Kabusecha: The Clever Middle of Shaded Green Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Kabusecha, in summary:** Kabusecha is the clever middle of shaded Japanese green: much of gyokuro's sweetness with much of sencha's freshness, easier to brew and cheaper, and the best-value way into shaded tea.

Kabusecha is one of the most rewarding Japanese greens almost nobody outside Japan has heard of, and the single fact that explains it is that it is a deliberate middle point: shaded for a short time before harvest, less than gyokuro, more than ordinary sencha. It is not an obscure curiosity or a lesser gyokuro; it is a distinct, very drinkable style created by turning the shading dial partway, and understanding that one variable explains the whole tea.

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

What kabusecha actually is

The name roughly means "covered tea". For about a week to ten days before picking (against three weeks or more for gyokuro and matcha-destined tencha), the plants are shaded with cloth or netting. Shading slows photosynthesis, raises the sweet amino acid L-theanine, lowers bitter catechins and deepens the green colour. Kabusecha gets a meaningful dose of that effect but a shorter one than gyokuro, so it lands between everyday sencha and the intense, sweet, almost broth-like gyokuro: more umami, sweetness and smoothness than sencha, but more freshness and brightness than gyokuro.

Why the short shading matters

This is the useful point. Shading is not on or off but a dial, and kabusecha is proof that the interesting flavours live along that dial, not only at its extremes. The short shade gives you much of gyokuro's sweetness and rounded umami at a lower price and with easier brewing, while keeping enough of sencha's lively, grassy character that it still tastes like a refreshing green tea rather than a concentrated specialty sip. For many drinkers it is the obvious best-value entry into shaded Japanese tea, which is more useful to say than treating gyokuro as the only shaded tea worth knowing, the same match-it-to-the-job logic the Japanese green tea overview applies.

The smart first shaded tea

The recommendation hiding in all this is that kabusecha, not gyokuro, is the smart first shaded Japanese tea for most people, for practical rather than snobbish reasons. Gyokuro is superb but unforgiving: it demands very cool water, precise measuring and an acquired taste for an intense, almost savoury concentration, and a beginner who scalds an expensive gyokuro learns nothing except that it was wasted money. Kabusecha delivers a large share of that shaded sweetness and umami while still tasting recognisably like a fresh green tea, so it is more forgiving to brew, cheaper to experiment with and more obviously enjoyable on the first cup. Learn the dial on kabusecha, then decide if you want to go all the way to gyokuro, rather than the other way round.

How to brew it well

Treat it as what it is, between sencha and gyokuro, and brew it between their methods: water around 60 to 70C (cooler than sencha, warmer than gyokuro), a generous amount of leaf, and a fairly short first steep, then re-steep, because the second infusion is often the most beautiful. Water that is too hot throws away the very sweetness and umami you chose kabusecha for and pushes it toward sencha-like briskness or outright bitterness, which is the main mistake. Like other quality Japanese greens it gives several distinct infusions from one measure, so it is not the extravagance the gyokuro price tag can imply.

Is kabusecha good for you

It is true green tea, so the story is the ordinary one: caffeine, catechins, L-theanine, hydration, no miracle. Because it is shaded it is somewhat richer in L-theanine than unshaded sencha, which is a fair, modest, real point and the reasonable basis for the smooth, settled character people describe, not evidence of a special health power. As ever in this family, the real reason to drink kabusecha is flavour, not therapy.

Where kabusecha sits

Tea	Shading	Character
Sencha	None (sun-grown)	Bright, grassy, brisk everyday green
Kabusecha	Short, around 7 to 10 days	Sweet, smooth umami but still fresh; best value
Gyokuro	Long, around 3 weeks or more	Intense, sweet, almost broth-like; premium
Brewing	60 to 70C, short, re-steep	Too hot wastes the sweetness

Choose kabusecha as the natural middle path of shaded Japanese tea: much of gyokuro's sweetness and depth, much of sencha's freshness, easier and cheaper than the former and more interesting than the latter. Brew it cool and short, steep it a second time, and enjoy it as the clever, underrated tea it is. Explore it across the green tea range, the sencha selection, or the full tea shop.

Reference noted

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

Practical shopping line for this topic: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Shop the tea range at teas.co.uk, and past £35 you pay nothing for UK delivery.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Kabusecha sits between sencha and gyokuro. Brew it cool and short, closer to the gyokuro end.

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Gyokuro
- Sencha
- Kukicha
- Sencha, gyokuro and bancha
- Green tea and caffeine

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/