Hojicha, Explained: Why Roasting Changes Everything

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Hojicha, in summary:** Hojicha is green tea roasted after manufacture: caramelisation replaces grassiness, some caffeine is driven off, and the leaf becomes forgiving to brew.

Hojicha is the toasty, comforting Japanese tea trending hard right now. It sits in the roasted-and-twig family alongside kukicha.

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

Aspect	The read
What it is	Green tea (bancha, kukicha or sencha) roasted after manufacture
Why it tastes toasty	Roasting drives caramelisation, not added flavouring
Caffeine	Naturally lower (roasting degrades some); not caffeine-free
Brewing	Forgiving: hotter water, short steep, hard to make bitter
Best for	Evening cups, anyone who finds green tea sharp, lattes

What it is, and what roasting does

Ordinary Japanese green tea, usually a mature bancha, a stalky kukicha or a plainer sencha, is fired at high heat after the leaf is already made, and that second step does three things at once. It drives Maillard and caramelisation reactions that replace grassy, vegetal notes with toasty, nutty, almost coffee-or-caramel character; it volatilises a meaningful portion of the caffeine and the astringent catechins, so hojicha is gentler and lower in caffeine without any chemical decaffeination; and it makes the leaf far more forgiving, because the compounds that turn green tea bitter in hot water have largely been transformed already. It is real processing, not a flavouring trick, which is exactly why it behaves so differently in the cup. And yes, it really is green tea: the same leaf changed by heat, not a different plant. See green tea.

How to brew it, and the forms

Because roasting has already tamed the temperamental compounds, hojicha is the rare Japanese green you almost cannot brew badly. Use water close to the boil (around 90 to 95C, not the careful 80 you would give a sencha) and steep thirty to sixty seconds for a clean, sweet, reddish-amber cup with almost no

astringency; it re-steeps two or three times and is excellent cold-brewed overnight, close to a clean iced barley tea. The forms are not interchangeable: loose-leaf hojicha is the standard for hot and cold infusions; kukicha-based hojicha (roasted stems and twigs) is lighter, sweeter and even lower in caffeine; and hojicha powder is the whole roasted leaf stone-milled like a darker matcha, whisked rather than steeped, and the right choice for a latte or baking. Matching the form to the use is most of getting hojicha right. See ideal water temperatures.

Who it suits, and how it compares

Hojicha is the green tea for people who think they do not like green tea: comforting rather than bracing, gentle enough for the evening, and a reliable base for a milky drink. Placed against its siblings it becomes an easy choice. Against sencha it is the opposite temperament, roasted and mellow where sencha is fresh and briskly grassy. Against genmaicha its toastiness comes from roasting the leaf itself rather than from added puffed rice, so it is rounder and less green-edged. Against kukicha the two overlap, since much hojicha is roasted kukicha, the difference being the degree of roast. And against matcha the contrast is total: hojicha powder gives the body of the whole leaf with the caffeine and astringency already tempered by the roast. See sencha.

What to buy

Try a loose-leaf hojicha for everyday cups, a kukicha-based one for the gentlest evening brew, or hojicha powder for lattes; explore the wider green tea range or the full tea shop. Divide a hojicha pack's price by the cups it makes before choosing; orders over £35 reach a UK address with no delivery charge.

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teas · If a roasted green tea like this sounds your sort of thing, try it once. One cup of hojicha will tell you more than twenty articles about it.

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