

Ethnic Emporiums
By Genevieve Vahl
Collaborator: Max Vichr

Tamales from Mexico. Sushi from Japan. Pierogies from Poland. Food is huge part of any culture: it is a significant characteristic of what makes a culture unique to its people and region. Food brings people together, manifesting the culture and tradition of peoples. Recipes are passed down from generation to generation, upholding authentic family traditions.

Ethnic grocery stores sustain specific culinary traditions, allowing them to thrive outside of country lines. Madison is home to many of these cultural hubs from countries around the world, and each one provides culturally specific ingredients. Specifically, Asian markets dominate Madison's ethnic grocery store scene, each providing their own take on the necessities of Asian cuisine.

J&P Fresh Market, located across the street from Woodman's grocery store in west Madison, has the best selection of frozen food, fresh seaweed, and snacks. Sharing kitchen space with the Chinese restaurant next door, the owners also offer freshly made savory Chinese steamed buns that we can't resist.

The Asian Midway Foods located on South Park St. has a wider selection of cold drinks and produce. It is the closest option to campus, accessible by foot and bus. The self-serve display case offers a wide range of baked sweets from the local Asian Sweet Bakery nearby. Plus, their sesame balls and red bean cakes can quench any sweet tooth craving.

For a more Korean specific grocery store, Lee's Oriental LLC on University Avenue, across the street from Whole Foods, is easily accessible by bus. This tiny establishment provides almost exclusively pre-packaged food. Lee's provides the largest selection of packaged Korean ramen and Kimchi. The sweet woman working the shop can even give you some authentic advice for your Korean cooking!

Generic grocery stores simply can't provide enough to serve each culture justly. Luckily, ethnic grocery stores are specific to their region and provide niche ingredients and experiences, heightening any culinary endeavor. They offer a more in-depth glance into other cultures, and a way we can experience diverse cultures within our own city.