Hojicha Caffeine: Lower, Not None

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Hojicha caffeine, in summary:** Hojicha is true tea, so it contains caffeine, but roasting and the use of bancha or stems make it noticeably lower than sencha or matcha. Lower, though, not caffeine-free.

"Is hojicha caffeine free?" is the most common hojicha question, and the short answer is no, but lower. It sits in the roasted-tea cluster beside hojicha explained.

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

Hojicha has caffeine, just less

Hojicha is true tea, Camellia sinensis, so it contains caffeine; the answer to "is it caffeine free" is no. Two things compound to make it gentler than other Japanese greens. High-heat roasting, the step that turns green leaf brown and grassy notes toasty, degrades a portion of the caffeine. And hojicha is frequently made from lower-caffeine bancha or stems rather than tender top leaf, so it starts lower before the roast even begins. The result sits clearly below sencha and well below matcha, where you drink the whole powdered leaf. For the full picture across teas, see the ultimate caffeine guide.

Tea	Relative caffeine
Matcha	highest, whole leaf consumed
Sencha / standard green	moderate
Hojicha	noticeably lower; roasted, often bancha or stems
Herbal tisane	zero, but not real tea

How much, in context

Exact amounts vary by leaf, roast and brew, so treat hojicha as a range rather than a fixed number. In practice it is a middle option: noticeably gentler than most green or black tea, comfortably drinkable late in the day for most people, but still real tea and therefore above the zero line that rooibos, chamomile and the other tisanes occupy. If your goal is a satisfying real-tea cup that will not wreck sleep for an average metaboliser, hojicha is one of the best answers there is. If your goal is guaranteed zero, it is the wrong tool.

Why it suits the evening

The combination of low bitterness and lower caffeine is exactly what makes hojicha a popular later-in-the-day tea: comforting and easy to drink, without the grassy edge or stimulant load of a strong green. The limit is worth keeping precise, though. Lower is not none. For strict caffeine avoidance, a sensitive evening, or anyone following NHS caffeine guidance in pregnancy, a herbal tisane is the better choice rather than hojicha. For where that line falls, see what counts as tea.

Brewing to keep it gentle

Because it is still true tea, the brew controls the dose. A shorter steep and water a touch off the boil keep both the caffeine and any roast bitterness modest, while a long, very hot steep pulls more of both, so the same hojicha can be a relaxed evening cup or a stronger afternoon one depending purely on technique. It also takes milk surprisingly well for a green-family tea, because the roast gives it body, and it re-steeps, with later infusions lower again in caffeine. None of that makes it caffeine free, so the rule stands: lower and gentle for the evening, and a herbal tisane when you need none at all.

Want to buy a good one?

If this is the cup you want, a fresh hojicha is worth buying over a tired bag. Browse Japanese green tea at teas.co.uk or the full tea shop, weigh up hojicha by the price of each cup rather than the pack's promises; UK delivery is free over £35.

Browse the tea range ?

Reference noted

- NHS guidance on caffeine

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Pick hojicha for the cup it pours, not the tin. The rest of the Japanese shelf can wait until your own taste is settled.

Japanese-tea reading

- Hojicha explained
- The caffeine reference
- Kukicha twig tea
- What counts as tea

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
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