



## Hoshi no Mori Daycare

Expanding sensibilities  
with an open kitchen  
designed for food education

The children whose turn it is to help pick up lunches from the lunch counter and bring them to the hall, where they eat with their teachers. The kitchen staff keeps a friendly eye on them.

School lunches and bento box lunches are among the activities that children in daycares and kindergartens really look forward to. Hoshi no Mori Daycare (Tamura City, Fukushima Prefecture), which focuses on food education with the slogan “childcare through the five senses,” has converted its kitchen into an open kitchen to encourage children to develop an interest in food and experience the joy of eating. It features a fun multi-purpose kitchen “designed for food education,” where the counter area doubles as a place for cooking classes.

### — Carrot cake made by the “little cooks”

Just before lunchtime at the daycare's kitchen. The glass door facing the hall is opened, and little cooks in aprons with colorful bandanas tied around their heads are making carrot cake at the counter. Children pour the orange-colored batter into round molds with the help of a registered dietitian and cooking staff, who they call “lunch teachers.” You can hear them say things like, “Isn't this fun? It's like a takoyaki party,” “Look, the dough is starting to rise,” and

“Oh, it smells great!”

If the little cooks say things like “It looks delicious!” you might hear a lunch teacher say, “Why don't we eat it during snack time? But before that, make sure to properly eat all of your lunch.” This is an example of what happens during the daycare cooking classes held in the open kitchen of the Hoshi no Mori Daycare in Tamura City, Fukushima Prefecture.



Photo from the cooking class. The kitchen floor is 40 cm lower than the floor where the children stand to allow adults standing there to talk to children at the same eye level.



The brightly lit kitchen. The glass doors are closed when cooking equipment is being used. The under-counter table-type refrigerators lined up on the hall side also serve as counters.

## Kitchen floor was designed at a lower height to put adults at eye level with the children

Hoshi no Mori Daycare is a privately operated daycare run by the Hoshi General Hospital Foundation in Fukushima Prefecture, which manages and operates general hospitals, health nursing schools, geriatric healthcare facilities, daycares, and daycare centers. The Foundation took over the daycare, which had been outsourced to operate by Tamura City, as a private facility and reopened it in a new location and building in April 2022. The daycare cares for 150 children aged 0 to 5, who have a great time there.

Its educational policy is “childcare through the five senses,” and the other four facilities managed and operated by the Foundation also place special emphasis on food education. At the recently opened Hoshi no Mori Daycare, the kitchen is ideally located across from the hall in the center of the building, which has a total floor area of 1,241.95 square meters. It has an open kitchen design, and the sliding door that separates the hall from the kitchen is finished with a warm wood frame and heat-resistant tempered glass. The kitchen floor is 40 cm lower than the hall and corridor where the children conduct their activities, allowing children and adults standing in the kitchen to communicate at the same eye level during cooking class and during the lunch distribution mentioned near the beginning of this article.

A catwalk with peepholes in the floor has also been constructed near the kitchen ceiling. This allows the children to play while watching lunch and snacks being prepared from their classroom or even from directly above the kitchen.

## A “kitchen” where you can see and smell the cooking

“Food is something to be enjoyed,” says Masatoshi Sato, Director of the Corporate Children's Division, “We want children to experience the joy of food through a variety of experiences, and the open kitchen is an important setting for realizing this.” He continues, “When we see school lunches being prepared, the delicious smells waft through the classrooms and hall. The smells make kids imagine the menu, and they can't wait to eat it. That process itself is a food-related experience that should enhance enjoyment and deliciousness.”

Akiko Tomatsu (Manager, Shoku Full Creation Section, Corporate Headquarters Planning Department) collaborated with Director Sato and other staff to create the kitchen concept, which gave shape to the ideas of Hoshi Hokuto (President of the Foundation, which is the parent organization of Hoshi no Mori Daycare), who always says, “Food is something to be enjoyed.” She explains, “We wanted to recreate the atmosphere of a parent standing in the kitchen at home. Children are less likely to neglect proper eating when they see the person preparing the food, which promotes better health for themselves. We hope that this facility will serve as a gateway for kids to naturally experience food in a variety of ways.”



Catwalk. The floor above the kitchen has several small peepholes.



The kitchen as seen through a catwalk peephole. If you were to ask the children to draw the “cooking area,” they might draw something like this with their crayons.



“Can you see us?” Kids wave from the catwalk and do a high-five in the air.



From their classroom, kids can see school lunches being prepared in the kitchen.

