

South Korea: An Ancient yet Modern Nation

Living and Learning in a High-Speed World

South Korea holds a special place in my heart and frankly, it is not because Bulgogi is my favorite culinary dish nor is it because I adore my LG front-loading washer and dryer. My heart connection with South Korea actually precedes my birth. It began when my father spent a significant portion of his

military career west of Seoul during the years following the Korean War in the early 1950's. While there, he fell in love with the country and its people. This event in turn led to the adoption of my sister years later, who has become my dearest friend. This relationship draws me in to want to learn more about the land and understand its complex culture.



The Location

South Korea is located just south and east of China and occupies the southern portion of the Korean peninsula. To the north, it is bordered by North Korea with which it was united until 1945. To the southeast of the Korean



peninsula, across the Korean Strait, lie the islands of Japan. Korea is a mountainous country and most of it is not suitable for farming. The majority of the population lives in urban areas, primarily the capital city of Seoul – a city which is called home by more than 10.3 million residents – the second most populous metropolitan region in the world.

South Korea, also known as the Republic of Korea, is known for its technological advancement and has become a major international economic power. South Korea's economy has grown tremendously in the last few decades and is now the 12th largest economy in the world and the 3rd largest in Asia. Encouraged by the government through tax incentives and easy financing, many large family-owned businesses are making a huge impact on the global scene, including Samsung, LG and Hyundai. South Korea has risen to the top as a global leader in electronics, digital monitors, mobile phones and semiconductors. It also leads the world in the ship building industry.

South Korea has also made a mark for itself on the world map through incredible sports programs and enthusiasm. South Korea hosted the summer Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988. You may remember that during the Winter Games held in Torino in 2006, the South Koreans dominated in the short track speed skating competitions, bringing home most of the gold medals in that field.

The History

But South Korea is more than just a country of technological advancement and short track speed skating; it is an ancient land with a rich heritage. Korea traces its founding back to 2333BC when it was first ruled by the legendary Tangun, who, the myth proclaims, was born of a heavenly father and an earthy woman. His descendants are said to have reigned for more than a millennium and this dynasty became known as the Three Kingdoms of Korea (Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla). The territory they ruled included the entire Korean peninsula stretching north into Manchuria.

By the 2nd century BC, the Koreans had adopted the Chinese writing system and in the 4th century AD, the Buddhist religion was accepted by the Korean people. These two events had profound effects on the Three Kingdoms of Korea. The Three Kingdoms were soon unified by Silla in AD 676 and was then ruled by a single government until the 19th century. At this time, the country came onto the radar screen of European and Japanese aggressors as an object for colonization.

In 1910, Korea was forcibly taken over by Japan and remained occupied until the end of World War II in 1945.

Following World War II, Soviet and U.S. troops occupied the northern and southern regions of the country, respectively. These Cold War rivals supplied aid and helped to establish government systems that were sympathetic to their own ideas about how government should function. This in turn led to the current division of Korea into two distinct political entities – the communist North and the capitalist South. As a result of escalating cold war animosity between the United States and the Soviet Union, war broke out on the Korean peninsula. On June 25, 1950, the North invaded the South at the prompting of Stalin (Soviet dictator) and the approval of Mao Zedong (China's dictator). This began the long and bloody Korean War that lasted more than three years and caused the deaths of more than four million soldiers and civilians. Eventually the United Nations stepped in on behalf of South Korea and the 1953 truce split the peninsula along the demilitarized zone at the 38th parallel. However, no peace treaty was ever signed, which means that technically these two countries are still at war.

Some attempts at reunification have been made, but with over a million troops sitting just inside the North Korean border and 650,000 (approx 38,000 are US troops) on the South Korean side, true peace has not been experienced by the Korean nations yet.

South Korea has made an incredible comeback since the Korean War. After the devastation of the war, the country was one of the poorest nations in the world. Since that time, it has grown and gained strength and has become an international economic power. South Korea has also become more culturally diverse as the migration tide has reversed. Instead of South Koreans leaving the country looking for “greener grass,” immigration has increased into the country because of its burgeoning economy and improved political climate, especially during the 1990's.



The People

Currently, just less than one half of the South Korean population states that they have no religious preference. Of the remainder, 10.7 million inhabitants claim to be Buddhist, 8.6 million are Protestant, 5.1 million are Catholic and less than 500,000 belong to a variety of minor religious groups. Over the past few decades, Christianity has grown dramatically in South Korea. The largest Christian church in the world, Yoido Full Gospel Church, is located in Seoul and has approximately 800,000 members. In fact, Seoul is home to 11 of the world's 12 largest churches.

Contemporary culture in South Korea is heavily dominated by futuristic technology. But this technological advancement does not come without a price. South Koreans work long hours in order to be valuable employees. It is expected that both parents work sacrificially to the neglect of their families. Most employees work the same hours that their bosses work – typically 16 hours a day, 6 days a week. Many Christians volunteer their time with their churches as well. Rush hour in Seoul is 11:00pm.

