

**Press Release  
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**The Japan Foundation**  
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## Shojin Ryori Cuisine of the Spirit Talk by Toshio Tanahashi

**Date:** Thursday, 16 September 2010 from 6.30pm

**Venue:** The Japan Foundation, 10-12 Russell Square, WC1B 5EH

Shojin ryori expert and food writer, Toshio Tanahashi will visit the Japan Foundation, London to take part in a special event focusing on the Japanese cuisine, shojin ryori.

Shojin Ryori is a form of traditional vegetarian cooking that started in Japan in the 6<sup>th</sup> century with the introduction of Buddhism, later becoming more widespread mainly due to the development of Zen Buddhism from the 13th century. In a modern context, Toshio Tanahashi creates exquisitely flavoured and visually arresting dishes from the simplest of ingredients based on the principles of shojin ryori cooking and his own deep respect for the rhythms and harmonies of nature.

Whilst a wide range of Japanese foods such as sushi and tempura are well-known to the public and readily available all over the world, shojin-ryori is not so commonly known. It does however have great significance in Japan as a special style of cuisine.

Toshio Tanahashi began cooking shojin ryori in 1987 when he trained for three years at Gesshinji Temple, a nunnery renowned for the quality of the shojin ryori created there. Tanahashi went on to open a shojin ryori restaurant, Gesshinkyo in Tokyo in 1992.

Tanahashi is highly regarded in Japan as a dedicated ambassador of shojin ryori, he has demonstrated shojin ryori cooking in various parts of the world and been featured in publications such as The New York Times, The Sunday Times, The Financial Times, Telegraph Magazine and Japan Vogue. He is also the author of the book "Shojin" which, as well as containing recipes by Tanahashi, also explains the philosophy behind shojin ryori.

In this intimate event, a UK audience will be able to hear from Toshio Tanahashi as he outlines the history and philosophy of shojin ryori. He will also discuss how shojin ryori can be incorporated into modern life and the benefits which it can offer.

This event will be in Japanese with English translation.

### **Booking information:**

**This event is free but booking is essential. To reserve a place, please email [event@jpf.org.uk](mailto:event@jpf.org.uk) giving your name and those of any guests, along with the title of the event you would like to attend.**

*Despite the obvious Zen influences, Tanahashi's food is a far cry from the dainty, highly sweetened dishes of the effete temples on the tourist trails of the ancient capital. Instead, he draws on an earthy rural tradition in which the body must be nourished no less than the spirit... it is a celebration of the manifold possibilities of the vegetable kingdom. (Japan Times)*

*...Mr. Tanahashi immersed himself for three years in study at Gesshin Ji temple, near Kyoto. He emerged profoundly changed and highly skilled in the vegetarian culinary arts. (New York Times)*

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**For more information please contact Junko Takekawa or John McIvor on 020 7436 6695 or email [press@jpf.org.uk](mailto:press@jpf.org.uk)**

Photographs of Mr Tanahashi and examples of shojin ryori cuisine are available upon request.

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Notes to editors:

- The Japan Foundation, founded in 1972, is Japan's principal agent for cultural relations between Japan and overseas countries and exists to promote a wider knowledge of Japan abroad and to promote mutual understanding between nations.
- **Toshio Tanahashi**, was born in 1960. At the age of 27, Tanahashi decided to serve as an apprentice at the Gesshinji Temple in Shiga prefecture, near Kyoto. A nunnery famous for its abbess' excellent shojin cooking, he trained there for three years. In 1992, he opened his restaurant Gesshinkyo in Tokyo. In 2000, Vogue Nippon ran a series of articles featuring his cooking and he was invited to demonstrate his style of cooking at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. In the same year, Tanahashi's story was dramatised for a TV series entitled "Honmamon" (The True Thing) by NHK Broadcasting, and he introduced Chinese traditional shojin style from China in a program of NHK BS. Tanahashi collaborated with a French chef at Hotel Okura in Tokyo to widen the possibilities of vegetable cuisine in 2003. In the same year, he gave lectures and demonstrations at the Japan Society in New York and Boston. Tanahashi has been featured by The New York Times, The Sunday Times, The Japan Times, The Financial Times, and Telegraph Magazine. He is the author of *Shojin* (Bunka Publishing Bureau, March 2002), a beautifully photographed recipe book, in Japanese, which outlines his philosophies of shojin ryori. After he closed Gesshinkyo in 2007, he founded the Zecoow Culinary Institute in February, 2008. In 2009, Tanahashi took up the role of Director of Culinary Art and Design at Kyoto University of Art and Design.

End of notes