

# The Not-So Puzzling Wholesomeness of Inbento

By Mariah Qaiser

The year 2020 has been less than hospitable. With a slew of disquieting events culminating one after the other, it's been an overwhelming ride for most, and at times like these, it's especially easy to succumb to stress. While video games have been cardinal for getting us through the year, there's one game in

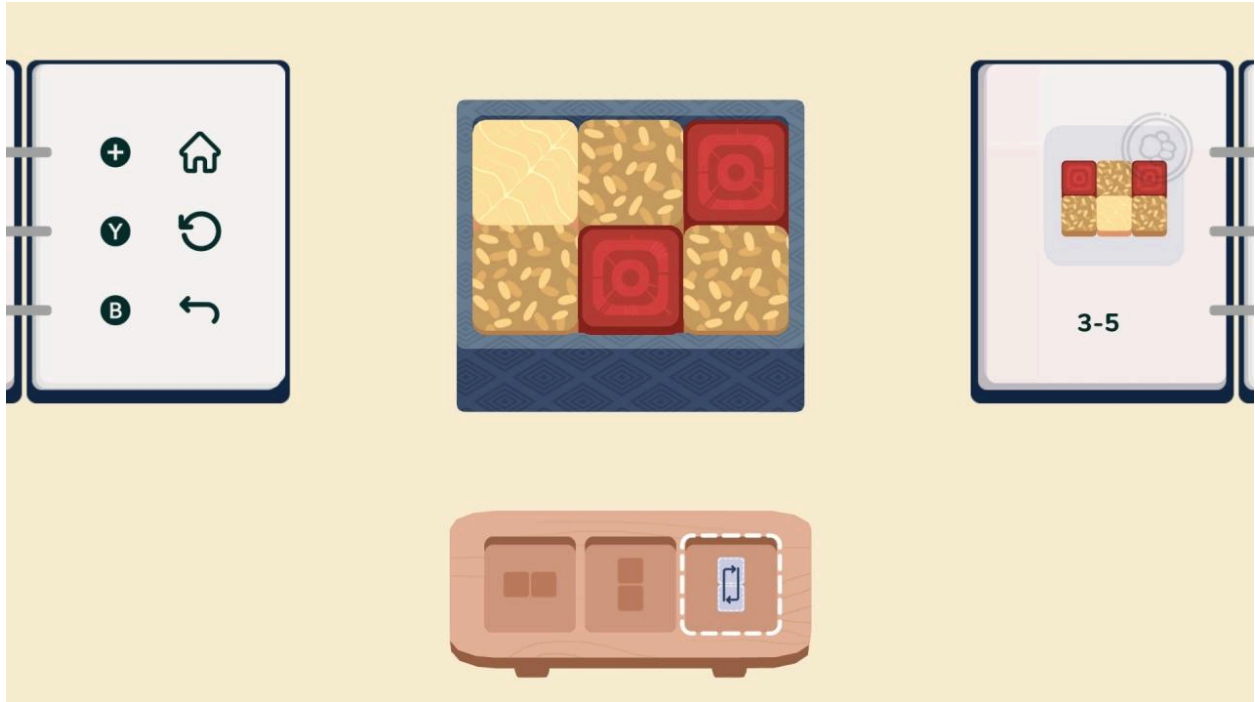
particular that offers a unique and self-reflective escape: *inbento*.



[Image Courtesy of Nintendo](#)

With so many explosively popular games coming out this year like [Animal Crossing: New Horizons](#) and [Among Us](#), *inbento* is certainly not a game that comes to mind when you think, “The saving grace of 2020.” I stumbled upon the game during a Nintendo eShop sale, and for just a couple of dollars, I welcomed into my life one of the most wholesome and engaging puzzle games I’ve ever played.

The most distinguishable elements of the game are cats and bento boxes, putting together two of the most wonderful things this world has to offer. While it is of the puzzle game genre, *inbento* tells the delightful story of a mother cat who makes bentos for her kitten, who gradually grows into an adult. The gameplay centers around matching the mother cat's bento box meal to its recipe via solving its respective puzzle. Each bento puzzle has a set number of moves that can be made, as well as movement specifications and restrictions. For example, some puzzles require the simple placement of ingredients to match the recipe whereas others call for directional rearrangements of ingredients already placed within the box. It's up to the player to figure out how to properly match the bento to the recipe within the limited set of moves available. As the player progresses through each level, they unlock story sequences and the puzzles become more challenging.



[Image Courtesy of Nintendo](#)

*Inbento* offers a very intriguing puzzle game experience, inviting players to think outside the (bento) box and engage in a healthy challenge. Along with its enjoyable and thought-provoking gameplay, *inbento*'s entire presentation is refreshingly simplistic and peaceful. The story of the mother cat raising her kitten is absolutely endearing and a sweet detour from some of the more conventional action-driven narratives in games. With the completion of each set of bento puzzles, the player watches the kitten grow into an adult under the mother cat's care and remains

present for milestone events and tender moments that occur between the two. It's a touching story about love and family and how an act as simple as making food can be so meaningful. Interestingly, the story is told not with dialogue or text, but through the sole use of pictures and sound effects. Additionally, the background music consists of soft, modest instrumental pieces that change tune after each major story sequence is achieved. This creates a soothing and gentle atmosphere, rendering the greater experience of *inbento* a calming escape from the noise of reality (Especially in 2020).



[Image Courtesy of Nintendo](#)

With all that's happened this year, I found myself thoroughly comforted by the sweet and heartwarming nature of *inbento*. Puzzle games in general are a nice divergence from more action-based titles in that players are definitely more introspective. The beautiful combination of minimalistic artwork, gripping gameplay, delicate audio and a heartfelt story about family make this small game a solid package. It offers a peaceful escape from the difficulties of 2020 by giving a subtle reminder to enjoy the simpler things in life. The game ultimately creates a medium of insight and self-reflection in which the value of something like carefully preparing food for a loved one is truly understood and appreciated.

Considering many of us have spent a great deal of time in isolation this year, it's helpful to remember where we find meaning in our lives and what's important to us. I may be getting a bit deep here, but sometimes it's the little things that let us realize what

matters, and *inbento* certainly places this ideal in front of its players.

In the midst of 2020's chaos, *inbento* offers a gratifying and healing experience full of cats, cute food and fun puzzles. While providing a peaceful escape from the difficulties of reality, this humble title is thought-provoking and a gentle reminder to appreciate the small things in life.