



## The Kimchi Chronicles: Korean Cooking for an American Kitchen

*Marja Vongerichten*

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Long a favorite of in-the-know foodies, Korean cuisine is poised to become the next big food trend, with dishes like bibimbap and kimchi popping up on menus nationwide. In a new PBS series that will begin airing in May 2011, Marja Vongerichten and three-star Michelin chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten will give viewers an insider's look at Korea as they travel the country and experience its authentic flavors and cultural traditions. As the show's companion cookbook, *The Kimchi Chronicles* will include a recipe for every dish featured, explaining how they can be easily duplicated in an American kitchen. Chef Vongerichten will also offer original dishes with a lighter, modern flair, showing how the flavors of the Korean table can be readily integrated into any meal.

For lovers of Korean food, those eager to experiment in search of an accessible introduction to this intriguing cuisine, and readers who just want a little taste of culinary and cultural exploration outside the Western Hemisphere, *The Kimchi Chronicles* is sure to provide plenty of inspiration, information, and entertainment.

## **The Kimchi Chronicles: Korean Cooking for an American Kitchen Details**

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Marja Vongerichten**

## From Reader Review The Kimchi Chronicles: Korean Cooking for an American Kitchen for online ebook

### adllto says

This is the accompanying book to the PBS series. Marja born to a Korean woman and an American soldier is given up to adoption given the difficulties of growing up mixed race in Korea. She grew up in the US to an American family, rediscovered her birth mother at 19 in New York and began the journey of reconnection. Culture is of course a part of our identity but so also is food and taste. The book abandons the travelogue of the TV show and focuses much more on food and reveals her roots. It cannot but help that her husband is a famous French chef well-known for his fusion cuisine and interest in street food of Asia. Although a fascinating library book to borrow and I enjoyed reading through it but somehow I won't be buying a copy for my book shelf.

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### Judy says

Bought this from my local HMART. The pictures are nice and descriptions easy enough. I didn't care too much for all of the recipes. They were very basic. I thought the video was better done and I preferred Jean Georges spin on the traditional recipes.

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### Joseph says

Enjoyed this book quite a bit. Like many I bought it as the companion book to the great series on Public Television. The first thing I would note is that the photography is incredible. Probably the best photography since that in the incredible K-Drama "Jewel in the Palace/Dae Jang Geum" (available on Amazon and a Korean foodies dream). It is not the definitive Korean cookbook. However, it is still an excellent source which is particularly valuable for it's explanation of and discussion of Korean ingredients. Some have criticized the book because Marja benefits from the perspective of her chef husband, Jean-George, and because she includes some of his recipes. For me this is a strength of the book. Viewing Korean cuisine through the lens of a classically trained French chef adds to the understanding of both cuisines.

My own perspective is colored by that of my Korean born wife. While Marja is from Uijeongbu in Gyeonggi Province, my wife was from a village near Mokpo in South Jeolla Province. I point that out because there are significant differences in Korean cuisine depending on the province where you were raised. Marja's discussion of kimchi making is a bit too simplified for me. Making kimchi is more than a science and more than precise measurements. How much kochukaru(gochnagaru in Marja's rendition) used, for example, should be varied by the quality of the kochukaru. But, then I might expect too much. But to call Korean red chile powder, kochukaru, "ubiquitous" is to deny the many differing grades of kochukaru and the keen discrimination required to find superior grades. The selection of kochukaru alone deserves a full chapter.

Another slight quibble I have is with her discussion of the making of basic cabbage kimchi which she calls the "Ultimate Cabbage Kimchi." Ah, that is just flat pretentious. Women in Korea spend years learning how to make kimchi. It is properly prepared in stainless steel bowls, not a stinking bathtub! (Yeah, I understand that may have been an attempt at humor.) Also, her prescription of how cabbage should be salted and wilted

does a disservice to the art of making kimchi. Proper wilting is determined by feel and it takes years of practice. Kimchi that is too wilted is very poor kimchi. Additionally, too little attention is paid to the the ingredients that go into kimchi.

