

# Umami in Tea: The Savoury Note in Fine Green

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

**Umami in tea, in summary:** Umami in tea explained: the savoury fifth taste in shade-grown Japanese green tea, where it comes from, how to brew to show it.

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Umami in Tea: The Savoury Note in Fine Green. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/umami-in-tea/>*

Umami, the savoury fifth taste, is the hallmark of fine Japanese green tea and one of the most rewarding things to learn to perceive. This sits in the tasting cluster beside [how to taste tea](#).

*Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in March 2026.*

## What umami is

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What umami is, Umami in Tea: The Savoury Note in Fine Green. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/umami-in-tea/>*

Umami is a savoury, brothy, mouth filling taste, the quality of stock, parmesan or seaweed. In tea it comes mainly from amino acids, especially L theanine, concentrated in shaded leaf.

## Where to find it

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Where to find it, Umami in Tea: The Savoury Note in Fine Green. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/umami-in-tea/>*

Shaded Japanese greens, gyokuro above all, then good sencha and matcha, are the classic umami teas. Quality shaded green can taste almost like a light savoury broth, see [green tea](#) and [brewing green](#).

## Why shading matters

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why shading matters, Umami in Tea: The Savoury Note in Fine Green. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/umami-in-tea/>*

Shading the plant before harvest raises amino acids and lowers astringency, which is the deliberate route to high umami. It is terroir and technique, not an additive, see [harvest effects](#).

## Brew cool to show it

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Brew cool to show it, Umami in Tea: The Savoury Note in Fine Green. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/umami-in-tea/*

Umami teas want notably cooler water and a short steep; too hot water pulls astringency that masks the savoury depth. This is why fine green is brewed gently, see the [temperature guide](#).

## Umami versus sweetness

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Umami versus sweetness, Umami in Tea: The Savoury Note in Fine Green. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/umami-in-tea/*

Good shaded green reads as both savoury and sweet, with low astringency. Sweetness is bright and front of palate; umami is deep, gradual and lingers in the aftertaste. Learning to separate the two is a real palate milestone, see [astringency](#).

## L theanine link

The same L theanine behind umami is behind tea calm alert character, a neat connection between flavour and how green tea feels, see [L theanine](#).

## What it boils down to

Umami is the savoury, broth like depth of shaded green, from amino acids, best revealed by cool, short brewing. Perceiving it is a turning point in tasting, see [the tasting guide](#).

## In short: Umami in tea

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Field	Detail
What umami is	The fifth basic taste; savoury, brothy, mouth-filling; comes from glutamate and related amino acids
Identified by	Japanese scientist Kikunae Ikeda in 1908; formally accepted as fifth basic taste in the 1980s
Where in tea	Highest in shade-grown Japanese green teas: gyokuro, matcha, kabusecha
Why shade-grown	Shading reduces photosynthesis and increases amino acid (especially L-theanine) accumulation; L-theanine produces the savoury character
How to taste it	Brew very cool (50-60C for gyokuro), drink slowly; umami emerges in the aftertaste rather than the front palate
Related to	L-theanine, the amino acid in all true tea but most concentrated in shade-grown green
In Western culinary terms	Closest experience: dashi (Japanese broth), aged parmesan, ripe tomato, mushroom stock

## What to choose to taste umami

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What to choose to taste umami, Umami in Tea: The Savoury Note in Fine Green. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/umami-in-tea/*

To taste umami at its clearest, look for shade-grown Japanese green: [gyokuro](#) is the strongest expression, then [ceremonial matcha](#) prepared properly, and a good [sencha](#) for everyday practice. Budget supermarket green bags do not carry it in quantity. Brew very cool (around 50-60C for gyokuro) and short, or boiling water destroys the very thing you are trying to taste. Browse the full [tea shop](#); free UK delivery is over £35.

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## More tea reading

For broader tasting context see the [practical tea tasting guide](#) and the [tea flavour wheel](#). For green tea context see the [green tea overview](#), the [what is matcha](#), and the [Japanese tea tradition](#). For L-theanine context see the [L-theanine ingredient guide](#). For brewing technique see the [how to brew green tea](#).

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