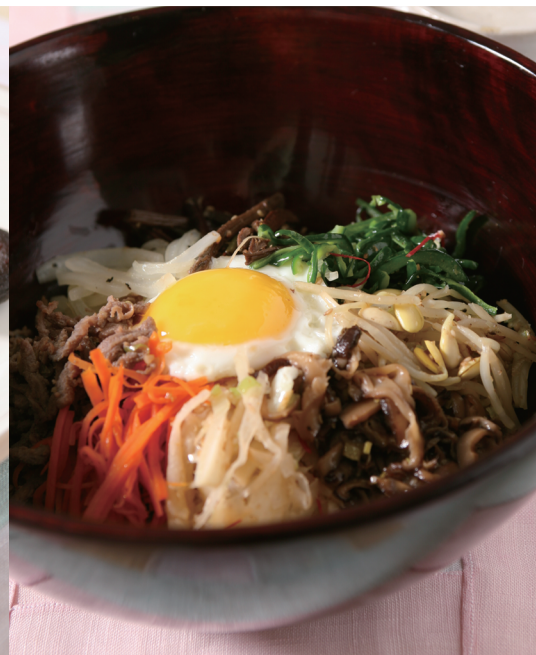




Revised  
Edition

# A Korean **Mother's** Cooking Notes

Chang, Sun-young



Ewha Womans University Press

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# The Making of a Bestselling Cookbook



**H**ow does an unassuming homemaker jump to the bestseller list writing a cookbook? That happens to be the story of Chang, Sun-young, who catapulted herself to the national bestseller list in 1993 with a culinary guide called *A Korean Mother's Cooking Notes*. Her secret is that she writes about food with her heart, not just with her brains.

Chang rocketed to fame as the nation's best-known culinary writer when her book sold over a hundred thousand copies in just two years after publication. Not only was that a record number for cookbooks in Korea, it has sold 50,000 more copies since then, marking the local publishing world's record for a gastronomic guide. Its English-language edition alone has sold over 20,000 copies, mainly in the United States. The reviewers at the US electronic book-selling company Amazon.com have given her five stars for excellence.

This is the story of her unanticipated success and the small role I played in helping getting out that book. Her efforts really began three decades ago when she and her husband were living in the Philippines. With their two sons out of home and studying in the United States, Chang had ample time to pursue her passion for cooking. Upholding traditional values, and placing her family welfare above all other concerns, one of her preoccupations was to think what food to feed her children when they came home for long summer holidays. To her, one sure way of forging a strong family bond with children living apart from their parents was to provide a happy family food table.

When she began scribbling cooking notes on bits and pieces of paper whenever ideas developed in her kitchen, never did it occur to her that they would someday end up as material for a national bestseller. But over time, these notes had grown into a pile of recipes on a variety of foods ranging from Korean to popular Chinese and Western dishes. The data on foods and their ingredients were carefully noted down in meticulous details, and neatly put into computer files.

Printed out in a rough form of notes, they nonetheless turned into a valuable gift to her daughters-in-law when her two sons Hee-seung and Hee-chang married and set up their own home. Soon, the story of her home-cooking notes went beyond the confines of her immediate family: it passed from mouth to mouth to reach the ears of her friends. Soon, Chang was showered with requests for copies of her book-length computer printouts. They became a favorite gift of her friends preparing marriage of their own daughters or sons.

I was so charmed by this story of unpublished yet widely popular cookbook that I wrote about it in my newspaper column. The readers' response was overwhelming: everybody wanted a copy. Sensing a commercial opportunity here, big-name publishers were soon falling over each other for a book contract from Chang.

A modest woman never keen on publicity or money, she signed up her contract with the publishing unit of Ewha Womans University from which she had graduated. The fact that it was put out by a university textbook publisher did not stop *A Korean Mother's Cooking Notes* from turning into a mega-seller as bookstores lined up for new editions. It clearly owed its sensational success to her meticulous, personal style of dishing out advice—her many recipes and cooking details written with a warm, motherly touch, each culinary introduction brimming with comments on which ingredients to avoid and what to choose.

