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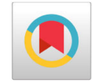
Identity Markers Among Koreans in Germany and the United States: Language Loss and Food Preferences



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Abstract

Korean Americans and Korean Germans exhibit similarities in their upbringing and migration processes: The first generation, speaking Korean natively and solid in their identity as Koreans, attempt to raise their children with a Korean identity in a culture, where English or German is the mainstream language. Given their minority status in either country, passing on their native tongue is difficult. The second-generation struggles in their ability to speak Korean, even though they are exposed to it at home and at Korean language school. Cultural concepts that are familiar to Koreans also prove difficult to translate, such as *jeong* or *han*. But consuming and talking about Korean food appears to be the gateway for second-generation youth to their parents' native country and culture, which they otherwise experience via mediated memories. In general, food preferences seem to mirror migrants' identities and identity processes: While abroad, the first generation cooks Korean food to cope with feelings of homesickness and to create community and a sense of belonging in the diaspora. As a result, Korean food, much more than the Korean language, seems to be the Korean identity marker that gets passed on successfully to the next generation. The second-generation, whether in Germany or the United States, is familiar with and appreciates Korean food, while they also experiment with combining Korean food elements with American or German ones. Just like the first generation, the second-generation Koreans have also experienced their fair share of food shaming due to the odiferous nature of Korean food, but it is still part of their daily lives. In fact, the second-generation deliberately chooses to include Korean food and combinations thereof in their life, as it has become a source of pride. Creating Korean German or Korean American dishes mirrors the second-generation's hybridity and fluidity of their perceived identities. Since the command of the Korean language significantly declines among second-generation Koreans due to assimilation forces, many cannot claim fluency in their parents' native language. Hence, cooking, eating, and talking about Korean food seems to be the remaining marker of Koreanness, other than their physical appearance.

Keywords: Korean migrants, migrant identity, heritage language loss, food, kimchi, Koreanness

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Introduction

Like many other migrants, Koreans have left or been forced to leave their peninsula in order to escape colonization, war, economic hardship, or in search of better opportunities, for decades and centuries. They have gone to neighboring countries, such as China, Russia, and Japan, but also to faraway countries, such as the United States, Germany, or Saudi Arabia. Whatever reason might have taken them to these places, the new environments all had in common that they were completely foreign to the Korean immigrants, in terms of language, culture, and food. Now, however, we have generations of people of Korean descent living in the diaspora. Can these people still be called Korean? Have they kept their national identity? Their cultural identity? Or have they completely assimilated into the mainstream culture? While there are studies on Korean diaspora, and especially in regard to Korean language loss among the second-generation in the United States, out there, to the best of my knowledge, not many have looked in depth at the food preferences of Koreans in diaspora and how those preferences impact their sense of identity. Even the large group of Koreans in the United States has yet to be examined for questions like the above. In fact, Ku clearly states that "[t]o date, neither scholars of Korean American studies or food studies have significantly addressed these questions" (Ku, 2018, p. 145).

In this article, I will explore the role that Korean food plays within transnational and diasporic contexts where Korean language ability moves to the periphery. Any migrant community living abroad has to deal with the fact that assimilation, no matter how hard it seems to achieve initially and to whatever degree it is even possible, is in their future, which can generally quickly be observed in the rate of language loss. While the native language is often spoken and kept up at home and in the migrant community, within a couple of generations, if not within in a single generation, the children in the community begin to struggle with retaining their heritage language until it is almost completely lost (Jo, 2018, p. 127). My hypothesis is that eating, cooking and talking about Korean food will serve as a placeholder for Korean identity among Koreans in diaspora even if the Korean language, for instance, is spoken less and less at home.

I will be comparing Koreans in diaspora in Germany and in the United States. My main research interest focuses on Koreans in Germany, however, while perusing Korean American literature, of which many more examples exist than Korean German ones, I have come to see many similarities between Korean Germans and Korean Americans despite their obvious differences, which piqued my interest in exploring whether Korean diasporic experiences are more similar than they are different. While there are differences in terms of numbers, demographics, and reasons for migration, the Korean German and Korean American experiences share similarities for the most part. Also, Germany and the United States are Western countries with English and German respectively spoken as the mainstream language. Both languages are West Germanic languages. Both cultures (individualistic, low-context) are similarly foreign to Koreans, who hail from a collectivistic and high-context cultural background. While the American population is overall more diverse, schooling experiences among the second-generation and the mainstream American food culture of the second half of the twentieth century does not look too different from German cuisine. Diasporic Koreans in China or Japan, by contrast, would have had a very different educational experience and it would have been arguably less "difficult" to find ingredients they know and need for Korean cooking than for diasporic Koreans in 1960s Germany or in 1960s America.

Conceptual Framework

These two migrant groups, Korean Germans and Korean Americans, will be highlighted and examined through the lens of a transnational and diasporic framework via discourse analysis that analyzes migrant narratives (here: cookbooks), while also considering findings from social studies regarding

language loss among Korean diasporic second-generations. The diasporic framework is often used to emphasize the ways that people in diaspora have maintained connections to their homeland, while the transnational framework seeks to address the interconnectedness of people and ideas across borders and how they shape their everyday life. Finally, discourse analysis is a useful tool to pay close attention to word usage that may give clues as to how Koreans in diaspora feel about their relationship with Korean food and their sense of identity. Ku et al. in their book *Eating Asian America* (2013) have acknowledged how

> [t]he methods of inquiry into food have traditionally diverged along disciplinary lines. Scholarship in the humanities and social sciences concentrates on the relationship of food, gender, and sexuality. Literary and film studies often analyze particular scenes, with little attention to the larger political or social factors shaping the food's preparation, consumption, and production. In contrast, works from the social sciences, particularly anthropology, center on ritualized significance of food and what food can tell us about the power relations and organization of particular societies, though without explaining how food entered the cultural or social imagination through film or literature. (pp. 5–6)

My approach to connect these various frameworks and to compare two diasporan communities is an attempt to bridge the divide between borders, languages, and disciplines, to get a fuller picture of what the Korean diasporic relationship between food, language and identity may look like. In the following, I will provide a short overview of the Korean diaspora communities in the US and Germany and address the role of the Korean language, Korean social/linguistic concepts, and food preferences as potential markers of Korean identity. Studies on second-generation heritage language loss from the Social Sciences will provide the backdrop for my discourse analysis that looks at narratives by first- and second-generation Korean authors. In that analysis, I will highlight the typical ambivalent relationship with Korean food that Koreans in diaspora have, since they are often perceived as the *Other* by mainstream society and thus, have often experienced food-shaming. I will further show, that despite shared negative experiences regarding their Korean food and palpable heritage language loss, the first- and second-generation Koreans abroad seem to emerge unharmed in terms of their own sense of Koreanness. On the contrary, Korean Germans and Korean Americans seem to be able to create their own new hybrid identities that are made possible via their maintained relationship with cooking Korean, knowing, and using Korean names for Korean food dishes, and passing traditional and new recipes on to future generations.

