



A younger Katherine (left) with her Korean School Teacher and classmate in their Hanboks at a Korean New Year Celebration.



New Year foods traditionally displayed and put out for the family's ancestors.



A young Katherine enjoying Seollal with her Grandfather.

# Meet Katherine and Julie

Learn about Seollal, or Korean New Year, from Julie and Katherine Kang. Katherine or **Hannah** (Katherine's Korean Name) is a fifteen-year old student who was born and raised in Seattle. Her mother Julie or **Youri** (Julie's Korean name), immigrated to the United States from Korea when she was seven years old. Together, they share how their family celebrates Seollal and how they've continued the traditions of the holiday here in Seattle.

## THE COLORS AND FLAVORS OF SEOLLAL

During the New Year you can hear the sizzle from **jeon**, or pancake-like side dishes, as they pan-fry and the smell of the savory, delicious aroma of the **tteokguk** soup broth coming from the Kang's kitchen. Foods and special dishes mark the celebration, shared each year with family and with friends.

Katherine's favorite food from the holiday is **tteokguk**. Julie shares that each family might do their **tteokguk** a little differently but for the Kangs, their stock is made from seaweed kelp, anchovies, onions and Korean radish called **mu**. After the stock comes together, she adds fresh rice cakes from the Korean Market that she slices into coins as well as sautéed beef or shiitake mushrooms for her vegetarian family and friends. For the finishing touches, Julie adds egg whites and egg yolks that have been pan-fried separately and sliced for extra decoration. She also adds a little piece of red chili pepper, "For a pop of color," Katherine explains. **Tteokguk** is not only a delicious dish but it's an important dish and part of tradition for the New Year, "We always say that when we eat the rice soup cake, we are a year older," Julie shares.

The festive colors of the holiday can be found in many of the dishes that are on the Kang's New Year's table. Julie explains, "Historically, it's the blue and the red is the two colors of our flag. When we make food or when we have our Korean traditional clothing, **hanbok**, we also think of the three colors of green, yellow and red. Wherever we can find those colors, in the vegetables or in the ingredients we add those to our food. It's also festive colors. I know in our family we like to dry jujubes because they are very bright red. You can use them to decorate the **Jeon**, or the little pancakes, you know put a little piece on the top to add a little color to the egg batter, yellow."

For dessert, Katherine remembers making **songpyeon** with her grandmother by stuffing the moon-shaped rice cakes with a honey and sesame mixture. The sweet treats are enjoyed with tea and conversations with family.

Julie reflects on how the holiday and its foods may adapt and change from one generation to the next, “We’re also learning a lot about it because when our immigrant parents came, they may not have had the financial ability to prepare for extensive dishes but also there weren’t a lot of Korean or Asian markets, so you couldn’t get all of the supplies to make the authentic dishes...I think that we are infusing some of what we like and what we remember, so it might not be as “authentic” but it’s okay too!”

### NEW YEAR CLOTHING AND SEBAE

After their feast of **tteokguk**, **jeon**, Korean side dishes and **songpyeon**, family and friends gather together in an open area of the Kang’s house that has been prepared and decorated for the holiday. Using a vibrant folding screen as the backdrop and with embroidered pillow-like mats in the front of the screen, the area is set for the New Year ritual and tradition of **Sebae**. **Sebae** is the ritual of traditional bowing in front of one’s elders, like grandparents, parents, aunts or uncles.

Katherine explains, “When you do your bowing or your **sebae**, as you are going down say ‘**Sehae bok manhi badusaeo**’. **Sehae** is new year, **bok** is luck, **mahni** is a lot or abundance, **badusaeo** is receive. So [translated it means] may you receive abundant luck in the new year.”

As you show respect towards your elders, they return the good wishes with advice for the upcoming year, called a **dokdam**, and even some money within a special silk New Year’s envelope. Honoring ancestors and being thankful for one’s family are meaningful and important parts of the holiday.

While performing the **sebae**, Katherine wears a traditional Korean outfit called a **hanbok**. The colors of the hanbok are festive and bright. Like mentioned earlier, favorite colors to the hanbok are green, reds, yellow and blues. Katherine shares how she feels in her hanbok, “I think this is one of the only times of the year that I pull out my **hanbok** and wear it. It’s really exciting as it’s very different from the clothes I wear every day. It’s exciting to be in those clothes and you’re very immersed in the culture and so that makes it even more special. You don’t get to wear it too often so if I can I like to wear it because it makes me feel fancy. There’s so many different colors.”



Katherine and her grandmother making **songpyeon**, the sweet moon-shaped rice cakes. They are rolling the rice cakes into their moon shape after adding the honey and sesame filling.



Katherine in her **hanbok** posing for a picture with her Korean school classmates. Katherine celebrates the holiday with her family and also with her community.





Katherine receiving her **dokdam** and envelope after performing sebae. Her parents make the experience exciting by putting different types of money from around the world within the envelope. Afterwards, Katherine tries to identify what country the money is from.

The Kang family makes sure to take pictures of Katherine each year in her **hanbok**. The pictures are sent to family members all around the US including to Katherine's grandmother living in Los Angeles. The celebration of Korean New Year is a welcome departure from the day to day in Seattle. A time to focus in on the family, enjoy each other's company over delicious foods and to honor Korean culture.

"We're a 100% Korean and 100% American," Julie explains, "and throughout our daily life, it's really the western culture, the American culture, that shapes and influences how we do things. And I think it's important for our children to recognize their identity and also be able to see what works for them."

As Julie and Katherine think about the holiday and the future generations of their family, Katherine is dedicated to continuing her family's traditions. "As someone who has experienced the full Korean new year for pretty much all fifteen years of my life, I think it is really important to keep it going through my kids and then their kids is because it's part of who I am and I think it's really important to continue knowing what it means to be Korean is like."