

Authenticity and representation: cuisines and identities in Korean- American diaspora

YOUNG RAE OUM

From a cultural perspective, food is much more than a source of physical nourishment or a part of quotidian routines. Food is a medium of emotional bonding, social relations, community building, religious practices, and is a battleground of cultures and politics. The focus of this article is the relationship between Korean (American) identity and food. First, I will examine how food is used in identity processes both in the US and in Korea. Next, the problem of defining a national cuisine, particularly the case of Korean cuisine, will be discussed. Thirdly, I will examine the narrative styles and strategies of Korean American representations of the “Korean cuisine”, by analysing how the cuisine is constructed in Korean American diaspora, and then contrasting these representations with those of Koreans in Korea. Food and cuisine are important tools and signifiers in nationalist discourses as well as immigrant literature. In the Korean American diaspora, Korean food is variously an object of nostalgia, longing, and desire; or a symbol of national identity and spirit; or a source of conflict, alienation, and embarrassment. Korean cuisine in the US is politicised and negotiated, hybridised and multi-layered, gendered and classed, as is any other aspect of diaspora.

Food and identity: Food as a boundary marker

Essentialist assumptions that connect food with an organic identity (you are what you eat, or you eat what you eat because of who you are) are commonly found in classic anthropological literature, cookbooks, novels, biographies, tour-guides, and travelogues. Eating *kimchi*, for example, has been commonly associated with Koreanness. On the other hand *Kimchi* has also become a touchstone of cultural acceptance. Non-Korean people who are open-minded enough to “boldly” try, and further, appreciate and frequently consume *kimchi* seem to pass a preliminary test of friendliness for Koreans and Korean Americans.

By the same token, rejecting Korean foods and *kimchi* often amounts to rejecting Korean culture or the race as a whole. Ji-Yeon Yuh interviewed seventeen Korean women in the US who married American GIs. She found that the majority of the “military brides” were unable to cook Korean food for the family, present *kimchi* on the table, or even keep Korean food in the refrigerator because their husbands, in-laws, and children either simply refused to eat Korean food or objected to having the food around. Yuh points out that by banning Korean

food in the house or on the dinner table or refusing to eat Korean food, American husbands were rejecting the ethnicity and culture of their Korean wives.¹

Class seems to be the major deciding factor in attitudes toward *kimchi* (as a synecdoche of Korean foods). The participants of Yuh's study were Korean "military brides" in the US, most of whom had working class backgrounds in their homeland as well as in the US. In contrast, the participants of my study, mostly Korean American intellectuals (many of whom were single or married to non-Koreans), regularly prepared and ate Korean food at home and invited non-Korean friends over for Korean meals. My interviewees emphasised, though, that they also cook and eat other ethnic foods and go to a variety of ethnic restaurants. In other words, my participants seemed to congratulate themselves on having a global, multicultural, and liberal palate and considered it cultural capital. The identification with *kimchi* and Korean food was selectively addressed as a marker of identity for Korean Americans, yet this part of identity did not require excluding other cultures and cuisines. On the other hand, the disidentification with, and denouncement of, Korean food (for example, the American husbands who banned Korean food at home in Yuh's study) invariably came from a zero-sum way of thinking identity, and an orientalist conceptualisation of "foreign" food as strange, smelly, unclean, or unhygienic.

The American husbands and in-laws in Yuh's study who objected to Korean foods detested and complained of the smell of *kimchi* or *doenjang jjigae*. The problem of foreign food odor is much talked about in daily lives, yet not much is written about it. The complaint about the odour of "ethnic foods" seems to have been quite common in the US throughout its history. Cooking odour was a major reason for roommate troubles at the single graduate student apartments at the two state universities I went to in the late 1980s to the 1990s. Needless to say, all foods smell, and smell differently to different people. The same food smells aromatic (or even odourless) to certain people while offensive to others. As American schoolteachers noticed Korean kids' garlicky smell², I often found the American children smelling like fries, fish, butter, or sour milk when I worked at a nursery.³ Calling certain cuisines (not certain dishes) "spicy" and certain people "smelly" requires some reference to a norm that is not. By calling certain food spicy or smelly, Americans seem to imply that themselves are clean, pleasant, civilised, hygienic, good, and normal. In other words, the other side of the orientalist construction of Korean food is the construction of white American identity as the norm.

The turn-of-the-century novel, *My Antonia*, illustrates well how the food of immigrants was seen by earlier settlers. The grandmother of the narrator, an old white woman, considers the Bohemian immigrants' food unacceptable and filthy, and throws into the stove the dried mushrooms Antonia's mother gave to her as a present.⁴ Donna Gabaccia has chronicled the making of American cuisine from the colonial period to today in her book, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*. A tour guide published in 1876 described Chinese banquets as serving "exotic and rare, but sometimes also disgusting foods". Even in the 1930s, a San Franciscan wrote that Chinese restaurants were not recommendable because of "Chinese chefs' disregard for sanitation and the usual niceties of food preparation," that Mexican restaurants were dirty and that monkeys, cockroaches, and parrots could be found in them. Only in the late 20th century did a variety of ethnic foods become popular beyond particular ethnic

communities, and incorporated into mainstream American cuisine through mass production. Overall, Gabaccia sees a victory of curiosity over fear of the unfamiliar: “However much Americans feared people different from themselves, we have ignored those fears when we believed we would find new pleasure by crossing cultural boundaries”.⁵

Considering the aforementioned experiences of ethnic minority people in the US, however, such optimism seems prematurely congratulatory. For one thing, the boundary-crossing, pleasure-seeking subject in Gabaccia’s observation, the curious, exploring, brave person who is attracted by something different and new, is unmistakably white/first-worlder, and ethnically unmarked. In this kind of imagination, the curious and brave person is already in the mainstream and the burden of difference is squarely on the shoulder of the potentially dangerous person of the unknown culture (read: people of colour or immigrants of non-Anglo ethnicity). For example, the Mediterranean eggplant I used to make was not seen as cross-cultural by my American roommates (in fact, they thought it was a Korean dish even after I explained, simply because they had never seen it before), but their “having been at Chinese restaurants” was a proof of their open-mindedness. Korean women who were married to Americans, who cooked “American food” so well for their families, were not curious boundary crossers, but the American husbands who overcame fear and tasted *kimchi* were.

