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A Gastronomic Study of 20th and 21st Century Korea

Retracing Korean Food from Japanese Colonization to Modern Times

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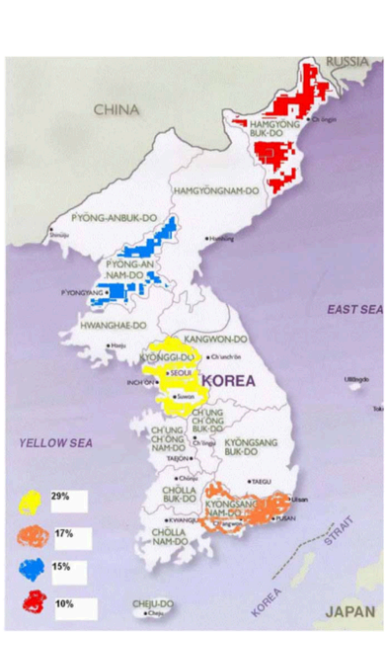
Food has entailed social interactions in most places around the world throughout history, whether through preparation or through the actual act of sharing a meal with loved ones. Food oftentimes facilitates unique social spaces in which one can relax and retell the day's events. However, when the presence of food becomes limited, this sociality transforms. Those who possess food also possess power; food provides political, economic, and social capital that generates notions of precariousness and prosperity which dramatically changes social relations. Particularly in times of political instability, when resources are scarce, the ownership of food becomes especially profound, and can serve as a defining characteristic of the state of a nation. Furthermore, cross-cultural interactions brought on by globalization and colonization can blur the lines of ownership of foods. When power is unequally distributed in these interactions, the food that emerges during these times can be haunted by painful memories; this can complicate the sense of identity one derives from the food. The turmoil experienced by Korea during the 20th century exemplifies the way in which food, politics, and identity are deeply intertwined with one another and are complicated by history. Food serves as a medium through which Korean society can retroactively rectify trauma stemming from colonization and occupation by America and Japan.

Japanese Colonization

The proximity of the Korean Peninsula to the island of Japan has allowed for ample cultural exchanges between the two nations. Despite the countries' similar isolationist policies, elements of writing, pottery, academics, and much more have successfully crossed the Sea of Japan and integrated themselves into both cultures for at least two millennia. The rise of Japanese imperialism starting at the end of the 19th century greatly expedited the rate at which pieces of Japanese and Korean culture were exchanged. Once Japan annexed Korea in 1910, Japanese citizens began migrating to Korea in large numbers, dramatically changing Korean culture. The effect of the transfer of language, industry, and people from Japan is still visible today, especially in Korean food culture. The evolution of soy sauce, the birth of cross-cultural dishes, and perceptions of kimchi showcase the dark history of Japan's colonial past in Korea, in modern times.

The Evolution of Soy Sauce



Soy sauce factories in Korea during Japanese colonization. Source: Tsushima, 1943.

Soy sauce has been a pantry staple in Korean households for centuries (Shurtleff & Aoyagi). After soy bean paste made its way into Korean society during the 9th century, individual households began producing their own soy sauce, known as *ganjang*. Made up of soybeans, salt, and water, *ganjang* has a very distinct taste, and is still widely used in Korean cooking today (Sherman). Japanese soy sauce, or *shoyu*, uses the same ingredients as *ganjang* but also includes wheat, which produces a slightly different flavor profile (Sherman). *Shoyu* first entered Korea in 1876 after Korean ports opened to the Japanese, and in 1885, the Yamamoto Soy Sauce Brewery opened the first *shoyu* factory in Korea near the port of Busan (Cwiertka). The *shoyu* industry continued to expand, experiencing its most massive growth once Japan annexed Korea; as Japanese citizens relocated to Korea, their desire for the slightly sweeter taste of Japanese soy sauce allowed for more Japanese soy sauce breweries to open up on the peninsula. By the 1920s, there were hundreds of *shoyu* breweries in Korea, the largest being the Japan Soy Sauce Company located in Incheon (Cwiertka).

