

## A Journey to South Korea

An English class of students aged 14-15 years old in South Korea completed the interview sheet from the "A Journey Back in Time and Around the World" activity. Use their answers to compare their reality with ours in Quebec.

What country do you live in? *South Korea*

In what setting do you live?



In a city or town



In a village



On a farm



Other

### At the Table...

1. What do you eat:

<b>For Breakfast?</b>	<i>Rice, fish, vegetables omelet, kimchi*.</i> <i>*Kimchi is a typical Korean food, usually fermented cabbage mixed with garlic and spicy peppers. There are over 200 kinds of kimchi; there is even a kimchi museum.</i>
<b>For Lunch?</b>	<i>Rice, kimchi, fried food.</i>
<b>For Dinner?</b>	<i>Balbi*, beef, pork or chicken, vegetables, kimchi and rice.</i> <i>*Grilled dishes made with marinated beef or pork ribs.</i>
<b>As a Snacks?</b>	<i>Ramen noodles.</i>



2. Do you eat the same things in the spring, summer, fall and winter?

Please explain why?

*Koreans tend to eat with the season. Koreans have a fondness for certain fruits and vegetables and eat and celebrate them when they are available. For instance they eat strawberries in January and in May when they are ripe in the greenhouses. Koreans also find ways to include fruits and vegetables year-long even if they are not fresh. For example, Kimchi is made in the early fall, as the chili peppers are ready for picking (Kimchi is a preserve that can be stored all year long). Some fruits that don't grow in South Korea are only available in stores that sell imported products, but their price is very high (e.g. seven dollars for a honeydew melon during winter). They just don't have the same access to international foods as we do in North America.*

3. Do you celebrate special occasions (e.g. religious and non-religious holidays)? Is the food served on these occasions different from what you normally eat? How so?

*There isn't many special foods, except for the rice cake.*

4. Who usually prepares and cooks meals?

*Usually the mother. A lot of Korean women are still "housewives" and if they do have a job, it's usually only part-time; so they do most of the cooking. Also, the grandmother usually cooks because she lives with, or very close to, the father's family. However, this trend is changing.*

5. Where do you buy your food? Are there grocery stores and supermarkets?

What are the food stores like (small, large, open every day)?

*This varies a lot. As some housewives seem to have more time than women in Canada, they do have time to go to local markets and bargain for better prices. A lot of the food is bought the day it is cooked. The market is usually the most economical place to buy food. There are also massive department stores or "marts" where you can buy anything from food to high couture clothing. A lot of people go there because they are open late, until about midnight.*

6. Does your family have a garden? If not, who grows your food (neighbours, local farmers, farmers in other countries)?

*Most students do not have gardens at home because they live in apartments. However, there are still many farmers in the cities, in communal gardens and along the subway tracks. They sell their seasonal goods on street corner or in subway stations; products such as potatoes, radishes, garlic, onions, etc. Also, many students*



have grandparents who live in villages and own a farm. Another interesting thing about Korea is that if you own a house or an apartment complex in Korea, there must be a green space. Many houses have stairs leading to the roof, where there is a small garden for lettuce, tomatoes and herbs.

7. How is the food preserved? Is it packaged?

most food is bought fresh from the market. Otherwise, food is preserved in Kimchi pots and Tupperware®

8. Does everybody in your town have enough to eat? Are there times of the year where getting enough food to eat is more difficult?

They couldn't really answer this question. Nowadays people seem ok, but in the poorer neighborhoods many people do not eat much (e.g. rice for dinner).

9. Do you eat candies? Chocolates? Fast food? Do you drink soft drinks? How often?

Koreans students eat candy but in limited quantities as packages and portions sold in "depanneurs" tend to be quite small. Also, a lot of kids eat ramen ("Mr. Noodles" equivalent) as snacks everyday. These are not really healthy snacks. They do not usually drink soft drinks.

10. Are obesity and diabetes common illnesses?

According to students, obesity and diabetes do not seem to be a major problem in Korea. Most of the kids are quite in good shape. However, several teenage girls diet without needing it, which is a growing problem.

11. What do you think of the food young people eat today? Do you think it is healthy and good for the environment?

Most Korean students seem to think it is good, except that they do not have enough time to exercise. They are quite happy and obedient towards their parents in terms of nutrition. The schools make a remarkable effort to prepare healthy meals for students.

12. Would you rather have been young in the time of your parents (food, life in general)? Why?

Children are happy to have more food variety than perhaps their parents had. However, in terms of life in general, they know that there is too much competition in the Korean education system and that they work much too hard. They go to school until 9 p.m! They have little time to play, exercise or develop other skills that might be useful in the future.