Appropriation of the national cuisine

Sidney Mintz believes that there is no such thing as an integral national cuisine, because a style of cooking and eating cannot be cleanly divided by politically determined borderlines. Cuisines are more regional than national, therefore a national cuisine only means “a holistic artifice based on the foods of the people who live inside some political system.”⁶ What constitutes Korean cuisine, then? When someone refers to “Korean food,” or “*uri umsik*” (our food or our cuisine; when the speaker and audience are both Koreans), different criteria such as national consensus, normative preferences, historical consistency, customs, and uniqueness, are often assumed implicitly and incoherently. Sometimes, when people speak/write of Korean food, they mean what the majority of Korean people eat today at home or at restaurants. At other times, they mean what Koreans normatively imagine as national food. Alternatively, others believe only the food that is unique to Korea deserves to be called national food, albeit the uniqueness itself is hard to define. Perhaps there is no such thing as *the* Korean cuisine nor one singular type of food that is and always has been Korean and only Korean, timeless and universal and unique. National foods such as French wine, German beer, Mexican taco, Italian pasta, and Japanese sushi are products of complex currents such as modern nationalist movements, commercial interests, and international competition, and to some degree, are arbitrary and invented rather than a natural outcome of collective culinary habits.

As in many other countries, the search for the national cuisine began in the relatively recent past in Korea. *Kimchi* became a representative Korean food probably because it comes closest to being a quintessentially Korean food, being unique⁷, essential and staple, and having a very long history.⁸ Still, the red hot

kimchi that we know today is a relatively recent invention, because the chili pepper arrived in Korea in the 16th century and began to be widely used in *kimchi* only two centuries later. In addition, the cabbage (*baechu*) that is used in the most typical *kimchi* came from China only 100 years ago.⁹ Besides, calling *kimchi* “Korea’s national dish”¹⁰ is stretching it somewhat, because *kimchi* is not considered a *dish* or a main part of a meal, but an essential staple accompaniment; *kimchi* cannot be served by itself without rice and other dishes, and thus it functionally resembles a condiment more than a dish.¹¹ Another example of the elusiveness of national cuisine is *bulgogi*, a famous marinated and grilled beef dish. An ancient form of *bulgogi* called *maekjok* goes back to the pre-agricultural age.¹² However, the distinctive taste of today’s *bulgogi* heavily depends on the sweet, industrially brewed soy sauce of Japanese origin, not the salty and deep-flavored traditional soy sauce.¹³

The rise of *kimchi* as a nutritious, healthful, and proud national dish was neither incidental nor natural. During the Japanese colonial occupation of Korea, the colonisers despised *kimchi* for its pungent odor and called it “*Chosenjin* smell”.¹⁴ *MASH*, the old American TV comedy series, used *kimchi* as a prop in certain episodes, invariably making fun of *kimchi* for being smelly or strange¹⁵. In fact, the current status of *kimchi* as a national food owes its fame to the continuous efforts of the Korean government. The government promoted the mass production of *kimchi*,¹⁶ supported scientific research in *kimchi* making, packing, preservation, and nutrition, and educated the public diligently. As a result, the export of *kimchi* to Japan had increased exponentially by the late 1980s, the general public in Korea came to have a more positive attitude toward *kimchi*, and commercialised *kimchi* became more accepted by Korean consumers.¹⁷ The 1984 LA Olympics, 1988 Seoul Olympics, and the 2002 Korea-Japan Worldcup provided further momentums for the government to present *kimchi* as Korea’s representative national food to the international community. Domestic palates are also disciplined by government policies: school textbooks at all levels include sections on “Korean foods” including *kimchi* and *doenjang* (bean paste),¹⁸ and the mandatory elementary school lunch includes *kimchi* everyday. If a national cuisine requires so much effort and maintenance by the state, it can no longer be a “natural” outcome of collective habits.

Yet, this does not mean that the concept of national cuisine is fictitious or bogus. Richard Wilk employed a phenomenological approach in his study of Belizean national cuisine: By conducting a large-scale survey on the foods that are actually consumed by the members of the society everyday and sorting out common elements of the meal content, he identified fairly stable patterns, and concluded that a national consensus of eating habits could be found.¹⁹

If a national food can be identified in Korea in this sense, it is rice (*bap*). Willy Jansen (2001) speculated, quoting Bacon, “humans in general prefer meat first, then tuberous roots, and only lastly grain,” and pointed out that in many cultures including North Africa, wealth is expressed by meat, and poverty is measured by the degree of dependency on dry bread.²⁰ Chu Young-ha, a food ethnographer, argues that such assumption of meat preference is a Western myth because human palates can be trained to prefer any kind of food, and animal protein has hardly been the preferred food for Koreans.²¹ Rice has been clearly preferred to other

grains by Korean people for centuries, although it has been in short supply until recent decades in South Korea, and it still is in North Korea. One of the reasons why North Korea has suffered famine in recent years is because the government has long focused on increasing the production of rice instead of other grains despite the fact that the topographical and climatic conditions of most of North Korea were not suitable for rice production. The North Korean government considered supplying enough rice to everyone in the nation crucial to the integrity of communist principles, which reflects the sentiment of Korean people toward rice.²² Pure white rice, unadulterated by cheaper grains, was the symbol of wealth and status — the precious white rice used to be reserved for the ruling class, and was available only on special days and holidays for plebian families.

Instead of classifying food items into main dishes versus side dishes, Koreans have divided the foods into *bap* (cooked rice) versus *banchan* (dishes). It would be unsatisfying to eat plain rice without *banchan*, but it is absolutely impossible to have a meal without rice (or its carbohydrate-rich substitutes such as noodles, dumplings, porridge, or rice cake soup.) Therefore, the word *bap* (cooked rice) is truly a synecdoche for a meal in the Korean language. If you ask someone “Have you eaten rice?” (*Bap mogotni?*), you are asking whether the person has recently eaten a meal, not whether the person had rice as opposed to noodles or a sandwich. Similarly, “It makes/qualifies as *bap*” (*babi doenda*) means the food is substantial enough to make a meal by itself. Children learn early on to respect *bap*, and to eat all of the rice in their bowls. Throwing away rice is considered obscene. Instead of giving thanks to God at the beginning of a meal, as is often the case in the US, many Korean parents and teachers tell children to thank the farmers, whose backbreaking labor produced the rice. Rice, however, has never been presented as Korean national food in international scenes, for an obvious reason: rice was not seen as unique to Korea.

