Genmaicha: Green Tea With Toasted Rice

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Genmaicha, in summary:** Green tea blended with toasted brown rice, some of it popped like popcorn. Savoury, nutty and comforting, with a real but modest dip in caffeine because part of the cup is rice rather than leaf.

Genmaicha is the savoury "popcorn tea". It sits in the roasted-tea cluster beside hojicha explained.

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

What genmaicha is

Genmaicha is Japanese green tea, usually bancha or sencha, blended with roasted brown rice, some of which pops like popcorn during toasting. The cup is toasty, nutty, savoury and warming, with the rice softening the green tea's edge into something easy and comforting. Its origin is humble: blending in rice was once an economical way to stretch the leaf, and the result was good enough that people now drink it for the flavour rather than the saving. The defining move is blending, not roasting, which is what separates it from hojicha, where the leaf itself is roasted. A "genmaicha matcha", or matcha-iri, simply adds a dusting of powdered green for colour and body, and it is still genmaicha at heart.

Where it sits in the roasted family

Tea	What changes it	The read
Genmaicha	Blended with toasted rice	Savoury, nutty; the rice is the signature
Hojicha	Roasted leaf	Toasty, low caffeine; roasting not blending
Bancha	Later-harvest leaf	Mild, everyday; common genmaicha base
Kukicha	Stems and twigs	Light, sweet, very low caffeine
Aged/dark	Time + microbial change	Different mechanism; craft, not magic

Placed beside its neighbours, genmaicha is easy to read: this family is shaped by what is done to the leaf after picking as much as by the leaf itself. Genmaicha's character comes from a real, repeatable processing choice, blending in toasted rice, not from anything exotic. Knowing which mechanism produces which flavour is the practical payoff: if you like the toasty idea but want no added grain, reach for hojicha; if you want the savoury popcorn note specifically, genmaicha is irreplaceable.

The caffeine reputation, fact checked

The claim most worth getting right is the caffeine one, because it is true but routinely overstated. The mechanism is simply dilution: a cup of genmaicha holds less tea leaf than a cup of straight sencha because a meaningful fraction of the volume is rice, so you take in less caffeine per cup. That is real and useful for anyone managing intake. What it is not is a decaffeination process or a guarantee. The actual figure depends on the ratio of leaf to rice, the base tea and how strongly you brew, so a strong genmaicha on a sencha base can still carry a respectable dose. Lower on average, then, not none, which makes it a sensible afternoon green rather than an automatic bedtime one. For the wider picture see the ultimate caffeine guide.

Brewing it well

Brewing genmaicha well is mostly about not overdoing it, because the friendly toasted character fools people into treating it like a hearty black. It is a green tea, so use water well off the boil, around eighty degrees, a short steep of a minute or two, and a re-steep, which give a sweet, nutty, balanced cup. Boiling water and a long steep pull a harsh grassy bitterness that buries the rice. The rice does two jobs at once: it adds the savoury popcorn note and, by replacing some leaf, gentles both the bitterness and the caffeine, which is why it suits people who find ordinary green tea sharp. It pairs naturally with savoury food, works iced, and the matcha-iri versions add powdered green for a richer cup if a plain one tastes thin. See ideal water temperatures for the detail.

Want to buy a good one?

If this is the cup you want, a fresh genmaicha is worth buying over a tired bag. Browse Japanese green tea at teas.co.uk or the full tea shop, pick genmaicha for the taste in the cup and the price of every serving, and free UK delivery applies once you pass £35.

Reference noted

- PubMed: Green tea catechins and human health
- PubMed: Polyphenols and chronic disease prevention

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Match the tea to the moment. A 6am genmaicha and a 4pm genmaicha can be steeped differently.

Japanese-tea reading

- Genmaicha: the full reference

- Genmaicha: the popcorn-tea overview
- Hojicha explained
- Green tea reference

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