Now a new English-language edition has been brought to meet not only the demand of overseas Koreans wanting to explore the culinary heritage of their mother country, but also to respond to increasing popularity of Korean cuisine in the international community. The Ewha Womans University Press could not have chosen a better timing for this venture, as it comes when Korea itself is making conscious efforts to introduce her culinary arts to the international community. The continuing popularity of her book should make Chang, Sun-young proud of her successful role as master purveyor of fine Korean cuisine, to which she has devoted a large share of her life.

Chang, Myong-sue

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Chang, Myong-sue is a columnist of *The Hankook Ilbo* newspaper in Seoul.

# Preface to the Revised Edition



**I**n this age of globalization, people from many countries are coming into contact with Korean food, but it is one of the least understood cuisines in the world. As is the case in other nations, Korean food represents the collective wisdom and palates of the Korean people as they have evolved through the ages. Early in their history, they developed the skills for making preserved and fermented foods that can withstand the passing of time without the help of refrigeration. And reflecting their background as an agricultural nation, vegetables claim a central place in their cookery, although Koreans also enjoy a variety of seafoods, meat and poultry.

Koreans use some colors in their cuisine in order to balance the nutrition: the five major colors being black, white, blue, red and gold. However, Korean cooking does not rely as much on the aromatic spices. In general, many Korean dishes try to strike a balance between vegetable and meat, in a formula harmonizing with the nature from which they derive. Depending on the circumstances, some foods are intended to have medicinal effects against an array of geriatric symptoms, as shown by the use of ginseng in certain dishes.

In recent years, though, some Korean dishes have come to be known for being spicy and aromatic, a good case being the world-famous fermented vegetable dish called kimchi. This fermented cabbage is liberally sprinkled with garlic, ginger and anchovy sauce, producing a fiery and pungent flavor.

By tradition, kimchi was never intended to be so provocative. Many authentic Korean dish started out as a mild — even bland — food. Indeed, the modern-day kimchi is a fairly recent evolution. Traditionally, most Korean dishes have tried to preserve the individual flavor of each ingredient used, with spices kept to a minimum. The idea was to keep them from overwhelming the unique, individual flavor of each ingredient present in the served dish.

Like their neighbors Japan and China, Koreans take their steamed rice with many side dishes. Rice and soup are served separately in different bowls, but Koreans tend to gather around a low food table set on the room floor. Side dishes are usually shared. These dishes may range from fresh salad or fermented kimchi, broiled or boiled fish or meat. They are normally served in one setting. In a typical Western table setting, each plate is served for one person, but in Korea smaller side dishes are served on one food table to be shared by all. This tradition stems from the ancient village lifestyles emphasizing the community spirit: sharing food was considered more joyous then, as is the case today, than eating alone.

Koreans use a variety of moderate spices when preparing their vegetable or meat side dishes, such as onions, green onions, garlic, ginger, red or green pepper, sesame seeds or sesame seed oil. Soy sauce, rather than salt, is predominantly used to season food. Boiled soybean paste is widely served, usually in a separate bowl.

In this book, I have tried to follow authentic, traditional recipes wherever possible. In certain instances, however, some recipes have been simplified to suit the busy modern lifestyles, without necessarily compromising the essence of food being introduced.

In preparing this revised edition, I have relied on the generous help of many people: my daughters-in-law Choi, Jung-moon and Cho, Soo-jin. Jung-moon has been my able kitchen assistant while Soo-jin translated this edition into English. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Park, Nakhee for pictures illustrating the foods presented here, and Kwon, Soo-reoung for the beautiful ceramic containers in which they are displayed.

As interest in Korean cuisine grows everywhere, I sincerely hope that those hoping to familiarize themselves with Korean cookery will find this book helpful and easy to use.

Chang, Sun-young  
Fremont, California



# How to Use This Book

My daughters-in-law say “Mother, your cooking is consistently great-tasting.” This consistency is due to the habit of accurately measuring the ingredients and the spices every time. That is my secret to preparing delicious food that is neither salty today nor bland tomorrow.

I think the most fundamental taste in cooking is saltiness. No matter how good the food looks, if the food does not taste right, the food is but a pie in the sky. You should correctly measure not only the main ingredients, but also the soy sauce, salt, and sugar in order to make the food taste right.

I would like to introduce four notes on using this book.

## First: Measuring

I always use measuring cups and measuring spoons. 1 cup is 240 ml, 1 tablespoon is 15 ml, and 1 teaspoon is 5 ml, based on the American measuring system.

