

JICC & ACF DC CO-PRESENT

Taste It,

Don't Waste It!

DCEFF 2022

Inspired by the film  
*Mottainai Kitchen!*

「もったいない」から  
始まるエコ活動

A community resources  
booklet featuring:

- Director's Interview
- Notes on Sustainability
- Places to Visit Near DC
- Japanese & Austrian Recipes

Let's bring the Japanese spirit of *Mottainai* to Washington DC!

# About



## [Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital](#)

The Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital (DCEFF) is the world's premier showcase of environmentally themed films since 1993.

Each March in Washington, D.C., they host the largest environmental film festival in the world, presenting 100+ films to audiences of more than 20,000. Collaborating with over 110 partners, including museums, embassies, universities, and theaters, the Festival is one of the leading annual cultural events in Washington, D.C., winning the 2017 DC Mayor's Award for Excellence in Creative Industries.

## [Japan Information & Culture Center, Embassy of Japan](#)

The Japan Information & Culture Center (JICC) is a part of the Public Affairs Section of the Embassy of Japan in Washington D.C. The JICC is committed to enriching the relationship between Japan and the United States through an active, vibrant cultural exchange. We aim to promote a better understanding of Japan and Japanese culture by providing a wide range of information and diverse cultural programming. For the past 35 years, the JICC has provided residents of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia with exciting cultural and arts opportunities.

## [Austrian Cultural Forum Washington, Embassy of Austria](#)

The Austrian Cultural Forum Washington (ACFDC) serves as a focal point to promote Austrian culture and art in the Washington DC metro area. By organizing a variety of cultural events (concerts, film screenings, exhibitions, theatre performances, lectures and panel discussions) throughout the year, they aim at encouraging cultural exchange between Austrian and American artists and its audiences.

Copyright © 2022 Japan Information & Culture Center, Embassy of Japan in Washington, D.C. 1150 18th Street NW, Suite 100 Washington, D.C. 20036. This booklet was produced through a special collaboration with the JICC, Embassy of Japan, the Austrian Cultural Forum Washington / Embassy of Austria, and with the support of the Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any material forms including photography or storage in any medium by electronic means and whether or not transiently or incidentally to some other use of this publication without the written permission of the copyright owners.

# What is *Mottainai*?

**Mottainai [moat-tie-nigh]:**  
もったいない・勿体無い

**\* A keyword for global environment issues,  
meaning "Don't waste what is valuable."**

According to the prestigious Japanese dictionary *Kojien*, the word *mottainai* (pronounced moat-tie-nigh) is most commonly used to express a feeling of regret when something is put to waste without deriving its value. Recently the term has become a buzzword or philosophy in coping with global problems related to resources and the environment.

The most prominent advocate of *mottainai* is Wangari Maathai, Kenya's Assistant Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife and winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize. Maathai believes that the word perfectly embodies the spirit of the 3Rs (**reduce, reuse, and recycle**), which promotes the efficient use of resources.

The spirit of *mottainai* is also discussed in the government's 2005 Environmental White Paper and White Paper on the Recycling-Based Society. At the G8 summit in July, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro told the leaders of the other countries, "It may be difficult to translate the word into English, French, German, or other languages, but I believe we can just use the Japanese word *mottainai*."

Prime Minister Koizumi called for the use of *mottainai* as a universal term in international efforts for the effective utilization of resources. (September 28, 2005)

Japan has set a national target of halving food loss and waste compared to 2000 by 2030. As a result, addressing food and product waste through sustainable, eco-friendly means has been prioritized in more recent years.

\* Definition of *mottainai* was taken and adapted from Web Japan (<https://web-japan.org/>).



## 金継ぎ

### *Kintsugi.*

The art of kintsugi is related to *wabi-sabi*, a fundamental Japanese concept. It is a unique technique in which broken objects, usually vessels, are repaired using gold Japanese lacquer such as the one pictured above.

## Mottainai in Japanese Culture

The spirit of mottainai can be linked to other sustainable traditions and practices in Japanese culture! Let's read more about them below.

