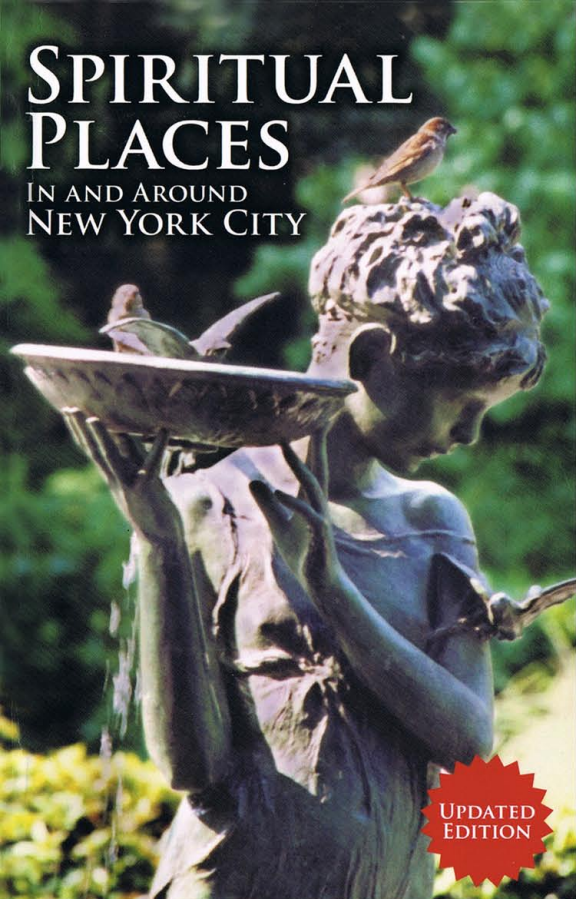


SPIRITUAL PLACES

IN AND AROUND
NEW YORK CITY



UPDATED
EDITION

EMILY SQUIRES & LEN BELZER



HANGAWI KOREAN RESTAURANT

12 East 32nd Street, New York, NY 10016

(between Fifth and Madison Avenues)

(212) 213-0077 www.hangawirestaurant.com

open for lunch and dinner; moderately priced

Can a restaurant be a spiritual place? Of course it can, especially if its owners are people like Ryoon and Terri Choi, whose native Korean mountains and villages inspire the restaurant. The interior is reminiscent of a Korean temple with traditional pillars, natural wood, stone, and copper.

Hangawi calls itself “a vegetarian shrine in another space and time.” When you grasp the iron ring on its mahogany door, be prepared to enter not just a gourmet Korean vegetarian restaurant, but a sanctuary as well.

In the stone entranceway, we remove our shoes in the Asian tradition, showing respect for the house we are visiting. Seated on

Anytime we eat, it's holy.

We should have ritual and ceremony, not just gobbling down some food just to keep alive.

—M.F.K. Fisher

cushions at a low wooden table, we rest our feet in the sunken space below, while a waiter dressed as a temple monk lights a Buddhist prayer candle. All the while, otherworldly sounds of Zen music pulse softly in the background, and we feast our eyes on hand-sewn, traditional Korean silk quilts hanging from the walls, and handmade pottery displayed on wooden shelves and in wall niches.

Thus soothed, we turn to a menu of dishes so new to our palate that all expectation must be set aside: pumpkin porridge, mung bean vermicelli, Korean pancakes, sweet lotus root with sesame, chili cabbage, and exotic tofu dishes. The selection of teas alone will suit the most adventurous palate: red ginseng, date paste, mushroom, lily root, fresh green leaf. For dessert, we throw caution to the wind and opt for silky chocolate tofu pudding.

What raises the level of this space from mere restaurant to internal respite is the intention and authenticity that hold us gently in the present moment.