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MORGAN STANLEY

## The **FOOD ISSUE**

KOREAN DINNERS WITH A KICK • SIX KNIFE-AND-FORK VACATIONS • AN EASY DIY DESSERT  
ALL-IN-ONE KITCHEN TOOLS • BUILD A BETTER BURGER • THE BEST CANNED COCKTAILS

**Plus:** GRAVEL BIKING • A NEW 4-BY-4 • WARM BATHROOMS FOR COLD WEATHER





# SEOUL FOOD

WHEN SHE HAS FRIENDS OVER FOR DINNER, THIS HOST MAKES THINGS EASY, SPECIAL, TASTY, AND KOREAN IN HER OWN, VERY AMERICAN WAY.

BY CATHERINE HONG

PHOTOS: HEAMI LEE; PROP STYLING: SOPHIA PAPPAS; FOOD STYLING: MICHELLE GATTON





I think I've finally discovered the perfect casual meal to serve friends, and it's bibimbap. A staple of Korean home cooking, bibimbap is, most simply, a rice bowl that's topped with meat, vegetables, a molten fried egg, and a dollop of spicy-sweet red chili sauce. (*Bibim* means "mixed," and *bap* means "rice"). Every Korean worth her rice cooker knows you can make a fast and loose version of bibimbap on weeknights, throwing scraps of last night's leftovers over some hot *bap*. But you can also make bibimbap a guest-worthy feast. Not only is it delicious, it's got excellent presentation (all those colors!) and, aside from the eggs, can be made in advance. Bibimbap is also highly adaptable, accommodating vegetarians, the spice-averse, and the plain ol' "just give me the meat and rice" types.



## THE MENU

### COCKTAILS AND SNACKS

Manhattans, Japanese beers (Kirin, Sapporo), packaged snacks (shrimp chips, potato chips, wasabi peas)

### APPETIZER

Seafood pajeon, a savory Korean scallion pancake

### MAIN COURSE

Bibimbap, the Korean rice bowl, with beef and assorted toppings

### DESSERT

Fruit and Eric Kim's Chewy Black Sesame Rice Cake



## THE GENERAL GAME PLAN

LET'S SAY I'VE INVITED SOME FRIENDS over for a Korean-ish dinner. We'll start out with drinks—maybe some Manhattans (just because my husband and I love them) and Japanese beer—served alongside an array of store-bought Asian snacks. Then, when everyone's busy scarfing wasabi peas and honey butter potato chips, I'll fry a big seafood pajeon. It's nice to bring it out still in its sizzling pan and serve it by cutting it

into wedges with scissors. More cocktails. When everyone is feeling nearly ready for dinner (and assuming I've prepared the toppings—carrots, lettuce, etc.—in advance), I'll quickly fry the eggs sunny side up, one for each person, and heat up the cooked beef in the microwave. At this point, I might deputize a friend to join me in the kitchen to assemble the individual bibimbap bowls. But more often, I'll lay all the fixings on the counter and call everybody over so they can build their own rice bowls, adding what they like and skipping what they don't. We Koreans are practical people!

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HAITAI HONEY BUTTER POTATO CHIPS

WASABI PEAS

DRIED SHREDDED SQUID

ROASTED SEAWEED



### COCKTAILS AND SNACKS

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU INVITED PEOPLE over and laid out a lovely charcuterie board of cheese, salumi, crackers, and olives? *Yawn!* So how much more fun is it to go crazy in the snack aisle at your local H Mart, the 100-store chain of Asian supermarkets across the United States? That way, you can lay out a plethora of packaged Asian snacks for everyone to sample and discuss over pre-dinner drinks. I'm Korean American and I grew up eating some of these snacks, but I always

find something new I've never tried. And because the packaging is part of the fun, I don't think it's at all gauche to leave a few of the unopened bags of chips and snacks on the table (so people can see what they're getting) before you decant them into your artisanal ceramic vessels. A few to try: Calbee Shrimp Chips, Calbee Seaweed & Salt Potato Chips, Baby Star Crispy Ramen Snack, dried shredded squid, and my No. 1 favorite of all time, Haitai Honey Butter Chip potato chips.





