

Korean Gastropub Anju Opens in Dupont Next Week With Late-Night Eats and Hot-Pot Tasting Tables

[washingtonian.com/2019/08/20/anju-korean-restaurant-from-the-chiko-team-opens-in-dupont-circle](https://www.washingtonian.com/2019/08/20/anju-korean-restaurant-from-the-chiko-team-opens-in-dupont-circle)

By Anna Spiegel

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One of the biggest restaurant debuts of the summer is almost here: Anju opens for dinner in Dupont Circle on Monday, August 26th. The ambitious Korean restaurant is the first full-service venture from the team behind popular “fine-casual” Chiko and the Lee family, who operated Mandu in the same location for over a decade before a fire gutted the restaurant in 2017. *Washingtonian* got a first look at the menu (see below), which blends traditional Korean techniques and ingredients with cheffy innovations.

“This is the light at the end of the tunnel. This has been a long, stressful, emotional project, especially for our family,” says chef and co-owner **Danny Lee**, who was literally putting out fires at Mandu the day Chiko’s flagship opened on Barracks Row two years ago. “It’s definitely a passion project.”





Left: chef/co-owner Danny Lee of Chiko and Anju. Right: Anju executive chef Angel Barreto.



The second-floor “garden room” can be reserved for private events.

And one that’s involved the whole restaurant family. **Yesoon “Mama” Lee**, who cooks at the remaining Mandu in Mount Vernon Triangle, spent time working with Anju executive chef **Angel Barreto** honing classic techniques and homestyle dishes (Barreto first worked with Chiko chef/partner **Scott Drewno** at The Source and has been with Chiko ever since). While most of the menu will have a modern bent, a section of “Mama Lee’s classics” is filled with items like stone bowl *bibimbap* and *kimchi jigae*, twice-cooked pork belly with soft tofu and aged kimchee. If you’re a fan of ferments, ask for an off-menu kimchee flight, which includes an extra-funky one that’s been aged for 100 days.

Meanwhile Danny Lee’s wife, **Natalie Park**, is behind the homey, plant-filled space. The interior blends salvaged original fixtures like wood floors alongside new touches like an airy second-floor “garden room” and an open kitchen flanked by a ferment/kimchee fridge, a *panchan* station, and four dining seats.



The second-floor dining room is set with two jeongol (Korean hot pot) tables.

Patrons can approach Anju in a variety of ways—and price points, from happy hour Hiite beers and kimchee slaw dogs to nightly tasting menus served around a *jeongol* (Korean hot-pot) table upstairs. The latter is the most upscale approach: an evening for six-to-eight guests that begins with 10-odd *panchan* (small cold vegetable dishes) followed by appetizers like Korean beef tartare or a whole fried chicken with dipping sauces. Guests can pick between vegetarian, seafood, poultry, or beef variations for the main casserole; the kitchen will rotate proteins and preparations, such as a *bourguignon*-like beef braise or cornish hens stuffed with sweet rice, dates, garlic, and ginseng.



Diners might be accustomed to free *panchan* from Korean barbecue restaurants, but the little dishes will go for \$3 to \$5 on the a la carte menu—a price that reflects the preparation time and seasonal ingredients like local radishes or bellflower root (a saline flower that’s only grown on hillsides by the ocean in Korea). Diners can match them with a la carte appetizers and entrees such as mandu dumplings, crispy charred kimchee pancakes, chewy noodles with roasted shellfish in seafood broth, or a rotating *ssam* board with cuts of grilled meat or fish. To start, look for thick-cut *galbi* short ribs served with fresh herbs, lettuce, and rice for wrapping, and sweet potato buns for stuffing.



Anju is the Korean term for food that’s meant to be eaten with alcohol, like this fried chicken.

