

4-27-2022

## **Interview with Patricia Hong (Hong's Market)**

Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga

Kerstin Istafanous

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Interviewee: Patricia Hong

Interviewers: Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga, Kerstin Istafanous

Date: April 27, 2022

Location: Zoom

Collection: Food for Thought: Oral Histories of California's Asian-Pacific Foodways, JAPN 317: Pacific Food Empires, Spring 2022

Length: 00:41:59

Overseen by: Dr. Dustin Wright

**Biography:** Patricia Hong is the daughter of the owners of Hong's Market, located on 302 Carmel Ave in Marina, CA. Established in 1970, Hong's Market was initially called Su's Market and was the first Asian grocery store in Marina. It was owned by her aunt until 1979, when it was purchased by her parents who renamed the store to Hong's Market.

**Summary of Transcript:** (00:00:00) Patricia Hong gives a brief introduction to the market, its history, and community need for it. (00:08:33) Ms. Hong discusses the customer demographics of the market over the last ten years. (00:14:56) She explains how COVID-19 and the pandemic have affected the business; in terms of the change in shop layout and product bulk-buying. (00:21:07) We mention their Instagram page and discuss how it has brought influence to new and existing customers. (00:26:18) Ms. Hong wraps up the interview talking about the market's famous homemade kimchi, authenticity, and personal comfort foods.

### Interview Transcript:

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 0:01

Okay, Kerstin, you want to start?

**Kerstin Istafanous** 0:04

Yes. So hello, my name is Kerstin Istafanous and I'm here with my partner...

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 0:10

I am Eriel Amoroso.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 0:13

And today we are interviewing for our final project, Food for Thought Oral Histories of California's Asian Pacific Foodways. Joining us today is Patricia Hong, the daughter of the owners of Hong's Market. Thank you for joining us Ms. Hong.

**Patricia Hong** 0:31

Thank you.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 0:32

So for our questions, we divided it into categories and we want to start with questions about the market. So how did the Marina community hear about your market and was it well received at first?

**Patricia Hong** 0:51

The market is probably the first Asian market in our county. And it actually started by my aunt, in 1970. So it was called Su's market. Before, (Su), so then my mom, when she came, my mom came here to the States, and my dad was coming shortly after, my mom was helping out at the market. And then when my dad came, they, you know, did other things, other other types of work. And then in 1979, they decided to purchase the store and take over. And that's how it became Hong's Market. So our store, our location has always been kind of known to have Asian goods and groceries, because we're the only ones that had it for some time. So in 1979, when they took over, they were still probably the only Asian market in the area. And not just Marina but the entire county I believe.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 2:00

I didn't know that.

**Patricia Hong** 2:04

Yeah. Yeah. So it's been. So yeah, I'm not 100% sure, but it's not like I research the history of our, you know, our county and Asian goods, but from what I understand for most, I think that is the case. And when I speak with my mom about it, I think she said, we were really the only ones that carried groceries. Asian, Korean, Japanese groceries at that time.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 2:33

That's great.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 2:37

Well, you kind of answered this in a way but like, did something like inspire your family to start the business? Or inspire your aunt to first start the business, and then your parents to take over?

**Patricia Hong** 2:51

Yeah, you're right. Yeah, it's because there was a need for it in the community. And because there was such an influx of Asian families coming here, because of Fort Ord, there was just this explosion, the need for you know, food, like Asian foods that they had in their home country. So, so that's actually what, you know, my aunt saw the need for and then, and then my parents decided to take that over before the 80s.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 3:30

Is there a specific product that you sell that everyone in the community loves?

**Patricia Hong** 3:38

Yeah, I mean, I would definitely say the house made, you know, kimchi, then her banchans (side dish). All exclusive, I know. All that's exclusively made by her. But honestly, it's a mix of things, too. I think it's a variety of products that we carry, that range not just for Korean. But for Japanese. And then, you know, for others, too. It's just we tried to carry a lot of different products here. But yes, I think mostly people know her store for her, you know, excellence in making her stuff. So, and I think people are familiar with it, and they have been for years.

**Kerstin Istafanous**

4:27

Do you have like a favorite part of being in the food industry?