## SEAFOOD PAJEON

PAJEON IS BASICALLY A GIANT SCALLION PANCAKE (*pa* means “scallion,” and *jeon* means “fritter”) with crunchy, lacy edges and a crispy-chewy interior. The most delicious pajeon I know is a seafood version loaded with squid, shrimp, scallops, and clams. I am usually not a fan of serving hot hors d’oeuvres, especially something that involves frying, but I will make an exception for pajeon. Do yourself a favor and start with a bag of instant pajeon mix, which requires you to add only water. (Think Korean Bisquick. Look for the Beksul mix in the red bag.) Prepare all the fillings ahead of time: plenty of scallions, cut into 3- to 4-inch lengths, with thicker stalks split lengthwise; some other thinly sliced vegetables such as onions, peppers, or mushrooms; and your seafood, sliced and patted dry. Follow the directions on the package to mix the batter and fry. To get that crisp texture, just remember: Do not skimp on the oil! Cut the pajeon into wedges and serve with a dipping sauce.



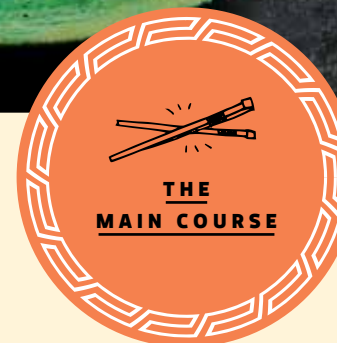
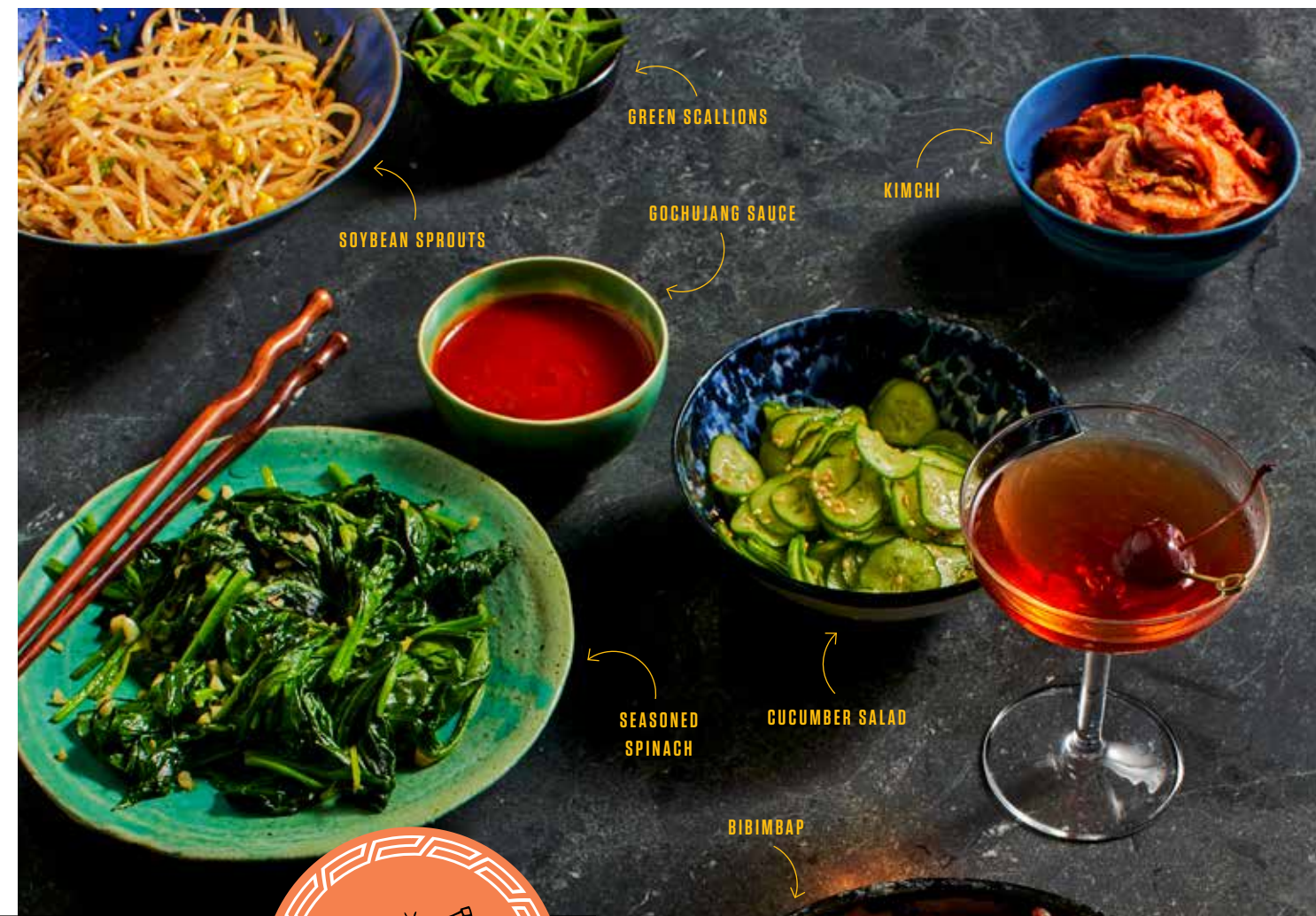
### THE DIPPING SAUCE