Korean Diaspora in the US and Germany

Korea used to be known as the "Hermit Kingdom" due to its attempts to seal itself off from a string of invasions and later Christian missionaries. The earliest record of emigration points to the 1860s, when a dozen Korean farmers emigrated to Russia, most likely as indentured laborers, and about a thousand went to Mexico to work on plantations (Schwekendiek, 2012, p. 4). Around 84.5% of overseas Koreans live in just five countries: China (many Koreans were sent to Manchuria during Japanese colonial times), the United States, Japan (immigration and partly forced labor deportations also during Japanese occupation), Canada, and Russia. But they have also migrated to other countries, such as Brazil, the UK, Germany, France, and the United Arab Emirates.

Korean migration to the United States first began at the beginning of the twentieth century (1903) to Hawaii, where Korean men were recruited by the United States to work on pineapple and sugar plantations. By 1905, around 7,000 Korean men (and some accompanying women and children) had arrived in Hawaii for work and to escape political turmoil and famine in their home country.

The first wave of immigration ended in 1924, when Congress passed the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924 and all Asians were banned from entering the US. During the Korean War (1950–1953). The McCarran and Walter Act of 1952 struck down the Asian immigration ban, and Koreans were allowed to immigrate again to the US and apply for citizenship. The second wave included Korean wives of American GIs, Korean orphans, and Korean mixed-race orphans (often called GI babies, as they had an American father and a Korean mother, but were abandoned) adopted by Americans, and around 27,000 Korean university students, business people and intellectuals. About 6,000 Korean university students, business people and professionals (doctors, lawyers, and professors) arrived in the US between 1950 and 1964. The third wave began after 1965, when the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act abolished the national quota system and allowed for family reunification. This time around, a lot of white-collar workers from Korea came and brought their families. By 1976, 30,000 Koreans had come to the US, and their numbers would continue to rise. Today, the Korean American community is around 1.7 million people strong (for more information on Korean migration to the United States, see Choy, 1979; Patterson, 1988; Kim, 2004).

Koreans in Germany started arriving in the 1960s, after private efforts of Sukil Lee came to fruition and Korean nurses were sought officially to help with labor demands in nursing. After World War II, Germany emerged as a production and export-oriented powerhouse, and the economic miracle years that occurred in the following years left the country searching for labor help. During this time, around 10,000 Korean nurses and 6,000 Korean miners came to Germany as so-called guest workers via bilateral contracts between West Germany and South Korea. Just like the guest workers from other countries (Southern Europe, Philippines, etc.), they had limited-term contracts initially, but the Korean nurses successfully lobbied for their right to stay. The result was that many Korean nurses and miners got married, started families, and stayed in Germany. Today, the number of Korean Germans remains at around 36,000–40,000. In recent years, mostly Korean university students and white-collar professionals have come to Germany by choice and for educational or business opportunities (for more information on Korean migration to Germany, see Choi & Lee 2006; Seong, 2018; Roberts 2012).

In both the United States and Germany, Korean migrants were often a dual-income family, unlike the traditional family make-up in Korea at the time. Moreover, in Germany, the wages of a full-time nurse were significantly higher than the wages for a miner. Not only were Korean women contributing to family income, but they were also often the main breadwinners. Koreans who had emigrated to the United States in the 1960s and later were often entrepreneurs, owning a small business or a restaurant, where both husband and wife worked. It was absolutely necessary for Korean women in diaspora to work in order to contribute to the financial stability and/or survival of the family (Chung, 2018, p. 242). This change in economic value had an impact on overall family dynamics. Traditional Korean family structures had focused on patriarchal hierarchy, but in this new setting, women got a stronger say in family or money decisions, as their contributions made them more valuable.

The Korean migrant communities in Germany and the United States also have in common that they were able to organize their social structures in their respective countries fairly quickly. Either the founding of Korean churches or Korean organizations and accompanying Korean language schools (on Fridays or Saturdays) helped with the upkeep and teaching of the Korean language and culture to the second-generation. It provided ample opportunity for the parent generation to mingle and speak in their language, and the second-generation was provided with a chance to learn reading and writing in Korean. Of course, depending on how successful Korean communities were at organizing themselves and whether one actually lived near such a community, some were able to retain and maintain Korean spoken at home and others were not (Jo, 2018, p. 126).

Markers of Koreanness: Korean Language

The people of Korea speak Korean, a language that is not directly related to its neighboring countries' languages (Chinese, Japanese), although it was certainly influenced by both. Korean has its own alphabetic writing system, *hangul*, since King Sejong charged his scholars in the 15th century to devise a writing system that would set itself apart from Chinese characters. Korean is perceived as a national treasure with its own national day (*hangulnal* on October 9) and a source of pride: "[…] the Korean language is considered primary to Korean national identity." (Jo, 2018, p. 129). Korea has long prided itself with ethnic as well as linguistic homogeneity as an effort to distinguish oneself from its neighbors, especially Japan, from which Korea has endured decades of cruel colonization. According to Jo, the Korean language has thus long functioned as a means to establish national identity (2018):

> Since the end of the colonial era, the Korean language has been continuously incorporated and reappropriated for the agenda of nation building. Campaigns designed to promote the Korean language often equated "loving the Korean language" with "loving the nation." Like the emphasis on ethnic homogeneity in the imagery of Korean nationalism, linguistic homogeneity and purity are considered by the Korean government and public to be an integral part of Korean identity. Thus, use of foreign lexicons and loanwords have been discouraged via "language purification" campaigns (kugŏ sunhwa undong) in modern Korea, and different foreign languages have been targeted for exclusion at different times in modern Korean history. (p. 130)

In fact, language purification and promotion efforts have gone as far as to say that Korea will disappear, if the Korean language disappears (Jo, 2018, p. 131). While Korea has to balance its language purification efforts with its desire and preference for introducing a lot of English loan words, the complete loss of Korean on the peninsula should be under no real threat. However, for Koreans in the diaspora, this threat of language loss can become very real, very quickly.

