

MOTHER IN LAW'S KIMCHI

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Based on original
recipe of Jang Mo
Gip Restaurant.
Established 1989.

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Be realistic. “Financially you have to be prepared not to make any money for some time,” warned Chun, “but as long as you have some business sense and put passion into your product, it’s a great way to get involved in the food system and really better other people’s lives.”



PHOTO BY JESSICA BOUCHER

Entrepreneur Lauren Chun turned her mother's recipe for kimchi into a successful business.

Mother-in-Law's Kimchi, NYC

Lauryn Chun's food business, Mother-in-Law's Kimchi, was also inspired by a family recipe—and the loss of a job. Whenever Chun visited the West Coast, her mother, who owns a Korean restaurant in Garden Grove, California, would send her home with homemade kimchi, the spicy, fermented staple of Korean cuisine. Back in New York, “I would share it with my friends,” Chun recalled, “and they would say that they'd never tasted anything like it—it was that good.”

But it wasn't until she was laid off from a consulting firm three years ago that Chun began thinking about kimchi in a whole new way. A lifelong foodie, she realized that she wanted to make something of her own. “I felt like Korean food was gaining momentum,” she said, “and I really thought there was an audience out there.”

Chun rented space in a community kitchen and started making kimchi the way her mother had taught her. She worked with a graphic designer to create sleek, upscale packaging and began doing in-store demos at Essex Market near her home on the Lower East Side. Within months she had landed her first big account: a spot on the shelves at Dean & DeLuca, which she earned after sending the store's buyer a sample and following up with phone calls and a visit to his office.

Mother-in-Law's Kimchi is now available in more than 15 locations on the East and West Coasts, and Chun feels she's just getting started. “I really hope that kimchi can take on a whole new reputation,” she said. “It's a handcrafted tradition alongside cheeses and wines. It should be at your specialty food stores.”

Be passionate about what you do. “If you're thinking about doing something, do it. Really go for it and give it a shot,” said Chun.