



Korean Ladder Study Note

국

Telling Korea's Everyday Soups Apart

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Culture Food Culture	국 Telling Korea's Everyday Soups Apart

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-CULTURE-FCL-004>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WafkE4R-UVA>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Here's my real problem. I see 된장찌개, 미역국, 갈비탕, and I just think, soup, soup, soup. Am I supposed to know the difference before I order?

좋은 질문이에요. In English, they can all feel like soup, but in Korean food culture, 국, 찌개, and 탕 feel different at the table.

Today's pattern is not grammar. It is menu sense. 국 is usually lighter broth, 찌개 is stronger and saltier, and 탕 is often a bigger soup dish with main ingredients.

먼저 국이에요. 국은 보통 국물이 많고, 맛이 비교적 가벼워요. In English, think everyday soup with a lot of broth.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	저는 된장찌개 주세요. —	I'll have doenjang jjigae, please.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	저는 갈비탕 주세요. —	I'll have galbitang, please.
Hana	찌개는 밥이랑 먹으면 좋아요. —	Jjigae is good with rice.
Junho	탕은 한 그릇으로 든든해요. —	Tang is hearty as one bowl.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
국 · 찌개 · 탕 guk · jjigae · tang	light soup · stew · hearty soup dish	Today's pattern is not grammar. It is menu sense. 국 is usually lighter broth, 찌개 is stronger and saltier, and 탕 is often a bigger soup dish with main ingredients.
국 guk	everyday soup; usually lighter and brothy	먼저 국이에요. 국은 보통 국물이 많고, 맛이 비교적 가벼워요. In English, think everyday soup with a lot of broth.
미역국 · 콩나물국 · 복엇국 miyeok-guk · kongnamul-guk · bugeo-guk	seaweed soup · bean sprout soup · dried pollack soup	예를 들면 미역국, 콩나물국, 복엇국이 있어요. These are common 국 names you may see or hear.
미역국은 맑아요 miyeok-gug-eun malg-ayo	Seaweed soup is clear.	문장으로 볼게요. 미역국은 맑아요. It means, seaweed soup is clear or light-looking.
찌개 jjigae	stew; thicker, stronger, often saltier	맞아요. 다음은 찌개입니다. 찌개는 국보다 더 진하고, 간이 센 편이에요. It is closer to stew.
김치찌개 · 된장찌개 · 순두부찌개 gimchi-jjigae · doenjang-jjigae · sundubu-jjigae	kimchi stew · soybean paste stew · soft tofu stew	대표적인 예는 김치찌개, 된장찌개, 순두부찌개예요. The flavor is usually concentrated, so you eat it with rice.
된장찌개는 짭짤해요 doenjang-jjigae-neu n jjapjjal-haeyo	Doenjang jjigae is salty-savory.	이 문장도 들어 보세요. 된장찌개는 짭짤해요. That means soybean paste stew is salty or savory.
된장찌개 doenjang-jjigae	Telling Korea's Everyday Soups Apart	된장찌개는 짭짤해요. Okay, this already feels less like a random soup word and more like a menu clue.



Grammar / Structure Notes

국 · 찌개 · 탕

국 · 찌개 · 탕 — light soup · stew · hearty soup dish

Think broth, saltiness, and serving style.

국

국 — everyday soup; usually lighter and brothy

Often served with rice as part of a meal.

미역국 · 콩나물국 · 복엇국

미역국 · 콩나물국 · 복엇국 — seaweed soup · bean sprout soup · dried pollack soup

국 often attaches to the main ingredient.

미역국은맑아요

미역국 + 은 + 맑 + 아요 — Seaweed soup is clear.

문장으로 볼게요. 미역국은 맑아요. It means, seaweed soup is clear or light-looking.

찌개

찌개 — stew; thicker, stronger, often saltier

Usually eaten with rice, often shared or served in a hot pot.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
된장찌개	doenjang-jjigae
찌개	jjigae
미역국 주세요.	miyeok-guk juseyo.
김치찌개 주세요.	gimchi-jjigae juseyo.
갈비탕 주세요.	galbi-tang juseyo.

Self-Check

- 1 Say 국 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
김치 / 반찬 / 밥 Korean Table Basics	A1 Culture: compare 김치 / 반찬 / 밥 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-CULTURE-FCL-001
누룽지 / 송늬 밥솥 바닥에서 태어난 한국의 구수한 마무리	A1 Culture: compare 누룽지 / 송늬 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-CULTURE-FCL-005
도시락 / 김밥 Korea's Packed-Lunch Everyday Culture	A1 Culture: compare 도시락 / 김밥 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-CULTURE-FCL-006
숟가락 / 젓가락 / 밥그릇은 안 들어요 Korean Table Utensils and Bowl Manners	A1 Culture: compare 숟가락 / 젓가락 / 밥그릇은 안 들어요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-CULTURE-FCL-002

My Notes

Your ladder to fluent Korean. This PDF, the website, and the video lessons are free for personal study.