

# “Real gems” are those things we want to continue using for always

Photographer

Kiyoko Eto



Born in Osaka in 1976. Now based in Tokyo, where she takes photographs mainly for magazines and books. Her photographs cover a wide range of genres, including people, food, and travel.



Kiyoko Eto, responsible for the photography of this book. She's a photographer whose depictions of scenes from daily life capturing everyday situations and snapshots of her travels are popular on social media, and who enjoys her own style and way of life. We asked her about finding she likes, and her rules for choosing things.

## Fond of everyday tableware created by artists, antiques, and pots and pans

Kiyoko Eto was born in Higashi-Osaka, and today, based in Tokyo, takes photographs for publications including magazines and cookbooks. Having seen

items made from good-quality materials on a daily basis as part of her job as a photographer, she says she gradually developed an affection for everyday tableware. “My latest fancy is for white porcelain, so everything I’m buying is white. I often go to Korea, both privately and for work, so that may also have influenced me, but I do like to see a white bowl making meals look more appealing.”

She also likes antiques, and says she often buys old tiny *mamezara* plates and tableware that conveys traditional Japanese techniques. “I’m crazy about artisanal hand-made tableware, but I also like buying kitchen implements, so apart from tableware I tend to buy mostly

cheaper stuff,” she says, pointing to a photograph of some aluminum pans she bought on a market in Korea. “For everyday things like boiling eggs or spinach, I only use lightweight pans. In fact, I use them so much that they eventually become dented and I feel thoroughly sorry for them, but I think that’s also part of their charm. These pans weren’t at all expensive, but they do have their own appeal.”

## One-off finds come unexpectedly

The basket piled with Japanese teacups was a one-off find, she says. “It’s an artist’s piece woven from akebia vines,

and when I use it I think I’ll cherish it for the rest of my life. I found it in a household goods shop near my home. The shop has a great selection of well-designed items, mainly tableware, and sometimes I’ll find something like this there unexpectedly. I’ll buy things from there just because it’s a shop that I trust.”

She found the teacups in the basket nearly 20 years ago in an antiques shop she was visiting as a photographer. “At that time I was still living with my parents, so I had no need to buy tableware, but I thought the day might come when I would need them, and bought, not one, but two teacups! Today they’re coming in really useful, so I’m glad I bought them.”

Eto lives with her husband. “We each travel a lot, both on trips and for business, and don’t get to see that much of each other, so we always try and eat breakfast together. And I do find sometimes that if I don’t eat breakfast, I don’t have any energy. So at breakfast time I try and cook delicious rice in an earthenware pot.”

## A relaxing place surrounded by favorite things

Eto often edits her photos in her home. She says that when she finds herself feeling tired, she goes into the kitchen. “I get away from my computer in the office and go and wash the dishes, or if I feel a bit hungry, I’ll eat natto on rice. The kitchen has a window, which makes it pleasant, and perhaps it’s the place where I can most easily relax.”

As all the kitchen utensils are things she’s chosen herself, Eto thinks that perhaps being surrounded by her favorite things is reassuring. “I really don’t have very much stuff, but I’ve made my own decision that having a lot of things in the kitchen is fine,” she laughs.

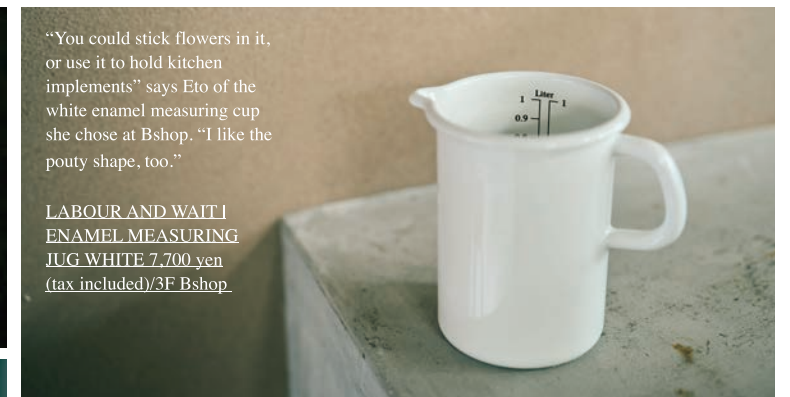
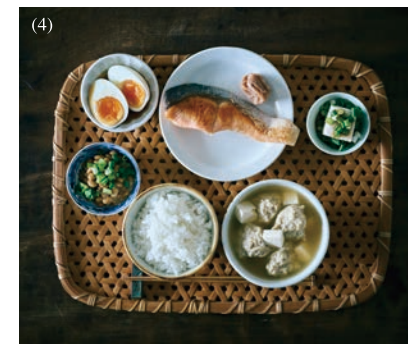
What Eto enjoys is the “pots and pans patrol.” “I can’t help using the things I like best, so I try and think ‘I should really use this bowl today.’ And if there are things I still don’t feel like using, I wonder if I can get rid of them, saying to myself ‘There are only two of us in this household: are we really ever going to use a four-person casserole dish?’ That’s what I do on patrol.”

## Perhaps, “real gems” are the things that are important to us individually

On her patrol, Eto also notices things that she wants to keep on using for the rest of her life. “I use this bamboo woven tray every day, and in one place it snapped. I took it back to the shop where I’d bought it, and they said they could repair it, and they did put it right. Look here, I think the pattern is different, but this is also part of its charm. I want to take care of it and carry on using it in future.”

Eto thinks that even items that aren’t expensive but which are dear to us may be “real gems.” “I have plenty of things that I want to treasure for always. Those teacups I just showed you, I think that if they break I’ll put them back together with gold. Though I’ve never tried *kintsugi* before” she says with a chuckle.

“Real gems” are those things that we love and want to keep on using. Being honest about our own feelings when we choose items may help us create spaces and times in which we feel comfortable.



“You could stick flowers in it, or use it to hold kitchen implements” says Eto of the white enamel measuring cup she chose at Bshop. “I like the pouty shape, too.”

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(1) Aluminum pans of varying sizes bought in a Korean market. (2) The sturdy akebia vine basket is a lifelong item. (3) The kitchen is a space where she can relax, surrounded by her favorite things. (4) The bamboo tray that she had repaired is used every morning. (5) Lately she’s taken a fancy to collecting white tableware. (6) Her favorite pots and pans that she wants to continue to cherish.