol: it satisfies both the eyes and the stomach. Even if individual portions are smaller compared to steamed Mandu or Tteok mandut guk (rice cake soup with dumplings), everyone ends up feeling full and happy at the end of a meal of Mandu-jeongol. It's also a good accompaniment to alcoholic drinks. As our ancestors would sometimes eat mandu instead of rice, Mandu-jeongol doesn't need rice to serve as a full meal. In fact, few dishes are easier to prepare than Mandu-jeongol, because the Mandu can be made at home but store-bought are easily available. If you prefer a lighter taste, boil meat mandu in a clear broth, but for a spicier version, Kimchi mandu can be boiled with an addition of chili powder or chopped extra-hot Cheongyang peppers to the broth.

A Well-balanced Dish

Mung bean sprouts in Mandu (dumplings) filling detoxify the body, reduce fever and stimulate the appetite. In addition, the bean curd in the filling contains plenty of calcium, playing a major role in maintaining healthy bones and teeth. As a result, Mandu hotpot, with its wide variety of ingredients in the filling, is an excellent food in terms of nutritional balance.



If you find the broth a bit too oily, red pepper flakes can be added to bring out a more refreshing taste. In addition, Memil-guksu (buckwheat noodles) as a side ingredient can provide a flavor quite distinct from that of wheat flour noodles.



A Harmonious Blend of Sweet Bulgogi and Spicy Baby Octopus

Bullak jeongol

[Bulgogi and Octopus Hot Pot]

It is difficult to describe the taste of Bullak-jeongol in one sentence, because the sweetness of Bulgogi and the robust spices used to season the Nakji (baby octopus) are married to create a novel gastronomic experience. It starts spicy, but ends with a clear note. Combining the ingredients is complex, but when successfully performed, the end result is a fantastic harmony of flavors.

Nakji: Ginseng of the Sea

Nakji is loaded with protein and healthy minerals, and is as energizing as beef. Rich in DHA and taurine, Nakji is also great for brain development and overcoming fatigue. In his record of marine life, *Jasaneobo**, the Joseon scholar Jeong Yak-jeon writes of how an ox that had passed out from heatstroke were fed Nakji to be set back on their feet. Even to this day in the south, whenever cattle collapse after giving birth or from heatstroke, they are offered a large Nakji. As soon as it swallows the Nakji, the ox was reported to stand up right on the spot. Aside from the validity of this report, it is not uncommon to see owners coil up a whole Nakji and feed it to their fighting bulls.

* *Jasaneobo* (Fishes of Heuksan Island) is the oldest surviving record of marine life in Korea, completed in 1814 by the Joseon scholar Jeong Yak-jeon, who personally collected, studied and recorded the names, appearances, behaviors, usages, of more than 155 different species of marine life from the coastal waters surrounding Heuksan Island, South Jeolla Province.



Thin and Refreshing Yeonpo-tang

People living on the West Coast of Korea prefer yeonpotang, with its refreshing taste, to fiery nakji-bokkeum (sautéed octopus). More suitable for yeonpotang are medium-sized octopi, rather than smaller ones. Sometimes the soup may turn black if an ink sac accidentally pops, which is part of the fun of eating yeonpotang.



JJIM, JORIM & BOKKEUM

[BRAISED DISHES, GLAZED DISHES AND
STIR-FRIED DISHES]

The Korean cuisine is healthy because it tends to use braising and simmering rather than deep-frying or grilling. This will dissolve extra fat in the ingredient and minimizes the total fat content. Braising, simmering over low heat for a long time, and stir-frying with a minimal amount of oil, allow one to add vegetables and spices and bring out the flavors of ingredients.



The Quintessential Holiday Food

Galbi jjim

[Braised Short Ribs]

Galbi-jjim (braised short ribs) was mostly served on birthdays or holidays, because it is made from the choicest and most expensive beef part. Indeed, Galbi-jjim always reminds people of special occasions or holidays, when family members are brought together.

Galbi-jjim, Sweet and Tender Short Ribs

Korean cooking consists of a large number of braised dishes that require considerable culinary skill. Galbi-jjim is one such dish, growing in popularity among international diners who appreciate the health advantages of braised dishes. When making Galbi-jjim, the fat on the short ribs is carefully removed before braising. Carrots, ginkgo nuts and chestnuts are added, and finally Pyogo (shitake) mushrooms and egg garnish are sprinkled on top to complete the cooking process. Internationally, this dish is becoming as popular as Galbi-gui (grilled marinated short ribs). Glazed with soy sauce and topped with ginkgo nuts and chestnuts, Galbi-jjim looks and tastes wonderful. Satae-jorim (braised beef shanks), which uses beef shanks in the place of fattier short ribs, is also popular due to its leaner taste.

Hot and Spicy Jjim-galbi

Jjim-galbi (steamed short ribs), which tastes completely different from traditional Galbi-jjim, is said to have originated in an alley in Dongin-dong, Daegu in the 1960s. According to one story, a married couple who greatly enjoyed short ribs used to steam them in an iron pot and eat them with salt. Gradually they added more and more garlic and hot peppers to suit the husband's passion for spicy food. After a while, the wife developed a special hot sauce and began to sell short ribs steamed in the sauce out of a small traditional house. It was an instant hit among the residents of Daegu, who have a love for extra spicy food. Other restaurants selling the dish quickly sprouted up along the same row, which is today known as 'Jjim-galbi Alley.'

The Secret of Dongin-dong Jjim-galbi

The famous Jjim-galbi restaurant in Dongin-dong uses nickel silver pots in order to quickly steam short ribs for Jjim-galbi. The ribs are served with lettuce and perilla leaves, and sometimes wrapped in Baek-kimchi (white kimchi) to temper the spiciness. After finishing all the meat from the pot, many diners like to mix rice with the remaining sauce. It is near impossible to find an undented or unbruised cooking pot in Dongin-dong restaurants. This is because of the practice of crowding multiple pots over a briqueite fire.



Reminiscing Dakdori-tang **Dak maeunjjim**

[Braised Chili Chicken]

Dakmaeun-jjim (braised chili chicken) is made with cut-up chicken, onions, potatoes and other vegetables, which are marinated in a spicy sauce and braised together. The dish can be made with less liquid to be less sloppy and presentable to guests. But, most people prefer the country-style version, which boils the ingredients in plenty of liquid to create a thick, bubbling sauce.

Dakdori-tang, the Ongoing Debate

Dakmaeun-jjim is still called 'Dakdori-tang' by many. Following a long, fierce debate, the official name of the dish was changed from Dakdori-tang to Dakbokkeum-tang and finally to the current term. It all started when the National Institute of Korean Language issued an opinion that the name should be changed, because the 'Dori' in Dakdori-tang is the Japanese word for bird. From that point, the dish was officially known as Dakbokkeum-tang, which led to complaints from those accustomed to the original name saying that the new name did not sound appetizing. It can be likened to the once questionable renaming of 'French fries' to the far less appealing 'Freedom Fries.' One argument recently gaining support is that Dakdori-tang is a legitimate Korean term, because Dori was not derived from Japanese but rather from the Korean verb 'Dorida' (to cut out). By whatever name it may be called, the tender chicken pieces and potatoes braised in a spicy sauce which is later mixed with rice, is an all-time favorite among Koreans.

Dakmaeun-jjim Broth

Home-cooked Dakmaeun-jjim is not cooked with a lot of broth, but the restaurant version tends to have an ample amount of broth, because the dish has to be continually simmered at the table. Sometimes, a large amount of potato chunks are added. Once cooked, the potatoes are mashed with spoons and eaten with the hot broth. 'Buldak' (fire chicken), which includes extra hot Cheongyang peppers, is a version where the chicken is stir-fried without broth on a hot pan. Those who love spicy food enjoy Buldak for its tongue-paralyzing, head-spinning spiciness.

Andong-Jjimdak, A Sweet Taste from Soy Sauce

Andong-Jjimdak (Andong-style braised chicken) is not red, but dark brown from being cooked in soy sauce. Still, the dish packs enough spice to bring sweat to most brows. The spiciness comes from the extra hot cheongyang pepper. Many believe that Andong-Jjimdak originated from a prestigious family from the Andong region, but it was actually invented in the chicken alley of the so-called Old Andong Market in the late 1970s as an affordable yet generous dish to be shared among a large group.



To Revive a Tired Body
Dak baeksuk

[Whole Chicken Soup]

One of the most popular foods to help alleviate the heat of summer is Dak-baeksuk (whole chicken soup). On hot days, the father will say, ‘How about boiling a chicken today?’ Come evening, and there it would be on the table - Dak-baeksuk, a nourishing dish with plenty of garlic and sweet rice. Oftentimes, a mother will serve Dak-baeksuk even in winter, if she sees that the family members could use some sprucing up.

A Dish for Cooling the Heat

During the hot summer, our ancestors used to choose a date and collect money for an excursion to a nearby valley creek. The purpose was to get away from the heat, relax, and eat something nutritious. After soaking their feet in the cool valley stream, they sat under a shady tree to enjoy steaming Dak-baeksuk boiled in a large pot. They consumed the chicken meat with sea salt, and afterwards poured soaked sweet rice into the soup to make Juk (rice porridge). While a spring chicken, also known as a medicinal chicken, was considered ideal for Dak-baeksuk, meaty roosters were sometimes cooked for large gatherings. The tradition of eating Dak-baeksuk at valley creeks in the peak of summer still remains; today, numbers of Dak-baeksuk restaurants populate resort spots in mountain valleys.

Nurungji-baeksuk, Savory and Chewy Delicacy

One of the popular modern variations of Baeksuk is Hanbang-baeksuk (medicinal whole chicken soup), prepared with traditional medicinal ingredients such as dried jujubes, chestnuts, and milk vetch roots. Equally popular is the Nurungji-baeksuk (scorched rice and whole chicken soup). Unlike the regular Dak-baeksuk, where sweet rice is added to the remaining broth, the Nurungji-baeksuk starts out with covering the bottom of the pressure cooker with soaked sweet rice. The sweet rice layer absorbs the chicken stock while it cooks, and becomes slightly burnt with a chewy texture and wonderful flavor.

Differences between Dak-baeksuk and Samgye-tang

Samgyetang is a chicken boiled with a variety of medicinal ingredients such as ginseng, hedysarum roots, chestnuts and ginkgo nuts, together with glutinous rice. Meanwhile, Dak-baeksuk is chicken boiled in simple plain water, with no medicinal ingredients added, then the broth being used to cook Juk (rice porridge).



Non-greasy, Succulent Boiled Pork

Bossam

[Napa Wraps with Pork]

The pork in bossam (napa cabbage wraps with pork) is boiled in a way that eliminates any unpleasant odor, and then placed under a heavy stone to squeeze out oily fat from the meat. The defatted meat is sliced and eaten with lettuce or napa cabbage leaves. The meat is dipped in salted shrimp sauce (saeujeot) and wrapped in yellow cabbage leaves with a spicy mix of white radish and chestnuts.

Pork, for Natural Detoxification

Pork is ideal for ridding the body of toxic substances such as lead or mercury. Because its melting point is below human body temperature, pork fat assists in drawing out toxins that the human body absorbed from the polluted air or water. Pork fat is said to be effective for the prevention of pneumoconiosis, or 'black lung,' which can be caused by breathing in soot or dust. Perhaps this is why miners and construction workers always eat pork at gatherings to 'scrub' the dirt from the throat. Pork contains five to ten times more B vitamins than beef, and is rich in high-quality proteins and other nutrients. Also, the iron in pork has high absorption efficiency and helps to prevent iron deficiency anemia.

Healthy Meals for a Long Life

It is healthier to consume pork steamed, as in Bossam, than grilled. In Okinawa, the southern Japanese island famous for longevity, the numerous centenarians enjoy steamed pork simmered in soy sauce. Many long-lived Korean elders also mention steamed pork as one of their favorite foods.

Suyuk, Boiled and Sliced Meat

Suyuk (boiled beef) refers to sliced, boiled, and pressed meat. Usually Suyuk refers to boiled beef, while Jeyuk refers to boiled pork. Beef Suyuk is dipped in vinegared soy sauce or mustard soy sauce, while pork Suyuk is dipped in salted shrimp sauce and wrapped in kimchi. The latter is a perfect combination, since the kimchi and shrimp sauce include enzymes that break down pork fat which otherwise may not digest well.



A Classic Late-night Snack

Jokbal

[Pig's Trotters]

Jokbal (braised pork trotters) with salted shrimp sauce wrapped in lettuce leaves is one of the most preferred dishes to accompany wine or spirits. It is also popular as a late-night snack. Although Jokbal is made with pork, the texture is unique. Its firm texture comes from the gelatin content of the skin and cartilage.

Jokbal, Loved for the texture and flavor

The word 'Jokbal' automatically conjures up images of Jangchung-dong, a Seoul neighborhood street lined with Jokbal places. Starting about 40 years ago, these restaurants opened one by one until they finally formed a sprawling cluster. Curiously, almost all of these restaurants claim to be the first or 'the original' one, as indicated in their signs. Jokbal is believed to have been invented by Yi Gyeong-seon, a seasoned Jangchung-dong restauranter who arrived in Seoul after fleeing from the North during the Korean War. Yi took the pork trotter dish from her hometown and added traditional Chinese five-spice to it. Displaced Northerners saw the sign 'Pyeongan Province Jokbal' and flocked to her restaurant. Then came the crowds from nearby Jangchung Stadium and National Theater. The restaurant's great success created what is called the 'Jokbal Street.' These days, Jokbal has also become popular among women who heard about its benefits on the skin. A substance called chondroitin, plentiful in Jokbal, is a bioactive substance that slows down the aging process. In China, pig trotters are a popular birthday dish along with noodles, as the two symbolize health and longevity. The resemblance between Jokbal and the German dish 'Eisbein,' ham hock boiled in beer, is also quite remarkable.

Jokbal for New Mothers

Jokbal promotes the secretion of breast milk, and the protein from the pork trotters enhances the quality of the breast milk. In the past, new mothers who had trouble breastfeeding, used to drink the broth of simmered pork trotters. However, due to the complexity of the process and the unpleasant smell of the broth, modern-day mothers opt for Jokbal instead.

Jokpyeon, a Dish for Royalties

Jokpyeon (jellied ox feet) is another traditional dish that also makes good use of gelatin. To create Jokpyeon, beef shanks are boiled with chicken or pheasant, and the meat is removed, chopped, and then put back in the broth. This is topped with red chili pepper threads, slices of boiled egg, and sautéed stone ear mushrooms (Seogi) and cooled until the gelatin sets. Jokpeon requires an elaborate process and was mostly prepared in the royal court where it was appreciated for the visual effect.



The Transformation of an Ugly Fish

Agwi jjim

[Spicy Monkfish with Soybean Sprouts]

Agwi-jjim (spicy monkfish with soybean sprouts) is prepared by braising monkfish with spices and vegetables. Monkfish meat is a delicacy with a rich and chewy texture, and develops a wonderful flavor when combined with Korean parsley (Minari) and soy bean sprouts. Unlike other regions, dried monkfish is used to make this dish in Masan, the home of Agwi-jjim.

Agwi-jjim, a Creation of the Mid-1960s

Monkfish used to be unpopular for its repulsive appearance—a gaping mouth fronting a flat head and body. When it was brought up in a net, the fishermen would simply toss it away or use it for fertilizer. Because the fish was hurled back into the water, they were known as *Multeomengi*, or ‘splashers.’ Thanks to the colorfully nicknamed ‘Lumpy Granny’ who sold eel soup in Odong-dong, Masan, monkfish was reborn as a gourmet dish. She decided to braise monkfish the fishermen brought in - for some unknown reason - with garlic, scallion, soybean paste and hot pepper paste (Gochujang), in the style of *bugeo-jjim* (braised dried pollack). The dish and its interesting texture were unexpectedly well received. Monkfish was plentiful in the seas off the coast of Masan, so Lumpy Granny began including the dish on her menu as an accompaniment for drinks. Forty years later, Agwi-jjim has become a well-known delicacy throughout the nation.