**Patricia Hong**

4:38

Yeah, I think I think being part of the food industry. And again, you know, like, it's her business and I'm just like, helping and volunteering but it's really the community feels bringing food and the community together. But it's, it's a nice thing to know that you're providing these goods for people to, you know, fuel themselves to make good food for themselves or to make it for their families? So, you know, it's actually food and community is always like a really important aspect. I feel like it makes the food taste better, for sure. But yeah, I think I think that's the best part is just the, it's just the bringing people together.

**Kerstin Istafanous**

5:27

Like interacting with your customers.

**Patricia Hong**

5:28

...we do love when people. Yeah, and then knowing that, you know, people are getting ready for a big gathering with their families, and then they're coming to see us to help them. So they can get that all prepared for their loved one. So it's just, it's a really nice feeling overall. But yeah, it's definitely being in the food industry. It's definitely, you know, being, you know, one with the community.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga**

5:58

Yeah. So, how important is it to meet the needs of the customers, say, like, I know, you accept, like requests on Instagram. So if you don't carry that product, and then you could request it. So how important is that?

**Patricia Hong**

6:16

Yeah, it's super important to try to carry things that people are requesting for. Our store is not that big so, we have limited space. But I think the one thing we try to do is try to give people subs for things that they're looking for. And so far, it's worked pretty well. But yeah, it is something we keep in mind, we, we actually encourage people to let us know what they like and what they would like us to carry. And it's helped us grow in terms of selling our shelves with more things for like hotpot, you know, which is something that we never did before. But yeah, but now it's like a major part of our business to make sure that we carry the types of meats and vegetables and mushrooms. Yeah, and everything else. Yeah, for our customer. So yeah, so it's definitely, it's definitely changed because of our customers. And they know it too. I mean, the

last few years has been time for us to like, kind of figure out what our community needs, because they're not able to go out to restaurants at that time. And so, we tried to fill that void as best as we could.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 7:37

Alright.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 7:39

Would you say that Hong's market has an advantage to other like Korean and Asian markets in Marina?

**Patricia Hong** 7:49

Yeah, I mean, we have a lot of Asian markets and Korean markets, especially in Marina. I think the thing we have is, we're probably the oldest, we are the oldest market. And, and it's a familiar face, my mom. So that's probably one of the advantages and people like to come and see her. But also, I think our one big advantage too, and it's really just because of myself just trying to help her, is the development of, you know, putting our business more on social media, like Instagram. Yeah, it definitely helps out.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 8:33

Well, you mentioned Instagram, but we wanted to touch on the demographics first, and then we'll come back, we'll come back to that.

**Patricia Hong** 8:44

Oh yeah, yeah. Sure!

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 8:45

So, for the, for the next category now, for regarding the demographics of the market. So, how is Hong's Market affected by the rise of popularity of the Korean culture in the US?

**Patricia Hong** 9:02

Yeah, big time. I, you know, I jotted down some things on that, because, I think before when our businesses first started in the, in the late 70s 80s, is primarily, you know, Korean and Japanese young families. And then later was also like other Korean, Japanese, Asian Pacific Islanders, almost everyone that would come by our market at that time. And then, yeah, there was a huge interest in probably Korean culture in the last 10 years. But people have been more interested in Korean food, but not, not right away. I would say like maybe about five or six years ago, from now it started becoming a big thing and I don't know if it was because of YouTube.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 10:00

I think so. And it's all the K-pop stuff.

**Patricia Hong** 10:06

Yes, exactly. So I think it's K-pop I think it's them doing like, you know, they're doing the Mukbangs themselves, and people just being influenced by it. And so people were intrigued by some of the flavors that they would see. And then I think our business has changed quite a bit to not just Asian now, I feel like we cater to a lot of Mexicans. A lot of like, you know, Latin Americans like it, like all. I feel like everyone, honestly, who has some vested interest in Korean K-Pop or drama. So it's, it's pretty interesting to see that change and fun too, because they're seeing things in Korean dramas like Tteokbokki. And all of a sudden, everyone wants Tteokbokki. And that's been around for like, probably a hundred years. Now, once, you know, so, so yeah, so it's kind of nice to see. And it's kind of nice to see the change. The different, you know, people that come through now, and even what's nice is even just the younger the younger people coming in, you know, like, just by themselves, not with their parents, really. But just coming in and asking for certain things. And even making food themselves which is kind of fun and interesting, too.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 11:41  
It's great to hear.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 11:45  
In regards to kind of the demographics. How has the customer demographics changed from 10 years ago? Like, do you still see the same families continuing to like, come back, maybe for multiple generations?

