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Editorial

Seoul declaration of Korean diet



The mission of the Journal of Ethnic Foods is to share information and research on the traditional ethnic foods of various countries in order to promote their value. As interest in Korean food, especially regarding its health benefits, has greatly increased, there are insufficient resources and research available on the characteristics and definitions of Korean cuisine.

Leading healthy lifestyles, including eating a balanced diet, has become an important global trend. In this context, renowned healthy diets, such as the Mediterranean and Nordic diets, have been thoroughly studied and promoted globally. Moreover, studies on the French diet have reported an interesting epidemiological observation called the French paradox. It implies that French people have low incident rates of cardiovascular disease (CVD) despite the high consumption of saturated fats in their diet. According to this research, it is presumed that the French lifestyle and consumption of red wine and resveratrol lower the incidence rates of CVD [1].

Compared with the Mediterranean and Nordic diets, the diversity of raw materials and cooking methods used in Korean cuisine supports the positive health benefits of Korean food. Others have raised questions regarding the health benefits of Korean food due to the high salt content in dishes such as *kuk*, *tang*, and *kimchi*, which is a risk factor for CVD. However, the average life expectancy in Korea is > 80 years and is often referred to as the Korean paradox. Some researchers have claimed that the paradox can be explained by the regular consumption of vegetables and the types of salt used in Korean cuisine. Historically, Koreans have used unrefined, baked, or fermented forms of salt. Research has also

shown that the consumption of fermented foods, such as *kimchi*, is not associated with high blood pressure [2]. Furthermore, the intake of potassium from Korean cuisine assists in the discharge of salt out of the body and as a result reduces the risk of CVD [3].

As the desire to study and understand Korean food increases, the editors of the Journal of Ethnic Foods, researchers, and food science and nutrition professors in Korea began working together in April 2015, in order to establish cohesive definitions and concepts to be used in relation to Korean food. The 100 most representative Korean foods, taking into consideration traditional, cultural, and health aspects, were selected. Based on this collaborative work, scholars in food science and nutrition announced the “Seoul Declaration on K-diet: Korean Heritage and Healthiness” on December 9, 2015. This declaration is the first step in response to the increased interest and queries about Korean food, and it will continue to be modified and perfected by numerous researchers in the field. The Seoul Declaration will serve as a cornerstone for raising global awareness about Korean food and its health benefits. Lastly, we look forward to other countries, such as India and China, joining us by creating their own declarations and promoting the value of ethnic foods.

Conflicts of interest

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

Appendix A**Seoul Declaration on K-diet**
Korean Heritage and Healthiness

Culture is one of the key elements of a country's global competitiveness. Over the last few years, Korean culture, including pop music, drama and food, have attracted many admirers from around the world. Moreover, there has been an increased global and local desire to learn about the nature of Korean culture.

As food is one of the most important parts of one's culture, we gladly proclaim the "Seoul Declaration on K-diet: Korean Heritage and Healthiness" in order to raise awareness and promote Korean cuisine, as well as develop the Korean food industry.

The Seoul Declaration promotes a cohesive understanding of the nature and characteristics of the Korean diet (K-diet) and an introduction to Korean food (K-food), its traditions, and health benefits. Moreover, the declaration will serve an important role in promoting the cultural values of Korea internationally by combining traditional knowledge with scientific evidence.

Below is the Code of Conduct we adopted to promote the "Seoul Declaration on K-diet: Korean Heritage and Healthiness":

1. We affirm that we will preserve, succeed and develop definitions and characteristics of the K-diet to promote the authenticity of traditional Korean food.
2. We affirm that we will provide technological, cultural, scientific, social and economical support for the globalization of Korean food.
3. We affirm that research into the traditions and quality of Korean food and diet will be conducted based on scientific practices.
4. We affirm that we will invest in product development based on the identified characteristics of K-diet that can succeed in the global market.

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*The representatives of the organizing committee
of the Seoul Declaration*

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