



Korean Ladder Study Note

복날 / 삼계탕

Why Koreans Eat Hot Soup on the Hottest Days

Level	Topic	Focus
A2 · Elementary TOPIK 2	Culture Food Culture	복날 / 삼계탕 Why Koreans Eat Hot Soup on the Hottest Days

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-CULTURE-FCL-002>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfOYbJb5EMQ>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real question. It's the hottest week of the year in Korea... and people line up for boiling hot chicken soup? That makes no sense to me.

그쵸? Everyone asks that. But there's a whole idea behind it, and once you get it, it's kind of genius.

First, the days themselves. In summer Korea has three special hot days. We call them 복날 — the 복 days.

There are three of them, in order: 초복, 중복, 말복. 초 is first, 중 is middle, 말 is last.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	오늘 초복인데, 삼계탕 먹으러 갈래요? —	It's chobok today — want to go eat samgyetang?
Junho	좋아요! 이열치열이죠. —	Sounds great! Fight heat with heat, right?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	그럼 저녁에 봐요. —	Then see you this evening.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
복날 bongnal	the hottest 'dog days' of summer	First, the days themselves. In summer Korea has three special hot days. We call them 복날 — the 복 days.
초복 · 중복 · 말복 chobok · jungbok · malbok	first / middle / last dog-day	There are three of them, in order: 초복, 중복, 말복. 초 is first, 중 is middle, 말 is last.
삼복더위 sambok-deowi	the heat of the three 복 days	맞아요. About ten days apart, usually mid-July into August — the deepest heat of the year.
이열치열 iyeol-chiyeol	fight heat with heat	이제 핵심이에요. Here's the key idea: 이열치열. It means fighting heat with heat.
더위를 이열치열로 이겨요 deowireul iyeol-chiyeol-lo igyeoyo	We beat the heat with heat.	The thought is: on a hot day your body is actually cold inside. A hot meal warms you inside, you sweat, and then you feel cooler and stronger.
더위를 이겨요 deowireul igyeoyo	beat the heat	그 를는 목적어를 표시해요. In English, 를 marks the object — the thing being beaten, here 더위, the heat.
-(으)로 -(eu)ro	by means of / using	And 로 here means 'by means of' — 이열치열로, by fighting heat with heat. It's the 'how.'
삼계탕 samgyetang	ginseng chicken soup	The star is 삼계탕 — a whole young chicken stuffed with rice, ginseng, and jujube, simmered into a hot soup.



Grammar / Structure Notes

복날

복날 — the hottest 'dog days' of summer

복 = midsummer heat period; 날 = day

초복 · 중복 · 말복

초복 · 중복 · 말복 — first / middle / last dog-day

초 first · 중 middle · 말 last

삼복더위

삼복더위 — the heat of the three 복 days

삼 three + 복 + 더위 heat

이열치열

이열치열 — fight heat with heat

以熱治熱 — meet heat with heat

더위를 이열치열로 이겨요

더위 + 를 + 이열치열 + 로 + 이겨요 — We beat the heat with heat.

The thought is: on a hot day your body is actually cold inside. A hot meal warms you inside, you sweat, and then you feel cooler and stronger.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
삼계탕 먹으러 갈래요?	samgyetang meogeureo gallaeyo?
갈래요	gallaeyo
훨씬 자연스러워요	hwolssin jayeonseureowoyo

Self-Check

- 1 Say 복날 / 삼계탕 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
떡볶이 / 김밥 / 라면 Inside a Korean 분식 Snack Bar	A2 Culture: compare 떡볶이 / 김밥 / 라면 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-CULTURE-FCL-001
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
배달 음식 / 치맥 Korea's Delivery and Late-Night Food Culture	B2 Culture: compare 배달 음식 / 치맥 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-CULTURE-FCL-001
술자리 예절 두 손으로 따르고 고개 돌려 마시기	B2 Culture: compare 술자리 예절 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-CULTURE-FCL-002

My Notes

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