**Patricia Hong** 12:03  
Yeah, so as I mentioned before, like, I feel like it's changed quite a bit, but we still have a lot of our, our icons, like our legacy customers, right? They've been around forever. We've had like, two or three generations come by. And there's still yeah, so our store has a lot of nostalgic feelings for a lot of people. But yeah, we we've been, you know, we've seen generation after generation, like, parents, like grandparents, parents, now they're, you know, kids, even grandkids by now. And so yeah, so it's kind of, it's kind of nice, you know, we have a lot of new customers, but we still have a lot of those customers that have been with us for, you know, 40 years.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 12:49  
That's really nice.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 12:52  
And have you seen any clear changes in the products that may have been a result of companies catering, catering to American consumers? I know one example was the Samyang, because there are some that still written in Korean but the Buldak is now in the English letters. So is there any other.

**Patricia Hong** 13:16  
Oh, ramen? Yeah, all of the ramen and all of it has, like, now changed. And also, like cheese. Never seen so many Korean products with cheese in them. Oh, yeah. There's a lot of yeah,

there's a lot of cheese. Which is crazy. Even chocolate. I've never seen cheese and chocolate. A lot have also been like how to make it like the descriptions on it. Yeah, they're usually in English now. I think they have to be for the ingredients. But yeah, I do see a lot of like the I think the ramyeon because a lot of them are made here too. Yeah, like factories here as well. So I think they have to be in English. But yeah, I would say in terms of ingredient wise, that's what the biggest thing is maybe cheese in a lot of things. Yeah.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 14:17  
I didn't notice that.

**Patricia Hong** 14:21  
Yeah, I just-I think you'll see that like cheese and bread like, you know, like the Samyang ramen, like the carbo. Like that's really one of the popular ones right now. But yeah, I feel like there's just more cheese in stuff or I don't know. I don't know what else they really changed. I think it's more just having even chocolate snacks, you know? Like chocolate churros? Yeah.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 14:56  
Moving on to like more COVID related questions. How has COVID 19 affected your business?

**Patricia Hong** 15:06  
Yeah, I think, I think we're, mhm.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 15:10  
Oh, I was just gonna say like, I know that your shop layout kind of changed to being like at the door instead uh was that like, before COVID or?

**Patricia Hong** 15:23  
So that started as the start of the pandemic in March of 2020. And we, you know, I don't think our store was really set up to allow anyone to come in. And also just because of the age of our store, and also the owner, we just didn't feel it was safe to, you know, let people come in and, and linger around at that time. So we turned it more into like, an ice cream truck. Where we have people come to our door, right? We put a lot of pictures up and let them kind of point. Or just talk to us at the door and let us know what they need. So it's actually, it's a little strange, but it's worked out. And I think people kind of appreciate it, you know? But yeah, so it was our way of trying to stay open and available for most of our long term customers, it was really just to, you know, keep keep it available for them, at least during the pandemic.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 16:34  
Like I wanted to add to that, because I yeah, I'm new to the area, and I just moved and I saw your store. At first, I didn't want to go in, because I was scared. Like, I don't know what I want yet. And it's kind of weird just telling you, oh I think I need this. But I tried it, and you're super helpful about everything. So it actually helps now. So when I need something, I'm gonna go to your store, and then like, how do I do this? Do that. And then you have your recommendations.

**Patricia Hong** 17:09

Yeah, I mean, for us, I think I think that's actually the fun part. If someone called us like the Nordstrom market, shopping, you know, we're like, personal shoppers for them. But, um, it's nice, because we get to kind of know what you like, and then make recommendations based on that. Like, if you tell me you don't like spicy things, and I definitely would recommend things that are, you know, milder. But yeah, I think I think it's worked out a lot, especially for people who aren't familiar with Asian grocery. First, they're intimidated by it, because how are they going to, you know, talk through what they need, what they want to try. But you know, we just bring a few things over, have them look at it, and then kind of get an idea of what they're looking for. And then we just go from there. And so it's been nice, like, they'll come by, try a couple things out. And then it's nice to see them come back again, which they mostly always do. And then we were recommend other things, too. So it's actually been a kind of, it's more work for us. But it also allows us to see, you know, what's really selling more, you know, what do people really like? What do our customer base like so? So it's been it's allowed us to be more specialized in certain things, too.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 18:34  
Yeah, definitely.

