

A dark blue vertical bar runs along the left edge of the page. A blue arrow-shaped banner points to the right from this bar, containing the text 'Northshield A&S Faire 2020'. In the lower-left corner, several thin, curved lines in dark blue and light grey sweep upwards and to the right, resembling stylized grass or reeds.

Northshield A&S Faire 2020

# 송편 *Songpyeon* –

Crescent moon rice cake

A Korean dish from 57 BCE to current

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## 송편 *Songpyeon* – Crescent Moon Rice Cake

*Songpyeon* are rice cake that is stuffed with fillings and formed into the shape of a half moon or crescent shape. The dough can be colored with edible dyes, allowing for various colors of rice cakes. The *songpyeon*, literally translated to “pine rice cake”, are layered over a bed of pine needles and then steamed in an earthenware steamer.<sup>1</sup> Though rice cakes is commonly referred to as *tteok*, *pyeon* was the term that was used for rice cakes in old cookbooks, circa 1600, written in Korean; however, it is influenced by the Chinese term *byeong*.

### Food Class System

*Songpyeon* is an important traditional food. In the Joseon dynasty (1392 – 1910), there was a class system. These classes were the royal family, *yangban* (nobles), and peasants. There was also a similar class system for food. This class system included royal, *banka*, *jongka*, traditional, and local cuisine. The royal family ate royal cuisine. Royal Cuisine would be passed down to noble families in the form of leftovers and cooking methods, becoming *banka* food. The *banka* food became *jangka* food as it is passed down through generations. Over time, *jongka* food gained the status of *bulcheonwi* or ancestral rites food. Peasants ate local dishes that mainly developed from what they could grow, and over time these became known as traditional food. *Songpyeon* is known as both a *jongka*, and a *bulcheonwi* food that can be traced back hundreds of years.<sup>2</sup>

### Special Event or Holiday Food

Traditionally, *Songpyeon* was not an everyday food. It was made during holidays, special occasions such as a first birthday, anniversaries, or royal feasts. Rice cakes were not only eaten as dessert, but they were also arranged in beautiful displays. During royal feasts, food was displayed in tall piles to show all the work that went into making those dishes. Rice cakes and cookies had some of the highest towers. Some of the food towers were given as gifts to palace guests, including nobles.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 국립민속박물관 KimMyungja. “Harvest Festival.” *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture*, National Folk Museum of Korea, folkency.nfm.go.kr/en/topic/detail/5060.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, Chang Hyeon, and Young Kim. “Jongka, the traditional Korean family: Exploring jongka food in the context of Korean food categories.” *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 5.1 (2018): 40-53.

<sup>3</sup> Lee, Chang Hyeon, and Young Kim. “Jongka, the traditional Korean family: Exploring jongka food in the context of Korean food categories.” *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 5.1 (2018).

## Korean Royal Cuisine Records

Traditional Korean sweets and cookies were originally created in the Silla dynasty (57 BCE – 935 CE), and further refined in the Goryeo period (935 CE – 1392 CE). Royal records diligently documented everything from preparation, procedure, and follow up for ceremonies and food. These records were so detailed that they included the type of utensil, illustrations, and depictions of ceremonies. However, two palaces and several cultural centers were destroyed during the Japanese invasion of 1592 – to 1598. In the process, nearly all these royal records were destroyed. Therefore, most of the royal documentation of ceremonies and cuisine that survives is from the later part of the Joseon dynasty.<sup>4</sup>

