

Abstract

A Workshop on Food Consciousness and Traditional Japanese Culinary Practice Increases Awareness of Sensory Food Properties, Mindful Eating, and Food Waste Reduction Actions[†]

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Abstract: Background and objectives: Food waste and unhealthy food choices contribute negatively to planetary health. Tackling this global concern and promoting sustainability require cross-disciplinary action. “Mottainai (“What a Waste!”)”, a Japanese term rooted in ethical and religious principles, calls for more sustainable lifestyles and mindful food consumption. We developed a workshop applying the Mottainai concept to explore sensory food properties, food consciousness/mindful eating, and food waste. The objective was to evaluate the effect of the workshop in adults. Methods: Participants were recruited at Glasgow University and invited to attend a 2.5 h workshop consisting of Mottainai concepts, Japanese traditional culinary practice (i.e., food fermenting to optimise nutrient content whilst reducing food waste), and food tasting. Participants answered before (PRE) and after (POST) workshop questionnaires. Questions with five-point Likert scale answers (1 = never/2 = sometimes/3 = about half of the time/4 = most of the time/5 = always) measured awareness of food sensory properties (4 items), food consciousness/mindful eating actions (6 items), and food waste reduction actions (1 item). Nonparametric statistics evaluated changes between the scores obtained before and after the workshop. Results: The participants (n = 76) were students and staff members in the field of nutrition (n = 20) and other study/work fields (n = 43). The questionnaire response rate was 83% (n = 63). After the workshop, participants gave increased median scores (25th, 75th percentiles) for most food sensory awareness items: texture/flavours (PRE 4(4,5) vs. POST 5(4,5), $p = 0.007$), smells/aromas (PRE 4(4,5) vs. POST 5(4,5), $p = 0.002$), and sound of eating (PRE 3(2,4) vs. POST 4(3,5), $p < 0.001$). The scores for appearance remained unchanged. Food consciousness/mindful eating significantly increased for eating slowly (PRE 3(2,4) vs. POST 4(3,4), $p < 0.001$) and considering food value from other dimensions (e.g., agriculture) (PRE 4(2,4) vs. POST 5(4,5), $p = < 0.001$), but the other items remained unchanged. After the stratification by study/work in Nutrition, the results remained similar, except for smells/aromas, and there was an additional significant increase in taking food waste reduction actions (PRE 4(3,4) vs. POST 5(4,5), $p = 0.011$). In other study fields, the scores for smells/aromas (PRE 4(4,5), POST 5(4,5), $p = 0.001$), sounds (PRE 3(2,4), POST 4(3,5), $p < 0.001$), and eating slowly (PRE 3(2,4), POST 4(3,4), $p < 0.001$) remained significantly higher. Discussion: The workshop had a small but positive effect on food sensory awareness, food consciousness/mindful eating, and food waste reduction actions, with potential to positively contribute to planetary health.



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