

KOREA

History

- The 2005 population census estimates that more than 1.2 million Koreans are living in the United States; more than half of this total arrived since 1980.
- In excess of 75 percent of Koreans in the United States were born in Korea.



Geography & Culture

- All Korean immigrants are from South Korea.
- States with large Korean populations include: California, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Maryland, Texas, Washington, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Hawaii.
- Specific figures regarding religious denominations are unknown, but most early and many recent immigrants are Christian.
 - Smaller numbers of Koreans in America practice ancestor worship or Buddhism.

Health Concerns of Immigrants

- The Korean concepts governing health and illness involve a balance of energy (um [yin] & yang) and are influenced by the dynamics of the five evolutive elements (fire, water, wood, metal, and earth)
 - An excess or deficiency of these forces results in illness
- Excessive emotions (i.e. joy, worry, anger, etc) are believed to result in physical conditions
- Home remedies include ginseng, ginger tea, bean sprout soup, lemon with honey in hot water, and yoojacha (hot citrus beverage)
- Traditional Korean diets feature high levels of sodium and low levels of calcium
- Diets more adapted to American foods often include higher caloric intake, as well as total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol
- Rate of hepatitis B, type 2 diabetes, stomach, liver, and esophageal cancer high in Korean Americans
- Koreans are at risk for hypertension
- Chinese herb medicine and acupuncture are acceptable and herb doctors explain health and illness in terms of yin and yang balance.

Food Management Practices

- Sweet, sour, bitter, hot, and salty are flavors combined in each meal and foods are frequently seasoned before and after cooking
- The colors red, white, black, yellow, and green are important attributes of dishes
- Beverages include barley water, beer, coffee, fruit drinks, and various teas and wines
- Sesame oil and vegetable oils are often used in cooking
- Seasonings include Chile peppers, Chinese parsley, chrysanthemum greens, garlic, cinnamon, ginger root, MSG, red pepper sauce, hot mustard, green onions, pine nuts, sugar, vinegar, rice wine, sea salt, sesame seeds, and soy sauce.
- Many Koreans classify food with regard to therapeutic uses (ability to balance um [cold foods] and yang [hot foods]).
- Preparing healthy, tasty food is a means of showing affection for family and friends.
- Length of stay in the United States reportedly is reported to have little effect on diet. American-born children may eat more like their school mates.

Agriculture and Staple Foods

- Boiled rice (Bap) is a staple of Korean cuisine, often mixed with barley, millet, beans, vegetables, seafood, meat, or kimchi,
 - Noodles made from wheat, buckwheat, mung beans, the starch of sweet potatoes and the kudzu plant are important staples.
- Rice is always accompanied by soups of which there are a great variety.
- Kimchi, which is pickled, fermented cabbage, is served at almost every meal in Korea, or at least eaten daily by many Koreans. It is a strong garlic flavor. Koreans who have been in the US for a long time may not eat Kimchi as often. In the US Kimchi is bought in supermarkets.
- Vegetables are served at almost every meal.
 - Popular types are Chinese cabbage, European cabbage, bamboo shoots, eggplant, cucumbers, mushrooms, chrysanthemum greens, bean sprouts, sweet potatoes, *perilla* (considered rich in minerals and vitamins, has anti-inflammatory properties and is thought to help preserve and sterilize other foods), seaweed, and spinach.
- Fruits consumed include apples, Asian pears, cherries, dates, grapes, melons, oranges, pears, persimmons, plums, pumpkin, and tangerines,
- Protein sources include beef, fish, shellfish, soybean products, mung beans, adzuki beans, and other legumes.

- Traditional Korean foods can be high in sodium especially pickled foods such as Kimchi. Koreans eat more vegetables and fish. Raw fish, dried squid, dried pollock, dried anchovy and dried mussels are common.
- *Bibimbap* is a popular rice dish in Korea and the US. Putting marinated beef, *bulgogi*, into *bibimbap* is optional so it is accepted by vegetarians.



Kimchi



Dolsot Bibimbap

Food Practices Related to Life Cycle & Major Celebrations

- *Sol*, or New Year's, is a three-day celebration that includes feasts, games, and flying kites
- An annual Kimchi festival in mid-October in Kwangju and celebrates Korea's kimchi culture and spans several days. Koreans make large amount of kimchi in the late fall to eat during the long winter. Relatives and friends help each other make kimchi during the season.
- *Chusok*, or Harvest Moon Festival is held on or about August 15th;
- Holiday foods include: sweet rice cakes (filled with red beans), rice cake soup, mung bean pancakes, dumplings, Korean chop suey and beef rib stew.
- A special ceremony is held on a child's first birthday and includes rice cakes, cookies, and fruit,
- During pregnancy, Korean-American women may consume seaweed soup, beef, and rice in order to build strength
 - Food taboos that exist during this time may exclude blemished food items, chicken, duck, sparrow, crab, rabbit, goat, pork, twin chestnuts, and spicy foods. Younger Koreans are less likely to follow these taboos.
 - Increase in calcium foods include: soybean products, seaweed, sesame seeds and dried anchovies.

Communication Style

- Koreans are often quiet and reserved in conversation and avoid emotional displays during confrontation
- May not actively engage in conversation during meetings.

- When Koreans greet each other, they take a bow and do not call their first name except children. They address their titles such as teacher, doctor, president of a company and then the last name. Even in families, they use big brother, big sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law instead of a first name.
- In addressing older people, respect is shown by using a different verb ending in conversation.
- Direct eye contact demonstrates attentiveness and sincerity,
- They do not hug or kiss in public even between husband and wife. Koreans express their affection or kindness by saying prudent words, helping each other or treating them with heart meals.
- Loud speech or laughing is considered rude; however, embarrassment may be expressed by excessive laughter,
- Due to traditional health beliefs, Korean immigrants may not adhere to physician or professional recommendations.

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