Combine 2 tablespoons of soy sauce, 1 tablespoon of vinegar, 1 tablespoon of sugar, and a sprinkle of sesame seeds.



## My New Korean American Food Guru

“THERE IS NO ONE WAY to make Korean food,” says *New York Times* food writer Eric Kim, the bestselling author of *Korean American: Food That Tastes Like Home* (Clarkson Potter, \$32.50). “Authenticity is crap!” In the past couple of years, Kim has become a darling of the food world not only for the undeniably delicious recipes he’s developed for dishes (such as gochugaru salmon and maple milk bread), but for the way he gorgeously weaves personal stories of home, family, and heartbreak into his writing. Earlier this year, Kim was a guest on the Korean American arts and culture podcast that I co-host, *K-Pod*, and his words about authenticity have really stuck with me. Much of the food Kim is known for isn’t what anyone would consider “traditional” Korean cuisine, as it’s shaped by his experience growing up in Atlanta in the 1980s, when his family developed a love for local specialties like lemon pepper wings and substituted jalapeños for Korean peppers because that’s what they could find in local stores. “I’m telling the story about how some people really ate,” he says. “And I’m not interested in perpetuating canons.” Kim’s innovative and open-minded approach to Korean food has helped me find courage in the kitchen too.



## BIBIMBAP

THERE'S NO ONE RECIPE FOR BIBIMBAP. In my mind, the only non-negotiables are the rice, the spicy gochujang sauce (see next page), and the egg. My mother would argue you need the gosari (sometimes referred to as fernbrake or fiddleheads, sautéed in garlic and dressed with soy sauce). My kids insist on the bulgogi (thinly sliced marinated beef). At any rate, I think that you’d want at least four elements aside from the essential three I mentioned to make a guest-worthy bibimbap. (For more in-depth guidance on the bibimbap toppings, the three websites I most regularly turn to are [koreanbapsang.com](http://koreanbapsang.com), [mykoreankitchen.com](http://mykoreankitchen.com), and [maangchi.com](http://maangchi.com). Eric Kim’s cookbook *Korean American* has a radically easy recipe, Sheet-Pan Bibimbap with Roasted Fall Vegetables, for a version that’s perfect for weeknights.)



(ERIC KIM) JENNY HUANG; (ICONS) THE NOUN PROJECT



## THE 3 ESSENTIALS



### RICE

See next page.



### SUNNY-SIDE UP EGG

Make sure the yolk is still oozy so that it acts like a sauce when you mix everything.



### GOCHUJANG SAUCE

To make it, thin out some gochujang (Korean red chili paste) by whisking it with water in a small bowl. Add sugar and sesame oil to taste.

## Other Classic Toppings (pick 4 or 5)

### BULGOGI (MARINATED BEEF)

If you're lucky enough to live near an H Mart or other Asian grocery, you can buy marinated uncooked bulgogi, which you just throw into a hot skillet and cook until it's browned all the way through.

### GOSARI (FERNBRAKE)

As a kid, I called this twiggy-looking, deliciously nutty-tasting vegetable (also known as bracken fiddleheads) "the brown sticks." Fernbrake is usually purchased dried, but if you find it fresh in the refrigerated section, all you need to do is drain it and sauté it in a little garlic, finishing it with a drizzle of soy sauce and sesame oil.

### SEASONED SPINACH (SIGEUMCHI NAMUL)

Boil spinach until just wilted, then squeeze out the water and mix with crushed garlic, soy sauce, and sesame oil. Top with finely minced scallions and sesame seeds.

### SOYBEAN SPROUTS (KONGNAMUL)

My favorite. Boil the sprouts in salted water for three or four minutes, then shock them in cold water to keep them crunchy. Season with crushed garlic, finely chopped scallions, sesame oil, sesame seeds, and gochugaru (dried Korean chili flakes).