## Awareness activities teach that “food education starts in childhood”

In fact, even before the Hoshi no Mori Daycare opened, the Hoshi General Hospital Foundation had long been conducting activities to educate children and the local community about the benefits of good nutrition. Examples of such activities include growing and harvesting vegetables at the Foundation's “Hoshikuma Farm\*,” as well as using the “Kitchen Hoshikuma” food truck to serve seasonal menus and conduct food-related awareness activities.

※“Hoshikuma,” lit. “star bears,” is the name of the Hoshi General Hospital Foundation's mascot character.

In addition to these activities, Section Manager Tomatsu, a registered dietitian who has long provided nutritional guidance in hospitals, believes that maximizing food education at daycares is critical to promoting the health of the local community. She says, “Unfortunately, counseling patients about nutrition after they have grown up or become elderly often does not lead to behavioral changes. Since eating habits are formed in childhood, raising awareness at this stage is extremely important. This is one of the reasons why it makes sense for us, as a hospital management company, to operate a daycare center.”

## Sparing no effort to create hands-on opportunities through play

When we asked about plans for any new food education programs that will utilize the kitchen, Director Sato responded, “In fact, we are just getting started,” and then used the cooking class mentioned at the beginning of this article as an example, saying, “Children expand their sensibilities through play. While this concept is not limited to food education, rather than teaching children, we want to create opportunities for them to feel things by experiencing them through play. If there is a hot plate and ingredients in front of them in the cooking classroom, children will naturally want to 'try it themselves' as a form of play. By using their hands, they will experience the joy of cooking. Their interest will grow from there, and they will try to learn things about vegetables and help with cooking at home. Wouldn't it be amazing if some of them wanted to become chefs because of this? There's always the concern that someone could burn themselves on a hotplate, but we can't dismiss the idea by saying, 'That's why we don't do it'. We just have to make it happen by figuring out some way to make it safe. The key is how much we can achieve with the mindset of 'wanting to let children have the experience, and asking ourselves how to do it.'”

## “We want kids to have a genuine experience. That's why we chose Fujimak.”

Fujimak handled the design and construction of the kitchen at Hoshi no Mori Daycare. Section Manager Tomatsu says, “We have a long relationship with Fujimak. We have complete confidence in Fujimak's service staff because, no matter what we tell them, they come up with ideas that reflect the Foundation's philosophy. This project also demonstrates their ability to give shape to the ideas we express to them about the kitchen.”



This food truck, called “Kitchen Hoshikuma,” visits local events to provide foods made from local ingredients, and also serves as a mobile classroom for local children.



Masatoshi Sato, Director of the Corporate Children's Division (right photo), and Akiko Tomatsu, Manager of the Shoku Full Creation Section at the Corporate Headquarters Planning Department (left photo)



All kitchen equipment, including refrigerators and combi ovens, are Fujimak products.



Children aged 3 to 5 eat lunch together in the hall.

Director Sato adds, “We want kids to have a genuine experience, not a simulated experience. When it comes to school lunches, one of the absolute musts is that they should be delicious. To prepare delicious food for 100 or 200 people at once, we need to use real equipment with sufficient heat and strong reliability. That's why we asked Fujimak to help us.” He also revealed, “The parents gave positive responses about the kitchen that we even held a tasting event for them because they said, 'they want to eat the school lunches made here'” .

Looking fondly at the children eating school lunch in the hall, Director Sato says, “When the community people

shared the local vegetables for lunches, if we tell them, 'today's tomatoes were grown by X's grandfather', that child is sure to be proud of themselves. The kids will also be more interested in those tomatoes. We want to strengthen our relationship with the local community through food, and we want the daycare to be seen as 'Oraga (the town's) daycare'.”

We can expect this “designed for food education” daycare center to remain a vital presence in Tamura City as a hub for food circulation that connects daycare children, families, and the community.

## Hoshi no Mori Daycare

Facility name	Hoshi no Mori Daycare
Management	Hoshi General Hospital Foundation
Address	285 Funehiki Yatoushimizu, Funehiki-machi, Tamura City, Fukushima Prefecture
Phone	0247-61-5581
Established	April 2022
Website	<a href="http://www.hoshipital.jp/kodomo/hoshinomori.html">http://www.hoshipital.jp/kodomo/hoshinomori.html</a>



## Related Products



Combi Oven Series



Refrigerator and Freezer



worktop refrigerators



**Inquiry** For queries and consultations relating to the case, please send email.

fujimak corporation 1-7-23, Minami-Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan  
Tel : +81-3-4235-2250 Fax : +81-3-5439-2323 Mail : [oversea@fujimak.co.jp](mailto:oversea@fujimak.co.jp)  
<https://fujimak.biz/>