During the early 20th century, many Koreans still consumed homemade soy sauce, and it wasn't until World War II that *shoyu* managed to enter the Korean market. Wartime shortages of soybeans and salt made it difficult for households to produce their own soy sauce, so many Koreans started turning to the factory-manufactured variety of Japanese soy sauce instead (Cwiertka). Even after World War II ended and Korea was freed from Japan's imperial reign, Japanese soy sauce still proliferated the Korean soy sauce market. This can in part be attributed to the quick transition from WWII to the Korean War. Japanese colonization devastated Korea, and rising tensions between North and South Korea left little time for either side to rebuild, forcing them to make quick decisions. One of the choices the South Korean government scrambled to make was transferring formerly Japanese-run industries, such as *shoyu* breweries, into the hands of Koreans (Cwiertka). The government made this decision hoping that it would allow for production to resume much faster than if the businesses went through a formal auction process (Cwiertka). In an attempt to dissociate the factories from Japanese influence, many of them adopted new names. For example, Monggo Food Company, the oldest surviving soy sauce brewery in South Korea today, started off as the Japanese brand, Yamada Shoyu (Cwiertka). This was a very surface level change however; many of the soy sauce breweries continued to draw from Japanese brewing methods and mixtures, and to this day, still do (Cwiertka).

Soy sauce documents the inequity Koreans faced at the hands of the Japanese, and the way in which they adapted and reinvented themselves in response. The transition between the homemade Korean variety soy sauce to one that is manufactured and heavily influenced by the Japanese showcases the unequal power dynamic of the two countries. Korean citizens were treated as second-class members of society upon the arrival of Japanese during colonialism and were largely unable to create change among the Japanese who arrived. The Japanese on the other hand had a significant influence on the lives of Koreans. By stripping Korean families of land, chopping down millions or trees, and tearing down historic sites, the Japanese disrupted facets of Korean society that had existed for decades prior. Similarly, although the Korean variety of soy sauce had been consumed for centuries on the peninsula, the arrival of the Japanese marked a shift from *ganjang* to *shoyu*. The continued consumption of Japanese soy sauce served as a reminder to Koreans of the trauma of Japanese colonization. The ingredients and manufacturing techniques behind soy sauce forces Korea to acknowledge Japan's colonial history in the peninsula despite surface-level attempts to hide the past through brewery name changes. Even though the factories became Korean owned and named, their history is still tied to the Japanese. At the same time though, the way in which Koreans made this soy sauce their own highlights how the peninsula carved its own unique identity in the post-colonial period. While taken from a Japanese base, soy sauce in Korea has now been adapted to suit the tastes of Korean consumers. Koreans have reclaimed the soy sauce industry, enabling them to face the past and grow from problems stemming from Japanese colonization.

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MinJi's Kitchen

Many different manufacturers produce *ganjang*. Image: MinJi's Kitchen, 2014.