### CUCUMBER SALAD

Slice cucumbers super-thin (use a mandoline if you have one), sprinkle them with salt, and wait 10 to 15 minutes, until they release their liquid. Squeeze out the excess moisture and dress with vinegar, sugar, and sesame seeds.



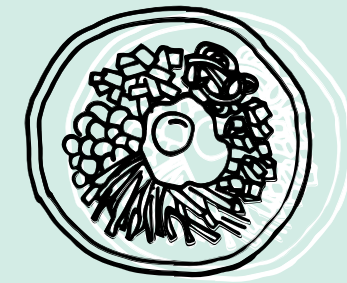
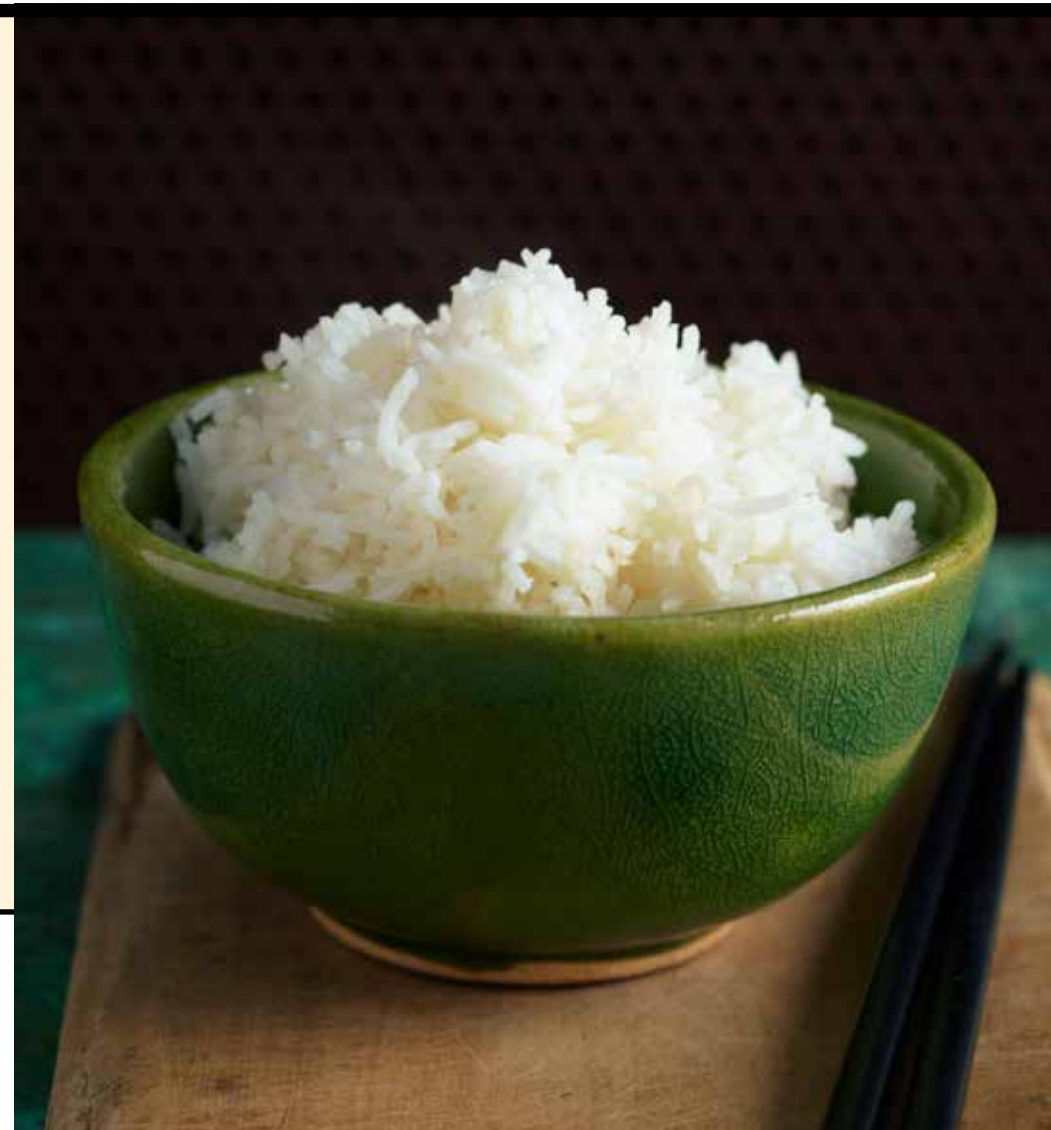
(ICONS) THE NOUN PROJECT; (EGG AND SAUCE ICONS) KAMINI RAMPERSAUD



