

Korean-American star chefs around the country

## BEYOND BBQ AND KIMCHI: FIVE CHEFS AT INSIDE KOREA'S TABLE

Boys and gentlemen, watch out!

Believe it or not, Koreans over the age of 50 might have heard growing up that if a man goes into the kitchen, his penis would fall off. Not so long ago, if you were living in the countryside in Korea, with a more conservative family, men and women and boys and girls in the same family were supposed to eat meals on separate tables or even in different rooms. Father eats with sons, Mother savors food with daughters. That's the way the Great Confucius taught Koreans for a long, long time.

*They are revolutionizing American dining culture. They have added bossam, ssamjang, kogi, chego, danji, hanjan and ddukbokki to the American dining vocabulary.*

A cook, as a profession, was not something that was well-respected or making good money in Korea. Ironically, quite a few star chefs in the United States today are Korean-Americans. Mostly male chefs. In May last year at the James Beard Foundation Awards, "the Oscars of food," David Chang of Momofuku Noodle Bar in New York, the most influential chef on the planet according to Time magazine, shared the Outstanding Chef award with Paul Kahan of Blackbird restaurant in Chicago. And the Rising Star Chef of the Year award went to Danny Bowien of Mission Chinese Food in New York and San Francisco.

David Chang is widely known as the hit-maker of pork belly bun and Japanese ramen, Danny Bowien jumped to stardom with his innovative Sichuan food. Was it just a coincidence that Mr. Chang and Mr. Bowien happened to be Korean-Americans?

In addition to Chang and Bowien, other Korean-American chefs are making news, including Roy Choi of Kogi taco truck (LA), Hooni Kim of Danji, the first Michelin-starred Korean restaurant (NY), Edward Lee of 610 Magnolia (Louisville, Kentucky), Corey Lee of two Michelin-starred Benu (SF), Jung Sik Yim of two Michelin-starred Jungsik (NY), Sang Yoon of Father's Office Burger (LA) and Jungjin Park of Michelin-starred Rosanjin (NY), to name a few. These chefs/owners of Korean descent are on the front line of the "New Wave of American Cuisine."

How could Korean-American chefs rise to such prominence in the American culinary world? What is in their DNA and blood? What is the secret recipe of their successes?

Yony Yoo, celebrity chef and former executive chef at the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in London says:

"Probably understanding bibimbab ("mixed rice with vegetable, meat or seafood and hot pepper paste) and fermented condiments could be an advantage for Korean men to qualify as excellent chefs. By mixing and blending different ingredients, a chef can create new flavors. Also, Korean chefs have an advantage of knowing spicy flavors and fermented condiments such as ganjang (soy sauce), doenjang (soy bean paste) and gochujang (hot pepper paste), which can be applied in modern cuisine as well."

The unconventional risk-takers are as bold as kimchi and as open as bibimbab. They know how to combine Korean ingredients with French technique, reinterpret and twist Korean, Japanese and Chinese dishes with other recipes to create delicious American food. As a result they are revolutionizing American dining culture and have become darlings of the media as well as foodies. They have added bossam, ssamjang, kogi, chego, danji, hanjan and ddukbokki to the American dining vocabulary.

David Chang, Roy Choi, Hooni Kim, Edward Lee and Danny Bowien are culinary rock stars. Let's invite these fabulous five chefs to the 'Inside Korea' table.

By Sukkie Park

kogibbq.com

LOS ANGELES



'Kogi' Taco Truck Pioneer  
**Roy Choi**

Roy Choi (43) is the pioneer of the Korean taco truck in Los Angeles. In his recent memoir and cookbook "L.A. Son: My Life, My City, My Food," the Korean-American chef Choi confesses: "Everything I am comes from kimchi."

Born in Seoul and grown up in LA since age 2, Choi was a rebellious soul. Once he was addicted to drugs, alcohol and even gambling. He recalls in the book "just like kimchi, my life was fermenting as well".

Choi was a good student, though. He majored in philosophy at California State University, Fullerton and enrolled at Western State University law school but dropped out after a semester.

