

# Korean rice liquor

Makgeolli 맥걸리

Today I'm going to show you how to make makgeolli, a traditional Korean alcoholic beverage made by combining rice, yeast, and water with a starter culture called nuruk. It's milky-white, fizzy and refreshing. It's also called "nongju" which means "farmer liquor" because it's made with a lot of rice, it's full of carbohydrates and was traditionally served to farmers as part of a midmorning snack or with lunch, giving them the strength and energy to work the rest of the day.

Korea has a long history of homebrewing, and every family used to make their own booze at home, it was much more common than buying it. These days you can buy makgeolli easily at a Korean grocery store or liquor store but when it comes to taste, it can't be compared to homemade makgeolli. Homemade makgeolli is thicker, less sweet, and more filling than store sold makgeolli.

This recipe is also in [my cookbook, Real Korean Cooking](#), and while developing the recipe I sent a sample of the finished product to the EMSL Analytical food lab for a full nutritional and toxic analysis to see what is really inside it. They let me know that it is totally safe to drink, 7.4% alcohol by volume, cholesterol-free, fat-free, and contains vitamin B1, B2, B3, B5, and B6. It's high in calories and has a lactobacillus count of 375,500 CFU/mL. Lactobacillus is a kind of lactic acid bacteria that's good for your stomach and digestion and can boost your immune system. It's also found in yogurt, but in much higher quantities.

So it's great for giving you energy and is good for your stomach, but the real reason to drink it is it's so refreshing and delicious! It's also a great thing to have at a party, and especially when you make it yourself, your family and friends will love to drink it and have a great time doing it. Making good makgeolli is not very difficult, it just takes a little time and there are a few pitfalls to avoid

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I've been making makgeolli for special family occasions and my reader meetups for years. [Some of you who came to my meetups and tasted my makgeolli](#) have been waiting years for this recipe. Thanks for your patience!

Make some makgeolli and enjoy life! Let me know how it turns out!

## Ingredients (Make 4 quarts)

- 5 cups [short grain rice](#), washed and soaked in cold water for at least 2 hours
- 1½ cups [nuruk \(starter culture\)](#)
- 1 package of [dry yeast](#)
- 5 quarts of water (20 cups)
- ¼ cup sugar (optional)

5 cups [Korean short grain rice](#)

## Special items that I use to make makgeolli

- [Electric food dehydrator](#)
- 7 to 8 quarts [earthenware crock](#)

## Directions

1. Drain the rice and put it into a heavy pot. Add 4 cups of water. Cover and cook over medium high heat for 15 minutes. Stir and turn the rice over with a wooden spoon. Cover and simmer it for another 15 minutes over low heat.
2. Remove from the heat. Transfer the rice to a basket of your electric dehydrator. Spread the rice evenly, and fill as many baskets as you need. Cover, set the temperature to 160° F, and dry for 3 hours, until the outside of each grain is hard, but the inside is still moist. If you don't have an electric dehydrator, you can dry your rice for several hours in a shallow basket set in breezy, sunny place.
3. Put the rice into the earthenware crock. Add nuruk, yeast, and 8 cups of water and mix well with a wooden spoon.
4. Place a cotton cloth under the lid when you close it, to let some air circulate in and out.
5. Let sit for several hours, then uncover and mix well with a wooden spoon. At this point, the rice will have absorbed a lot of the water to create a thick paste. Cover and let sit overnight.
6. Open the crock and you'll see a lot of bubbles popping to the surface, and the mixture will be a lot thinner than yesterday. Stir it well with a wooden spoon and cover again. Stir it a few times a day for the next few days.
7. On day 4 or 5, it will be bubbling a lot less and will have separated to a clear liquid on top and a milky mixture on the bottom. Mix well, and keep mixing a few times a day for a few more days.
8. On day 8 or 9, there will hardly be any bubbles at all. The liquid on the top will be clearer and more amber. It's now perfectly fermented and ready to drink.
9. Strain the makgeolli into a large bowl, pressing on the solids

9. Strain the makgeolli into a large bowl, pressing on the solids with the back of a wooden spoon to squeeze as much liquid as possible out of it. Discard the solids. Add 8 cups of water to dilute. Add the optional sugar and mix well.
10. Strain the makgeolli one more time and put it into glass jars or BPA free plastic beer bottles.
11. Serve cold, and stir or mix well before drinking. Serve with kimchi or some side dishes. It can keep in the fridge up to 2 to 3 weeks.