The regional differences further problematise the effort to define Korean cuisine, as do class variances and historical changes. Up until the late Chosun period, there were rather distinctive regional cuisines in Korea. Each of the nine provinces was known for special items and methods of cooking.²³ Individual families, in addition, tend to have their own unique recipes that have been passed down for generations.²⁴ Chu Young-ha maintains that in recent decades, Chollado (Southwest) cuisine has become the most dominant among all regional cuisines in South Korea. Upscale restaurants began to adopt the complex and spicy Chollado seasoning and the elaborate presentation of copious dishes in the 1970s, and the trend trickled down to popular restaurants in all regions. Consequently, Chu maintains, many South Korean restaurant foods have been largely standardised and homogenised.²⁵ Due to the mass-produced food materials, including bean pastes, soy sauce, chili paste, and even factory-made *kimchi*, food at home has also been homogenised at some levels. But this hypothesis of homogenisation of regional cuisines seems to be overstated, and ignores another concurrent process of diversification: Food at home and in restaurants has also been diversified and expanded through the hybridisation of cooking methods and materials, because many people were displaced by the process of urbanisation and industrialisation and settled in new locations during the past half a century.

Despite such difficulty in defining a national cuisine, I believe that there are common basic meal structures and a range of food items and cooking methods that are recognised as “Korean.” There may be large regional and historical variations in tastes, seasoning, cooking methods, and usage and availability of certain kinds of food materials, but there are some shared principles that bind Korean cuisines together. Korean cookbooks, school textbooks, and academic literature all present a consistent normative meal structure, which originated from as early as the Three Kingdoms period (1st to 7th century) and has been settled in its current form since early Chosun period (late 14th to 16th century). In this article, the term “Korean foods/cuisine” is loosely defined as the foods that are recognised collectively as Korean by common knowledge of the general public, by means of shared consumption (commonly eaten by many Koreans) and by normative imagination (acknowledged as traditional or customary). National cuisines are by no means purely indigenous nor an antithesis to globalisation. As Wilk points out, national (local) identities and globalisation are closely related, and in fact, aspects of the same processes.²⁶ Globalisation is not an entirely new phenomenon, because global trades and cultural exchanges occurred in numerous waves since ancient times. Such historical facts are reflected in national cuisines as well. For example, the most commonly used spices in Korean foods include sesame oil, which originated from Africa, garlic from Southern Europe or Central Asia, black pepper from the Middle East or Southern India, ginger from Eastern India, and chili pepper from Central America.²⁷ Some of the ordinary spices and herbs in Korean cuisines such as sesame seed, garlic, and green onion were mentioned in documents that are more than a thousand years old.

In search of authenticity

Authenticity is the Holy Grail for both the producers and consumers of Korean cuisine in the US. The first and most important criterion for vetting a Korean restaurant or a Korean cookbook seems to be authenticity. This is hardly exceptional to Korean foods in the US. Ethnic restaurants and cookbooks tend to proclaim authenticity as though authentic is synonymous with “good.” The authors of Korean cookbooks written in English claim that they have reproduced the very foods that they grew up on or lived on at least for a while (implying genuineness), and, perhaps to corroborate their points, many of them include a short autobiography in the book.²⁸ Lisa Heldke has analysed the concept of authenticity as used in American culinary scenes, and has pointed out that authentic means “different from familiar, tired and dull food”, “prepared the way it would be in its culture of origin,” and “native to the original place”. However, Heldke has shown how such criteria are tenuous and contradictory, and are all based on the idea of mythical, exotic others. It is often forgotten that authenticity is not independent of context.²⁹ In the end, authenticity is a subjective experience that is defined by a relationship between a person (or a group of people) and a style of cooking and eating, rather than a quality that is fixed and embedded in foods.³⁰

Judy Hyun, an American woman who married a Korean American, wrote in her cookbook, “The recipes in this book are authentically Korean, with only a very few adaptations to American kitchen practices; I’ve substituted American

ingredients only when the original Korean ones cannot be found in this country at all".³¹ Hyun seems to establish authenticity by presenting the ingredients and cooking methods used by Koreans in Korea. However, many Korean readers would find her recipes more peculiar than familiar. For example, in her *kimchi* recipes, the measurements of the seasoning are very strangely proportioned: in one recipe, one teaspoon of hot pepper is used for a whole Chinese cabbage, and in another, two tablespoons cayenne pepper plus four tablespoons of hot pepper flakes are recommended.³² In addition, canned anchovies (presumably as a substitute for fermented and salt-preserved fish sauce) are prescribed in several *kimchi* recipes in this cookbook. Even if the recipes were relatively in tune with Korean cookbooks in Korea, using the same food materials and employing the same cooking methods as many Koreans in Korea do would not guarantee "authenticity" because a meal, let alone a cuisine, is much more than a combination of a few foods. Judy Hyun also added:

If you are living in America, you may want to take off your shoes, sit down on the floor, perhaps around your coffee table and eat pickled cabbage with chopsticks. On the other hand, you may find that this is carrying authenticity too far. There are, however, a number of more conventional ways of enjoying the delicious flavor of Korean food. In this book there are a number of "main dish" meat and vegetable dishes.³³

Taking off one's shoes and sitting on the floor in an American home would hardly be authentically Korean, because unlike typical Korean homes where the floor is meticulously cleaned, heated, and maintained, the bare floors in American homes are not designed to sit on for a prolonged time. Coffee tables are much too high and thus would make very inadequate substitutes for Korean meal tables. Eating "pickled cabbage" (a *kimchi* substitute?) on its own would be bizarre to Koreans, because *kimchi* is salty and is supposed to be eaten with rice. Also, what Hyun calls "main dishes" are incompatible with the Korean meal structure, as I discuss later in this article.

Jae Won Lee, a Korean American professor, recommends the bilingual Korean cookbooks by Jae-Ok Chang for "a source for comfort food for the first generation immigrants, more *authentic* cooking methods for Korean food for the second generation, and novel taste and cuisine for non-Korean readers". The author of the cookbooks (Chang) and six out of the seven commentators testify to authenticity, uniqueness, and the need to pass down and spread the Korean culinary tradition.³⁴ Nonetheless, the recipes and the presentation of the foods in these books are far from being authentically Korean or traditionally Korean, however one might define these terms. The meat dishes presented in the two books are mostly the kinds found in Chinese restaurants in the US, and even the common Korean vegetable dishes resemble Chinese-American restaurant foods *prima facie*. Different kinds of vegetables are often mixed in one dish and the same combination of heavy spices is used repeatedly. The foods are excessively sweetened, and are nearly universally pan-fried. The pictures present completed dishes that are severely decorated with ubiquitous parsley, thin threads of red chili pepper, carrot chips cut into a flower shape, cabbage bottoms cut in the shape of lotus and dyed pink, and small plastic flowers, leaves, and fish.³⁵ (Refer to Figure 1)

In contrast, the recipes in the cookbooks published in Korea that I reviewed often used different combinations of spices, accentuating certain spices over others for different dishes, instead of using the same sweetened soy-sauce based spices universally.³⁶ In addition, each vegetable dish is presented on its own. For example, blanched marinated spinach, seasoned grated radish, and seasoned steamed bean sprouts are presented in separate small bowls (sans parsley). Even when different kinds of vegetables are used for the same dish, as in *japchae* or *bibimbap*, they are steamed (or stir-fried) and seasoned separately before they are put together for final seasoning or serving. Mixing and pan-frying different vegetables together in a big wok is a method commonly found in Chinese cooking, not in Korean cuisines. None of the Korean cookbooks used plastic flowers or cabbage lotus for decoration, either, and decorative materials (called ‘*komyong*’; mostly scrambled and fried egg strips, pine nuts, gingko nuts, dropwort stems, and mushrooms) were used sparingly.

