

# TRADITIONAL SUMMER BEVERAGES

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**M**ost Koreans, even after a heavy meal, welcome a bowl of refreshing rice punch, *shikhye*, or persimmon punch, *sujeonggwa*. Shikhye and sujeonggwa are seasonal drinks for cold months, whereas *hwach'ae*, drinks decorated with flower petals or pieces of fruit, are perfect for spring and summer.

The first written record of Korea's traditional cold beverages, called *umch'ong*, "refreshing drinks," is found in the *Samguk sagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*). It is recorded that when passing his house on the road to battle, General Kim Yu-shin asked his servant to bring him some *changsu*, and upon drinking it said: "It tastes the same as before so all must be well here." From this episode, it can be deduced that *changsu*, a drink made of a mixture of fermented grain and

water that came to Korea from China, was made in private homes during the Three Kingdoms period (1st century B.C.-A.D. 7th century). In *Samguk yusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), it is recorded that King Suro made offerings of "drinks and alcoholic beverages made of orchids" to his subjects when he received the queen.

In ancient Chinese literature, it is noted that "The Shilla people drink tea made of dried mint leaves," and "the *omija* (*schisandra chinensis*) fruit of Koguryō is excellent because it is fleshy, sour and sweet." During Korea's Koryō Dynasty (918-1392), tea drinking thrived, not only among the nobility but among commoners as well. In the *Tong-ŭi pogam* (*Exemplar of Korean Medicine*), a medical book published in 1610 during the mid-Chosŏn period (1392-1910), *saengmaeksan*, *samult'ang*, *sanghwa'tang*, and *cheho'tang* are list-

ed as tonic drinks made of local herbs. *Shiŭijonsŏ*, a recipe book published toward the end of the 19th century, lists various drinks made of rose petals, cherries, wild berries and peaches. From this it can be inferred that toward the end of the Chosŏn Dynasty, punch drinking was widespread, even among commoners. In addition, in Chosŏn-period recipe books and records of court festivals there are references to numerous hot and cold beverages made from fruits, herbs, grains, pollen, flowers and honey.

## **Hwach'ae, Cold Fruit Drinks**

Many people make a fruit drink by adding pieces of fruit to sugared water, but this is not the right way to obtain the proper taste. To make a proper *hwach'ae*, a stock is made from grated



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fruit, and then garnished with small pieces of fruit to float in it. Strawberries, peaches, and citron are common ingredients of hwach'ae. Depending on the main ingredient of the stock, hwach'ae can be divided into omija, honey, herbal, and plain fruit. The most popular stock is made of omija because of its contrasting sweet and sour taste. For garnish, azalea flowers are used in spring, newly harvested barley, berries and rose petals in summer, and pears in autumn. When flowers or fruits are not readily available, starch noodles or rice cakes are added, which provide a seasonal touch as well as nutritional benefits.

Omija is a deciduous, broad-leaf, perennial vine that typically grows on hillsides. Its red fruit tastes sweet, sour, bitter, salty and spicy because it is rich in malic and tartaric acids. Omija can be bought at herbal medicine shops. The fresh fruit is sticky and bright red. In Oriental medicine, omija is considered effective for quenching thirst and relieving exhaustion, so it is used in invigorating tonics. To make omija stock, dried omija are soaked in water (the ratio of

water to fruit is four or five to one), and then the liquid is sieved through a soft fabric, and sugar or honey is added to taste. Boiling or steeping in hot water intensifies the fruit's sour and bitter tastes, so it is best to soak it in cold water for a day and a half. In spring, azalea petals are floated in the stock, and in summer edible yellow rose petals. To use azalea petals, the stems are first removed and then the petals

are coated with starch, scalded in boiling water, and finally rinsed in cold water for a smooth texture. For pear garnish, pears are cut into small, rectangular pieces or flower shapes. When flower or fruit floats are not readily available, one can prepare transparent noodle-like embellishments called *sūmyōn*, *ch'angmyōn* or *hwamyōn*. This is done by pouring a mixture of bean starch mixed with water into boiling water to form a thin sheet. The water is drained off and the sheet is cut into thin pieces like noodles.

In late autumn, when citron provides a great flavor and pears are ripe, citron drink is at its best. It is made of thin slices of peeled citron and pears, added to honey or sugared water, and steeped for about an hour. When serving, jewel-like pomegranate seeds and



pine nuts can be added for a visual effect.

*Sunch'ae* (water lily), *waegamja* (sweet potato), *pokbunja* (blackberry), *sansa* (red hawthorn), *karyŏn* (lotus) and *tuch'ung* (Chinese gutta percha) are some other drinks recorded in old recipe books.

