



gachi 
Newsletter

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FAMILY DAY OUT

Strawberries and Farmily

By Anna Jo



Finally, red strawberries cover a green field. Believe me. It is not a realistic scene if you look inside of the strawberry green house. I can tell Farmer Kim Byeong Soo's strawberries are the best ever. If you buy strawberries at the department store today, there is something about the after taste that is just not right. The secret to his delicious strawberries is rather simple. He also runs a natural chicken farm and so he is able to receive good quality organic fertilizer.

Spring rain drizzled down on the Family Day Out last May. All greens out there were so vivid. The Family Day Out in May is my favorite because you can pick and taste the best strawberries as much as you want! Gachi CSA and our farmers welcome all children to come by our farm as well. Your children are able to touch animals & plants, help farmers and feel the fresh air in their body. They will learn where foods they eat come from and get a connection with nature even if it is a one-day activity.

We are going to host more Family Day Outings and more events for Gachi CSA members and expats in Korea who like nature so watch out for our updating and join us. We always welcome you.

THE KONG PROJECT



'From Seed to Sauce' The 콩 Project

A Journey Into the World of Korean Soy Sauce

By James Thole

What do you miss most about Korea? This is the question people often hear after they've left Korea. The answer is more often than not – the food. It's the thing I miss most about Korea even when I only leave for a couple weeks. So what's the secret to Korean food? I don't think there is a specific "secret", but when you look at the foundation of Korean food you're going to usually find a common denominator: ganjang (soy sauce). Kalbi Jimm, Bulgolgi, Jimmdak, deonjang soup, sam gapsal, you name it – ganjang or deonjang plays a key role in making most Korean cuisine delicious. I never understood the power of ganjang until I was participating in a weekend WWOOF event at a farm in Namyangju.

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We were doing some weeding around a grouping of large ceramic pots. The farmer's wife came over to us and started taking the lids off the pots and letting us sample the contents. Awaiting inside the massive earthenware pots was ganjang and deonjang of various ages. Some were aged at a year and the oldest over five years. They all tasted like nothing I had ever experienced at any Korean restaurant. The flavors were complex and delightful, and I wanted more but settled for the samples. I instantly knew that any dish made with this ganjang and deonjang would be on another flavor level. When I left the farm I told myself some day I'd go back there and buy some from the nice lady. But I never did, and I don't think it was for sale. Fast forward two years, the flavor experience had not faded, and I had developed new knowledge and contacts in the Korean farming world. Idea: learn to make ganjang. The kind of ganjang I tasted two years ago. Leave Korea with the "secret" behind great Korean cuisine. I searched the WWOOF website for host farms and found one about four hours south of

Seoul. Too far for a yearlong project. Who did I know locally who could help? The farmer who gave me my first crack at farming surely would know somebody. I made the proposal to Kim Byung Soo of Hansol farm as he's a friend and mentor of mine. First I asked if he knew anybody who could teach me, then proposed the idea of getting Gachi members together and turning it into a group project. He liked the idea of a group project, and now a group of us will have the opportunity to do what few have done. We have the chance to leave Korea with a skill that many Koreans, and even Korean farmers do not have. We will learn how to create the "secret" ingredient in amazing Korean cuisine. Mr. Kim agreed to let 10 people come to his farm and plant a crop of soy beans. He will teach us how to maintain, harvest, dry, and process the beans into ganjang and deonjang the traditional way. I'm still pinching myself over the opportunity. Everyone who participates will walk away with their own supply of deonjang and ganjang that they grew and processed themselves, and most importantly the experience of doing it.



There will be other learning opportunities at the farm as well. The farm has chickens, goats, and other crops. In addition, there is a giant hoop house facility that is equipped with a full kitchen so participants can have BBQs and even utilize a clay oven and make pizzas. It's a great escape from the city, and a nice way to connect to your food. As of this writing there is only one open slot for anyone who would like to join. We'd especially love to have Gachi members join us. Hope to see you on the farm! Have a great summer..

INSIGHT

Introduction: Optimizing digestive function using "FOOD HYGIENE"

By Sunjae Lee
Naturopathic Doctor

In Naturopathic Medicine, there is a set of practices called "food hygiene" which look to optimize the process of digestion. As a Gachi CSA customer, you are already ahead of the curve when it comes to obtaining fresh, local, organic foods. It's clear that you've thought about "what" to eat—but have you thought about "how" to eat and how to optimize the process of digestion?