At 26, he was able to turn over a new leaf when he watched Emeril Lagasse's cooking show on TV. Mr. Lagasse quickly became his role model. Choi passed through New York while attending the Culinary Institute of America and worked at Le Bernardin. Heading back to California, he trained at a couple of restaurants, including The Beverly Hilton LA.

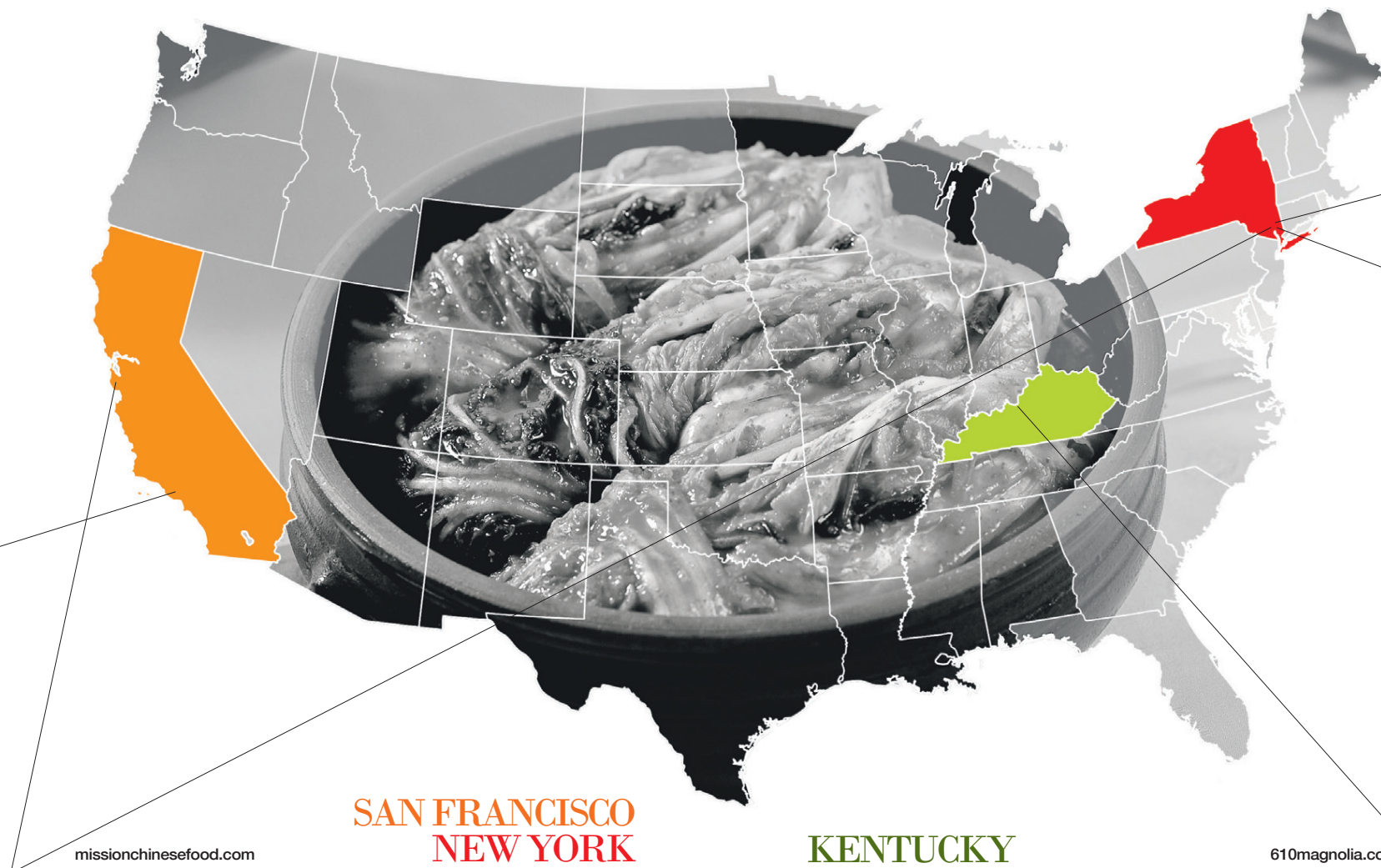
Out of luck and out of money, Choi thought and started small. In late 2008, he parked a food truck outside nightclubs on Sunset Boulevard selling beef short rib (galbi) BBQ tacos for \$2. BBQ from Korea, tortilla from Mexico, mixed in L.A., the Korean taco was born. Choi's Kogi ("means meat in Korean) truck became a cult hit thanks to Twitter. Now, Kogi has more than 112,000 followers.