Norm Wakefield of Spirit of Elijah Ministries comments, “Because of this frenzied, high-speed, technologically advanced lifestyle, children leave home early to attend a tutor service until school starts. Then they might have tutor service after school as well as other activities until 11:00 at night when they all come home to sleep. Then they do it again the next day, for 6 days a week. Where can homeschooling fit into this schedule?”

Homeschooling

The answer is that for the most part, it doesn't. The South Korean economic lifestyle is dependent on two incomes and the prevailing culture demands career paths for everyone. For this reason, very few Korean parents have chosen to homeschool their children. In the year 2002, a few families chose to defy their cultural norms and homeschool their children. The movement has grown significantly since then but homeschooling is still in its infancy in South

Korea, similar to homeschooling in the United States during the early 1980's. The number of homeschooling families is doubling every year.



Homeschooling is not officially a legal choice in South Korea. Currently, parents are reporting to the school their desire to pull their children out and teach them at home, and the government has not made a strong opposition yet. Various sources report the number of families that are presently homeschooling in South Korea

fall anywhere between 300 and 1000 families. A homeschool organization – the Christian Home Education Association of Korea (CHEA) – has been formed by a pioneering group of Christian pastors and leaders and an annual conference has been held since 2002.

Daniel Chang, pastor and homeschooling dad in South Korea, writes that you can pray for “the hearts of the parents that they will be well equipped to take on this responsibility and that a curriculum suitable for Korea will be soon developed.” Remember to pray for your homeschooling brothers and sisters in South Korea the next time you drive your Hyundai, read email on your LG monitor or watch your favorite show on your Samsung TV.

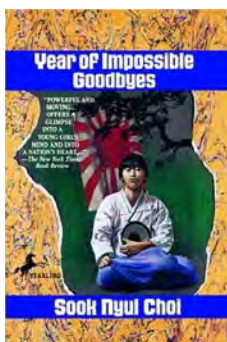
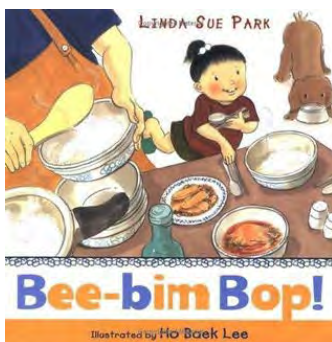
There are several ways that you can support the homeschooling families in South Korea, according to Brad Voeller, who is the founder of Family Mission International. You can “Coach a family, host a family or go as a family,” says Brad. You can find out more at www.FamilyMission.org.

Now that you have read the chapter, it's time to dive in for some hands-on learning to cement your student's growing knowledge of this small but fascinating Asian country.

Unit Study

When my father was in South Korea just after the Korean War during his military career, he took many pictures. As children, we loved to watch his old slide shows and see pictures of that handsome young man (could that really be our dad?) and the darling Korean children at the orphanages he visited during his free time. My sister was born in Seoul and our family adopted her when she was four years old. She has since visited her birth country and has become a fabulous cook. She cooks a variety of food, but her Korean dishes are to die for! I'll share a few of them below.

1. READING SELECTIONS - Let's start with some extra reading. Listed below are some great books about Korea, or set in Korea, that will provide many hours of enjoyable reading. The links below will take you to Amazon.com for more information, but you may find these at your local library. Read for pleasure alone, or have your kids write a book report on one of these selections.



- [Bee-Bim-Bop](#), by Linda Sue Park
- [Year of Impossible Goodbyes](#), by Sook Nyul Choi
- [Echoes of the White Giraffe](#), by Sook Nyul Choi
- [A Single Shard](#), by Linda Sue Park

The first book above is a picture book for the younger set and it is about Korean cooking and one very popular Korean dish in particular known as Bibim

Bap, or otherwise known as mix-mix rice (recipe below, but read the book first). The next two books are part of a series that are getting great reviews and are about a girl in war-torn Korea during the Japanese occupation of WWII. The last book is set during medieval times and is a great fictional read as well. While you are at the library on your next visit, don't forget to pick up some picture books as well. *South Korea in Pictures* would be a good choice, but there are probably several to choose from.

- 2. HISTORY & TIMELINES** - After more than 50 years of "cold war" between the divided countries, North and South Korea are making some serious attempts at reconciliation this past month. The Korean War may have appeared to have ended in 1953, but a peace treaty was never signed and the two lands have kept a total of over 2 million troops on their shared border all of these years. Could we see a united Korea again after all of these years? What caused the division in the first place? Take a peek at the timeline of Korean history below to find some answers to these plaguing questions.