There are two primary documents, one from circa 1450 “*Sangayorok*”, and *Eumshikdimibang*” from circa 1670. “*Sangayorok*” is a cookbook based on agricultural food traditions and ingredients, written by Jeon Soon-eui (royal physician). “*Eumshikdimibang*,” the first book of recipes that is written in the Korean alphabet, was written by Yun Junh Im (royal court lady). These are two of the oldest recorded manuscripts found after the Japanese invasion. However, much of the royal cuisine tradition was preserved due to the rigorous training royal cooks must receive beginning as early as the age of 7 or 8.<sup>5</sup> In 1910, the last royal cook of the Joseon dynasty, Han Hee-soon, passed down her knowledge to her disciple, Hwang Hae-song. Hwang passed this knowledge down to her daughter Han Bok Ryeo, who is referred to as the “Human Cultural Asset” in Korea. Han Bok Ryeo continues to research royal Korean cuisine and is now the Director of the Institute of Korean Royal Cuisine. In partnership with the Korean Food Promotion Institute, the book “Jewels of the Palace” was published to give insight into the stories of the Joseon dynasty as well as provide recipes from royal Korean cuisine.<sup>6</sup>

## Chuseok Harvest Moon Festival/Korean Thanksgiving

Traditionally, *songpyeon* are associated with Chuseok, the Korean harvest moon festival celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the eighth lunar month. Chuseok, historically known as Hangwaim, dates back to the *Silla* dynasty nearly 2000 years ago.<sup>7</sup> Chuseok translates into “autumn evening” or

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<sup>4</sup> “How to Serve Royal Cuisine.” *Jewels of the Palace: Royal Recipes from Old Korea*, by Han Pong-nyŏ, Hollym International Corp., 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Han, Bok Ryeo. *Jewels of the Palace: Royal Recipes from Old Korea*. Hollym International Corp., 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Han, Bok Ryeo. *Jewels of the Palace: Royal Recipes from Old Korea*. Hollym International Corp., 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Farhadian, Charles E. (2007.) “Christian Worship Worldwide.” Wm. Bm. Eerdmans Publishing. ISBN 978-0-8028-2853-8

“autumn evening with the brightest moon.” This festival is also a time of thanksgiving and ancestral rites. People visit the grave sites of their ancestors a few days before the festival and remove the weeds that have grown over the last year. On the day of the festival, the family prepare an offering table with the freshly harvested rice and food, including *songpyeon*, as offerings for their ancestors.<sup>8</sup>

### **Korean Proverbs**

Not only was the food itself significant, but how the food was made also had a significance. Typically, rice cakes would be made by each family. Proverbs says that people who make a beautiful *songpyeon* will find a beautiful/handsome spouse. If a pregnant woman makes beautiful *songpyeon*, she will have a beautiful child. For these reasons, families would practice making beautiful rice cakes in the days leading up to *Chuseok*. It is also said that pregnant women who eat the dish can predict if they will have a girl or a boy. Eating an undercooked rice cake means she will have a girl, and a well-cooked rice cake means she will have a boy.<sup>9</sup>

The shape of the *songpyeon* is also significant. Before the *songpyeon* is filled, the dough is in the shape of a full moon. Once the rice cake is filled and formed, it is in the shape of a half moon or crescent moon. The full moon represents abundance and prosperity, but a full moon only wanes. However, a half moon or crescent moon will become a full moon, meaning abundance and prosperity will grow.

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<sup>8</sup> 국립민속박물관 KimMyungja. “Harvest Festival.” Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture, National Folk Museum of Korea, [folkency.nfm.go.kr/en/topic/detail/5060](http://folkency.nfm.go.kr/en/topic/detail/5060).

<sup>9</sup> 국립민속박물관 YoonSookja. “Pine Needle Rice Cakes.” Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture, [folkency.nfm.go.kr/en/topic/detail/4337](http://folkency.nfm.go.kr/en/topic/detail/4337).

### Traditional SCA Period Songpyeon Ingredients

Korean Name	English Transliteration	English Name	Latin Name
멥쌀	Mepssal	Short Grain Rice	<i>Oryza sativa</i>
물	Mul	Water	<i>aqua</i>
쑥	Ssuk	Mugwort	<i>Artemisia princeps</i>
오미자	Omija	Magnolia Vine	<i>Schisandra chinensis</i>
치자	Chija	Gardenia Seed	<i>Gardenia jasminoides</i>
맨드라미	Maendrami	Cockscomb Flower	<i>Celosia cristata</i>
꿀	Kkul	Honey	<i>mel</i>
설탕	Seoltang	Sugar	<i>sacchraum</i>
계 피	GyePi	Cinnamon	<i>Cinnamomum Zeylanicum</i>
참깨	Ggae	Sesame Seed	<i>Sesamum indicum</i>
녹두	Nogdu	Mungbean	<i>Vigna radiata</i>
잣	Jat	Pine Nut	<i>Nucleus pineus</i>
깨	Kkae	Sesame Oil	<i>Sesamum indicum</i>
솔잎	Sol-ip	Pine Needle	<i>Pinus strobus</i>