Short Rib Taco

With baseball cap and tattoo-covered arms, Choi knows how to make tasty and cheap food. For example, he uses 21 ingredients for his BBQ marinade sauce.

Food and Wine Magazine named him as Best New Chef in 2010. The same year Choi opened his first sit-down eatery, Chego ("means the best in Korean), a rice bowl joint. Also, Alibi Room lounge in Venice serves Kogi's menu as well.



SAN FRANCISCO  
NEW YORK

Photo by Suke Park



Neo-Sichuan Chef  
**Danny Bowien**

He could be a drummer in a rock band, but instead of drumsticks, Danny Bowien (31) uses chopsticks, knives and also drumsticks (from chicken).

He was born in Korea and adopted by a couple in Oklahoma. In childhood, Danny loved watching cooking shows on TV with his mother and at 13, he worked as a dishwasher in a Vietnamese restaurant. He played drums in a high school rock band and had a dream to be an eye doctor.

His dream was changed when he took a trip to San Francisco at 18. The city opened his eyes, he tasted Korean food for the first time there.

Danny Bowien decided to be a chef and moved to San Francisco. But he quickly drop-

ped out of culinary school and landed in New York to work in Sumile and Tribeca Grill. He left his heart in San Francisco. So he moved back to SF and trained at Bar Crudo, Blowfish Sushi, Tsunami, Slow Club and Farina where he learned Italian cooking from executive chef Paolo Laboa. In 2008, the 25-year-old Korean-American chef flew to Italy to compete in the Pesto World Championship in Genoa and defeated more than 100 chefs.

Never having cooked Chinese food before, Bowien was invited by Anthony Myint, Chinese-American restaurateur, to cook twice a week inside a dingy Chinese joint, Lung Shan (means dragon mountain in Chinese), on Mission Street. That was called "Mission Chinese Food," the sensational neo-Sichuan restaurant everyone was talking about. Sichuan is the closest Chinese food to Korean food in terms of spiciness.

In May 2012, Bowien went bicoastal by opening his second Mission Chinese Food, on the Lower East Side, New York, which was an instant success. His angry-funcky-silly red stew, Mapo tofu, makes you feel like you are on fire from its numbing spiciness. The New York Times picked Mission as the most exciting new restaurant in 2012, rated #1.

Bowien cooks like a performance artist, maybe like a drummer. He doesn't hesitate mixing and matching ingredients. Kung-Pao pastrami and thrice-cooked bacon with rick cake (like ddukbokki) with plentiful dried peppers. Breaking all the rules and conventions, As you like it, anything goes!

Last year Bowien was named Rising Star Chef of the Year at the James Beard Foundation Awards and opened his second New York restaurant, a Mexican Mission Cantina near Mission Chinese Food. They have soju (Korean vodka) cocktails such as lil' luche and commo la flor on the menu. From Sichuan to Mexican, then tomorrow could be Korean, spicier than normal.

KENTUCKY

610magnolia.com



Iron Chef, '610 Magnolia'  
**Edward Lee**

Former New Yorker Edward Lee (41) could have been a writer like Chang-rae Lee. He graduated magna cum laude from New York University with an English Literature degree. But instead of writing, cooking became his calling. Edward Lee, chef and owner of 610 Magnolia in Louisville, Kentucky, was the finalist for the James Beard Foundation Award Best Chef (Southeast) in 2011, 2012, 2013.

Born in Seoul and immigrated to New York at 1, Lee grew up in Starrett City in Brooklyn. He learned cooking over the shoulder of his grandmother, making pickles with carrots, cucumbers and eggplants. She scolded him that men shouldn't cook, as it was women's work.