Monkfish, a Low-fat and High-collagen Food

Monkfish tastes delicious despite its appearance. After it became popular, people began to wonder about its nutritional value and found out that the fish was rich in collagen, a group of proteins that enhances skin elasticity. For this reason, monkfish has become even more popular among women. Once considered an unlucky catch and discarded, monkfish has now become a local specialty of the Masan area, and there is even a ‘Monkfish Alley’ in Odong-dong. Unlike other regions where fresh monkfish is used in Agwi-jjim, the Masan Agwi-jjim is made of dried monkfish. As if reflecting the character of South Gyeongsang people, Agwi-jjim restaurants in Masan are sparsely decorated and the turnover is high. Everything is hurried, but at least no one has to wait a long time for a table.

Monkfish Liver, Another Foie Gras

In the Agwi-jjim Alley of Masan, *agwi-suyuk* (boiled monkfish) is also sold. This is basically boiled and sliced monkfish. Many claim that monkfish liver tastes better than the meat. Monkfish liver has become popular among gourmets, because of its similarity to foie gras.



The Ocean on a Platter
Haemul jjim
[Braised Seafood]

Haemul-jjim (braised assorted seafood) is not much different from Agwi-jjim in terms of spices and cooking process. The difference is the wide variety of seafood ingredients. Haemul-jjim features fresh blue crab, octopus, shrimp, mussels, clams, and sea squirt. It is truly a celebration of the full bounty of the sea.

Other Delicacies: Shrimp Head, Squid Roe, and Pollack Innards

Shrimp is one of the main ingredients of Haemul-jjim. When eating shrimp, many people savor the tail but discard the head. However, the head holds much of the unique flavor of the shrimp, as well as all sorts of nutrients. One is missing half the flavor if the shrimp head is thrown out. Haemul-jjim includes a variety of delicacies, such as crunchy sea squirt, squid roe, and pollack roe and testes. After fishing and eating the seafood in Haemul-jjim, rice is mixed in the remaining sauce with chopped kimchi, Korean parsley, crushed dried laver, and sesame oil. Everything is mixed and stir-fried as a finishing course to the meal.

The Health Benefits of Seafood

Haemul-jjim fits the taste of contemporary people who prefer food that is delicious and healthy at the same time. Clams and other types of seafood are low in calories but high in protein, vitamins and minerals. They boost the stamina and help to prevent lifestyle diseases. Lean, tender octopus and flavorful squid are both rich in taurine, a substance known to alleviate fatigue. Furthermore, the chitosan in blue crab is known to bind fat and have a diuretic effect.

Making Fried Rice with Leftover Sauce

After eating the seafoods from Haemul-jjim, one is left with a thick sauce. Chopped kimchi, Korean parsley and rice are mixed into the sauce and stir-fried all together to make a delicious rice dish. Sesame or perilla oil can be added for flavor.



A Salty and Spicy Side Dish
Galchi jorim

[Braised Cutlassfish]

To make Galchi-jorim (braised cutlassfish), sweet autumn white radish or tender summer potatoes are placed in the bottom of a pot and topped with slabs of cutlassfish. A spicy sauce is then poured over the pot and the contents are braised. The dish consists of lean fish meat with radish or potatoes permeated with the spicy sauce.

Cutlassfish Braised in a Spicy Sauce

Until the 1980s, cutlassfish was considered a common fish that was served at the home. The thick body was salted and grilled or pan-fried, and the head and tail were braised in spicy sauce with white radish or potatoes. Unfortunately, the fish has since then become rare and expensive, hence the nickname 'golden cutlassfish.' A visitor to the Namdaemun Market in Seoul is greeted by the salty and spicy Galchi-jorim drifting out of Galchi-jorim alley. Typically cooked and served in well-worn and dented nickel silver pots, the red sweet-spicy sauce is excellent for mixing with rice, and the taste of soft radish drenched is to savor. The Galchi-jorim alley is always bustling with hungry customers eagerly waiting in line. There are more than ten Galchi-jorim restaurants in the alley that have been in business anywhere from 20 to 40 years.

How to Remove Bones from the Cutlassfish

How do skilled Korean diners remove the bones from cutlassfish? First, they poke holes along the edges of the fish and carefully pull out the pin bones in two neat rows. Some people become unbelievably good in executing this process. They set aside the small bone clusters from the edges. When separating the meat from the bone, the trick is to use the tip of a chopstick to carefully lift the upper meat little by little. Once enough space has been created between the meat and bone, a chopstick can be placed between them and run all the way to the tail to separate the top fillet. The same routine is followed for the other side. After eating the flesh, the small bone clusters removed in the first step can be nibbled on to get the tender meat from in between the bones.



Namdaemun Market Galchi-jorim in a Nickel Silver Pot



Fishy Smell Removed with a Spicy Sauce

Godeungeo jorim

[Braised Mackerel]

Mackerel has always been an affordable and popular fish in Korea. It has been called ‘the barley of the sea, because it is as nourishing as barley. As a ‘blue-backed’ oily fish, mackerel is rich with many nutrients including the brain-nourishing DHA.

Filled with Flesh and Flavor

There is an interesting term derived from the name of mackerel. In Japanese, mackerel is ‘Saba,’ and said twice becomes ‘Saba-saba.’ The colloquial Korean term ‘Saba-saba’ refers to flattery or under-the-table deals involving bribery. The word originated in the Japanese colonial era, when people asking a favor from a public official would offer two mackerels. This bribe repeatedly proved effective and, as a result, ‘Saba-saba’ became a term for flattery or bribery.

Perfect with Potatoes, White Radish and Aged Kimchi

The sauce for godeungeo-jorim (braised mackerel) is made by mixing a generous amount of Gochujang (red chili paste) or red pepper flakes with soy sauce. Because mackerel can have a strong fishy smell, the sauce also includes generous dollops of garlic and ginger. The cooking process for godeungeo-jorim is almost identical to that of galchi-jorim (braised cutlass-fish). Mackerel is braised on top of potatoes or white radish while the sauce is intermittently spooned over the fish. Mackerel goes especially well with potatoes. Recently a godeungeo-jorim variation that replaces the potatoes with aged kimchi and uses a sauce blended with Doenjang (soybean paste) has become popular among restaurant goers.

Removing the fishy smell of mackerel is key to a tasty Godeungeo-jorim. Ample garlic and ginger are added to achieve this. Sometimes, aged kimchi and soybean paste are added to enhance the flavor.

Autumn Mackerel

Autumn and winter mackerel taste the best. This is because, after June, when the spawning season ends, the fish begin to prepare for winter by eating voraciously, accumulating fat and nutrients.



Expensive But Worth Every Penny **Eundaegu jorim**

[Braided Black Cod]

Eundaegu (black cod), although fatty, does not have an unpleasant smell nor does it contain the greasy taste of fatty tuna. It has a creamy texture, a luxurious flavor, and a clean after-taste. Eundaegu-jorim (braised black cod), which is famous for its sweet and spicy taste, is a favorite seafood dish in Korea and can be found in most Korean food restaurants overseas.

A \$50,000 Fish

Although a great amount of confusion surrounds it, Eundaegu is neither Chilean seabass nor cod. In English, it is called black cod, sablefish, butterfish or coal fish. A limited number is caught off the coasts of Russia, British Columbia, Alaska and other American states. This once-affordable fish used to be consumed mainly by Americans and British who salt-pickled and grilled it. However, as it became more and more popular around the globe, especially in Japan, the price has soared, and now it has become exorbitantly expensive. Since 1984, New South Wales, Australia has designated a similar fish, also called black cod, in the Southern Hemisphere as a vulnerable species and has banned harvest with a fine of over 50,000 dollars for illegal fishing. There are only twelve people in the world who have the license to fish this Arctic Ocean species in the wild.

A Firm yet Flaky Texture

Fatty Eundaegu is so tender that it flakes under the touch. Because the fish is mainly distributed frozen, it is often consumed fried, braised or simmered. Koreans prefer it glazed with a sweet and spicy sauce, while Japanese gourmets, who prefer the mild and creamy taste, enjoy it raw (sashimi) or grilled. Americans and Canadians often enjoy the fish smoked. Thanks to the recent success of Eundaegu farming, more and more people are able to enjoy Eundaegu dishes including Hwe (sliced raw fish).



Eundaegu (black cod) contains an abundance of calcium, phosphorus, iron, potassium and vitamins. Packed with omega-3 fatty acids, it is effective against myocardial infarction and excellent for improving blood circulation.



Everyday Side Dish
Dubu-jorim

[Braised Pan-Fried Tofu]

Dubu-jorim (braised pan-fried tofu) is simmered in a soy sauce mixture. Dubu-jorim is clean and tastes delicious even when cold, which made it a lunchbox staple in the past. With its delicate aroma of sesame oil, adding it to a simple meal of rice and kimchi would make anyone's mouth water. Indeed, it has long been an everyday side dish welcomed by all.

What is in Tofu?

The origins of the word 'Kong' (soybean) have yet to be established. However, one leading theory is that it was inspired by the sound of soybeans striking the floor. Soybeans are often called 'beef from the field,' because although it is a legume, it is nutritionally similar to meat. Protein makes up 40 percent of tofu, along with important nutrients including iron, calcium, magnesium and vitamin B complex. The yellow color of most soybeans comes from isoflavones, a cancer-fighting substance that has become highly popular for its bioactive properties. The benefits of soybean and the nutritional value of tofu are well known in the West. It is rumored that tofu is now a leading ingredient in the U.S. White House.

Easy-to-cook and Delicious Side Dishes

Dubu-jorim is tasty and easy to cook, even for those who lack confidence in the kitchen. Its flavor can vary with the marinade used, and the only trick lies in removing the water carefully to prevent the oil from spattering.



If dusted with starch before frying, it can be made even crispier and more savory.



A Popular Drinking Accompaniment **Dubu kimchi**

[Tofu with Stir-Fried Kimchi]

Tofu and kimchi together make an ideal combination. Dubu-kimchi (tofu with sautéed kimchi) refers to warm sliced tofu served with boiled or sautéed kimchi. Mild-tasting tofu rich in protein is a perfect complement to spicy kimchi and its abundant vitamins. Many Koreans like to eat Dubu-kimchi while enjoying Soju (a Korean distilled spirit) or Makgeolli (Korean rice wine).

Tofu as a Celebrity Diet Food

It is well known that so-called one-food diets are detrimental to health. But many celebrities who successfully lost weight say that tofu is an exception to this rule. Tofu is an essential part of the diet for many celebrities who want to maintain a super slim figure. Shin Dong, a member of the boy band Super Junior, lost 44 pounds in four and half months with a Dubu-kimchi diet. Sol Kyung-gu, who is known for repeatedly gaining or losing weight for movie roles, says that he literally lived on tofu when he had to lose 30 pounds in a single month. Recounting how he fought hunger with only tofu and cucumbers, the actor says: “Tofu is unbeatable if you want to lose weight fast.”

A Great Harmony of Red and White

Dubu-kimchi is a dish that anyone can easily make with some kimchi and a block of bean curd from the refrigerator. Just find an attractive serving dish, and the most ordinary cooking ingredients can become a colorful gourmet dish.



The amino acid lysine found in soybeans—the main component of bean curd—is an essential nutrient for growing children. In addition, as a high-protein/low-calorie food, bean curd is ideal for those who want to stay fit and energized at the same time.



Korea's Favorite Snack

Topokki

[Stir-Fried Rice Cake]

Topokki (stir-fried rice cakes) is representative of hot Korean dishes spiced with Gochujang (red chili paste). Everybody loves Topokki. Even children, who have yet to develop a taste for spicy food (red chili paste), food, enjoy Topokki, even if they have to drink lots of water to cool their tongue. It is the national street food of Korea.

Gungjung topokki, A Colorful Dish for Royalties

Originally, Topokki was not a spicy dish. In the royal courts of Joseon, it was prepared by simmering beef, carrots, onions, Pyogo (shitake) mushrooms and other ingredients together with rice cakes in soy sauce. The colorful ingredients - black Pyogo mushrooms, white onions, red carrots and peppers, green chili peppers, and yellow egg garnish - were visually as well as nutritionally harmonious.

Gochujang Topokki Debuts in the 1950s

It is believed that Topokki seasoned with spicy Gochujang paste first appeared in the 1950s and became widely popular in the 1970s. Because Topokki in this early incarnation was a working-class snack, flour, instead of rice, was used to make the finger-like Tteok sticks. The dish was an instant hit and became the most popular snack item along with 'Odeng' (fish cake) soup. The history of the Sindang-dong Topokki alley, which is the most famous row of Topokki shops in Korea, dates back to the 1970s. There was once a famous Topokki restaurant named 'Babodeul' (Fools). To please its student clientele, the restaurant installed a music system and hired an amateur DJ to play songs on request. Their romantic concept of 'listening to favorite songs while enjoying Topokki' proved extremely popular and led to the establishment of numerous restaurants under similar themes.



Gungjung Topokki for Healthy Skin

Gungjung-Topokki, which combines meat with vegetables, is a nutritionally balanced dish. The vitamins in carrots and cabbage promote red blood cell production and healthy skin. The gooey substance in the straw mushrooms gives luster to the skin, and the fibers help the body flush out toxins.



A Dish that Will Bring Tears to Your Eyes

Nakji bokkeum

[Stir-Fried Octopus]

Nakji-bokkeum (stir-fried octopus) is made with common octopus, onions, scallion, red & green chili peppers, anchovy or littleneck clam broth, and a spicy sauce. The sauce is made by blending red pepper flakes and minced garlic with sugar, soy sauce and Gochujang. Mugyo-dong and Jongno are the place to go for extra spicy Nakji-bokkeum packed with garlic and Cheongyang peppers.

The Legendary Story of Mugyo-dong Nakji Alley

'Mugyo-dong Nakji' a variation of nakji-bokkeum, was created by Bak Mu-sun, the living legend of Mugyo-dong Nakji Alley. Back when Nakji (baby or common octopus) was cheap and plentiful, Bak opened a working class eatery in an alley in the center of Seoul and served Nakji-bokkeum, clear clam soup, Gamjatang (pork backbone soup) and Pajeon (green onion pancake). Although it was just a simple dish meant to accompany a kettle of Makgeolli (Korean rice wine), her ferociously spicy Nakji-bokkeum captured the fancy of every drinker in town. Restaurants mimicking her recipe began to sprout up all along the alley. 'Yujeong' and 'Mijeong' are the most famous among them. Bak's legacy continues even today under the household name 'Mugyo-dong Nakji.'



As a low-calorie/high-protein food, octopus is good for a diet or just when in need of refreshment. It is rich in minerals such as calcium and phosphorus, and contains a rich supply of taurine which is highly effective in building muscle and protecting cardiovascular health.



Spicy and Sweet Flavor

Ojingeo bokkeum

[Spicy Stir-Fried Squid]

To make Ojingeo-bokkeum (spicy stir-fried squid), stir fry parboiled squid in sauce over high heat. The sauce is created by blending garlic and onions with Gochujang. It is sweet and zesty, yet spicy enough to make even the most seasoned Korean diners sweat. Ojingeo-bokkeum is one of the most popular dishes using the firm-textured and flavorful squid.

Squid, a Versatile Seafood

With squid, there is nothing to throw out. There are many recipes that use the head, legs and even the innards. For example, squid entrails are the main ingredient of Ojingeo-naejangtang (squid innards soup). People in Ulleungdo, an island famous for squid fishing, claim that the best way to enjoy the full flavor of squid is to slice and eat steamed whole squid, innards and all. Grilled dried squid is a popular movie snack or a late night snack for students. Nowadays there are many variations of Ojingeo-bulgogi (marinated and grilled squid), including recipes that add pork belly or herbal roots.



Squid goes well with a variety of vegetables since, as an acid-residue food, it contains more phosphorus than calcium. Tossing in some vegetables, which are alkaline, means adding vitamins A and C. In particular, squid and cabbage cooked together become a diet food that even helps regularity.



