

C E R E A L

In this volume, we look towards Korea. We explore the architecture of Itami Jun, the photography of Koo Bohnchang, and the Dansaekhwa art movement. We converse with David Chang and Eunjo Park, visit Charlotte Perriand's Méribel chalet with Aēsop, and share our cultural guide to Seoul.

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CROSS
POLLINATION

*A Conversation with
Eunjo Park & David Chang*

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It's an hour before opening and the rust-coloured banquettes are empty. At the centre of the restaurant, the long arms of cherry branches, bursting with pale pink buds, stretch into space. The kitchen, which opens into the room, buzzes with the clatter and chatter of prep: the clink of metal bowls, the hum of running refrigerators, a polite, "You go ahead." One chef, hunched over his chopping board, instructs another to go to California and bring back bags of avocados. Elsewhere, Eunjo Park and David Chang are moved around for portraits, which they do with almost silent agreeability and perfunctory speed. There is no time to relish in vanity. The kitchen calls.

Kāwi, the latest jewel in Chang's crown, sits within Hudson Yards, on the fifth floor of what is likely one of the most glamorous shopping malls in the world. The complex verticalises the New York City experience, creating a dense concentrate of international tourists, local residents, and no-nonsense business types. Kāwi's location has given Park, Kāwi's executive chef, unique exposure to a broad and discerning audience. Like Hudson Yards itself, her cuisine represents an intersection of sorts, a flawless and inventive merger of Korean tradition and French technique. Park's menu is not simply a collection of dishes; it is a rallying cry against the status quo, and an invitation to reshape the palate of the US and beyond.

Both of you excel at a kind of cross pollination, with Korean cuisine as its backbone. Is it important to master all of your culinary influences?

EUNJO PARK

I think it's important to know the foundations, but you don't necessarily have to master them.

DAVID CHANG

It helps to know how to do things — it's hard to break the rules until you know the rules.

What aspect of the other's cooking do you most admire?

EP Dave's creativity is something I've never imagined. He'll have a crazy idea, like a seed, and get me to bloom it.

DC She's crazier than I am. [Park and Chang laugh.] She just hasn't realised how crazy she is — in a good way. In terms of technique and execution, there are very few people as good as Jo. She's in the midst of finding her voice. She's really just scratching the surface. That's exciting.

David, you are a child of Korean immigrants, and Eunjo, you are a Korean immigrant yourself. How has your relationship to your Korean heritage changed throughout the years?

DC I think Jo has a deeper relationship to it than me. For me, it's something that I tried to get away from. It's only at my current age that I have slowly tried to embrace it, but not in a traditional way. I feel like I'm closer to it than before, yet simultaneously further away from it.

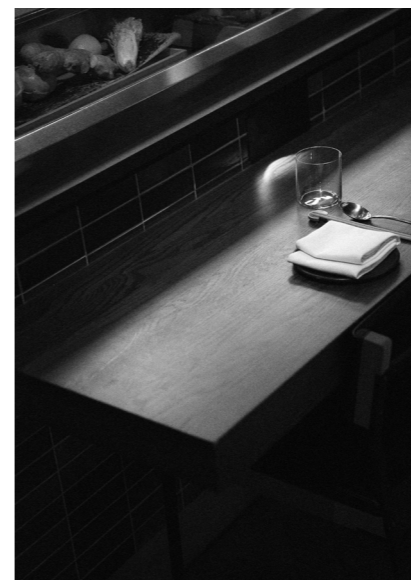
EP I feel the same way. When I started cooking, I didn't want to cook Korean food. But it's so deep within me that I'm drawn to it more and more.



As children, did you find that your parents held onto their heritage, or did they try to discard a part of themselves in the service of assimilation?

DC I think our parents tried their best to assimilate, while at the same time holding onto what made them 'them'. It was about dipping their toes into both cultures — but the one they were drawing on more, was certainly Korean culture.

EP The same goes for my parents. It was about striking a balance — like, cooking American Thanksgiving but making sure we spoke Korean at home.



What Korean dish defines your childhood?

EP The roasted sweet potatoes that we used to dig up from the countryside and eat with my grandma's kimchi — and the Japanese cucumber maki rolls from my parents' Japanese/Korean restaurant.

DC For me, it would probably be my mom's braised short rib — *galbi jjim*. It was something that we had on special occasions. That was the thing I looked forward to the most.

What about an American dish?

EP I'd have to say boxed mashed potatoes.

DC Chicken fingers.

What used to be in your parents' grocery carts at the supermarket?

EP Tofu. Scallions.

DC I mean, it depends. If you went to the Korean market it would be all Korean food. If you went to the American market it would be all American food.

Eunjo Park is the executive chef of Kāwi, a 2019 addition to David Chang's Momofuku group of restaurants across the US, Canada and Australia. Chang has also been involved in two Netflix series: *Ugly Delicious* (2018), and *Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner* (2019).

Eunjo, you moved to Philadelphia from Seoul at the age of 12. Was there an ingredient you remember having a hard time accessing once in the States?

EP It was accessible in the States, but my grandma would still send my parents freshly dried chilli flakes or dried anchovies from Korea.

David, as a new parent, have you thought about how you'll pass down Korean culture to your kid?

DC I haven't really thought about it too much. I think it's just going to happen naturally. He speaks better Korean than I do already. We're reading the same books.

What's a good Korean children's book?

DC I don't know, but they're scarier than they are here.

I suppose the early Brothers Grimm stories were, well, very grim.

DC This is way grimmer than Grimm. The last one we read, the door opens and a tiger eats the mom. That's a really terrifying story.

Is there a meal you most enjoy sharing with family and friends?

DC I make oxtail a lot. Braised oxtails.

EP With my family, it's always Korean BBQ. Ever since high school. We used to bring friends over and my parents served pork belly.

When you're creating new dishes and menus, does your future audience come into play at all?

DC Certainly. It has to. That doesn't mean you dumb it down, but you have to think about how someone's going to eat it, and if it's too esoteric. For instance, Jo's raw crab dish, which is delicious — how will someone receive it? A lot of people don't even eat crab, let alone crab in the shell. And then it being raw — that's the next step. Hopefully in the future it won't be so foreign to people, and I believe that will be the case. But right now, there are a lot of things that are new and you have to take how they're eaten into consideration.

How does one then introduce flavours and textures to an audience? Is it something done incrementally, or all at once?

EP I think it's straight up. There's no taking little steps. One thing that Dave has taught me is to push boundaries, but to also have empathy.

Aside from the crab, is there any other Korean flavour or ingredient that you want to push?

EP I would love to promote dried fish. But I know it's hard — the texture, the flavour, the smell. That's something I want to work on in the future.

DC Give it time.

What is your vision for how Korean food can continue to push culinary boundaries?

DC More Eunjo.

EP I would love for people to be eating something one day and be reminded of Korean food. Right now, most people still see *gimbap* as sushi. In the future, maybe they'll see sushi as *gimbap*.

Is there anything in particular about Kāwi's space that excites you?

EP Fighting against the odds. The guests here tend to be more the steak-and-potatoes type. For us, it's about having that on the menu, but also having something that's a bit out of place and getting them excited about coming here for that reason.

David, what about you?

DC About this space?

Yeah. Is there something significant about Kāwi's placement within New York City?

DC Well, we're on 34th Street. I sort of still see it as Koreatown. •





EUNJO PARK — *Dave's creativity is something I've never imagined. He'll have a crazy idea, like a seed, and get me to bloom it.*

