

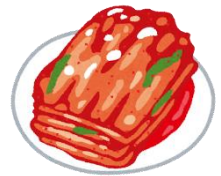
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Kimjang to Overcome Winter, Kochori to Welcome Spring

In Korea, when winter approaches, many households gather for kimjang.



Kimjang is the traditional practice of making kimchi all at once to eat throughout the winter.

In the past, it was difficult to obtain fresh vegetables during the winter, so neighbors do kimjang to preserve Chinese cabbage by salting and adding a special seasoning sauce called "Yangnyeom" to it in late autumn. Kimchi was an essential food that supported families' diet and health through the long winter.

Kimchi: a Korean preserved food made by mixing vegetables with yangnyeom, chili peppers, garlic, salt, and other ingredients

Yangnyeom: a sweet and spicy Korean-style seasoning sauce

Kimjang is not merely a task of making preserved food kimchi. Family members and neighbors gather, and spend the day together washing Chinese cabbage, salting it, and carefully coating it with yangnyeom sauce. During kimjang, laughter echoes and people share stories of their lives. The time at kimjang also creates warm moments that strengthen the bonds among everyone involved.

I grew up watching my mother prepare kimjang when I was a little child. At that time, I never really thought about how much effort she devoted herself to making the kimchi, which was naturally served on our dinner table.

After living in Japan for 30 years, I was asked to introduce Korean kimjang culture, so I organized a kimjang experience workshop.

For the event, I prepared salted Chinese cabbage and yangnyeom sauce made with salted anchovy paste, salted mysid, chili pepper, garlic, ginger, and fruits. All participants - Japanese and Korean, children and adults - enjoyed making kimchi. Though the work was unfamiliar to them, everyone was smiling and chatting the whole time. The kimchi-making experience became a moment of genuine heart-to-heart connection.

Salted mysid: small mysid shrimp preserved in salt

After the event, one participant said, "This is the first time I've ever made kimchi with such heart.". Those words warmed my heart. At that moment, I realized once again that kimchi is not just a dish, but a kind of "spirit" that connects people.

In 2013, kimjang culture was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

UNESCO praised not only kimchi itself but the custom of kimjang: the spirit of sharing and cooperation, and the wisdom of life that has been passed on through generations.

Kimchi prepared in winter can be used to make a variety of dishes, such as kimchi jjigae, kimchi fried rice, and kimchi jeon. The rich flavor of kimchi, enhanced through fermentation, reflects the Korean wisdom to endure the harsh winters.

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage: Cultural treasures include traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to future generations in the world.

Kimchi jjigae: Kimchi hot pot.

Kimchi fried rice: Fried rice seasoned with kimchi.

Kimchi jeon: Korean-style thin and round pancakes by frying the mixture of flour, water, kimchi, and other ingredients.

Fermentation: A process that enhances the flavor of foods by utilizing microorganisms' enzymes.



After the long winter, the dining table becomes a little lighter, as spring arrives. Freshly made kotchori (lightly pickled kimchi) is served instead of long-aged kimchi. While kimchi is a preserved food that is fermented for a long time, kotchori is eaten after minimal marinating to enjoy its freshness. Spring Chinese cabbage kotchori is a representative spring dish. Its tender leaves have a gentle sweetness, and marinating it lightly will bring out a refreshing flavor. Wild garlic kotchori also has a spring-like aroma and goes well with rice. Spring vegetables like Japanese parsley and shepherd's purse can also be mixed into kotchori, adding their gentle bitterness and aroma to it. Cucumber kotchori offers a crisp refreshing taste, and early spring yeoleum (young radish leaves) kotchori goes well with Japanese somen noodles and bibimbap.

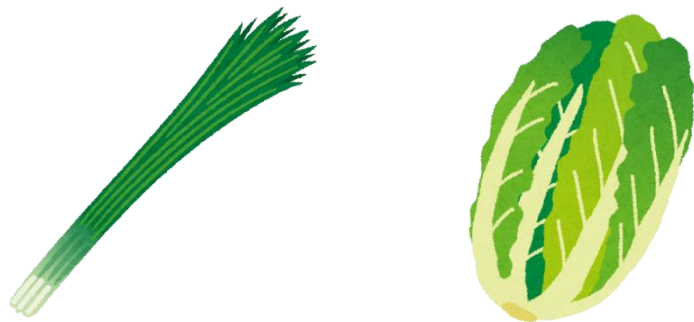
Kotchori tastes like "Negi-choregi" served at Japanese yakiniku restaurants. Imagine the refreshing flavor of freshly mixed negi-choregi, and you may feel closer to the delicious charm of spring kotchori.

Bibimbab: Korean-style mixed rice

Negi-choregi: Korean-style leek salad

Kimjang to endure winter and kotchori to welcome spring are not merely culinary differences, but expressions of wisdom for living in harmony with the seasons. A plate of kimchi is filled with the warmth of a mother's hands, her affection for her family, and the precious time people spent together during kimjang quietly lives on to this day.

Every winter I remember the warmth of kimjang, and when spring arrives, I feel like taking a new step forward like freshly mixed kotchori.



Information from Nerima City Regional Promotion Section

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【Venue】 3-1-1、Hikarigaoka, Nerima City

【Telephone number】 03-3975-1252

【Open】 Weekday 10:00a.m.-1:00p.m.

Saturday, Sunday, holidays 1:00-4:00p.m.

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Counseling service in English, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog and Japanese is available at Nerima City Regional Promotion Section. Counseling on phone is also available.

【Venue】 Regional Promotion Office, 9th floor of Nerima City Main Building

6-12-1, Toyotamakita, Nerima City

【Telephone Number】 03-5984-4333

【Open】 1:00p.m.-5:00p.m.

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【Nerima City Official HP】

<https://www.city.nerima.tokyo.jp/gaikokunohitomuke/bunka.html>

【QR】



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