Got Kimchi? The answer is “yes” at the second

Kimchi Festival held on Saturday, March 22nd, 2014! The East Asia Institute (EAI) hosted this event in the Main Building on UTSA’s main campus. The event was made possible through collaboration with the Korean American Association of San Antonio (KAASA), Korean American Cultural Center of San Antonio (KACCSA), the Houston Korean Education Center and the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Houston. This celebration of Korean culture and food was attended by over 500 people.

The festivities began at 2:00 p.m. and guests were invited to visit cultural and educational booths through games, art and craft activities, and short presentations. Many were attracted to the craft booths where they made Korean and American flag ornaments and participated in Korean paper folding.

The traditional Korean game, Yut (four-stick game) was also extremely popular. The trivia game on Korean geography, history, society, economy, language and culture attracted many participants as well. Those that answered the questions correctly were able to spin a wheel and get a prize. The KACCSA had booths showcasing the Korean language as well as calligraphy. There was also an informational booth that covered the Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) and English Program in Korea (EPIK) through which American students are able to teach English in Korea. The booth was hosted by Director Geunhye Kim of the Houston Korean Education Center (HKEC). In addition, one booth featured famous children’s books in Korea and another Hanbok, traditional Korean clothing. The participants also enjoyed a cup of Korean tea while learning different methods of making Kimchi.
After spending time enjoying the fair, guests were invited to the auditorium to hear the opening remarks. Mimi Yu, Associate Director of the East Asia Institute, gave the welcoming remarks and brief introductions to all the speakers. Julius Gribou, Executive Vice Provost of UTSA, introduced the Kimchi Festival and talked about the international community of UTSA along with the ties the university has with Korea.

Next up was Jai Hun Yang, M.D. and President of the KAASA who took up the mic speaking about different types of Kimchi and the health benefits that Kimchi provided. Afterwards, Martha Henry, Senior International Relations Office of the City of San Antonio, spoke not only about the growing population of Koreans in San Antonio, but also the sister city relationship with Gwangju, located in South Korea. Finally, Geunhye Kim, Director of the HKEC, welcomed the guests and gave many thanks to the people who supported and made the festival a reality this year. She also talked about how Korea offers many cultural aspects that people around the world should experience.

Once the opening remarks were finished, the much anticipated performances introduced by Dr. Deukhee Gong, Director of KACCSA, and Bea Adams began. Many traditional Korean dances were performed by the KACCSA Youth Dance Team and the S.A. Joon Ang Dance Group. The Sam Go Mu is a dance genre with colorful and various techniques, having dancers with three drums hung on the square frames laid out in a triangle form. Three drums equal one set for a dancer so that she can hit all of three drums while dancing. When a performance starts with the powerful sound of Daego, the
biggest drum among three, all dancers start hitting the drums hung on the frame. Usually, the beat of dancing gets faster as the performance continues. This emphasizes the strong points of drum.

Another key feature of this dance is that dancers do not just hit the drum but they bend their back or move their body in different ways to hit drums. It shows dancer’s great flexibility as well as their sense of rhythm.

Next was the Elegant Dance and the Flower Crown Dance, both of which were two magical performances in their own right. Throughout history, these two dance were performed for the royal family, court officials, and foreign envoys or for festive occasions sponsored by the state.

Following this was the Fan Dance. This style is one of the most popular and appealing Korean folk dances. This dance is usually performed by a group of young girls with folding fans with feathers at the end. The dancers open and close the fans to a folding rhythm, leading to them resemble a big fluttering flower. The dancers wear colorful costumes similar to those once worn by dancers of the royal court.

The Janggo Dance was performed afterwards. The performers danced and used an hour-glass shape drum along with traditional Korean music. This dance is performed to pray for good blessing and good will. After the Janggo Dance, the Nanta Dance was performed. The Nanta has many similarities as the Janggo Dance but the performers use short drums to perform.

The Final performance of the day took a more modern turn. The Young Adult Group of All Nation Church danced to two popular Korean Pop (K-pop) songs. The first dance was to “Like This” by the Wonder Girls. For the performance, the dancers donned brightly-colored
hoodies, to emulate the dance of “Bar Bar Bar” by Crayon Pop. When all of the performances were concluded, the Kimchi related event began. In addition to the continuation of the festival and booth activities, the attendees were able to enjoy various Kimchi and Korean food tasting catered by Koreana Restaurant, Han Il Garden, Arirang, Kiku Garden, Seoul Market, Go Hyang Jip, and Seoul Garden. Some of the dishes provided were: Bulgogi (barbecued beef), Jap Chae (stir fried noodles with vegetables), Kongnamul Muchim (seasoned yellow bean sprout), Bap (steamed white rice), Baechu Kimchi (sliced fermented Napa cabbage), Kkakdugi (spice cubed radish), Bak Kimchi (white kimchi), Yangbaechu Kimchi (cabbage kimchi), Musaengcha (spice radish salad), Oi Kimchi (cucumber kimchi), Kimchi Man Du (Kimchi dumpling), and Gut Ju Li (Fresh Kimchi).

As the event grew to a close, all of the guests seemed very pleased with their experiences. “I thoroughly enjoyed the festival!” exclaimed one young participant, “I look forward to future events!”

All of the info booths were very educational and I learned a lot about Korean culture. I hope there are other Korean culture events in the future!”, said another participant.

UTSA’s East Asia Institute’s mission is to promote awareness, appreciation and understanding of East Asia in the Alamo City. “Korea is strategically important to the U.S. in terms of its geographical and economic positions,” said Mimi Yu. “With the Kimchi Festival, we are hoping to prepare our local community to participate on a global stage better in the cultural, economic and political context.”