Nowadays, with healthy living and the "slow food" movement receiving spotlight worldwide, Korean cuisine is drawing much interest as a healthy cuisine with nutritional harmony and balance. In fact, Koreans have traditionally viewed food as "medicine," a means to keep oneself healthy and strong. 

Korea’s four seasons and geography have produced a good many seasonal dishes and foods that reflect the nation’s geographic characteristics, such as seafood from the ocean that surrounds the peninsula.

This book will attempt to explore Korea’s 5,000-year-old culinary culture and introduce to readers the historical, cultural, nutritional and philosophical background to this rich cuisine.
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“The noted Chicago eatery Blackbird has kimchi on the menu, and California Pizza Kitchen is developing Korean barbecue beef pizza. In Los Angeles, crowds are lining up for street food from a pair of Korean taco trucks called Kogi. The slightly sour-tasting Korean frozen yogurt served at the Pinkberry and Red Mango chains has inspired many imitators... Redolent with garlic, sesame oil and red chili peppers, Korean food is suddenly everywhere.”

“The New Hot Cuisine: Korean,”
*Wall Street Journal*, March 7, 2009
Chapter One

WHY KOREAN FOOD?

Korea’s culinary tradition stretches back as long as Korea itself: some 5,000 years. With a history like that, it should come as no surprise that Korean cuisine has developed an incredibly rich and varied menu reflecting the country’s unique geographic, climatic, and cultural conditions.

First and foremost, Korean cuisine is balanced and healthy: centered on Korea’s staple of rice, the Korean dinner table features an assortment of vegetable and meat dishes prepared in only the most nutritious ways. Indeed, Koreans of old very much regarded food as medicine to keep mind and soul healthy. In these health-conscious days, much attention has focused on the nutritional excellence of Korean food, with no lesser an authority than the World Health Organization praising Korean cuisine as a model of healthy eating. The nourishing quality of Korean cuisine is further enhanced by its use of medicinal herbs to produce a harmony of health and taste.
Korean cuisine is also characterized by its liberal use of fermented foods. Few nations match Korea’s variety of fermented dishes and the skill with which dishes are prepared. Korea’s internationally best known dish, kimchi, is also its most representative fermented dish. Many of Korea’s other better known foods, such as doenjang (soybean paste) and jeotgal (salted seafood), are also fermented.

Korean food is also vegetable-heavy. While Koreans do eat meat, Korean cooks have taken advantage of the countless vegetables and herbs produced in the country’s fertile fields and verdant mountainsides. These vegetables, in turn, are prepared through low-fat “slow food” cooking processes that accentuate taste while preserving nutritional integrity.