Learn more about South Korea by compiling historical facts and events from Korea's turbulent history and adding them to your timeline. If you do not have a timeline on the go, you can construct one by following these directions - [How to Make a Timeline Easily](#). Here is a link to a wonderful resource for timeline entries about Korea - [SIKIDS.com-Timeline of South Korean History](#).

- 3. MAPWORK** - A unit study would not be complete without taking a good look at the lay of the land. Pages 53 and 54 include both a labeled and unlabeled map of South Korea. Have your students mark some of the major cities (Seoul is the capital of S. Korea and P'yongyang the capital of N. Korea), the neighboring countries, and the seas to the east and west, at the least. For older students, have them use your teacher's map and fill in the rest!

4. RECIPES - This is my favorite part - the food from the land! I love Korean cuisine! After you complete the above activities on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, take some time on either Thursday or Friday to whip up some authentic Korean dishes in your kitchen.

In Korea, rice is served at every meal. At breakfast it is sometimes served as gruel, especially for elderly people and children. At other meals, steamed rice is accompanied by soup, meat, fish, vegetables and, of course, kim chi (recipe below). Rice is of such importance that meals are described as consisting of rice and panch'an, a term that incorporates whatever else is served with the rice.

Korea has an abundance of fish and other seafood, and often the fish is combined in surprising ways with meat or poultry. Like the Japanese, Koreans use seaweed, especially the dried laver seaweed known as nori by the Japanese and kim by the Koreans. It is used as a relish.

Beef is the most popular meat in Korea. Beef is not usually cooked in one big piece. It is very thinly sliced and cut into bite-size pieces; sometimes the slices are beaten out for extra thinness. The beef is then kneaded well with a marinade and left for 2-4 hours so that it is tenderized and flavored. While Koreans charcoal grill or broil such meals as bulgogi or bulgalbi, everyday cooking includes boiling, steaming, stir frying and deep or shallow frying.

The seven basic flavors of Korean food are garlic, ginger, black pepper, spring onions, soy sauce, sesame oil and toasted sesame seeds. Yum!

Here are a few of our favorite dishes. Don't forget the big pot of steamed rice. Enjoy!



Japchae (Transparent Noodles with Vegetables)

1 pack transparent noodle (dangmyun),
(soaked in hot water for 30 minutes, drained)
1 medium onion, thin sliced
1/2 carrot, thin julienne
1 bunch spinach, blanched, cut into 3 inches
10 oz thin slice beef
5 green onions, cut in a bias
7 shiitake mushrooms, rehydrated, thin sliced
oil to saute
salt and pepper
2 tbsp sesame seeds

Beef marinade: 1 tbsp soy sauce, 1 tbsp sugar, 1 tsp sesame oil, 1 tsp minced garlic,
1/4 tsp pepper, 1/2 tsp sesame seeds

Shiitake marinade: 1/2 tsp soy sauce, 1 tsp sugar, 1 tsp sesame oil

Noodle seasoning: 1 and 1/2 cup water, 1/4 cup sugar, 2 tbsp soy sauce, 4 tbsp vegetable oil

In a non stick pan, add oil and saute vegetables. All ingredients have to be cooked separately. To use the same pan, start with light color vegetable. An ideal order will be onion - green onions - carrot - shiitake mushrooms - beef. The vegetables don't have to get any color, just need to be softened. Saute and move to a big bowl to cool a little bit.

Put a non-stick wok or large pan on a medium heat. Add dang myon seasoning, pour in dang myon. Bring to a boil, stir occasionally for a few minutes until dang myon absorbs water.

In about 10-15 minutes they start to stick together. From this point, stir constantly until the noodle gets soft and translucent. Take off from the heat, let cool for a while. If needed cut the length.

Mix with vegetables, sesame seeds, salt and pepper to taste.



Kim Chi (Spicy Pickled Cabbage)

- 1 Large Chinese cabbage
- 1/2 cup Sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Cayenne pepper
- 5 Spring onions, finely chopped
- 2 cloves Garlic, finely chopped
- 5 cm Fresh ginger, grated
- 3 teaspoons Chopped fresh chili
- 1 tablespoon Caster sugar
- 2 1/2 cups Cold water



Cut the cabbage in half, then into large bite-sized pieces. Place a layer of cabbage in a large bowl and sprinkle with a little salt. Continue with layers of cabbage and salt, finishing with a salt layer. Cover with a dinner plate that will fit as snugly as possible over the top of the cabbage. Weigh down the plate with cans or a small brick and leave the bowl in a cool place for 5 days. Remove the weights and plate, pour off any liquid, then rinse the cabbage well under cold running water. Squeeze out any excess water and combine the cabbage with the cayenne pepper, spring onion, garlic, ginger, chili and sugar. Mix well to combine before spooning the cabbage into a large sterilized jar. Pour the water over the top and seal with a tight-fitting lid. Refrigerate for 3 to 4 days before eating.

