

Kyungdong Market: From Old Tradition to Seoul's Newest Hip Playground

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Kyungdong Market near Jegi-dong Station, a place most students often pass by without much thought, is now under a dynamic transformation. As the largest traditional market in Seoul dealing in medicinal herbs and various agricultural and marine produce, it has long been crowded with the elderly, earning the nickname “Hongdae for seniors.” However, in recent years, this old traditional market has been transforming into a hip space by embracing the retro trend. Despite the psychological distance most students may feel, physically it is only a 15-minute bus ride from Kyung Hee University Seoul Campus. It may be time to pay attention to Kyungdong Market as an extended local commercial district for the campus.

The Aesthetics of the Old: Authenticity, Not Imitation

In the middle of a market bustling with old stores, a Starbucks sign can be seen that seemingly does not fit the atmosphere of a traditional market. This is Starbucks Kyungdong 1960, remodeled while preserving the original frame of the old Kyungdong Theater located within the main building of Kyungdong Market in the 1960s. What differentiates this place from other popular places in Seoul is its authenticity. Unlike the artificially created retro concepts in other places, the weight of over 60 years of history emanating from the old ceiling and raw



The entrance of Kyungdong Market

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concrete walls dominates the space here. This raw charm delivers a strong visual impact and is enough to attract young people tired of overly manufactured aesthetics. Because the theater's original frame is preserved, the seating inside the store is arranged in tiers, while a modern large-scale artwork displayed at the top highlights the harmony between vintage and contemporary elements.

A Creative Laboratory for University Students: Geumseong Jeonpasa Campus Art Center

Walking out of the iron gate of Starbucks Kyungdong 1960, Geumseong Jeonpasa Campus Art Center catches the eye. Although it bears the signboard of an electronics shop exuding retro sensibility, the interior is a high-tech AI laboratory filled with the imagination of uni-

versity students. Students from various universities including Konkuk University, Hongik University, and Ewha Womans University have participated in a relay format to project their artistic visions onto the Electronics on display.



The exhibition, “Objects with Nunchi,” runs at Geumseong Jeonpasa until the end of March
Photo: VISITKOREA (korean.visitkorea.or.kr)

At the time of writing, an exhibition named “Objects with Nunchi” was being held. Twenty-nine students from the Dept. of Design at the Korea National University of Arts participated to interpret AI's capacity for empathy through *Nunchi*, the intuitive art of gauging the atmosphere and reading others' unspoken needs. The exhibition can be seen at Geumseong Jeonpasa in the main building of Kyungdong Market until the end of March. Encountering the most futuristic AI technology implemented by university students in the middle of an old traditional market creates a very unique experience. In this way, Kyungdong Market is evolving beyond a place for

buying and selling goods into a venue for mutual growth, where corporate technology meets student creativity to experiment with and experience new culture.

A Space for Young People Within a Traditional Market: Cheongnyeong Mall

The changes in Kyungdong Market do not end here. Cheongnyeong Mall offers a completely different charm from the noisy landscape of the first floor. Using the Korean word *Cheongnyeong*, meaning youth, this space is a hybrid food culture venue that preserves the vitality of the traditional market while embracing a youthful vibe. The mall is a startup space for young entrepreneurs under the age of 39, featuring clean interiors and trendy sensibilities that young people would appreciate.

Currently, the mall houses eight general restaurants, six dessert and bakery shops, six workshops and one-day classes. The meal for sale at Cheongnyeong Recipe—a plate-filling pork cutlet served with what appeared to be at least three scoops of rice—cost just 9,000 won. It was a meal that showed both the sophisticated sense of the young chefs and the generous heart of the traditional market. In addition to this, the place is full of menus reflecting the ideas and efforts of young people, such as thoughtfully prepared rice bowls and handmade desserts.

Kyungdong Market holds the possibility of becoming an extended campus for university students in the Dongdaemun-gu area. Going beyond a market, it can serve as a cultural intersection where the youthful energy of students and the wisdom of merchants converge. If you need a refresher from the repetitive daily life of the Hoegi university district, why not take a walk to Kyungdong Market?



Cheongnyeong Mall



Pork cutlet for sale at Cheongnyeong Mall



Two contrasting signboards standing out amidst the old (Starbucks & Geumseong Jeonpasa)



Starbucks Kyungdong 1960