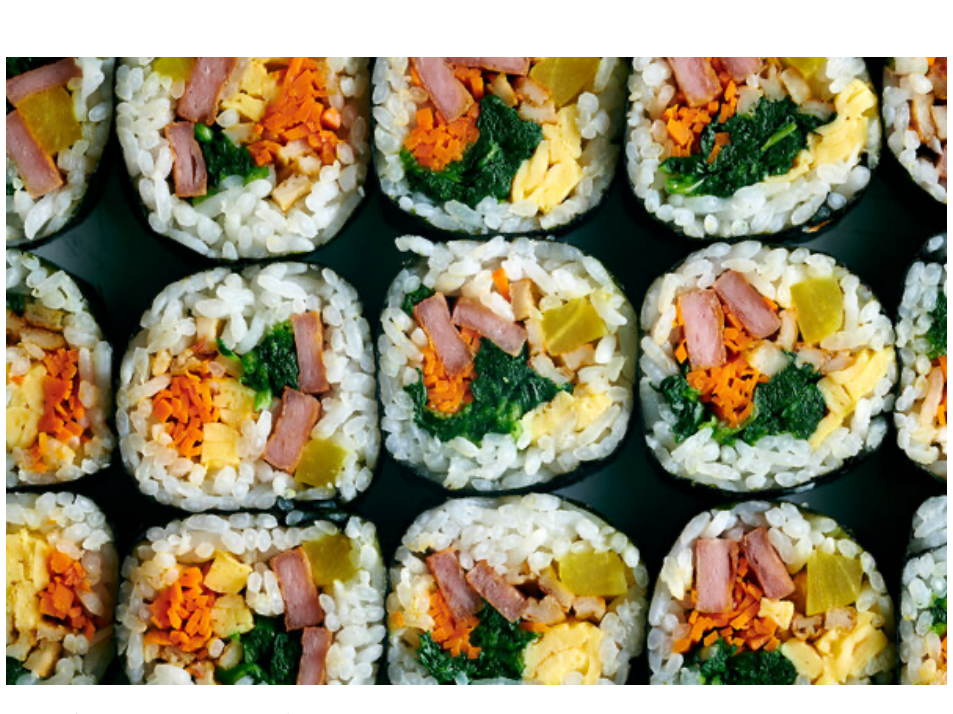
Not only did the Korean War impact the way in which soy sauce manufacturing was run, but it also affected the way in which Korean citizens consumed the sauce. The trauma, destruction, and violence of the Korean War displaced many Koreans, preventing many from brewing their own soy sauce at home (Cwiertka). This forced more to rely on factory-produced brand soy sauce, creating a larger market for the sauce seeped in Japanese roots. The growth of soy sauce production further reflects the historical changes of South Korea during the Korean War in terms of modernization. North Korea was much more politically and economically stable than its neighbor during the 1960s (Armstrong). One way in which South Korea tried to modernize itself to compete with North Korea is by emphasizing a modern lifestyle within its citizens. Factory made soy-sauce emulated the feeling of newness and advancement as compared to the older practice of homemade soy sauce, so many citizens started to turn to the former for their soy sauce needs (Cwiertka). The rapid growth of South Korea's urban population also helped catapult brand soy sauce to larger consumption (Cwiertka). Although brand soy sauce was redesigned by Korean companies following Japan's WWII loss, because manufactured Korean soy sauce draws from Japanese manufacturing, it's impossible to completely erase the memories of colonization even from the modern day product. Part of the reason that brand soy sauce is consumed as it is in Korean is because of Japanese influence.

The evolution of soy sauce reflects the major historical changes that Korea, and more specifically South Korea, faced in the 20th century. Korean society's transition between a homemade, Korean variety to a manufactured, Japanese-influenced soy sauce mirrors the increased involvement of the Japanese on the peninsula. Soy sauce highlights the inequality of Japanese colonialism, but also draws on the agency Korea took during its WWII recovery and the dramatic changes it experienced from the Korean War. Even though Japan's influence on Korea's mid-century development cannot be ignored, soy sauce demonstrates how the peninsula was able to take from the lopsided nature of the colonial relationship to create something that was its own.

Kimbap and *Jjampong*

One of the primary reasons for diversity in cuisine across different countries and cultures is a difference in ingredients. Culturally specific foods arose from citizens' interactions with the environment, and as globalization and cross-cultural interactions became more prevalent, the melding of both of these factors gave rise to many well-known dishes. *Kimbap* and *jjampong* both exemplify the phenomenon of cross-cultural interactions generating dishes that overtime became synonymous with one country, Korea, despite having ties to Japan.

Kimbap, which literally translates to "rice" and "seaweed," is as it sounds, seaweed wrapped around rice and other fillings such as egg, carrots, spinach, *danmuji* (pickled radish), marinated beef, and *odeng* (fish cake). Although most will associate the food with Korean culture, it has ties to Japan. Most believe that *kimbap* originated in the early 20th century during Japanese colonization (Camlisa). Koreans took inspiration from the Japanese dish *norimaki*, which is also a seaweed wrapped rice roll stuffed with various veggies and meats, and made slight alterations to utilize ingredients available in Korea and tailor the dish for the Korean palette (Camlisa). One primary difference between *kimbap* and *norimaki* is that the former uses sesame oil while *norimaki* uses vinegar instead.



Kimbap and *norimaki* can look similar at times, but their ingredients are quite different, reflecting different environments and cultural preferences. Image: The New York Times.

