



# Korean New Year

"Saehae bok mani badeuseyo!"



Did you know: Korean New Year's celebrations last for three full days!

# Meet Jay

Learn about Sol, the Korean New Year, through the eyes of Jay J. Koh, who was born in Korea and immigrated with his family to America when he was 10 years old. Jay is currently based in Seattle. Jay tells us about his New Year's memories in an interview with the Wing Luke Museum

## FOOD

Food is an important part of all of the New Year's celebrations and ceremonies in Korea. Life families in Korea, many Korean Americans still prepare some of the same traditional New Year's foods: fruit, hangwa (a traditional Korean snack), ttokkuk (rice cake soup), galbijjim (rib stew), japchae (noodles with meat and vegetables), Korea-style pancakes, and various types of fish and wild vegetables.

Jay recalls: "first of all with food, you have to eat ttokkuk, ttok is the rice cake. and kuk is the soup. You had to eat this in rice cake soup in order to age one year. So anyway, I remember that, and I like eating. I eat enough to age three years. I remember

certain rice and Korean sweets. They're more like called, once again, ttok, a kind of sweeter version of the rice cake with fillings and stuff, like black bean, sweet bean fillings, and some sweet sesame fillings and things like that. . . I guess it's kind of like Thanksgiving, huh? Just eat."

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Many New Year's traditions are important to Korean or Korean American families and their communities, the most important of which is to celebrate with family. Some people travel hundreds or thousands of miles to be with their loved ones on New Year's Day. While together, families often celebrate by wearing their "**soelbim**", which are specially prepared clothing for Sol, playing games like **yut nori** or performing **sebae**. Jay remembers the sebae tradition:

"There's this certain bow that you have to do. The elders sit in front of the room, cross-legged and. . . you kneel, you bow and you say *sehepongmani du seyoh* (which means, 'In the New Year I hope you receive lots of blessings and good luck'). Then they give you money. . . usually five to ten bucks. . . twenty would be a huge score, and I remember some uncles, who want to show off, would give you \$100. Which, of course, would drive any kid crazy. I remember in Korea, we would visit Grandma's and Grandpa's to do this. I also remember how neighborhood kids would get together at the end of the day to brag or lament about how much we earned. . . It's a fun memory."

## BEING UNIQUELY AMERICAN

Many people immigrate to America every year. Jay's family moved here from Korea in 1979. Jay reflects on how the move to America impacted and changed their New Year's traditions: "When we first came over to the States we were struggling financially so we didn't have time to celebrate anything. . . I remember just birthdays or Christmas. . . but it wasn't until later on when our family settled down more that we started doing some things for New Year's. . . We've started doing it again but we don't have that many extended family members over here."



Yut nori game like Jay describes.

# The Story of Yakwanggy

Where do you put your shoes? Does it change depending on the season or the holiday? For many Korean and Korean American families, it does. Throughout the year, many families leave their shoes outside their homes. During New Year's, though, some will bring their shoes inside, and instead put a strainer outside their door. This tradition is rooted in the story of Yakwanggy.

Yakwanggy is believed to be a goblin who wanders the human world on Sol. While going from home to home, he searches for shoes. If he finds shoes that are the perfect fit for him, Yakwanggy will steal them. If your shoes are stolen on New Year's, it is believed that you will have bad luck for the following year!

To prevent bad luck, families will bring their shoes indoors during New Year's, turn off the lights, and distract Yakwanggy with a strainer on their door. While searching for shoes, Yakwanggy will become distracted by the strainer, believing the many holes to be eyes. "Wow! So many eyes! I don't know how many they are. All right. Let's count them. Let's see how many they are," he will say before he starts on his mission to count every single "eye" on the strainer. Despite his intentions, Yakwanggy has a hard time remembering which "eyes" he has already counted, so he will be stuck all night counting the "eyes", forgetting which ones he has already counted, and starting all over. In the early morning, after spending all night counting "eyes" instead of stealing shoes, Yakwanggy will run away as soon as he hears the birds' call.

While this story has inspired many traditions, and is used to explain why Korean and Korean American families bring their shoes inside during New Year's, today it is more likely to be heard being told to children on New Year's Day to try to convince them to go to bed early after having stayed up late for New Year's Eve the night before!

