

## Traditional Korean Grill is a great experience

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Traditional Korean Grill is a great experience. It has its own technique, and its own fan following. You start off with kim chi, various forms of it to rev up your appetite. Specially fermented with garlic, red chili peppers, ginger and pickled fish, kim chi is not only a tasty treat but it's also rich vitamins.

A waitress in full traditional Korean garb will come and greet you with the menu before you even notice the plush booth and contemporary decor which makes the place cozy. Modern designs and decorations, like wire sculptures and paintings, are sporadically placed around the restaurant to the eye but do not take away from the homely feel emphasized by the teak wood and astutely placed lighting.

Once you get comfortable, it's time to absorb the menu while you munch on kim chi. The menu is complete with traditional platters both grilled and not grilled, but since grilled cuisine is what we're going to bypass the assortment of stews and soup offered, like Gae Tchigae or crab soup and Dol Sot Man Doo Gook or prawn, pork and vegetable dumpling soup in stone pot, and go straight for the grilled specialities. Or washing down the heat and re

Korean fruit punch with cinnamon, pine nuts and jujube, or Soo Jeong Kwa, comes in watermelon or pineapple and is good for washing down the heat and refreshing your taste buds for more BBQ action. If you're looking for an alcoholic touch, a full bar with Soju, Korean Liquor, is available.

The Goo Jeol Pan, which means Princess Hors d'oeuvres, is a must as it's an assortment of nine cold appetizers served with thin crepes. But if that sounds like too much and you want to save your appetite for the meat to come, try the Pa Jeon or pan-fried spring onions, mussels and squid pancake (Bt180). The Pa Jeon is one of Kongju's house specialties and is commonly referred to as the "Korean pizza" for its shape and looks. You can never judge a book by its cover though, because even if the Pa Jeon resembles a pizza, it tastes more like a traditional Thai omelette stuffed with mussels, squid and onions. The Pa Jeon has a more distinctive taste than a Thai omelette and it's not as greasy.

The kim chi, the appetizer, and the drink have all done their part. Don't miss the Doe Gee Kal Bee, or marinated spare ribs, a whole lot of large sized ribs marinated in its own special juice-like sauce. The sizzle it makes as you place the dripping spare ribs on the grill and the aroma enhances your appetite.

Kongju uses a special grill which extracts the barbecue smoke into a circular recess located under the table. The centre of the recess is an edgiest system with a variable air control knob so that you can let as much or as little air and smoke out while you eat your dinner. The exhaust system allows you to enjoy your barbecue dinner without having your hair and clothes smell of a barbecue. Kongju also uses real charcoal instead of gas for the real taste of barbecue grill.

With that in mind, don't be afraid to order more for the grill. The Mo Deum Hae Mool Guyi, or mixed seafood platter, and it comes with sliced up shrimp, squid, and scallops also marinated in the special juice that gives it the zesty flavor.

The Mo Deum Bulgoki, or meat platter, is also a must as you get big slices of pork, chicken, and beef, also marinated to perfection. The slices are big, but not thick, so that you're not waiting a lifetime.

There's a special way of eating your barbecue here at Kongju though. The waitress explains what the large plate of lettuce, string beans, and the Korean soybean sauce with sesame, garlic and chilli are for. She might also suggest a small bowl of rice to go with your meal so that you can eat your barbecue Korean style.

What you do is take a large lettuce leaf, put a piece of your favorite grilled meat from the grill and wrap it up in the lettuce leaf with some rice and some of the Korean soybean sauce and pop it in your mouth. The coolness of the lettuce leaf, plus the hint of spiciness in the sauce combined with the juicy grilled selection and rice to fill up all the empty spaces is a combination that will have you coming back to Kongju for more.

You won't even be thinking of dessert after that lavish meal. But if your sweet tooth gets the best of you, go with the Mo Deum Gwail, or selection of fruits in season.