Jjampong similarly has ties to Japanese imperialism, but was also influenced by Chinese cooking. *Jjampong*, a spicy Korean noodle dish is taken most directly from the Chinese dish *chǎomǎmiàn* (Yarvin). Before the Chinese dish reached Korea however, the Japanese made slight changes, calling their version *champon*; it was this altered version that appeared in Japanese-owned Chinese restaurants in Korea (Cwiertka). Overtime, Koreans began to make the dish their own by adding seafood and spices to better suit Korean taste, and eventually named it *jjampong*, a name derived from Japanese imperial soldiers' pronunciation of *champon* (Lee).

Koreans added spice and seafood to the Japanese-Chinese dish to better represent Korean palettes. Image: Korean Bapsang, 2018.

Kimbap and *jjampong* both demonstrate the way in which globalization and colonization produce clashes in concepts of food. Food is a central part of culture and identity, however, it can be easily distorted by histories of trauma, like Japanese imperialism. *Kimbap* and *jjampong* are extremely popular and have become synonymous with Korean culture despite having strong ties to Japan. This contradicts Korean society's more common practice of avoiding Japanese products. The South Korean government and citizens will frequently partake in trade bans or boycotts of Japanese products, including food goods, to demonstrate disdain for Japan. These practices correspond with the lingering hatred of Japan following colonization, while consumption of Korean food items that stem from Japanese colonialism, such as *kimbap* and *jjampong*, does not. By eating *kimbap* and *jjampong*, Korean society does not distance itself from their "sometimes enemy" Japan, but instead generates, "… a common food culture [that] enforce[s] and instill[s] the idea of the nation in relation to the colonial power," (Ichigo & Ranta, 11). The conflict arises because it's impossible to distance *kimbap* from *norimaki*, *jjampong* from *champon* and Japanese-Chinese restaurants, or any of these dishes from Japanese colonization.

At the same time however, it can be argued that the consumption of *kimbap* and *jjampong* serve as a way for Korea to break free of its colonial past. Even though these dishes are rooted in Japan's colonization, the way in which Korea has claimed these dishes as their own, tailoring it to Korean ingredients, serves as another example of how they were able to grow after 1945. Korean culture's stake in these dishes enables them to define what is theirs from what is Japan's (Ichigo & Ranta); food liberates South Korea by helping it build a new post-WWII identity. This is similar to the way in which Koreans adapted their soy sauce beyond the Japanese model to better suit the Korean palette. These dishes mirror the way in which Korea amended the trauma brought on by colonization as the peninsula took agency in its recovery, and is a testament to the immense growth that occurred throughout the 20th century. Food serves as a medium through which Korea is able to acknowledge the traumatic history of Japanese colonialism, while also emphasizing the way in which culture has been able to rebuild and gain independence.

Kimchi and *Zainichi*

It's hard to think of Korean cuisine without thinking about kimchi. The salted, fermented vegetable side dish is so strongly associated with South Korea that it was ranked as the second most "symbol of national culture representing Korea," falling short only to the national flag (Cho). The strong association between food and national identity has propelled kimchi to being a symbol of national pride, but it's for this very reason that *kimchi* is strongly associated with the contentious relationship shared between Korea and Japan. Disputes over kimchi serve as another reminder of the colonial and postcolonial legacies that plague the relationship between Korea and Japan.

The relationship between *kimchi* and *zainichi* has changed dramatically throughout the 20th century. Image: Korean Bapsang, 2016.

Although Japan has had interactions with Korean kimchi for centuries, the fermented side dish did not gain much notoriety until Japan annexed Korea in 1910. Once Korea was an official colony of Japan, Koreans began to both forcibly and voluntarily move to Japan. The population of ethnic Koreans residing in Japan became known as *zainichi*. *Zainichi* faced extreme racial discrimination and were oftentimes subjected to a life in poverty in Korean migrant ghettoes (Lie). The discrimination and seperation from loved ones back in Korea made the lives of *zainichi* hard, and *kimchi* became an extremely powerful symbol for them as it allowed them to retain a sense of "Korean-ness" and home. However, it was this very association that made *kimchi* a taboo food in Japanese society (Demelius). The distinctive nature of *kimchi* made it an easy target for ridicule, and it quickly became labeled as an "unsanitary" and "vulgar" food (Demelius). The strong garlic-y and fermented odors that *kimchi* produces followed *zainichi* out of the Korean ghettos, making it easier for Japanese nationals to identify and target Koreans that had otherwise blended in with Japanese society.