What is ironic is the emphasis on authenticity in English language cookbooks that are unfaithful to the culinary traditions of the country of origin in every aspect—in cooking methods, in the choice of materials, and in the visual presentation of final products. Whether the authenticity is established by what Koreans in Korea do (practices) or what Koreans in Korea believe (norms), the cookbooks all fail the test; albeit there is a wide variation in the extent of failure. The very fact that authenticity is a central issue reflects a key characteristic of diaphora—a constant search for identity in relation to the homeland. Many Korean American cookbook authors and commentators emphatically assert their wish for the cookbooks to help their own daughters or the second generation in general appreciate and maintain “Korean” culture. Paradoxically, what these cookbooks accomplish is the creation and dissemination of hybrid cuisines instead of traditional Korean cuisines.



Figure 1.
Vignettes of Korean cooking.³⁷

Ordering Korean food

The Korean cookbooks written in English that I reviewed are all organised within the framework of Western culinary thinking. In all these English cookbooks, the foods are classified into categories of courses, such as “appetisers”, “soups”, “salads and vegetable dishes”, “meat dishes”, and “desserts”.³⁸ Food materials are introduced individually and matter-of-factly (for example, botanical classification, where you can get it, how to clean and prepare it), rather than in *relation* to other materials used in given recipes, or the physical condition of the person who will eat the food (as Korean cookbooks). Also, *banchan* is translated invariably as “side dishes,” and is treated as such in the English cookbooks.

A Korean meal, regardless of the regional origin or kind, is structured by an entirely different order, and there is no way to compare *banchan* with elements or courses in Douglasian (Western) meals. If *banchan* were “side” dishes, rice and soup would be the main dishes. However, rice and soup, along with *kimchi*, *jjigae* (hot pot stew), and sauces, are not counted as *dishes* in Korean meals. These (rice, soup, stew, *kimchi*, and sauces) are basic requirements, while the kind and number of *banchan* are the factors that determine the level of elaborateness of a meal. *Banchan* dishes at a meal come in odd numbers (most commonly 3, 5 or 7), and should not overlap in terms of the materials (e.g. sprouts, leafy vegetable, tofu, egg, seaweed, fish, or beef) and cooking methods (e.g. fresh marinated, steamed, pan-fried, boiled, grilled, broiled, sun-dried, or raw).

A three-dish meal (*sam-chop bansang*)³⁹ is, for example, a typically modest but well-balanced ordinary meal, which includes one fresh marinated vegetable dish, one blanched and seasoned vegetable dish, and one baked or broiled dish (usually seafood or meat), in addition to the basic necessities of rice, soup, *kimchi* and little bowls of sauces. A five-dish meal (*o-chop bansang*) is a more elaborate ordinary meal, with a pan-fried vegetable or fish cutlet, and a dried food or preserved seafood dish added to the three-dish meal. A nine-dish meal is a formal feast,



Figure 2.
 Three-chop (left) and five-chop (right) meal tables. Author’s own cooking and photography, based on Korean cookbooks and textbooks.⁴⁰

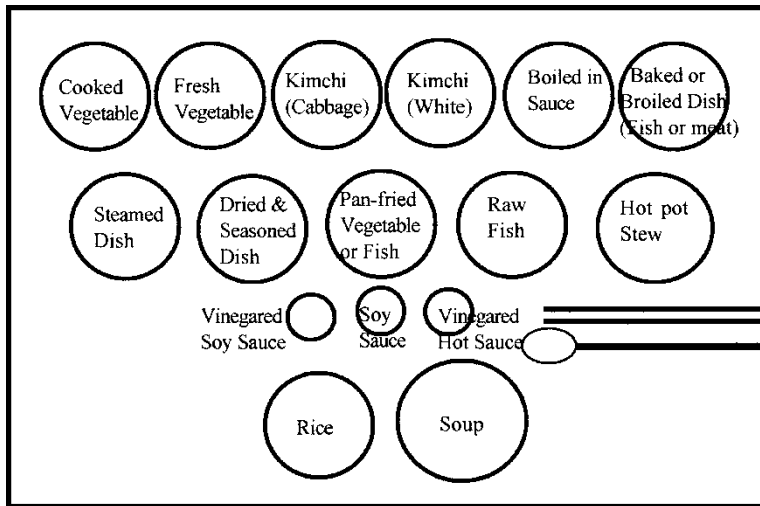


Figure 3.
Table setting for a 7-chop meal (normative one-person table).

which requires more than one kind of rice, soup, stew, and *kimchi* to be served simultaneously.

Banchan and *kimchi* should be eaten at the same time as rice and soup. Diners must use both a spoon and a pair of chopsticks; rice, soup, and other liquid must be eaten with a spoon. Lifting, holding or drinking directly out of a soup bowl is expressly banned.⁴¹ Such structures and manners are common knowledge for ordinary Korean people, and the principles of meal preparation and table etiquettes are found in school textbooks at all levels.

The contrast is clear when comparing the cookbooks written for Korean housewives, or foods served at restaurants in Korea, with Korean American cookbooks. Comprehensive cookbooks in Korea do not classify foods into Korean and non-Korean. Popular cookbooks often include unceremoniously dishes that were originated or inspired from Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Indian, or French cooking.⁴² Korean foods, by implication, are those that are not Western, Chinese, nor Japanese.⁴³ The most commonly found organisation of comprehensive cookbooks (in Korean) is not based on the kind or course, but based on the season.⁴⁴ The seasonal availability of food materials alone does not justify this classification. Even though many vegetables, sprouts, fruits, fish, and grains are available year-round today, eating in-season items is considered most harmonious with nature and thus healthier. The *banchan* not only come in a given number and kind, but there are complicated combinations of foods that are known to be harmonious. It is well known that Korean medical science does not separate food from medicine. Even ordinary people possess folk knowledge about the therapeutic effects of certain foods for certain physical illnesses or physical constitutions. Many cookbooks published in Korea still include the medicinal impacts of certain food materials in their recipes.⁴⁵ Despite the endless

hybridisation that is apparent in modern Korean cookbooks, these are the traces of a different worldview that is in contrast with the Western cookbooks. Diasporic Koreans seem to be oblivious to the differences at this level, which explains the organisation and logic of the Korean cookbooks in English.

