

Family Culture



Characteristics of the Korean family

The traditional Korean family is a large family of many generations with confucianism at its roots, but the modern form of family in Korea is a nuclear family consisting of parents and their children. Generally, children move out of the house when they grow up and get married, although some leave their parents and live independently when they become an adult. Because children tend to live longer with their parents compared to other countries, the Korean family is very tight-knit.

Language etiquette

The Korean language uses different expressions and terms depending on the age and status of the person being addressed, and relationship and intimacy with the person. The Korean language employs forms of honorific speech and normal speech.

- If the person you are addressing is older than you or occupies a higher position, you should use honorific speech. You should also use this form of speech when you are talking in public places.
- If the person you are addressing is your friend or your subordinate, you should use the normal form of speech. You should also use this form of speech when you are talking to children.

Manners and Etiquette for Special Occasions

Wedding



Wedding ceremonies in Korea today usually take place at a commercial wedding hall, hotel or church whereas traditional Korean weddings were held at the bride's house. Traditionally, all guests to a wedding need to prepare a gift money of some appropriate amount for the bride or groom. Guests to a wedding ceremony need to dress appropriately to respect and celebrate the occasion. Men should wear suits and women should avoid white or pink and should not wear anything dressier than the bride's wedding dress.

In Korea today, most wedding ceremonies and receptions take place at separate venues and guests are led to a reception hall for dining although some ceremonies are held at a dining hall with guests served with food. After the ceremony the bride and groom change to Korean traditional garments called Hanbok and move to a special venue where the traditional Pyebaek ritual takes place.

Funeral



A three-day funeral is common in Korea. The best time to visit is between 09:00 to 23:00 on the second day because the funeral parlor may not be ready on the first, and the coffin is carried out first thing in the morning on the third day. Mourners - both men and women - visiting the funeral house are expected to wear a black suit with black tie and shoes although other dark colors such as dark blue or gray will also be acceptable. On arriving at the funeral house, mourners exchange bows with the bereaved family members before paying their respect to the deceased person by offering incense. The incense offering is traditionally followed by two deep bows to the portrait and exchanging a single bow with the bereaved family and offering a word of condolence. Christians tend to give gentle nods rather than deep bows to express their condolence.



Tip Terms for addressing family members

In the Korean language, there are different terms for addressing family members and relatives on the maternal and paternal sides. When a couple gets married, the family of one's spouse is also regarded as his or her own and they should be addressed with the proper term.

Food Culture



Everyday Food

Everyday food



Koreans enjoy eating together and sharing their food. If they invite guests, they tend to serve better food than their usual food. A typical Korean meal mainly consists of steamed rice, soup, and side dishes. Types of soup include guk (soup), tang (soup or stew) and jjigye (stew), while the huge variety of side dishes includes seasoned vegetables, steamed dishes, boiled dishes, grilled dishes, stir-fried dishes, deep-fried dishes, and pancake dishes. However, the most representative side dish is of course kimchi. As an alternative to steamed rice, there are various noodle dishes (hot noodle soup, cold buckwheat noodles), sujebi (hand-pulled dough soup), and tteok (rice cake).

Korea's Staple Foods

Steamed rice

Steamed rice is a staple in almost all Korean meals and Koreans prefer sticky rice. Barley, beans and other grains are also added to rice.

Kimchi



Kimchi is a staple side dish served at almost every meal. Kimchi not only tastes great but is highly nutritional and easy to store. Vegetables such as radish, nappa cabbage, and cucumber are salted and seasoned with chili, garlic, green onion, ginger, and fermented fish; and are then sealed in a pot and left to ferment for a certain period. Winter kimchi (or gimjang) is prepared during late November to early December for the cold season when fresh nappa cabbage is not readily available. Koreans usually get together with their close relatives to make large amounts of winter kimchi.

Guk (soup), Tang (soup or stew), Jjigye (stew), Jeongol (hot pot)



• Soup and stew

- **Miyeok-guk**: Soup made with seaweed. Koreans eat this soup on their birthday.
- **Kongnamul-guk**: Soybean sprout soup.
- **Seollong-tang**: A rich soup made by simmering ox bones, brisket, and other cuts of beef for many hours.
- **Kimchi-jjigye**: Kimchi stew boiled with pork, vegetables and other ingredients.
- **Doenjang-jjigye**: Soybean paste stew boiled with tofu, radish, mushroom and onion.

• Side dishes

- **Bulgogi**: Thinly sliced beef marinated in sweet soy-based sauce and stir-fried with vegetables.
- **Galbi**: Grilled marinated beef or pork ribs.
- **Jeyuk-bokkeum**: Pork seasoned in spicy sauce and stir-fried with assorted vegetables.
- **Saengseon-gui**: Salted or seasoned grilled fish.
- **Saengseon-jorim**: Fish and vegetables braised with soy sauce and seasoning.



Popular Korean Dishes

Bajirak kalguksu (clam noodle)



This comforting noodle dish refers to flat noodles in broth made with littleneck clam. Other ingredients such as prawn and dried anchovy are also used to make the broth depending on the recipe. Clams are rich in protein, minerals and taurine, so the noodles are known as an invigorating and healthy dish.