Historically, the United States have encouraged complete acculturation and assimilation, if one recalls Henry Ford's commencement procedure at his Ford English school (first quarter of the twentieth century): Employee graduates walk through the melting pot in their native clothes and emerge on the other side as Americans, wearing American-looking clothes and holding American flags. While the melting pot metaphor is not used broadly anymore, the sentiment of preferred acculturation has not changed significantly. Multilingual education in the United States is still a rarity. Migrant children are expected to learn English, which they generally do quickly (Portes & Rivas, 2011, p. 231), and their native language is generally not supported or taught in school. Hence, they quickly become heritage language speakers of the language of their parents, which means that they may retain the basics of their first language and thus may only be able to communicate on daily matters. By the next generation, the heritage language ability is generally lost (Portes & Hao, 1998, p. 269).

Apparently, even among Latin American heritage speakers, who are the most likely to retain their heritage language, less than half are fluent bilinguals, according to Portes & Hao (1998, p. 288). Among second-generation Asian Americans, an even significantly higher number of children (over 90% of second-generation Asian immigrants, in fact) lose the language of their parents. Parental American acculturation (Portes & Hao, 1998, p. 288), and the lack the opportunity to speak it are most likely reasons for this development (Jo, 2018, p. 64). The fact that so few are able to retain their parents' language is quite shocking. However, if one considers that Asian migrants are known for their desire to succeed academically, it makes sense that the second-generation is encouraged to learn and speak English quickly and thoroughly. If a second-generation youth speaks both languages well, it is often due to the fact that both parents come from or have higher-status backgrounds and use their

native language at home (Portes & Rivas, 2011, p. 232). Generally, high bilingual ability is a rare phenomenon that occurs mostly "among those from high-status families and those who attend high-status schools" (Portes & Hao, 1998, p. 289).

Korean American families of the 1970s through 1990s are also often dual-income families, where the parents may run a small business full-time, often seven days a week. Spending quality time with the children may fall to the wayside, and so would speaking with the children in Korean. Korean parents were also likely under the impression that speaking Korean at home could hold their children back academically. The advantages of bilingualism were not apparent at the time. As Portes & Hao (1998) point out: "Up to the 1960s, the established consensus in the linguistic and psychological literatures was that bilingualism and cognitive development were negatively associated." Korean Americans did establish Korean language schools, often founded and operated by Korean churches, to service K-12 students whose parents sought a more structured and formalized way of teaching their heritage language and culture to their children (Lee & Wright, 2014, p. 152). However, these Korean Saturday schools are often perceived as a chore and boring by the second-generation, even though they do allow for social interactions among them (Jo, 2018, p. 66). But the problem remains that, if multilingualism is not appreciated and praised by mainstream culture, the incentive to speak another language is very low. Instead, the main incentive for immigrant children becomes to fit in or not to stand out. Given the minority status of Korean Americans, one's own heritage might be perceived as inferior to the mainstream (Jo, 2018, p. 66).

In a study that interviews Korean American college students participating in Korean heritage language classes, H.-Y. Kim (2003) notices in their answers a "frustration with limited communication in Korean with their parents, particularly on highly emotional or complex topics" (Kim H.-Y., 2003, p. 318). According to Kim, most of the students interviewed "regard Korean as a language to be used in the family with parents or the older generation. None reported using Korean with siblings or with friends of similar bilingual/bicultural backgrounds" (Kim, 2003, p. 318), which foreshadows the seeming inevitability of not passing Korean down to the next generation. Speaking with elders in Korean is due to a sense of responsibility, but speaking Korean with peers would require that communicating in Korean is part of their identity. But a lack of ability and/or confidence thereof "undermines their desire to pass the language down to their own children. Only one of the ten students could foresee themselves speaking Korean to their children" (Kim, 2003, p. 323). Kim concludes her study by summarizing that

> For these students, language largely functions as "a symbolic marker of ethnicity" and they draw some level of satisfaction or reward in that regard from taking classes. (p. 324)

While there are far fewer Korean immigrants residing in Germany than in the United States, the heritage speaker situation looks eerily similar. Studies undertaken to assess the status of Korean spoken among the second-generation Korean youths come to the same findings: German is the preferred language and the language ability in Korean is very low (Stolle, 1990, p. 134; Kim, 1986, p. 198; Cho, 2014, p. 22). Adina Cho in her master's thesis (2014) interviews second-generation Korean Germans and encounters varying degrees of heritage language ability. The fluent bilingual, however, is rare and all informants have in common that neither of them sees Korea as a viable long-term option for residency. Other authors, who have studied Korean migration to Germany, share similar observations: While the second-generation may start out speaking Korean at home, their preference for German starts to show as soon they enter school. Very few, according to Lisa Hartmann speak Korean exclusively at home (Hartmann, 2016, p. 139). Like their American counterparts, Korean parents in Germany were very concerned with their children's academic performance, for which they considered knowing German as essential. Bilingualism at the time was seen as a potential hindrance to high achievement in German, therefore, some Korean parents even switched to speaking German at home (Hary, 2012, p. 128).

As a result, Korean language ability shrunk and communication at home often included a language mix (parents speak Korean and children speak German), so that the second-generation at least has a passive understanding of the Korean language (Hartmann, 2016, p. 140). One of Simone Hary's second-generation Korean informants referred to her own low ability in Korean as "Kitchen Korean" (Hary, 2012, p. 128), a level of Korean that does not go beyond conversations at the kitchen table.

Looking for a more formalized approach to Korean language instruction, Korean parents in Germany started Korean language schools, very similar to the ones in the United States, which met for a couple of hours on Friday afternoons or Saturdays (Hartmann, 2016, p. 140). While parents undoubtedly saw value in these extra hours of language and culture instruction, the second-generation mostly saw it as an added chore, like their American peers, and preferred German as their main language to communicate with their second-generation peers (Hartmann, 2016, p. 141). With age, however, the second-generation starts to develop a desire to keep their, yet limited, knowledge of Korean alive for the sake of connecting with their parent generation. In retrospect, Hartmann notes, the second-generation share the feelings of gratefulness for having learned some Korean as well as feelings of regret for not having learned more. Hartmann predicts that Korean culture (she most likely means language) will slowly die out and not be accessible to the third generation (Hartmann, 2016, p. 148). Korean culture or Koreanness, as I will argue later, has other ways to transmit itself rather than through language alone.