## Vocabulary

- **Sebae** - A traditional series of bows and rituals designed to pay respects to elders in your family. It often involves wishing for good blessings for elders in exchange for packets filled with money.
- **Soelbim** - A special kind of *Hanbok*, or traditional Korean clothing, worn during New Year's celebrations.
- **Sol** - The Korean term for New Year's. Sometimes it will also be referred to as *Seollal*.
- **Superstition** - a belief or way of behaving that is based on a story, folktale, or faith in magic or luck.
- **Ttokkuk** - A traditional Korean soup eaten on New Year's that made up of two parts: broth, and rice cakes
- **Yut Nori** - A game that uses wooden sticks, or *yut* sticks, as dice to determine how far a player will move. This game is played by people of all ages during Korean New Year celebrations!



# Taste the New Year: Ttokkuk Recipe

## MAKE RICE CAKE SOUP!

Ttokkuk or Ddukjuk, Rice Cake soup, is a traditional dish for New Year's Day. Once you have eaten the soup, you are considered one year older! Julie Kang, who makes the soup for her family, explains, "My mother used to spend hours making the broth from scratch, but I've learned to modify it to save time. Traditionally, the stock can be made with beef, anchovy, or chicken. However, I use chicken or beef broth (or instant bouillon cubes). Dduk are plain, cylinder shaped rice cakes sold in any Korean market. Most stores sell them precut but fresh ones often need to be sliced. In comparing Ddukjuk to chicken noodle soup, one can consider Dduk as the substitution for noodles."

Here is a recipe for Ddukjuk from Julie. Julie uses one cup of broth and one handful of Dduk for each serving.

### Ingredients:

- Dduk (rice cakes)
- Broth (1 cup/serving)
- Eggs (1/2 egg/serving)
- Green onions
- Chicken or beef (cooked and sliced)
- Salt and pepper (to taste)
- Sesame Seeds
- Seaweed



### Directions:

1. Bring Broth to a boil.
2. Add rice cake. Cooking time depends on the rice cake; it's similar to cooking pasta and depends on the texture preferred. (Julie's family like it al dente.) Fresh rice cakes take a shorter time than frozen rice cakes.
3. Whisk egg(s) and pour into the boiling soup\*
4. Put in the green onion and meat, then turn off stove
5. Add salt and pepper as needed.
6. Garnish with shredded seaweed and sesame seeds.

\*Julie admits, "My mother would fry the eggs separately by color, and slice them finely so that the yolk and the whites are used as decorative toppings. She also decorates and adds flavor by topping the soup with shredded sauteed carrots, diced beef, sliced pepper and green onions."

# Let's Watch: Sebae



Practicing sebae during the Korean New Year is an important part of the holiday. Not only are you showing your respect to your elders, but you also wish them a Happy New Year as you say, “Saehae bok mani badeuseyo”, which translates to “may you have abundant fortune for the new year.” In turn, elders may share words of advice and wisdom for the year before giving gifts of money within special envelopes.

[Watch how different people would bow during sebae just like Jay described in his interview!](#)

[See how these bows translate to the full se-bae activities.](#)

