



Korean Ladder Study Note

잘 먹겠습니다

What Koreans Say Before Eating

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Culture Etiquette	잘 먹겠습니다 What Koreans Say Before Eating

Study Links

[Open this lesson on Korean Ladder](https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-CULTURE-ETQ-001)

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-CULTURE-ETQ-001>

[Watch the full video on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYVS02GVlo4)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYVS02GVlo4>

[Visit Korean Ladder for all free lessons](https://www.koreanladder.com)

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Core Idea

Okay, real question. In K-dramas, before anyone touches the food, they all say this one phrase. What is that?

Right, and I tried to translate it literally and it got weird. It doesn't mean 'let's eat,' does it?

좋은 질문이에요. The phrase is 잘 먹겠습니다. Let me show you the words, and then what it really means.

So literally it's 'I will eat well.' But the feeling is gratitude — thank you for this food, I'm going to enjoy it fully.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	오늘은 제가 살게요. —	I'll treat you today.
Hana	감사합니다. 잘 먹겠습니다. —	Thank you. I'll eat well.
Junho	오늘은 제가 살게요. —	I'll treat you today.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	감사합니다. 잘 먹겠습니다. —	Thank you. I'll eat well.
Junho	오늘은 제가 살게요. —	I'll treat you today.
Hana	감사합니다. 잘 먹겠습니다. —	Thank you. I'll eat well.
Junho	맛있게 드세요. —	Enjoy your meal.
Hana	네, 잘 먹겠습니다. —	Yes, I'll eat well.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
잘 먹겠습니다 jal meokgesseumnida	I will eat well (said before a meal)	좋은 질문이에요. The phrase is 잘 먹겠습니다. Let me show you the words, and then what it really means.
맛있게 드세요 masitge deuseyo	Enjoy your meal (said to others)	네. The host or cook says 맛있게 드세요 — 'eat deliciously,' meaning 'enjoy your meal.' You say this TO other people.
잘 먹었습니다 jal meogeosseumnida	I ate well (said after a meal)	네. After eating you say 잘 먹었습니다 — 'I ate well.' Only one syllable changes: 겠 becomes 었, the past tense.
먹겠습니다 → 먹었습니다 meokgesseumnida → meogeosseumnida	before → after	Before the meal, 겠 — 'I will.' After the meal, 었 — 'I did.' Same thank-you feeling, just before and after.
잘 먹을게 jal meogeulge	I'll eat well (casual, to friends)	You CAN — it's never wrong, just a little stiff with close friends. With friends, Koreans often say 잘 먹을게. Drop the formal ending.
잘 먹겠습니다 / 잘 먹을게 jal meokgesseumnida / jal meogeulge	formal / casual	So 격식엔 잘 먹겠습니다, 친구엔 잘 먹을게. Formal with elders and hosts; casual with close friends.
잘 먹겠습니다 ≠ 'Let's eat' —	It means 'thank you, I'll enjoy this'	And the big trap: don't translate it literally as 'let's eat,' right? It's really a thank-you.



Grammar / Structure Notes

잘 먹겠습니다

잘 먹겠습니다 — I will eat well (said before a meal)

A set phrase — feel it, don't translate it

잘 먹겠습니다

잘 + 먹 + 겠 + 습니다 — I will eat well

Here are the pieces. 잘 is 'well.' 먹 is the verb 'eat.' 겠 shows intention, the will to do it. 습니다 is the polite formal ending.

잘 먹겠습니다

잘 먹겠습니다 — = 'Thank you, I'll enjoy this food'

It's a thank-you, not an announcement

잘 먹겠습니다

잘 먹겠습니다 — Say it the moment before you eat

To whoever provided the meal

감사합니다. 잘 먹겠습니다.

감사합니다. 잘 먹겠습니다. — Thank you. I'll eat well.

A common pairing

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
잘먹겠습니다	jal meokgesseumnida
잘 먹겠습니다	jal meokgesseumnida

Self-Check

- 1 Say 잘 먹겠습니다 three times: slow, natural, then inside a short sentence.
- 2 Write one original sentence that was not in the video.
- 3 Rewatch the YouTube lesson and pause when the same pattern appears.

Related / Subsequent Studies



Lesson	Why study it next	Link
두 손으로 주세요 Why Koreans Give and Receive with Two Hands	A1 Culture: compare 두 손으로 주세요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-CULTURE-ETQ-002
경조사 예절 결혼식·장례식 봉투와 조의금	B2 Culture: compare 경조사 예절 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-CULTURE-ETQ-001
눈치 / 정 / 체면 The Social Concepts Behind Korean Behavior	C1 Culture: compare 눈치 / 정 / 체면 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-CULTURE-ETQ-001
신발 벗고 들어오세요 Shoes, Floors, and Korean Homes	A2 Culture: compare 신발 벗고 들어오세요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-CULTURE-ETQ-001

My Notes

Free Korean lessons, one rung at a time. This PDF, the website, and the video lessons are free for personal study.