At 16, the Brooklyn boy had a chance to work as a busboy at a restaurant in Trump Tower. After training under Italian chef Frank Crispo and other East Village restaurants, in 1998 at age 25, Lee opened a Korean fusion restaurant, Clay in downtown. Clay had good business until 9/11 hit hard in lower Manhattan.

Lee closed Clay and took a culinary exploration to Lyon and Ancey in France to recharge. When he came back to NYC, he thought he could do anything, but not in the city. In 2001, Lee was invited to work in the kitchen during the Kentucky Derby week and fell in love with Louisville. His Korean spice connected with the Southern spirit. He made Louisville his second home and started restaurant chapter 2 with 610 Magnolia.

In 2010, Lee defeated Iron Chef Jose Garces on "Iron Chef America," a popular show on Food Network, in a battle that featured tongues and cheeks as the ingredients. In early 2012, Lee opened MilkWood, paying homage to Dylan Thomas, at the Actors Theatre of Louisville's theatre complex.

Lee's love of writing and cooking incubated in the book "Smoke & Pickles: Recipes and Stories from a New Southern Kitchen," which was published last year. Intwoven with memoirs and recipes, he uses kimchi (collards and kimchi, kimchi poutine, four seasons of kimchi), gochujang, ganjang as well as Southern flavors. Of course, he didn't forget his favorite recipe, rice bowl with spicy pork.

NEW YORK

danjinyc.com



Michelin Star Chef, 'Danji'  
**Hooni Kim**

His Korean mother didn't talk to her only son for almost a year when he gave up being a doctor. The son had to be a successful chef to prove that his decision was right. Hooni Kim (41) of Danji won one Michelin star in 2011. It was the first ever star for a Korean restaurant.

Born in Seoul, Kim moved with his family to London at age 3 and settled in New York since at age 10. Following his mother's expectation, Kim majored in biology the University of California, Berkeley. Then, he attended the University of Connecticut's School of Medicine for three years, but took sabbatical years, twice. Instead of a surgery knife, he picked up a kitchen knife and learned how to cook at the French Culinary Institute.

After working at Masa and Daniel, both three Michelin starred restaurants, in December 2010, Kim became an owner and chef of Danji ("means jar or just in Korean) in Hell's Kitchen. He didn't give up authentic Korean flavor; actually his plan was to educate New Yorkers about Korean cuisine. Kim divided menus between traditional and modern. His bulgogi beef sliders (marinated and grilled brisket with cucumber kimchi and scallions) were among the hits, along with kimchi bacon chorizo paella. Kim's galbijim (braised beef short rib) takes 3 days to cook. His mother-in-law makes kimchi every two weeks and he brings doenjang from Jookjangeon near Pohang in Korea.



Bulgogi Sliders

Photo by Sukkie Park

In December 2012, Hooni Kim opened his second restaurant, Hanjan ("means one shot), a Korean gastropub, in the Flatiron District.

The menu got bolder and bolder with pork fat ddukbokki (rice cake), odeng tang (homemade fishcake in daikon broth), gamja-tang (spicy pork bone and potato stew) and Gwangju market fried chicken, inspired by Korean market food and snack stalls. The New York Times named Hanjan as one of the best new restaurants in 2013, ranking # 5.

momofuku.com

NEW YORK

Photo by Gabriele Stabile



Emperor of 'Momofuku',  
**David Chang**

David Chang (36) of Momofuku Empire is an international superstar chef and food mogul at the top of his game. Since he opened a humble ramen place called Momofuku Noodle Bar in 2004, he has garnered four James Beard Foundation Award medals (2007 Rising Star Chef of the Year; 2008 Best Chef New York City for Momofuku Ssäm Bar; 2009 Best New Restaurant for Momofuku Ko and 2013 Outstanding Chef) and two Michelin Stars for Momofuku Ko for 6 years in a row (2009-2014).

David (his Korean name is Seok-ho) grew up in Alexandria, Virginia. He dreamed of becoming a professional golfer and won a Junior Golf Championship in Virginia. He also loved noodles, especially jajangmyeon (noodle with black bean & diced pork sauce).

