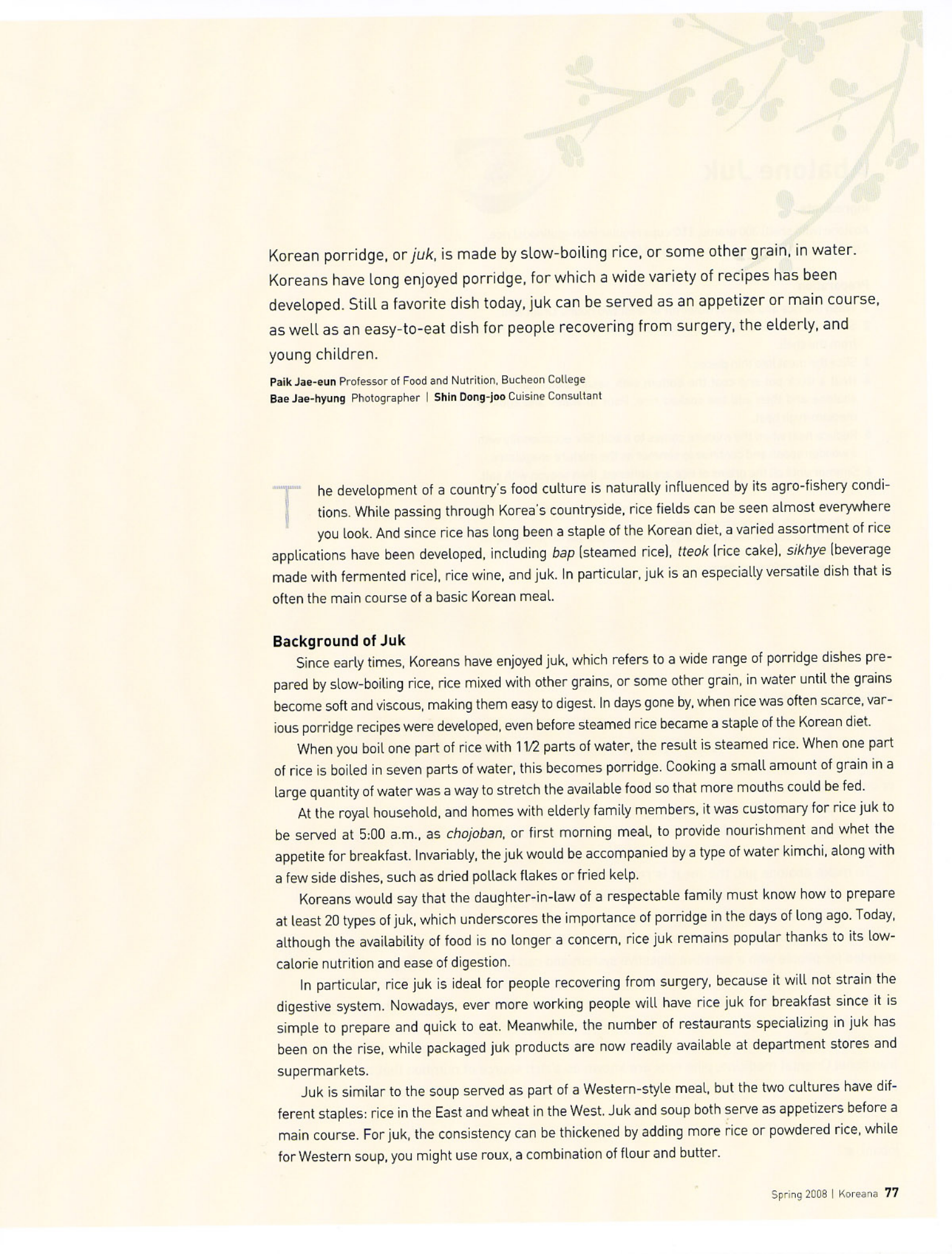


CUISINE

Rice Porridge (Juk)

A Practical Source of Nutrition





Korean porridge, or *juk*, is made by slow-boiling rice, or some other grain, in water. Koreans have long enjoyed porridge, for which a wide variety of recipes has been developed. Still a favorite dish today, *juk* can be served as an appetizer or main course, as well as an easy-to-eat dish for people recovering from surgery, the elderly, and young children.

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The development of a country's food culture is naturally influenced by its agro-fishery conditions. While passing through Korea's countryside, rice fields can be seen almost everywhere you look. And since rice has long been a staple of the Korean diet, a varied assortment of rice applications have been developed, including *bap* (steamed rice), *tteok* (rice cake), *sikhye* (beverage made with fermented rice), rice wine, and *juk*. In particular, *juk* is an especially versatile dish that is often the main course of a basic Korean meal.

Background of Juk

Since early times, Koreans have enjoyed *juk*, which refers to a wide range of porridge dishes prepared by slow-boiling rice, rice mixed with other grains, or some other grain, in water until the grains become soft and viscous, making them easy to digest. In days gone by, when rice was often scarce, various porridge recipes were developed, even before steamed rice became a staple of the Korean diet.