Orientalist representations

Misrepresentations and blatantly false pieces of information about Korean foods and eating habits are quite common in Korean American cookbooks and other forms of literature. More subtly and disturbingly, Korean American authors frequently describe Korean food and cuisine in a language of lack, deficiency, and deviance, without properly locating themselves as knowers with a Western bias. Ji-Yeun Yuh wrote:

Korean meals are structured around a bowl of rice and several side dishes. There are no courses and everything is served at once. The side dishes usually include a bowl of soup or a pot of stew, and always include *kimchi*. Only rice and soup are served in individual portions; other side dishes are served each in its own dish placed at the center the table. . . . Eating the same side dishes meal after meal is common. The structure of American meals, on the other hand, more closely approximates Douglas's formula of 1a + 2b, that is, a main dish accompanied by two supporters. . . . Everything is individually served, and diners do not dip their eating utensils into the same bowls or plates of food. Eating the same thing twice in a row is usually considered to be eating leftovers. Dessert, a common ending to middle-class American meals, has no equivalent in Korean meals. . . . Mrs. Vaughn [one of the participants of Yuh's study, a "military bride"], her husband, several of Mrs. Vaughn's military bride friends, and I ate a meal together. . . . Mrs. Vaughn served her husband a plate of meatballs with tomato sauce, Korean style rice, and steamed vegetables. For the rest of us, she served bowls of rice, bowls of seaweed soup, and various kinds of Korean side dishes. We ate with chopsticks and spoons, all of us dipping into the same bowls of side dishes. Her husband ate with a fork, touching only the food on his own plate.⁴⁶

The passage above provides good examples of narrative strategies utilised by Korean American writers. First, Yuh saw Korean meal customs as a series of *lack*—lacking the Douglassian structure, lacking a Western-style course, lacking hygiene, lacking menu diversity, and lacking individual portions. Second, Yuh portrayed "Korean" table manners as deviant from American manners. Third, Yuh generalised her personal experience with a group of Korean military brides as *Korean meal customs*, oblivious to this group's class-specific behaviors and expectations. I argue that Yuh's standpoint exemplifies a native informancy that produces an orientalist (mis)representation of Korean meal customs.

First, the "lack" of Western order is only one of many possible paradigms of analysis. Korean meals have their own logic and structure, based on yin-yang-and-five-elements (*um-yang-o-haeng*) framework and several major ontological principles. Each food material is considered to have not only certain nutritional and medicinal characteristics but also different valences of *ki* (energy). Besides, the same food produces different impacts on different individuals, depending on physical constitutions, weaknesses and strengths. Moreover, certain food materials

go together and certain materials clash. Therefore, there is no single food or certain combination of foods that is universally good for everyone. It is true that there is no Western-style course in Korean meals,⁴⁷ but lack of courses does not mean lack of temporal coordination. Rice, soup, and *banchan* should be eaten slowly and in a coordinated pace. Also, most American/Western family meals are not strictly coursed meals, because such formal course meals would require a server dedicated to bringing out food in different waves. Most American families I observed served food all at once, but the people at the table ate the food in a certain order, most commonly, salad or soup first, then the main dish.

It may be true that “Koreans have not incorporated Western-style dessert as the last *course* until recently”, although there have been sweets, rice cakes, fruits, fruit- or grain-based drinks, teas, and numerous kinds of homemade fruit wines. By the same token, American cuisine lacks the concepts of *dagwasang* (a table of drinks, fruits, rice cakes and cookies), *juansang* (wine and accompanying dishes), or *myonsang* (noodles and accompanying dishes as a light meal-snack or guest entertainment course). Western cuisines also do not have the hundreds of other customary rite-of-passage foods and holiday menus found in Korean cuisines, such as *dolsang* (first birthday celebration food), *chaekryesang* (ceremonial food for completion of a study book by a child), May 5th festival, or winter solstice foods, to name a few. In other words, “lack” is not an absolute but a relative concept, and it points out the location of the knower.

Second, the comparison of the two cultures consistently takes the Western or American culture as the norm, thereby reading Korean culture as deviant. For example, the observation that “eating the same food meal after meal” is normal in Korea whereas it is considered eating leftovers in the US is simply wrong because the “same food” that Koreans are eating meal after meal is not exactly the *same* food. What Yuh called “the same food” is preserved food, the point of which is to be consumed over a period of time. It may be another serving from the same batch of *kimchi* in a large jar, or from the same pot of peppers preserved in *doenjang*, but it is not the same exact food served over and over again, which would be considered leftovers in Korea as well. “More than one person dipping in the same bowl” is also misleading, because even if more than one person may eat the food from one plate, they take caution not to touch the food carelessly with their chopsticks, and only pick up the small portion that they would eat. If the food has liquid, dipping an individual spoon in the pot or bowl is considered rude, and the person must transport a small amount with a serving spoon into his or her own bowl.⁴⁸ Sharing dishes on the same table is also a recent practice in Korea. All of the Korean ethnographic literature I reviewed mentioned that traditionally each person (especially male adults and older females) received his or her individual table with all the dishes in small one-person portions. (Refer to Figures 2 and 3.)

Third, Yuh repeatedly juxtaposed the food preferences and meal customs of Korean “military brides” with those of their American husbands and generalised the two as “Korean” and “American.” Both groups tended to exhibit working class values and more than ordinary inflexibility, as mentioned early on. What was presented as Korean also tended to be timeless or stuck in the past. Food cultures in South Korea these days are quite diverse and rapidly changing, with sharp trends and fads. Fusion foods, North Korean foods, Southeast Asian ethnic cuisines, slow food and organic

food movements, various diet methods and health food items, revived royal cuisines and traditional homemade wines are all examples of recent trends in South Korea. None of these appear in the gastronomic imagery of Korea by Korean American writers, even though many of them traveled to Korea in recent years.