Note : Kim Chi is an accompaniment eaten with Korean main meals and with steamed rice. For an authentic flavor, use 3 tablespoons of chili. Bottled chopped chili can be used instead of fresh chili.

Bulgogi (Grilled Marinated Steak)

- 2 tablespoons Dark soy sauce
- 1 tablespoons Light soy sauce
- 4 tablespoons Sugar
- 1 bunch (about 8) Scallions, white and tender green parts only, coarsely chopped
- 1 (about 2 inch) Fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 6 cloves Garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons Cooking rice wine
- 5 tablespoons Sesame oil
- 2 lb / 1 kg flank steak, sliced as thin as possible
- Cooking oil



Mix all the ingredients thoroughly except the sliced beef. Add the beef and marinade for about 1 hour. Heat some cooking oil in a large frying pan. Put the sliced beef in a few at a time and sear on both sides for about 1 minute per side.

Note : This is a festive national dish of Korea. A good choice for New Year. Often cooked at the table on small grills and diners seated around it. Kim Chi (above) often accompanies it.

Bibim Bap (Mix-Mix Rice)

3 cups rice, a handful of soy bean sprouts
4 dried shiitake mushrooms, 1 zucchini, sliced 1/4 inch thick
1/2 cup go sa ri (packaged fernbrake in water)
1/2 cup mu (Korean radish), julienne
4 oz beef, thinly sliced, 1/4 cup carrot, julienne, 1/2 onion, sliced
4 tbsp gochujang (Korean chili paste), 4 eggs
sesame oil, vegetable oil for sautéing

soy bean sprouts seasoning: 1 tbsp sesame oil, 1/4 tsp gochugaru (Korean chili powder), 1/2 tsp salt, 1/4 tsp sesame seeds, a pinch of sugar

shiitake mushrooms seasoning: 1/2 tsp sesame oil, 1/2 tsp soy sauce, 1/4 tsp sugar

zucchini seasoning: 1 tsp sugar, 1 tsp salt, 1 tsp sesame oil, 1/4 tsp minced garlic, 1/4 cup water

fernbrake seasoning: 2 tbsp vegetable oil, 1 tsp minced garlic, 1/2 tsp soy sauce, 1 tsp salt, 1/2 tsp sesame seeds

radish seasoning: 1 tsp sugar, 1 tsp salt, 1 tsp sesame oil, 1/4 tsp minced garlic, 1/4 cup water

beef seasoning: 1 tsp soy sauce, 1 tsp sugar, 1/2 tsp sesame oil, 1/4 tsp minced garlic, pinch of pepper

Wash rice until the water comes out clean. Add 3.5 cups of water, cook rice in a rice cooker. Or cook in a pot on a high heat until the water is absorbed. Reduce heat to very low, cover with a lid, cook for another 15-20 minutes. Turn the heat off, leave for 10-15 minutes with a lid on.

Marinate beef with seasonings.

Soy bean sprouts - Wash and add to a pot, pour 1/2 cup water and a pinch of salt, cover the lid. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, cook for 5-7 minutes. Don't peek it, if they smell like cooked beans, they're done. Pour into a colander, let cool for a while. Add seasonings, mix.

Shiitake mushrooms - Dried ones need to be reconstituted, add warm water, leave until softened. Wash, squeeze out water, slice thinly. Add to a pan with seasonings, saute briefly.

Zucchini - Add in a pan with seasonings (see above) on a high heat with a lid. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, cook for 2-3 minutes. Open the lid, let cool.

Fernbrake - Drain the water, add oil to a pan, saute with seasonings (see above). Add sesame seeds at the last minute. Let cool.

Radish - Add in a pan with seasonings (see above) on a high heat with a lid. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, cook for 4-5 minutes. Open the lid, let cool.

Onion - Saute with some salt.

Carrot - Saute with some salt.

Saute beef on a high heat.

To assemble the bowl - Put rice on the bottom, arrange vegetables around. Add egg yolk (or sunny side up, or just fried) on top. Serve with go chu jang (Korean chili paste) and sesame oil.

Tips: You can use any vegetables such as spinach, bean sprouts, or mushrooms (oyster, enoki). Blanch mushrooms, squeeze, add some sesame oil, salt and sesame seeds.

5. CRAFTS - Korean Han-Ji: Dak Paper Doll Craft

Crafts in Korea are not like crafts in America. These are works of art and a "craft" might take months instead of minutes or hours. Take a look at this link and see what I mean:

<http://www.topics-mag.com/international/customs/korea-han-ji.htm>

Perhaps you will be inspired to make some easier and less intensive paper dolls - American style - and put on a puppet show. All you need is paper (or even easier - coloring books), colored pencils (or pens), popsicle sticks, glue, some creativity and you are on your way.

And remember to have fun!





