

The Dish

Seoul food Sizzle and spice in South Korea

GIZZI ERSKINE



How to describe South Korean food to the uninitiated? Well, sandwiched between Northern China and Japan, South Korea's cooking techniques and flavours are a mix-match of those countries', but their cuisine is distinctive. Chilli is the staple of most national dishes. Soy is a key base flavour, and South Koreans are huge fans of fermenting ingredients, which has created a cuisine that is earthy, fiery and complex.

My full-blown love affair with Korean food began five years ago (I'm so obsessed with it, I even named my beloved cat "Kimchi"), but I only visited South Korea for the first time earlier this year. They're all as fond of kimchi as me: this fermented cabbage dish is eaten with everything. The same is true of another passion of mine: street food. The night market at Gwangjang was thronging with people, and the best dishes I ate there were fried chicken, raw spiced crab, mung bean fritters, *mandu* (dumplings) and *pajeon* (light pancakes). From Seoul I travelled to Busan, a beautiful spot in the south where the speciality is braised pig trotters and shanks served with pickled sauce and jellyfish. Jellyfish taste of little, are incredibly chewy, but hold flavour very well. From Busan I flew to the island of Jeju. Famed for its black pigs which eat human poo, initially I had my reservations about this dish, adopting the "when in Rome" philosophy, I tried it cut into thick slices and barbecued. It was one of the finest BBQ dishes I've ever had.

There was also a great deal of Korean fusion cooking going on. One of the recipes I've included was inspired by a dish of chips doused in pulled pork, kimchi, cheese and Mexican toppings. It blew my mind. I could go on all day about Korean food, but I've knuckled it down to three recipes ■ *Gizzi Erskine travelled as a guest of Korea Tourism Organization and Korea Foods. Visit gokorea.co.uk and orientalmart.co.uk*



6 spring onions, trimmed and each cut in three

12 raw king prawns, peeled, deveined deeply, and each cut in three

1 medium squid, cleaned, scored and cut into bite-sized pieces

4 scallops, cleaned and cut in half horizontally (I always buy hand-dived)

180g kimchi, roughly chopped

4-5 tbsp vegetable oil

FOR THE BATTER

80g plain flour

30g rice flour

1 tsp baking powder

100ml chilled dashi (made with bonito flakes, kombu or fish stock) or water

1 free-range egg

FOR THE DIPPING SAUCE

3 tbsp soy sauce

3 tbsp rice vinegar

1 tbsp mirin

1cm ginger, finely julienned

Seafood and kimchi pajeon

This is a cross between a pancake and a fritter. Carve it up, dip the pieces in the salty sauce and enjoy. Ingredients are widely available in Asian supermarkets, or from the website koreafoods.co.uk

SERVES: 4

PREPARATION TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOKING TIME: 10 MINUTES

1. Prepare the spring onions, seafood and kimchi and place in the fridge. Mix together the batter ingredients and chill in the fridge for 30 minutes. Mix the kimchi and spring onions with the batter and leave to rest for a further 10 minutes in the fridge.

2. Make the dipping sauce by mixing together all the ingredients.

3. Heat the vegetable oil in a large pan. When really hot, dollop the mixture into the pan to make 3 or 4 small fritters. Turn the heat down to medium and cook for 1-2 minutes on each side, until crisp and golden. Transfer to kitchen paper and repeat until all the mixture is used up. Serve immediately with the dipping sauce.

Korean bulgogi fries

Bulgogi is traditionally a sticky, sweet, barbecue beef dish. In Seoul, there's a trend for Mexican-Korean dishes, and bulgogi is served slathered over chops and nachos. A delicious snack.

SERVES: 4 AS A LARGE SNACK
PREPARATION TIME: 30 MINUTES
COOKING TIME: 30 MINUTES
FREEZING TIME: 2 HOURS
MARINATING TIME:
2 HOURS MINIMUM

FOR THE MARINADE

3 *tbsp* soy sauce
 3 *tbsp* shochu (an alcoholic drink made from distilled barley)

1 *tbsp* sugar

1 *tbsp* toasted sesame oil

2 cloves garlic, grated

$\frac{1}{2}$ Korean pear, cored and grated (a standard pear is fine if you can't find Korean)

2 spring onions, finely chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ *tsp* black pepper

FOR THE STEAK

1 x 250g steak (ideally sirloin, rump or flat iron frozen for two hours, then finely sliced)

1 *tbsp* vegetable oil

600g french fries, freshly cooked

FOR THE TOPPINGS

100g kimchi, roughly chopped

150g cheddar cheese, grated

100ml soured cream

A good squirt of sriracha chilli sauce

$\frac{1}{2}$ small red onion, finely chopped

2 *tbsp* sliced jalapeños

Handful of coriander, roughly chopped

GIZZI'S
GADGETS

DOLSOT
STONE BOWL



From £25 (souschef.co.uk)
 Heating up to high temperatures without cracking, these are perfect for making bibimbaps



1. Mix together the marinade ingredients, add the beef and marinate overnight, or for at least two hours. Prepare all the toppings, so once the meat is cooked, it's all systems go.