Dakgalbi (spicy stir-fried chicken)



Dakgalbi, or spicy grilled chicken, is a popular food that originated in the city of Chuncheon. In the past, people who could not afford to buy pork ribs used to eat grilled chicken as a substitute. The grilled chicken dish was prepared by marinating chicken in a sweet, spicy sauce and grilling it like pork ribs. This dish became popular as a side dish consumed with alcohol, and soon it spread throughout Chuncheon. At present, some 30 restaurants in the city's downtown Myeongdong form a food alley called "Chuncheon Dakgalbi Alley".

Kkotgejang (live blue crabs in soy sauce)



Known as kkotgejang, this dish is made by preserving fresh live blue crabs in a special sauce made with soy sauce and various herbs. Dangjin in Chungcheong province is especially famous for this crab dish, because only fresh egg-bearing hen crabs caught in the spring season are used.

Samgyetang



Samgyetang is a chicken soup made with a whole young chicken stuffed with glutinous rice. Ginseng, jujube, ginger, garlic and various herbal spices are used to make the broth, and the soup is served with cubed radish kimchi. Samgyetang is especially popular as a summer stamina dish in Korea.

Jeonju bibimbap



Although there are various kinds of bibimbap to choose from, the traditional form of bibimbap which originated from Jeonju is particularly popular. The Jeonju bibimbap is made with rice steamed in beef broth, adding richness and flavor to the rice. Also, the bean sprouts add a crunchy flavor to the dish. Jeonju bibimbap is served in traditional brass bowl, which is known to preserve the taste and nutritional value of the ingredients.

Gomtang (ox bone soup)



Gomguk refers to ox bone soup, while gomtang is steamed rice topped with ox bone soup. Gomtang is cooked with beef and ox intestines to produce a rich flavor. It was originally sold in Korean traditional markets in Naju and became famous across the nation simply by word of mouth among merchants. Naju gomtang has now become a popular local food of Jeolla province, and is served in many restaurants nationwide.

Grilled black pork



A specialty food of Jeju-do. Jeju's black pigs have a long and narrow snout, short ears, a droopy belly and back, and shiny black fur. Jeju black pork is tender and juicy, and is also known to be high in unsaturated fat but low in cholesterol. Owing to the rising popularity of Jeju's black pork, many restaurants specializing in grilled black pork have sprung up in recent years.

Naengmyeon



Naengmyeon means "cold noodles". The noodles are thin and chewy and made with the flour and starch of buckwheat, potatoes or sweet potatoes. There are two varieties of Naengmyeon – mulnaengmyeon is served in cold broth and topped with boiled eggs and sliced pear, cucumber or radish, and bibim-naengmyeon is served with spicy red pepper dressing and eaten all mixed.

Street Foods

Gimbap



Steamed rice is either simply seasoned with salt or with baehapcho, a mixed seasoning of vinegar, sugar and salt. The rice is then placed on a sheet of dried laver. Strips of eggs, eomuk (fish cake), carrot, seasoned spinach and pickled radish are then placed in the middle to be rolled together into a cylinder shape. The roll is then cut into bite-sized pieces. The taste can be quite versatile, depending on the ingredients. Gimbap is a perfect meal option for when you're on the go!

Buchimgae/ Jeon



Buchimgae and jeon refer to many pancake-like dishes in Korean food. Meats, seafoods, vegetables and eggs are mixed with flour batter and then pan-fried with oil. Depending on the ingredients of choice, the pancakes are called differently. Examples include pajeon made of spring onion, kimchi jeon made of kimchi and bindaetteok made of ground beans. All go well with makgeolli (Korean rice wine).

Tteokbokki



Tteokbokki, along with gimbap and odaeng (skewered fish cake), is one of the most common foods sold by street vendors. Rice powder is steamed and made into a long cylinder-shaped rice cake called garae-tteok. This rice cake is cut into finger size pieces and cooked in a spicy yet sweet red pepper sauce called gochujang. Fish cakes and vegetables can be added depending on personal tastes.



Sundae



Sundae is a traditional sausage made of the lining of pig intestines stuffed with a mixture of bean curd, vegetables and glass noodles. It is usually dipped in seasoned salts and in some regions, it is served with ssamjang, a mixed paste of gochujang and doenjang (fermented soybean paste). Sundae can also be made with squid or mixed with glutinous rice.

Eomuk



Eomuk is usually referred to as odaeng. Odaeng is a kind of fish cake, made of ground fish. This fish cake is skewered and boiled in water along with radish and green onions. This popular snack is especially loved during the cold winter months. Some variants also contain sausage, cheese or rice cakes.

Twigim



Twigim is the general term for deep fried food covered with flour batter. Squid, dumplings, potatoes, shrimp and assorted vegetables are the usual main ingredients. They taste even better dipped in soy sauce or tteokbokki sauce.

Hotteok



Hotteok are chewy pancakes, usually stuffed with various combinations of sugar and walnuts or pine nuts. The recipe can be made adventurous by adding vegetables or cheese to the batter. The dough can come in a unique green color by adding green tea powder.