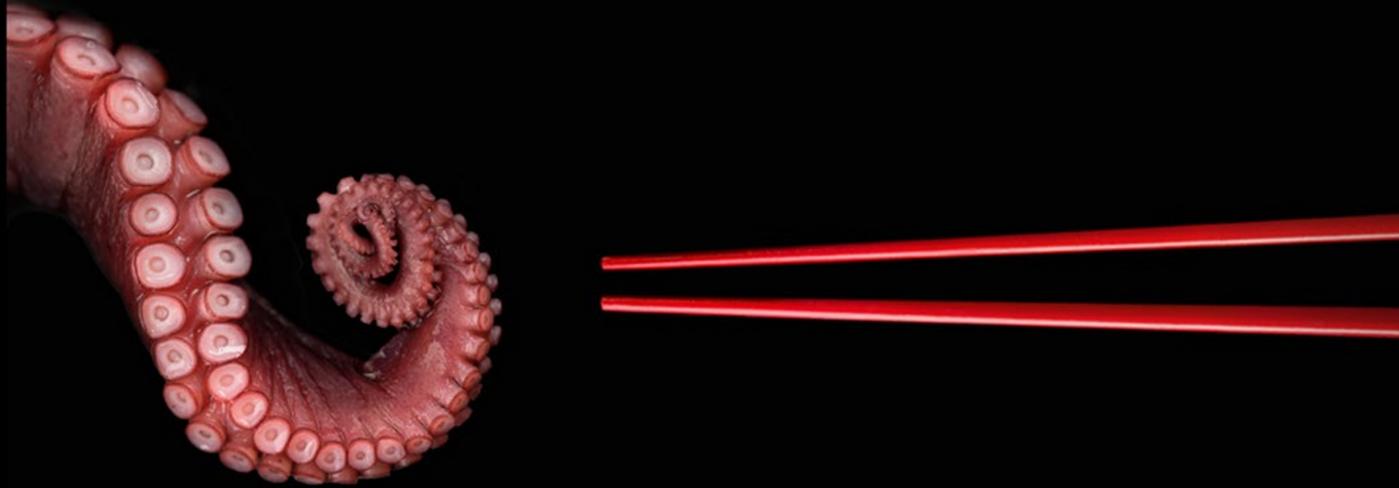




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BE A SEOUL MAN: HOW TO EAT LIVE OCTOPUS



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By **Erik R. Trinidad** | June 27, 2012

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You may have eaten octopus over a portion of rice as *nigiri sushi* at a Japanese restaurant, or savored it grilled from a Mediterranean restaurant, but when it comes to having octopus the freshest it can be, head to a Korean restaurant in Seoul (or even some parts of New York City). In South Korea, the locals like it raw — and I mean really *raw* — so raw that it's literally still moving on the plate.

This is *sannakji* — Korean for live octopus — a traditional culinary delicacy for decades, served in restaurants that specialize in it. Chefs take an octopus from a tank, and then slice, dice, and prepare the eight-armed seafood in various ways. With that said, the octopus is in fact technically dead when you eat it — we're not live creature-eating savages after all — but the tentacles are still very much "alive" after being detached from the body, since their motor skills are not controlled by the brain. This means a plate of cut, bite-sized tentacles will squirm like a pile of worms. You'll have to tame them before savoring their taste and textures.

Step 1: Arm Yourself

Using your chopsticks, pick up one of the tentacle pieces. This is easier said than done; not only are the arms moving around, but their suction cups are still active and will stick to anything: the plate, the table, or virtually anything. Try and get one to latch onto your chopsticks.



Step 2: Secure the Tentacle

Thought picking a vivacious octopus tentacle was hard enough? Try *keeping* it on your chopstick. If you have the skills to harness the suction to your chopstick, more power to you. However, the rest of the tentacle will still be squirming around and could pull itself off. If it falls on the table, grab it quick — Five Second Rule, remember?

Step 3: Add a Little Spice

Any gourmand knows that adding a touch of seasoning or spice can enhance any food's natural flavor, seafood included. Take your fidgety seafood and dip it in sesame oil — it's usually served at the restaurant. If you want to liven things up a bit — as if they're not already — add a little hot chili sauce. Don't add too much though, just enough to bring a little heat to each bite. This is fresh seafood after all, and you don't want to drown the freshness.

Step 4: Move that Morsel into Your Mouth

Without further ado, place the octopus tentacle in your mouth. You'll discover that the active suction cups will stick to your lips and tongue, plus the roof of your mouth with more gusto than peanut butter. The muscle reflex motions will still be there too, so bite down and chew. Really grind it down with your teeth before swallowing, otherwise the suction cups may stick to your inner throat — and you don't cause a choking scene at the restaurant.

Need to learn by example? Let me show you the steps in action:



Once you've got all the steps down, repeat the process. You'll find it gets easier with each bite — and ultimately more delicious. After all, this is as fresh as seafood can get — unless you count eating free live oysters. Then again, oysters aren't nearly as interesting as the Koreans' moveable feast.

Erik Trinidad is an author, writer, designer, food critic, world traveler, and all-around "Freelance Renaissance Man," whose work can be seen on The Huffington Post, Food Network/Cooking Channel, and Discovery.com, as well as on his own travel and food sites, The Global Trip and Fancy Fast Food. Follow him on Twitter @theglobaltrip and @fancyfastfood; on facebook.com/theglobaltrip and facebook.com/fancyfastfood; youtube.com/theglobaltrip and youtube.com/fancyfastfood and at "theglobaltrip" on Instagram.

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