

## **A Korean Meal: Teaching Confucian Manners Through Dining Etiquette**

**GRADES:** 7-12

**AUTHOR:** Karl Dotterweich

**SUBJECT:** Korean Society and Culture, Religion/Philosophy, Korean Cuisine

**TIME REQUIRED:** 90 minutes, divided over two class periods

### **MATERIALS REQUIRED: Day 1**

- Pens, paper for note taking

### **MATERIALS REQUIRED: Day 2**

- Pens, paper for note taking
  - Chopsticks
  - Spoons
  - Bowls/Plates
- Korean food provided by the teacher**

**BACKGROUND:** Though Buddhism and Christianity are the largest organized religions in South Korea, Confucian philosophy and ideals are imbedded in Korean language and culture. Students should already be familiar with Confucian philosophy prior to this lesson, specifically, ideas of filial piety, respect for elders and interpersonal relationships. Students should also be aware that many aspects of Korean culture, though brought from China, were integrated into Korean culture in unique ways. The official Korean Tourism website has excellent resources on Korean food. It can be accessed at [http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/1051\\_Food.jsp](http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/1051_Food.jsp) This can be shared with students prior to starting the lesson or after the first class period.

A Korean table setting is quite different than a Western setting. Forks and knives are not used. Additionally, there are usually numerous side dishes in a full Korean meal. There are also numerous condiments, including fermented bean paste, soy sauce, red and black pepper, and others. Soups are usually part of the main course and not an appetizer. Rice and *kimchi*, or fermented spicy cabbage, form the basis of the meal. Individual place settings should be set up from a person's left to right as follows: a bowl of rice, a long spoon, and chopsticks. Hot foods go on the right side of the table and cold foods go on the left. Soups are placed to the right side of each person at the table. Vegetables are placed to the left. Condiments are placed in front of the kimchi.

**CONNECTION TO STUDENTS LIVES:** Students should be able to compare Korean values and manners with their own and see how the way we organize society is reflected in our manners.

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will be able to identify Confucian values in Korean culture by having a traditional Korean meal, using Korean table manners.

## **NCSS STANDARDS**

### **CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

- assist learners to understand and apply the concept of culture as an integrated whole that governs the functions and interactions of language, literature, arts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behavior patterns
- have learners interpret patterns of behavior as reflecting values and attitudes, which contribute to or pose obstacles to cross-cultural understanding

### **INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS**

- help learners understand the concepts of role, status, and social class and use them in describing the connections and interactions of individuals, groups, and institutions in society
- help learners to describe and examine belief systems basic to specific traditions and laws in contemporary and historical societies
- help learners to understand the various forms institutions take, their functions, their relationships to one another and how they develop and change over time

## **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

WHST 1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content

**PROCEDURE:** On the first day, the teacher will review Confucianism (this should have already been covered previously while studying East Asia) and its core beliefs. These include filial piety and respect for elders, which will be the focus of the lesson. The teacher will then explain that although many Koreans have no religious affiliation, Confucian ideals are actually built into Korean social customs, and that this is particularly evident in Korean table manners. Students should be invited to discuss ways in which we show our respect for our elders in social situations in our own culture. After discussing this, the teacher should draw comparisons between how we treat our elders in America and how it is done in Korea. For example, older guests will be seated at or near the head of the table. Guests are typically served from oldest to youngest, and the eldest person at the table is the first to start eating. When serving an elder, it is polite to use both hands. Inform them that they do not refill their own drinking glasses; if they want more, they fill someone else's glass and wait for that person to reciprocate. It is considered polite to finish all the food on one's plate. Write these table manners on the board and tell students to copy them down. Allow students time to discuss how these customs show respect to elders. Inform students that during their next class period, they will have a Korean meal and use Korean table manners. To make things run smoothly during the meal, the teacher should record students' birthdays prior to the next class period so that students can be arranged by age.

The teacher will be responsible for supplying the necessary components for the Korean meal. This will include paper plates and bowls, cups, chopsticks and spoons, water and/or tea, and of course food. Korean food is readily available from Asian markets. A simple meal is sufficient, but must include rice and kimchi. Additional dishes like bibimbap (rice mixed with beef and namul) and sauces like gochujang (red pepper paste) could be included to broaden the experience. The teacher may wish to supply a folding table or tables, or may have students arrange their desks to resemble a table.

Begin by setting up the table. This may be done before students arrive to save time. Once the table is set, seat students by age. The teacher's spot should be at the head of the table. The teacher will serve himself/herself and then pass the food, explaining what each dish is as s/he does so. The teacher should watch to see if students offer food with both hands and should remind students to fill each other's glasses. Point out that no one should eat until the eldest person (the teacher) has started. The teacher should eat slowly so that s/he is the last one finished, so that students can see that a meal isn't finished until the eldest person is done. When the teacher is finished, dessert can be served (if the teacher brought it).

**EVALUATION or ASSESSMENT:** Discuss with students how the meal differed from the way we normally eat meals. Give them a chance to comment on their favorite aspects of it and their favorite foods. After cleaning up, assign students a writing assignment to assess their understanding of how the meal reflects Confucian values in Korean culture. The paragraph should include specific examples and will explain how Korean table manners show deference to elders and how this reflects Confucian teachings. The length of the written assignment will be determined by the teacher based upon grade level and student ability. This can be adapted to the teacher's specific grading rubric.

**RESOURCES:**

Life in Korea - Table Manners: <http://www.lifeinkorea.com/food/f-manners.cfm>

Quick and Easy Korean Cooking Podcast from the Korea Society:  
[http://www.koreasociety.org/arts/cooking/quick\\_easy\\_korean\\_cooking\\_podcast.html](http://www.koreasociety.org/arts/cooking/quick_easy_korean_cooking_podcast.html)

Korean Tourism: [http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/1051\\_Food.jsp](http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/1051_Food.jsp)