

SUSTAINABILITY IN EVERY BITE: JAPAN'S B CORP-CERTIFIED VEGAN BAKESHOP CHAMPIONS ETHICAL BUSINESS

A bakeshop specializing in plant-based cookies has achieved a groundbreaking milestone as the first food establishment in Japan to obtain B Corp Certification, an accolade for businesses that prioritize environmental and social considerations. What kind of diverse options does its founder, at the heart of a movement to harness the power of business for societal change, envision for the future?

“Doing good tastes so good”—this simple concept of creating something both delicious and good for everyone has brought attention to ovgo Baker, a bakeshop founded by MIZOBUCHI Yuki and two of her friends in May 2020. Ovgo inc. sells cookies and muffins made entirely from plant-

based ingredients. The name “ovgo,” an acronym for “organic, vegan, gluten-free as options,” embodies the bakery’s mission to expand the range of choices for those with dietary restrictions, whether due to religion, allergies, or other reasons. Coupled with their unwavering dedication to exceptional taste,

theirs is a welcoming space that ensures everyone who enters leaves with a smile.

After the company launched online sales during the COVID-19 pandemic, word of delicious cookies made at ovgo quickly spread on social media. Today, the company runs three bakeshops in

Vegan cookies use domestic wheat and plant-based ingredients in a wide variety of products while reducing the environmental impact. Popular flavors include *matcha* (powdered green tea) a favorite among foreign visitors.

Tokyo, and the number of cafes stocking its products is steadily rising. In a significant milestone, ovgo earned B Corp Certification in 2022, established by the American nonprofit B Lab, which recognizes businesses committed to substantial public benefit and of high social and environmental performance standards. The certification is based on fulfilling various criteria in all five evaluation categories, namely, governance, workers, community, environment, and customers, followed by analyst review and interview. With the certification given to over 8,900 companies certified in 101 countries (as of July 2024), ovgo became Japan’s first in the food industry to receive the distinction.

Mizobuchi resigned from a major trading firm that she had joined after graduating from university in just three years. While pursuing a venture that truly resonates with her values and benefited society, she

traveled alone to the U.S. and Brazil, where she crystallized her vision of a society offering a rich diversity of options and possibilities. She was also inspired by the local mindset in those countries of choosing plant-based food products motivated by the environmental repercussions of livestock farming and concerns over food security. Combining her love for baking American-style cookies, a desire for connection with society, and her entrepreneurial spirit, ovgo was born.

“When a food establishment like ours, deeply rooted in the community with many people involved, obtains B Corp Certification, I believe, the social impact is significant,” remarks Mizobuchi. A measurement of their flagship chocolate chip cookies, carbon footprint, from procurement to production, and distribution found that their greenhouse gas emissions were 84% less than that of similar cookies made elsewhere. “It would be wonderful if awareness grew about how tasty cookies can play a role in decreasing environmental impact and motivate people to act,” she adds.

Mizobuchi has stepped down as chief operating officer of ovgo, having assumed the position of co-lead at B Market Builder

Japan, in March 2024. In her new post, she advocates the B Corp philosophy across Japan. B Corp’s aim is to benefit all stakeholders, from consumers and employees to local communities and the environment. “Japan, I think, used to have a good corporate culture of caring for the environment and employees. Societies and businesses alike, by introducing mechanisms to embrace previously overlooked diversity and address hidden disparities, can cultivate meaningful change,” she says.

While she has shifted her primary focus, she hasn’t forgotten her passion for cookies as a member of ovgo. Plans are underway to expand the company’s market presence to the U.S. and beyond. She views the art of transforming plant-based ingredients into delicious foods, such as the ubiquitous *dashi* broth from kelp, as a hallmark of Japanese cooking. “Last year, at a pop-up shop we ran in the U.S., customers were full of praise for how tasty our products were. I’m confident that our flavors can win people’s hearts overseas,” she remarks.

Today, as ever, the bakeshop brought to life by Mizobuchi’s aspiration is brimming with sweet scents and countless smiles—“a diverse group of customers and staff: everyone a picture of happiness.”



B Market Builder Japan’s focus is on nurturing connections and supporting local movements in Japan. The photo is from the launch party held in March. NISHIDA KAORI



MIZOBUCHI Yuki, founder of ovgo inc., focused on obtaining B Corp Certification since the company’s early days. Her next goal is to promote the Impact Business Model, one of B Corp’s assessments, in Japan.