Part I: "Rest and digest" vs. "Fight and Flight"

You may have heard about these two terms before—they refer to two complimentary aspects of our nervous system. Our "sympathetic nervous system" is

considered the "fight and flight" part because it is engaged when we are under stressful situations. During these instances, our blood and nerve activity is routed away from our core organs; our heart beats faster and pumps blood to our muscles so that we are better able to run from a predator. The "parasympathetic" nervous system serves the opposite function—when we are in safety and in the midst of a comfortable meal, this system should be active, routing blood back from the muscles and brain to our vital organs. This can be considered part of the reason for "food coma"—the blood and nerve activity is being drained from the head back to the intestines to aid in the act of digestion.

Normally, these two aspects of our nervous systems should work in balance with each other; rigorous activities would be supported by the sympathetic nervous system, and activities like eating and relaxation would engage the parasympathetic nervous system. However, in modern society, our sympathetic nervous system is almost always triggered: we are constantly in stressful situations without effective coping mechanisms, watching TV until late at night, drinking multiple cups of coffee per day, and not taking enough time to relax. Over many years, this brings upon an internal state in which our body is used to being in a "sympathetic dominant state". This means that even when our parasympathetic nervous system should be engaged, it is only partially functional.

Part of food hygiene is focused on enhancing parasympathetic, "rest and digest" function as much as possible during the act of eating. These are common sense recommendations and are all about staying in a calm, relaxed environment during mealtimes:

- Take a moment before meals to give thanks and gratitude for the food in front of you. Even if you're not religious, it can be a great way to calm your nervous system, clear any stressful thoughts, and prepare your body for the food that is about to enter your stomach.
- Not eating while standing, walking, or driving. When we are moving or driving our sympathetic nervous system is engaged, routing the blood and nerve activity away from our intestines.
- Not engaging in strenuous activity right before or after mealtimes. Food takes about 2 hours to completely pass through the digestive tract, during which time we need to help the process of breakdown and absorption as much as possible.
- Focusing on the food in front of you rather than a TV or computer screen. We are all used to constant entertainment, but next time you're eating at home consider focusing on food and conversation instead of that action movie which is provoking the sympathetic response inside of you!

Part II: Chemical breakdown

The other aspect of food hygiene looks at the chemical aspect of digestion. When you think about it, food digestion is a very difficult process. Our bodies have to take solid foods, chop them up into little pieces, dissolve them with harsh chemicals, and then filter them through a porous membrane to absorb them into the bloodstream. Chemical digestion begins in the mouth, where the enzyme amylase begins breaking down carbohydrates. It continues in the stomach where food mixes with hydrochloric acid, and then

in the small intestine encounters pancreatic enzymes, bile, and finally is further broken down by "brush-border" enzymes which are on the surface of our intestinal lining.

It is a complex process to assimilate foreign objects into our body, and the basic strategy for assisting your body during this activity to do this is to slow down eating as much as possible. Think of a car wash— as the car slowly passes through, each station has its function of cleaning or rinsing, and by the time the car comes out the other end, it is completely clean. However, if the track speed is set too high, then the car passes through without being thoroughly cleaned. The slower the car passes through, the more thoroughly it will be cleaned. The act of eating is similar: we need to make sure that the pace of our eating is optimal for our digestive tract. Here are some tips:

- Cooking food at home: the simple acts of chopping up vegetables, smelling food, looking at food starts the secretion of enzymes which prepare our digestive tracts.
- Chewing food thoroughly: 31 times before swallowing is the official Naturopathic magic number. Breaking food into smaller portions increases the surface area for the food to have contact with digestive enzymes, and also allows carbohydrate digestion to begin with the "amylase" enzyme from our mouths!
- Not drinking large amounts of liquids around mealtimes. Modern restaurant culture has us gulping down a glass of ice-water with our meals— surely if we don't chew our food properly, we would need liquid help getting large chunks of food down our esophagus. However, if you consider the chemical aspect of digestion, drinking large quantities of water during meals does nothing but dilute digestive enzymes, which are more effective when they are concentrated. Avoiding liquids during, before and after mealtimes might feel uncomfortable at first, but is an important step in improve digestive function.
- An optional trick you can try which helps to stimulate secretion of digestive enzymes is to have a spoonful of raw apple cider vinegar 20-30 mins before meals in a small amount of water. Sour and bitter flavored liquids such as vinegar, lemon, and digestive bitters were traditionally used in many cultures as an "aperitif" before meals to stimulate digestive enzyme secretion.

These tips, used in combination with each other, can have far reaching effects in improving our digestive function not only for people who have digestive disorders, but also for the general population. Hope you found this information useful and enjoy the beautiful weather!