But, in her defense, Marja is trying to sell a book, a cuisine and a culture and a little hype is essential to the process.

Finally, to her credit Marja does something I have not seen done in other Korean cookbooks. She discusses soju and makgeolli. The discussion would have been even better if she had discussed bekseju.

Don't let my Korean food snobbery dissuade you from this book though. As Marja notes at the onset, these are recipes from a Korean American kitchen. And, her American side thinks in terms of how many tablespoons or cups of this or that are required. (We Americans are too often anal like that.) Classical cooking in Korea was defined not by precise measurement by by the number and quality of ingredients. My wife, for example, thought in terms of numbers of ingredients then adjusted to the quality of those ingredients and taste. For example her kalbi marinade had five or seven ingredients. And, was she ever picky about the quality of her sesame oil and fish sauce. Maybe I'm just too picky myself because I know I will never probably never eat Korean food as good as hers again.

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### **Png says**

What an entertaining cookbook! Really liked the author's storytelling and the wonderful traditional korean cuisine and the unique twists on incorporating them into western recipes. Definitely worth trying out.

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### **Simona says**

Maybe its not KCC fault. I live in one of the most diverse areas of the country and eat excellent Korean food every week. Is this as if I lived in Napa, read Ad Hoc At Home and wondered what the fuss was about ?

I saw the show on TV and wanted to try out some recipes but nothing is turned out good. I sent hubby to the market for Korean spices gochugaru and gochu-something else, dried seaweed and started loosely cooking from Kimchi chronicles inspiration. Friday--kimchi fried rice, followed recipe to taste, added diced leftover porkchops. Not good. Saturday--birthday seaweed soup. Again loosely followed; added daikon radish slices. Bland. Sunday--mung bean pancakes. Too salty, greasy for a meal, maybe as a happy hour snack with drinks. Too bad because I love fried beans, but this was not comparable to falafel. I think the best recipe I learned is the scallion dipping sauce :soy sauce, rice vinegar, sesame oil, gochugaru, scallions (i substituted red onions). I am going to dip everything in that.

I will try cooking bulgogi from her recipes (secret ingredient:coca cola) and the scallion panchan. Then I will be done with this cookbook. Too bad I don't like it more, it is very high quality paper and pictures. The fault is mine. I use recipes as loose inspiration. Maybe these flavors aren't in my home cooking vocabulary or the techniques are esoteric. Strange because they are all the same I usually use (soy sauce, garlic, vinegar, sesame oil, fish sauce) except for pepper paste and pepper powder. I will try to cook something I am familiar (bulgogi) with before I write off this cookbook. I will continue going out for Korean food and will try out Hankook for their panchan/raw meat bar.

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### **Yodamom says**

I have watched the show and love Korean foods and spices, so I was really excited to get this book. Unfortunately the recipes I tried were less than expected. I tried foods that I have eaten many times before in our local Korea-town, and savored over the years. They lacked spice, or were too salty for my taste. The kimchi recipes which is the base of cooking were just bland. What is with the american cheese ? She say's it's there because the GI's brought it so they had to include it in cooking. Ok I get that but it does not make me think Korean cooking. It is a lovely book about a women and her adventure to her family's history but not a great cookbook.

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### **Annie says**

Interesting. Korean and French fusion. Hmm...cheese with kimchi goes together SOMETIMES but I like AUTHENTIC Korean cuisine.  
Thought some of the pictures were interesting but the recipes were not quite what I was looking for. Glad I bought the book for \$5. :P

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### **Tom Menner says**

Perhaps I am rating this artificially low, but as a vegetarian this Korean cookbook by the wife of famous French chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten (his flagship restaurant is Jean-Georges in the Trump International Hotel and Tower, a Michelin-rated 3 stars) is of somewhat limited value, though I have no doubt the recipes are great for omnivores. I bought the book because I really enjoyed her TV series "The Kimchi Chronicles", wherein she and her husband traveled around Korean and mixed culture, cuisine and drinking with celebrities such as Heather Graham and Hugh Jackman.

