Matcha: Whole Leaf Green Tea, Minus the Hype

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Matcha, in summary:** Matcha is concentrated whole leaf green tea with one real, modest advantage and a large, unjustified mythology. Buy the grade that matches your use, prepare it cool and well whisked, and judge it as a vivid tea, not a miracle.

Matcha is the most hyped tea on earth, which is exactly why it needs the plainest, clearest explanation. Stripped of the marketing, matcha is simply shade-grown green tea that has been ground into a fine powder and whisked into water, so you drink the whole leaf rather than an infusion of it. Almost everything really special about matcha, and almost everything overstated about it, follows logically from that one fact, and a guide that starts there serves you far better than one that starts with "superfood".

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

What matcha actually is

Weeks before harvest the plants are shaded, which slows growth, raises chlorophyll and the amino acid L theanine, and reduces bitterness, giving the vivid green colour and savoury "umami" character. The best leaves are steamed, dried, de-stemmed and de-veined into a flat leaf called tencha, then stone-ground extremely slowly into the bright powder that is matcha. Because you whisk and drink the powder rather than steeping and discarding leaves, you consume the whole leaf, which is the real, defensible reason a serving of matcha delivers more concentrated caffeine, L-theanine and catechins than a normal cup of brewed green tea.

The health picture

Here are the facts. It is true that, because you take in the whole leaf, a serving of matcha is more concentrated in caffeine, L theanine and catechins than a cup of brewed green tea, and caffeine plus theanine is a reasonable basis for the "clear but relaxed" feeling people describe. It is not true that matcha is a proven fat burner, purifier, cancer preventative or miracle; those are the usual extrapolations from concentrated lab studies and they go far beyond what the evidence supports for a drink. The summary: matcha is a concentrated, pleasant form of green tea with a real but modest whole leaf advantage, and nothing about it justifies treating it as medicine.

Grades matter more than the hype

The single most useful practical fact is that "matcha" spans a huge quality range, and the price difference is not snobbery. Ceremonial grade is made from the youngest shaded leaves, is smooth, sweet and umami enough to drink with just water, and is what people mean when they rave about matcha. Culinary grade is bolder and more astringent, built for lattes, baking and smoothies where milk and sugar balance it. Drinking cheap culinary matcha straight and concluding "matcha is bitter and grassy" is one of the most common mistakes; the tea was never meant to be drunk that way.

How to prepare it well

Sift a small amount (about half to one teaspoon) to remove clumps, add water that is hot but not boiling (around 70 to 80C, since boiling water scalds matcha bitter), and whisk briskly with a bamboo or electric whisk in a "W" or "M" motion until frothy. For a latte, make a stronger base and add warmed milk. The two rules are cooler water and proper mixing; most "I do not like matcha" experiences trace back to boiling water, a poor culinary grade, or unsifted clumps rather than to matcha itself.

Matcha at a glance

Question	Answer
What is it?	Shade-grown green tea ground to powder, whole leaf whisked
Real advantage	More concentrated caffeine, L-theanine, catechins per serving
Health hype	The relaxed but alert claim is fair; fat burning, purifying and miracle claims are not supported
Grades	Ceremonial = drink neat; culinary = lattes and baking
Commonest mistake	Boiling water, cheap culinary drunk neat, unsifted clumps
Prepare	Sift, 70 to 80C, whisk to a froth

Put simply, matcha is neither a superfood nor a fraud: it is concentrated whole leaf green tea with one modest, real advantage and a great deal of marketing on top. Buy the grade that matches your use, prepare it cool and well-whisked, and enjoy it as the vivid, distinctive tea it is. Explore it across the matcha range, the green tea range, or the full tea shop.

Related on the wiki: Tencha, explained.

Reference noted

- PubMed: Matcha green tea and human health

Where this fits in the wider range: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. For more, the full tea shop ships free across the UK over £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Buy matcha on the bowl, not on the label. Other grades can follow once you know what you like.

More related guides

- Matcha Grades: Mostly Marketing

More from the tea wiki

Continue with matcha deep dive, matcha benefits, how to make matcha, matcha grades explained and green tea explained.

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.



teas.co.uk · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@teas.co.uk · 3-click cancel at teas.co.uk/cancel/