

# The Beauty of Korean Food:

## With 100 Best-Loved Recipes

Text by Institute of Traditional Korean Food  
Translated by Kiyung Ham • Richard Harris



The Research and Development Project for the Standardization of Korean Cuisine

## The Beauty of Korean Food: With 100 Best-Loved Recipes

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Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries, Republic of Korea

Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism, Republic of Korea

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First published in 2007

Tenth printing, 2011

by Hollym International Corp., USA

Phone 908 353 1655

Fax 908 353 0255

<http://www.hollym.com>

e-Mail [contact@hollym.com](mailto:contact@hollym.com)



Published simultaneously in Korea

by Hollym Corp., Publishers, Seoul, Korea

Phone +82 2 734 5087

Fax +82 2 730 5149

<http://www.hollym.co.kr>

e-Mail [info@hollym.co.kr](mailto:info@hollym.co.kr)

Sponsored by Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries and  
Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism, Republic of Korea

Photo by Masu Jeong, Gyeongho Baek

ISBN: 978-1-56591-253-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2007941002

*Printed in Korea*

\* This book is the results of the "Research and Development Project for Standardization of Korean Cuisine" achieved by Institute of Traditional Korean Food with the supports of Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries and Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism, Republic of Korea.

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# **CHAPTER I.**

## **AN OVERVIEW OF KOREAN FOOD**

1. The Culture of Korean Food
2. The Ingredients of Korean Food
3. The Kinds of Korean Food
4. Table Settings for Korean Food
5. Regional Korean Food
6. Korean Table Manners

# 1. THE CULTURE OF KOREAN FOOD

With four distinct seasons in the temperate zone, Korea produces a variety of seasonal ingredients such as grains, beans, vegetables and seafood. Main dishes and *banchan* (side dishes) were created with those ingredients as were storable, fermented foods such as fermented sauce, Kimchi (salted fermented vegetables) and salt-fermented seafood. As sharing seasonal food with neighbors was a custom, *sisik* (seasonal food) and *jeolsik* (festival food) thrived, and regional specialties made with local products also developed. In terms of topography, mountains and fields are spread out over the country, and Korea is surrounded by sea on three sides. Therefore, marine products are abundant and Koreans have been farming rice and hunting since early times.

*Maekjok* who immigrated to Korea from Middle Asia around the time of the Old Stone Age (before 3000 B.C.), was the forefather of Korea. It is believed that the tradition of eating cooked rice as a staple and *banchan* such as Kimchi as a side dish had started from the later part of the Three Kingdoms (*Silla, Baekje, Goguryeo*) era (late 6th – 7th century B.C.) when Korean ancestors lived in a community. In the unified *Silla* era (676 – 935 A.D.), the consumption of meat declined, and dishes with tea and vegetables were preferred due to Buddhism. In the *Goryeo* Dynasty (935 – 1392 A.D.), active trade with northern countries brought salt, black pepper and sugar to *Goryeo*, and famous Korean dishes such as *Goryeo-ssam* (lettuce wraps) and *Goryeo-byeong* (*yakgwa*, a sweet cake) were taken to China.

In the *Joseon* Dynasty (1392 – 1910 A.D.), Confucianism was predominant. Based on the idea of devotion to parents, the culinary tradition of serving ancestors in a patriarchal system was considered to be extremely important. That tradition extends to the Korean way of eating now. The culture of Korean food, harmonized with nature, and social and cultural environments, has developed a cuisine that promotes seasonal and regional characteristics, which are as follows:

## A. Main dishes and side dishes have been developed independently.

Main dishes such as *bap* (cooked rice), *juk* (porridge), *tteokguk* (sliced rice pasta soup), *sujebi* and *mandu* (dumplings) are accompanied with side dishes that provide a balanced meal.

## B. Various kinds of dishes and recipes

There are various kinds of dishes such as cooked rice, soups, salads, and diverse cooking methods such as grilling, boiling, blanching, steaming, frying and braising.

## C. Varieties of taste and appearance

Various seasonings are added during cooking to evoke typical Korean flavors. Nuts, eggs and/or mushrooms are added as gamish to make the food visually appealing.

## D. There are two notions about Korean food, which are *eumyangohaeng* (the doctrine of the five natural elements of the positive and negative) and *yaksikdongwon* (food and medicine are of the same origin).

Based on the doctrine of *eumyangohaeng*, ingredients or gamishes in five colors are used in the food, and the concept of *yaksikdongwon* is evident in the recipes.

E. All dishes are served on one table at the same time. All the table settings have been developed based on the table setting for one person.

Prepared dishes are served on one table at the same time. There are 3, 5, 7, 9 and 12-course table settings, but all the table settings are based on the setting for one person.

F. Regional food, seasonal food and storable, fermented food have been developed.

There are various local specialties from every region. Regional food and seasonal food made with those specialties have been enjoyed, and several fermented foods made of seasonal ingredients such as soy sauce, soybean paste, salt-fermented seafood and Kimchi have been developed.

G. The food for initiation ceremonies and table manners has been developed.

Under the influence of Confucianism, food for festivals and rituals such as for the first birthday, marriage, funeral rites and ancestor memorial ceremony, has been developed.



Folding Screen of Feast Celebrating the 60th Wedding Anniversary, Painter—Unidentified, Joseon, 18th Century, (33.5 cm x 45.5 cm) National Museum of Korea



Non-glutinous Rice



Glutinous Rice



Brown Rice



Black Rice



Wheat



Barley



Buckwheat



Foxtail Millet



Chinese Millet



African Millet



Red Beans



Mung beans



Soybeans



Blue Beans



Peas



Kidney Beans



Unripe Beans



Cowpeas



Geopi-Mung Bean



Geopi-Pat

## Grains and Beans