### The Philosophy of *Wabi-Sabi* | わび・さび

Like mottainai, the philosophy of *wabi-sabi* is also derived from Buddhism. *Wabi-sabi* is a world view or mindset that can be applied to aesthetics in art, design, or even in your every day practices. It is sometimes described as the act of appreciating beauty in nature and objects even when it is impermanent or transient. *Kintsugi* (defined above) is an excellent examples of this.

Although the the philosophies mottainai and wabi-sabi are quite different, they are considered to be interrelated. Both encourage individuals to appreciate the things around us. Instead of tossing out an old cup or shirt, view them as objects of importance in your life that serve purpose and utility. They are "too good to waste" so why not try re-purposing them into something new and beautiful instead of simply tossing them out?

# More About *Mottainai*



## **Shōjin Ryōri: Japanese Buddhist Cuisine | 精進料理**

*Shōjin-ryōri* is traditional Japanese vegetarian (and sometimes vegan) cuisine that was first introduced during the Heian period (794 to 1185 AD) that was originally eaten by Buddhist disciples. *Shōjin ryōri* prohibits hunting animals for the purpose of food so this cuisine does not use fish, meat or other animal products such as eggs. Instead, *tofu* is used as a popular ingredient.

Many *shōjin ryōri* recipes embody the spirit of *mottainai* because they involve using as much of a food product as possible, using the same ingredients with different recipes, and pickling or frying all parts of a vegetable in order to avoid waste and encourage mindful consumption.





## Zero Waste & the Five Rules

Did you know that original three Rs, **3Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle)**, have been expanded to **five rules** which include **refuse** and **rot**? “Refuse” encourages individuals to refuse what they don’t need or what may be considered unnecessary. On the other hand, “rot” specifically encourages everyone to try composting and purchasing or using consumer goods made out of more eco-friendly materials.

Although mottainai as a cultural concept is considered Japanese in origin, it can be easily applied to other zero waste movements all over the world. Incorporating aspects of mottainai in your daily life can be as easy as reducing food waste by buying only items you need during grocery trips (to avoid unused, expired foods), re-purposing or repairing home goods or daily items, and avoiding single-use plastics.

### Additional Resources

- [Food Facts from the United Nations](#)
  - [From Farm to Kitchen](#)
  - [“Stop Food Waste!” Day](#)

# *Mottainai Kitchen*

[Virtual Screening with DCEFF | March 18 - 24, 2022](#)

The JICC, Embassy of Japan and Austrian Cultural Forum Washington co-present a special virtual screening of the documentary *Mottainai Kitchen* and this community resources booklet as part of the 30th Anniversary of Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital. Snippets from a pre-recorded exclusive interview with the director is also included!

## About the Film + Trailer Link

[Mottainai Kitchen](#) is a culinary road movie, tackling the issue of food waste and other environmental issues in Japan, searching for sustainable solutions. The film follows filmmaker and food activist **David Gross (Groß)** as he discovers the fascinating Japanese concept of "*Mottainai*", meets local chefs, scientists and farmers while creating tasty recipes for a "*Zero Waste Kitchen Revolution*."

>> [Watch the trailer here!](#)



## Director David Gross (Groß)

Austria and Japan-based director **David Gross** has been working as a freelance television journalist, filmmaker and food activist. In 2012, he launched the crossmedia project *Wastecooking*.

Initially created as a web series and "*artivism*" (art and activism) project, *Wastecooking* later became a television series and a documentary film in feature length. The film shown at numerous festivals won several awards.

The documentary film *Wastecooking* (2015) was also released in Japan. His latest documentary film *Mottainai Kitchen* was shot in Japan and released in 2020.

# Interview with Director Gross

**How did you become a food activist as well as a film director?**

**David Gross:** Well, first and foremost, thank you, for screening the movie and for doing the interview. Many thanks to the Austrian and Japanese Cultural Forums. *Danke schoen—arigatō gozaimasu.*

Yes, I am a filmmaker and food activist from Austria currently living in Japan. and I learned cooking and tourism in high school in Salsburg where I grew up but to be honest, I was not a big talent, not a very good chef.