2. Heat a frying pan on high, add the vegetable oil and, when

virtually smoking, add the steak pieces, reserving the marinade for later. Spread the meat out all over the bottom of the pan and leave to brown without stirring, then flip over and repeat. Stir-fry for 1-2 minutes, then add the rest of the marinade and leave to cook around the meat.

3. Heat a grill on high. Place the freshly cooked fries into an oven-proof serving dish, top with the bulgogi beef, then cover with the kimchi and cheese and grill until bubbling. Top with the soured cream, sriracha, red onion, jalapeños and coriander. Serve straight away.



TOP TIP
 You want the sauce to be thick enough that it pools together in the pan when you draw a spoon through it



Bibimbap

This authentic dish is a pot with rice, vegetables and meat, topped with a sauce. The pot gets so hot it stir-fries the ingredients within.

SERVES: 2

PREPARATION TIME: 45 MINUTES

COOKING TIME: 15 MINUTES

300g sushi rice

1 tbsp sesame oil

2 tbsp sunflower oil

150g spinach

1 courgette, sliced

100g shitake mushroom, sliced

1 large carrot, cut into fine juliennes

6 spring onions, shredded

100g bean sprouts

1 corn on the cob

2 egg yolks

300g rump steak, finely chopped

FOR THE SAUCE

6 tbsp gochujang (chilli paste)

2 tbsp soy sauce

1 tbsp vinegar

2 tbsp sesame oil

1½ tbsp sugar

1. Place the rice in a large pan, cover with 400ml water, add salt and cook with the lid on for 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and leave to steam for 10 minutes with the lid on.

2. Add the sauce ingredients to a small pan and cook until the sauce has emulsified. Leave to cool.

3. Prepare all your vegetables and mix together the oils. Heat a large wok, add 1 tsp of the oil mix then cook down half the spinach with a little salt until wilted. Drain on kitchen paper, squeezing out the juice. Repeat with the remainder of the spinach. Quickly fry the courgette until golden but with bite. Repeat with the carrot, spring onions, shitake mushrooms and bean sprouts, swishing them around the wok for 20 seconds. Rub the corn with oil and seasoning and brown until the kernels are a little charred.

4. Heat 2 bibimbap stone dishes in an oven until roasting hot. (You can use a wok over a hot heat instead.) Place on a heatproof surface. Brush the remaining oil around the inside of the dishes and divide the rice between the bowls. Group the vegetables around the edge, add the raw meat to the middle with the egg yolk and 1 tbsp of the sauce. Top with sesame seeds.

5. Use a spoon to mix the sauce into the rice at the table, making it a very fiery, fried-rice concoction.

On the bottle

Rioja bears fruit... and mulls the memories

BOB TYRER



I still have in my cellar the last three bottles of a batch of ancient and undrinkable Portuguese wine bought in a Brazilian supermarket — a reminder that 28 years ago, almost to the day, I answered a phone call at the duplex penthouse in Rio de Janeiro where, astonishingly, the BBC housed me as its Latin America correspondent. Would I like to join The Sunday Times? For reasons nobody at the Beeb understood, I leapt at the chance and was inducted into that ugly east London newspaper factory known as Fortress Wapping, which was under siege from sacked printers and their allies.

A generation on, Brazil is hosting the World Cup, and the Fortress is being torn down. We veterans, who now occupy a building nearby, are agog as we watch great mechanical dinosaurs tear at the fabric with pneumatic jaws. My old fifth-floor office was one of the first to go. The former chief executive's suite dropped with one bite. Dark humour is in the air, not unconnected with a high-profile trial at the Old Bailey.

It's time to raise a glass in farewell. But of what? Not the Portuguese stuff I brought back from Brazil. When I arrived at the Fortress, the hacks maintained old Fleet Street habits of lunchtime drinking, which meant heading for a subterranean wine bar next to Tower Bridge to mop up bottles of over-oaked rioja with tough steaks and baked potatoes. So very Eighties.

While writing this I've jogged my taste buds by barbecuing a couple of bavette steaks — a delicious, bargain cut undreamt of in Wapping 28 years ago, but now for sale at the local supermarket — and opening an old bottle of Imperial Reserva, an elegant, traditional rioja I couldn't afford then.

Everything changes. Most rioja is generally a much brighter, fruit-driven wine than it used to be. But it connects me to a past I will always celebrate ■

THREE OF THE BEST



TORRES IBERICOS

RIOJA 2010

Catalonia's famous Torres family has made this savoury, slightly chalky take on rioja for a few years now (£9.99, Waitrose)



CAMPO ALDEA GRACIANO RIOJA 2009

The graciano grape, usually a minor player in the rioja blend, gives this M&S stalwart a freshness I've always enjoyed (£13.49, Marks & Spencer)



RIOJA IMPERIAL RESERVA 2008 CVNE

Spices, dark plums, a hint of vanilla and a substantial yet fine texture (£22, Majestic)