

A Heartwarming Homestay Experience



Meeting the Takemura Family

Yuki-san's family was incredibly warm and lively. She has three children: Makina, an 8-year-old girl; Motoru, a 6-year-old boy; and Materi, a 4-year-old boy. Their names carry fascinating meanings - Makina = Machine, Motoru = Motor, and Materi = Material which makes it obvious that their father is an engineer. The children filled the house with laughter and energy. Their toys and doodles on the walls were scattered everywhere which created a charming and heartwarming atmosphere. Yuki-san's mother was staying with them at the time and was equally kind and hospitable.

A Taste of Japanese Hospitality

On my first evening, they served grilled cod with vegetables, rice, and soup - simple yet incredibly comforting. Japanese food is milder than Bangladeshi cuisine, but it is filling and soothing. After dinner, while enjoying some tea, I gradually opened up to Yuki-san and her mother despite my initial social awkwardness. Their sincerity made me feel at ease.

The next morning, after a delicious breakfast of Onigiri and Hijiki and Bean Nimono, I visited a local workshop run by Hiratsuka-sensei, a retired Toyota engineer and was accompanied by Yuki-san's mother. Sensei's workshop has many fascinating machines - 3D printers, CNC machines, and other fascinating tools. He shared stories about his work and asked about my research and life in Japan, making me feel valued and inspired.

For lunch that day, we had halal Mapo Tofu. I'd always wanted to try the dish but couldn't because outside it is usually made with pork. It was really delicious and exceeded my expectations. Later,

Yuki-san took me to her workplace at HICE, where I met her colleagues, and then to a bakery where I tasted Taiyaki and Dorayaki for the first time; both were delightful! That evening, we watched anime with the kids, including episodes of *Ninja Hattori* and *K-On*, before playing puzzles and sharing stories about my home country.

An Unforgettable Goodbye

The final day began with Yuki-san leaving early for the International Festival, where I joined them later in the afternoon. Together, we enjoyed cultural performances and exhibits, followed by a visit to the Hamamatsu Science Museum. The children's curiosity and joy were infectious, making the experience even more enjoyable.

Saying goodbye that evening was bittersweet. The warmth and kindness of Yuki-san's family had made me feel like I had found a second home in Japan. This homestay didn't just teach me about Japanese culture; it gave me a family away from home. The memories of their laughter, sincerity, and care will stay with me forever.