Energy for a Tired Body **Jeyuk bokkeum**

[Stir-Fried Pork]

Jeyuk-bokkeum (spicy stir-fried pork) is one of the best-known dishes cooked with Gochujang. It is a stir-fried dish with thick slices of a pork shoulder marinated in hot Gochujang with minced ginger. Before the 1950s, it was reportedly made using only scallion, black pepper and soy sauce, and the current form of Jeyuk-bokkeum marinated in Gochujang is believed to have appeared sometime afterwards.

Jeyuk-bokkeum, an Affordable Dish Served in Generous Portions

Koreans associate beef with Bulgogi and pork with Jeyuk-bokkeum. Jeyuk-bokkeum appears on the menu of virtually every Korean restaurant in the world and has won the hearts of diners of all nationalities. Gochujang eliminates any unpleasant smell of pork and tenderizes the fatty meat. Because pork fat contains a high percentage of highly unsaturated fatty acids such as oleic acid and linoleic acid, pork tastes best when cooked over moderate heat. Pork has eight to ten times more vitamin B1 than beef, and its digestion rate can be as high as 95 percent. Young people on limited budgets favor Jeyuk-bokkeum, because it is a hearty meat dish yet inexpensive. Youngsters often list it as their favorite food, and many Korean mothers will talk about how their son can 'finish a pound of Jeyuk-bokkeum on a sitting.'

How to Obtain a Lustrous Glaze

Preheat the pan before sautéing the marinated pork. To prevent the dish from getting soupy, keep the lid off the pan to let the liquids in the meat and vegetables evaporate. It is important to control the heat, because too much will burn the sauce yet leave the inside of the meat uncooked. Set aside some of the sauce and later add to the pan. Toss immediately before serving, in order to coat the meat and create a glazed appearance. Add perilla leaves for a zesty flavor and fragrance. Half-split garlic cloves are another great addition. Garlic is rich in allicin, which has powerful anti-bacterial and anti-coagulant effects.



Pork helps prevent cholesterol from sticking to the walls of arteries, strengthening blood vessels, and combating a number of lifestyle diseases. In addition, its vitamin B1 content is ten times greater than that of beef.



NAMUL

[SEASONED VEGETABLES]

Namul is a unique dish that can only be found in Korea.

There are two main types of namul:

Saengchae made by dressing fresh vegetables,

and Sukchae prepared by first blanching or boiling the ingredients.

The base ingredients for namul, vegetables and greens which are harvested in the fields and mountainsides, are full of healthy vitamins and minerals.

Namul should be mixed by hand in order

to thoroughly blend the seasoning with the vegetables.

This gave rise to the expression that “taste comes from the finger tips”



A True Health Food for Everyone

Namul

[Seasoned Vegetables]

Namul (seasoned vegetables) includes all the side dishes made from vegetables, greens, herbs, or wild roots harvested in the mountains and in the fields. It is also a general term for any type of edible plant ingredient.

Namul includes both sukchae and saengchae but mostly refers to sukchae. Vegetables, mushrooms or sprouts can all be used to make namul.

Namul: Rich in Vitamins and Minerals

There are as many, if not more, varieties of namuls as salads. To name just a few: julienned and sautéed Mu-namul (radish Namul); thinly sliced, salted, rinsed, drained and sautéed Oi-namul (cucumber Namul); blanched and seasoned Chamnamul (*Pimpinella brachycarpa*, a wild green, Namul), Kkaennip-namul (perilla leaf namul), and Gochunnip-namul (pepper leaf namul). No wonder there's an old saying "As long as you remember 99 names of Namul, you will never starve." Korea is a mountainous country blessed with plenty of sunshine, so wild greens and vegetables can easily be found growing all over the mountains and fields. Even though some vegetables are seasonal, most can be dried and used whenever needed, just with some soaking and boiling. There are two main recipes for preparing Namul: stir-frying with oil and seasoning, or just mixing the seasoning with the pre-cooked ingredient. The seasoning is usually comprised of soy sauce, ground roasted sesame seeds (*Kkaesogeum*), chopped scallion and garlic. Vinegar, by principle, is not used. Salt is used instead of soy sauce if one desires to preserve the color and delicate taste of the ingredients. In the old days, ground pine nuts were occasionally used in place of ground roasted sesame seeds.

Stir-fried Namul and Blanched Namul

Popular ingredients for cooked namul include osmund ferns, bracken fiddleheads, bellflower, mushrooms, aster leaves (*Chinamul*), dried radish leaves (*Siraegi*), cucumber, summer squash, and aubergines. To make namul, vegetables or greens are stir-fried with oil and then seasoned with soy sauce, scallion, garlic, and ground roasted sesame seeds. Sometimes, julienned and seasoned beef is stir-fried together with the vegetables. Ingredients for blanched namuls include spinach, crown daisy, Korean parsley (*Minari*), mung bean sprouts and bean sprouts. After blanching, excess liquid is squeezed out and the vegetables are mixed with oil, soy sauce, ground roasted sesame seeds, scallion and garlic. The liquid is squeezed out to prevent the namul from becoming soggy and bland. A few different types of Namul are usually placed together on the same plate for an attractive presentation, but fresh and sautéed namuls are usually put on separate plates. Several different Namuls can be arranged on a single plate to combine different flavors and create a contrast between colors, e.g. white namul versus green namul.



The Universe in Nine Compartments

Gujeolpan

[Platter of Nine Delicacies]

Gujeolpan refers to a Korean specialty made up of eight different kinds of vegetables and meats placed in the outer eight sections of an octagonal wooden serving dish and thin wheat crepes (Miljeon-byeong) stacked in the central compartment. The term Gujeolpan literally means ‘nine-sectioned wooden plate,’ which also serves as the name of the dish.

A Work of Art

It is commonly said that the taste of Chinese dishes is determined by the fire, Japanese dishes by the knife, and Korean dishes by the hand. Gujeolpan is an elaborate dish which best demonstrates the detailed and painstaking work that goes into the preparation. A Gujeolpan container is typically made of lacquered wood, while more elaborate versions are inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The eight outer sections are filled with an assortment of meats and vegetables, while the center is usually reserved for the wheat crepe wraps which can also be tinted in subtle colors. The assembled dish is a true work of culinary art and never fails to impress the guests.

Meat, Vegetables, and Even Nuts

People eating Gujeolpan take the fillings of their choice, place them on the wheat crepe, wrap, and eat. This task can be a challenge to those less skilled with chopsticks. For this reason, the crepes are sometimes wrapped with fillings beforehand and served on a plate. The tangy taste of the dipping sauce made of mustard, vinegar, and soy sauce provides a pleasant twist to this dish.

Gujeolpan is also used as serving dish in a Juansang (a table with wine and side dishes) or Dagwasang (a table with refreshments). For Juansang, the Gujeolpan is filled with dry foods that go well with wine, such as raw chestnuts, walnuts, ginkgo nuts, jujubes, pine nuts, peanuts and dried persimmons. With Dagwasang, several kinds of Gangjeong (deep-fried sweet rice puffs), Jeonggwa (candied fruits or roots), Dasik (tea confectionery) and Suksilgwa (glazed fruits and nuts) are placed in a colorful arrangement. Together, these two presentations are called Geon-gujeolpan (Gujeolpan with dry snacks).

Miljeon-byeong, a Product of Great Craft and Skill

Miljeon-byeongs, or wheat crepes, are not easy to prepare. They are made by combining wheat flour and water, then pouring the batter into a pan in round shapes. Once cooked, the crepes are carefully removed using a wooden skewer, and trimmed to fit the central compartment of the Gujeolpan. The pan must be wiped of excess oil before the batter is poured, the heat must be very low, and the resulting crepes must be paper-thin. These often remind people of the ‘crêpe,’ a classic French dish also well known to Koreans.

Pearl Buck and Gujeolpan

There is a well-known story that cannot be left out when talking about Gujeolpan. The story is about the Nobel Prize-winning author Pearl S. Buck, who was invited to a meal during a visit to South Korea. At the center of the table was a black, octagonal lacquer box. When Ms. Buck lifted the lid, she discovered nine different foods arranged by color, creating a striking and beautiful harmony while contrasting against the black lid. Although delighted with the beauty of the dish, Ms. Buck refused to touch it, saying that she couldn’t destroy such a work of art by eating it.





A Low-fat Dish Perfect for Dieting

Dotori muk

[Acorn Jelly Salad]

Dotori-muk (acorn jelly salad) is considered an ideal food for dieters, because it allows diners to feel full with a minimum amount of calories, thanks to its high water content. The tannins in the acorn leave a slightly bitter aftertaste, which also prevents people from eating large portions. All combined, it makes for a perfect dish for those looking to shed some extra pounds.

A Dish for a King in Wartime

Dotori, or acorns, have been consumed since the Stone Age, as demonstrated by the widespread discovery of wild acorns at archeological sites. There is a story related to the oak trees that produce the acorns. King Seonjo of the Joseon Dynasty was forced to flee the royal palace and head for the northern regions to escape the Japanese Invasion of 1592. At that time, in the northern part of Korea, oak trees were called *Tori-namu*. Since the war was raging, there was little to eat, but the people of the village where the king was residing felt compelled to serve their king. They prepared a jelly from acorn starch, what they called 'Torimuk,' and served it to the king. The hungry monarch devoured the acorn jelly with great relish. After he returned to the royal palace, in order to remind himself of this period of hardship, he ordered that 'Torimuk' be served. Torimuk thus became an important and regular part of the royal meal, and since then, Dotori, or acorns, was also called 'Sangsuri,' meaning food placed on the king's table.

The Legend of Pakdaljae

There is a popular song whose lyrics mention Dotorimuk: 'wul-go-neom-neun-pak-dal-jae' which can be translated as 'Pakdaljae that can't be passed without tears.' Pakdaljae is a name of a hill in Pyeongdong-ri, Jecheon, North Chungcheong Province, the origin of the sorrowful legend of Pakdal and Keumbong. On his way to Hanyang - the ancient name for Seoul - to take the civil service examination, a young man named Pakdal stopped in Pyeongdong-ri to pass the night. He happened to meet and fall in love with a maiden named Keumbong. The two promised themselves to one another, but they were forced to part when Pakdal had to finally leave for the examination. Keumbong waited for three months and ten days, but heard not a word from Pakdal. Driven to despair, Keumbong eventually died of a broken heart. After failing the examination, Pakdal returned to Pyeongdong-ri, but arrived too late to save Keumbong. He ended up throwing himself off a cliff upon hearing of Keumbong's death. The food Keumbong had prepared for Pakdal when he was about to leave for Hanyang was Dotorimuk, hence the lyric 'Packing Dotorimuk for Pakdal, at Pakdaljae, Keumbong never stops crying.' It is historically accurate that Dotorimuk was carried on long journeys, because it does not easily spoil.



Crispy and Refreshing **Oiseon**

[Stuffed Cucumber]

Originally, Oi-seon was a Korean royal dish prepared by stuffing cucumbers with meat filling, steaming them and then pouring chilled Jangguk (clear beef broth) over them. It was originally cooked over a slow fire, but to better suit the modern preference for a more refreshing and crunchy texture, lightly fried cucumbers are slit, stuffed with sautéed meat and Jidan (egg garnish) and then dressed with a sweet and sour vinegar sauce.

A Vinegary Summer Delicacy

In the royal cuisine, the term 'Seon' refers to traditional dishes prepared by steaming vegetables or fish that have been stuffed or mixed with meat. The vegetables used to make seon dishes included cucumbers, summer squash, aubergine, tofu, and napa cabbage. Among these Seon dishes, Oi-seon is suitable as a summer dish because of its fresh fragrance and clear green color. These days, cucumbers are usually eaten uncooked. In the past, however, they were used as ingredients in Gochujang-jjigae (hot pepper paste pot stew), as well as pan-fried or steamed dishes. When cucumbers are added to Jjigae (pot stew), the broth becomes refreshing and the cucumber bits remain crunchy even after cooking. The bite-sized cucumber pieces lined in a row compose a beautiful plate, and for this reason it is frequently served as an appetizer when entertaining guests. Although finely slicing the ingredients can be quite laborious, it is certainly worth the effort.

Cucumber as a Beauty Aid

Cucumber is 95 percent water. It is an alkaline food rich in potassium and vitamin C. In China, it was said that cucumbers make women beautiful, and that beautiful women smelled of a cucumber-like fragrance. For this reason, some Chinese women would carry a cucumber hidden in their bosoms. Oi-seon is made with vitamin-rich cucumbers, sautéed meat, Pyogo (shitake) mushrooms, and Jidan (egg garnish) to create a nutritious food packed with essential amino acids.

Dubu-seon and Eo-seon

Oi-seon, Dubu-seon, and Eo-seon were frequently served at the royal court during the Joseon Dynasty era. Dubu-seon is made by mincing tofu, squeezing out the excess water, adding ground chicken meat, and then forming it into shapes. Garnished with sliced Pyogo (shitake) and black mushrooms, it is then steamed. When decorated with a garnish of red chili pepper threads and pine nuts, it appears all the more beautiful. After cooling, it is sliced and served with a blend of soy sauce, vinegar and mustard. Eo-seon refers to steamed fish stuffed with sautéed beef and vegetables.



Seasoned with Love

Japchae

[Glass Noodles with Sautéed Vegetables]

Japchae (glass noodles with sautéed vegetables) is made by boiling glass noodles, draining and mixing them with stir-fried spinach, carrots, mushrooms, beef and onions. It is both a special dish and a versatile favorite. It has been chosen as one of the most popular Korean dishes in the world, along with Bulgogi, Galbi-gui, and Bibimbap.

A Classic Dish on Festive Days

No Korean festivity is complete without Japchae. It has long been perceived as a luxurious and elegant dish and was always served on birthdays, weddings and 60th birthday celebrations. Japchae was first created in the 17th century when King Gwanghaegun hosted a palace banquet. The Gwanghaegun Ilgi (Daily Records of King Gwanghaegun's Reign) records that Yi Chung, one of the king's favorites, had the habit of personally presenting unusual dishes to the king. Gwanghaegun relished these dishes so much that he would not start a meal until they arrived. Among these, it was Japchae that most captivated the heart of the king. Traditional Japchae was made purely with vegetables, lacking the glass noodles that characterize the current style of Japchae. It was also recorded that thinly-sliced and sautéed vegetables would be placed in a plate and topped with a special sauce, along with Sichuan pepper (cheoncho), black pepper, and ginger powder. The special sauce was concocted by combining pheasant broth, strained soybean paste and wheat flour, and then reducing it to a thick consistency.

Old-style Japchae without Glass Noodles

The term 'Japchae' is a combination of 'Jap,' meaning 'mix, gather, or plentiful' and 'Chae,' meaning 'vegetables.' Thus, it can be translated as 'assorted mixed vegetables.' The current form of Japchae made with glass noodles became common after a dangmyeon (glass noodles made from sweet potato starch) factory was first erected in Sariwon in 1919. It became popular only after 1930. Recently, first Lady Kim Yoon-ok made Japchae during a CNN interview, drawing considerable attention. Ms. Kim invited reporters from CNN to the Cheongwadae (presidential residence) and prepared japchae, slicing and pan-frying all the ingredients herself. Notably, when mixing the boiled glass noodles with the other ingredients, she used her hands rather than utensils to demonstrate the traditional mantra that "taste comes from the finger tips of a loving mother."



Boiled glass noodles may swell if left unattended for too long. So, in order to prepare a large batch of japchae, the glass noodles can simply be steeped in hot water instead of boiled before stir-frying.



A Dish Bestowed by the King to Stop Factional Strife

Tang pyeong chae

[Mung Bean Jelly Mixed with Vegetables and Beef]

Tang-pyeong-chae is prepared by combining mung bean jelly with sautéed julienned beef, parboiled Korean parsley (Minari), and roasted dried laver, and is also called Cheongpomuk-muchim (seasoned mung bean jelly). The dish, which derived its name from ‘Tangtang-pyeongpyeong (蕩蕩平平),’ was born as a consequence of a tragic event that took place during the Joseon Dynasty.

