

Former Ryotei Hotoro: Entrance and Reception Area

Hotoro was once one of the largest luxury restaurants and entertainment establishments (*ryotei*) in the Sanchomachi area. The building was constructed in the late nineteenth century and preserves the historic atmosphere of the neighborhood, which had multiple teahouses, restaurants, and inns during the time when Osaka was a bustling port. The expert craftsmanship, high-quality materials, distinctive architecture, and refined interior details reflect Hotoro's prosperity and serve as reminders of its past as a *ryotei* that entertained distinguished guests.

Entrance

The entryway has a small garden with a stone lantern, a tiled floor that was quite unusual for that time period, and a round latticed window. Originally the floor was earthen, but it was later replaced with small ceramic tiles carefully laid by hand. Eye-catching details like the decorative window gave potential customers an idea of the elegant interior that awaited them inside the *ryotei*.

Reception Area

Upon stepping into the building, guests found themselves in a large reception space. The proprietress would be seated in the far-left room, welcoming visitors and making arrangements to accommodate their requests. She conversed with the patrons at the brazier table made of zelkova wood, gathering information and strengthening personal and business relationships.

Historic and Everyday Objects in the Former Ryotei

A variety of other notable items occupy the reception space. Boxes for paper lanterns stored on high shelves bear the ringed cross crest of the Murata family, the owners of the establishment. This part of the building contains two Shinto altars: in an alcove facing the entrance is a small shrine dedicated to Inari, a deity of commerce and agriculture, and in the far-left room is the family's household altar (*kamidana*). One of the shelves displays several traditional dolls called Fukusuke that are thought to bring commercial success and good fortune. Comparatively recent additions include beckoning cat figurines (*maneki-neko*) believed to attract customers.