

Han Jung Sik

(Korean full-course meal)

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The Korean full-course meal is a traditional meal. And it has been developed by the ancestors. So obviously the Korean full-course meal is suitable for Korean environment. Today, we speak of Korean full course meal as combination of royal and native styles from all over Korea. The royal style meal has been inherited and polished from generation to generation. The royal style meal is not to draw a line from the common people. The marriages for the royal families are not just with other royalties, but with the gentry. The daily meal as well as the culture of the wealthy royalty to the gentry shows us that there are some kinds of separation between the two classes. But in some cases, the foods for royalties are taken by the common people and the common people food is brought up to the royalty. The food used especially during the festive situations for a royal gift. During the ancient Korean times, the settings of the course meal and it's contents were very traditional. But the setting of the meal also varies by the personal tastes and their customs.

The Korean full course meal is bound to change due to the constantly changing culture and people's interest. When we actually visit a Korean restaurant that specializes in traditional Korean full-course meal, their food has been fusionized already. The meal has been changed into meals with different course meals including cutlet, tortilla, and a salad. You might have experienced tough times deciding what to eat first from 30 different dishes. It might help to choose the main dish and move slowly into the other side dishes to bring pleasure to the tongue. Then we can enjoy cold dishes cold and hot dishes hot. We have talked about the Korean full-course meal's origins. Before we talk about finding more about each meal and their specialties, let's learn about how to eat and the table manners to eat them.

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Koreans use spoons for soups and stews and chopsticks for other side dishes during their meal. Unlike Chinese and Japanese people, Koreans don't think it's good manners to hold the rice dish in their hand while they eat. Even though a lot of things have changed, they still don't approve of it. When they eat the food, Chinese people enjoy loud conversations and laughter but the Koreans prefer a quiet meal. But from time to time, Koreans make slurping sounds while consuming noodles that we call ramen and stew. You can't say it's to show how delicious the meal is but just to cool the hot dish in front of them. Because the Koreans are in habit of cooling their hot dishes from way back in history. Next, Koreans also wait for the elder to start eating first, and can't get up until the elder is finished. Also speaking during a meal may come off as a bad habit. Even though some people follow these manners a lot has changed lately. But if you follow these manners, the elder Koreans will be very pleased.

Now I will recommend some restaurants in Daegu where you can enjoy the traditional Korean full-course meal. On the main street located in suseongoo doosandong is many restaurants. Among them a restaurant called "soo-lak-gan" where you can enjoy a meal passed down from the Korean ancestors. The name of soo-lak-gan means department of making food for royal family in Chosun

dynasty. Anyway, this building is a second story and the first floor is a parking lot. When you enter, one of the workers will assist you to parking as well as into the restaurant. The restaurant is on the second floor so you would have to go up the wooden stairs and then the host or the hostess will take you to your seats. For customers who have already made reservations, they will be led to their reserved seats and others to other open seats. You will have to take off your shoes and there are no chairs so you might feel discomfort. But if you use the cushion under the table then it might be better. When you are seated, the waitress will bring you the menu, water, cup and, a wet hand towel. Because the Korean meal does not have many different choices to choose, the waitress might wait beside you. When you want to order, you can just ask for the server or press the call bell located on your table. After ordering when you waited few minutes, they will bring you the meal course at a time. After the meal, they will give you coffee or sweet rice tea as dessert. After the main meal, you don't have to get up and pay because the check is placed on the table. You can use cash or a credit card to pay for the meal. If you gave the car keys to the worker when parking, just tell them your car's plate number and get your keys back.

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In the menu, there are main courses labeled A, B, and C. And you can also order additional side dishes. The prices are classified, course A is 10000won, course B is 20000won and course C is 30000won. Basically the white rice is served but you can order nutritious pot rice or mushroom pot rice. The dolsot rice (Rice of Stone pot) is 7000won and the mushroom rice is 8000won. Also instead of the traditional main courses, there are steamed seafood and thornback. Their price being 15000won and 30000won. Besides the main course and the steamed dishes, there other dishes on the menu. Koreans usually drink alcohol with their meal so, there are many different kinds of menus to fit the drinkers. The menus might be for dinner and alcohol, fancy occasion dinner course with alcohol and just light side dishes with alcohol. In order to choose one of the three menus, you have to make reservations ahead of time. And the alcohol menus come with raw fish, their price is from 50000 to 60000won. Soju and beer are 3000won, chung-ha, baek-se-joo are 4000won, sprite, coke, and fanta are 1000won each. Hot rice juice is also available to customers who want it. When you dine at a Korean full-course restaurant, the dishes come in sets in a period of time instead of all at once.