### Wet Rice Flour

*Songpyeon* are made with rice flour, salt, hot water, and natural food coloring. These rice cakes can be filled with a variety of ingredients including sesame, pine nuts, chestnuts, red bean, or mung bean. For Chuseok, freshly harvested grains of rice are used to make a wet rice flour. Dried grains of rice can also be used. The rice flour is made by soaking clean grains of rice for 8 to 12 hours, or overnight. Short grain rice or glutinous rice can be used to make rice flour. For this particular recipe, short grain rice is used.

Grains of white rice have an opaque appearance. While soaking, the grains of rice will absorb some of the water and become white. Before I soaked the rice, I washed the rice until the water was no longer cloudy from excess starch. I added enough water to the rice for the grains to soak. I put my finger at the highest point of rice and poured water until it reached the second knuckle.

Once the rice has been soaked and the grains were white and had expanded slightly, I drained the water from the rice. I transferred the rice to a mesh strainer and let it continue to strain for half an hour to an hour. I transferred the rice to a food processor and blended for 2 to 3 minutes or until the rice is ground into a fine powder. During the period studied in the SCA, the rice would be ground in

a stone mill that was powered by horse, water, or man. I used a processor because the mortar and pestle I had could not achieve the fine grain texture that a traditional stone mill would have. The finely ground powder is sifted through a fine mesh sieve. I used a wooden spoon to help the rice flour through the sieve because the sieve I had was bowl shaped. A traditional Korean sieve would be flat with a rim much like a cake pan, and you would use your hand to help the rice flour through the sieve. The larger pieces are set aside to be reground or used to make *jjuk* or rice porridge.<sup>10</sup>

- Wet rice powder (*mepssalgaru*) can also be found in the frozen section in a Korean grocery store, however as it is a specialty item, it can be hard to find
- Dry rice flour can also be used to make this recipe, however 4 to 5 times the amount of water must be used, and the dough will be more prone to cracking



## Korean Measurements

Many traditional Korean recipes do not have standard measurements. As recipes are passed down, the amount may slightly vary from family to family. Growing up, as I was learning to cook Korean food, I was told to use “about” this much, “approximately” that much of an ingredient, or until it looked “about” right. For re-creation purposes however, I will provide measurements. In the book “The Beauty of Korean Food: With 100 Best-Loved Recipes”, the Institute of Traditional Korean Food recognizes this and attempts to standardize measurements for the recipes within the book.

## Colors of *Songpyeon*

Several different types of natural food colorings are used in Korean cooking. These include: mung bean (yellow), mugwort (green), jujubes (Chinese dates) (red), gardenia seeds (yellow), pumpkin (yellow), magnolia vine (pink), cockscomb flower (red), red bean powder (brown), cinnamon powder (brown), and more. Today, common colorings include strawberry (red), blueberry or purple sweet potato (purple), and orange Jell-o (yellow). Listed below are the natural food colorings I used.

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<sup>10</sup> Maangchi. “Short Grain Rice Flour (Mepssalgaru).” Maangchi, 17 Jan. 2013, [www.maangchi.com/recipe/mepssalgaru](http://www.maangchi.com/recipe/mepssalgaru).

- Green – Mugwort powder

During the SCA's period a stone mill would be used to grind herbs or seeds into fine powders. I used a food processor to grind dried mugwort into a powder, however this did not achieve the fine grind of a stone mill. The dough did turn green; however, it was speckled with mugwort pieces. To achieve a more even green color, I got Korean mugwort tea, in which the mugwort is already ground into a fine powder. I used 2 tablespoons to naturally color the dough.



