

Kitami Mint Memorial Museum

[About Kitami Mint \(Hakka\)](#)



Mint falls into two categories: Japanese mint and Western mint. However, only Japanese mint (hakka) contains menthol. You can probably think of a lot of products made with menthol.

Menthol, the main component of hakka mint, is used in snacks such as chewing gum and cookies, but its pain-killing, antispasmodic and antipyretic properties mean that it is mainly used for medicinal purposes such as cool gel patches, stomach medicine, eye drops and ointments.

In order to produce these medicinal supplies, menthol from Japanese mint is needed all over the world. It used to be grown in other areas of Japan too, such as Okayama Prefecture in Honshu, but price fluctuations led many farmers to switch to crops that provided a more stable income, such as rice.

At one point, Kitami commanded 70% of the world's market share for hakka mint, and in 1939 it was the largest producer in the world. There are four reasons for this:

① Advantageous climate

Hakka mint does not grow well in strong wind and heavy rain. Kitami sees less of such weather conditions than other parts of Japan. It also has quite a high percentage of sunlight hours, creating conditions ideal for drying the harvested hakka mint.

② Product exchange prospects

It was not easy to grow rice in Kitami at that time, but it was very easy to grow hakka mint, which could then be exchanged for other crops. A family could exchange 15kg of mint oil for enough food to live on for the whole year.

③ Easy to transport

The farmers' jobs were to grow, harvest, dry and distill hakka mint to extract its essential oils, which they would then bring to the factory. 300kg of mint leaves produced 15kg of mint oil, which was easy to transport.

④ No waste

After distilling, the spent mint leaves could be used as livestock feed or fertilizer for the farms.



When World War II broke out in 1941, exports were suspended and hakka mint farms were converted to produce farms. With mint imports from Japan no longer possible, the world shifted its focus to Brazil, and Brazil became the new number-one producer of mint.

Technological advancements also led to the production of synthetic mint to help fill the demand. Kitami's world-dominating mint industry is now a thing of the past, but thanks to its pre-war heyday, Kitami is now a flourishing city with over 120,000 citizens. We are constantly adding information and artifacts relating to Kitami's Hakka mint industry and culture, so watch this space!

[Mint\(Hakka\)History of Kitami Mint Memorial Museum](#)

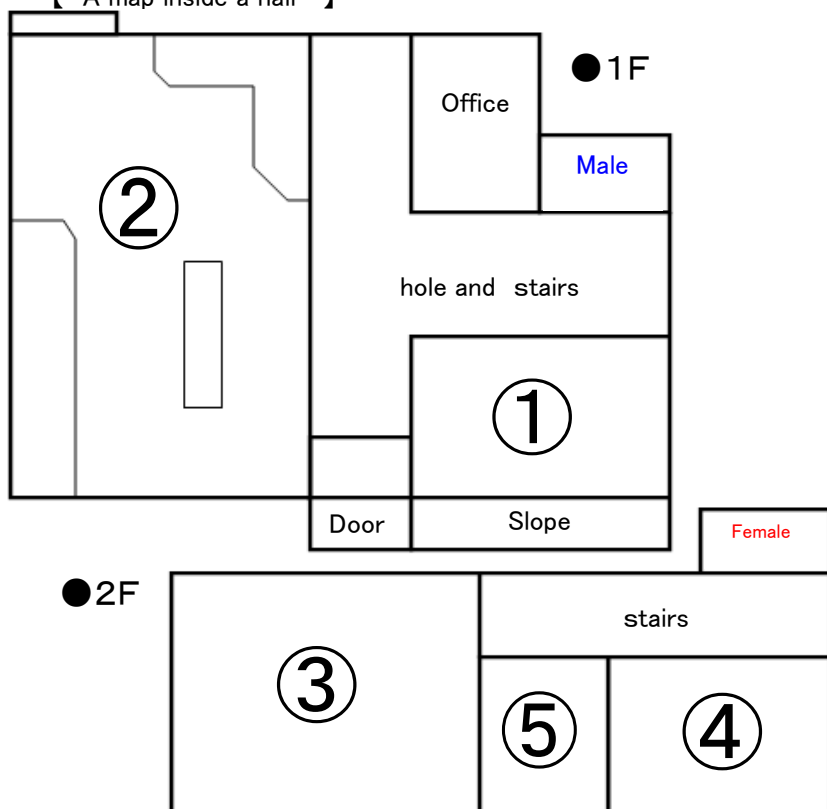
- 1934 Hokuren Hakka Factory was completed
- 1935 The building you are standing in now was built as a laboratory.
It also housed the factory chief's room, a guest room and a library.
- 1939 Kitami was the world's largest producer of hakka mint, with a 70% market share.
- 1983 Hokuren Kitami Hakka Factory closed.
- 1986 Kitami Mint Memorial Museum opened.
- 1996 Kitami Mint Memorial Museum was registered as a Kitami City Cultural Treasure.
- 2007 Kitami Mint Memorial Museum was registered as a Japanese Modern Industry Heritage Site.

Kitami Mint Memorial Museum Guide

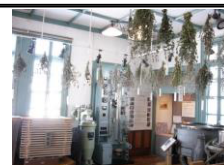
1st floor Machinery from the Hakka mint factory is displayed in the former laboratory.
There is also a 15-minute video on the history of Kitami hakka mint.

2nd floor A diorama of the Kitami Hakka Factory.
There is also a room with a table and a chair used by Emperor Hirohito when he visited in 1954.

【 A map inside a hall 】



① Exhibition room
「People and peppermint」



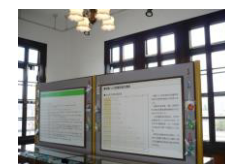
② Exhibition room
「Up to completion of a product」



③ Exhibition room
「Hokuren Hakka Factory」



④ Exhibition room
「Mint and its kind」



⑤ Data room

Admission: Free

Open: May 1st ~ October 31st 9:00 a.m.~5:00 p.m.

November 1st ~ April 30th 9:30 a.m.~4:30 p.m.

Closed: Mondays (if Monday is a national holiday, it will close Tuesdays instead.)

Address: Minaminakamachi 1-7-28

Kitami City, 090-0812

Tel: 0157-23-6200

