# How young Egyptians are shaping a new era of Korean cultural exchange



As Korean pop culture continues to flourish across the Arab world, Egypt stands at the forefront of this cultural exchange, driven not just by consumption but by active participation. Young Egyptians are increasingly finding ways to connect with and express their fascination for South Korea—through education, culinary ventures, and social media engagement. Mohamed El-Bayar, Noha Mahmoud Aref, and Thoraya Gamal exemplify this trend, embodying the passionate spirit that bridges Egypt and South Korea in meaningful and innovative ways.

The narrative of Mohamed El-Bayar begins in his hometown of Mansoura, where his early exposure to trade ignited an interest in cultures far beyond the world of textiles. Enrolling in the Korean language programme at Al-Alsun, Aswan University, he embraced the challenge of mastering a new language and its associated culture. His efforts bore fruit when he received a scholarship to South Korea, allowing him to immerse himself fully in the language. “My passion for Korea began with trade,” he notes, reflecting on how language can serve as a conduit to dreams. This passion enabled him to work as an interpreter for high-stakes meetings, a role he believes speaks to the deeper emotional and cultural aspects of translation. “Translation isn’t just about words,” he asserts, emphasising the irreplaceable human touch in conveying literature and culture, which he deems vital even as artificial intelligence continues to evolve the field.

Gamal’s journey, meanwhile, navigates the bustling food scene of Cairo, where the rich heritage of Egyptian cuisine meets the growing allure of Korean cooking. A child of culinary tradition, she took her family’s love for food and gave it an international twist. Inspired initially by Korean dramas and music, which gradually penetrated Egyptian media, Gamal decided to explore Korean gastronomy. Her burgeoning love for Korean cuisine resulted in the establishment of her own restaurant in Cairo, where dishes like kimbap and bibimbap are served alongside dramatic screenings, creating an immersive cultural space. “I wanted to bring a piece of Korea to the heart of Cairo,” she shares, highlighting her restaurant not merely as an eatery but as a cultural hub that invites diners to engage with the richness of Korean culture.

Emerging alongside them, Noha Mahmoud's story is one of resilience and ambition. Initially deterred from her dream of studying engineering due to academic setbacks, she discovered the newly founded Korean department at the Faculty of Al-Alsun. As she delved deeper into the world of K-dramas, she found themes that resonated with her own experiences. Her academic journey sprang forth from a place of fascination, ultimately leading her to graduate with honours. Mahmoud's influence extends into the digital realm, where she cultivates a substantial online following. Through her platforms, she not only shares her love for Korean language and culture but serves as an educational guide for her peers. “I found in their stories a unique sense of humanity and social issues that resonated with the Arab reality,” she reflects, underscoring the mutual understanding rooted in storytelling.

The cultural embrace of Korea in Egypt has been further galvanised by institutional efforts. The Korean Cultural Centre has become a pivotal player in this dynamic exchange, celebrating its tenth anniversary with the vibrant 'K-Movement' festival in May 2024, which featured performances and exhibitions designed to engage the Egyptian public. These events showcase a mix of traditional and contemporary Korean art forms, contributing to a richer understanding and appreciation of Korean culture among Egyptians. Even more, initiatives such as language contests and cultural workshops create avenues for direct involvement in this growing cultural dialogue.

Moreover, the rising popularity of K-pop in Egypt has played a significant role in forging ties between the two cultures. Events organised by the Korean Cultural Centre, such as the K-Pop Academy, have showcased local talents, fostering interaction and appreciation for Korean music and dance styles. In contrast, a wave of Korean restaurants in Cairo has emerged—from Gaya to Seoul Barbecue—offering authentic cuisine that allows local patrons to engage in the Korean dining experience.