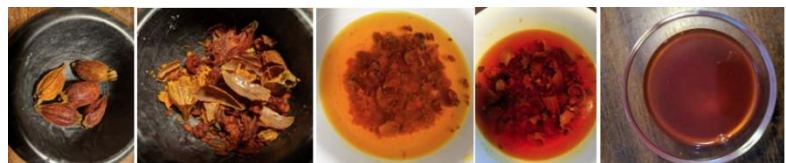
- Pink – Magnolia vine

During the SCA's period a stone mill would be used to grind the dried magnolia vine, or Schisandra berries into a fine powder. The berries that I had access to were dried with sugar and had slightly sticky consistency that did not allow it to be ground into a powder. Instead, I got Korean magnolia vine, in which the magnolia vine is already ground into a fine powder. I used 2 tablespoons to naturally color the dough.



- Yellow – Gardenia fruit

I placed the dried gardenia fruits in a mortar and pestle, lightly crushed, and transferred the seeds to a bowl. I added 1 cup water to the fruit and allowed it to soak overnight to develop a deep yellow, almost orange, color. I strained the dye from the flowers and boiled for 1 minute to kill any bacteria. I used 2 tablespoons of the yellow dye to naturally color the dough.



- Red – Cockscomb flower

I first tried to grind the cockscomb flower in a mortar and pestle but could not achieve a fine powder. Instead, I separated ½ cup of cockscomb flowers into small pieces in a bowl. I added 1 cup of water to the flowers and allowed it to soak overnight to develop a deep red, almost velvet, color. I strained the dye from the flowers and boiled the dye for several minutes until the dye was more concentrated to half a cup. I used ¼ cup of the red dye to naturally color the dough.



## ***Songpyeon* Dough**

To make the dough, I started with 1 cup of rice flour and ¼ teaspoon salt and add ¼ cup of hot water. I mixed the dough with a spoon until it was cool enough to knead by hand. When first kneading the dough, it may feel wet when first kneading it, but as you keep kneading, the mixture should feel soft and pliable, yet not sticky. If you take a piece of dough in your hand and roll it into a ball, and the ball has cracks in it, add more water. If the mixture is too sticky, add more rice powder. I found that it was better to start with too much water and add more rice flour than not enough water because the dough is less likely to crack. The dough must be kneaded for a long time — enough to evenly distribute color and ensure the dough is pretty as well as pliable. Once the dough has been completed, it would traditionally be kept in a bowl with a moist cloth over it to prevent the dough from drying out.<sup>11</sup> I wrapped the dough in plastic wrap as the most secure way to prevent drying out of the dough. I repeated these steps five time, once per color (white, green, pink, yellow, red).



## ***Fillings for Songpyeon***

There are many different types of filling were traditionally, and still now, used to fill *songpyeon*. These fillings include mung beans, red beans, black beans, toasted sesame, pine nuts, chestnuts, and jujubes (Chinese dates). These ingredients are sweetened with honey or sugar, and the beans can be flavored with cinnamon.

- Steamed mung beans with sugar, honey, and cinnamon

To create the mung bean filling, I soaked 1/3 cup dry mung beans for 8 hours. After soaking, I rubbed the beans to remove the outer skin, and drained the water to get rid of the skins. I continued to rinse and drain the beans until most of the skins had been removed. I steamed the mung beans for 15 minutes or until soft. The beans should be soft enough that they can be easily crushed. I put the beans into a mash with a mortar and pestle with ¼ teaspoon of salt and lightly crushed them into a mash. I added 1 tablespoon of honey, 1 tablespoon of sugar, and 1/8 teaspoon of cinnamon and mixed.



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<sup>11</sup> Ham, Ki-yung, and Richard Harris. *The Beauty of Korean Food: with 100 Best-Loved Recipes: the Research and Development Project for the Standardization of Korean Cuisine*. Hollym, 2007.



