Usucha vs Koicha, Explained

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Usucha vs koicha, in summary:** Usucha is thin everyday matcha; koicha is thick, kneaded ceremonial matcha that demands a really high grade and carries more caffeine per serving.

Usucha and koicha are the two classic matcha preparations, and the difference is real. They are not a beginner-versus-expert ladder but two preparations for two moments. It sits alongside matcha water ratio.

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Koicha and usucha both use whole powdered green tea, so each carries real caffeine. This is general information: matcha drinkers who are sensitive to caffeine, pregnant or on medication should go easy and ask a pharmacist.

	Usucha (thin)	Koicha (thick)
Powder to water	Less powder, more water	Much more powder, little water
Texture	Light, frothy	Paint-like, syrupy
Whisk action	Brisk whisking to foam	Slow kneading, no foam
Grade needed	Good ceremonial style is plenty	High, smooth, low bitterness only
Caffeine	Moderate	Clearly higher per serving
When	Everyday bowl	Ceremonial, deliberate

How to make each one

Usucha is the bowl most people mean by matcha: roughly a level scoop of powder to a small bowl of water that is hot but well off the boil, whisked briskly in a light W or M motion until a fine even foam forms. It is forgiving and quick. Koicha is a different discipline: several times the powder into only a little water, no foaming at all, worked slowly until it becomes a smooth, glossy, almost paint-like paste with no lumps. The single most common koicha failure is water that is too hot or powder that is not smooth enough, which turns an expensive preparation bitter and grainy. Cooler water and a properly sieved, smooth matcha fix it. See matcha water ratio.

Why koicha demands ceremonial grade

Grade is optional-ish for usucha and non-negotiable for koicha. Thinned out and foamed, a slightly astringent culinary powder is drinkable in usucha; concentrated several fold and kneaded thick in koicha,

that same harshness becomes overwhelming and the drink is simply unpalatable. This is the one context where "ceremonial grade" is a functional requirement rather than marketing language, because koicha exposes every flaw with nowhere for it to hide. The history explains the split: koicha is the formal heart of a tea gathering, a single thick bowl traditionally shared and made only with the finest matcha, while usucha is the lighter, more sociable everyday preparation. Look for a vivid, almost electric green and a recent milling date; dull khaki powder is stale and will be bitter however carefully you whisk. See what is matcha.

Caffeine, and which to make

Because you drink the whole leaf as powder, matcha is meaningfully caffeinated, and koicha, using several times the powder per serving, carries a much higher load than a bowl of usucha. The L-theanine in matcha can make that caffeine feel smoother for some people, but smoother is not smaller, so treat a thick koicha as a strong serving and time it accordingly. For everyday drinking, make usucha: it is forgiving, quick and the default. Save koicha for when you have really high grade powder and mean to make it properly. See matcha jitters.

What to buy

If usucha is all you will make, a solid mid ceremonial-style matcha is plenty. If koicha is the goal, treat grade as a hard requirement. Browse the matcha range and a matcha whisk, or the full tea shop. Choose matcha by the bowl and its cost per serving, not the marketing; matcha orders above £35 ship free in the UK.

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