Wangdo tangtang, Wangdo pyeongpyeong

The four main ingredients of Tangpyeongchae have four colors: bluish-white mung bean jelly, red beef, green Korean parsley, and black dried laver. The four colors of white, red, green, and black represented the four political factions known as the Seoin, Namin, Dongin and Bukin. White mung bean jelly was used as the main ingredient, because the Seoin was the strongest group at the time. King Yeongjo, the 21st king of the Joseon Dynasty, was the son of King Sukjong born by a female servant of the lowest rank in the court. When King Yeongjo succeeded his older half-brother Gyeongjong to the throne, he was accused by some of poisoning his brother. The opposing Soron faction, who had supported Gyeongjong, argued that it was not a legitimate succession.

The fact that his son, crown prince Sado, was close to the Soron sowed even further misery. Based on a misapprehension that Sado was seeking to usurp his position, King Yeongjo ended up locking up his own son in a wooden rice chest (Duiju*) until he died. When the king realized what he had done, it was too late. Deeply regretting his actions, King Yeongjo implemented the Tangpyeong Policy, under which individuals were selected for government office based on merit rather than political affiliation. The term Tangpyeong was derived from a phrase in the section of the Seokyeong* asserting, ‘Wangdo tangtang, Wangdo pyeongpyeong’ which can be translated as “An emperor’s path will be clear only when he shows no bias or favoritism towards any faction.” It was a perfect phrase to demonstrate his strong resolve to never again be swayed by political factionalism. Together with the policy, King Yeongjo had a dish named Tangpyeongchae served to his officials as a symbol of his resolve.

Perfect Example of the Five Cardinal Colors

Korean food is often characterized by the Five Cardinal Colors, or Obangsaek, which represent the five natural elements in yellow, blue, white, red and black. Obangsaek is based on yin and yang and the ‘five movements’ principle which says that the spirits of yin and yang gave birth to heaven and earth and then created the five elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water. It also refers to the five cardinal points of north, south, east, west and center. In Korean cuisine, there are many dishes that strive to include all of the five colors. Perfect examples would be Bibimbap and Tangpyeongchae.

* Duiju is a wooden box for the storage of grains such as rice, beans, or red beans.

* Seokyeong is an ancient Chinese scripture and one of the five classics of Confucianism.



Spicy, Sour and Sweet Taste

Haepari naengchae

[Chilled Jellyfish Platter]

Haepari-naengchae is a dish made by mixing crisp, crunchy jellyfish with an assortment of vegetables in a traditional Korean mustard sauce which is a combination of sweet and sour vinaigrette (Danchotmul) and piquant mustard.

A Showcase of Culinary Skills

One must be careful when eating haepari-naengchae, as a large amount of the mustard sauce will send a sharp fume up the nose and bring tears to the eyes. Haepari-naengchae is a perfect dish for entertaining guests, because the crunchy and chewy texture of jellyfish is a gastronomic treat, and the colorful dish is perfect for showing off the host's culinary skills.

Haepari-naengchae as a Diet and Beauty Aid

There are numerous varieties of jellyfish, but not all are suitable for cooking. Edible jellyfish are mainly caught along the coasts of Korea, China, and Japan and are primarily used in Chinese cuisine. Jellyfish can feel slippery due to mucin, a protein blend with considerable water-holding capability. Chondroitin, which makes up mucin, is a major component of skin, cartilage and blood vessels, and helps keep them supple by retaining moisture in bodily tissues. In addition, jellyfish is a low-calorie food with only 32 calories per 100 grams. Also known for its effectiveness in relieving digestive issues, it is very popular as a diet food to help treat both obesity and skin troubles.

How to Enjoy Haepari-naengchae

In order to get the best taste of Haepari-naengchae, turn the salad over in the plate right before eating it. This allows you to start with the moist and well-seasoned bottom and you can fully enjoy its taste all the way through.



GUI & JEON

[GRILLED DISHES AND PAN-FRIED DELICACIES]

Unlike Western cuisine where grilling is largely limited to steak or barbecued foods, grilling in Korean cuisine is a more common cooking method applied to a great variety of ingredients.

It is also open to a broad range of flavors, depending on whether marinades are applied, and if so, the type of marinade sauce.

Galbi-gui (grilled short ribs) is popular among Koreans and foreigners alike.

Jeon (pan-fried dishes), made with a cooking process which requires only a small amount of oil, is a healthy dish loved by all.



Marinated, Chargrilled Short Ribs

So galbi gui

[Grilled Beef Ribs]

Sogalbi-gui (grilled beef ribs) refers to marinated beef short ribs grilled over a charcoal stove on the table. Tender ribs of young cattle are considered best for Sogalbi-gui. In the past, the ribs used to be marinated in a light colored and saltier soy sauce known as 'Joseon ganjang.' Nowadays, the darker regular soy sauce is used with some salt. The marinating process is skipped altogether for Saenggalbi-gui (un-marinated grilled beef ribs).

Suwon-Galbi, Famous for Generous Servings

Sogalbi-gui is cooked on a grill, which is placed over fine-textured oak charcoal at a red-hot temperature. Its biggest appeal is the smoky flavor from the charcoal. It is crucial to skillfully score the ribs in order to allow the meat to be thoroughly marinated and grilled without burning. Great care is required as it is not easy to butterfly and score the meat and still keep it attached to the bone.

Suwon in Gyeonggi Province is especially famous for Sogalbi-gui. It is said that Hwachunok, which opened in the Yeongdong Market in Paldal-gu in the 1940s, was known as the first Sogalbi-gui restaurant in the region. It is not in business anymore, but the secret to its unique flavor remains, characterized by its method of using salt and sweet pear juice instead of soy sauce. Suwon-galbi, sectioned with an axe, is very large, and the meat attached on both sides of the ribs provides for generous servings.

Haeundae-Galbi and Idong-Galbi

Haeundae, Busan is also a famous Galbi town. Marinated Haeundae Galbi is not cooked on a grill but on a steel plate. The beef juice left on the plate is delicious when mixed with rice. Pocheon, Gyeonggi Province, was once home to many military bases. Targeting mothers who wanted to feed their sons while on military leave, a number of Galbi restaurants sprouted up in the area. These restaurants are known as 'Idong-galbi,' and are famous for their moderate price and generous portions.

The Menu of Choice on Special Days

Even today, the expensive Sogalbi-gui is reserved for special occasions. In fact, it was only in the 1980s, when the nation became relatively affluent, that average Koreans could afford to dine out at Galbi restaurants. At the time, many Galbi restaurants opened in the outskirts of big cities, invariably including the word 'garden' or 'park' in their name. People donned their best clothes and celebrated special occasions at galbi 'gardens' and 'parks,' and were seen leaving with toothpicks dangling from their mouths. The conspicuous use of toothpicks was a way to show off and let everyone know that they had dined on Galbi.



Re-assembled and Grilled Short Ribs

Tteok galbi

[Grilled Short Rib Patties]

Tteok-galbi (grilled short rib patties) was a royal beef dish once enjoyed by kings. Its name comes from its similarity in appearance to steamed rice cakes. One story has it that as palatable as Sogalbi-gui (grilled beef short ribs) is, it was not befitting for kings to bite off the meat from the ribs and, hence, Tteok-galbi was born. It is a dish that is easier to eat, although not necessarily easier on the chef.

Royal Cuisine Learned from Court Ladies and Exiled Nobilities

Koreans love their Galbi. However, it is not easy for children or the elderly with weak teeth to pull the meat off the bones. In this case, Tteok-galbi is a perfect alternative. Originally a royal dish, Tteok-galbi is now a famous local specialty of Gwangju and Yangju, Gyeonggi Province and Damyang and Hwasun, South Jeolla Province. The recipes of Gyeonggi Province Tteok-galbi are said to have been imparted from court ladies in the late Joseon era. Minced rib meat is seasoned and wrapped around the bone to create a shape resembling steamed rice cakes. This is char-grilled to produce a wonderfully chewy texture.

The recipe for South Jeolla Tteok-galbi was reportedly passed on by nobilities in exile. The most famous of these is Damyang Tteok-galbi, which was passed on by Song Hui-gyeong around 650 years ago. Tteok-galbi, which exclusively uses rib meat, is best when infused with the aroma of charred oak.

A Combination of Prime Galbi Meat, Marinade, and Smoky Fragrance

Near Songjeong in Gwangju, South Jeolla Province there is a Tteok-galbi street specializing in Tteok-galbi made with half beef and half pork. Its history dates back to the 1950s, when Choe Jeo-ja began to sell Tteok-galbi with Bibimbab (rice mixed with vegetables and beef). Back then in the Songjeong market, there was a slaughterhouse and a cattle market, which provided her with easy access to meat and the opportunity to create inexpensive, savory Tteok-galbi. Her recipe requires that the meat be hand-kneaded for a long time in the seasoning made from nearly 20 ingredients including kelp, pear and honey to ensure thorough marination. Also, a special sauce is intermittently brushed on the meat while it is slowly grilled over charcoal.

* Song Hui-gyeong was sent to Japan in 1420 as an emissary of King Sejong during the early Joseon period. There, he was pressured to sign using the Japanese reign title instead of that of the Ming dynasty. He refused to give into this demand, and won the admiration of the Japanese king.



A Sumptuous, Affordable Dish for the Masses

Dwaеji galbi gui

[Grilled Spareribs]

Dwaеji-galbi-gui (grilled pork ribs) is more affordable than the expensive So-galbi-gui (grilled beef ribs), and its soft texture makes it easy to chew and digest. Pork ribs are marinated in a mixture made with plenty of minced ginger and black pepper to remove any porky smell. Because of the captivating image of sizzling Dwaеji-galbi-gui on the grill, this dish is often featured in foreign newspapers.

Dwaеji-galbi-gui, A Barrel of Flavor

Among the numerous Dwaеji-galbi-gui restaurants, the most famous are the ones in the Mapo Dwaеji-galbi-gui street in Seoul. Prior to the 1950s, the Mapo marina bustled with cargo boats, and timber and grains that had traveled down the Han River in the boats passed through Mapo to reach central Seoul. For this reason, there were many sawmills and granaries around the dock. In the evenings, workers used to look for something to 'scrub' sawdust from their throat, and cheap eateries selling pork and Makgeolli (Korean rice wine) opened up in the region to meet their needs. However, with the construction of railroads, the dock was closed down, and the blue-collar workers were gradually replaced with white-collar workers and local merchants, looking to enjoy some Soju (Korean distilled spirit) with snacks on their way home from work. Unlike today's restaurants that have individual ventilators for each table, Dwaеji-galbi-gui diners in the past were filled with so much smoke that one could hardly see. Meat was grilled on a table made out of junk oil barrels, containing briquette stoves inside. These oil-drum tables would be surrounded with three or four stools barely large enough to sit on. But the food and drinks were merry, and all doors and windows were kept open to disperse the smoke.

A Nutritious Treat When Served with Lettuce, Perilla Leaves and Raw Garlic

Regardless of the times, Dwaеji-galbi-gui is always served and eaten the same way. The meat is wrapped in lettuce or perilla leaves along with raw garlic and chili pepper, and dipped in Ssamjang (a spicy, pungent mixed sauce). Sometimes, a small fire-resistant bowl containing sesame oil is placed on the grill to cook garlic. Seasoning determines the taste of Dwaеji-galbi-gui, because the dish uses the first five ribs of a pig, which tends to have an unpleasant porky smell. Seasoned with a soy sauce marinade, Dwaеji-galbi-gui is usually eaten with raw vegetables to achieve nutritional balance.



Koreans' Favorite Meat Dish

Bulgogi

[Bulgogi]

Bulgogi is prepared by marinating thin slices of beef and grilling them. In the past, the royal court and Yangbans (gentry class) in Seoul used to call it 'Neobiani,' which means wide meat slices.

The Origin of Bulgogi: Maekjeok in Goguryeo

Traditional grilled meat dishes in Korea originated from Maekjeok. 'Maek' was the north-east region of China, and is also a reference to Goguryeo which is one of the earliest Korean kingdoms. Maekjeok is a dish of barbecued beef skewers and, according to folklore, it evolved into the current Bulgogi because the introduction of the grill made skewers obsolete. It is said that bulgogi was the only dish in the world that marinated the meat before it is grilled. There is a similar dish in China, but the meat is grilled or ground first and then mixed with sauce. Because the marinated Maekjeok did not require the use of sauce, it was also called Mujang (no sauce). It eventually evolved into a royal court dish Neobiani (sliced grilled beef) the predecessor of Bulgogi.

Mixing Rice with the Juicy Broth

Bulgogi tastes sweet and flavorful because it is marinated in a sauce consisting of honey, thick soy sauce, black pepper, chopped garlic, and scallion. Back when restaurants did not offer as many choices as now, Koreans usually ate Bulgogi when they dined out on special days. While the Bulgogi sizzled on a plate moist with its juice, adults ate the meat and drank Soju (Korean distilled spirit), and children mixed their rice with the sweet gravy.

President Obama and Bulgogi

Bulgogi has long been a popular dish served to guests. Many foreigners visiting Korea are impressed by Bulgogi, and state guests are no exception. Indeed, U.S. President Barack Obama, a known fan of Korean cuisine, cites Bulgogi as one of his favorite lunch choices. During his 2009 state visit to Korea, Cheongwadae (presidential residence) gladly obliged and served Bulgogi at the official dinner



The Gravy Which Is Tastier than the Meat **Ttukbaegi bulgogi**

[Bulgogi in an Earthenware Pot]

Ttukbaegi-bulgogi (clay pot Bulgogi) is made by adding water and cooking bulgogi in a clay pot. The meat becomes tender and releases succulent juices into the water, resulting in a gravy which is great for mixing with rice. This dish is a good alternative for single diners who crave bulgogi but lack the company.

Ttukbaegi Straight onto the Table

Ttukbaegi (clay pot) is a convenient cooking vessel. It does not break even when placed over a direct flame and can be set on the table even when it is hot. Once heated, the pot retains heat and keeps the food warm for the duration of the meal. Many dishes are served in a clay pot, including seolleongtang (ox bone soup), galbitang (short rib soup), doenjang-jjigae (soybean paste pot stew), kimchi-jjigae (kimchi pot stew), and yukgaejang (spicy beef and scallion soup). However, ttukbaegi-bulgogi is the only dish that has 'clay pot' in its name.

Bulgogi Ideal for Individual Dining

Up until about two to three decades ago, bulgogi was consumed like a hotpot dish. Back then, the bulgogi grill was in a concave shape unlike the convex ones used these days. Vegetables were placed in the hollowed middle and marinated meat placed alongside the higher rim. The meat broth flowed down into the center and cooked the vegetables. The resulting gravy, rich with the flavor of bulgogi, was delicious when mixed with rice. With the passage of time, however, people began to prefer the meat over the rice-gravy mix. Restaurants complied with the demand, and introduced convex grills to cook bulgogi. But people started to miss the combination of bulgogi gravy and rice, and so the idea of cooking bulgogi in a clay pot emerged. Ttukbaegi-bulgogi is popular, especially among lone diners as well as children and elders who like the soft texture of rice mixed moistened with gravy.



The ttukbaegi, a traditional Korean clay pot, is still in wide use even today. Varying in size and shape, they are perfect for holding hot foods like jjigae (stew) in the wintertime, since they are slow to cool once heated.



Vegetables Wrapped in Seared Beef **Sogogi pyeonchae**

[Pan-Fried Beef with Vegetables]

Sogogi-pyeonchae (pan-fried beef with vegetables) is a cold summer dish made by freezing smoked strip loin, slightly thawing it, and sliced into thin pieces. The lean strip loin combined with various vegetables makes this fresh-tasting dish a classic.

An Appetizer Favored by Foreigners

Surprisingly, many foreigners who have tried Sogogi-pyeonchae say that it is the most memorable among the dishes they had in Korea. They say it's because the dish does not feel foreign, and does not taste strange or disagreeable. Although it is seared, it is close to Yuk-hwe (Korean beef steak tartare). However, because vegetables are wrapped in the beef slices and it is dipped in a spicy mustard soy sauce, it is easier to eat than regular uncooked meat. Its popularity can also be attributed to the fact that cold dishes are somewhat easier for foreigners to consume than the many boiling hot dishes, and that it goes well with red wine. It is elegantly presented with a small mound of vegetables in the middle, and thin meat slices placed around it.

