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|  |  | Cultural Heritage Administration NEWS |
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| **‘*Tteok* Making’ To Become** **National Intangible Cultural Heritage**-Designation will recognize the making and sharing tteok, rice cake, as traditional culture and way of life-No specific group or person will be acknowledged, just like ‘kimchi making’ |

The Cultural Heritage Administration (Administrator Kim Hyun-mo) plans to designate the *Tteok* making, Korean rice cake, as the National Intangible Cultural Heritage. The designation will recognize the making and sharing of Korean rice cake as traditional culture and way of life.

Koreans have made tteok by steaming grain flours in *siru*, the traditional steamer, boiling or baking, depending on the type of the rice cake. From long time ago, they have enjoyed making and sharing with others different kinds of tteok for major milestones in their lives as well as for important national holidays.

Historically, rice cake has been a key offering at various rituals in Korea. They include rites held for village gods wishing for peace and prosperity as well as similar rites held for house gods like *sangdalgosa*. Rice cake is also offered at *gut* rituals held by traditional shamans. In modern-day Korea, people distribute among others in their community when they open a business or move into a new place.

More on rites and *gut* rituals;

\*sangdalgosa: Ritepeople hold on an auspicious day in October for house gods. People offer newly harvested grains and fruits and prepare *sirutteok*(steamed rice cake), sharing it with neighbors.

\*byeolsingut: Large-scale gut ritual held by shamans in villages

\* jinogwigut: Gut ritual aimed at cleansing the spirit of the deceased person so that he or she may cross over to the world of the dead. Also called ssitgimgut.

Tteok, in that sense, is more than just a tasty delicacy. Given that Koreans distributed rice cake among others in their community in every special moment of their lives, it can be considered an embodiment of sharing and generosity, as well as a symbol of the unique Korean concept of *jeong*, or a deep connection, and harmony.

It is also notable how different types of rice cake were made for different occasions and how each had a story of its own. This makes tteok intangible cultural heritage that people need to learn in order to fully understand the Korean culture.

It is unclear since when Koreans made rice cake. However, archaeological findings show that Koreans ate rice cake since the ancient times. Siru, the traditional steamer, has been unearthed in historic sites of the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Siru can also be seen in the mural of fourth-century Anak Tomb No. 3 in South Hwanghae, North Korea.

Furthermore, a Chinese character, 餠, that means rice cake can be found in *Samguksagi*, or a historical record of the Three Kingdoms of Korea written in the 12th century. That people cooked rice cake can also be found in various historical documents like the 13th-century literary collection of *Donggukisanggukjip* written by Lee Gyu-bo; and the 14th-century literary collection of *Mokeunjib* written by Lee Saek.

During Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) that followed, agricultural technology developed and food processing techniques also made strides. As a result, ingredients and recipes for making rice cakes became much more diverse. In particular, cooks at royal palaces and noble households were at the forefront of introducing new flavors and types. New names of tteok and recipes can be found in various food, farming or housekeeping documents like *Sangayorok*; *Jeungbosanrimkyungje*; *Gyuhapchongseo*; and *Eumsikdimibang*. More than 200 different types of rice cake can be found in various historical documents.

Different types of rice cake are made and shared on different occasions. For instance, parents have traditionally prepared *baekseolgi*(white steamed rice cake) for their baby’s 100th-day celebrations. The type is traditionally considered pure and sacred and Korean parents have wished through the rice cake that the baby will grow up innocent and bright. They also prepared *patsusugyeongdan* (sorghum ball cake made of red beans) to prevent bad luck in the baby’s life, based on the folklore that ghosts shun color red. Traditional saying also encourages parents to share the 100th-day rice cake with 100 households to make sure the baby leads a long, healthy life.

In traditional Korean weddings, it is customary that the bridegroom sends to the bride’s house before the wedding a wedding box, called *ham* in Korean. The bride’s family is supposed to place the box on top of a steamer that contains red *ppatsiru* (layered rice cake with red beans) This type of rice cake, also known as *bongchitteok* or *bongchaetteok*, stands for a wish for the harmony between two households and a blessing of the matrimony.

There is also *goimtteok*, which is prepared for both for a person’s 60th birthday celebration and *jerye*, the rite for remembering ancestors. It represents a wish for long, healthy life and commemorating ancestors’ virtues, respectively.

Koreans have also traditionally enjoyed *tteokguk* (soup made with white rice cake pieces) on the New Year’s Day for a clean start to a New Year, and prepared *songpyeon* (half-moon shaped rice cakes) with newly harvested grains when they pay their respects at their ancestors’ tombs during the Chuseok Holidays in the fall to thank them.

Songpyeon comes in various kinds depending on the region, like potato-filled songpyeon and white radish-filled songpyeon. There was also a saying that women who make pretty songpyeon will marry fine husbands and pregnant women who make pretty songpyeon will give birth to beautiful daughters.

It is also interesting to compare different types of rice cake in different regions and explore their origins. Gangwon-do province, for example, has always had ample supplies of potatoes and corns and thus the signature tteok from Gangwon are sirutteok made of potato and corn. Jeju-do Island, on the other hand, has had scarcity of rice and instead had plentiful grains. As a result Jeju’s famous rice cakes – namely *omekitteok*, *bingtteok*, *chajopssaltteok* – are made of red beans, buckwheat and millet, respectively.

The introduction of Western cooking culture in the late 19th century brought many changes to the Korean cuisine and less Koreans are now making rice cake at homes. However, there has been a rise of rice cake mills which led to the distinction between sellers and buyers of rice cake. Nonetheless, the tradition of sharing rice cake on special occasions is still very much a part of Korean lifestyle.

To sum up, the Cultural Heritage Administration believes Tteok making should be recognized as national heritage in its own right for following reasons; ▲it has a long history and has been passed down to present-day generation across the Korean peninsula; ▲there are many records of rice cake making in historical documents dating back to the Three Kingdoms Period (57 B.C.-A.D. 668); ▲it can be further explored academically in various fields like food and nutrition or folklore; ▲different regions have developed their own signature rice cake based on their climate and environment; ▲and even at present, various entities like rice cake mills, tradition study groups and simply average households are making rice cake, keeping the tradition very much alive.

But the CHA decided it will not recognize specific group or person in the designation, as it is cultural tradition that all Koreans across the Korean peninsula are keeping, as was the case with ‘kimchi making.’

**\* National Intangible Cultural Heritage items that do not recognize specific group or person (Total: 11 items):**

Arirang (traditional folk song); Jeda (tea-making); Ssireum (Korean wrestling); Haenyeo (women divers); Kimchi Damgeugi (Kimchi making); Jeyeom (traditional salt making); Ondol (underfloor heating system); Jang Damgeugi (Korean sauce and paste making); Traditional Fishing-Eosal (fishing weir); hwalssoki (traditional archery); Insam jaebae and yakyong munhwa(cultivation of Ginseng and Its medicinal applicatin);

The Cultural Heritage Administration will receive opinions from June 8 to July 7 on the planned designation of rice Tteok as National Intangible Cultural Heritage. People can share their views on the designation through the administration’s website (<http://www.cha.go.kr>) as well as the Instagram and Facebook accounts of the administration’s intangible heritage division. After the 30-day review period, theCommittee for Cultural Heritage will make a final decision on the proposed designation.

**\* Instagram account:** <https://www.instagram.com/k_intangible_heritage_u/>

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