But as a result, it seems that second-generation Koreans in the United States and Germany have in common that they often find themselves at a literal loss for words in Korean, since they are growing up as heritage speakers of Korean and most of their schooling and socializing takes place in the mainstream language. For many second- or later generations, the degree of Korean language competency itself might give a clue to their perceptions about their own Koreanness. One might ask, then, what makes one Korean, if competency in the Korean language is not absolutely necessary. Obviously, ethnic appearance, such as facial features, hair color, stature, and such, will weigh into this question, but even these features may not be reliable, especially if the child is the result of an interracial marriage. It may be worthwhile, therefore, to consider other markers of Koreanness.

Markers of Koreanness: Concepts

When Koreans are asked about what it means to be Korean, they will probably mention two words, or concepts, that they find cannot be translated and are thus unique to Korean people and their experience. They may mention *han* and *jeong*: *Han* symbolizes the injustices that the Korean people had to endure in their history, such as Japanese colonization in the recent past, but also invasions by China further back in history (Lee, 2009, pp. 28–29). *Han* describes the feeling of pain and suffering that Koreans as a people have endured, and every Korean is said to feel this pain even if s/he may not have lived during the time of invasion, oppression, or colonization. Nowadays, this traditional notion of *han* has expanded to include the suffering of Korean women as a result of the Korean patriarchy (Lee, 2009, p. 29). The other sentiment is *jeong*, which describes a positive, warm feeling that a Korean person may have towards another person after a relationship has been established. It generally results in generous actions and care towards this person (Hurt, 2018, p. 364). *Jeong* arises naturally and may also disappear. One can be attached to someone or something or even a place (*jeong-i deulda*) or one can "drop" *jeong* and lose affection if the other person has done something to lose trust or affection (*jeong ddeol-uh-jida*).

As members of a high-context culture, Koreans rely on context and actions, rather than the spoken word. Shared, collective experiences, whether bad or good, increase the likelihood that Koreans will feel a connection with someone else. Koreans in diaspora have taken these concepts with them and applied them in their new surroundings. It is very common for cultural newcomers to seek each other's

company because one longs for a sense of familiarity in a place that is at first completely unfamiliar. Therefore, "being Korean" or "being of Korean descent" connects Koreans everywhere, and the knowledge of both, *han* and *jeong*, creates the first layer of their relationships.

While *han* and *jeong* are concepts readily available to first-generation Koreans, as they grew up in Korea and were raised in that particular cultural sphere, second-generation Koreans may never acquire these concepts, since they lack daily experience and interaction with Koreans outside of their own family. They tend to learn about these things from their parents, but often the language used as a vehicle is not Korean but English or German, which complicates what and how contents are transmitted. As a result, many second-generation children might struggle to grasp these particular concepts, and they may not feel the same emotions that their parents do. Hence, *han* and *jeong,* as examples of markers of Koreanness, may not be readily available to second-generation Koreans abroad.

Markers of Koreanness: Korean Food

The Korean word for Korean food is *hansik,* which consists of two Korean words that are based on Chinese characters: *han* (Korean country/people/culture) and *sik* (food/eating). (Lee, 2017, p. 281). Korean cuisine is distinct from the cuisines of its neighboring countries, and Koreans take great pride in the uniqueness of their dishes (Kittler, Sucher, & Nahikian-Nelms, 2017, p. 355).

For the Zainichi Koreans (multi-generational Koreans in Japan), for instance, the prototypical example of Korean cuisine, namely kimchi, was a symbol of their Korean identity as well as a symbol of their marginalization in Japan:

> Once negatively regarded as immigrants' food and the symbol of ethnic Koreans' marginalization, many now consider kimchi a comfort food. […] Although some Zainichi Koreans perceive kimchi's popularity as a sign of reduced skepticism and gradual acceptance towards Koreanness and Korean residents in Japanese society, for many others—particularly Zainichi Korean women—kimchi also serves as a medium through which they can express their Koreanness and negotiate their position as an ethnic minority within the context of Japan's hegemony of "homogenous" national identity (Befu 2011). (Demelius, 2023, p. 90)

In fact, Kimchi, despite its longer existence in the country, did not gain popularity in Japan until the 1980s (Demelius, 2023, p. 92). Since then, Korean food's popularity has not only spread in Japan, but also globally and has become a favorite among world travelers and food lovers. What was once considered smelly and repugnant has become a popular food choice. Much of this culinary awareness and status change of Korean food can be traced back to the time when the Korean government, particularly the Kim Young Sam government (1993–1998), made real efforts to promote the taste and healthful aspects of Korean food across the globe (Lee, 2017, p. 284). In doing so, the Korean government has also spearheaded a project called *Research and Development Project for Standardization of Korean Cuisine* in order to globalize Korean food and to provide accurate information on its preparation (2007). Efforts have certainly paid off, as Korean food, and especially kimchi, have made a lasting global appearance. Finally, people outside of Korea seem to be able to appreciate the distinct flavors of Korean food.

Koreans as a people take their food very seriously. While Korea in the past sometimes experienced food shortages and many poor Koreans, especially during and after the Korean War, had very limited means to prepare food, food nowadays is readily available 24/7. It can be ordered for delivery at any time of the day, and food innovations and new street food creations hit the markets at a dizzying rate. Food remains at the center of every Korean's life (Lee & Claus-Kim, 2017, p. 401). For example,

Korean mothers express their love to their family, especially their children, by cooking homemade meals, as home cooking is perceived to be a major contributor to a family's wellbeing (Kittler et al., 2017, p. 353).

Korean food utilizes a lot of vegetables, seafood, fermented foods, as well as combinations of ingredients of different colors. It is supposed to exemplify harmony in terms of ingredients and combination. Interestingly, Koreans are aware of aspects of food that other people may be indifferent to. Not only do they seem to care about whether ingredients and dishes work together harmoniously, they also see food as medicine and will as a result choose ingredients and combinations carefully: "There are two notions about Korean food, which are *eumyangohaeng* (the doctrine of the five natural elements of the positive and negative) and *yansikdongwon* (food and medicine are of the same origin)." (The Research and Development Project for the Standardization of Korean Cuisine, 2007, p. 12). The *eumyangohaeng* informs all Korean dishes and creates a special harmony in terms of colors, shapes, and flavors.

A Korean meal looks very different from a Western meal, as it does not require that one eat the various elements in chronological order (appetizer, main, dessert). Rather, what is often called "side dishes" (banchan) is eaten with rice and soup at the same time. Thus, one does not distinguish between main meal and sides, as everything is eaten together. This process is followed to recreate Korean cosmology at the table, with all elements being presented together, each element serving a purpose, and everything being in harmony (Kim et al., 2018, p. 15). Preparing Korean food, sharing it (Koreans eat communally, rather than having their own dishes), and eating it, go beyond simply refueling one's body with calories for survival. Korean food symbolizes health, family, and the cosmos, and one is part of something bigger than oneself (Kim et al., 2018, p. 15). These principles surrounding food might seem quite foreign to a Westerner, but they are simply second nature to Koreans, even if average Koreans may not be able to accurately describe the underlying principles themselves. Certainly, their taste buds have been trained since birth to expect certain flavors, a specific order and combination of ingredients and dishes.