To give you an idea, I will explain the main course A from this restaurant "soo-lak-gan". The other B and C course meal is similar with extra dishes so just take this course a as the basic course. About 5 minutes after ordering, a mung bean pancake, tofu, acorn jelly, and custard made of sesame is serviced. The course is usually serves without the rice until the middle of the meal, so you have to ask for rice as soon as you want it. There is no correct way to eat, but having the warm dishes might help you enjoy the course better.

As I mentioned, I would like to say more information about first served foods.

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What is the Bindaettuk (A mung-bean pancake)?

This pancake is something you can find anywhere. Names and ingredients may vary but it's essential to all special events. The bean is saturated in water for about 3 hours and then the peels are easily rubbed off by hand.

After the peeling, it is grinded by the stone grinder or a blender. Scallion is chopped and, pork and beef is sliced thinly and put into the bean dish. Picked cabbage is also diced and few drops of sesame oil are added. After combining all the ingredients, the salt is added

and poured into the pan to be made into a round shape. The thinly sliced peppers are also added for both taste and decoration. The bean sprouts are added from time to time. Before eating it is dipped into the sauce made with pepper, scallion, garlic and sesame seeds.

What is the Tubu (Bean-curd)?

It's a bean product with excellent source of protein.

It is made by saturating the beans and having them grinded and hardened by a hardening product.

What is the Dotorimuk (Acorn-jelly [paste])?

The acorns are picked up during the fall season and then peeled and saturated in water to gain the bitter tastes of then acorn. The grinded acorn is softened until is nearly liquid. This liquid is poured into a pot and brought to boil till is sticky and then shaped to make a jelly dish.

What is the Kkejuk (Custard made of powdered sesame)?

Black sesame seeds, rice, 2 cups of water (or milk), is grinded inside a blender. Then it is brought to boil in medium heat. Lastly, water, milk and salt are added more for taste.

Next the mixed vegetables with noodles, steamed short ribs, cold jellyfish with vegetables, sliced raw salmon, mashed potatoes, steamed Pollack, crab salad, Mexican tortilla, and cutlet is served. Also as I mentioned, I would like to say more information of second served foods.

What is the Jabcce (A mixed dish of vegetables and sliced meat)?

This dish is used in most party meals. Its ingredients, the different vegetables such as carrots, spinach, onion, cucumber and beef is sliced into the noodles and soy sauce and pepper is added for seasoning.

What is the Galbijim (Steamed short ribs)?

The short ribs are slice and made cuts so that the sauce will easily saturate into the meat. Soy sauce, sugar, grinded garlic, scallion, pepper, sesame seeds, and sesame seed oil is all mixed to make a sauce. The sauce is put on the meat and carrots, egg, mushrooms are added and then steamed till it's ready to eat.

What is the Haeparinangcho (Cold jellyfish and vegetables)?

The sliced jellyfish is saturated in salt water for about 2 hours and then different types of vegetables are added with other sauces to bring to delicious taste.

Finally, original kimchi, watery plain[flat] kimchi, vegetable soup, fried kimchi, hard-boiled sesame leaves, fried mushrooms, fried hairtail/cutlassfish, soybean curd residue soup, crab preserved in soy sauce, cooked roots of balloon flowers, scorched rice-tea is served.

What is the Mulkimchi (Watery plain [flat] kimchi)?

This is the white-non spicy version of the red pickled cabbage called kimchi.

What is the Kimchippokum (Fried kimchi)?

Salted cabbage sliced and fried in pan with water, pork, and scallion. The sesame seed oil is added for seasoning at the end.

What is the Kkaimporim (Hard-boiled sesame leaves)?

Sesame seed leaf saturated in salty sauce.

What is the Bisyjike (Soybean curd residue soup)?

A soup made from left over tofu.

What is the Gaejang (Crab preserved in soy sauce)?

Crab saturated in sauce.

What is the Sungrung (Scorched rice-tea)?

This is the traditional rice tea is made by adding water to the hot rice pot. The rice left over inside the pot slowly boils with the water which contains good nutrition for the body. The scent of this is very warm and soothing. This is the origin of the tea culture we all enjoy today.

If you want to know and understand about real Korea, you must try to eat traditional Korean's meal. Korean's meal contains Korean's spirits, passions and customs. It doesn't be in a day. Korea may be a small country, but when you try to have Korean's meal, you can't help denying that Korea is a great country.

Just have it without hesitation.