When you boil one part of rice with 11/2 parts of water, the result is steamed rice. When one part of rice is boiled in seven parts of water, this becomes porridge. Cooking a small amount of grain in a large quantity of water was a way to stretch the available food so that more mouths could be fed.

At the royal household, and homes with elderly family members, it was customary for rice *juk* to be served at 5:00 a.m., as *chojoban*, or first morning meal, to provide nourishment and whet the appetite for breakfast. Invariably, the *juk* would be accompanied by a type of water kimchi, along with a few side dishes, such as dried pollack flakes or fried kelp.

Koreans would say that the daughter-in-law of a respectable family must know how to prepare at least 20 types of *juk*, which underscores the importance of porridge in the days of long ago. Today, although the availability of food is no longer a concern, rice *juk* remains popular thanks to its low-calorie nutrition and ease of digestion.

In particular, rice *juk* is ideal for people recovering from surgery, because it will not strain the digestive system. Nowadays, ever more working people will have rice *juk* for breakfast since it is simple to prepare and quick to eat. Meanwhile, the number of restaurants specializing in *juk* has been on the rise, while packaged *juk* products are now readily available at department stores and supermarkets.

Juk is similar to the soup served as part of a Western-style meal, but the two cultures have different staples: rice in the East and wheat in the West. *Juk* and soup both serve as appetizers before a main course. For *juk*, the consistency can be thickened by adding more rice or powdered rice, while for Western soup, you might use roux, a combination of flour and butter.

Abalone Juk



Ingredients

Abalone (with shell) 300 grams, 1 1/2 cups regular (non-glutinous) rice, 2 tablespoons sesame oil, 8 cups water, 1/2 tablespoon salt

Preparation

- 1 Wash the rice and soak in water for at least two hours. Drain well.
- 2 Scrub the abalone shells with a brush before removing the meat from the shell.
- 3 Slice the meat into thin pieces.
- 4 Heat a thick pot and coat the bottom with sesame oil. Stir-fry the abalone and then add the soaked rice. Pour in water and cook at medium-high heat.
- 5 Reduce heat when the mixture comes to a boil. Stir occasionally with a wooden spoon and continue to simmer as the mixture coagulates.
- 6 Simmer until all the grains of rice are softened, then season with salt.

Note: If it is difficult to remove the abalone meat from the shell, steam the abalone with the shell-side down for a few minutes.


The green abalone intestines are generally discarded. But on Jeju, the intestines are included, which gives the porridge a green color, along with a distinctive aroma and pungent flavor.

Wide Array of Varieties

Juk comes in a wide array of varieties, including plain white-rice juk, juk with nuts (pine nut, walnut, or chestnut), vegetable juk (kimchi, mushroom, or pumpkin), meat juk (chicken or beef), seafood juk (abalone, raw oyster, or mussel), juk with herbs or sprouts (bean sprout or curled mallow), and milk juk. At times, medicinal herbs, flower petals, fruit, and roots such as sweet potato are also added. Among the numerous types of juk dishes, abalone juk and pine nut juk are two of the favorites among Koreans, and are thus often served as a treat for dinner guests.

To make abalone juk, the meat is removed from the shell, sliced thinly, stir-fried with sesame oil, and then boiled with the soaked rice and water. To preserve the delicate fragrance and taste of abalone, minimal seasoning should be used. Abalone is an expensive shellfish delicacy of Jeju Island that is prized for its delectable flavor. Abalone juk is recommended for people with a sensitive digestive system and can help breast-feeding mothers to lactate. It is also an effective treatment for a hangover, by absorbing alcohol from the liver and intestines. In addition, abalone juk is said to revitalize people who need a boost of energy, slow down the skin's aging process, and help to lower blood pressure.

Made with ground pine nuts and rice, pine nut juk is savory as well as highly nutritious. In traditional Oriental medicine, pine nuts are known as a rich source of nutrition that can also promote vigor and prolong life. In fact, pine nuts, which are comprised of unsaturated fatty acids and various proteins, iron, and vitamin B, are a great health food. As such, it is not surprising that pine nut juk was the most frequently served dish for the pre-breakfast meal (chojoban). 🍵



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Pine Nut Juk

Ingredients

1 cup rice, 1/2 cup pine nuts, 6 cups water, moderate amount of salt, honey to taste



Preparation

- 1 Wash the rice and soak in water for at least two hours. Drain well.
- 2 Trim off the pointy tips of the pine nuts, and measure 6 cups of water.
- 3 Pour the water into a mortar or blender, and grind the pine nuts and rice separately.
- 4 Strain the liquid from the ground rice and pine nuts into a thick pot and heat until warm. Add the ground rice, and stir with a wooden spoon as it cooks.
- 5 When the mixture comes to a boil, slowly add the ground pine nuts, in small amounts. Reduce the heat to prevent lumps from forming. Slowly simmer until the mixture coagulates.
- 6 Serve the juk while still hot, and season with salt and honey.

Note : Pine nut juk can become watery after sitting for a while. To help prevent this, the rice and pine nuts should be ground separately, the mixture should not be stirred continuously while cooking, and the salt should be added after the cooking is completed.