**Patricia Hong** 18:37

Yeah, but thanks for coming. We, yeah, we love especially students. We love the students that come by. Because, you know, a lot of them also live in dorms, too. So it's kind of hard, but I used to live in dorms, too, when I was in college, so I kind of understand. Like, I wanted to eat everything right, but you're only so you only have so much.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 19:05  
Ramen's the best thing to eat.

**Patricia Hong** 19:09

Yeah, it's the best thing if you have a microwave great, you know, and so yeah, we try to it's kind of tapped into my college days of what people might want and make or have the energy to make right because no, like usually college college students don't want to sit there and make a whole big meal. I don't know now they do these days they seem to be able to so I don't know. I guess we're maybe lazier back then.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 19:46  
Are we going to Instagram now? Okay, so.

**Patricia Hong** 19:50

Oh, you know you have something on bulk-buying. Did you want to go over I just kind of wrote notes on that but we can skip that.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 19:57

Oh, bulk-buying, yes. Did your customers start bulk buying products during the height of quarantine?

**Patricia Hong** 20:05

Oh, yeah, for sure. They tried, yeah. And then we try to manage it a bit too. But um but yeah, we've, we have that a lot, but we do have like just regular customers who just stock up in general even before the pandemic. They like to buy a lot at one time. So, so but I think because our store is so small, I don't think people just tried to buy out our store.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 20:34

Like trying to hoard all the toilet paper.

**Patricia Hong** 20:37

Yeah, right. So yeah, like, we didn't have toilet papers. Like, for groceries. I think people were pretty good about it. I didn't know, I noticed some hoarding was like, certain ramen. But yeah, but like we tried, I mean, we tried to manage it, right, like, as best as they could, because we knew we'd had other customers who would want their goods too but for the most part, it wasn't, it wasn't too bad.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 21:04

That's good.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 21:07

So we have another question of COVID. But we, you already answer that, the shopping layout. So this time, we will actually move on to the Instagram part. So what made you think of using Instagram to show ways and how to use the products you sell?

**Patricia Hong** 21:29

Well, first it was it was to show the goods we had in the store, and things people weren't familiar with. Because now we we can't have customers come into the store to just look at things you know. So then we have to kind of share those things. And then the second part was, we couldn't really go out. So we were cooking our meals at home. So then we just decided to do the Instagram stories and posts on that. Just to show people how easy it is to make their recreate their own foods or Korean barbecue hot pots, whatever. So we started doing that home. And then it just became really popular. Because everyone wanted to know how they can do the same. Right? Well, I think the one big thing is they couldn't go in for Korean barbecue. Yeah. And so something that they were so used to doing all the time, right? Yeah, and driving up to San Jose too there, they were so used to driving up to San Jose and going to Korean barbecue. And then, and then all of a sudden that was completely taken away from them. And so we had people desperate for Korean barbecue. And, and that's actually how it kind of started, we were trying to show people how to do it. We all of a sudden had all these grill pans. So they can do it at home with this portable stove. And then, you know, we had some of our customers purchase that and then try it at home. And then we just reposted it and people really realized that they

could do it at home. So then, I don't know, I think we all fitted for many customers here with their own grill pans. And so.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 23:09

It was easier than we thought.

**Patricia Hong** 23:14

Yeah, it was way easier, right? I think, I think it's when you go to Korean barbecue, it looks so overwhelming, because there's so many ingredients and stuff. And, and the fact that you could get some of that, while besides and can choose from us, you know that all you really have to do is just get the meat and throw it on, you know, and I don't think people realize that by now. You know, a lot of our customers are a little barbecue pros. So they do that a lot. Yeah. I mean, they like to do their own barbecue. So it's kind of fun to watch. them turn into like, you know, being able to do their own K barbecue night and get ingredients that they like, you know, at home for the family.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 24:04

In terms of like influence, how much influence does the Instagram page bring to existing and new customers?

**Patricia Hong** 24:15

I think, I think Instagram is what brought the new customers in for sure. I think the community sharing of people, even the new customers who come in and repost, has definitely put some validity to things and so then their friends and family start coming. So I think that's how we kind of grew from that. So yeah, it was definitely a plus to see that. So you know, you can't really lie. Like people were posting pictures of their dinners and stuff and then you know, all their friends and families would want to do the same.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 24:55

Yeah, like sharing on their own like platforms and bringing.