Hot Sogogi-pyeonchae

Sogogi-pyeonchae can also be eaten hot, cooked at the table. The beef is seasoned with salt and black pepper, coated with sweet rice powder and pan-fried. A variety of sliced vegetables are placed on the meat slice, rolled up, and dipped in sauce. Surprisingly, even tougher cuts of meat become tender when coated with sweet rice powder and cooked. Sweet rice powder takes the greasy edge off the meat while preserving its flavor and nutrients.

Perilla Leaves, a Fragrant Accompaniment

Among the many vegetables that accompany Sogogi-pyeonchae, perilla leaves are the most appetizing. The leaves, commonly consumed by Koreans, are rich in antocyanin, a potent antioxidant. Perilla leaf extract is known to be highly effective in suppressing inflammation, allergic reactions, fat cell division and genes that accumulate fat cells. For such effects, it is often used to treat obesity.



Koreans' National Pork Dish
Samgyeopsal gui
[Grilled Pork Belly]

Samgyeopsal, meaning 'three layered meat,' is the Korean name for pork belly. The pork belly is Koreans' favorite cut of pork. Some even say that Koreans consume all the pork belly in the world. Naturally, pork belly is the priciest pork cut in Korea.

Koreans' Insatiable Appetite for Pork Belly

The pork belly consumption in Korea exceeds imagination. According to statistics, the average Korean eats a serving of Samgyeopsal-gui (grilled pork belly) once every four days. Koreans take their pork belly seriously: there is a 'Samsam Day (March 3rd),' designated for eating pork belly, and there is a spike in pork belly sales during the spring yellow dust season owing to the popular belief that pork belly will melt away the dust accumulated in the throat. The disproportional popularity of pork belly results in sluggish sales of other pork parts, and triggers campaigns promoting pork fillet, loin, shank, shoulder, and hock. 'Mok-samgyeop' and 'Ogyeopsal' are recently coined terms reflecting the popularity of pork belly. Mok-samgyeop (three-layered pork neck) was made to promote the cheaper neck/shoulder cut by associating it with Samgyeopsal, whereas Ogyeopsal (five layered pork) is actually Samgyeopsal with the skin attached.

When Did Koreans Begin to Eat Pork Belly?

Once the most unpopular and fatty cut of pork, pork belly was transformed into the tastiest cut by Gaeseong merchants who are traditionally known for their commercial flair. Raising western pig breeds, they discovered how to obtain the ideal pork belly. Pigs are omnivorous and can be fed on leftover food. People in Jeju Island even raised them in outhouses, raising them on human waste. As Gaeseong merchants alternated fiber-rich millet with condensed feed, they found the combination to produce the perfect pork belly with streaky layers of fat and meat. The savory blend of fat and meat captured the palate of Koreans, sending the price and popularity of Samgyeopsal soaring.

Samgyeopsal-gui and Changing Trends

The early 1990s saw the rising popularity of pork belly slices grilled on iron pot lids. Shortly after, there was the Daepae samgyeopsal-gui (shaved pork belly), which made it even cheaper than most restaurant meals. In the late 1990s, Misutgaru samgyeopsal-gui (pork belly with a three grain powder) was the rage, and since 2000, it became fashionable to marinate pork belly in red wine or sprinkle it with green tea powder to reduce the greasy taste.



The Perennial Side Dish
Saengseon gui
[Grilled Fish]

A piece of Saengseon-gui (grilled fish) somehow completes the Korean meal. Consequently, people have devised various ways to grill fish. Among them, sprinkling coarse sea salt and grilling, or intermittently brushing the fish with a soy sauce mix during grilling are the two most common ways of grilling a fish. Sometimes, Gochujang is used for less salty fish. Gulbi-gui (grilled dried yellow croaker) and Godeungeo-gui (grilled mackerel) are the most popular grilled fish dishes.

Gulbi-gui and Rice, a Perfect Summer Meal

Gulbi (dried yellow croaker) is made by salting and drying yellow croaker. It is non-greasy and has a slight sweet taste. The most delicious and thus expensive Gulbi comes from Beop-seongpo off the coast of Yeonggwang, South Jeolla Province. In the past, people called dried yellow croaker 'Gubi-jogi' (bent yellow croaker) because the dried fish would bend in shape when it was strung in dried rice straw ropes and hung to dry. The word Gubi-jogi evolved into 'Gulbi' as time passed. Gulbi fans say the summer is the best season to eat Gulbi. Well-dried Gulbi flesh is torn into strips and dipped in gochujang mixed with sesame oil. This is eaten with cooked rice immersed in icy cold water: nothing else is needed.

Gangodeungeo-gui, Originated in the Remote Valley of Andong

Because Andong, North Gyeongsang Province is landlocked, in the past, mackerel had to be transported all the way from the Ganggu Port in Yeongdeok. It took at least two days to deliver the fish through narrow mountain roads. Before the introduction of freezers, mackerel merchants salted mackerel to keep it from spoiling. Surprisingly, the salted mackerel proved to be much better than raw fish when grilled, thanks to the combination of the salt and the enzymes produced right before decomposition. As a result, Andong Gangodeungeo (salted mackerel) was born. The dish became so famous that everyone visiting Andong tried it, and through word of mouth Andong Gangodeungeo became famous, resulting in the emergence of commercial mackerel products labeled 'Andong Gangodeungeo.'



There is a wide variety of seasonal fish caught on the Korea peninsula. The favorites have been yellow croaker in spring, salted mackerel in summer, cutlassfish in fall and herring in winter.



Weathered in the Wind and Sun Hwangtae gui

[Seasoned and Grilled Dried Pollack]

Hwangtae-gui refers to seasoned grilled dried pollack. Whole well-dried pollack is split and butterflied, cut into pieces, and grilled while brushing liberally with a Gochujang sauce mixture. Hwangtae-gui, an ideal winter delicacy, is popular as an accompaniment to Soju (a Korean distilled spirit) but also as salty side dish to be eaten with rice.

Myeongtae: Nothing goes to Waste

For Koreans, Myeongtae (pollack) is more than just a fish. It has traditionally been closely associated with good fortune. The remnants of this custom can still be seen today when dried pollacks are tied in string and hung in a newly moved-in house or a newly open business. Dried pollack is one of the key foods offered in sacrificial rites and ancestral rites performed on holidays. There is no other fish that is consumed as thoroughly as dried pollack: the eyes are stir-fried and served as a side dish with drinks; the steamed skin is consumed as wraps; the innards are salted and fermented to become a side dish called Changnan-jeot; salted and fermented gills are known as Agami-jeot; and salted and fermented roe becomes Myeongnan-jeot.

Hwangtae: Repeatedly Frozen and Thawed in the Wind

Hwangtae refers to a certain variety of dried pollack. However, it is different from the regular dried Pollack (Bugeo) in that it undergoes a curing process that requires extreme care. It is repeatedly frozen and thawed in mountainous areas where temperatures fall below -10°C . Hwangtae is made by hanging whole pollacks for 40 to 90 days in a windy, freezing outdoor environment. Over the course of weeks, the pollack slowly dries, freezes at night and thaws during the day. After repeated contractions and expansions, the fish finally turns into a yellowish Hwangtae. Although it is still a form of dried fish, Hwangtae appears plump as if rehydrated in water. The flesh is white, soft and has a savory taste free from any fishy smell. The key to producing the tastiest possible Hwangtae is the weather. If it continues to be severely cold, Hwangtae reaches its peak. In contrast, if the weather warms up early, that year's Hwangtae turns out as Meoktae, a term that describes a darker and less ideal Hwangtae.



The Best Cure for Hangovers

Hwangtae has long been recognized for cleansing the body of toxins, and protecting the liver. It has been widely used in soup specially prepared to cure hangovers. In fact, many people say they feel much better after a night of heavy drinking when they consume Hwangtae.

The easiest way to eat Hwangtae is to brew it into a stock. Once the stock has been prepared by simmering Hwangtae, you can drink it at leisure or use it in cooking.



A Nutritious Dish for Tight Budgets

Chuncheon dak galbi

[Chuncheon-Style Spicy Chicken]

Chuncheon-dakgalbi is a dish prepared by pan-frying chicken that has been marinated in a mixture of Gochujang and vegetables in a large round iron skillet. Known together with Makguksu (buckwheat noodles with vegetables) as a representative local dish of Chuncheon, it is now enjoyed nationwide, particularly among college students on limited budgets.

A Splendid Makeover of ‘Gyereuk’*

Dakgalbi restaurants in Inje and Wontong, Gangwon Province are among the local attractions enjoyed by people visiting loved ones stationed at the military bases that populate the area. Chuncheon-dakgalbi first gained fame as an inexpensive dish favored by students. Although several opinions remain as to who exactly first created Dak-galbi, the general consensus is that it was Kim Yeong-seok, a restaurateur once specializing in pork in the Jungangno area of Chuncheon in the 1960s. Even the local government of Chuncheon has validated the story as part of the city’s official history in order to establish the city as the origin of Dakgalbi. One day in the early 1960s, Mr. and Mrs. Kim, who were then selling pork dishes in their restaurant, ran out of pork. They rushed to a nearby store, bought two chickens and cooked them in the same way they would cook pork ribs. They split and spread out the chicken meat like pork ribs, grilled and sliced it, and discovered it has a unique savory flavor. They later introduced grilled chicken marinated in a sugary sauce and it became a big hit.

Dakgalbi: Value for Money

The owners of Dakgalbi restaurants proudly claim that the portions, price, and taste of Dakgalbi are unrivaled. Today, Dakgalbi is reputed as a great dish that combines chicken with an assortment of healthy vegetables. It has grown popular among international diners as well. The recipe for Chuncheon-dakgalbi is as follows: Cut up and marinate a medium-sized chicken in a Gochujang sauce for seven to eight hours. Cut cabbage, sweet potato, carrot, perilla leaves and other vegetables and greens into bite-size pieces. Heat a well-oiled pan and stir-fry the chicken pieces together with the vegetables. Everyone has their favorite ingredient: some will eat the rice cake sticks (Garaetteok) first, while others go for sweet potatoes. Thus, almost every Dakgalbi restaurant offers extra ingredients that can be added to the pan according to different tastes. Once most of the pan is empty, rice is stir-fried in the remaining sauce for a finishing touch.

Chicken is good for the skin and can be helpful to patients with osteoporosis. Rich in protein, it stimulates brain activity as its abundant essential amino acids increase the levels of excitatory neurotransmitters and help relieve stress.

*Gyereuk

When Cao Cao of China first said the word ‘Gyereuk,’ his subordinates could not figure out what he meant. The word means ‘chicken ribs’ which is not as fleshy as the leg or breast, yet a shame to just throw away. In this sense, the word ‘Gyereuk’ is used as a metaphor for something that you hesitate to abandon even though it is of little use to you.



A Hearty Dish for True Gourmets

Gopchang gui

[Grilled Beef Tripe]

The term Gopchang refers to curved chitterlings. Gopchang is divided into So-gopchang and Yang-gopchang. So-gopchang indicates the small intestine of a cow while Yang-gopchang refers to its first stomach (rumen). A cow has four stomachs: The first is called the rumen (Yang); the second the reticulum (Cheonyeop); the third the omasum (jeolchang); and the fourth the abomasums (Makchang).

Beef Innards as a Superb Ingredient

The taste of Gopchang-gui (grilled beef tripe) hinges on eliminating any unpleasant odors. Marinating beef chitterlings in onion juice in the refrigerator for two to three hours helps tenderize the meat and purge odors. In the past, Gopchang was usually eaten by commoners who could not afford more expensive meat. Accordingly, Gopchang houses were mainly humble affairs equipped with large oil drums made into tables and a couple of shabby chairs. However, things have changed dramatically. As Gopchang became a delicacy and more expensive than regular meat, today's Gopchang restaurants have become high-end and now sport stylish interiors. When cooked to perfection, the outside of the chitterling is crispy and golden brown, while the inside remains soft and juicy. With a savory taste and pleasant texture, Gopchang-gui is welcomed by drinkers as the best accompaniment to Soju (distilled spirit).

Gopchang, a Perfect Accompaniment for Drinking

Gopchang is perfect to invigorate weakened constitutions and to speed postpartum recovery. As a high-protein, low-calorie food, it protects the lining of the stomach and helps break down alcohol. In this sense, Gopchang is a welcome dish for business entertainment or at office parties.



Gopchang is a high-protein food. As long as cholesterol intake is kept in check, it can be considered a health food richer in iron and vitamins than other forms of meat. It reinvigorates weakened constitutions and is perfect for patients recovering from illness. It is also known to be highly effective in postpartum recovery.



A Food for Both Health and Beauty

Ori gui

[Grilled Duck]

Duck is well-known for cleansing the body and ridding it of toxins. It is also a restorative food for patients coming off surgery or recovering from illness. These days, duck has also become popular as a beauty food, since its high collagen content was discovered to be beneficial for the skin.

A Boon of a Meal

In the past, duck was given the cold shoulder. The meat was unpopular, because it lacked the lean and savory quality of chicken and gave off an unpleasant gamy smell. There are even old phrases that reflect the negative perceptions toward duck, such as ‘to hold out a duck’s foot after eating a chicken,’ which refers to a guilty person brazenly claiming innocence. Another phrase ‘duck eggs in the Nakdong River,’ means someone feeling unwanted and useless. However, duck has suddenly become popular recently due to new evidence showing that duck helps to detoxify the body and strengthen the immune system and build resistance. According to studies, ducks fed on sulfur, which can be toxic in nature, ends up having medicinal effects. Duck meat contains up to 45 percent unsaturated fatty acids, a substantially higher number compared to other meats. Unsaturated fatty acids do not build up in the vessels, and therefore one can eat as much duck as one wants without worrying about the health consequences. With proper cooking, duck meat becomes tender, flavorful, and low in fat content. Now, Ori-gui (clay oven baked duck) is considered a more luxurious dish than Tongdak-gui (roast whole chicken).

Grilled Cuisine with a Unique Flavor

Grilling is the most fundamental form of cooking and usually involves applying dry heat of 200-300 degrees Celsius to food. Grilled at high temperatures, duck meat acquires a flavor different than when it is boiled in water. At high temperatures, dehydration occurs on the surface of the meat, leading to the concentration of flavorful compounds. In addition, during the process of grilling, a smoky aroma similar to that of a charcoal fire is added, providing a distinctive flavor.



The Mountain Meat **Deodeok gui**

[Grilled Deodeok]

The aroma of wild Deodeok (bonnet bellflower root) can be sensed even from a great distance. Sweet and pleasantly bitter, it is claimed that wild Deodeok grows on dewdrops in the mountainsides. Deodeok is rich in fiber and has earned the nickname 'mountain meat' because of its firm, chewy texture. In China, deodeok has been used purely as a medicinal herb, but Koreans have used it mostly for cooking.

Evidence that Food Is Medicine

Since ancient times, wild Deodeok has been referred to as 'Sasam (ginseng grown on sand),' because of the belief that its pharmacological effects are comparable to wild ginseng. According to old sayings, Deodeok can relieve even the nastiest stomach cramps. Deodeok is similar to ginseng or wild bellflower in appearance but has a distinct flavor. It is preferred over bellflower roots, because the root is more fragrant and tender. Young leaves of Deodeok can be steamed and eaten as a side dish or as wraps, while the roots are used in various dishes including Gochujang-jangajji (Deodeok roots pickled in red hot pepper paste), Saengchae (juliened Deodeok root salad), Jaban (salted Deodeok roots), Gui (grilled Deodeok roots), Nureumjeok (pan-fried Deodeok roots), Jeonggwa (candied Deodeok roots) and Deodeok root liquor. Among these, it is Deodeok-gui (grilled Deodeok roots) that makes the best side dish for rice. Deodeok-gui, prepared by brushing the roots with a Gochujang sauce and grilling it in an oiled pan or over charcoal flames, has a deliciously tender and crunchy texture.



