

## The *Hagoromo* Spice Adventure: Creating Spices and More

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### 1. はじめに

“*Hagoromo* Original Spice” was developed and commercialized by students of the Department of Food and Nutrition at *Hagoromo* University of International Studies. After developing *Hagoromo* original spices in 2021, the students commercialized “*Hagoromo* Ready-made Curry” in 2022, and “*Hagoromo* Spice Emergency Curry” in 2023 for disaster preparedness. In 2024, produced “*Hagoromo* Spice Chai”, a milk tea with spices.

You might wonder: Why curry and why spices at a university? I would like to report a project I worked on with my students, centered around spice. I'll be summarizing the results of the project, including its educational effectiveness, industry-academia collaboration, and contribution to the local community.

### 2. Encounter with spices

With the pandemic in 2021, the entire world was suffering Japan was no exception. Remote learning became the norm for classes held in most educational institutions, and students could not meet friends or fully enjoy their campus life.

*Hankyu* Department Store is one of the largest department stores in Western Japan. At *Hankyu* Department Store in *Takarazuka*, Curry Grand Prix 2021 was held to sell curry made by university students to bring energy to a society fatigued by the pandemic with the energy and smile of university students.



Figure 1: Flyer of *Takarazuka* Curry Grand Prix 2021,  
at *Takarazuka Hankyu* Department

In Japan, curry is so popular that it is often referred to as “the comfort food of Japan,”

and is one of the standard that can be found in the school cafeteria across of the country. Once my students and I decided to enter the Curry Grand Prix, we carefully considered what kind of curry we should make.

Some of the prerequisites were that first, it should taste good. Second, it should be easy to make and be served by students. Third, it should have something special compared to other curries. That's why we decided to use spices to create keema curry.

Spice is a basic ingredient for making curry, and of course, your curry tastes different depending on the spices you use<sup>1)</sup>. We discovered that each country has its own preferred spices and that there are spices that go along well with curry. That's why we decided to research spices that can provide comfort to those faced with challenges during the pandemic. The result of our research is the *Hagoromo* original spice.



Figure 2: Students blending spices, and selected introduces the 12 spices blended in *Hagoromo* Original Spice.

The *Hagoromo* original spice is an optimal blend of 12 distinct spices. We experimented countless combinations of mixed spices, creating curry and tasting it until we discovered the perfect blend for *Hagoromo* Original Spice<sup>2)</sup>. Made by combining 12 different spices, the spicy aroma of the curry roux will enhance anyone's appetite. We entered the Curry Grand Prix 2021 with our refined *keema* curry, and it was received so well that we won the second prize.



Figure 3: The *keema* curry (A) we sold, our original spices (B) and the students selling them (C)

### 3.The glory of winning the Grand Prix 2022, and Ready-Made Curry.

The following year, we finally won the long-awaited Curry Grand Prix 2022. We also introduced recipes that can be made using *Hagoromo* original spices<sup>3)</sup>. There were lots of challenges in leading academic activities for students during the pandemic. What we feared the most was the outbreak of COVID-19 from outside activities. That's why we implemented more thorough hygiene practices. Despite all challenges, however, the enthusiasm and cheerful spirit spread to the general public, and visitors enthusiastically praised the students for their efforts.

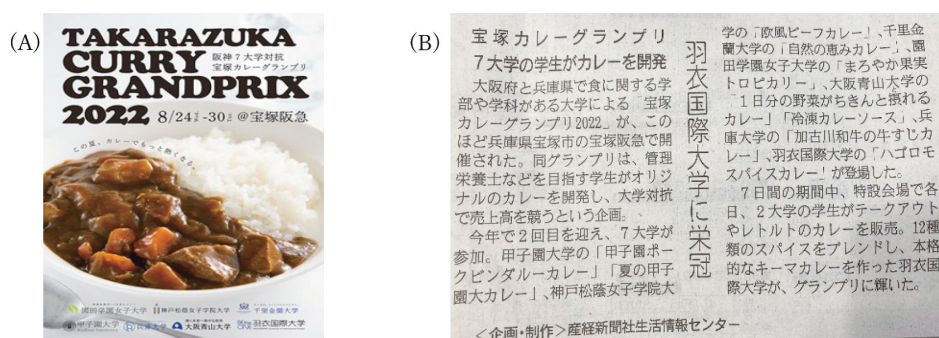


Figure 4: An information flyer about *Takarazuka* Curry Grand Prix 2022 (A) and an article (B)

Figure 4 An information flyer about *Takarazuka* Curry Grand Prix 2022 and an article about *Hagoromo* University of International Studies victory published in the SANKEI SHINMUN on the September 11th 2022.



