

Hime Daruma

Visitors walking around Taketa are bound to notice gently smiling red and white dolls in shops, restaurants, and even Bungo-Taketa Station. These Hime Daruma dolls are unique to Taketa and have become a distinctive part of the city's culture. Daruma dolls, considered talismans for good luck, are common throughout Japan. Most of these dolls are male, whereas the Hime Daruma are female. They date back to the Edo period (1603–1867) and were traditionally tossed into houses to celebrate New Year.

Hime Daruma have a rounded and weighted base that enables them to always right themselves when pushed over. For this reason, they were formerly called *okiagari* (“stand-up”) dolls, which was also what people would shout when the dolls were flung into homes. They symbolize the belief that a person can always get up after a failure, and Hime Daruma embodied both family happiness and prosperity in business.

Hime Daruma fell out of fashion in the first half of the 1900s but were revived in the 1950s by a local resident named Goto Tsuneto, who thought the resolute dolls would be the perfect symbol for Japan's recovery from the destruction of World War II. Today, the dolls are made to order by the Goto family, who still reside in the city. Hime Daruma are often given as gifts to new businesses to wish them success.