I was more interested in storytelling and this is why I studied journalism and theater sciences and I became a filmmaker. I did some TV shows and I did cinema documentaries and then one day, in 2012, ten years ago, I saw a documentary about dumpster diving in New York. This was a wake-up call for me, it was almost like the voice of God, telling me you need to become a dumpster diver, a food activist and this is how the *Wastecooking* story started.



# Interview with Director Gross



**Can you say a few words about mottainai and what it means to you?**

Well maybe I should tell you shortly how I came to Japan. So, I had this idea of doing the *Wastecooking* show. It's quite a radical idea to do a cooking show and only use ingredients that others call waste. We really started diving into the trash of supermarkets at night, we call it midnight shopping, rescuing the unsold food and preparing delicious meals. It became popular as an underground YouTube series and it became, later, a TV series. We traveled to ten European countries with our waste car, our car eats waste as well. Then finally we made a cinema documentary and it was released in Japan and I was invited to do a promotion tour [there].

[But] to explain a little bit about mottainai, it's a Japanese phrase, it's a bit hard to translate. It means, "what a waste." As an example, if I don't finish my food on the plate my Japanese wife Aiko says "mottainai," "what a waste," or "you shouldn't waste." This is a very unique concept and at the same time it expresses sadness for wasting but it's a call to work towards sustainability, to take an action. That's very unique. Japan, unfortunately, produces a lot of food waste and at the same time, there are a lot of sustainable solutions and that's fascinating for a filmmaker. That's the reason why I decided to do the movie in Japan.

But I think that we have a global problem and a global challenge, we have too much fast food. In the US, in Austria, but in Japan as well. This fast-food industry causes a lot of food waste and it's a big waste of resources and it's not healthy at all. So, we need to come back to the culture of slow food, you know the cooking of our grandparents. Cooking with love, using the leftovers to create new dishes, this slow food culture is what we need for a more sustainable future in my opinion.

>> [Click here to watch the full interview!](#)



# In Your Neighborhood

Are you interested in incorporating mottainai into your daily life or getting more involved in the Zero Waste movement? Check out our recommended list of things to try below!

Cookpad  
(Japanese Recipes)

DC  
Community  
Gardens

DMV  
Food  
Co-Ops

Food  
Cowboy

Food  
For  
Others

Fruit  
Farms  
(Local)

Manna  
Food  
Center

Mom's  
Organic  
Market

Nourish  
Now  
DC Kitchen

Smarticular  
(Austrian  
Recipes)

The Zero  
Waste  
Chef

Tokiya's  
Shidashi  
Project

Too  
GoodtoGo  
Food App

Wa-  
shokuiku  
DC

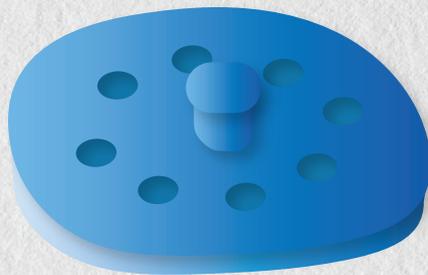
What is  
Imperfect  
Produce?

WRFAS  
Animal  
Sanctuary



# The Basics of Composting

>> Read more about composting at home from [Zero Waste DC!](#)



## GREENS (CARBON)

- bread and grains
- coffee grounds
- crushed eggshells
- fresh grass clippings
- fruits (including peels; limit citrus)
- hair or pet fur
- old or dried flowers
- tea bags or leaves
- vegetables (including scraps)

## BROWNS (NITROGEN)

- cardboard cartons
- non-chemical garden waste
- nutshells
- paper towel scraps
- sawdust
- shredded cardboard
- shredded newspaper
- tea bags or leaves

## DO ~~NOT~~ ADD

- biodegradable plastic
- bones
- compostable plastics
- dairy (milk, butter)
- eggs
- fat
- meat
- metal
- oil
- pet waste
- recalled produce

### Additional Links:

[Composting Info for MD](#), [Locations for VA](#), & [Compost Crew](#)

**Thank you  
for reading!**