Similar orientalist narrative styles are found in Korean cookbooks in English written by Korean Americans and non-Korean Americans: Korea and Korean cuisine are represented as exotic and deviant, lacking Western (normal) elements, and frozen in the past. Korean culture is considered as a monolithic, generalisable unit, homogeneous and timeless. Such assumptions are apparent in the ubiquitous sentences that start with “Koreans” followed by a verb in the present tense such as “like”, “love”, “consider”, “eat”, “do”, and “are”.⁴⁹ Two cookbooks, Judy Hyun’s *The Korean Cookbook*, and Copeland Marks’ *The Korean Kitchen: Recipes from the land of Morning Calm*, start with an introduction to the basic geography of Korea and to Koreans as a race. Nika Hazelton wrote in the introduction of Hyun’s cookbook:

The thing that fascinated me about Korean food—as it has all others who know it— is that it is quite different from Chinese and Japanese food. [Korea’s] climate, contrary to what one might think, is not tropical. (...) Koreans belong to an ancient race, distinct from both the Japanese and Chinese. They are thought to be the descendents of two strains, the nomadic tribes of Mongolia and the Caucasian people of Western Asia.⁵⁰

Copeland Marks, an American who traveled to Korea, writes: “Koreans are descended from a Mongolian race who came south from Mongolia and Manchuria and developed into a distinct nationality of great individuality—honored by vicissitudes of life in a rugged country and beset by innumerable Japanese invasions”.⁵¹

It seems that whenever Korean cuisine is introduced to Westerners, new knowledge needs to be inserted comfortably into the average Westerner’s pre-existing acquaintance with the country/region/race, no matter how abysmally feeble it may be. The lack of knowledge about Korea on the part of the Westerners is taken for granted and forgiven as a matter of course; therefore, even cookbooks are justified in carrying such over-generalising, factually wrong and rudimentary introductions to the country. There are numerous examples, but to give just a few, Marks writes: “Korea is an eating society.” “[Koreans] say that if you eat duck your feet will become webbed like the feet of ducks!”⁵²

Judy Hyun sees Korean cuisine and culture as shaped by poverty—the lack of normative Western wealth. She maintains that Koreans (and other East Asians) chop food finely, because their perennial fuel shortage forces people to reduce cooking time, and in order to have finely chopped food, they have used chopsticks. She also comments that it is fortunate that soy sauce is a good food preservative because Korean traditional kitchens do not have refrigerators, forgetting that all traditional kitchens everywhere lacked refrigerators. She even believes the breastfeeding of babies was caused by lack of dairy foods in Korea.⁵³

Gender is a dimension many authors use in order to frame Korean culture within their assumptions. In particular, authors orientalise Korean women as one homogeneously oppressed group. Sonya Hepinstall wrote in the forward of her mother’s cookbook:

In the case of my mother and me, one was brought up as a second-class citizen (as a woman) in a deeply Confucian society nearly destroyed by occupation, natural disaster, and war, and the other was American through and through, a girl brought up free in an era of great prosperity for the United States, deliberately raised to believe no goal is too lofty... This book is a testimony to the fact that she never gave up on me or all those who needed encouragement to recognize the value of things Korean. . . .⁵⁴

There is no reconciliation between her observation of her mother as an oppressed victim (“second class citizen”), of Korea as a “destroyed country” and her hope to find values in Korean things, nor is there any reconciliation between her location/complicity as an American citizen and her presentation of the destruction of the looked-down upon (or pitied) country. Her mother (according to her brief autobiography, pp. xiii–xvii; 3–8) was from a highly privileged upper class family, grew up very happy surrounded by a large family, was highly educated, well traveled, and well accomplished. Yet, the Hepinstall daughter summarily denounces her mother’s culture in the name of the universal female oppression of a third world country. She hopes to find values in her mother’s recipes, but she seems to isolate the food from the context of Korean culture.

Copeland Marks wrote that “before modish Western clothes became popular, young ladies sat at the corners of the tables and . . . men and elders sat at the more comfortable sides.”⁵⁵ He implies that Western influence brought gender justice in table seating in Korea. This observation is flat out false: Traditionally, individuals had separate tables and thus there was no designated “sides” of a table for individuals. Even when a larger table was shared by more than one person, sitting at the corner was strictly banned, regardless of one’s situation. When children sat at the corner of a table, even momentarily, they were corrected immediately and warned that their “blessings would leave”.⁵⁶ Both Marks and Hepinstall ignore the intersecting social forces of class and gender in pre-Western-enlightenment Korean society, as though gender alone decided a person’s position and all women suffered the same dire oppression.

Conclusion: Korean American relationships with Korean cuisine

As is the case for all diaspora cultures, Korean American cuisine exhibits hybridity, multiplicity, and complex and ambivalent relationships with the origin (Old Korea). There are ample examples of hybridised Korean American foods, including LA *kalbi*, Hawaiian *kimchi*, *bulgogi* burger, herb *bibimbap*, *kimchi* pizza, and avocado *kimbap*, some of which have been imported back to South Korea by returning students and visiting Korean Americans.

It seems that there is a diverse range of Korean American food habits, varied by region, class, and time. For example, most of Yuh’s participants cooked and ate Korean food separate from their families. Middle class Korean Americans I interviewed were more global and treated Korean food as one of the many cuisines they enjoy. Won Moo Hurh surveyed Korean Americans residing in Chicago and found that the degree of “acculturation” in terms of food habits depends on the time of the day and day of the week. About two thirds of those surveyed responded that they ate American breakfast and lunch during the weekdays but Korean food

dominated their dinner and weekend meals. Education and immigration status also affected food habits—the more educated a person is, and the earlier the age of immigration was, and the longer the person lived in the US, the more Americanised the person's food habits were.⁵⁷ Food is a site of struggles for identity for Korean Americans. How to approach Korean cuisine is closely related to how the person locates herself or himself in terms of race, gender, and nationality.

Unfortunately, Korean American narratives on food and cooking frequently betray an orientalist view toward Korea and Korean cultures. Korean American literature, just as Korean American cookbooks, often embodies Western perspectives: the authors approach Korean cuisine from the perspectives of either a native informant, whose mission is to satisfy a Western curiosity, or a Westernised self, who is identified with a hegemonic subject. Therefore, they tend to see Korean cuisine as exotic and different, lacking and deviant, static and locked in the past.

Earlier in this article, I discussed the problems in defining a national cuisine, pointing out the internal variations (by region and class), the historical changes, and the constant process of global/local interactions. I also addressed that there *is* indeed a national cuisine as a social construction and a shared imagination in Korea, because there are fairly consistent principles, logics, practices, and normative expectations that serve as common denominators of all cooking and eating customs in Korea.

Postmodern and postcolonial theories question the idea of an absolute Truth that is not affected by the subjectivity of individual knowers. These theories therefore would be less useful in assessing the correctness of a representation, but would be helpful in exposing the relationship between the location of the knower and the kind and purpose of knowledge produced. I think, however, that it is also beneficial to differentiate an alternative representation from a *mis*representation. In other words, it is possible to distinguish partial truths⁵⁸ from false reports. There is a qualitative difference in the intention, ambition, and methodology between the two.

