Shizuoka: Japan's Biggest Tea Prefecture

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Shizuoka tea, in summary:** Japan's largest tea prefecture, around 40 to 45% of production: the everyday sencha backbone, mostly Yabukita cultivar, with sub regions like Honyama, Kakegawa and Makinohara that really matter.

Shizuoka is the workhorse heart of Japanese tea. This sits in the terroir cluster beside Yame.

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

Where it is, and why it matters

Shizuoka Prefecture sits in central Japan around the Mount Fuji area, and it has historically been the largest tea-producing region in the country, at roughly 40 to 45% of national output. It is known for vast production of sencha, the backbone of everyday Japanese green tea, plus deep-steamed (fukamushi) styles that are fuller, greener and less astringent. If Uji and Yame are prestige, Shizuoka is scale and consistency: the region most everyday Japanese tea passes through. It spans many micro-regions and elevations, from valley to mountain, so "Shizuoka" covers a wide range, which is the key caveat: the name tells you scale and origin, not grade. See green tea for the category and the named sub-region for the real signal.

Aspect	Note
Where	Shizuoka prefecture, central Japan; Mount Fuji area
Volume share	40-45% of Japanese tea production; largest region
Specialism	Everyday sencha; workhorse cultivars
Dominant cultivar	Yabukita; 70%+ of plantings
Sub-regions	Honyama (premium), Makinohara (high-elevation), Kakegawa
Fukamushi specialty	Kakegawa deep-steaming tradition
Pricing	Everyday tier; £8-£20 per 100g for most products
Buying signal	Named sub-region (Honyama, Kakegawa) over generic "Shizuoka"

The sub-regions

The "Shizuoka" label spans meaningfully different areas. Honyama, in central Shizuoka around Shizuoka City, is the premium sub-region and the original tea-growing area dating to the fourteenth century, a river-

valley terroir running around £15 to £25 per 100g. Kawane, in the mountainous east, gives high-elevation production from 400 to 1,000m with a bright vegetal character and meaningful umami (around £12 to £20). Makinohara, a south-central plateau developed after the Second World War, supplies the bulk of Shizuoka's everyday sencha volume (around £8 to £15). Kakegawa in the west is the fukamushi (deep-steamed) specialist, producing the cloudy, green, rich-umami profile (around £10 to £18). And Asahina in the north is one of the few non-Uji gyokuro origins, at premium tier. Learn the sub-region names and you can target the style you want.

Shizuoka vs Uji vs Kagoshima

Three regions make up most of Japanese tea. Shizuoka (40 to 45% of volume) is the everyday workhorse, reliable Yabukita-based sencha at mid-tier pricing, and the UK supermarket Japanese sencha is almost always Shizuoka by default. Uji, in Kyoto prefecture (4 to 5% of volume), is the premium benchmark, the centuries-old home of top-grade gyokuro, matcha and ceremonial sencha, typically £25 to £100+ per 100g. Kagoshima, on Kyushu (30 to 35% of volume), is the second-largest producer and the fukamushi and aracha specialist, where a warmer southern climate gives a different leaf character (around £10 to £25). Together the three cover more than 80% of Japanese production: pick Shizuoka for everyday sencha, Uji for premium gyokuro and matcha, Kagoshima for deep-steamed specialities.

History and the Mount Fuji connection

Tea cultivation in Shizuoka began around the thirteenth century, when the Buddhist monk Shoichi Kokushi brought seeds from China and planted them in the Honyama area near Shizuoka City, where the mountain river-valley microclimate proved exceptionally suited to tea. The Mount Fuji geology matters too: the mineral-rich volcanic soils of the Fuji plateau provide both the drainage and the nutrient profile behind the characteristic Yabukita body. By the nineteenth century Shizuoka had become the dominant tea prefecture, and the Meiji-era opening of Japan drove export-led growth that turned it from a regional specialty into the national workhorse. Modern production runs at roughly 35,000 to 40,000 tonnes a year, with mechanised harvesting and standardised processing giving consistent everyday-grade sencha at accessible prices, while Honyama keeps the traditional craft tier alive and Makinohara provides the bulk.

Brewing Shizuoka sencha

The Yabukita-based cup needs the right technique. Use a kyusu (a 150 to 200ml side-handle teapot) or a porcelain gaiwan, since smaller vessels work better. Water temperature is the key lever: 75 to 80C for typical mid-tier Shizuoka, 70 to 75C for premium Honyama, and 80 to 85C for fukamushi Kakegawa, whose deep-steamed leaf extracts faster and tolerates slightly hotter water. Use 4 to 5g of leaf per 150ml, a rounded teaspoon per small mug. Steep the first infusion 60 to 90 seconds for standard (asamushi) sencha, or just 30 to 45 seconds for fukamushi, with a similar second steep at slightly hotter water and two to three productive steeps in all. The common UK errors are using boiling water (bitter), under-leafing (watery) and over-steeping (astringent). See sencha tea for more.

Reference noted

- PubMed: Green tea catechins and human health

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

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