Anju is the Korean term for food meant to be consumed with alcohol—so yes, the bar program is robust. Beverage director **Phil Anova** channels the communal nature of Korean drinking culture with large-format cocktails such as teapots filled with *soju* and fresh fruits. There’s also *somaek*, a beer cocktail that Anova fashions into a shandy with citrus-infused *soju*. The bar will have plenty of Korean beers, global wines, and—a first for DC—*makkoli* (sparkling rice wine) on tap. While the full a la carte menu is offered throughout the place, a lineup of bar snacks will only be available on the first floor and will extend to 12:30 AM on weekdays and 1:30 AM on weekends.



Drop into the bar for late-night Korean snacks and draft makkoli.

The team bandied about other ways to describe their restaurant.

“We’ve put out ‘modern Korean,’ we’ve put out ‘progressive.’ But for us it’s just a Korean restaurant,” Danny Lee says. “Because Korean food is still fairly new in mainstream America, people still view it as one thing: a grungy, garage-style restaurant with barbecue grills. And anytime you do something different, like with Mandu in 2006, people call it Americanized or fusion. Nope, it’s a Korean restaurant.”



Bungeoppang, fish-shaped waffles, are stuffed with coconut custard and strawberry compote for dessert.

Anju will host a pre-opening cocktail party on Sunday, August 25th from 5 to 8 PM with food and drink stations throughout the restaurant. Tickets (\$50 all-inclusive) will be available for 100 guests on Resy starting Wednesday at 5 pM.

Anju. 1805 18th St., NW

Menu:



ANJU

ANJU

Tornado Potato

anju salt blend, furikake, citrus aioli

Dosirak Salad

avocado, egg, cucumber, gochujang
toasted rice, yuja vinaigrette

Yukhoe

beef tartare, palm sugar, chili basil
seeds, lotus crisps

Mandu

pork & kimchi dumplings, steamed
or pan-fried

Goguma

korean sweet potato, sesame honey
butter cream, herb muchim

Gyeran Jjim

silky egg custard, chicken jelly,
salmon roe

Wild Mushroom Juk

rice porridge, roasted tomatoes,
pecorino

Kimchi Jeon

crispy kimchi pancake, charred
kimchi

Chikin

half or whole fried chicken, jujube
mole, white bbq, spicy gochujang

MAINS

Jorim

spice-braised rockfish and korean
radish

Gamjatang

whole pork shank stew, potatoes,
perilla

Jjamppong

thick noodles, spicy seafood broth,
wok roasted shellfish

Kimchi Fried Rice

wok fried rice, shrimp, scallops,
squid, buttered kimchi

Palace Ddukbokgi

chewy rice cakes, mushroom medley,
braised lotus root, sweet soy

Ssam Board

seared galbi, seasonal greens,
roasted garlic ssamjang, sweet
potato roll

MAMA LEE'S CLASSICS

Dolsot Bibim Bap

hot stone bowl of rice, assorted
vegetables, and choice of bulgogi or
tofu

Dak Jjim

korean chili-braised chicken thighs,
potatoes, and onion

Kimchi Jjigae

twice-cooked pork belly, soft tofu,
aged kimchi

PANCHAN

Kimchi

Stuffed Cucumbers
Assorted Radish Water Kimchi
Gardenia-Pickled Baby Radish

Soy-brined Chayote

Sweet Lotus Root
Shredded Bellflower Root

Tomatoes w/Blistered Corn

Caramelized Anchovies w/Korean
Snack Mix

DESSERT

Bananas Foster Ho Dduk

sweet pancake stuffed with syrup
and assorted nuts, boricha/vanilla
gelato

Bungeoppang

fish shaped waffle, coconut custard,
strawberry compote

Sorbet or Gelato

asian pear sorbet or vanilla/boricha
gelato

Welcome to the Jeongol

Our Jeongol Tables are available at 6:00 pm and 8:30 pm nightly. Please visit anjurestaurant.com to make your reservation and experience a unique dining experience centered around tabletop casserole.

Consuming raw or under-cooked meat, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your chance of food borne illness

Anna Spiegel
Food Editor

Anna Spiegel covers the dining and drinking scene in her native DC. Prior to joining Washingtonian in 2010, she attended the French Culinary Institute and Columbia University's MFA program in New York, and held various cooking and writing positions in NYC and in St. John, US Virgin Islands.