Shincha First Flush

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Shincha first flush, in summary:** Shincha is the first-flush Japanese sencha harvested in early-to-mid May; a bright, vegetal cup with the highest umami of the Japanese tea year.

Our sencha guide mentions seasonal flushes in passing; shincha deserves its own page because it is one of the few teas with a real season worth waiting for.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in May 2026.

What shincha is

Shincha simply means "new tea": the very first sencha harvest of the year, picked in the first flush of spring, typically late April into May in Japan. The plant has spent winter storing nutrients, and the first young leaves carry a concentration of sweetness, amino acids and a vivid grassy aroma that mellows out over the following months.

Why people chase it

Shincha is to green tea what Beaujolais Nouveau is to wine, prized for vibrancy and immediacy rather than age. It is brighter, sweeter and more aromatic than the same garden is sencha later in the year, with a lower astringency. It is also a moment: it ships quickly, sells out, and is drunk fresh rather than cellared, because freshness is the entire point.

How to treat it

Drink it soon and store it cold and sealed. Brew it cooler than you think, around 70 C, for a short steep, to protect the sweetness and keep astringency away. This is gentler even than standard sencha brewing, for the same reason gyokuro is brewed cool, see sencha vs gyokuro vs bancha. Treating shincha like a strong black tea wastes what makes it special.

When to buy and how to store

Shincha is picked in spring and reaches the UK from roughly May. It is bought to drink, not to keep, so order a quantity you will get through in a couple of months. Store it like all green tea, sealed against air and light, ideally in a cool dark cupboard or the fridge in an airtight pouch, and away from anything aromatic because green tea readily takes on other smells. The freshness that defines shincha is exactly the thing that fades, so

use it rather than save it.

Shincha vs ordinary sencha, side by side

They are the same tea at different ages. Shincha is brighter, sweeter, more aromatic and lower in astringency, with a vivid spring grass character. Standard sencha from later in the year is steadier, a little more brisk and astringent, and more consistent across the seasons. Neither is better in the abstract; shincha is a seasonal pleasure, ordinary sencha is the dependable everyday brew our sencha guide is built around.

Quick reference: shincha first flush

Aspect	Note
What it is	First-harvest Japanese sencha; "new tea"
Harvest window	Early to mid May; around 88 days from the first hint of spring
Limited availability	Few weeks per year; UK access May-July
Cup character	Bright vegetal, grassy-sweet, high umami
Why prized	Highest-vitamin-and-amino-acid leaf of the year
Pricing	Premium; £15-£30 per 100g typical for shincha
Tip	Drink fresh; shincha character goes stale within 3 months
Buying signal	Named harvest year, vacuum-packed, Uji or Shizuoka origin

The bottom line on shincha

Shincha is the first-flush Japanese sencha, harvested in early-to-mid May, producing a bright, vegetal, grassy-sweet cup with the highest umami and aromatic intensity of the Japanese tea year. UK availability runs roughly May to July, after which the shincha character fades fast, so it is bought to drink rather than to keep. A premium-tier seasonal pleasure worth timing if you only go out of your way to buy green tea once a year. Source it fresh from the shincha range and the wider sencha range.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Shincha is pricey for a short season, so weigh it per cup. Loose leaf usually wins, and with shincha bags rarely come close.

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