

South Korean

About the Culture

- South Korea occupies the southern portion of the Korean peninsula bordered by the Democratic People's Republic of China to the north (also known as "North Korea").¹
- The population is predominantly ethnically Korean with a small minority of foreign residents from China, Japan, and the US.¹
- A large percentage of South Koreans do not have religious affiliations, but the most commonly practiced religions include Protestant, Buddhist, and Roman Catholicism.¹
- Distinct weather patterns coupled with geographic isolation from other countries have contributed to cultural legacies around the Korean diet (K-diet).²
- Respect for ancestors, age, and seniority dictates a large part of Korean daily life, with seniority related to economic status, position in a business, age, and marital status.¹



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Eating Customs and Traditions

- Meals and drinks are typically a shared experience with an emphasis on politeness.³
- Banchan are a collection of side dishes (usually soy or vegetable based) that are shared with the table and part of almost every meal.²
- Some traditional eating customs include:³
 - ▶ Waiting for the oldest person to be seated first.
 - ▶ Waiting for the oldest person to lift their eating utensil before others begin eating.
 - ▶ Eating at the same pace as the elders at the table (no rushing or lingering).
 - ▶ Taking only the amount of banchan intended to eat.
 - ▶ Acknowledging the host of the meal whether it be at home or dining out with the phrase masegaemugusuyo (I ate well).
- Many people believe in the Chinese yin (cold)/yang (hot) categorization of food. Holiday meals revolve around the lunar calendar and focus on yin-yang foods to create balance and good health.²
- Fermented foods are extremely important for overall digestive health and served at every meal.²

Cultural Ingredients

- Rice (ssal) is the most important national agricultural crop and served with every meal.²
- Kimchi is vegetables fermented in chili sauce (usually cabbage or radish) and is served with every meal.²
- Primary characteristics of meals are cooked or fresh vegetables, rice or grains, fermented foods, legumes, and seafood. Red meat is not a primary component of a typical K-diet.²
- Deep-frying is not common in Korean cooking due to limited production of high heat point cooking oils (i.e. vegetable or animal oils), with pan-frying or stir-frying being the most common cooking methods.²

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Adapting SNAP-Ed Curriculum to Reflect Dietary Patterns

- Emphasize the importance of fresh and cooked vegetables with each meal.
- Discuss benefits of fermented items (where warranted).
- Promote continued consumption of banchan that are complementary to rice consumption.
- Discuss different fish and seafood available in Washington.

RECIPE RESOURCES

Live Well:

<https://wasnap-ed.org/live-well/recipes/>

University of Hawaii Cooperative Extension
[Korean Cultural Cuisine \(Pamphlet\)](#)

POPULAR FOODS	DESCRIPTION, SEASON, AND STORAGE	COMMONLY AVAILABLE FORMS AND SUBSTITUTIONS
Barley (Boli)	<p>A grain typically found as pearl barley in the US. Cooked similarly to rice (1 cup barley: 2 cups water).</p> <p>Soak barley in cold water to cut down on cooking time.</p> <p>Available all year.</p> <p>Store in an airtight container away from light/moisture for up to 6 months.</p> <p>Cooked barley can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.</p>	<p>Varieties include dehulled and malted.</p> <p>Quick cooking barley in precooked flakes.</p> <p>Packaged individually or available in bulk</p>
Soft Tofu (Sundubu)	<p>Tofu is made from soybeans that are soaked in water then boiled, ground, and strained to create soymilk that is coagulated and pressed into curds.</p> <p>Also called silken tofu, it is unpressed and the softest type available, containing the most moisture.</p> <p>Available all year.</p> <p>Handle with care and do not press.</p> <p>Can be stored in a refrigerator unopened for up to 1 year.</p>	<p>Tofu is available in soft, medium firm, and firm pressed forms based on the amount of water content it has.</p> <p>Typically found in the refrigerated section of grocery stores separate from typical firmer tofu varieties.</p> <p>Packed fresh in tubes or in water (in square shape).</p> <p>Substitute with soy based yogurt or milk; mashed banana or coconut cream.</p>
Soybean Sprouts (Kongnamul)	<p>Germinated soybeans that are grown in the dark.</p> <p>High in protein, fiber and B vitamins, making them complimentary to rice.</p> <p>Available all year.</p> <p>Rinse with cold water and store in an airtight container lined with paper towels in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator for up to 3 days.</p> <p>Store them submerged in cold water in the refrigerator for up to 7 days.</p>	<p>Bean sprouts or mung bean sprouts.</p> <p>Cleaned and packaged in the refrigerator section.</p> <p>Canned in water.</p> <p>Substitute with snap peas, enoki mushrooms, or thinly sliced cabbage.</p> <p>Grow your own:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Wash ½ cup mung beans and drain.2. Cover beans with water in a large glass jar and cover jar opening with cheesecloth secured by a rubber band.3. Change water in the jar once a day until sprouted.4. Rinse sprouted beans, drain and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

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References

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3. Imatome-Yun N. What are essential etiquette rules for Korean Dining. The Spruce Eats. <https://www.thespruceeats.com/korean-table-manners-2118645>. Published October 14, 2019. Accessed March 8, 2022.