As the relationship between Japan and Korea thawed towards the end of the 20th century, *kimchi* started to receive a much warmer welcome in Japan. Around the 1990s, *kimchi* became one of the most widespread and popular facets of Korean culture in Japanese society and about 90% of South Korea's *kimchi* exports went to Japan (Demelius; Sims). The prevalence and popularity of *kimchi* benefited both nations as it served as a way in which elements of Korean culture could disseminate through Japanese society, a phenomenon that rarely occurred because of the colonial history shared between Korea and Japan. It was especially helpful to *zainichi*, who commonly struggled to handle the conflict between the two countries they considered home. *Kimchi* was both a comfort and a menace to *zainichi* and it wasn't until the dish was accepted and welcomed by the Japanese that they could find solace in the dish. Once *kimchi* became popular, *zainichi* could consume it in Japan without feeling the same shame and fear that they once did. *Kimchi* has helped build a bridge between tense Korean-Japanese relationships, and, "… if no kimchi were available to average consumers in Japan, the level of tolerance toward *Zainichi* Koreans would be much lower," (Demelius, 4). *Kimchi* has helped relieve the tensions established by memories of colonialism in ways that other pieces of Japanese and Korean culture have not been able to.

Despite attempts of the Japanese to attach shame to *kimchi*, the fermented food has remained a huge part of Korean society, culture, and identity. Although *kimchi* had a dark start in relation to Japan, it eventually transformed into a tool that Koreans used to repair the damage of imperialism. Food connected Korea and Japan, providing a new space through which the two cultures could interact in a more amicable manner. This most notably affected *zainichi*, allowing them to heal some of the trauma inflicted by Japanese society. *Kimchi's* tumultuous history in regards to Japan emphasizes how food both carries the burden of history and serves as a healing mechanism for past trauma.

American Occupation of Korea

Unbeknownst to a large portion of the American population, America was heavily involved in the political climate of Korea prior to the breakout of the Korean War, and played a large role in instigating the conflict on the peninsula that still exists today (Armstrong). In 1945, as Japan intended to surrender following the atomic bombs, American military strategists focused their attention to limiting Russian influence in Korea (Cwiertka). Thus, they hastily divided the peninsula along the 38th parallel, a split that still persists today. Tensions continued to grow between the two Koreas, which were officially known as the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the South and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the North. Ultimately, the two Koreas broke out into a civil war in June 1950, but the beginning of the conflict started before the first shots were fired, and did not end when the armistice was signed in July 1953.

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Official seal of United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK). Image: Wikipedia

During the Korean War, the 24th Corps of the U.S Tenth Army controlled South Korea under the leadership of General John Hodge. This unit was transferred to Korea on short notice from Okinawa, arriving with no understanding of the land, culture, and language and they had absolutely no plan on how to rule over the South (Cwiertka). Consequently, the Korean population suffered, specifically from food shortages. In October 1945, the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) declared a free market in rice in order to prevent the riots that arose from the strict Japanese method of managing rice (Cwiertka). Some argue that these measures were taken to undermine the organizational power of Korean coalition groups like the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (Choson Konguk Chungi Wiwonhoe) and the People's Republic of Korea (PRK) who aimed to create plans for an independent Korean government (Cwiertka).

Regardless of the reason behind implementing a free market, the Korean population was not accustomed to the processes that balance the open market, resulting in the skyrocketing price of rice and increased black market trading. After seeing how poorly the open market system functioned, the USAMGIK decided to revert back to the Japanese method of rice collection. However, because of this system's association with Japanese colonialism, the strategy failed and stirred multiple peasant uprisings that resulted in massive inflation and unemployment. The average daily calories intake in South Korea fell to 1468 calories per day from 1946-1947 (Cwiertka). Luckily by 1949, the recycled Japanese system of rationing helped to relatively stabilize the food supply situation. This prolonged period of food shortages left many Koreans to define American occupation by the absence of food or the strong desire to rely on American imports.

