

Traditional liquors and wines of Korea

Takju

Takju is, along with yakju, the representative folk drink of Korea and possesses a long history in the nation's culinary culture. In ages past when it was common for people to brew their own drink at home, every household had his own unique method and no two households produced liquor of the same flavor.

Takju is thick and unrefined, opa que, with low alcohol content. Most of it is called makgelli which means "recently filtered."

Yakju

When takju is nearly mature, a beautiful layer of clear liquid will form at the top of the liquor jug where it has been sitting; it is called yakju and may be poured off, and includes varieties such as baekhaju and beopju.

Soju

Soju was devised to overcome the main problem with takju and yakju, inability to be stored long. Before the Joseon era when yakju was distilled it was called yaksoju and used mainly for tinctures(yak means medicine). Later soju came to be consumed plain.

Traditional wines by region

Gyeonggi-do: Baekseju and Munbaeju

Baekseju is a highly regarded drink created from ingredients prized as medicinal plants such as the fruit of chinese matrimony vine. The drink protects the kidney and liver and is believed to stave off the effects of aging. Many Koreans drink it. Munbaeju is deceptively termed, because it does not contain juice from the native Korean crab apple munbae. It does, however, carry the lovely scent of the crab apple flower, which accounts for the name. It is brewed from grains such as millet, Indian millet and wheat, and distilled and is similar to Chinese mao-tai, but with a cleaner, yeast-free flavor. Munbaeju has earned exceptional praise from liquor enthusiasts.

Gangwon-do: Gamjasul & Ongnoju

Gamjaju potato wine is a health drink said to help people with an over-acidic body chemistry to become more alkaline. Ongnoju is a flavorful wine from corn and glutinous rice. It has a distinctive and wholesome flavor and was often consumed by peasants during their field toil or used as a ceremonial wine. These days it is mainly served as a treat for honored guests.

Chungcheong-do: Baegilju and Cheongmyeongju

A mild 18-proof liquor, baegilju has a savory taste that dances pleasurably on the tip of the tongue. It is rich in organic acids, sugars, Vitamins and minerals, said to stimulate the appetite and the circulation of the blood. Cheongmyeongju is brewed with water from an area with many healthy elderly folk, and it is said that the region's water is what helps them live so long. This is a celebrated drink, prized enough to have been served at the royal table during the Joseon Dynasty. It is known for a lack of side effects normally associated with alcohol consumption.

Jeolla-do: Hongju, Igangju & Bokbunjasul

Hongju means red wine. It is brewed using a type of bracket fungus, also called the "ten thousand year mushroom" due to its health benefits. It was considered the finest of drinks during the Joseon era, and is loved in modern times by devotees who trust in its efficacy. Designated an "provincial cultural asset," igangju is a pale yellow drink that smells and tastes of cinnamon. It is made from native pear and ginger of the Jeolla-do Provinces, and leaves a potent lingering flavor. It is reputed as a clean drink creating no hangover. Bokbunja, a wild mountain berry, has a reputation for imparting a strong "yang" power, and bokbunjasul is still appreciated by avid drinkers who believe it increases virility.

Gyeongsang-do: Andong Soju and Gukhwaju

Andong soju is distilled liquor made in traditional fashion using the pure waters of Andong and the fine rice cultivated from the rich soil of the area. It has a subtle but appealing flavor, and is said not to leave a hangover despite its high alcohol content(Andong soju is 45 proof). Gukhwaju is brewed from chrysanthemums, Chinese matrimony, and glutinous rice. The renowned drink is said to help cure headaches, improve sight and hearing and loosen the joints, and has other medicinal uses as well.

Korea's traditional alcoholic beverages can largely be classified by production stage into *takju* and *soju*. The most basic form is *takju*, fermented and cloudy. When the solid particles settle out it becomes *yakju*, which distilled becomes *soju*, the final product.



Korean textbooks, reminding of days past, is located in Insa-dong.

>>Inquiries : Tel: 82-2-733-3126
>>Open house : 11:30-24:00(Open 365 days a year)

Tteul-araechae

Tteul-araechae is at Seoul's Daehangno Street, providing the traditional flavors of Korea at affordable prices. The building is fashioned after a traditional Korean home, provides meals as well as drinks. Most items are under 10,000 won. The best dish to try at Tteul-araechae may be the pork or chicken barbecued over hot coals.

>>Location: Seoul Subway Line 4, Hyeon Station, near Exit 4
>>Inquiries : Tel: 82-2-742-3092
>>Open hours : 14:00-02:00(Open 365 days a year)

Gamateo

The Gamateo is a cozy space to enjoy traditional Korean drink. Popular items are potato pancakes and the country-style pancakes with hot pepper paste, which, used to be, could only be found in traditional marketplace. Gamateo is also popular with Japanese tourists wanting to taste traditional Korean drinks, and they often opt for dongdongju or soju. Located in the U2 Zone alley in Myeongdong. Stop at Esquire (shoe shop) before U2 Zone, and walk about ten meters into the alleyway.

>>Inquiries : Tel: 82-2-777-0424
>>Open hours: 15:00-02:00(Open 365 days a year)

Donghak

Donghak greets you with straw mats lining its floors, emulating the atmosphere of a farm house way out in the countryside. They serve dongdongju, Seonunsan bokbunjasul, and Jirisan gukhwaju and other fruit drinks, with tofu with kimchi, acorn jelly and grilled doraji bellflower roots on the side at all meals. The stars of the menu, though, are the fresh-made kimchi and seasoned cucumbers served as a basic side dish. Walk in the direction of Yonsei University from Changseo Elementary School, and make a left at the Green Mart. Walk 50 meters to Donghak.

>>Inquiries: Tel: 82-2-322-1766
>>Open hours : 15:00-04:00



Jeju-do: Gosorisul & Omegisul

Gosorisul, otherwise known as Jeju soju, is one of the three finest soju liquors in Korea's brewing history, along with the special soju from Andong and from Gaeseong. It is traditional liquor made from all-natural grains and instilled with the lives and souls of kindly inhabitants of Jeju Island. Omegisul was brewed with hulled glutinous German millet ground under the giant stone of a beast-worked mill(now a rare sight).

Traditional drinking houses in Seoul

Baesangmyeonjuga



Soft urban lighting, traditional Korean props, and a meticulous interior set the mood in this attention-seizing alehouse. Baesangmyeonjuga is known for its wide selection of traditional Korean drinks along with a respectable offering of flavorful side dishes, as is traditional Korea when drinking.

Regular house drinks are heungmiju made from black rice, Hwarin 18 pum(made from 18 different kinds of medicinal plants), Cheondaehongju, and Sansachun. Nine seasonal drinks are also served to fit the mood. Oksusul made from corn in spring, Nokchaju from green tea and plum Maesilmiju in summer, and so on.

If sampling a variety of traditional drinks and side dishes is your desideratum, the juansang menu is for you. Side dishes march out of the kitchen one after another, and you can drink your fill of alcohol-no limits. Drink as much or as little as you like. The only limitation on this offer is that it only applies for groups of three or more. Take your friends!

>>Location: B1, Seoul Finance Building, Taepyeongno 1-ga, Jun-gu
>>Open hours: 11:30-14:00, 17:30-23:30(Closed Sundays)

When Daddy Was Young

A pebbled railroad track lit up with a traffic signal is the atypical and interest-piquing entrance to When Daddy Was Young. The interior is decorated with relics reminiscent of the 60s and 70s, including old school uniforms, movie posters, award certificates, barber chairs, furnaces, even a telephone pole. The menu is made from old

