Sencha

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Sencha, in summary:** Sencha buying reads five named-detail signals: region, harvest, cultivar, steaming style and pack vintage, the marks of real substance.

Sencha is the green tea most Japanese people actually drink daily; here is the short version. Sencha's neighbours in the named tea guides include gyokuro.

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

What it is

Steamed (not pan-fired) Japanese green tea. The steaming is what makes Japanese green distinct from Chinese green; see steamed fixing. Steaming gives sencha its fresh, vivid green, marine-vegetal, brisk character, while pan-firing (the Chinese method, as in Longjing) produces a nuttier, mellower cup.

Fukamushi (deep steamed)

Standard sencha is lightly or medium-steamed; fukamushi (deep-steamed) sencha has a longer steaming time, giving a fuller, greener, less astringent cup. Common in Shizuoka. Both styles are sencha; the steaming duration is the variable.

How to brew it

Cooler water, around 70-80°C, and a short steep (60-90 seconds for the first, 30-45 for the second). Boiling water makes it bitter and spinach-like, and that is the most common reason good sencha disappoints. Watch the first steep rather than timing it loosely; sencha is quick to over-extract.

Cultivar and freshness

Most sencha is the yabukita cultivar (around 70% of Japanese production), which gives a well-balanced, moderate-umami, everyday-drinkable cup. Named single-cultivar senchas (Saemidori, Okumidori, Samidori) are premium alternatives. Freshness matters more for sencha than almost any other tea: the volatile aromatics that give it its vivid character oxidise within months of production. A pack with a named harvest year and vacuum or nitrogen packaging is worth more than vague "Japanese green tea" in a plain tin.

In short: sencha buying signals

Signal	Note

Named Japanese region	Uji, Shizuoka, Kagoshima, Yame; the meaningful provenance
Named harvest period	Shincha (early May), ichibancha (first), nibancha (second)
Named cultivar	Yabukita (typical), Okumidori, Saemidori, Samidori for premium
Named steaming style	Asamushi (light), chumushi (medium), fukamushi (deep)
Pack vintage	Harvest year on pack; sencha goes stale within months
Storage format	Vacuum-packed or nitrogen-flushed; freshness signal
Price tier signals	£5-£10/100g everyday; £15-£25/100g premium; £30+ top-tier
Avoid	Vague "Japanese green tea" with no named-detail; marketing-only

Common questions

What makes sencha different from other green tea? Steaming rather than pan-firing gives it a bright, marine-vegetal, grassy character instead of the chestnut-nutty mellowness of Chinese greens.

Why does my sencha taste bitter? Almost certainly the water temperature. Boiling water extracts harsh compounds rapidly. Brew at 70-80°C; a brief rest after boiling is enough.

What is fukamushi sencha? Deep-steamed sencha: longer steaming creates a fuller, greener, less astringent cup that can handle slightly hotter water without the same bitterness risk.

How fresh does sencha need to be? Very fresh. The volatile aromatics that make a good sencha vivid and bright degrade within months at room temperature. Check for a harvest year on the pack; vacuum-sealed is best.

Quick take

Sencha is the everyday Japanese green standard: steamed for freshness and marine-vegetal character, quick to deteriorate if stored poorly, and destroyed by boiling water. Buy fresh from a source that prints the harvest year; brew cool. Five named-detail signals on the label (region, harvest, cultivar, steaming style, vintage) indicate substance; "Japanese green tea" alone does not. Explore the green tea range or the full tea shop.

Reference noted

- PubMed: Green tea catechins and human health

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Pick what you'll actually drink every day. A sencha you brew every day beats a rare tin you only admire.

More from the tea wiki

Continue with gyokuro, Longjing (Dragon Well), green tea, kill green (fixing) and how to judge tea quality.

Earn rewards on teas.co.uk

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

Create your free account

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.