- Crushed toasted sesame with sugar and honey

In a dry pan, I toasted sesame seeds on medium heat for 10 to 20 minutes until lightly browned and stirred occasionally. I set aside ½ cups of sesame seeds for the filling and stored the remaining toasted sesame seeds. I crushed half of the sesame seeds in a mortar and pestle, added the rest of the whole sesame seeds, 1 tablespoon of sugar, 1 tablespoon of honey, and ¼ teaspoon of salt and mixed.



- Crushed pine nuts with sugar and honey

I used a mortar and pestle to crush ½ cup pine nuts lightly. Do not create a paste. I mixed with 2 tablespoons of honey.



\*\*Cinnamon and sugar are found in recipes for royal cuisine, but these expensive and uncommon ingredients would be rare in traditional cuisine of the Joseon dynasty period.

### Filling and Shaping *Songpyeon*

To make *songpyeon*, I took a piece of dough (about the size of a Ping-Pong ball) and rolled it into a ball in my hand. I used my thumbs to create a small cup from the dough. If during this process the dough is cracking, add more hot water to the dough and knead again until the water is evenly distributed. I added a small spoonful of filling to the dough cup. I closed the opening of the cup and formed the dough into a smooth oval shape. I created a small peak on either end of the oval and pinched along the side to create a wing shape. (If the dough is cracking when closing the *songpyeon*, stop and add more water to the dough and knead until it is evenly distributed.)<sup>12</sup>



<sup>12</sup>Maangchi. "Songpyeon 송편." Maangchi, 8 Sept. 2008, [www.maangchi.com/recipe/songpyeon](http://www.maangchi.com/recipe/songpyeon).

## Pine Needles

I washed fresh pine needles in water to remove debris. I separated the pine needles and removed any loose particles or brown needles. I drained pine needles and patted them dry. The pine needles are an integral part of this dish. They provide a hint of pine flavor, and act as a natural liner during steaming and leave a distinctive pattern on the bottom of the *songpyeon*. It was believed that the chi of the pine trees was absorbed from the pine needles by the rice cakes, and those who ate the rice cakes would receive the chi and therefore be healthy and strong.<sup>13</sup> The pine needles also contain antibacterial properties that help prevent food spoilage.<sup>14</sup>



## Steaming the *Songpyeon*

I prepared a steamer basket with a damp cloth at the bottom and added a layer of pine needles. I heated the water for the steamer before forming the *songpyeon*. As the rice cakes are formed, I placed them in an even layer on the pine needles, spaced out so they are not touching. If the bottom layer fills up, place another layer of pine needle on top to create another layer. I placed a wet thin cloth on top of the final layer to protect the *songpyeon* from any water dripping down from the steamer. I steamed the rice cakes with a lid for 30 minutes. If your *songpyeon* dough is thicker, cook them longer. Once the *songpyeon* were finished steaming, I transferred the rice cakes to a bowl of cold water for a quick rinse. I removed any pine needles sticking to the rice cakes, drained the rice cakes, placed them in a bowl, and lightly coated them in sesame oil. *Songpyeon* can be served warm or at room temperature.<sup>15</sup>



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<sup>13</sup> Lee, JinJoo, et al. "How to Make Songpyeon for Chuseok!" Kimchimari, 8 Sept. 2019, [kimchimari.com/how-to-make-songpyeon-for-chuseok/](http://kimchimari.com/how-to-make-songpyeon-for-chuseok/).

<sup>14</sup> Kim, Yong-Suk, and Dong-Hwa Shin. "Volatile components and antibacterial effects of pine needle (*Pinus densiflora* S. and Z.) extracts." *Food microbiology* 22.1 (2005): 37-45.

<sup>15</sup> "Songpyeon (Half-Moon Shaped Rice Cake)." Korean Bapsang, 27 Sept. 2019, [www.koreanbapsang.com/songpyeon-half-moon-shaped-rice-cake/](http://www.koreanbapsang.com/songpyeon-half-moon-shaped-rice-cake/).

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