Figure 5: The newly renewed spice package and pictures of the students



Figure 6: Package of the ready-made curry



Figure 7: Elementary school students eating *Hagoromo* spice curry

Winning the grand prize became a valuable experience that highlighted their success in society for our students. We made the ready-made curry because we wanted to preserve the delicious and popular *Hagoromo* curry for years to come. Figure 6 shows the ready-made curry I produced with my students. The students and I also designed this tasteful packaging with the help of a professional designer. Winning the Curry Grand Prix led to exciting opportunities and pleasant surprises for us. The city of *Izumitsu*, which is close to our university, has selected our curry for the city-wide elementary school lunch menu. On January 27, 2023, all elementary school kids in *Izumitsu* were served the *Hagoromo* spice curry for lunch. In addition, this ready-made curry, with its artful packaging, has been selected as a hometown tax gift item by *Takaishi City*<sup>4)</sup>, where our university is located.

#### 4. 2023 : Prepare Emergency Curry for disaster Readiness

I asked myself, could there be any other uses for our spice? Therefore, we have focused on “preservation” of spice. In Japan, there are many natural disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes. And, each household stores water and food in case of such disasters. In Japan, they’re called emergency food supplies<sup>5)</sup>. I wondered if we could create emergency food supplies made with *Hagoromo* original spices. That’s why we created “*Hagoromo* Emergency Curry.”



Figure 8: *Hagoromo* emergency curry

We created ‘*Hagoromo* Emergency Curry’ by mixing dried beans, dried onions, dried tomatoes, coconut milk powder, and spices. Beans are rich in minerals and dietary fiber. And when spices are added, they enhance its distinctive flavor and aroma.

Preparing “*Hagoromo* Emergency Curry” is very simple. Here’s how you can prepare it:

1. Pour 300ml of water into a pot and bring it to a boil over high heat. Let it sit for 2 minutes.
2. Then, simmer on low heat for 20 minutes.
3. Serve and enjoy!

Our research shows that the current younger generation is less inclined to cook, with over 25% of college students who seldom cook at home<sup>6)</sup>. However, “*Hagoromo* Emergency Curry” can be easily prepared even by those who are less experienced in cooking. In the event of a disaster, people may need to rely on stockpiled emergency food or food assistance from public agencies until lifelines are restored. One of the dietary issues during disasters is the challenges in ensuring a consistent food supply, leading to imbalanced nutrient intake and occurring health problems due to the nutritional imbalances<sup>7)</sup>. In particular, the lack of vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber is a significant concern. Another issue with emergency food is its bland taste, which lacks variety and is uninspiring. According to research, as the evacuation period extends, individuals tend to seek slightly unique flavors in their meals<sup>8)</sup>. Depending on the type, spices can enhance the flavor of food, stimulate appetite, and promote digestion.

Curry is so popular among Japanese people, regardless of age or gender, that it’s often referred to as one of the soul foods of Japan. “*Hagoromo* Emergency Curry” is made with beans and vegetables, which are rich in nutrients which are commonly deficient in diets during disasters. Furthermore, it utilizes non-allergenic ingredients and is suitable as a vegan option.

In our community in *Higashi-hagoromo*, where our school is located, “*Hagoromo* Emergency Curry” has been selected for emergency food supplies. The shelf life for “*Hagoromo* Emergency Curry” is one year. The community leader of *Higashi-Hagoromo* has announced that if a year goes by without any disasters, he intends to serve the “*Hagoromo* Emergency Curry” he has stored to those gathered at a local festival to celebrate a year free from disasters. I hope it will be useful for helping people maintain their health and staying prepared for disasters.

## 5. 2024 : Spice Up Your Breaks with “*Hagoromo* Spice Chai”

“Chai” refers to various ways of drinking depending on the country’s culinary traditions, but in Japan, it refers to spiced chai<sup>9)</sup>. In Japan, there is a custom of drinking tea when feeling tired or seeking relaxation. We have launched the “Chai Project,” which proposes to create an *Hagoromo* original chai using spices. The ingredients for chai are

spices, tea leaves, sugar and milk. We conducted repeated tasting sessions, adjusting the choice of spices to add to the chai, the quantity of tea leaves, and the level of sweetness. “*Hagoromo Spice Chai*” features a subtly sweet milk tea infused with the attractive aroma of spices.



Figure 9: *Hagoromo Spice Chai*

## 6. The Impact of University-Crafted Spice Curry

This is the journey that led us to the spice we are presenting today. The best part is that all of these projects were initiated and led by students. We certainly learned a lot, and each of our students has grown significantly both personally and professionally.

Another fruitful outcome is meeting and connecting with the local people where our university is located. I extend my sincerest gratitude to everyone in our local community who incorporate a curry developed by university students into a city-wide lunch menu for elementary school kids. None of this could have been done without the power of spice. Please give it a try, and I hope you enjoy it.

## 7. Special Thanks

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. *Fumiya Kuita*, assisted us from blending spices to product development. I would like to thank Mr. *Katsuyoshi Okuno*, manager of Hankyu Department Store in *Takarazuka*, for inviting me to the *Takarazuka Curry Grand Prix*. Thanks to him, my fateful encounter with spices began. Miss *Nahoko Kimura* the designer, always impresses us with her wonderful designs.

We would like to express our gratitude to the communities of *Izumiotu City*, *Takaishi City*, and *Higashi-hagoromo* for providing us with opportunities to introduce *Hagoromo Spice Curry*. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the students who enjoyed participating in everything from blending spices to crafting and selling.

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