

포장마차 (Pojangmacha)

A pojangmacha is typically a restaurant on wheels. People cook food out of their trucks or vans. The walls of the restaurant are made with heavy duty plastic. A pojangmacha usually has plastic tables and chairs. During winter months, pojangmacha owners may use kerosene heaters to warm the inside of the tent. Don't expect a nutritious three course meal at a pojangmacha, instead you will find all manner of snacks that are cheap and delicious. I would like to introduce most common street food offered at pojaangmach in Korea.

Odeng: Odeng is a fish skewered sausage-like form. Some people enjoy the soup more!! The soup is made from anchovy stock and you can drink it as much as you want - free! It is good for cold weather. Certain places add crab, been-sprout, sea tangle, and shrimp for the soup base. There are two different shapes odeng. One looks like a mozzarella cheese stick but little longer and little bigger. The other kind is flat and square. They are folded in half and skewered onto bamboo wooden stick. They look different but taste the same.

Tui-ghim: Tui-ghim is a deep fried food also known as Tempura. Tui-ghim is one of the Korean traditional foods at memorial service and can be easily found at pojangmacha. About 100 years ago, the recipe of Tui-ghim was taken by Japanese and they named it as Tempura. There are so many different kinds of Tui-ghim: vegetable, squid, sweet potato, boiled eggs, shrimp, stuffed green pepper, and rice roll. Squid and vegetable Tui-ghim are most commonly found at pojangmacha.

Tteokbokki (Stir Fried Rice Cake): Tteokbokki is a long tteok (rice cake) and is stir-fried with carrots, cabbage, onion, green-onion sauce and stewed in a gochujang-based sauce. Although it may look unappetizing at first, it is delicious. Historically, rice cakes started in about the 1950's,

but some say it used to be a royal meal made with soy sauce instead of red pepper paste. It started to get popular in 1970~1980's where it was sold primarily in front of school stationary stores. Today, it is sold on the street. The cake increased in popularity by adding curry or extra hot to cheesy with mozzarella cheese. If you make street food at home, you cannot make it taste the same. But this is commonly made at home with their desires of its ingredients; hard boiled eggs, mandoo, ham, fish cake, tuna, and romaine noodles. Some restaurants serve tteokbokki, but then price is higher than the market price, and the taste is not the same. It originated in Sin-dahng city, Seoul. They try to copy the original taste as much as possible. The taste is not the same because the person who originated tteokbokki used secret ingredients which included red pepper paste.

Dried Squid: Dried Squid is very popular at any age. Squid is especially popular at the food stand in front of movie theaters. If trying squid for the first time, people may hesitate to try it because of its strong fish smell. Squid is also good with roasted peanuts. Squid also is enjoyable to eat at the movie theater or while enjoying a comic book, you've got to have it. Squid comes in different flavors and different shapes. Pressed and seasoned. In my opinion, the original brand is always better because it is very chewy, and that is what I personally like about dried squid.

Sundae (Korean Sausage). This is another very popular street food served at every pojamacha. The small and large intestines of pigs are salted and stuffed with a mixture of pig's blood, rice, green onions, garlic, minced pork, and clear noodle before being steamed. The sausage is sliced when served and some steamed lung and liver slices usually accompany it. Use a toothpick or chopsticks to eat, dabbing each piece in salt to taste. You will also find, ears, liver, and tongue. Liver is a little dry and has bitter a taste, ears are chewy, and lung has holes. It has an odd look at first but they are quite tasty and nutritious.

Dakkochi: Dakkochi is Korean chicken kebab and is made from several cubes of boneless chicken skewered alternately with leek or other vegetables. It is then grilled over a hotplate and smothered with sweet and spicy sauce.

Gimbap (Rice Wrapped in Seaweed). Gimbap is Korea's most popular and nutritious convenience meal. You can find it sold everywhere: picnics, schoolchildren's lunch boxes, convenience stores, especially at pojamacha. A layer of cooked rice is spread over a square piece of gim (dried laver). Various ingredients (including ham, sausage, spinach, cucumber, crab meat, carrots, and radishes) are thinly sliced and placed on top. The laver is rolled into a tube, sliced into pieces, and seasoned with sesame seeds. The idea was borrowed from the Japanese during the colonial period, but Korean Gimbap is slightly different.

Guksu (Wheat Flour Noodles). The simplest of Korean noodles dishes, wheat flour noodles are cooked and served in an anchovy soup with cabbage kimchi. This is one of the cheapest noodle dishes and found in every pojangmach in Korea.

Udong (Japanese Noodles). This dish is similar to the Japanese noodle dish and Korean Guksu. The noodles are thicker than those used in other Korean noodle dishes.

Ho-thuck. This one looks like English muffin called Ho-thuck. This is also popular in winter, because the taste is much better with right after it is cooked. Ho-thuck dough is made from flour and stuffed with dark brown sugar, chopped roasted peanuts, and cinnamon. You have to be careful when you get a first bite of it, because the hot brown sugar liquid can spill burn your mouth!

Why are pojangmachas so ubiquitous in Korea? Firstly, the price is right. The food at pojangmachas is often very cheap, since owners don't have to

pay exorbitant rents. Secondly, the atmosphere is lively. Pojangmachas are most often found clustered in areas where people are shopping, drinking and partying. You can go in there completely drunk, act loud and obnoxious and still manage to get a nice greasy meal to soak up the booze. If you want to continue drinking, most pojangmachas serve the alcoholic jet-fuel known as soju! In summary, pojangmachas are friendly places you can get cheap greasy snacks and chat with the owners or people next to you. It's the fun atmosphere which makes pojangmachas a popular place for casual socializing.