



Culture and Traditions

Short-answer questions: kimjang in Korea | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511

1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner before you read.

1. What foods are linked to family traditions in your culture?
2. Why do people preserve food?
3. Should traditional food skills be taught to young people?
4. How can cooking bring a community together?

Exercise 1 at a glance

Read one factual text. Answers are in the text. Copy exact words and check the question carefully before choosing your answer.

2. Read for overall understanding

Read the text. Why is kimjang more than just cooking?

Kimjang in Korea

Kimchi is one of Korea's best-known foods, but the tradition of making it together is called kimjang. Kimjang usually takes place before winter, when families and communities prepare large amounts of kimchi for the colder months. In 2013, UNESCO added kimjang in the Republic of Korea to its list of intangible cultural heritage.

Kimchi is made by fermenting vegetables, often napa cabbage or radish, with seasonings such as chilli, garlic and salted seafood. Fermentation allows the food to last longer, which was especially important before modern refrigerators. In the past, storing enough kimchi for winter helped families manage a season when fresh vegetables were harder to find.

Kimjang is not only about the final food. It is also about cooperation. Families may gather to wash vegetables, prepare seasoning, fill cabbage leaves and pack the kimchi into containers. Older relatives often pass on knowledge about taste, timing and ingredients to younger family members.

The tradition also has a social purpose. In many communities, kimchi made during kimjang is shared with neighbours or people in need. This makes the activity a way of showing care and strengthening relationships. The work can be tiring, but doing it together turns a practical task into a community event.

Kimjang also reflects the seasons. Before supermarkets and imported vegetables were common, families had to prepare for winter carefully. The amount of kimchi made depended on the size of the family, the weather and the ingredients available. Recipes could vary from region to region, with different seafood, spice levels or vegetables.

Tools and storage methods have changed. In the past, kimchi might be stored in large earthenware jars placed partly underground to keep a steady temperature. Today, many families use special refrigerators designed for kimchi. Even when the equipment changes, the idea of preparing and sharing food before winter remains important.

The tradition can also help younger people understand family history. A recipe may remind grandparents of a particular village, harvest or childhood memory. When younger relatives ask why an ingredient is used, they are not only learning how to cook; they are learning how food connects people to place and time.

Kimjang has changed with modern life. Many people now buy ready-made kimchi, live in smaller homes or have less time for large family gatherings. Some still join community kimjang events, while others make smaller amounts at home. Schools and cultural organisations may also teach the tradition to children.

UNESCO recognised kimjang because it shows how food can carry memory, identity and cooperation. The tradition connects everyday eating with seasonal change and family knowledge. Even when the process becomes shorter or more modern, kimjang reminds people that food traditions are often about relationships as much as recipes.

3. Strategy focus

Check food or tradition

This text mentions kimchi and kimjang. Check whether the question asks about the food itself or the shared tradition of making it.

4. Exam-style short-answer questions

Answer the questions using words from the text.

1. When does kimjang usually take place? [1]

2. Which organisation added kimjang to its intangible cultural heritage list? [1]

3. Why was fermentation especially important before modern refrigerators? [1]

4. What knowledge may older relatives pass on? Give one example. [1]

5. Who may teach the tradition to children besides schools? [1]

6. According to the text, what are three social or cultural purposes of kimjang? [3]

5. Vocabulary notebook

Underline five useful words or phrases. Check their meaning, then record them in your vocabulary notebook.

6. Follow-up tasks

1. Discussion: Which food tradition should be protected in your culture?

2. Summary: Summarise kimjang in about 50 words.

3. Creative task: Write instructions for one traditional food.

4. Research: Find one UNESCO food tradition from another country.

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4. Exam-style short-answer questions

1. before winter
2. UNESCO
3. it allows the food to last longer
4. Any one from: taste; timing; ingredients.
5. cultural organisations
6. Any three from: cooperation; pass on knowledge; shared with neighbours or people in need; showing care; strengthening relationships; carry memory, identity and cooperation.

Notes for checking

1. Answers should be short and clearly based on the text.
2. Accept bracketed or optional wording if the meaning is clear.
3. For the final question, learners need three separate details.