## MORE IDEAS FOR TOPPINGS

- \* Kimchi
- \* Roasted seaweed
- \* Grated carrots
- \* Chopped romaine
- \* Sautéed shiitake mushrooms
- \* Prepared vegetables from the Korean market

(RICE) BRETT STEVENS / GETTY IMAGES



## How to Eat Bibimbap

**MY MOM ALWAYS SAYS,** "Good bibimbap is all about the mixing!" She means that the contents of the bowl must be thoroughly mixed and tossed by each diner with a spoon before the first bite. Each spoonful of bibimbap should have a little taste of everything, with the oozy egg yolk and deep red gochujang sauce coating every grain of rice.

## THE RICE

**MY HANDS-DOWN FAVORITE** brand is Koda Farms Kokuho Rose Heirloom White Rice (look for the pale-blue bag with the man in the hat). It's a very tasty, fragrant, and slightly nutty-tasting medium-grain rice good for every day, grown by the family who has owned the farm since the 1920s. (It's not always available at H Mart, but you can order it directly from [wellspentmarket.com](http://wellspentmarket.com) in Portland, Oregon.)

I have a very small kitchen and limited counter space, but for me, an automatic rice cooker is non-negotiable. Mine is a decade-old Zojirushi model that's still going strong, turning out perfect rice every

time. Although the cooking takes a little longer than if you were to do it on the stove, the convenience is unmatched. You just push a button and walk away. No watching the pot!

There are many methods for cooking rice, but no matter which one you choose, you should rinse the grains first to remove excess starch. (Do not skip this step no matter what the rice packaging claims!) Simply swish the rice in cool water using your fingers. Drain and repeat a few times, until the water is almost clear.

To measure water for rice, I usually use the hand method—or, more specifically, the knuckle method. This is a very traditional

technique among Koreans that sounds, I admit, suspiciously loosey-goosey, as it requires zero measuring. Here's how it works: After the rice is washed and placed in the rice cooker, you lay your palm flat on top of it and add water until it covers your knuckles. I know, it sounds crazy, because nobody's hands are the same size. But this is how millions of Koreans have been taught to make rice...and it works. If you'd like a more precise method, just use a simple one-to-one ratio of rice to water. (This is how Eric Kim does it.) Let the rice soak for about 10 minutes, press the start button on the rice cooker, and walk away.





**MELONS, ORANGES,** maybe some grapes. I swear, I am not trolling you. If you've ever eaten at an old-school Korean BBQ joint, you've probably partaken of the cut-up oranges or watermelon that the restaurant sends out to tables at the end of the meal. More often than not, fresh fruit is the after-dinner sweet.

## CHEWY BLACK SESAME RICE CAKE

**IF YOU WANT SOMETHING** extra, Eric Kim developed this scrumptious, toothsome mochi cake recipe. (It's in his cookbook *Korean American*.) He compares this "simple yet regal cake" to the honey-sesame rice cake called songpyeon and the chewy black sesame rolls from a Korean bakery. Kim recommends "a solid 1 to 2 minutes" of whisking for the egg-honey mixture to incorporate air and fluffiness. The end result: "a sweet, nutty brittle atop the squidgy vanilla base."



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**YIELD: ONE 8-INCH CAKE**

### INGREDIENTS

- Cooking spray
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup sugar, plus more for sprinkling on top
- ¾ cup honey
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- ½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 4 tablespoons toasted black sesame seeds
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 8 ounces (227 grams) glutinous rice flour (aka mochiko or sweet rice flour)
- Powdered sugar, for serving

### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Mist an 8-inch round cake pan with cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, sugar, honey, and salt until fluffy and pale yellow, 1 to 2 minutes. Whisk in the milk, vanilla, melted butter, and sesame oil until combined.
3. Using a mortar and pestle (or a coffee/spice grinder), pulverize 2 tablespoons of the black sesame seeds into a rough powder. It should smell very fragrant. Add this sesame powder, along with the remaining 2 tablespoons of whole black sesame seeds, to the bowl with the egg mixture, followed by the baking powder and rice flour. Whisk to combine, then carefully pour the batter into the greased cake pan.
4. Bake until the top is nicely browned and cracked slightly (this is a good sign), 50 to 60 minutes. You can also insert a chopstick or toothpick into the center of the cake, and if it comes out clean, then you're done.
5. Cool completely before dusting with the powdered sugar and slicing into wedges to serve. This cake will keep in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days.