American camptown (*gijichon*) in the 1960s in South Korea. Image: 한국일보

Throughout the US's military occupation of the South, American camptowns (*gijichons*) imported food including sugar, canned foods, beans, and rice from nearby US sources like Burma, Siam, the Philippines, and the Red Sea area (Cwiertka). This was mainly used to support troops, but some of the food was made available for the Korea population. For example, certain foods classified as "deteriorated subsistence"—foods that were deemed unfit for army use—were offered to Korean citizens who worked for the US government (Cwiertka). Other snacks like candy bars and chewing gum were often handed out in neighborhoods surrounding military camps as well. Consequently, American ingredients such as spam and sausages became very popular in Korea and were popularized in many dishes, including *budaejjigae*, which is literally named "Army Base Stew" (Sul). Korea can trace much of its modern obsession over meat to the infatuation with Spam and other canned meats during the US occupation. Prior to American presence in Korea, meat was rarely consumed by most citizens. But following the common consumption of meat in American camptowns, meat started to be added to traditional Korean dishes and has become a staple in most Korean dishes today.

Koreans living near American camptowns created *Budaejjigae* (Army Base Stew) by mixing spam and other US imports with Korean ingredients. Image: BeyondKimchee

In contrast with meals reminiscent of Japanese imperialism, there is more of an acceptance of American-influenced dishes from military occupation in South Korea. While the memory of food in Japanese colonization is generally associated with discrimination, during American occupation, food was the silver lining that helped Koreans deal with wartime trauma and previous decades of hunger they had experienced in the past. Additionally, American occupation was not necessarily viewed as destructive in South Korea until recent years as the violence enacted upon Korean civilians, specifically sex workers in these camptowns has been exposed (Larson). Today in Korean society, there is more of an anti-American voice that has been rising up in contrast to the more accepting perspective on American interference from the older generation. The younger generation is more critical of American involvement on the Korean peninsula throughout the 20th century whereas the older generation associates American presence as less of a hostile figure because of the recovery aid and military assistance offered (Armstrong). This could potentially explain why American-influenced dishes like *budaejjigae* are more popular and openly embraced in Korean society today whereas traditional Japanese dishes consumed during colonization are not as openly accepted into Korean society, especially by the older generation.

For older generations in Korea, the desire for food and constant feeling of hunger was a universal experience. The trauma of being uplifted from one's hunger through the aid of American soldiers is a memory that younger generations do not hold the same emotional ties to. Despite the crimes that occurred in these military camptowns, food represented a way to remember American occupation in a positive light. Although we know today that there occupation in a positive light. Although we know today that there are other historical records of trauma experienced at these towns, at the time the food provided by American military bases was a good memory to latch onto in an era filled with trauma.

Two Koreas

For much of their complicated history, North and South Korea have shared traditional food customs and dishes. Along with both countries' citizens, these food traditions have also experienced changes from Japanese imperialism and Soviet/US occupation. Additionally, Korean citizens from both nations have lived through prolonged periods of food instability and heavy reliance on foreign aid for sustenance. Food has connected the two countries in ways that other parts of their culture struggle to do so. Although some may argue that South Korea is shifting away from Korean traditions by continuing to globalize, both Koreas continue to share the same strong memories surrounding food and the desire to protect the integrity of their dishes that have been influenced by numerous foreign powers over the 20th century.

Bunshik (flour-based food), encouraged by the South Korean government following rice shortages, has become popular street food today in Korea. Image: GoGoHanguk

Following the end of the Korean War, South Korean President Park Chung-hee continued to implement strict restrictions on rice because of harvest shortages, adopting similar management tools used by the Japanese. In order to make up for the lack of rice and to prevent having to rely on foreign aid, the government actively promoted the consumption of flour-based dishes, creating cafeterias called *bunshikchoms*, which translates to "flour-based food stores" (Cwiertka). These include popular Korean dishes like *tteokbokki* (spicy rice cakes) and *twigim* (fried assorted foods). Because of this push for flour-based foods, more Japanese and Chinese style dishes like *ramen*, *jjampong*, *udong*, *jjajangmyeon*, dumplings were consumed. This normalized the consumption of foreign foods, which would become even more common in the 1980s after South Korea began opening up fast food restaurants. The fast food industry rapidly grew following 1988 when the Seoul Olympic Games pushed the nation to cater to a Western audience (Cwiertka). But despite the increased popularity in foreign foods, eating out at non-Korean restaurants would continue to be a sign of affluence and luxury because most Koreans would maintain their traditional meals at home, consisting of rice and vegetable side dishes.