If one talks about Korean food, one must mention *kimchi*. *Kimchi* is uniquely Korean, as the Korean government, for instance, has strived hard not only to establish *kimchi's* uniqueness across the globe but especially also to protect it from its neighbor Japan, which has started to market its *kimuchi*, a blander version of Korean *kimchi.* Korea's *kimchi* (there are hundreds of different types of kimchi) is usually made of a type of cabbage to which spices, such as hot chili pepper flakes, garlic, greens, and small amounts of seafood are added. This particular mix leads to fermentation, which makes the cabbage leaves slightly sour and tangy tasting. As many have argued, this particular food is unique to Korea (Kim et al., 2018, p. 6). Apparently, *kimchi* has existed in Korea for centuries, albeit not in its current form. Chili peppers were not introduced to the Korean peninsula until the 16th century, which made the original *kimchi* a blander version of today's cousin. However, fermentation was a part of kimchi-making from the beginning. Additionally, the yin-yang-and-five-elements (*umyangohaeng)* principle comes into play here, as well, since the ingredients in kimchi are carefully chosen not simply for taste but also for their symbolic value (Kim et al., 2018, p. 13).

Rice and kimchi would be enough to be considered a meal, which highlights the significance of kimchi as the most important *banchan* (side dish), and even among an abundance of other side dishes, if kimchi were to be missing, a meal would not be considered complete. Hence, kimchi has to be seen as integral and, in fact, even as representative of Korean food. No Korean dish is complete without the presence of kimchi. For Koreans in diaspora, this very requirement proved problematic in their arrival years. Ingredients for making kimchi were often not readily available, which made the consumption of kimchi unpredictable, and that uncertainty contributed to a stronger sense of homesickness. Missing kimchi, and Korean food in general, reinforced the already existing feelings of missing home. If one

was able to either procure the right ingredients or come up with makeshift ingredients to create an approximation of kimchi, one had to deal with judgmental reactions and comments in the host culture about the pungent smell of kimchi.

Korean Migrants and Otherness of Korean Food

In the United States and Germany alike, Korean migrants have continued to cook and eat Korean food, even though its ingredients, dishes and preparation were significantly different from American or German cuisine, at least initially. For instance, Korean plantation workers in Hawaii at the beginning of the twentieth century packed rice and kimchi as their lunches, and as a result, they helped spread the appreciation for kimchi across the island. Kimchi is now part of Hawaiian cuisine (Lee, 2017, p. 287). What makes Korean food special and unique in today's world was the source of agony and shame for many first-generation and subsequent-generation Koreans: Korean food is quite pungent, due to the many fermented ingredients it uses, namely soybean paste, soy sauce, chili pepper paste, and the main staple *kimchi*. The Koreans who migrated went to countries with much blander cuisines. Germany, for instance, in the 1960s complained about the pungent smell of garlic and olive oil that the Italian guest workers had brought with them. But Italian food smells were relatively mild, compared to Korean food smells.

Similarly, in the United States, mainstream foods resembled European cuisine for many years due to its history of European immigrants. Children of Korean migrants who went to school with their packed Korean lunches had to deal with their fair share of embarrassment and shame, whenever they had to open their odiferous lunchboxes next to children eating seemingly fragrance-free wonder bread sandwiches. Ku describes the second-generation's relationship with Korean food as follows:

> To many Korean Americans who came of age before this past decade, Korean food was a source of deep ambivalence: on the one hand, it was "our" food, and essential marker of our Koreanness. On the other hand, it was not the sort of food that you wanted to share with non-Koreans due to fear of rejection and ridicule. (p. 131)

It was, he goes on to say, for many Korean Americans "a source of shame. Yes, it could be delicious, and you could not live without it for any significant stretch of time, but it was so *different*" (Ku, 2018, p. 132). And not simply different. Ku continues to describe Korean food in very distinct terms: "Korean food somehow seemed more *alien*. […] Comparatively speaking, Korean food was fiercer, more audacious, and more obstinate. But, above all, Korean food was miasmic, odoriferous. Put simply, it stank" (Ku, 2018, p. 132).

Calling immigrants' or newcomers' food smelly and strange is certainly not uncommon, and in fact it has a long tradition within "an orientalist conceptualization of 'foreign' food as strange, smelly, unclean, or unhygienic." (Oum, 2005, p. 110). The United States, despite its large number of diverse immigrants and its famed history as a country of immigration, was not spared from this racist attitude. The smell of "ethnic foods" was often a complaint throughout its history, when mainstream American food for the most part meant whatever white settlers from white Europe used to bring over. Nowadays, of course, American cuisine has become more diverse, since the culture has allowed dishes and cuisines previously considered to be simply foreign to enter mainstream American cuisine, such as Italian, Chinese, Mexican, etc.

Calling a "foreign" food smelly indicates that one's own food is not smelly, but instead clean and good, the norm. Constructing oneself and one's culture as normal and someone else's as not is indicative of a power imbalance. Generally, the mainstream population dominates the discourse of what is considered to be normal, while the marginalized are constructed as being lacking or offensive. Such identities

then can be easily rejected and marked as un-American. It is not simply language or looks that can turn someone into an outsider. The odors of your cuisine can have the same effect. This has major implications for the migrant population. Do they keep eating the foods they desire and are used to, or do they give them up for the promise of acceptance?

For many newcomers, this may not be a real question, since they cannot imagine giving up their familiar foods, the source of their memories and community. So, therefore, they have to deal with potentially negative reactions by the mainstream culture. Many members of the second-generation probably remember instances, at times even traumatic ones, where their two culinary worlds collided. Maybe a non-Korean friend happened to open their refrigerator that contained *kimchi* and was stunned by the unfamiliar, odiferous smells (Hong, 2014, p. 77).

The world has changed in recent years, and Korean food is making strides across the globe in terms of acceptance and preference. Eating *kimchi* or being able to eat *kimchi*, now carries an air of sophistication, rather than backwardness. If one can appreciate *kimchi*, one must certainly be worldly. While, in the past, eating kimchi was associated with being Korean or with Koreanness in general, today it may signify not simply interest in Korean cuisine but multicultural openness and worldliness, and it may even be an indicator of class (Oum, 2005, p. 110).