**Patricia Hong** 25:01

Yeah, and we have people coming all the way from Carmel to you know, on Pacific like Pacific Grove who never really came out this way intrigued by what you know, we had available. And then and then just the advice that we would try to give them you know, to recreate at home. So I think it just kind of spread like crazy, which is really nice. And it's really nice. So if the customer is comes from such a long distance, like we have a lot of customers with Salinas but even further out in Salinas, they come out, you know, like a half an hour drive, and that's crazy that they do that, but it's really nice. You know, it's like, I think they know that they're just gonna get good service when they come in, and we're gonna help them as best as we can.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 25:45

Yeah. Yeah, looking at your guys's posts that always makes me so hungry.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 25:54

Like seeing how to make it too.

**Patricia Hong** 25:56

That's our goal. Yeah, yeah, we try and we, you know, we and we'd like to try different things too, not just Korean food. You know, we do a lot of Japanese style. We do a lot of fusion, a lot of Vietnamese Korean fusion stuff. Just because that's our community. You know, it's a mix of so many different people.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 26:18

Okay, speaking of food. So, there's a lot of, like, mass produced kimchi now, or just side dishes in general. And they used to be homemade all the time. And do you think it makes a difference if you're eating something from the store versus something homemade?

**Patricia Hong** 26:41

Oh, yeah, for sure. I think homemade is always well, if you can make it, homemade is always going to be better. You know, like, everyone's favorite Kimchi, especially for Koreans is their moms kimchi, or it should be you know, and sometimes it's not, which is okay. Luckily, you know, our house made Kimchi is made by, you know, her. So, for me, you know, it's almost like homemade for others, too. And I think that's why they like it. Mass produced kimchi, they just, I don't think they get, you know, it's going to be hard because they don't get the pickling and stuff. Right? You know, it really depends.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 27:27

They're like. They look very light compared to the ones you guys sell or the other markets. Like, it looks really red. And then the store bought ones are like orange, or very pale.

**Patricia Hong** 27:47

Yeah, and, you know, it really depends on produce, too, right? Like, my, my mom is like, just a master of knowing, you know, what the produce is, like, you know, especially the napa cabbage, you know, during the season. It's not always going to look great and perfect and, you know, be good. So she just knows how to pickle it. And you know, and I think mass produce kimchi, they just have, you know, they have certain ingredients that weighed that amount. And then they just throw it all in, you know, and so, it's, it's never going to be that great. And I think people know that now. I mean, they, they have stuff out like Costco, right? And then they'll try that, and then they'll come back and you know, because it's, it's way different. And because you like kimchi, you know the difference, like it's just you've had, you know, good canned food versus like, factory kimchi, you know, and it's, it's unfortunate. I mean, the only good thing is that the factory kimchi makes it easier for you know, supply for a huge demand for it, you know? But yeah, but definitely homemade kimchi, it's going to be you know, 10 times better than the factory kimchi.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 29:14

And it smells better too.

**Patricia Hong** 29:17

Yeah, smells better, smells fresher, you know, I think yeah. I think people who know kimchi know there's a huge difference in it. And people who don't, it's okay. They're just gonna, you know, they're so used to that kind of kimchi and that's fine. You know? People have like the other like 30 tastes in kimchi that they like and so they'll just keep doing that. Just keep buying that same kimchi.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 29:49

In your opinion, what do you think makes a meal authentic? Like if certain ingredients are added? Maybe ones that aren't traditionally used, do you think that changes its authenticity?

**Patricia Hong** 30:04

Um, yeah, it's one of those things. I don't know. I mean, what is authentic too, right? Like authentic to the house? You know, to your home? Like, I feel like, especially Korean food and people ask, you know, is it authentic? You know, when they make it, it's like, I don't know, I think it depends on what you like to put in it. You know, like, if you go to each think, like other Korean homes, things are gonna just taste different. Yeah, it's never going to be like, exactly the same. So yeah, so I don't know. It just depends. You know, we might be heavy on the garlic, garlic. But others might not. You know, some people might be heavy on sugar because they love like sugary, you know, Korean food, maybe? And we don't. So it's just yeah, yeah, it's kind of hard to, like, address that or what's authentic? I mean, it's, it's pretty, I guess, traditional. I think I heard something on like, authentic versus tradition. But I guess, I guess like, traditional would be the word. You know, the traditional Korean food. Kimchi. Yes. You know, bulgogi yes, that's traditional Korean food.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 31:19

So we touched on the mass produced kimchi. But we didn't ask, like, do you think, oh, you didn't want to use authentic? Do you want to use maybe traditional? So do you think the mass produced.

