

The Korean Cookbook

Junghyun Park

Jungyoon Choi

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Rigorous in detail and yet explained in an accessible manner, *The Korean Cookbook* presents a panorama of recipes and food history punctuated with artful color images of finished dishes. Throughout its pages, Junghyun Park and Jungyoon Choi outline how mountainous, peninsular Korea has often relied upon plant food from the sea and land in its diet. Rice is also a foundational ingredient, as well as fermented and pickled types of foods and sauces made from fermented soybeans.

Many of these foods have medicinal properties, symbolism (long noodles = a long life), and ritual uses. The book also calls attention to how Korean food culture is attuned to seasonal rhythms and balanced combinations of textures, fragrances, and flavors. There are recipes for everyday family menus and others more suited to formal meals: rice and an array of side dishes are laid out for convivial dining. Kimchi is another constant on the table, though the iconic Napa cabbage type is but one star in a galaxy of salt-preserved kimchis made from radishes, peppers, cucumbers, and other herbs and vegetables.

With street food favorites, including deep-fried vegetable twigim; home-cooked comfort foods, as with steaming breakfast bowls of rice porridge; and tempting North Korean hotpot dishes like Beef Jeongol, there's ample coverage of the country's distinctive regions. A splendid concluding chapter about master artisans of food and ceramics, the majority of them women, features stories about being meticulous about ingredients, techniques, and intentions, whether it concerns the intricate butchering of Snowflake Bulgogi or precise attention to details in cooking vegetable leaf wraps.

The Korean Cookbook is the new definitive culinary reference for chefs and home cooks who are interested in Korean culinary culture.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (September / October 2023)

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