How to Peel Wild Deodeok

After cleansing the surface of the wild Deodeok (bonnet bellflower) with a scouring pad, soak it in boiling water for four or five seconds. Because the sticky saponins smear into the Deodeok, it becomes easier to peel with a knife or other tool. Do not rinse the peeled Deodeok, just lightly pound it with the back of a knife or dowel until tender and then prepare it to taste grilled or pickled in red chili paste.



The Rainy Day Griddlecake

Pajeon

[Green Onion Pancake]

Pajeon is a mixture of wheat flour batter and scallions shallow-fried on a griddle. It goes wonderfully well with chilled Dongdongju (floating rice wine). Recently, restaurants specializing in Pajeon (green onion pancake) have proliferated with the revived popularity of Makgeolli (Korean rice wine).

A Dish to Share with Friends

Because green onions are rich in vitamins and minerals, and seafood has a high protein and calcium content, Pajeon is a dish that provides a balanced nutrition all by itself. The savory smell and crispy texture makes for a mouth-watering treat. Pajeon tastes even more delicious when shared with friends. The moment a sizzling Pajeon arrives at the table, everyone digs in with their chopsticks and finishes the plate in no time. The anxious wait for the next one is all part of the fun. Preparing Pajeon is also fun - pouring the mixture into the pan, pressing down with a spatula, waiting until the edges turn crispy and golden brown, and flipping it over with style.

Pajeon: Perfect on a Rainy Day

For some reason, people associate rain with Pajeon. Some say it's because the sound of rain-drops hitting the ground or a window sill reminds people of the sizzle of spattering oil. This theory may not be totally groundless. According to an experiment conducted by the Sound Engineering Research Lab of Soongsil University, the two sounds have almost identical vibrations and frequencies. There is another physiological explanation: rain increases the discomfort index and decreases blood sugar levels. In response to these changes, the human body naturally craves foods made from starchy wheat flour. A more layman's view would be that, on a wet, cold day, people simply crave for food that will warm and comfort them.



Dongrae-pajeon

The most famous pajeon is Dongrae-pajeon. Dongrae is a hot springs town in the Busan area, located in between Eonyang, an area famous for minari (Korean parsley) and green scallions (jjokpa), and Gijang, a fishing town with plentiful seafood. Dongrae-pajeon is cooked in the following way. Line up thin green onion stems on a cast-iron griddle. Place five or six different kinds of seafood over the scallions. Cover with another layer of green onions and Korean parsley (minari). Let the vegetables cook while intermittently spooning hot oil over them. Pour a batter made of ground rice - half sweet and half regular rice - followed by beaten eggs to coat the pancake and add color. Dongrae-pajeon is unrivaled in terms of portion size and taste. This cooking method has become the most popular way for making Pajeon, and Dongrae-pajeon and has become synonymous with Pajeon itself.



The Commoners' Feast **Bindaetteok**

[Mung Bean Griddlecakes]

Made with ground mung beans, pork, mung bean sprouts and fiddleheads, Bindaetteok (mung bean griddlecakes) has a savory flavor and a crispy crunch. For an ideal cake with crunchy edges and a moist center, it should be shallow-fried with on a griddle over low heat.

Alms for the Poor in Famine Years

Bindaetteok is also called binjatteok. There are many stories on the origin of the dish. According to one, a Bindaetteok was a small griddlecake used as a prop to support the towering piles of pan-fried meats placed on the ancestral rites table, or Gyojasang (large traditional Korean dining table). As this griddlecake became a commonly eaten food among the poor, it became known as Binjatteok ('Binja' refers to the poor) and grew in size. Another story has it that in the old days, Jeongdong, a district of Seoul, was nicknamed Bindaegol for its plentiful Bindae (bedbugs). Coincidentally, a number of Binjatteok sellers lived along its streets. In this version of the story, binjatteok started to be called Bindaetteok, the compound of 'bindae' from Bindaegol and '-tteok' from Binjatteok. There is also a theory that Bindaetteok originated from Bingjeo, a pan-fried mung bean dish. Over time, Bingjeo changed into Bingjatteok, and then Binjatteok, and finally settled as Bindaetteok. It is well known that in the Joseon era, in years following a bad harvest, influential families prepared Bindaetteok and handed them out to the poor homeless people gathered around Namdaemun (South Gate) in Seoul, crying out 'Alms from a certain family!'

A Nutritious Fatigue Reliever

With its golden brown color and savory aroma, a slice of piping hot Bindaetteok delights the palate. As a popular song reminds us with the line 'If you don't have money, just go home and cook yourself some Bindaetteok,' this mung bean griddlecake was once regarded as a dish mainly eaten by the poor. It was especially popular in the northwestern regions of Korea. The dish, which was often cooked for guests, has become a favorite side dish for drinks. Mung beans, the main ingredient of Bindaetteok, are nutritious: it is rich in iron and carotene, and helps detoxify the body. When you feel physically or psychologically worn out, eating Bindaetteok is a great way to revive the spirit and boost energy.



Bindaetteok tastes much better when enjoyed after dipping in soy sauce mixed with spring onions, garlic, crushed roasted sesame seeds and other flavorings.



A Delicacy Made of Aged Sour Kimchi

Kimchi jeon

[Kimchi Pancake]

Kimchi-jeon (kimchi pancake) is an easy dish that can be prepared simply by pan-frying chopped kimchi mixed into a flour batter. For an even more special Kimchi-jeon, one or two additional ingredients can be added to the mix, such as ground pork or chopped squid, which both pair well with kimchi.

A Dish for Many

The joy of serving jeon (pan-fried delicacies) lies in the instantaneous response from those who eat them. Although, as with other foods, jeon is especially delicious when eaten in company, it is particularly fun for a group to share Kimchijeon together on a rainy day. As soon as a piping hot Kimchijeon is served, it is descended upon and torn apart with chopsticks or fingers. To provide a savory accent to kimchijeon, season the chopped kimchi ahead of time. Moreover, when mixing the batter, using kelp broth instead of water gives it an even deeper flavor. Kimchijeon has enjoyed enormous popularity in other countries, especially in Japan, ever since it was introduced in 'A Journey in Search of Korea's Beauty,' a travel photo essay authored by Bae Yong-jun, a famous Korean actor and a leader of the 'Hallyu,' or Korean Wave (a boom in Korean pop culture in overseas countries). It is said that Kimchijeon was featured in a variety of TV programs targeting ethnic Koreans abroad.



The perfect treat for a rainy day, crispy and nicely-textured kimchijeon becomes even tastier with the addition of kimchi liquid to a flour batter blended with well-ripened kimchi.



For Sharing on Joyous Occasions

Modeum jeon

[Assorted Pan-Fried Delicacies]

Jeon (pan-fried delicacies) can be made from meat, fish, shellfish or vegetables seasoned with salt and black pepper and dipped in a flour and egg batter before being pan-fried golden brown. Jeon is a familiar yet still very special dish among Koreans.

A Healthy, Tasty All-time Favorite

On holidays such as Seol (New Year's Day) or Chuseok (fall harvest festival), as well as on feast days celebrating special occasions, the Koreans of the past constructed a temporary oven by stacking rocks in the corner of the yard, set a cauldron lid over this stove, and cooked Jeon. With the exception of the cauldron lid, things haven't changed all that much. Korean people still prepare Jeon for special events. Indeed, as a holiday draws near, Korean TV home shopping channels feature specialized electric frying pans designed to cook a large number of Jeon at the same time. The beauty of Jeon is that it preserves the natural flavor of the ingredients without complex seasoning or sauces. In addition, traditional pan-frying makes food tasty without the excess oil of deep-fried dishes. Jeon, especially Modeumjeon (assorted pan-fried delicacies), is a good one-dish-meal that isn't too heavy but pleasantly filling. As a matter of fact, in overseas Korean restaurants, Jeon is often the default dish of choice, much like the popular steak of western restaurants.



Koreans have long enjoyed a wide array of Jeon thanks to the abundance of so many different seasonal ingredients. Any piping hot jeon, freshly cooked to a golden brown and briefly dipped in savory soy sauce, is beyond comparison.



HWE

[RAW DISHES]

Koreans have a long history of enjoying Hwe (sliced raw fish or meat). Fish is sometimes eaten raw as Seangseon-hwe, but meat is also enjoyed parboiled as Yuk-hwe, or seasoned and mixed with various vegetables (Hwe-muchim). Fresh, raw beef is julienned and seasoned to create a Korean-style beef steak tartare called Yuk-hwe, a superb dish with excellent nutritional value.



The Delectable Taste of Fresh Fish Hwe

Saengseon hwe

[Sliced Raw Fish]

As a peninsula and seafaring nation, Korea has historically eaten many fish hwe dishes, though perhaps not as much as the Japanese. Ancient cookbooks contain records of raw seafood dishes such as Ungeo (Korean grenadier anchovy), Mineo (croaker), sea cucumber, clam, waehap (common orient clam) and oyster. It is said that in the summer when food tends to spoil more easily, Hwe was eaten off a bed of ice.

Freshly Caught Fish Hwe

Nowadays Hwe is dipped in a spicy vinegared Gochujang paste, but before the 17th century, when chili peppers were yet to be introduced, Hwe was dipped in mustard and vinegar soy sauce. There are two types of Saengseon-hwe based on the color of the fish flesh: red and white. White-flesh fish such as Neopchi (Olive flounder), Ureok (rockfish), Dom (sea bream) or Nongeo (sea bass) are considered high-quality ingredients for Hwe because, being firmer in texture than red-flesh fish such as Bangeo (yellowtail), tuna or mackerel, they provide a wonderful chewing experience. Most Japanese sashimi is made from aged raw fish: raw fish is usually left to age for a certain time before it is consumed. In comparison, most Koreans prefer the chewy texture of freshly caught fish.

Mak-hwe, Sekkosi and Gwamegi

Mak-hwe is a platter of roughly cut chunks of raw fish eaten with a Makjang (fast-fermented soybean paste) dip or served on a bed of shredded vegetables to be mixed with Makjang. Those who lived by the sea during their childhood talk about still finding Mak-hwe more appetizing than the uniform Saengseon-hwe slices: they cannot forget the fresh taste of fish sliced immediately after being caught from the sea. While a horrifying sight to some foreigners, eating wriggling bits of Sannakji-hwe (live common octopus cut and served immediately) is an all-time favorite treat in Korea. An even more strange sight is that of someone eating Sebalnakji-hwe - which is only for the adventurous gourmet. The Sebalnakji (baby octopus with thin tentacles) is held by the head, the tentacles straightened out with the fingers, and devoured whole. Another hwe cherished by Koreans is Sekkoshi, or slices of small fishes with the bone in. Though no longer available now, traditionally Busan locals enjoyed whale meat Hwe and Pohang people enjoyed Gwamegi (freeze-dried Pacific herring) as drink accompaniments. Due to a shortage of herring, the original ingredient for Gwamegi, nowadays mackerel pike is often used in its stead. Mackerel pike is dried by sea breeze, and then the semi-stiffened flesh is cut, topped with thinly sliced scallion and sea mustard, and served with a Gochujang dipping sauce.



Savory Morsels that Melt in the Mouth

Yuk hwe

[Korean Beef Tartare]

Yuk-hwe consists of a mound of thin, seasoned, and julienned lean fresh uncooked beef. It is indigenous to Korea and not found in neighboring Japan or China. A lean prime cut of beef is sliced thin and seasoned with soy sauce, minced garlic, sesame seeds and sugar. Adding sliced pear into the mix will result in a savory taste that is hard to forget.

Yuk-hwe: Meat Lovers' Choice of Meat

Koreans have long enjoyed various types of meat as Yuk-hwe. Thinly julienned beef is of course the most common ingredient of Yuk-hwe, but various parts such as beef kidney, liver and Cheonyeop (omasum) are also mixed with the same seasoning to make what is called Gap-hwe. Dongchi-hwe is Yuk-hwe made with raw pheasant meat. Traditionally, pheasants were slaughtered in the winter, gutted, and left to freeze on ice or snow. Then the hardened flesh was cut into thin slices and marinated with vinegar soy sauce, ginger and scallion.

The Light Taste of Fresh Lean Beef

One taste of Yuk-hwe is enough to convert anyone with a prejudice against eating raw beef. Many people who think uncooked meat will be tough are in for a pleasant surprise. Because meat protein immediately coagulates when cooked over heat, cooked meat is tough unless there's sufficient marbling, but Yuk-hwe is both lean and tender. The meat seems to melt as soon as it touches the tongue, filling the mouth with a light yet wonderful flavor. The sliced pear served with Yuk-hwe contains digestive enzymes that tenderize the meat, which is why pear juice is often used for marinating Bulgogi and Galbi (short ribs).

The True Taste of Beef

The most recent trend in beef Hwe dishes is to eat it plain with minimal seasoning: cuts of lean beef are chopped into bite-sized bits and dipped in a simple salt and sesame oil sauce or vinegared Gochujang sauce. Originally, this was how Yuk-hwe was prepared in the Jeolla Provinces, where many households raised cattle, but it has now become popular nationwide for being the best way to enjoy the unique flavor of fresh beef.



A Nose-clearing, Eye-watering Delicacy

Hongoe hwe

[Raw Skate Fish]

Hongoe-hwe is fermented raw skate fish (Hongoe) served with vinegared Gochujang sauce or seasoned soy sauce. Aged Kimchi can also be served on the side to wrap the bite-sized hwe slices. Thinly sliced Hongoe-hwe can be mixed with Korean parsley (Minari) and vinegared Guchugang, resulting in a spicy salad. In the Jeolla Provinces, no matter how many delicacies are served, no feast can be truly complete without a pungent plate of Hongoe-hwe.

Addictive Hongoe-hwe: One Bite Is Never Enough

Many people who have never tried Hongoe-hwe think of it as a dare, repulsed by its unique and pungent smell. Yet the taste is heavenly, and one bite is said to be enough to get one addicted. Gourmets have even ranked the parts of Hongoe-hwe, and the winner was without contention the skate's glossy, slimy nose. People will say that you are not qualified to discuss the taste of Hongoe if you haven't tasted it. Placing a piece of Hongoe nose, dipped in salt, in one's mouth results in an immediate stinging sensation that starts at the tongue, climbs up the nose, and finally makes the eyes swell with tears. The sensation is hard to describe and could be a numbing experience for first timers.

The part voted in second place was the wing, and the third was the tail. Both parts are enjoyed for their soft and crunchy texture.

The Stronger the Smell of Ammonia, the Better the Hongoe-hwe

Skate caught fresh in the waters surrounding Heuksan Island in South Jeolla Province are the most valued, but the best places to eat fermented skate are the nearby cities of Mokpo and Naju. Residents of Heuksan Island prefer Hongoe-hwe made with unfermented skate. Fermenting skate is a complex process. In the past, the skate was sometimes wrapped in hemp or rice straw and covered in compost in order to accelerate fermentation with the heat. The smell of fermented skate fish is not the result of rotting, but because of the ammonia that is produced while bacteria grow during the fermentation process. The famous Samhap is a dish that slices the fermented skate skin and seasons it with a sweet and spicy sauce, and serves it with 3 year-old aged kimchi and boiled pork. This dish is the famous Samhap, or 'medley of three.' On its own, Hongoe-hwe can be served with a simple vinegared Gochujang sauce, mustard soy sauce, or chili powder with salt. The beverage that best accompanies Hongoe-hwe is Makgeolli (Korean rice wine) because it softens the stinging taste and strong smell of the Hongoe. Hongoe-hwe can be mixed a heap of Korean parsley (minari) and seasoning to make Hongoe-hwe-muchim. In this case, the Hongoe-hwe is first immersed in Makgeolli vinegar and then drained of excess liquid, to preserve the soft and crunchy texture.



KIMCHI, JANGAJJI, JEOTGAL

[KIMCHI, PICKLES, SALTED SEAFOOD]

The characteristic that best defines Korean cuisine is the use of fermentation as a cooking method.

Kimchi is a uniquely Korean creation made with a main vegetable that is first pickled in salt to draw out excess water, then mixed with other vegetables and Jeotgal (salted seafood) and left to ferment.