After studying religion at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, he had an office job in finance only to quit soon after. Chang flew to Japan to teach English and mastered how to make noodles. Coming back to New York, he enrolled at the French Culinary Institute against his father's wishes. He then worked at Mercer Kitchen (owned by Jean-Georges Vongerichten), Craft (by Tom Colicchio) and Cafe Boulud (by Daniel Boulud). All the masters a novice chef should admire.

In 2004, with a loan from his father, Chang opened Momofuku Noodle Bar in the East Village. Unexpectedly Chang's pork bun (pork belly sandwich topped with hoisin sauce, inspired by Peking duck) became as popular as his ramen. Noodle Bar also featured Korean style fried chicken. Still, Momofuku's ramen and pork bun were imitated by many chefs, who opened ramen bars in Manhattan, Brooklyn and beyond.

After the sweet taste of success in 2006, Chang opened his second restaurant, Momofuku Ssäm Bar, also in the East Village. The centerpiece is his Korean-style bo ssäm (whole roasted pork butt, served with a dozen oysters, kimchi, rice and lettuce). Two years later, Momofuku Ko was born. Ko, a 12-seat haute-cuisine tasting menu restaurant, received two Michelin stars. Chang has also opened Momofuku Milk Bar and Má Pêche in Midtown and beyond.



Pork Buns

Photo by Gabriele Stabile

David Chang is the chef who popularized pork among New Yorkers, elevated ramen as serious cooking instead of dormitory food, and revived the East Village as a dining destination. Now, Chang's Empire has expanded to Sydney (Momofuku Seibo) and Toronto (Momofuku Noodle Bar, Daisho, Shōji, Bar Nikai). Chang was listed as one of Time magazine's 100 Most Influential People in 2010 and 2012.

### SLOW FOOD

Source: JOGYE ORDER OF KOREAN BUDDHISM  
CULTURAL CORPS OF KOREAN BUDDHISM  
(KoreaTempleFood.com)



Baru: The set of wooden bowls for a formal monastic meal at Korean Buddhist temples

*"Small matters accumulate into big matters. A small and hidden thing contains in it a sprout of something large and clear. Therefore, a noble person must behave carefully from the beginning and a holy man shall always be aware."*

*Seonrim bohun  
(the Precious Lessons of Seon Forest)*

cooking time - Korean Food



## Binjajeok (Mung Bean Pancakes)

### - INGREDIENTS -

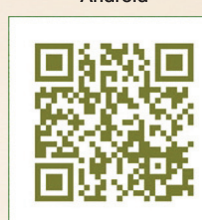
soaked mung beans 1 cup, soaked bracken 100 grams, mung bean sprouts 150 grams, carrots 40 grams, 3 shitake mushrooms, 2 green chili peppers, 2 red chili peppers, soy sauce(Korean traditional fermented soy sauce) 1/2 tsp, sesame oil to taste, salt to taste \* For cooking oil: perilla seed oil 1 tbs+ vegetable oil 1 tsp

### - DIRECTIONS -

- Soak raw mung beans in water over night and drain. Grind mung beans in a blender with little bit of water to blend softly to make a thick paste.
- Soak bracken in water over night and boil them in hot water. Drain the water and squeeze access water out. Place the bracken in a bowl, add sesame oil and mix well. Stir fry lightly in a pan.
- Boil bean sprouts in water for 1 minute. Drain water and squeeze access water out and cut them half. Season with salt and sesame oil, mix well.
- Julienne carrots into thin slices, lightly season with a pinch of salt and lightly stir fry in a pan.
- Julienne shitake mushrooms into thin slices, season with sesame oil and soy sauce. Lightly stir fry them in a pan.
- Chop red and green chili pepper and stir fry lightly in a pan.
- Keep all ingredients separated from each other.
- Heat the pan and coat with cooking oil. Drop a tablespoon of mung bean paste and flatten it out to a 1/4 of an inch in thickness (similar to when making pancakes). Sprinkle the prepared vegetables on top. Add another layer of mung bean paste. Flip the pancake to cook both sides.

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iOS