**Patricia Hong** 31:34

I don't know, I'm not, I'm not that smart. I don't know however you guys want to use that.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 31:42

Cause I mean, yeah, we've been asked this a lot of times too. And, you know, there's like, really no right answer, because it's very subjective. And it just depends on what you think. And I guess on this one, authentic, we mean, like, is it authentic to the Korean culture, and like how it was made before? So if it's mass produced, is it still the traditional Kimchi that you know?

**Patricia Hong** 32:17

Yeah, I mean, it's, I mean, I guess kimchi, you know, it's fermented. That's, you can say that, so that's what I mean. That's what it is. And, yeah, I guess it's even mass produced. It's just.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 32:35

It's still kimchi.

**Patricia Hong** 32:36

Kimchi is traditionally Korean, you know. That's, that's a good way of putting it. So I don't, yeah you got to be choosy with your words. But yeah, I would say that I mean, it's authentic, the Kimchi for us is authentic to our house, you know? Because that's how I know it. Oh, yeah. But kimchi, the factory one versus homemade versus some of the other stores in areas that also make it I mean, it's, it's, you know, they're a form of kimchi. You know, it's kimchi. But yeah, just varies in taste.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 33:20

Do you think like the people or the people that are not familiar with kimchi and they try, like, the store wants first? Does that affect the perception of the people? Or do you think it doesn't matter?

**Patricia Hong** 33:35

Yeah, it can. No, I mean, see, so I know that there are people who've tried kimchi once, and will never touch it again. And it's because of, you know, like they've been to and I always hear the same thing, right? Because it's interesting when we have customers tell us that because they're like, "Oh, I will never eat kimchi again, because I had it and it was horrible." You know? It, it could I don't know. It could be whatever Kimchi they've picked up like you said, like certain sometimes there's like a certain smell to factory kimchi. And that can be off putting for some. And they might, you know, not want to eat it again. Right? And that happens. It's unfortunate, but it does happen. And it happens. You know, I think for ourselves, too. Like, it's happened for me for certain things that I've had, you know. So, I can tell you for sure I've had when I had pho for the first time. Like years and years ago, my friend had ordered me a bowl that had all these different cuts of beef in there. And, and like that included like stuff I would normally not eat like tripe, you know? Yeah, but everyone loves that. And I was I was grossed out and I didn't touch pho for like 10 years after that, you know, like, no way am I eating that. Now it's one of my favorite foods, you know. So I think I think with kimchi, it's unfortunate when people have a taste of it, and they can't eat it anymore. You know, like, there's some people who have had kimchi that has a lot of fishy smells to it, like more fish sauce, or, I mean, sometimes some kimchi has oyster in it, like raw oyster and it's gross people out. You know, but I just, I just hope people understand that there's everyone may contain different ways, you know, so they may not like one but they should try it to see again, especially if they like pickled foods, they should like kimchi. And if they've had it once, and you know, and it wasn't good. I mean, they need to try it probably somewhere else. But there's just some people who just don't like fermented Napa cabbage and that's okay, too.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 35:56

Yeah.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 36:00

I saw on your Instagram page that you touched a little bit on comfort foods. And so I was kind of curious what you would define as a comfort food for you personally. If there's like any meals.

**Patricia Hong** 36:13  
Me personally?

**Kerstin Istafanous** 36:14  
Yeah.

**Patricia Hong** 36:16  
Yeah, for sure. It's always gonna be the Kimchi Jjigae, which is like the kimchi pork stew.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 36:24  
So good.

**Patricia Hong** 36:25  
That's my comfort. Yeah, for sure. Yeah. I'll be happy with that that like, all the time. For the owner, it's always going to be fish so, yeah, she's we have we have difference in opinions on what we like. I like kimchi stew, tofu stew, she is not a big fan of stew. She's more like grilled fish and rice. She can't go a day without it.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 37:05  
Did you have that a lot growing up? Is that why it kind of brings you comfort?