Luckily, for Koreans abroad, Korean food is now celebrated in many places of the world, and it has lost its seeming foreignness. However, for the first generation and second-generation of Koreans anywhere, this new acceptance of Korean food is bittersweet. Too many have memories of being ashamed of Korean food's pungent smells that in a Korean household were perceived as delicious but as offensive in many non-Korean spaces. Certainly, especially in recent years, second-generation Korean American and Korean German chefs and cookbook authors have talked about their ambivalent feelings towards and their childhood memories related to Korean food.

New Identities: Korean American Identity

It is to be expected that migrants undergo identity changes in their new surroundings. Added to that, new language ability and insights into a new cultural system led to opportunities to compare one's own upbringing and life with what is possible in the new environment. Upon arrival, food preferences in the new culture will most likely mirror food preferences obtained in the old country. Once an immigrant becomes more accustomed to the new surroundings and life, his/her tolerance for American food, for instance, may increase (Kittler et al., 2017, p. 359). Hence, the level of acculturation seems to mirror food preferences and vice versa. First-generation mothers, for example, introduce more and more American dishes into their cooking routine over time, while also eating out more often, rather than preparing meals at home. Cooking Korean food is laborious, and the relative ease with which Western cuisine can be prepared and its availability might contribute to the decrease in the number of mothers who prepare traditional Korean meals (Kittler et al., 2017, p. 359). Not surprisingly, as a result, second-generation Korean Americans, having been introduced to both cuisines early on, are comfortable with eating either traditional Korean or American food, but overall, they are actually eating less rice and kimchi than people in Korea, which correlates with fewer mothers cooking Korean food (Kittler et al., 2017, p. 359).

Interestingly, whereas early Korean cookbooks (early 1990s and early 2000s) in the United States were mostly authored by first-generation Koreans, mostly those mothers, who wanted to pass on their recipes to their children's generation, recent cookbooks (2015 and later) feature the second-generation, whose recipes demonstrate the ambivalence of what these authors ate as children and how that shaped their tastes. The first-generation mother authors may think that what they are passing on is traditional Korean recipes, but by living in diaspora they have recipes that are often already a result of blended

cuisines (Oum, 2005, p. 116), and the second-generation authors tend to give traditional Korean recipes a new twist by making them vegan or fusion.

One can see such examples in *The Vegan Korean* by Joanne Lee Molinaro and *Korean American* by Eric Kim. Proponents of traditional Korean cuisine might argue that Veganism and Korean food do not go together, but the second-generation Korean American Lee Molinaro has found a way to recreate Korean dishes in a vegan fashion. She herself was initially tied to the belief that Korean food had to include meat, and consequently she even questioned her own Koreanness (Molinaro, 2021, p. 18). For instance, she recalls eating SPAM in Korean dishes as a "uniquely Asian American experience." In fact, it turned her into a "card-carrying member of the Korean diaspora, a child of immigrants":

> It marked me as a card-carrying member of the Korean diaspora, a child of immigrants, with stories built on war, poverty, racism, and courage, because SPAM, in some strange, beautiful way, signified that we had made it. We had survived. And survival, we'd learned, was something we never took for granted. (Molinaro, 2021, p. 20)

To the Korean immigrant, eating SPAM, a fairly cheap meat product first introduced to Koreans by American soldiers stationed in Korea, meant life had come full circle. Korean War stories about poverty and hunger during and after the war were replaced with migrant stories. Being fed extra chunks of SPAM instead of struggling for any kind of food at all symbolized a step up. They had come out on the other side. Therefore, giving up meat potentially meant giving up that family story of survival. However, Lee Molinaro found a way forward by substituting ingredients that would not negate her Korean side, as long as the integrity of the Korean dishes remained intact. It is possible that her individualistic American upbringing allowed Lee Molinaro to become creative in her search for identity and, as a result, also affected how she would recreate her food. Rather fittingly, Oum notes that, "Food is a site of struggles for identity for Korean Americans. How to approach Korean cuisine is closely related to how the person locates herself or himself in terms of race, gender, and nationality" (Oum, 2005, p. 123).

Others have undertaken similar approaches to what they consider to be Korean American food.

Eric Kim, for instance, more than any other second-generation author of Korean cookbooks, describes in detail what it meant to him to grow up bi-culturally, Korean and American, and he beautifully links his identity to his food experiences. He defines himself as Korean American and explains that he has actually come to this conclusion after not knowing who he was until just recently:

> Too often have I felt the pangs of this tug of war: Am I Korean or am I American? Only recently have I been able to fully embrace that I am at once both and neither, and something else entirely: I am *Korean American.* (Kim, 2012, p. 12)

His recipes reflect the duality, or even more, the multiplicity of his identity, as they are neither completely traditional, nor exclusively American. They are both and more, something new. Kim acknowledges the identity struggles that many of his generation have likely experienced similarly, but he juxtaposes this "tension," as he calls it, with "the ultimate harmony," giving a nod to his cultural ancestry that recognizes the *eum* and *yang*, the yin and yang of the cosmos. Neither can exist on its own, but both create a complete circle. Instead of looking in other places, such as language or culture, for the source of his cultural identity, he looks no further than in his kitchen:

> As is often the case with cooking, there are many answers to be found in the kitchen. The recipes here explore that tension, and the ultimate harmony, between the Korean in me as well as the American in me, through the food my family grew up eating and the food I cook for myself now. (Kim, 2012, p. 12)

Kim also addresses the predicament of Korean Americans in the United States, since they are part of a minority that is often overlooked and marginalized. He acknowledges and validates their struggles. He makes them feel seen, and ultimately, he offers hope that they will one day "arrive" and feel at home:

> My hope is that in reading this book, you'll see yourself in it, whether you're Korean, Korean American, or neither, whether your family immigrated to Atlanta, Los Angeles, or Little Rock. Because at the heart of this book is really a story about what happens when a family bands together to migrate and cross oceans in search of a new home. It's about what happens when, after so much traveling and fighting and hard work, you finally arrive. (p.13)

