

South Korean Culture & Foods

Country of Origin: South Korea

Primary Language(s): Korean, English

Percent of Iowa's Population: 0.28%

Background

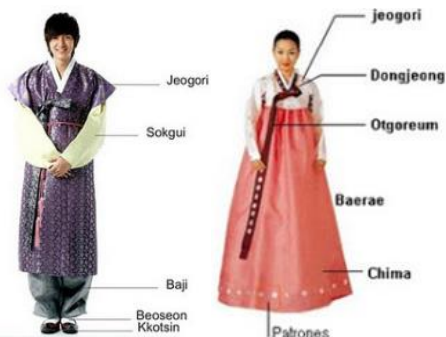
An independent kingdom for much of its history, Korea was occupied by Japan beginning in 1905 following the Russo-Japanese War. Korea regained its independence following Japan's surrender after World War II in 1945. After World War II, a democratic government was set up in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula while a communist-style government was installed in the north. During the Korean War (1950-53), US troops and UN forces fought alongside South Korean soldiers to defend South Korea from a North Korean invasion. A 1953 armistice split the Peninsula along a demilitarized zone at about the 38th parallel. South Korea is a highly developed country and the world's 11th largest economy. Its citizens enjoy the longest years of postsecondary education in the world, along with the world's second most equal access to quality healthcare, resulting in the third highest health adjusted life expectancy in the world.¹

Traditions, Customs, & Taboos

South Korea is rooted in culture and traditions. Family is the most important aspect of the culture where the father is the head of the household⁴. Families believe in the teachings of Confucius. Bowing to one another and giving gifts are also of importance in South Korea. South Korean food and drinks such as rice malt and cold noodles are on the top of the list of famous dishes. Buddhism in the main religion in South Korea⁴. Another important aspect in South Korean culture is pottery and ceramics. South Koreans take pride in their traditional clothing called Hanbok which in an emblem in their culture⁴.

Holidays & Celebrations

Lunar New Year or Seol is celebrated in South Korea on January 1st each year⁵. There are many other celebrations such as Independence Movement Day (3/1), Buddha's birthday (4/8), Children's Day (5/5), Memorial Day (6/6) Liberation Day (8/15), and Christmas (12/25)⁵. There are also seasonal celebrations throughout the year. South Korean babies are considered one-year-old at birth⁵. There is a special celebration when they are 100 days old and again at their first birthday after birth⁵. Weddings are also an important celebration in South Korean culture.



Hanbok is the traditional Korean dress. "Han" is the designation for Korea, and "bok" means clothing. Hanbok in general has a bright color, with simple lines and do not have pockets.²

Education and Literacy

Education is a high priority for South Korean families, as success in education is often a source of pride for families. More than 97% of South Koreans graduate from high school, the highest graduation rate in the world. Bachelor's degrees are held by 68% of South Koreans, aged 25-34.³

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Health Disparities

The observed life expectancy for female South Koreans is 85.5 years old and the male population is 79.5.⁶ Self-harm, stroke, ischemic heart disease, lung cancer, and Alzheimer's Disease are among the highest causes of death⁶. Compared to other areas there are more incidences of self-harm, stroke, and Alzheimer's Disease⁶. Government health spending and out of pocket expenses are how medical services are mainly covered⁶. South Korea scores a 90.3 on the Health Care Access and Quality (HAQ) Index⁶.

Traditional Foods & Meal Patterns

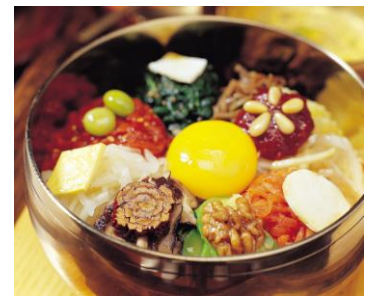
Korean cuisine is based largely on rice, vegetables, and meats. Common ingredients used in Korean meals are rice, noodles, soybeans, mung beans, radishes, Napa cabbage, cucumber, potato, sweet potato, spinach, bean sprouts, scallions, garlic, chili peppers, seaweed, zucchini, mushrooms, chicken, beef, and fish/seafood.⁷ Some popular Korean dishes are⁷: Kimchi (fermented vegetables) Bibimbap (mixed rice) Bulgogi (marinated beef barbecue) Japchae (stir-fried noodles) Hoeddeok (sweet syrupy pancakes) Ddukbokki (spicy rice cake) Seolleongtang (ox bone soup) Sundubu-jjigae (soft tofu stew)

Considerations for WIC

- A typical Korean meal consists of a bowl of rice, a bowl of soup or stew, and some side dishes as accompaniments⁹
- Korean-style breakfasts feature dishes that are the same dishes served at lunch and dinner, too. Essentially, if it is sold in the morning, Koreans eat it in the morning. These dishes are usually accompanied by classic steamed white rice.¹⁰
- Drinking is a huge part of its corporate culture and combines different Confucian norms. South Koreans see it as the easiest way of alleviating stress and building relationships. The World Health Organization found in 2010 that Korea has the highest prevalence of alcohol abuse and dependence at 6.76 per cent of the population.¹¹
- Communication can be complicated in South Korea due to an inherent dislike of saying 'no' as it is considered poor etiquette. Discussions can be prolonged due to the avoidance of declining or refusing.¹²
- Food and dining are important parts of Korean culture and are used to build relationships. Be sociable and work at shaping good associations for pleasure and business, as they are interlinked.¹³

What's the Iowa Connection?

There was a large immigration of South Korean's to the US during the Korean War¹⁹. Many South Korean immigrants who come to the United States are educated, but struggle with language barriers and therefore become self-employed¹⁹. There are approximately 389 students at the University of Iowa obtaining an education¹⁵. Please visit <http://www.welcometoiowa.org/ethnic-organizations-in-iowa/immigrant-assistance-organizations> for a list of agencies in Iowa.



Bibimbap is essentially a bowl of mixed ingredients including, but not limited to, rice, *namul* (seasoned and sautéed vegetables), mushrooms, beef, soy sauce, *gochujang* (chili pepper paste), and a fried egg. The ingredients found in bibimbap vary by region.⁸

How are we Living?

South Koreans typically have nuclear family with two children. The father in the home tends to have the most authority¹⁶.

The highest percentages of South Koreans live in the following Iowa counties: Appanoose, Des Moines, Henry, Iowa, Johnson, and Polk¹⁷.