**Patricia Hong** 37:09  
Kimchi Jjigae?

**Kerstin Istafanous** 37:10  
Yeah.

**Patricia Hong** 37:11  
Yeah, we did. We had, we had it a lot. I just, I love kimchi. So any form of what that kimchi takes like, either stir fried kimchi. Or in a stew, I'm just going to want to eat it. And I think because it's so cold here. Maybe that's why.

**Kerstin, Eriel** 37:33  
Yeah.

**Patricia Hong** 37:34  
I told her that it was cold here I always wanted something warm, right, and hot, and spicy and that's that's why, you know, we didn't really have a lot of soon dubu, tofu stew, growing up. I don't think it was as popular back then too. But kimchi jjigae was pretty popular. And definitely, you know, it's something that the moms, you know, would make at home with leftover kimchi. And it was like the most perfect thing right? It's, that's, that's just one of those comfort foods, I

think for most Koreans, is pulling that stuff. Like bibimbap, like leftover side dishes that you make into, you know, this great dish called bibimbap?. You know, I think Kimchi Jjigae is the same thing, it's just leftover stuff. You that kimchi that you throw in. So yeah, that's my comfort, that's definitely my comfort food.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 38:27

It sounds delicious.

**Patricia Hong** 38:28

When we have kimchi, which we hardly have kimchi.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 38:31

What?

**Patricia Hong** 38:34

No, I'm just kidding. I know, it's because it's like everyone buys me it so we never have it. I was just saying, cause I love, I love old kimchi. Like I like to age it a long time. But because so many people have an interest in kimchi, we hardly that you have it now, like at home. Like, like, it's funny. Like, I'll take, we have some kimchi too, but it's like special kimchi you don't really want to use for stews. But yeah, I always joke with our customers on Instagram. Like, yeah, it'd be nice to get a jar myself. Yeah, but it's kind of like it's kind of Yeah, it's kind of telling you though, like it's just such a popular item now. You know, like, so many different faces pick up kimchi. Now, you know.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 39:18

Yeah, last time we went I asked for kimchi and you didn't have kimchi.

**Patricia Hong** 39:24

Yeah, I know, huh. I was like, oh, sorry. Yeah, I know. So I talk to like, the older customers are kind of joking with me now, too. They're like, damn it why don't you have any. I'm like, but it's nice because you know, I think I think when during the pandemic people came to visit their families here too, and so their families would send them over to our store, you know, to get, you know, groceries or kimchi, whatever. And now when they come visit, they always kind of take one back with them. It's like yeah. So that's who's taking them, out of towners. Sorry. Sorry, we didn't have it for you last time.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 40:10

It's okay.

**Patricia Hong** 40:14

We might have it now, yeah. You live close enough that you could get it yourself?

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 40:16

Yeah, I can go anytime. Well, that is all our questions. And did you want to add anything that you wanted to share that we didn't ask about?

**Patricia Hong** 40:32

No, I think it was great that you guys have such a, like there's class on this is amazing. And thank you for thank you for coming to us. You know, I know it was kind of tough to get an interview last year. But, you know, we we wanted to partake in the last year, but it was just like, just ran out of time. So thanks for working with our schedule, I think I have to fill out a form still.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 41:05

We could come by and pick it up.

**Patricia Hong** 41:07

I know you, you dropped it off. Do I need to sign that and send it back to you? Do you want to pick it up?

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 41:15

Yeah, I could pick it up, I guess tomorrow. Or I don't know what, whenever you're.

**Patricia Hong** 41:21

If I'm not there, yeah. Okay, I'll let you know if I'm not there then she'll be there and she can hand it to you.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 41:31

Okay, thank you.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 41:34

Thank you.

**Patricia Hong** 41:37

Thank you. Yeah. Thanks for your time, you have enough content. I probably talked a lot but.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 41:42

No, it's perfect, thank you.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 41:44

It's perfect.

**Patricia Hong** 41:45

Hopefully, but you know where to find me if you have a question.

**Eriel Jeneviv Zuniga** 41:50

Yes, thank you.

**Kerstin Istafanous** 41:52  
Thank you, have a good day.

**Patricia Hong** 41:55  
Okay, you too. Bye bye.

**Eriel, Kerstin** 41:57  
Bye.