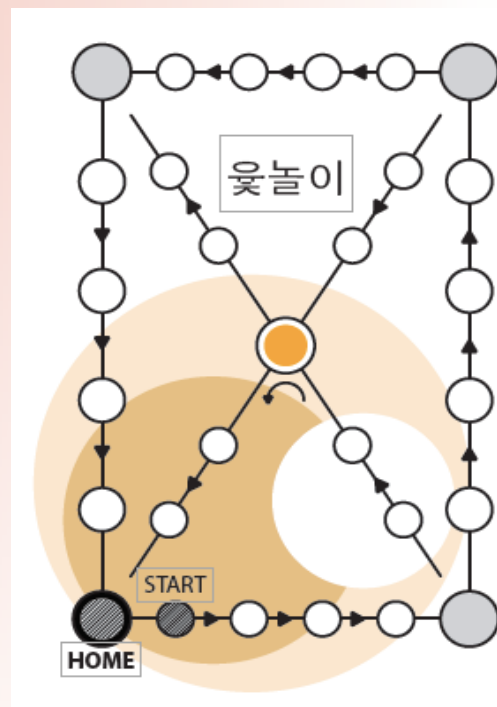
# Let's Play: Yut Nori

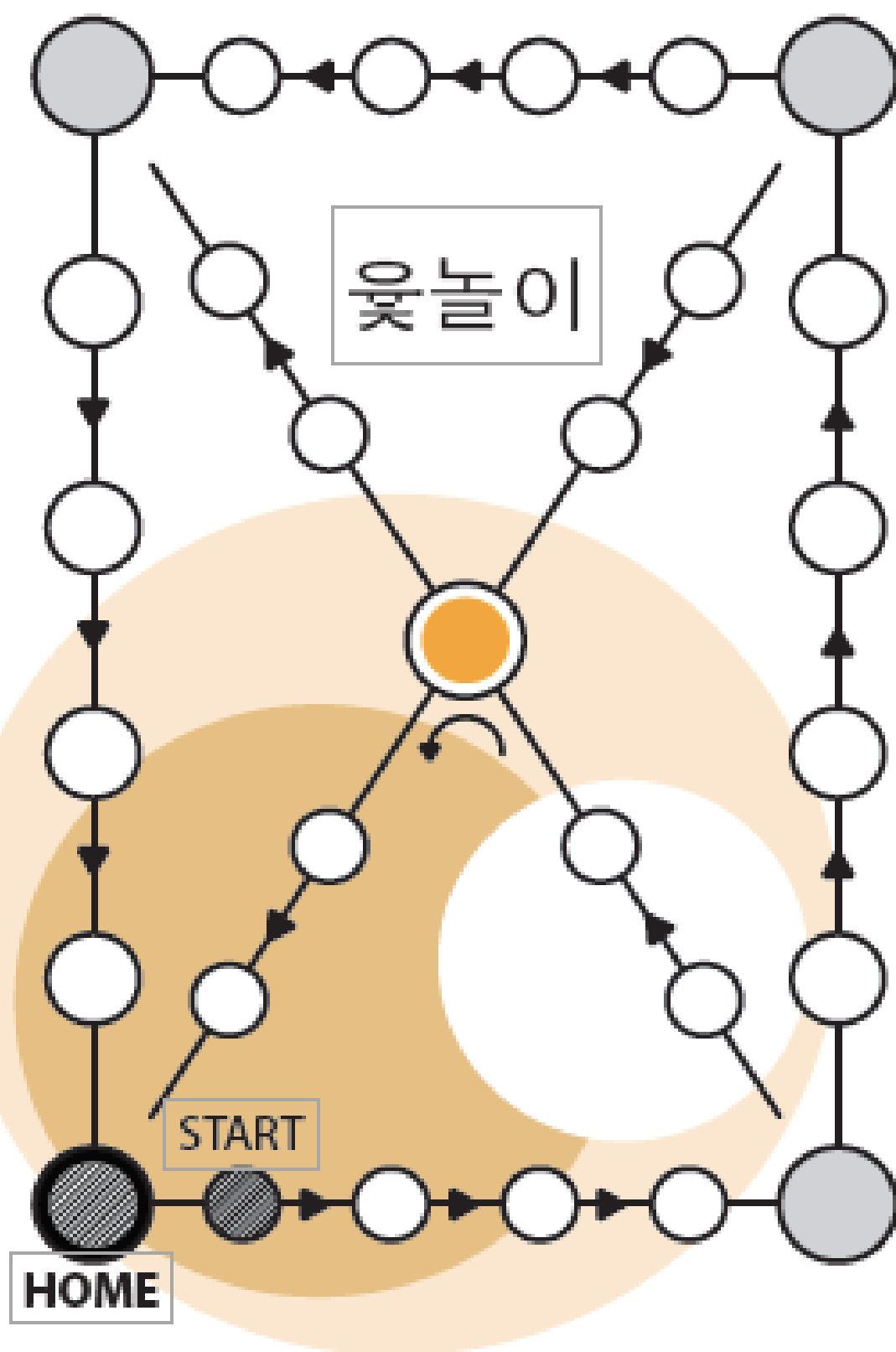
Start the New Year playing a game that so many Korean Americans play during Sol celebrations!

Using four coins as your yut sticks, the printable board on the next page, four game pieces of one color and four game pieces in a different color, you can play Yut Nori without a Yut set of your own with a friend.

Take turns throwing the coins, make sure you note how many are facing up (heads) and how many are facing down (tails) and follow the table to figure out how many spaces to move. If you get a yut or mo, you can take another turn and throw again. If you land on the corners, you have the opportunity to take a shortcut following arrows. If you land on the same space as one of your own tokens, you can carry one another. If you land in the space as your opponent, you can knock their piece off the board. First one home wins!

[Learn more about the game, including its origins and its evolution in Korean culture with this short video.](#)





# of Movement Spaces	How the Yut Sticks Land	Name of Combination
1		도 Do
2		개 Gae
3		걸 Geol
4		윷 Yut * Extra Throw
5		모 Mo *Extra Throw