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### **eyes.2c says**

'Kimchi is very personal and it's all about your particular preferences'

A great comment by Vongerichten that goes to the heart of things.

Whilst many readers of Korean heritage noted that Kimchi Chronicles is not sufficiently pure enough for them (some have likened it to the BigMac approach to Korean foods), as a European, trying to discover how to make some of the tasty Korean dishes I have so enjoyed both in Korea and in North American Korean restaurants this is a reasonable cookbook addition to my collection, particularly the Kimchi chapter.

Mind you with the addition of cheese, Coca Cola and other ingredients, including Mexican, some of the recipes are really more fusion Korean. I liked Vongerichten explanation for these inclusions that some of these ingredients found their way into Korean pantries during the Korean War from American GI rations. (p. 62), although some of these ingredients are not personal preferences.

The list of staples at the beginning gives clarity and understanding to searching for ingredients.

Ok, I freely admit to going to my fav. Korean store to buy fresh Kimchi rather than making my own--but

here's my chance!

The explanation about the Banchan dishes (side dishes) I found excellent. These are the parts of a Korean meal that make it so enjoyable.

There are several recipes I found didn't overtax my abilities. Though I must say as a fan of Bloody Mary's, the Kimchi Mary is a definite temptation.

By the way, I have been meaning to review this for a couple of years. This is one of those where I lost my draft review and ... Well time fled by! What more can I say!)

A colourful addition to the kitchen shelves.

A NetGalley ARC (2011)

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### **Leah Hanley says**

Eh, 3.5 I think. With a title like Kimchi Chronicles I expected/hoped the emphasis would be on kimchi from all aspects of cuisine. Unfortunately it is not, but still I found enough of value to give it a fairly high rating. Apparently the book is named after a TV series but I haven't ever heard of it, let alone seen it. I would say there is quite a lot of fusion fare in this cookbook as the author is married to a famous chef and the author herself is American but born in Korea and adopted as a young child. Overall this is full of interesting recipes with corresponding photos (something I look for in good cookbooks), but I wouldn't call it every-day cooking.

There is a strong emphasis on sauces in this book, which I thoroughly appreciate, but I had to modify every sauce recipe I tried to suit my taste. Part of why I can't give full stars is because many of these recipes use obscure ingredients for those of us living in small rural towns in the US, and I thought the author relied pretty heavily on dropping her husband's name everywhere along with loads of pictures of him. I know he's a coauthor, but com'on.

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### **Astrid Yrigollen says**

My husband picked this up for me because he knew I wanted to make a good home made kimchi and to dissect a kimbap. I had never seen the television program since we do not watch television. I thought the author's personal story ( told in a few pages in the front) was very touching. The cook book, not so much.

I am vegetarian and love to be able to make veggie versions of yummy recipes and with titles like "Veggies and Tofu" I thought "*Okay! She even has a section for me! Something new and different with Korean know how.*" **Nope.**

The recipes were a fusion of American, Korean and French. Which is fine, but the title of the book is a little misleading. It should have somewhere in there "*FUSION*" to let the potential reader know what is inside. Cheese and Kimchi? Ugh.

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### **T says**

I remember seeing the TV series years ago and enjoying it for the bit of culture and the introduction to Korean food....Just unearthed my copy of the cookbook from the TBR pile the other day.

Enjoyed the commentary and pictures and have noted several of the recipes that I will try...Given the cooling weather, these warm recipes will be perfect!

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### **Elaine says**

Interesting! This was given to me by my auntie, and I think Marja's personal story is complementary to her Korean-fusion dishes.

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### **Yunice says**

Marja loves Korean food and her enthusiasm is a joy. Can't vouch for the recipes however. Some of them I know I will NEVER try (cheese in kimbap?!?!).

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### **LemontreeLime says**

Salright. The side dishes interested me more than the mains.

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