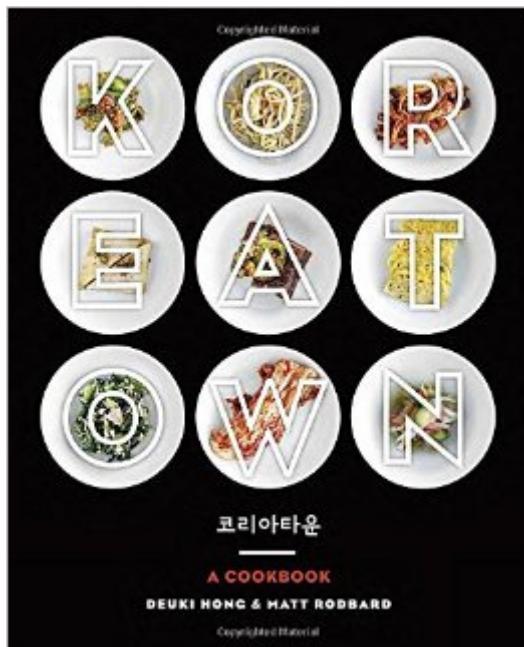


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Koreatown: A Cookbook



Synopsis

A collection of 100 recipes exploring the foods and flavors of Koreatown, a New York Times bestseller and one of the most praised cookbooks of 2016. This is not your average soft-focus "journey to Asia" kind of cookbook. Koreatown is a spicy, funky, flavor-packed love affair with the grit and charm of Korean cooking in America. Koreatowns around the country are synonymous with mealtime feasts and late-night chef hangouts, and Deuki Hong and Matt Rodbard show us why with stories, interviews, and over 100 delicious, super-approachable recipes. It's spicy, it's fermenty, it's sweet and savory and loaded with umami: Korean cuisine is poised to break out in the U.S., but until now, Korean cookbooks have been focused on taking readers to an idealized Korean fantasyland. Koreatown, though, is all about what's real and happening right here: the foods of Korean American communities all over our country, from L.A. to New York City, from Atlanta to Chicago. We follow Rodbard and Hong through those communities with stories and recipes for everything from beloved Korean barbecue favorites like bulgogi and kalbi to the lesser-known but deeply satisfying stews, soups, noodles, salads, drinks, and the many kimchis of the Korean American table.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I love Korean food, and having lived in Chicago, New York and LA, I've hit up some of the best the U.S. Koreatowns have to offer. This book was exciting to receive, and the photos are beautiful, although some of the narrative writing is admittedly a bit cheesy. My girlfriend says that's not really

an issue, because who buys a cookbook for the articles, but for me that's part of the whole package. At points it just feels like the authors got a bunch of their celebrity chef friends together to parade them around and win points with less-savvy readers, but I wasn't fooled. I'm in it for the spicy goat soup, yam so tang (unfortunately that recipe wasn't included.) The recipes that were included were pretty good. There's a fairly extensive list of banchan, ranging from typical (kimchi variations, fishcake, sesame spinach) to fun (water radish kimchi, bubbling egg). And on the entree side there's all the hits - soon dobu, japchae, bulgogi, kalbi and some fun additions too, like braised hamachi, whole squid, or fire chicken feet (in the "drinking food" section). Overall, the recipes are pretty straightforward, and there's a great section in the front for beginners who don't know what certain ingredients are, an index of sorts with ingredient explanations and places to purchase. There's a good expanse of recipes, with lots of little celeb-chef interludes that take you to various Koreatown experiences. But that feels a little unnecessary, especially if you just want to get to the food. I felt the recipes themselves were a little too pared-down and simplified, although easy to make. They lacked some of the funk and spice I love in Korean food, so I just chose to add more doenjang, gochujang, or anchovies to taste.

My first taste of Korean food was on a trip to New York City ages ago. Mike and I found a Korean BBQ restaurant that we just had to try. At this stage, I can't remember what we ate but I do recall the experience itself: cooking food on a tiny grill set into the table, trying dishes that had familiar flavors but were completely new to us... it was novel and it was fun. And it was something we couldn't do back home. Skip forward a few years and surprise! We have a Korean BBQ restaurant of our very own now. And it's amazing! What's more, we have two "world" markets that offer such a wide variety of foods that we can actually recreate these dishes at home. Deuki Hong and Matt Rodbard's Koreatown: A Cookbook is a little bit of a dream come true in that sense. It's a guidebook to cooking Korean food in your own home! Just about every imaginable aspect of Korean food, too. Now if you've ever been to a Korean BBQ place yourself, then you know that one of the coolest parts of the meal is the plethora of side dishes. Everything from multiple kimchis, pancakes, and fish cakes to fermented bean sprouts and potato salad. Yes, potato salad. So it's fitting that the very first chapter of the book is focused on Kimchi and Banchan or side dishes. I hadn't realized, until cracking the book open, that kimchi is not actually the name of the fermented cabbage dish in particular. Kimchi actually just refers to the pickling method itself. With one base and cure the authors offer up five different quick kimchi recipes for the home cook - and none of them are cabbage! That's actually the next recipe in the book, "Baechu Kimchi aka Napa Cabbage Kimchi"

something that still intimidates the crap out of me.

Okay, well to say I was excited about this book is kind of an understatement. I am half-Korean who spent one year living in Seoul in the 1990's. I love the culture, have huge gaps in my knowledge of it, have a complex relationship with this identity but, that said, I LOVE THE FOOD. This identity and experience has been hard, as I imagine most cultural identities are, to summarize and capture. I feel this book accomplishes this or at least takes the best stab at it that I personally have seen. What I like about is I feel like it really encapsulates what, to me, is modern Korean-American culture. It's fun and relatable to see Trader Joe's mentioned in a book that also has very deep, traditional roots in old-school Korea. As I cobbled together my personal kitchen & pantry over the years, I developed some very stringent specifications for "must-have" authentic Korean essentials while at the same time, our kitchen became kind of Trader Joe's/international hodge podge so this really resonated. I love hearing some of the information and history of the foods that I wasn't aware of (the difference between Doenjang (Korean fermented bean paste) and miso (Japanese fermented bean paste), using Roy Choi's quote "You can call it miso just like you call a girl a ho; that is, you can't." (I have already quotes this multiple times to my children, call it cultural inheritance. They will thank me later.) Most of the Korean food cookbooks that I have seen so far are missing this ingredients, the politics, the "spice" of what I see as modern Korean culture. This book is not "white-washed", and I love it for that! As far a cookbook, it has all the things I have wanted in Korean cookbook, but have not seen so far.

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