### Chehot'ang

From long ago, ordinary Korean households prepared a thirst-quenching concoction for hot summer days by brewing together arrowroot, omija, ginseng, and *liriope graminifolia*. During the Chosŏn Dynasty, a drink called *chehot'ang* was popular with the court. In China, from where the word *cheho* (*ti hu*) originates, *cheho* has several meanings. Above all, it refers to a nourishing drink carefully prepared with cow's milk.

The fifth lunar month is when summer begins to heat up. In the court on Tano (the fifth day of the fifth lunar month), the Royal Infirmary brewed *chehot'ang* and presented it to the king. The king, in turn, gave his cabinet ministers a vessel of *chehot'ang* and a fan, wishing them a healthy summer. *Chehot'ang* is a refreshing drink, made

by mixing a spoonful of a solution made of boiled, dried and powdered apricot, *amomum xanthoides* seeds, *santalum album* and ginger in water, and adding honey to taste. The apricots, dried and straw-smoked, are effective for thirst, diarrhea and coughing, according to Oriental medicine. A tea can be made by mixing powdered dried plums in honey and cold water.



In the *Tong-ŭi pogam*, *chehot'ang* is listed as a cure for "summer heat and frequent thirst." The Royal Infirmary's recipe for *chehot'ang* is as follows: Mix 1 *kun* of coarsely ground dried apricot, 1 *ryang* of finely ground ginger root, 5 *chŏn* of *santalum album* and five *kun* of honey; store in a porcelain jar; mix with cold water to drink.

### Misu, Ground Grain Powder

Most summer drinks are prepared for their cooling effect. However ground grain powder mixed with water is not only a refreshing drink but also a nourishing snack that is perfect for summer when many people tend to lose their appetite. It is an easy-to-digest instant food, made of powdered cooked rice or barley. From ancient times, people carried powdered grain when traveling or in wartime. Chinese characters signifying powdered fried rice (*qiu*) and dried steamed rice (*bei*) can be found in Chinese literary sources from around





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misu powder is put in a bowl or glass and then water is added a little at a time while stirring. Otherwise, if the water is added all at once to the powder, hard-to-dissolve lumps will form. An easy way to make this drink is to put sugar in the grain powder before adding the water.

**Songhwa Milsu, Pine Pollen Honey Drink**

*Songhwa milsu* is a summer drink made with pine pollen and honey. Pine flowers begin to bloom in the fifth or sixth lunar month, and come into full bloom in about a week, at which time the pollen is released into the air. To gather the pollen, flowers are picked from their stems when they are still half-open, then spread out on a tray to dry for three or four days, after which the stems with flowers are shaken to loosen the pollen. To eliminate foreign objects, the pollen is put in a large basin of water and stirred. When the pollen rises to the surface of the water, a gourd is put in the water; the pollen sticks to the bottom of the gourd. The water is changed and the process is repeated five or six times to obtain pure pollen. The pollen thus collected is spread out on mulberry paper to dry and then put through a sieve and dried again. Pollen is an effective summer thirst quencher, and is known to be good for stroke patients as well as those who suffer from high blood pressure and heart disease. It is also effective for relieving respiratory ailments, neuralgia and headaches.

**Sudan, Rice Cake Floating in Honey Water**

*Sudan* is made by adding white rice cake cut into small pieces to honey water. Pine nuts are added for decoration and flavor. During the hottest summer days, cooked barley is often used instead of rice cake.

In the past, a rite was held on the sixth day of the sixth lunar month to offer barley, wheat, melons, cucumbers, watermelon and other newly harvested crops to the ancestral spirits. Farming households placed rice cakes at irrigation channels and rice paddy paths, and prayed for good crops and no misfortune.

*Yudumyōn*, noodles for the sixth day of



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the 1st century B.C. In a Korean book, *New Variety Recipes of Chosōn*, there is this description: "Misu is stir-fried barley powder. Because it has a nice flavor, it is also called *ku* (qiu). It is inexpensive and easy to eat, so it is a must when one goes to the mountains or travels to a faraway place." The most popular misu is made of glutinous rice, but it can be made with barley or Job's-tears (*yulmu*). For a more nutritious variety, glutinous rice, barley, black beans and black sesame seeds are mixed together. This variety is more nutritious, but the taste is quite different from the simple, traditional misu made with barley or glutinous rice only. To serve, some

the sixth lunar month, *sudan* and *kōndan* (plain rice cakes) were among the special foods prepared for the day. Rice cake *sudan* is a cold drink made with small rice cake balls and honey water or omija stock, served with ice. *Kōndan* is believed to have been rice cakes served without putting them in honey water. Barley *sudan* is made by steaming newly harvested barley, coating it with starch and then scalding it in boiling water. The barley *sudan* is then floated in a sour omija stock. Floating in the pink stock, barley *sudan* is notably attractive. It is fun to eat because of its crunchiness. ♦