Notes

¹ J-Y Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America*, New York: New York University Press, 2002, pp. 126–153.

² Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America*, p.149.

³ Alain Corbin notes the importance placed by people on odors as a way of marking identity and class. See A Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986.

⁴ W Cather, *My Antonia*. New York: The Modern Library, 1996, pp. 33–34; 70–72.

⁵ D R Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 103, p. 225.

⁶ S W Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1996, pp. 92–105.

⁷ There are all sorts of pickled vegetables in many different cuisines but none are quite as sophisticated and complex as *kimchi*.

⁸ The oldest form of *kimchi*, vegetables pickled with salt, vinegar, grain wine base, or bean paste, go back to the Three Kingdoms period. See Y-h Chu, "Origin and change in kimch'i culture", *Korea Journal*, 35(2), 1995, pp. 18–33. and S Yun, G Yi, T Yu, M An, H Cho, H Yi, T Kwon, *Hangugumsik daegwan, Je-1-gwon: Hangugumsigwi gaegwan (Comprehensive overview of Korean food, Volume 1: The overview of Korean Cuisine)* Seoul, Korea: Hollym Press, 2002, p. 33.

- ⁹ There are more than 200 kinds of kimchi in Korea. For a history of *kimchi*, see Y-h Chu, *Umsik jonjaeng, munhwa jonjaeng (Food War, Culture War)*, Seoul, Korea: Sagyejol, 2002, pp. 56–69.
- ¹⁰ M-J Kim, K-T Lee, and O-Y Lee, *The Kimchee Cookbook: Fiery Flavors and Cultural History of Korea's National Dish*, North Clarendon, VT:Periplus, 1999.
- ¹¹ In an extremely humble meal, *kimchi* and a bowl of rice could be served, just as bread and butter could make a very simple meal.
- ¹² Yun et al., *Hangugumsik daegwan, Je-1-gwon: Hangugumsigwi gaegwan (Comprehensive overview of Korean food, Volume 1: The overview of Korean Cuisine)*, p. 26.
- ¹³ The brewed soy sauce began to be mass-produced in Korea only after the mid 1960s. Chu, *Umsik jonjaeng, munhwa jonjaeng (Food War, Culture War)*, 2002, pp. 110–177.
- ¹⁴ Chu, *Umsik jonjaeng, munhwa jonjaeng (Food War, Culture War)*, 2002, pp. 306–308. Chosenjin is a derogatory Japanese word for Koreans.
- ¹⁵ According to a former American serviceman, US soldiers in Korea often use the word *kimchi* as a replacement for “Korean” somewhat derogatorily, as in *kimchi* taxi, *kimchi* beer, or *kimchi* girlfriend. (Interview, October 1999.)
- ¹⁶ Mostly for export to Japan originally, because the majority of South Korean people ate home-made *kimchi* until recently.
- ¹⁷ Chu, *Umsik jonjaeng, munhwa jonjaeng (Food War, Culture War)*, pp. 305–313.
- ¹⁸ For example, Ministry of Education, *Sahoe 3–2 (Social Studies, 3rd grade, 2nd semester)*, Seoul, Korea: National Textbook Corporation, 1996, pp. 24–27; S Yi, et al., *Junghakgyo kisu kajong (Technology and Home Economics, Middle School)*. Seoul, Korea: Chonjae gyoyuk, 2002, pp. 72–77; I Yun et al., *Kodunghakgyo kajong gwahak (Family Science, High School)*. Seoul, Korea: Kyohaksa, 2003, pp. 138–145; Y Yi et al., *Kodunghakgyo kisu kajong (Technology and Home Economics, High School)*. Seoul, Korea: Korea Textbook Company, 2002, pp. 75–83.
- ¹⁹ R R Wilk, “Food and nationalism: The origins of ‘Belizean food’” in *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies*, W Belasco and P Scranton (eds), New York: Routledge, 2002. pp. 67–89.
- ²⁰ W Jansen, “French bread and Algerian wine: Conflicting identities in French Algeria” in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages*, P Scholliers (ed), Oxford, UK: Berg, pp. 195–218.
- ²¹ W Jansen, “French bread and Algerian wine: Conflicting identities in French Algeria” in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages*, P Scholliers (ed), pp. 235–243; Yun, et al., *Hangugumsik daegwan, Je-1-gwon: Hangugumsigwi gaegwan (Comprehensive overview of Korean food, Volume 1: The overview of Korean Cuisine)*, pp. 120–157.
- ²² Chu, *Umsik jonjaeng, munhwa jonjaeng (Food War, Culture War)*, pp. 42–48.
- ²³ H Hwang, J Han, Y Shim, B Han, G Choi, and B Han, *Naerim somssi, daemullim yori (Hand-down Techniques, Pass-down Recipes)* Seoul, Korea: Ju Bu Press, 2001; Yun et al., *Hangugumsik daegwan, Je-1-gwon: Hangugumsigwi gaegwan (Comprehensive overview of Korean food, Volume 1: The overview of Korean Cuisine)*
- ²⁴ Hwang et al. *Naerim somssi, daemullim yori (Hand-down Techniques, Pass-down Recipes)*.; J Rutt, and S Mattielli, (eds), *Lee Wade's Korean Cook-book*. Seoul, Korea: Pomso Publishers, 1974, p. 5.
- ²⁵ Chu, *Umsik jonjaeng, munhwa jonjaeng (Food War, Culture War)*, pp. 233–5.
- ²⁶ Wilk, “Food and nationalism: The origins of ‘Belizean food’” in *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies*, W Belasco and P Scranton (eds).
- ²⁷ There are several different hypotheses about the origins and routes of transmission of certain spices and herbs. See for example, Yun et al., *Hangugumsik daegwan, Je-1-gwon: Hangugumsigwi gaegwan (Comprehensive overview of Korean food, Volume 1: The overview of Korean Cuisine)* p. 168, and www.nature.nonghyup.com (Korean Agricultural Co-op).
- ²⁸ J-O Chang, *Vignette of Korean Cooking I & II*. Daegu, Korea: Maeilwonsaek Press, 2001, 2003; H S S Hepinstall, *Growing up in a Korean Kitchen: A Cookbook*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2001; J Hyun, *The Korean Cookbook*. Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym International Corp, 1970 (Illustrated edition, 1992); J Kwak and L Fried, *Dok Suni: Recipes from My Mother's Korean Kitchen*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- ²⁹ L Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer*. New York: Routledge. 2003, pp. 23–44.
- ³⁰ Part of this idea comes from an anonymous reviewer of this article.
- ³¹ Hyun, *The Korean Cookbook*, p. 10.
- ³² Hyun, *The Korean Cookbook*, p. 235, p. 238.
- ³³ Hyun, *The Korean Cookbook*, p. 39.
- ³⁴ Chang, *Vignette of Korean Cooking I & II*, Vol I, pp. 6–7. Italics are mine. The remaining one commentator emphasised the importance of pure natural foods and praised the books for not using any instant foods or MSG. Oddly enough, store-bought pre-mixed and packaged sauces, processed fishcakes, instant noodles, and soup-base powder (mostly of Japanese brands) were often required in the recipes of these cookbooks.
- ³⁵ Some Japanese cookbooks I examined used decorative vegetables and small flowers abundantly, but the plastic leaves were only used to separate different kinds of sushi rolls. Food sculpting and carving seem to be