Maybe because of Kim's experiences as a second-generation Korean American, as he early on had to straddle two cultures and learn to live with them, he is able to see that there is more than one way of being. Instead of insisting that there is only one way of cooking Korean, he stresses that being resourceful, using what you have and combining it are key to Korean American cooking. Kim describes the character of first-generation immigrant cooking and extends its scope to the second-generation. He gives Korean Americans agency to cook what they think Korean American food means to them, without being tied down by traditional expectations of what "authentic" Korean food should look like (Kim, 2022, p. 17). In addition, his definition of Korean American is not static but fluid and inclusive. Whereas the attribute "Korean," in regard to food, may often focus on "authenticity," if that in fact exists, and as such would be more limiting in its scope, "Korean American" allows for personal individuality. And while he talks about food, he also addresses the person:

> Here's my bottom line: These recipes are Korean American because the people who cook them identify as such. Too often when I publish a family recipe, someone will write to me: "I'm Korean and that's not Korean" (because it doesn't match *their* family's version). But there is more than one way to be Korean. We are infinite. (Kim, 2022, p. 18)

In general, one can say that diasporic cuisines are a symbol of hybridity and a complex relationship with new and old (Oum, 2005, p. 122). This hybridity and multiplicity come out both in first-generation and second-generation cooking. However, the main difference is that first-generation cooks change ingredients and recipes out of necessity (e.g., lack of ingredients, ease of preparation), whereas the second-generation makes more deliberate choices based on individual preferences and in an active attempt to combine Korean and American or German flavors. Both Lee Molinaro and Kim do not explicitly address their level of Korean language ability, although one can guess their level as heritage speakers, when they talk about their Korean American identities. Interestingly, what all these cookbooks have in common is that they retain the Korean names of the dishes. Lee Molinaro offers a Romanized version of the Korean name of the dish first, followed by the Korean name in Hangul and an English translation in parenthesis. She also uses the Korean names of ingredients, such as *gochujang* (chili pepper paste) and *danmuji* (yellow pickled radish), which suggests that American readers should be able to find and identify these ingredients in Korean grocery stores in the United States. Eric Kim also uses Korean dish names in Romanized spelling and uses the Romanized version of ingredients, such as *gochugaru* (chili pepper flakes) and *kim* (toasted seaweed). This selective language usage of Korean seems to parallel language use in Korean migrant homes, as it suggests that dishes introduced by the parent generation continue to have Korean names, which means that Korean language, albeit limited in its scope, does get passed on this way. Hence, as mentioned above, language loss among the second-generation is common, Korean food item names seem to be generally retained. And not only dishes are referred to in Korean, but also ingredients, particularly the ones that are more commonly found in Korea, such as chili pepper paste (*gochujang*) and *doenjang* (soybean paste), for example, as we can see in the examples above. Thus, cooking, eating, and being able to name Korean food emerges

as a sufficient possible factor of identifying as Korean. For them and many others, eating Korean food together seems to be a unifying and identifying activity of Koreanness, that seems to be attainable.

Korean German Identity

Not surprisingly, Korean migrants in Germany show similar patterns in their food preferences. The first generation that came in the 1960s made their own version of kimchi using German cabbage until a fellow Korean started importing Korean napa cabbage. They also kept their food traditions, even though critical remarks by Germans about pungent smells were common. However, food quickly becomes not simply nutrients to survive on but emotional nourishment that satisfies their longing for home. The cookbook *Hansik – Das Korea Kochbuch* (2011) features three first-generation Korean women who had come to Germany either as a guest worker in the 1970s, in the one case, or as international students in the 1990s and later, in the other two cases. Minbok Kou, for instance, writes about her arrival as a nurse in Berlin in 1974, where she met her German husband and raised two children. By cooking Korean food, she states, she brings a piece of her home to Berlin, and just like her mother, she cooks with love and out of love for her family (Kou et al., 2011, p. 19). In particular, she recalls specific memories of watching her mother cook and noticing that she always looked happy (p. 28). Korean mothers may traditionally not say "I love you" to their children, but carefully cooking delicious meals was meant to express a mother's love to her family. Kou remembers when her mother made special dishes for her, such as her birthday seaweed soup, and she can literally smell the fragrance of the soup in her nose, even though it is but a memory (p. 29). Clearly, these memories motivate her to do the same for her own family now. She writes that she is grateful that her Korean German family likes to eat and appreciates Korean food. In particular, her second-generation children like and expect Korean food, so much so that they are disappointed when they do not get to eat it after returning from studying abroad, for example (p. 42). They eat and need kimchi and associate Korean food with home and being safe. Kou is very pleased that her children take pride in their Korean food.

Sunkyoung Jung moved to Berlin in 1992 to accompany her husband, who was pursuing his doctoral degree in Germany, and later she attended university there herself. She mostly cooks Korean food, but is open to other cuisines, as well. Like Kou, she also has strong memories related to Korea and Korean food, in particular, her grandmother's cooking, which she tries to recreate from memory. Jung has no trouble identifying herself as Korean, as she includes herself in the group of Koreans, (she says "to us Koreans"). Jung recalls initial struggles when she first moved to Berlin because everything was foreign to her. Among those foreign things, she mentions German vegetables that seemed bigger and different looking (Kou et al., 2011, p. 96). She misses Korean ingredients and thus improvises with replacements, a practice very common among immigrants in general, no doubt, but also Korean Americans, as we have seen above. While the taste of her food might not exactly strike one as authentic, the close resemblance is enough to elicit positive emotions in her. Eating recreated Korean dishes helps with feelings of longing for home (Kou et al., 2011, p. 96). Like many other first-generation Koreans, Jung was aware of the odiferous nature of Korean food and its potential to bother Germans' senses. She goes out of her way, therefore, to avoid Korean spices and garlic altogether, just so that those smells do not cling to her clothes when she is out in public (Kou et al., 2011, p. 97). She tries her best to avoid smelling "strange," because it causes her unpleasant worry that she will draw attention to her and be perceived as an outsider. By giving up the biggest sources of "smelling strange" (namely, soy sauce, garlic, and possibly soybean paste, another odiferous ingredient), Jung sacrifices a big part of where Korean flavors come from. It must have seemed a worthwhile sacrifice for her at the time. One can imagine, though, that her feelings of homesickness must have compounded immensely during that time.

Like Jung, Yun-Ah Kim came to Germany as an international student. She studied music theory in Hamburg and now lives in Berlin. She recalls living in the student dorms and having to share a

communal refrigerator with eleven other university students. Each student had their own compartment in the refrigerator, but she was the only one who kept "exotic" ingredients in there, while the others stuck with regular butter, milk, cheese, etc. (Kou et al., 2011, p. 136). Astutely aware that Korean food smells were unbearable to some, she never kept any Korean kimchi in her part of the refrigerator since the smell of it would have seeped out of its container and would have likely permeated all the other food items in the refrigerator.

