



Happy Chuseok!

September is in full swing, and for most Americans that means one thing: the beloved Fall season is being welcomed with open arms. We crave pumpkin lattes, pull out our cozy sweaters, and cheer on our favorite football teams. We feel nostalgic and reflective, fill up on comfort foods, and are drawn to spend time with family and friends. Each year, autumn seems to captivate us, as we anticipate the first leaves turning color and floating away on a chilly breeze.

Western cultures aren't the only ones to delight in this time of year. Over 2,000 years ago in ancient Korea, a seasonal harvest celebration emerged. Known today as Chuseok, its themes are not unlike the end-of-year holidays with which we are most familiar.

Originally called Hangawi, Chuseok is a three-day festival comparable to Thanksgiving in the US. It takes place sometime in September or October, dependent upon the lunar calendar. Chuseok ("Autumn eve") is one of the most important Korean holidays, its celebrations encompassing the new season, culture and family lineage. It's a time for gathering; people return to their hometowns to spend time with family and friends and partake in various traditions.

While it's unclear exactly how Chuseok originated, it has evolved into a cheerful celebration that centers on cultural roots, games and entertainment, and of course, food. Families gather to partake in various traditions, welcoming the new season.

Chuseok festivities begin in the morning with *charye*, a formal memorial service. Traditional foods are prepared as an offering, and the family congregates in the home to express thanks to their ancestors. The family members may also carry out *seongmyo*. In this practice, family members travel to the graves of their ancestors to repair and tidy them, a demonstration of their appreciation.

After the *charye* service, a banquet is shared. *Songpyeon* is a popular Chuseok culinary tradition. These kneaded rice balls are filled with wholesome ingredients like sesame seeds, nuts and beans, colored pale shades and steamed atop a bed of pine needles for distinct flavor. Other significant Chuseok dishes are *jeon*, a type of fried pancake made of meat and vegetables, *hangwa*, a decorated rice flour cookie, and *sindoju*, a Korean rice liquor.

Beyond rituals and bountiful meals, Chuseok is known for entertainment and games. *Ganggangsullae* is a circle dance performed by women and children. Interestingly, it is said to be based on a successful military scare tactic used

hundreds of years ago – young women dressed in soldiers’ uniforms and circled the mountains, leading the enemy to think the Korean army was larger than it really was. During Chuseok, men might participate in *Ssireum* wrestling matches to determine who is the strongest. A mask dance called *talchum*, *samul nori* music, martial arts displays, and acrobatic routines are also common.

This year, Chuseok Day is September 24th, with the entire event spanning the 23rd – 26th. We’re honoring our roots by celebrating this important holiday at BIBIBOP. You’ll notice some unique decorations in our stores; this month, our Korean inspiration goes beyond our cuisine. We invite you to share in this joyful time of togetherness, generosity and fun.

Happy Chuseok!

추석 잘 지 내세요.

Take Care Always,

The BIBIBOP team