With young Egyptians passionately navigating their newfound interests, the cultural landscape in Egypt is being reshaped by these connections. The stories of El-Bayar, Gamal, and Mahmoud encapsulate a broader phenomenon where cultural curiosity transforms into a substantive exchange. Through their respective journeys, they are not only embracing a distant culture but are crucial players in creating a cultural bridge that fosters understanding and connection across continents. As this ongoing dialogue continues to develop, it highlights the power of cultural engagement to unite people, reflecting a shared humanity that transcends borders.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://globalvoices.org/2025/06/08/bridging-cultures-how-korean-passion-is-shaping-a-new-generation-in-egypt/), [[4]](https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2022/09/22/k-pop-creates-mutual-understanding-between-south-korea-egypt-korean-cultural-center/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://globalvoices.org/2025/06/08/bridging-cultures-how-korean-passion-is-shaping-a-new-generation-in-egypt/), [[2]](https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2024/05/16/k-movement-culture-week-decade-of-korean-cultural-exchange-in-egypt-celebrated-with-dance-music-and-art/), [[5]](https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/4/125253/Bringing-culture-closer-Korean-Cultural-Center-hosts-the-3rd-Ahlan)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2023/07/08/korean-cultural-centre-in-egypt-organises-korean-language-speech-writing-contest/), [[6]](https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/7/1188/523881/Life--Style/City-Lights/KCC-in-Cairo-marks-its-10th-anniversary-with-a-hybri.aspx)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2024/05/16/k-movement-culture-week-decade-of-korean-cultural-exchange-in-egypt-celebrated-with-dance-music-and-art/), [[4]](https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2022/09/22/k-pop-creates-mutual-understanding-between-south-korea-egypt-korean-cultural-center/), [[6]](https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/7/1188/523881/Life--Style/City-Lights/KCC-in-Cairo-marks-its-10th-anniversary-with-a-hybri.aspx)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://www.cairo360.com/article/restaurants/korean-food-culture-in-egypt/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://globalvoices.org/2025/06/08/bridging-cultures-how-korean-passion-is-shaping-a-new-generation-in-egypt/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2024/05/16/k-movement-culture-week-decade-of-korean-cultural-exchange-in-egypt-celebrated-with-dance-music-and-art/> - The Korean Cultural Centre in Egypt celebrated its 10th anniversary with the 'K-Movement' cultural festival from May 18th to 24th, 2024. The event featured performances by renowned Korean dance groups Goblin Party and Gamblerz Crew, showcasing a blend of traditional and contemporary dance styles. The festival also included an exhibition on Korean traditional mask dance, a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, and interactive workshops where participants could create their own masks under the guidance of Korean instructors.
3. <https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2023/07/08/korean-cultural-centre-in-egypt-organises-korean-language-speech-writing-contest/> - In July 2023, the Korean Cultural Centre in Egypt organised the Korean Language Speech and Writing Contest for students of the King Sejong Institute. A total of 22 students showcased their skills in speaking and writing Korean, sharing their personal journeys and views on Korean culture. The first-place winners in both categories were eligible to participate in the final round in South Korea and receive Korean language training.
4. <https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2022/09/22/k-pop-creates-mutual-understanding-between-south-korea-egypt-korean-cultural-center/> - The Korean Cultural Center in Egypt highlighted the role of K-pop in fostering mutual understanding between South Korea and Egypt. During the closing ceremony of the 2022 K-Pop Academy, students showcased various dance performances they had learned, with instructors presenting additional performances. The event underscored the growing enthusiasm for K-pop among Egyptian youth and the Centre's commitment to promoting Korean pop culture.
5. <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/4/125253/Bringing-culture-closer-Korean-Cultural-Center-hosts-the-3rd-Ahlan> - In June 2023, the Korean Cultural Center in Egypt hosted the 3rd edition of its regular cultural event, Ahlan Korea. The event featured Korean and Egyptian folk music presented by the ANE Band, composed of Egyptian and Korean musicians. Attendees had the opportunity to try on traditional Korean clothing, learn to write their names in Korean, and taste traditional dishes such as Tteokbokki and Bibimbap.
6. <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/7/1188/523881/Life--Style/City-Lights/KCC-in-Cairo-marks-its-10th-anniversary-with-a-hybri.aspx> - In May 2024, the Korean Cultural Centre in Cairo marked its 10th anniversary with a hybrid Korean culture week titled 'K-Movement'. The event, held from May 18 to 24, featured performances by Korean dance groups Goblin Party and Gamblerz Crew, an exhibition on Korean traditional mask dance, and interactive workshops. The festival aimed to promote Korean culture and art among Egyptians and strengthen cultural ties between the two nations.
7. <https://www.cairo360.com/article/restaurants/korean-food-culture-in-egypt/> - Korean food culture has been gaining popularity in Cairo, with several restaurants offering authentic Korean cuisine. Establishments like Gaya, Kokio, Seoul Barbecue, Hana Barbecue, and Tomato provide dishes such as bulgogi, Korean fried chicken, and tteokbokki. These restaurants not only serve traditional food but also aim to introduce the Korean dining experience to the Egyptian public, reflecting the growing interest in Korean culture.