Green Tea vs Matcha: Same Plant, Two Forms

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Green tea vs matcha, in summary:** Same plant, two forms. Steeped green infuses the leaf then discards it; matcha is the whole leaf powdered and drunk, so it is stronger, fuller and pricier per serving.

Green tea and matcha are the same plant in two very different forms. This sits in the comparison cluster beside matcha vs coffee.

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

The core difference, and why it matters

With steeped green you infuse the leaf and throw it away, so you only get what dissolved into the water. With matcha you whisk the whole powdered leaf into the water and drink all of it. That one difference explains everything that follows: matcha is more concentrated in caffeine and in the leaf's other compounds per serving, not mysteriously "stronger", just consumed whole, the mechanism the what is matcha and matcha jitters guides both turn on. It is the same Camellia sinensis; the form, not magic, sets the dose. The same logic covers the catechin point: because you eat the leaf rather than discard it, a serving delivers more of its catechins, which is a real difference per serving, not a miracle.

Side by side

	Steeped green tea	Matcha
What you consume	Infusion, leaf discarded	The whole leaf, powdered
Caffeine per serving	Lower, easy to moderate	Higher, whole leaf
Leaf compounds	Only what dissolved	All of it
Taste	Lighter, quicker	Fuller, intense, often shaded
Prep	Steep and strain	Whisked suspension
Cost	Everyday value	More per gram

Shade growing and taste

Matcha is usually shade grown before harvest, which raises sweetness, umami and L-theanine and lowers harsh catechins, then stone milled to powder; ordinary steeped green is typically sun grown and infused.

That is why matcha tastes fuller, rounder and more savoury than a light steeped green even though it is the same species, the shading mechanism the shading guide explains and the same principle behind gyokuro. Knowing this stops the difference feeling mysterious: it is shade plus whole-leaf consumption, not magic.

Cost per serving

Good matcha costs more per gram, and that is fair: it is shade grown, hand finished and stone milled. Steeped green is the everyday value form of the very same plant, and a good loose green re-steeped is excellent value. The sensible framing is not "which is better value" in the abstract but "a daily light cup is steeped green; a concentrated deliberate serving is matcha", and you can happily own both for different moments, the same use-led logic the matcha vs coffee guide takes.

How to brew each well

Both punish boiling water. For steeped green, use water well off the boil and a short steep, and re-steep the leaf two or three times rather than discarding it after one. For matcha, sift if it clumps, use hot but not boiling water, and whisk briskly to a fine even foam for usucha. The commonest reason people think they dislike either is brewing green too hot or whisking stale matcha; freshness and temperature fix most complaints. To really understand the pair, make both the same day and taste them side by side: the steeped green lighter, quicker, cleaner; the matcha fuller, rounder and more persistent.

Who each suits

Steeped green is the better choice for an easily moderated all-day drink, for anyone caffeine sensitive, for several cups across a day, and for simple value, because you can make it weaker or stronger by feel and re-steep good leaf. Matcha is the better tool for a concentrated, deliberate serving with a defined lift. Neither is a lesser version of the other and neither is a health miracle, so most people are best served owning both and choosing by the moment rather than a league table.

Common questions

Is matcha just strong green tea? Same plant, different form. You consume the whole leaf as powder rather than infusing and discarding it, which concentrates everything.

Does matcha have more caffeine? Generally yes per serving, because it is whole leaf, though how much powder and how strong you brew green both shift it.

Why is matcha more expensive? Shade growing and stone milling cost more. Steeped green is the everyday value form of the same plant.

Which is better for every day? Steeped green for a light, easily moderated daily cup; matcha for a concentrated, deliberate serving. Many people keep both.

Want both forms on the shelf?

Keep a fresh, vivid matcha for the deliberate cup and a good green tea or classic sencha for every day. Go by the taste of the cup and the price of each serving rather than a ranking, and UK delivery is free over £35.

Browse the tea range

Reference noted

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

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