The cookbook *Kimchi Princess* (2017) is written by a second-generation Korean German, Youngmi Park Snowden, who successfully runs Korean restaurants in Berlin, namely Kimchi Princess and Mani Mogo. In her cookbook, she tells of ambivalent feelings she had as she was growing up towards Korean food and smells, comments that are reminiscent of what other second-generation Koreans in diaspora, such as in the United States, have shared (Park-Snowden, p. 8). For example, she recalls that her German school friends were bothered by the sight and smell of dried anchovies, a staple ingredient in Korean cuisine. Park Snowden's own impression of German cuisine was that it was much more "orderly," probably meaning "less offensive in terms of odors," but her words suggest that her earliest perceptions of food were already influenced by a Western aesthetic even though she grew up in a household where non-Western foods were the norm. She also remembers many instances where her mother prepared and brought a popular Korean vermicelli noodle dish to various get-togethers and potlucks. While Park Snowden states that she would have preferred it, if her mother had made the standard German open-faced sandwiches, she understands that whatever she considered to be "normal" was different from her parents' normal (Park-Snowden, 2017, p. 53).

Park Snowden, who is a new mother, now faces the same question, of what to feed her offspring. Her daughter Mina is half-Korean and enjoys eating Korean food, in particular, seasoned dry anchovies. Even though Park Snowden herself was once food shamed for eating them, she introduced her daughter to them, also calling it "*myeolchi,*" the Korean name rather than the German name (*Anchovis*). Although she at times resented her mother for exclusively making Korean food for various social events, she now walks in her mother's footsteps: She might offer *myeolchi* with rice at her daughter's next birthday party instead of the usual pizza, pasta, or hotdogs. Because after all, Mina likes it (Park-Snowden, 2017, p. 111). Park Snowden, just like her parents, is making food choices for herself and her family that go beyond simply cooking German or Korean cuisine. She removes any boundaries between the two, something that she was annoyed about at times when she was growing up. Instead of being self-conscious about Korean food in a German setting, she now seeks out opportunities to introduce Korean food. After all, she runs two successful Korean restaurants in Berlin. The foreignness and perceived awkwardness of Korean food of the past has given way to the feeling that others might enjoy and appreciate Korean food as much as her family does. Through food, Park Snowden actively creates a space of belonging for her own family, but also for any migrants, migrant families, and anyone whose palate is more adventurous and flexible.

Again, in both cookbooks, the dishes are presented with their Korean names (in Korean letters as well as in Romanized form) and a German description alongside it, which suggests, just like with their American counterparts, that Korean dish and ingredient names are actively passed on and retained by the second-generation. Park-Snowden, for example, also lists Korean names of ingredients, such as red chili pepper flakes (*gotchugaru*), although one will notice that the spelling is Romanized but also adapted for German readers. If an ingredient seems to be less known, Park-Snowden offers a German definition in parenthesis following the Romanized version, such as *ssamjang* (Sojabohnen-Chili-Paste/soybean chili paste). More telling is the fact that she mentions the side dish *myeolchi* (seasoned dried anchovies), which can also be found in her cookbook, and how her own daughter (third generation) and her German friends eat this dish without batting an eye. Snowden-Park mentions in her introduction that she spent a year after high school in Korea, in order to get to know the country of her parents

and to learn Korean, which suggests low heritage language ability, at least prior to her year abroad. Now, she uses Korean dish and ingredient names in her own daily German language usage and is even passing those words on to her daughter, who is third-generation Korean. The familiarity with Korean food and ingredient names does not indicate her level of proficiency in Korean, but they do suggest that the names associated with Korean food and ingredients are part of her upbringing and her current life.

Conclusion

If one considers heritage language ability central to one's identity, very few second-generation Koreans in Germany or the United States would be able to identify as Korean or partly Korean. Interestingly, the absence rather than the presence of linguistic proficiency in Korean is indeed a characteristic of second-generation Koreans, as we have seen, and is very common among second-generation immigrants in general. If the second-generation youth is not victim of authoritative parenting and "cultural dissociation," where they may reject their parents' native culture, they are likely to emerge with some type of "transnational identity," an identity that is characterized by synthesis of more than one culture, fluidity, and hybridity. In fact, their perceived "ethnic identity can develop despite a lack of linguistic proficiency in the heritage language" (Jo, 2018, pp. 145–146). Hence, if heritage Korean language ability is not a marker of Koreanness, the question remains what is. Aside ethnic appearance, of course, cooking and eating preferences as practiced in Korean immigrant homes, emerge as a clue into identity processes of second-generation Koreans. While the Korean language is difficult to pass on to the next generation, for various reasons, food preferences can be transmitted more easily, since everyone must eat. While there are differences in how the first generation and the second-generation may approach Korean food and cooking Korean food, Korean food remains at the center of their food preferences.

First-generation Koreans who went to the United States and Germany, for instance, share experiences of longing for their traditional food, resourcefulness due to the lack of ingredients, and having to deal with food shaming. They cooked Korean food, because they were missing home, and cooking and eating Korean food brought them closer to the place and family that they left behind. If they did not have the right ingredients, they found ways to tweak recipes. Necessity made them creative. While they were highly aware of how their food was perceived (as foreign and smelly), they continued to seek ways to prepare and eat it without overly burdening the non-Koreans around them. They managed to continue their food traditions, and they raised the second-generation on a mix of old and new, but with the Korean cuisine still playing a prominent role.

The second-generation does not share the same sense of longing for Korean food, since they simply grew up with the foods that they are eating. However, they all seem to share some type of food-shaming memories, as well as memories of having eaten or at least having observed their parents making fusion dishes. Adolescent struggles with the strangeness of Korean food, against a background of mainstream Western food and subsequent feelings of not belonging and inadequateness, are typical for the second-generation, even though the United States and Germany are the only countries they know intimately. By the time the second-generation has grown up and become adults with their own families, though, one can observe that Korean food and their Korean names are incorporated into their daily lives with intent and seemingly with no residual shame attached to it. They deliberately choose to make Korean food part of their diet, and they see that it is part of their identity, just as they are Korean American or Korean German. The boundaries may not be clearly drawn, but there is no doubt that Korean food has a place in their lives. It even seems that it has been elevated to a source of pride. Prior experiences with shame are not forgotten, but they have a place in the hybrid and multiple nature of their identities. The second-generation adults have come to terms with their bi-culturalness and fully embrace it. The first generation has often done the same, in fact. In the end, food connects them both. It has made them, and it continues to connect them, even if other traditional markers, such as biological features and language, are fading away.

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