(CAKE) JENNY HUANG; (BOOK) COURTESY PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE; (ICONS) THE NOUN PROJECT

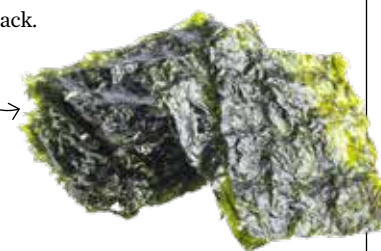


# THE SHOPPING LIST

What I always buy at the Asian market. A much-abbreviated list.

## PANTRY STAPLES

- PAJEON MIX (BEKSUL OR O'FOOD):** Basically, a Korean Bisquick. Just add water and scallions to make crispy, chewy pajeon.
- GOCHUJANG:** The deep red umami-rich fermented chili paste is at the base of a gazillion Korean dishes.
- GOCHUGARU:** It's the signature ingredient in kimchi—a fragrant red-pepper powder with an underlying sweetness. There's no substitute!
- ROASTED SESAME OIL:** The toasty and fragrant finishing touch to so many dishes. You can even drizzle it on plain hot rice as a treat.
- KEWPIE MAYO:** This cult Japanese mayo has unparalleled richness and umami.
- LEE KUM KEE CHICKEN MARINADE:** A culinary security blanket. Stash a bottle of this in the pantry and some chicken thighs in the freezer.
- KODA FARMS KOKUHO ROSE HEIRLOOM WHITE RICE:** Not all rice is the same! This one is fragrant, toothsome, and delicious.
- ROASTED SEAWEED:** Wrap it over rice, crumble it over eggs, munch on it as a snack.



## SNACKS AND TREATS

- MELONA POPSICLES:** Koreans love melon-flavored desserts. This is like melon gelato on a stick.
- RAMUNE SODAS:** If we have friends coming over with their kids, I'll buy all the different flavors of this Japanese soda. Everyone loves popping the glass marble seal.
- CHOCO PIE:** Just as junky as Mallomars but way better.
- HAITAI HONEY BUTTER CHIPS:** No other potato chip comes close. When these hit the market in Asia, the shortages spurred a honey-butter-chip black market.



## PRODUCE

- FERNBRAKE:** Looks like twigs; tastes nutty and earthy. I get the fresh packet when I can find it.
- PURPLE SWEET POTATOES:** The Korean love for roasted sweet potatoes is well documented, even on K-dramas.
- PEA SHOOTS:** Sautéed with garlic, they're hands down the tastiest vegetable of all time.



## REFRIGERATED FOODS

- TOBAGI KIMCHI:** I'm loyal to the classic Country Style Sliced cabbage and the crunchy Cubed Radish varieties of these fermented vegetables.
- PULMUONE SOON TOFU:** Even people who say they don't like tofu love this silky, ultra-custardy dubu (that's the Korean word for tofu).



## NOODLES

- PULMUONE KOREAN STYLE NOODLES WITH BLACK BEAN SAUCE AND PORK:** This refrigerated instant jajangmyeon is Korea's answer to pasta Bolognese. I keep packets around for my ravenous teenage son's "second dinners."
- SHIN RAMYUN BLACK:** This is the ramyun (that's what Koreans call instant ramen) that I buy in bulk. It's spicy but not killer hot, with an intense bone broth.
- CJ NIGHT TIME UDON NOODLES:** Soothing and delicious, with an anchovy broth that always hits the spot. Also in the refrigerated section.



(RED PEPPER) EYECON / GETTY IMAGES; (MAYO) COURTESY KEWPIE; (SEAWEED) SHOWCAKE / GETTY IMAGES; (POPSICLE) COURTESY MELONA; (RAMUNE SODA) COURTESY SHIRAKIKU; (CHIPS) COURTESY CALBEE; (POTATOES) CHENGZHUHENG / GETTY IMAGES; (TOFU) COURTESY PULMUONE; (RAMEN) COURTESY NONGSHIM