However, towards the end of the 20th century and into the 21st century, there exists a growing concern about the over-globalization of South Korean society. Some believed that Korean culture was "fall[ing] victim to Japanese or Western influence" (Cwiertka, 128). Within society, it became a popular argument that urban citizens should eat Korean-style dishes with native ingredients to protect their fellow citizens in the countryside. The government reinforced the idea that excessive consumption (*kwasobi*) was dangerous, and Koreans must remember the importance of patriotic frugality (Cwiertka). On the other hand, anti-*kwasobi* campaigns arose out of "a sense of camaraderie built around a shared history of poverty and a shared future of prosperity" that encouraged Koreans to be less prudent about their spending (Cwiertka, 134). There exists a dilemma within society surrounding the desire to be both nationalistic and global. This has led to some movements that support reviving traditional Korean food customs, like Korean Royal Cuisine (*kungjung umsik*). By 1985, the Important Intangible Cultural Asset system (Chungyo Muhyong Muhwajae, IICA), founded by the South Korean government, had established a multitude of theatrical forms, music, martial arts, food, and other historical markers as necessary to be protected as South Korean society continued to advance and change (Cwiertka). Despite the general trend towards a globalizing society, there is a desire to preserve Korean traditions from Western and foreign influence.

Kungjung umsik (Korean Royal Cuisine) saw a recent surge in popularity as the Korean population desires to hold on to their traditions in the midst of globalization. Image: Nary Lee

Although following a different trajectory after the Korean War, North Korea also desired to preserve their native Korean culture from outside influence, particularly the US. It was not until 2009 that the first fast food restaurant was founded in North Korea, and even then it was only visited by foreigners and elite members of the government (Cwiertka). Even during their famine that lasted from 1994 to 1999, the DPRK would not allow international aid agencies to develop independent channels to deliver food to North Korean citizens (Ireson). Government authorities insisted on utilizing their Public Distribution System (PDS) to control what kind of food, how much food, and where the food was being distributed to. This significantly slowed down the process of delivering foods and most likely prolonged the famine, but the government was insistent on using their own distribution methods to prevent any foreign influence, and the PDS still operates today. Ever since the Korean War, the North Korean government has reinforced the narrative that the US, along with Japan, is their enemy, and this shows in their policies that aim to minimize any interactions with America, especially one in which North Korea allows its people to regard the US with gratefulness.

The US stands as a symbol that reminds Koreans, both North and South, of memories of their shared history. For South Koreans, globalization of their food is not just a representation of affluence, but it is also a grim reminder of a repeated history of losing national identity in food to American occupation and Japanese colonization. For North Korea, the remnants and memories of dangerous American influence have been reinforced by their government since the Korean War. There exists a strong desire to protect the Korean culture and its traditions, which includes the integrity of Korean food, because the peninsula has suffered from having to rely on outside food in order to survive. Both Koreas search to solidify their own distinct identities away from Japanese and American influence and this means recognizing the importance of preserving their traditional foods. As a means to approach the trauma of hunger and war in the 20th century, food creates a unique space where both North and South Korea can have ownership over how their food cultures reflect the history they both experienced. Whether it be through completely rejecting certain foods or reinventing dishes, food connects both Koreas because it allows the countries to look back on their history and control the future course of their food cultures.

The Korean peninsula experienced dramatic cultural, political, and social upheaval throughout the 20th century. These changes are apparent in many aspects of Korean society today, one of the most striking being food. Food reflects the story of 20th century Korean history, from Japanese imperialism, to American occupation, the Korean War, the Cold War, and the subsequent years of recovery. Some of the foods linked to these moments in history have positive associations, while others leave much more painful remnants; the variation in the way memories are stored in food highlight the trauma of these events, but more importantly, highlight the way in which Korean society has developed its own identity despite heavy foreign influence. Food has allowed Korea to face its past and the resulting trauma, and in more modern times expand its culture into other nations. As Korean food reaches more corners of the world, more and more spaces are born in which others can learn about Korean culture and history. In this way, Korean food continues to emphasize how Korean society has persevered to work through wartime trauma and decades of food shortages, truly proving the power and importance of food.