



Epiqueerean
BY JENNY NGUYEN

Feed Your Inner Seoul

My entire life I was ignorant to the cuisine that resided just east of China and north of Japan. In my limited experience, Korean food was simplified to kimchi and bulgogi. After dining at these three fine Korean establishments, I have a newfound respect for and craving for this oft-neglected Asian cuisine.

BeWon

1203 N.W. 23rd Ave., 503-464-9222,
www.bewonrestaurant.com

Below street level, this magical maroon den delivers Korean food with exceptional elegance and exquisite preparation. The *han jung shik*, a seven-course *prix fixe* dinner, is ideal for diners who've had little contact with Korean cuisine. From a sweet rice and pumpkin porridge to miniature crepes, every tiny portion is jam-packed with flavor. The macro components play to the sweet, sour, spicy and bitter flavors of the palate, offering the coexistence of simplicity and complexity like no other Asian cuisine. Finish your meal with *su-jeong-gwa*, a sweet corn drink with cinnamon and ginger, and realize what you've been missing all these years.

Toji Korean House Grill

4615 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd., 503-232-8998

This airy space fills early and fills fast. Devout eaters of all ages come for the pricey but unique experience of the grill-it-yourself dining tables. Each table has a built-in hub of flames, making every eater a chef du jour. Scale the mammoth menu with caution; some items aim to please those not seeking traditional Korean cuisine, but the über-helpful wait staff won't hesitate to guide you. Many of the starters are superb, served with a multitude of dips and sauces. For optimum dining pleasure, stick to the barbecue for your main course. Toji is also a terrific place to bring larger groups for family-style dining. The live fire, multiple components and booth seating take communal eating to an all-new level of feasting fun.

Sorabol

7901 S.E. Powell Blvd., 503-771-5842

Located at "Hell's Intersection," 82nd and Powell, this Korean barbecue house has got the tabletop grills, the perfectly marinated meats and the tiny bowls of *umami* to boot. Serving authentic, traditional cuisine at a price that won't pickle your cabbage, Sorabol is the place to go for good, affordable Korean. Ignore the sushi and other pan-Asian options on the menu; they're there to make the neophobes comfy. Opt instead for the sizzling *bee bim bap*—a hot stone bowl of egg, veggies and rice—or the Korean dumpling and rice soup. Considering it's located out in the Styx, this place sure does serve a tiny slice of heaven. 10

JENNY NGUYEN is Vietnamese but is proud to say that there is now a little Korean in her. Write to her to discover your inner Korean or anything else at epiqueerean@comcast.net.

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