# Okumidori: The Late Budding Japanese Cultivar

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Okumidori cultivar, in summary:** A 1969 Japanese late-budding cultivar of Camellia sinensis used in higher-grade sencha, gyokuro and matcha. Prized for a rich, vegetal-green, umami character and a vivid colour.

Okumidori is prized for the vivid green and smoothness it brings to matcha. This sits in the cultivar cluster beside samidori.

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

## What Okumidori is

Okumidori (the name means "deep green") is a later-budding Japanese cultivar developed in 1969, valued for the colour and smoothness it brings to matcha, sencha and gyokuro. In the cup it is smooth, mellow and strikingly vivid green, with a rich vegetal umami and less of the briskness of Yabukita. Much matcha is a cultivar blend, and Okumidori is frequently a deliberate component added for colour and softness, though single-cultivar Okumidori is a small and growing category in its own right. See matcha for the powdered form.

| Aspect | Note |
|---|---|
| Origin | Japanese cultivar of Camellia sinensis |
| Developed | 1969, Japan; "deep green" name |
| Used for | Sencha, gyokuro, matcha; especially shade-grown teas |
| Distinguishing trait | Late budding; rich vegetal green character |
| Why late budding matters | Avoids early frost; longer growing window concentrates flavour |
| Common in | Higher-grade Japanese green tea blends |
| Often blended with | Yabukita (the dominant Japanese cultivar) |
| Connoisseur read | Real flavour signal, not certificate of quality |

## What "late budding" means

The single most useful fact about Okumidori is that it is genetically programmed to bud late in the Japanese spring, and that changes the cup. Most cultivars, including the dominant Yabukita (about 75% of Japanese

tea-garden area), bud in late March to early April when a sudden frost can still wipe out the first flush. Okumidori buds two to three weeks later, well into mid-April when frost risk has largely passed, so its harvest is both more reliable and slightly delayed. The flavour consequence is the interesting part: the longer cold-then-warm sequence the leaf experiences before harvest concentrates amino acids and chlorophyll in the bud, producing the deep vegetal-green, rich umami character it is known for. Producers therefore plant it when they want a richer tea, which is why it shows up disproportionately in the higher quality tiers rather than everyday supermarket sencha.

### Where it fits among Japanese cultivars

Each major Japanese cultivar gives a recognisably different cup. Yabukita is the reliable, mid-flavour workhorse most British drinkers have unknowingly drunk. Okumidori sits in the premium tier with its rich vegetal umami and late-budding reliability. Saemidori, developed in the 1990s, is prized for a bright green colour and a clean, sweet character, and is sometimes blended with Okumidori for balance. Asahi is a heritage cultivar still used in some of the most prized gyokuro, Gokou is associated with the deepest umami in matcha, and Yutaka Midori is a faster-growing everyday sencha cultivar. To taste Okumidori specifically, look for higher grade teas that name it: single cultivar Okumidori matcha (deep green, more pronounced umami, a thicker mouthfeel, often a modest 20 to 40% premium over standard ceremonial grade) is the clearest place to meet it, and you can really taste the difference against a Yabukita led matcha side by side.

### Cultivar is a signal, not a certificate

The cultivar layer has become slightly fashionable in speciality marketing, and the marketing sometimes outruns the cup. A pack labelled "Okumidori single-cultivar matcha" tells you something useful about flavour, but the cultivar alone does not guarantee quality: the leaf can still be old, under-shaded, badly stone-ground or oxidised in storage, and a poor Okumidori matcha is meaningfully worse than a good Yabukita one at the same grade. So treat cultivar as a useful additional signal alongside grade, origin, harvest year, processing method and seller transparency, not a replacement for them. Cultivar is the connoisseur layer that becomes meaningful once the fundamentals are right, not the thing to lean on if the seller is opaque about everything else. See how to judge tea quality.

### Brewing Okumidori teas

The deep umami of Okumidori is easily over-extracted or under-prepared, so temperature and timing matter. For matcha, use the cool-water paste method: sift about 2g into a wide bowl, add a splash of water at 70 to 80C and whisk to a smooth paste, then top up to about 60ml and whisk briskly into foam; the cup is darker and richer than standard and rewards slow sipping. For gyokuro, go cooler still, around 50 to 60C, with a small ratio (about 3g of leaf to 60ml) and a long steep of 90 seconds to two minutes, served in small contemplative cups rather than gulped. For Okumidori-blended sencha, use 70 to 80C and a 60 to 90 second steep, which carries the vegetal depth cleanly. See how to make tea properly.

### Reference noted


- PubMed: Green tea catechins and human health

- PubMed: Polyphenols and chronic disease prevention

Round it off with the English tea range and loose leaf range.

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