The main ingredients are measured in cups and pounds. For example, instead of saying ‘1 cucumber,’ this book says ‘1 cup cucumber, julienned.’ Because the size and the thickness of each cucumber are different, it is difficult to state that you need one cucumber.

## Second: Salt

I use two kinds of salt: table salt and roasted salt. Unless I specify “table salt,” I use roasted salt. I want to make the point that ‘table salt’ is typically twice as salty as roasted salt.

## Third: Serves Four

Each dish in this book is prepared for a four person meal. A la carte dishes, the hot pots, and the side dishes are also portioned for serving four people. For the special dishes that are not categorized as a meal, I specify the serving size.

## Fourth: Korean Spices and Condiments

When you look at the lengthy list of required spices and condiments, you might be intimidated before you even start cooking. In reality you’re probably more concerned about the unfamiliar Korean spices and condiments when you look at the recipes to make Korean food. However, if you look at them carefully, there are only a few main spices and condiments: soy sauce, soy bean paste (*doenjang*), red pepper paste (*gochujang*), green onion, garlic, ginger, sugar, honey, and red pepper powder (*gochu garu*). Anybody can cook delectable Korean dishes with these basic ingredients.



# Rice

*Bap*, 밥

Today, some Koreans have a western style breakfast of toast and coffee. However, before the introduction of bread and butter, rice, cooked with or without other grains, was a must for all three daily meals and still is for many Koreans.

# Porridge

*Juk*, 죽

Nowadays, a great many people have *juk* for breakfast because it is simple to make and eat. I can think of nothing better than *juk* for the sick, especially for those who don't have an appetite. It is also ideal for snacks, especially at night.



## Rice *Bap*, 밥

**B***ap* (cooked rice) is the staple of Koreans. Today, some Koreans have a western style breakfast of toast and coffee. However, before the introduction of bread and butter, rice, cooked with or without other grains, was a must for all three daily meals and still is for many Koreans. Elderly people click their tongues at young people who prefer pastry and noodles to rice and say, “You won’t be strong and energetic without rice inside you.”

You would think all you need to do to cook rice is to boil it in water, but cooking rice well is not such a simple job, especially when you have guests and have to cook more than you ordinarily do for your family. Cooking rice has become much simpler with the advent of the electric rice cookers, but still you can easily end up with more or less rice than you need. I have written a quick recipe for cooking rice and some recipes for rice dishes which are a meal by themselves.

## Porridge *Juk*, 죽

**L**ong ago when food was scarce, people ate *bap* (rice) in the morning and *juk*, rice porridge, in the evening. For the poor *juk* was a way to stretch what little grain they had, especially if they added vegetables and plant roots to it. Apart from saving grain, the combination of *bap* for breakfast and *juk* for supper seems to me to be a reasonable, healthy diet that allows you to burn up the calories from breakfast during the day. Nowadays, a great many people have *juk* for breakfast because it is simple to make and eat. I can think of nothing better than *juk* for the sick, especially for those who don’t have an appetite. It is also ideal for snacks, especially at night.

Most people tend to think that all one has to do to make *juk* is to dump rice into a great quantity of water and boil it, but this only makes boiled rice water, not *juk*. Follow the measurements given here to get the right thickness. Be sure to cook on low heat; otherwise, the rice will not swell completely and all of the water will boil away before the rice is cooked.

# White Rice

*Huin bap*, 흰밥

Koreans eat cooked rice at every meal. This is the reason *bap* means not only “the cooked rice” but also “meal.” Korean eats short-grain rice.

1. Wash the rice and drain. Repeat this step 2 or 3 more times before soaking the rice for one hour.
2. Drain the water and transfer the rice to a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Add water to rice and cook over medium-high heat.  
\*If the rice is not soaked, add a quarter cup more water for each cup of rice.
3. When the water comes to a boil, stir once.
4. Reduce the heat to low and stir once more when the water begins to boil again.
5. Continue to simmer very gently over low heat until done.

*\* Note You may also use an electric rice cooker.*



**Serves 3-4**

2 cups rice  
2 cups water



# The well-being food guide of 126 authentic and practical Korean recipes

In this book, I have tried to follow authentic, traditional recipes wherever possible. In certain instances, however, some recipes have been simplified to suit the busy modern lifestyles, without necessarily compromising the essence of food being introduced.