Rich in vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber and Lactobacillus, kimchi is a healthy pickle when consumed in moderation.

Jangajji (pickled vegetables) and Jeotgal are also uniquely Korean fermented pickles, each with a flavor of its own depending on the ingredients and method of fermentation.



Satisfying with Every Meal **Baechu kimchi**

[Kimchi]

Baechu-kimchi is made by stuffing salted napa cabbages (Baechu) with a mixture of julienned white radish, red chili pepper powder, minced garlic, chopped scallion, Jeotgal (salted seafood) and other ingredients. Kimchi, along with a bowl of steamed rice, is an essential part of every Korean meal. When consumed in moderation, kimchi has various health benefits, and, as the most well-known and familiar Korean dish to foreigners.

A Traditional Dish with 1,500 Years of History

Kimchi is a fermented dish made with vegetables and a variety of seasoning ingredients. There are currently over three hundred varieties, but when it was first made prior to the Three Kingdoms Period (57-668AD), making kimchi required a very simple recipe of salting and storing napa cabbages in an earthenware vessel to ferment for some time.

In the old days, kimchi was an important source of vitamins in the winter when fresh vegetables are unavailable. What was originally a simple salted pickle now requires various seasonings, but the modernization of the kimchi-making process has allowed it to become well known throughout the world. Kimchi varies by climate, geographical conditions, local ingredients, methods of preparation and preservation.

Kimchi as an Ingredient for Jjigae and Fried Rice

In the cold northern regions, kimchi is mild and made with less salt or chili powder, and is more watery. It is also sliced in larger pieces. Salted shrimp or yellow croaker is usually added as Jeotgal. In the warmer south, however, more salt, Jeotgal and chili powder are added for preservation purposes, resulting in spicier, saltier and drier kimchi. Kimchi is low in calories, high in dietary fiber and vitamins A, B and C. The protein-rich Jeotgal provides amino acids, which helps kimchi balance the carbohydrate-based Korean diet of rice. After around ten days of aging, Baechu-kimchi ripens and acquires a crisp and tangy taste. While Baechu-kimchi is delicious in itself, it also serves as an ingredient for various dishes. Kimchi pot stew made with Mugeun-kimchi (kimchi aged for over a year) and chunks of fatty pork is irresistible. Kimchi can be stir-fried with rice, and kimchi liquid can be used as a sauce to mix with noodles or rice.



Geotjeori: Freshly-seasoned Kimchi

Geotjeori is napa cabbage mixed with a seasonings and spices right before it is served and eaten like a fresh salad. Foreigners, who are not used to the taste of fermented Baechu-kimchi, will find Geotjeori easier to enjoy. An extra spicy version of Geotjeori is a must with Kalguksu (handcut noodle soup) or Sujebi (Korean pasta Soup).



Simple Colors and Clean Taste
Baek kimchi

[White Kimchi]

Baek-kimchi, or white kimchi, is made without adding red chili powder. Even until the 20th century, whole Baechu-kimchi and Baek-kimchi were not unlike each other: only the former contained red chili powder, and the latter, thin slices of fresh red chili peppers. To enhance the clean taste of Baek-kimchi, salted shrimp should be the only Jeotgal (salted seafood) used if any, and the liquid should be strained several times.

A Mild Taste Loved by Men and Women of All Ages

The original kimchi was a type of Baek-kimchi. As red chili powder was introduced to Korea after the Japanese Invasion in 1592, Koreans began making spicy kimchi. But that did not mean the end of white kimchi. Instead, expensive ingredients such as pear, pine nuts, jujubes, chestnuts, oysters were added and it evolved into a higher quality kimchi. Baek-kimchi ripens and sours faster than kimchi which contains red chili powder. And because of its mild taste, Baek-kimchi is good for the elderly, young children or patients who should avoid overly spicy foods. It is also good for foreigners who don't want their kimchi too spicy.



Health Benefits of Baechu

Baechu (napa cabbage) is an excellent source of dietary fiber with a bounty of calcium and vitamin C. The dietary fiber found in baechu helps stimulate intestinal activity, easing bowel movements.



Crisp Slices in a Cold, Refreshing Liquid

Nabak kimchi

[Chilled Water Kimchi]

Nabak-kimchi is a watery Kimchi that contains napa cabbage and white radish slices as its main ingredients. It is usually served in the spring, but the fresh taste can be enjoyed in any season. Nabak-kimchi is placed on the table for ancestral rites, and served with Tteokguk (rice cake soup) for the first meal of each Lunar New Year. Because retaining the freshness is essential to a good Nabak-kimchi, wealthy families were said to have made it every other day.

The Perfect Kimchi to Eat with Rice Cakes

Nabak-kimchi means kimchi made with square-cut vegetables ('Na-bak-Na-bak' adds to the verb, 'to cut,' the meaning, 'into squares'), but it could also mean kimchi made with white radish, considering that white radish was once called 'Nabok.' Nabak-kimchi is not only served with regular meals, but is also with snacks such as rice cakes, Mandu (dumplings), Yaksik (sweet rice with nuts and jujubes) or other sweets. This is because the fresh tangy liquid stimulates the palate, and the digestive enzymes in the white radish calm the stomach. Kimchi liquid is sometimes used in the broths for Guksumari or Naengmyeon (wheat or buckwheat noodles in cold broth), but it is especially good to wash down sticky rice cake pieces. The 'kimchi soup' in the saying, 'drinking kimchi soup before getting any rice cakes,' refers to the liquid of Nabak-kimchi.

Differences between Nabak-kimchi and Dongchimi

Nabak-kimchi and Dongchimi are watery varieties of kimchi made with radish. Dongchimi is prepared purely with radishes and can be stored and consumed over long periods, whereas Nabak-kimchi is created with the addition of thin green onions (Jjokpa), apple and pear in order to slightly sweeten the liquid. The fact that Nabak-kimchi has to be consumed right when it is made also separates it from Dongchimi. Red chili pepper powder is added to the Nabak-kimchi liquid to enhance its refreshing taste.



Dongchimi

Dongchimi is a radish water kimchi mainly intended for winter storage. Its clean and refreshing liquid is used in broths for noodles or Naengmyeon (wheat or buckwheat noodles in cold broth) and it is also often served as a complement to Tteok (rice cake) or steamed sweet potato.



The Perfect Relish for Seollong-tang or Gom-tang

Kkakdugi

[Radish Kimchi]

Kkakdugi is a Kimchi made by salting white radish cubes, draining excess water, then seasoning the cubes with red chili pepper powder, salted shrimp, Korean parsley (Minari), scallion, minced garlic and scallion. When Seolleong-tang (ox bone soup) started gaining international popularity, so did Kkakdugi, the Kimchi that is served with Seolleong-tang.

Suk-kkakdugi and Jeong-kkakdugi

Gukbap (rice in soup) tastes best when sour Kkakdugi liquid is stirred into the broth. Kkakdugi also goes especially well with meat-based soups such as Seolleongtang (ox bone soup) or Gomtang (thick beef soup), because the sour Kimchi liquid reduces the greasiness of the meat stock. Since ancient times, Kimchi has been prepared with great care, using different methods to suit the needs of different people. This was also the case with Kkakdugi. For elderly people with weak teeth, gums and digestive systems, Suk-kkakdugi, a softer version of Kkakdugi made with white radish softened by pre-boiling and mixed with finely-chopped salted shrimp. Pregnant women were given Jeong-kkakdugi, where the radish was cut into perfect cubes to express the wish for a healthy, perfect baby.



Radishes contain saccharides, amino acids, minerals, and amylase while boasting seven times the vitamin C of apples. Shredded radish or radish juice, with its pungent and peppery flavor, is rich in compounds that are believed to aid in cancer prevention and enhance stomach function.



A Crunchy Cucumber Delight

Oi sobagi

[Cucumber Kimchi]

Oi-sobagi is a Kimchi made by making cross-shaped slits in cucumber pieces, and stuffing it with a seasoned mixture of chives, garlic and red chili powder. In the past, Oi-sobagi was eaten in the hot summer when people lost their appetites. But nowadays, with cucumbers available all year round, Oi-sobagi has become seasonless.

A Cooling, Appetizing Summer Kimchi

Cucumbers have high water content and known to cool the body. Meanwhile, chives are known to have a warming effect. Thus the two perfectly compliment each other when used as ingredients for Oi-sobagi. Another cucumber treat is Oiji (salted cucumber), which is made by stacking cucumbers in a earthenware crock, sprinkling with salt, and pouring boiled, salt water over them. Oiji is salty yet also refreshing and makes a great summer side dish. Seasoning sliced Oiji with chili powder, minced scallion, crushed garlic and sesame oil will give you Oiji-muchim (seasoned salted cucumber) which has a soft and crunchy texture. It goes especially well with a bowl of steamed rice mixed in cold water.

For anyone who craves a refreshing treat during a long, stifling hot spell, cucumber is a perfect snack for its refreshing taste and crunchy texture. This vegetable is ideal for hikers, as it slakes both thirst and hunger.

Health Benefits of Garlic Chives

Garlic chives, a supplementary ingredient in Oisobagi, are known to be effective in preventing colds. Their aryl radical substances help stimulate digestion and strengthen the intestines, while providing energy boosting effects as well.





Salty and Savory Pickled Vegetables

Jangajji

[Pickled Vegetables]

Jangajji is vegetables pickled and ripened over a long time in salt or soy sauce. Some types of Jangajji are made by placing vegetable pieces in soybean paste, soy sauce, fast-fermented soybean paste (Makjang) or Gochugang and left to slowly ferment.

Even Kings Relied on Jangajji to Cure Lost Appetites

When vegetable pieces are left for several months in a Jang (salt brine or fermented bean paste), they absorb the Jang flavor and can be served right out of the crock. But, more often, it is seasoned with various spices and sesame oil. Due to the saltiness of the Jangajji, only one or two kinds of Jangajji are enough for a meal. With the introduction of refrigerators, it has become easier to preserve foods. As a result, Jangajji is consumed less nowadays and has been relegated to a 'side dish of last resort.'

However, in the old days, Jangajji was considered a treat, even in the royal courts where it was called by the special name Janggwa. Even the king, who was surrounded with various delicacies from the land and the sea, would sometimes lose his appetite, and on such occasions, Janggwa would be served to stimulate his taste buds.

A Simple Accompaniment to Rice

The choice of Jang (salt brine or fermented bean paste) to use for Jangajji depends on the type of vegetable. Garlic Jangajji is made by soaking young garlic bulbs in diluted vinegar to remove the sharp edge, and pickling them in sugared soy sauce. Using salt instead of soy sauce will result in a lighter and crispier garlic Jangajji. The cross section of a bulb resembles a flower, and the individual cloves are crunchy and bursting with flavor. Chili pepper leaf, eggplant and sesame leaf Jangajji are made in the same way. Tucking perilla leaves in soybean paste in autumn and taking them out to eat in early spring is called Doenjang-kkenip-jangajji. It has a surprising yet delightful flavor that is sharp and intense. Garlic spears and cucumbers taste best when pickled in Gochujang. The vegetables should be semi-dried when pickling in soybean paste or Gochujang. When ripe, the paste is scraped off the surface of the Jangajji, and then seasoned with sugar and sesame oil.



Tucking sesame leaves in soybean paste (Doenjang) in autumn and leaving them over the winter, will produce pickles with a surprisingly sharp and intense flavor.



The Crab that Steals Rice

Jeotgal

[Salted Seafood]

Jeotgal (salted seafood) is made by salting and preserving seafood. The Korean Jeotgal has a distinctive taste which is developed in the process of salt-fermentation. Along with soybean paste, soy sauce, Gochujang, and kimchi, Jeotgal is one of the five basic fermented pickles in Korean cuisine. While it is sometimes served as a separate side dish to rice, Jeotgal is also widely used to add flavor to various dishes including kimchi.

Great Variety and Wide Usage

Jeotgal made with shrimp, anchovies, and oysters are the most common types consumed as an everyday dish, but dozens of different varieties exist based on seasonal catches. Whereas fermentation in agricultural regions centered on soybeans, fishing villages created numerous Jeotgals by fermenting the flesh and innards of fish and shellfish. Salted and fermented seafood can also be found in the cuisines of India, Vietnam and Thailand, countries known for hot climates and an abundance of seafood, and the anchovies commonly used in Italian cuisine are also fermented. Yet no country has a richer variety of salted and fermented seafood as Korea. Jeotgal is intense with flavor, and served in a small amount which is plenty to finish a bowl of rice. And this is why Jeotgal is another so-called 'rice thief.' The first record of Jeotgal can be found in Samguksagi.* At the wedding of Silla's King Sinmun and Lady Kim, the ceremonial Paebaek table was set with rice, wine, oil, honey, Jang, Meju (fermented soybean), dried beef and 'Jeotgal.' During the Joseon period, there were largely four types of Jeotgal: seafood fermented in salt; in a mixture of salt, liquor, oil and Sichuan pepper (Cheoncho); in salt and yeast; or in salt, malt and sweet rice.

Jeotgal by Region and Season

In Korean cuisine, Jeotgal plays an important role in defining the flavor of regional cuisines. As the ocean catches are different by region each region has their own favorite Jeotgal and the variety is endless. Some popular Jeotgals that are eaten with rice include pollack roe, pollack innards, squid, and clam Jeotgals. Meanwhile, shrimp, anchovy, croaker, corvina and cutlass fish Jeotgals are mostly used as ingredients for kimchi. Making Jeotgal may seem easy at first sight since the only process required is salt-fermentation.

However, Koreans are quite particular about their Jeotgal, and it is not that easy considering the many different fish varieties and flavors. It is also important to keep the Jeotgal in the right place where the temperature and humidity are ideal for fermentation. Gwangcheon salted Saeujeot is made by fermenting salted shrimp in an underground care that maintains a temperature of 15~16°C all year long, resulting in a flavor that is famous for its subtlety and richness. As the ideal habitat of oysters is where freshwater and seawater meet, the best Eorigul-jeot (seasoned oyster Jeotgal) is produced in Ganweoldo where the river meets the Yellow Sea.

*Samguksagi is the history of the three ancient Korean kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla. This collection of historical records was compiled by Goryeo-era historian Kim Busik.



Crab at its Best
Ganjang gejang
[Soy Sauce Marinated Crab]

Ge-jang (pickled crab), or Gejeot, is pickled whole crabs in boiled soy sauce brine. A traditional Korean dish enjoyed since before the 17th century, Ganjang-gejang tastes best when it is made with egg-bearing crabs. Properly preserved, the roe-filled Ganjang-gejang can be enjoyed all year round.

A Superb Combination with Rice

Ge-jang is only made with live crabs, which are scrubbed clean, turned upside down and drained, then placed in a container and submerged in soy sauce. Garlic cloves and whole chili peppers are thrown in for a spicier taste. Three days later, the soy sauce is drained, boiled, cooled, and poured over the crabs. After this process is repeated three to four times, the Ge-jang is kept in the container ready to eat. According to Gyuhap-chongseo*, an old collection of household advice, Ge-jang was made by keeping live crabs in a crock with bits of beef overnight, and when the beef was all eaten up by the crabs, soy sauce was poured into the crock. It is said that feeding crabs with beef enhanced the taste of the crab meat. In the Jeolla Provinces, Ge-jang is commonly made by chopping up live skittering sea crabs and immersing the pieces in a seasoned soy sauce for a day or two. This fresh Ge-jang is called Beoltteok-ge-jang, because it has to be eaten Beol-tteok (quickly) or it will go bad.

Rice in a Shell

Restaurants famous for their Ganjang-gejang have their own soy sauce mixture that they have been using for years. Some established names even have crocks that were first filled with soy sauce over twenty years ago and never completely emptied, but only replenished once in a while. A bowl of rice vanishes in no time when eaten with Ganjang-gejang which has achieved just the right degree of saltiness. Nevertheless, true Ganjang-gejang enthusiasts are especially fond of a certain part: the carapace (top shell). Naturally, this does not mean that they eat the shell itself, but rice mixed in it. The combination of rice, creamy tomalley, bits of crabmeat, and crab-flavored soy sauce is so good that the taste defies description.

