Koreans are truly a people who love to drink. Drinking is an integral part of social life in South Korea, and alcohol consumption is high. Per capita consumption reached its peak in the mid-1970s with an average of more than fifteen liters per person. It has since declined but remains relatively high at 7.9 liters per person in 2003. The Korean people’s love of song, dance, and drink goes back to ancient times; it was even mentioned in the ancient Chinese text *The Book of the Later Han* from the fifth century. In the Joseon period, liquor was not something drunk only on special occasions but was virtually an everyday beverage. It was used as a tonic to give energy and pleasure to people whose lives were filled with arduous labor. The *Geumyang jamnok*, a fifteenth-century book on agriculture, advised farmers to take a jug of liquor when they went out to weed their fields. Liquor, rather than tea, was served to guests and used in ancestral memorial rites.

Although Koreans enjoy drinking, Korea does not have its own liquor as China does with maotai and Great Britain does with whisky. Nor does Korea have many kinds of liquor. There were over 200 kinds of liquor mentioned in records from the Joseon period; however, they began to disappear in the Hanmal period, hardly any remaining today. After turning Korea into a de facto colony with the Protectorate Treaty in 1905, Japan implemented the Liquor Tax Law in 1909, which required liquor producers to pay a tax. After its takeover of the country, Japan passed the Liquor Tax Ordinance in the year 1916. It forbade brewers without a permit from making liquor and cracked down on bootlegging. Since these policies have continued up to the present, the only liquors remaining are those mass-produced in factories.

*The Types of Liquor*

Though there were many different kinds of liquor in the Joseon period, they can be classified into three general types: *takju*, *cheongju*, and *soju*. Popular among commoners, *takju* were cloudy liquors such as *makgeolli*. 
In fact, the term *makgeolli* itself means ‘liquor brewed carelessly.’ To make *takju*, wheat flour was kneaded into dough, placed in a round or square frame, and stepped on until it became a mash. As the mash mold grew, fermentation would begin. Next, rice was put in a steamer to make hard-boiled rice. It was dried and mixed with mash that was grounded into a powder; then, it was placed in a jar into which warm water was added. If it was maintained at the proper temperature, a bubbling sound emerged