

Korean Radish Soup aka 무국

Easy-to-make recipe with ingredients you probably have at home already!



K-CULTURE WITH JAE-HA KIM

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Korean Radish Soup (무국/Muguk) is light, delicious, healthy and easy to make.

My mother used to make muguk/무국 for my siblings and me when we were little. The soup can be doctored up to make it spicy, but it's delicious in its original form — soothing, smooth, and hearty. After we grew up and had kids of our own, my mother would **make the soup** for her grandchildren. She would send us home with no less than a gallon of soup, each.

I vividly remember my son sitting on a tiny stool my brother had made (back when he was in high school), waiting for my mother to spoonfeed him rice and muguk. Could he eat by himself? Of course he could. But it tasted better when his halmoni fed him.

It's literally freezing outside today, and we have already had several inches of snow. So while my husband and son were snowblowing, I made a fresh batch of muguk for our lunch. Did I have all the ingredients to make it the *proper* way? Nope. But I improvised with what I had in my pantry and it turned out just fine. (The substitutions are noted in the footnotes.)

As most of you already know, I only use recipes when I make desserts. My cooking style for most meals relies on son-mat (손맛), which literally translates to hand (손)¹ taste (맛). You know, a little bit of this, a little bit of that. But I tried to keep track of what I *kinda-sorta* used today so I could share this recipe.



Muguk

What you need:

- 12 to 16 oz. mu/Korean radish ²
- 12 to 16 oz. beef ³
- 3 garlic cloves
- 5 green onions
- 1 tablespoon guk-ganjang ⁴ (you can add more later as needed)
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1.5 teaspoons sesame oil
- 10 cups of water

What you do:

I used a mandolin and cut the radish into 3mm slices. If you don't have a mandolin, you can use a knife to cut them into thinnish bite-size pieces. Set them aside.

Cut the beef into bite-size pieces. Add oil to a soup pot. Once pot is hot, add the beef, minced garlic, and pepper. Saute until meat is browned. (The meat doesn't have to be cooked all the way through at this stage.) Pour the water over the beef, cover the pot, and boil it on high for about 15 or 20 minutes.

Then, skim the beef foam from the top of the soup. It will look a little gross. Now's the time to add the radish. Once everything is in, give the ingredients a good stir and add the add the guk-ganjang. Cover with a lid again and let it cook on medium high for another 20ish ⁵ minutes.

The radish should be soft, but not falling apart. Add the green onions. (I like larger chunks, but cut them to whatever size you prefer.) Cook for another 5-to-10 minutes.

This makes about 5 portions of soup. Serve with a bowl of rice, kimchi and whatever banchan you might have. It's a delicious and healthy meal that comes together in less than an hour. Enjoy!

- 1 Actress Son Ye-jin's Instagram username is @yejinhand. If you've ever wondered why the "Crash Landing on You" actress would include hand in her user handle, it's clever wordplay. 손 in Korean translates to *hand*.
- 2 Muguk literally means Korean radish (mu/무) soup (guk/국). Unfortunately, I didn't have any 무, so I used daikon radish instead. It tasted great,
- 3 Beef is the traditional meat that goes in this soup, but if you want to sub in some leftover Thanksgiving turkey instead, that would work. But if you don't have any of that on hand, you can make it meatless. Firm tofu holds up well and tastes delicious.
- 4 I also didn't have any soup soy sauce (guk-ganjang /국간장), so I used regular low sodium soy sauce. Note that the latter is less salty than guk-ganjang. I tend to believe that less is more. So start off with a little bit and then add more as the soup simmers. If the flavor isn't quite what you like, you can add about 1 tsp. of fish sauce to give it more richness. FWIW: guk-ganjang will make the soup a lighter color. Soy sauce will make the soup darker, like in my photo and video above.
- 5 Everyone's stove is different. You don't want to cook it so long that the radish falls apart. Yours may take less time than mine did. So check it every now and again.

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