much more common in Japanese and Chinese cuisines compared to Korean cuisines. Japanese mothers are famous for crafting elaborate lunch-box foods for children. See, for example, A Allison, “Japanese mothers and obentos: The lunch box as ideological state apparatus” in, *Permitted and prohibited desires: Mothers, comics, and censorship in Japan*, A Allison, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996, pp. 81–103. Similar decorations are found in the Chinese restaurant foods in the US, also.

³⁶ None of the Korean cookbooks written in Korean that I reviewed claimed authenticity, but all of the Korean cookbooks in English did. Here, I used Korean cookbooks as a point of comparison, and I do not assume that all Korean cookbooks are “authentically Korean” naturally.

³⁷ Chang, *Vignette of Koreas Cooking I & II*, Vol. I, p. 12, p. 20, Vol II, p.112.

³⁸ See for example, Chang, *Vignette of Korean Cooking I & II*, S Y Chung, *Korean Home Cooking*. Boston, MA: Periplus Editions, 2002; Hepinstall, *Growing up in a Korean Kitchen: A Cookbook*; Hyun, *The Korean Cookbook*; C Marks, (With M Kim), *The Korean Kitchen: Classic Recipes from the Land of the Morning Calm*, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993; D C Price, *The Food of Korea: Authentic Recipes from the Land of Morning Calm*, Singapore: Periplus Editions, 2002; Rutt and Mattielli, *Lee Wade’s Korean Cook-book*.

³⁹ “Dishes” as the translation of *chop* is not precise. *Chop*, the unit of counting *banchan*, refers to the small shallow bowls in which *banchan* are served.

⁴⁰ See Song, Haegyun et al., *Junghakgyo kisul kajong 3 (Technology and home economics, middle school, 3rd Year)*. Seoul, Korea; Daehan Gyogwaso, 2003, p. 92; Yun Ingyong et al., *Kodunghakgyo kajong gwahak (Family Science, High School)*. Seoul, Korea: Kyohaksa. 2003, p. 141; and Yun, et al., *Hangugumsik daegwan, Je-I-gwon: Hangugumsigwi gaegwan (Comprehensive overview of Korean food. Vol. I: The overview of Korean Cuisine)*, pp. 59-61, for more pictures.

⁴¹ In contrast, Japanese and Chinese people hold the rice bowl in hands, and they use chopsticks to eat rice. Chu, *Umsik jonjaeng, munhwa jonjaeng (Food War, Culture War)*, p. 295.

⁴² For example, see the best selling cookbook, I Pak and H Kim, *Sikdangwa banchan 365-il (Menus and dishes for 365 days)*, Seoul, Korea: Jubusaenghwalsa, 1995.

⁴³ Classifying “foods,” into the four large categories, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and Western is quite common. For instance, it is the most popular way to categorise restaurants in phonebooks, tour guides, newspapers, and searchable on-line restaurant databases. I think this reflects the Korean people’s worldview: Korea is located between China and Japan, but is a distinctive and different and separate country/nation/people/culture. In other words, China and Japan are in the first layer of “Others” from whom we must distinguish ourselves, and then there is a more distant, Euro-American Other, called the West.

⁴⁴ See for example, H Cho, *Sesipungsokkwa uriymsik (Seasonal Customs and Our Foods)*, Seoul, Korea: Hollym Press, 2002; S Kim, *Kim Suknyonui 600nyon Seoul umsik (600 years of Seoul Cuisine by Kim Suknyon)*. Seoul, Korea: Dongaibosa, 2002; Pak et al, *Sikdangwa banchan 365-il (Menus and dishes for 365 days)*; Sonjae, *Sonjae sunimui sachal umsik (Buddhist temple cookbook by Sister Sonjae)* Seoul, Korea: Design House. 2000.

⁴⁵ The cookbooks listed in the above all include such commentary.

⁴⁶ Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America*, pp. 145–5.

⁴⁷ Korean meals are arranged more spatially than temporally, in general. However, there are some coursed meals in communal events such as 60th birthday feasts or wedding feasts which start with wine and accompanying dishes and end with individual bowls of noodles. See G Kim, *Hangugui jontongumsik (Korea’s Traditional Cuisines)*, Kwangju: Chonnam University Press, 2004, p. 11.

⁴⁸ Dipping individual spoons into the same bowl of liquid (such as a stew or soup) instead of using a serving spoon might be a practice of the post-war urban poor in Korea. I have seen a few Korean adults using their individual spoons to eat someone else’s stew at a meal, but it was frowned at by the people at the table, and was considered rude.

⁴⁹ Hyun, *The Korean Cookbook*, pp. 19, 20, 22, 23; Marks, op. cit., pp. 2, 3, 4, 16, 17.

⁵⁰ Hyun, *The Korean Cookbook*, pp. 1–3.

⁵¹ Marks, *The Korean Kitchen: Classic Recipes from the Land of the Morning Calm*, p. 2.

⁵² Marks, *The Korean Kitchen: Classic Recipes from the Land of the Morning Calm*, pp. 3–4.

⁵³ Marks, *The Korean Kitchen: Classic Recipes from the Land of the Morning Calm*, pp. 8, 15, 34.

⁵⁴ Hepinstall, *Growing up in a Korean Kitchen: A Cookbook*, p. xi.

⁵⁵ Marks *The Korean Kitchen: Classic Recipes from the Land of the Morning Calm*, p. 17.

⁵⁶ Chu, *Umsik jonjaeng, munhwa jonjaeng (Food War, Culture War)*, p. 173.

⁵⁷ W M Hurh, *The Korean Americans*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998.

⁵⁸ James Clifford’s term (J Clifford, “Introduction: Partial truths” in *Writing cultures: The poetics and politics of ethnography*, James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds), Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 1–26). Clifford suggested that all ethnographic truths are “inherently partial—committed and incomplete,” because all ethnographic texts are systemically constructed within certain tropes and narratives, and are necessarily selective.