

Campus News

"By the students, for the students" "By the students, for the students" "By the students, for the students"

Café Satobito: Supporting the Local Community Through Student-centered Restaurant Initiative

By Yuji Yamamura

Going through the entrance door, a comfortable atmosphere welcomes us and surrounds visitors with comfort. Sounds of cooking and cheerful laughs fill the whole store. You can feel relaxed and refreshed. That's what the healthy local food and nice staff of Café Satobito can offer.

Café Satobito opened in June 2017 and is located just to the west of Kochi University's main entrance along the tram line. From the front gate of the university, it only takes a couple of minutes on foot. People feel free to drop by this café.

About Café Satobito

Actually, in this café, there are no professional chefs or clerks. Almost all of the work is done by students including the management, meal planning, and layout design of the café. I interviewed Prof. Hiroshi Tsujita, who is the representative director of Café Satobito, for this story. He said, "Of course, making a profit is a fundamental goal as a business. But, more importantly, this café gives social experiences to students which can never be gained from class. So, I leave the management of the café completely to the students."

About 20 students work at the café, taking turns to keep the restaurant running. Each staff member has their own role and tries to figure out a good way to make the management of the café work well. Working at Café Satobito is not just a part-time job. Experiencing how to manage themselves and the café can be an unforgettable skill for their future careers.



Satobito's Commitment

At lunch time, Café Satobito is lively with many local people and students as customers. There are six choices on the lunch menu; two kinds of pastas, two rice dishes, a daily pizza, and a daily lunch special. The staff highly recommends the chef's daily lunch special. There are different chefs every day and they each have their own specialty items that they prepare. Surprisingly, all of the dishes in this café are not made from foreign-produced products. Only domestic products, and mainly only local ingredients from Kochi are used.



In the right side of the café, there is a big showcase for local ice cream. Fourteen kinds of colorful ice creams are lined up for sale. They are all homemade using products from Kochi. In this ice cream showcase, the flavor that the Café Satobito staff recommends the most is blueberry which is made in Otoyo, Kochi. It isn't too sweet, and the blueberry's flavorful taste spreads through your mouth and is definitely worth trying! As well as ice cream, wines and cheesecakes are also made from Otoyo blueberries. Visitors can have a great time enjoying nice meals and desserts at Café Satobito.

The mission of Café Satobito

"Our role in this local community is to help consumers connect with agricultural products from farmers in the rural and mountain areas of Kochi," Prof. Tsujita said. "Consumers are sometimes not fully aware of what nice products farmers in Kochi are making, and they have no chance to access these fresh products. That's

why profits don't usually return to farmers."

The philosophy and mission of Café Satobito is to "support local areas". They are trying hard to be a key part of more efficient cycles between consumers and producers. Firstly, farmers produce the products, then Café Satobito creates food menus with them, and then visitors to the restaurant can try the products. By having such a cycle and flow of local products, both farmer and consumer (and the students!) can gain advantages. These are the main reasons that Café Satobito was established.



This process just started in June 2017 after a Café Satobito company was formed, and although the project is only just getting under way, there is great hope that it is going to work well.

Current challenges

It has been about nine months since Café Satobito opened, and there are some business worries that all new restaurants must face. "Everything was going well at the beginning. The café was full of visitors, and we were pretty busy all day. Recently, though, the number of visitors is gradually decreasing. It was just a little boom," said one student staff member, Mr. Nagatoshi Ando. "Sometimes visitors complain about the quality of the food and the service. We have a lot of things to do though, and I really get motivated by working here. The harder we work to solve these problems, the better the results will be, I think." As I mentioned above, Café Satobito adopts a student-centered management policy. They strive to make business better and somehow resolve their worries. Everything is up to the students' effort.



Plans for the future

Now, Café Satobito is trying to do lots of different things such as developing new menu items, renting out the café space for private drinking parties, and other activities. For example, once a month, a party called "Indonesian Food Night" is held in Café Satobito. In addition to this, they are trying to establish a system of selling local products on the Internet which is under development, and their original work is still under way.



Café Satobito continues to develop and there is a lot of work to do, but their helpful ideas towards promotion of local areas are meaningful not only to consumers but also to the farmer producers. As an excellent example of what KU students can do with just a little help from people like Prof. Tsujita, let's encourage their wonderful community efforts by visiting for lunch once in a while.

Our 15th Edition: *KU Campus News!* Read all about it!

The Kochi University Campus News aims to present a voice for the students of our university. It is meant to profile the great potential of the many KU students who take initiative and action during their university days. There is much to learn from the experiences of those who have taken the first step in making something special and unique from their university experience.

This newspaper will introduce some of the people who might inspire other students. These people encourage us to try something new. Although it is hard to try things that we are not sure about, it is very important for us as university students, to take advantage of our time here and make the most of our opportunities. Now is the time to think about our future and gain valuable life experiences.

The purpose of publishing *The Kochi University Campus News* is to inform students about what is happening around the campus. Profiling students from the various faculties helps us to see what other students are interested in. We believe students will see that our university is a lot more dynamic than we might think. It's a small local university, but all students have the potential to open up their world. As we present some aspects of our university, we hope that this will give students an opportunity to think

about how university life should be, and inspire students to be more active in their learning.

Another goal of this newspaper is to promote the many international aspects of our campus. As always, our main focus is on the word 'exchange'. There are many international students, teachers, and researchers here at Kochi University, and there are many Japanese students who are involved with international projects. Hearing about them helps us to understand more, start friendships and develop relationships. International opportunities abound for us, both inside and outside Japan. Let's learn more about these opportunities and do what we can to fulfill our potential. Profiling this aspect of our campus is good for us as students.

Last, but not least, we would like to follow the lead of the students who have worked hard on the *KU Campus News* over the past years. This newspaper represents the voice of students. Although we are always trying out new column ideas, the theme remains the same for this 15th edition, "By the students, for the students". We thank you for taking the time to read our paper. Comments, suggestions, criticisms and feedback of any kind are welcome. Please enjoy this fifteenth edition!