*Gyuhapchongseo is a home economics encyclopedia compiled by Lady Bingheogak Yi in 1809 that organizes and compiles matters related to the necessities of life.

Crab Roe Bibimbap

One popular dish at specialized Ganjang-gejang houses is crab roe Bibimbap (rice mixed with crab roe), a dish designed for those who crave Ganjang-gejang but find it bothersome to have to pick the crab meat from its shell. The edible contents of Ganjang-gejang, steamed rice, raw egg yolk, dried laver flakes and sesame oil are all mixed together in a bowl. The wonderful aroma of sesame oil is what makes Ganjang-gejang lovers choose crab roe Bibimbap over regular Ganjang-gejang with rice.



TTEOK & EUMCHEONG-RYU

[RICE CAKE, BEVERAGES]

Tteok (rice cake) is filling enough to substitute rice, but it can also be a snack, as well as an essential item for banquets or ancestral rites. Korean teas and beverages are distinguished by its flavor, aroma, as well as properties that promote health and wellness. The sweet, sour, bitter, astringent and spicy tastes all have a role in reinvigorating the body, and thus it is important to harmonize and preserve individual tastes.



Skillfully and Elaborately Prepared

Tteok

[Rice Cakes]

The old Korean expression, “Tteok (rice cakes) instead of Bap (steamed rice)” implies how tasty Tteok is. According to another old saying “No matter how much rice one eats, there is always room for Tteok.” Tteok was never left out on holidays or festive occasions, but it was also an everyday food made with available seasonal ingredients

Bite-sized Gyeongdan Balls

Gyeongdan refers to small balls of rice cake prepared by mixing sweet rice powder with boiling water, shaping the dough into balls about the size of chestnuts, boiling them in water, and coating them with different kinds of Gomul (dressing powder).

The small, round shape is cute, and thanks to the Gomul preventing it from drying out, Gyeongdan remains soft for a while. Chalsusu-gyeongdan, made with glutinous sorghum powder in celebration of a new-born baby’s 100th day or first birthday, is coated with mashed red beans in the belief that the red color wards off evil spirits.

Sweet Kkultteok: One is Never Enough

In Korea, the expression ‘Gulttukgatta’ is commonly used to mean ‘eagerly wishing for something.’ Here Gulttuk is derived from Kkultteok (rice cake filled with honey). This is originally from the dialect of the Gyeongsang Provinces and is an onomatopoeic word that mimics the sound like swallowing Kkultteok. In the past, when food was scarce, Kkultteok was the food of dreams. The desire for Kkultteok could be so great that when people were longing desperately for something, they used the expression ‘Kkultteokgatta’ to mean ‘I want it as much as Kkultteok.’

Yaksik: Made of Healthy Ingredients

Yaksik is a seasonal delicacy traditionally eaten on Jeongwol Daeboreum, a Korean holiday which falls on the 15th day of the first lunar month. Yaksik derives its name from the use of honey among its ingredients. In olden days, honey was often considered to be a medicine, which explains the word ‘Yak’ meaning ‘medicine.’ Thus pan-fried Gochujang mixed with honey was called Yakgochujang, while deep-fried honey cookies were named Yakgwa. Due to the healthy ingredients such as sweet rice, chestnuts, jujubes, pine nuts and honey, Yaksik was traditionally perceived to be a great health food.

Pan-fried Hwajeon Embellished with Flower Petals

Hwajeon (sweet pan-fried rice cake with flower petals) is made by mixing sweet rice powder with boiling water, shaping the dough into small balls, arranging flower petals on top, and pan-frying them in a small amount of oil. Depending on what edible flowers are in season, Jindallae-hwajeon was made with azaleas in the spring, Jangmi-hwajeon with rose petals in the summer, and Gukhwajeon with chrysanthemum flowers in the fall.

During the Joseon era, the queen would go on an outing to the Biwon Garden of Changdeok Palace on every third day of the third lunar month (Samjidal). Alongside a stream known as the Okryucheon, round Hwajeons would be made with sweet rice dough and decorated with azalea petals. This traditional custom was called Hwajeonori, literally meaning ‘merrymaking with Hwajeon.’ Commoners also enjoyed their own Hwajeonori.



Refined Colors, Sweet Tastes

Hangwa

[Korean Sweets]

The history of traditional Korean sweets, or Hangwa, is deeply related to the cultural practice of ancestral rites. In seasons when no fresh fruits were available, fruit-shaped sweets were made from powdered grain and honey. The branches from these fruits were added to the dish before it was placed on ancestral rites tables. During the Joseon Dynasty, whenever a banquet was held at the royal court, confectionaries such as Yakgwa (deep-fried honey cookies), Dasik (tea confectionery), or Gangjeong (deep-fried sweet rice puffs) were piled high on the banquet tables. This practice was called ‘Goinda’ meaning ‘stack up high’ and an average of 24 different kinds of hangwa were piled as tall as 55 centimeters to create an imposing banquet table.

Crispy Crunchy Gangjeong

Gangjeong (sweet deep-fried rice puffs) is notoriously difficult to make. Sweet rice powder is mixed with liquor and honey and steamed. A small amount of honey is added once again, they are cut into slices one half centimeter thick, three centimeters long and one half a centimeter wide, and then left to dry in the shade. After soaking in liquor overnight, they are dried and deep-fried in oil. Fried Gangjeongs are coated in grain syrup and then coated with other ingredients such as beans or sesame seeds. As demonstrated by the popular phrase ‘hollow Gangjeong,’ well-made Gangeong is deep-fried until it puffs up and becomes airy in the center. Gangjeong is naturally healthy, as it uses medicinal herbs and natural ingredients. For instance, the puffed cereal coating of Gangjeong may be dyed pink with gromwell (Jicho), yellow with pine pollen, or brown with cinnamon powder.

Sweet Dasik that Melts in the Mouth

Dasik was made with powdered rice, chestnuts or beans combined with honey or syrup and shaped in a patterned wooden mold (Dasik-pan) into decorative forms. The shapes include a letter, flower, of geometric figure.

In the Joseon Dynasty era, Dasik was an essential part of the table setting for special ceremonies, such as ancestral rites, weddings, and holidays. The compressed sweets also served as an emergency medicine. Heukimja-dasik, made with black sesame seeds, was useful for treating food poisoning, vomiting or diarrhea. Dotori-dasik or acorn Dasik were effective for suppressing coughing. Sanyak-dasik contained medicinal ingredients and was good for improving the health of the feeble.

It was, in fact, so often served to elderly parents that they came to be called Hyoja-dasik, meaning dasik for filial piety. Dasik is soft, sweet, and melts in the mouth. They were frequently served with tea or for dessert.

Sweet and Savory Yakgwa

Yakgwa refers to Yumilgwa (deep-fried grain cookies) made with wheat flour mixed with honey and sesame oil, pressed in a Yakgwa-pan (Yakgwa frame), and slowly deep-fried.

Afterwards, the sweets are dipped in syrup or honey to firm up the texture. According to shape, Gungjung-yakgwa (royal court Yakgwa) refers to an elaborate flower-shaped version molded in a Yakgwa frame, while a bite-sized, square-shaped variety is known as Gaeseongmo-yakgwa. Yakgwa boasts a long tradition and is said to have first been made for Buddhist sacrificial rites during the United Silla period. With a soft texture and sweet flavor, it is one of the most popular sweets that children rush to eat at the end of an ancestral rite.



Sweet and Soothing Aroma

Cha

[Tea]

Green tea has been savored ever since the Three Kingdoms period. Tea culture was introduced from China, flourished in Korea, and spread to Japan. Fruit tea made with sugar-preserved fruits such as Yuja (citrus) and Maesil (green plum) has also been popular since ancient times. However, the most famous Korean would be ginseng tea which is well-known as a tonic drink.

Green Tea, One of the World's Top Ten Health Foods

There are many theories about the origins of Korean tea culture: some say that it started when seeds were introduced from the Tang Dynasty and planted throughout the Jiri Mountain area during the Three Kingdoms period; others claim that it was introduced from India when King Kim Su-ro, the founder of Gaya Kingdom*, married a princess of the Ayutthaya Kingdom. Others assert that wild tea had been already growing throughout in the southern region.

Tea can be categorized into green tea, Oolong tea or black tea, depending on the degree of fermentation. Green tea is made by roasting freshly-picked leaves. There is a special verb 'Deok-nen-da' meaning 'to roast tea leaves' in Korean. Oolong tea is half-fermented and black tea is fully fermented.

Green tea is clearly the most popular of the three. Ujeon tea is green tea made by roasting leaves freshly picked in the early spring, and is also known as Cheotmul (the first infusion) tea. Ujeon tea is made from tender young leaves with a delicate and subtle flavor and is very expensive, since the preparation process is so difficult that only small amounts are produced.

Green tea was designated by Time Magazine as one of the world's top ten health foods. The catechins in green tea have been proven to be antioxidants which delay the aging of cells. Green tea is also good for the skin and weight control. Boseong in South Jeolla Province is Korea's largest producer of green tea, and its winding green tea terraces have become a famous tourist destination.

Sweet, Sour Maesil Tea

Maesil is the fruit of the plum tree. In early spring, clusters of small green plums can be seen hanging from the branches of trees amid the white petals. Unfortunately, there is only a brief period when green plums (Maesil) are available in the market. Maesil tea strengthens the digestive system and prevents diarrhea and constipation. It also helps cleanse the body of toxins and boosts immunity against food poisoning. Green plums (Maesil) produced from late May through mid-June is mixed with sugar in a one to one ratio, stored in a cool place for several months, and then strained for a sweet-and-sour fermented Maesil syrup with a sweet aroma. This syrup can be diluted with water to one fifth its strength to make a Maesil drink. If diluted with hot water, it becomes Maesil tea. Add Soju, and it becomes fragrant green plum liquor. Green plums are rich in organic acids, as well as citric acid, and break down fatigue-inducing lactic acid. It is also rich in calcium which particularly beneficial for women.

* Gaya Kingdom is an ancient nation founded by King Kim Su-ro in A.D. 42.

Yuja Tea: Citrus for Combatting Fatigue

Yuja (citrus or yuzu) is an aromatic citrus fruit that is effective against arthritis and neuralgia, and also aids digestion. Yuja-cheong, or Yuja syrup, is made in the same manner as Maesil syrup, by mixing yuja with sugar. Most commonly, Yuja tea is made by adding warm water to this concentrate, but Yuja tea can also be brewed with sliced fresh Yuja fruit or the rind. A single Yuja fruit contains one and a half times the vitamin C of an orange and twice that of a tangerine. Yuja tea is consumed primarily in the wintertime as an effective relief for hangovers and also for preventing colds.

Ginseng Tea, Elixir of Immortality

The Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huang, who longed for eternal life, was known to have sent 500 couples to the shores of the Yellow Sea on a mission to obtain an herbal elixir. History tells that what was brought back was Korean ginseng. Ginseng has long been used as a general cure-all. It was mostly consumed in the form of tea which can be made from fresh ginseng (Susam), red ginseng (Hongsam),* and dried ginseng (Geonsam). Sometimes, jujubes can be added for flavor. In order to make aromatic ginseng tea, ten grams of ginseng is boiled in 500 milliliters of water. Ginseng is rich in saponin which helps break down fats, aids digestion, and stimulates cellular enzymes, thus boosting the metabolism. Ginseng's anti-oxidative properties have an anti-ageing effect.

* Red ginseng is made with a special technique of par-boiling and drying fresh ginseng. It is known to have first been produced some 1,000 years ago.





Sujeonggwa



Sikhye

Flavor, Aroma and Well-being Eumcheong-ryu

[Beverages]

Korea's definitive drinks are Sujeonggwa (cinnamon punch with dried persimmon) and Sikhye (sweet rice punch). These beverages, made with medicinal herbs or grains to enhance the flavor and aroma and to boost energy, are usually served as dessert.

Hwache (punch) is a classic fruit drink. Sour Omija-hwache (five flavor berry punch) is enjoyed mainly in the winter. Hwache is prepared by soaking pieces of sweet fruit in honey water.

Spicy and Sweet Sujeonggwa

Sujeonggwa is made by simmering ginger and cinnamon sticks, sweetening it with sugar or honey, and adding dried persimmons and pine nuts.

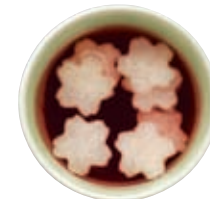
Ginger and cinnamon are well-known for their medicinal qualities, but they also give off a spicy and aromatic flavor when boiled in water. Sujeonggwa is a cold drink normally consumed in winter, since the dried persimmons which are the principle ingredient are available only after late autumn. This drink is generally presented to guests who make courtesy calls on New Year's Day. The combined flavor of spicy cinnamon coupled with sweet dried persimmons and pine nuts is wonderful. In the old days, the whole family would sit together in the evenings and drink Sujeonggwa with floating bits of ice.

Sikhye, a Sweet Digestive Drink

Sikhye is a traditional dessert beverage made by fermenting rice in malt oil (Yeot-gireum). Also known as sweet liquor (Gamju), it is called Sikhye if you drink it together with the grains and Gamju when the liquor is separated out. Sikhye's essential ingredient is malt oil made from sprouted barley. Since malt oil is rich in amylase, a diastatic enzyme, Sikhye has been traditionally offered as dessert drink after eating heavy meals on holidays. It was a favorite digestive tonic after overindulging during the days when other forms of digestive aids were not readily available.

Omija-hwache, a Ruby Colored Soft Drink

Clear red-colored Omija (schisandra berry) tastes sweet, sour, bitter, salty and spicy, all at the same time. This is where the name Omija meaning 'five flavor berry' came from. If you store well-dried Omija berries in water, the color of the liquid turns into a translucent ruby red color. With the addition of small pieces of sweet fruit, it becomes Omija punch. Sweet and crunchy pears are a common partner.





Liquor Rich in Lactobacilli and Dietary Fiber

Makgeolli

[Korean Rice Wine]

Makgeolli is a traditional Korean alcoholic beverage made from grains such as sweet rice, regular rice, barley and wheat, and malt. As Makgeolli is made by fermenting grains, the lees (Suljigemi) settle on the bottom. If you siphon off the clear liquor, it is called Cheongju. Makgeolli is an undistilled spirit before separating out the Cheongju, which is the origin of its name, meaning ‘not distilled.’

Undistilled Makgeolli

Makgeolli is called by many names: Takju meaning ‘cloudy liquor,’ Nongju meaning ‘farmers’ liquor,’ Baekju meaning ‘white liquor,’ and Dongdongju or Bueuiju meaning ‘wine with floating grains of rice.’ The fact that it has so many names reflects its popularity among common people.

Cheongju, the clear liquid which rises above the rice sediment as the wine matures, is fifteen percent alcohol, while Makgeolli is diluted to five to six percent.

Treasure Trove of Nutrients

Aside from the alcohol, the bulk of Makgeolli is pure nutrition. Other than the 80 percent water and six to seven percent alcohol, Makgeolli consists of two percent protein, 0.8 percent carbohydrates, 0.1 percent fat and ten percent dietary fiber, along with vitamins B and C, lactobacilli and yeast. It fully deserves its nickname: ‘a treasure trove of nutrients.’ One milliliter of undiluted Makgeolli contains tens of millions of lactobacilli.

Makgeolli Cocktail

Even those unaccustomed to Makgeolli can enjoy Makgeolli cocktails. All sorts of different concoctions are available. Frozen Omija (schisandra berry) juice can be ground with a spoon or puréed in a blender. With the addition of Makgeolli to the sherbet, highly aromatic, sour red Omija-makgeolli can be enjoyed. Strawberry- or citrus-makgeolli can be made in the same manner. Other variations made with ginseng and honey or red ginseng concentrates offer exceptional flavor and aroma and also are believed to provide health benefits.

Makgeolli’s Dietary Fiber

A bowl of Makgeolli contains dietary fiber ranging from 100 to as much as 1,000 times the amount found in so-called ‘fiber beverages.’ Dietary fiber promotes digestion, and helps prevent constipation and heart disease.

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