Kamairicha: Japan's pan-fired green tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Nearly all Japanese green tea is steamed. **Kamairicha is the exception.** Instead of steaming the fresh leaves to halt oxidation, the makers fire them in a hot pan or drum, the way most Chinese green teas are made, and the result tastes noticeably different.

It is made mainly in Kyushu, in Miyazaki, Saga and Kumamoto, and Japan's agriculture ministry lists it as one of the country's tea types. MAFF on Japanese tea

What the pan does

Steaming gives Japanese green tea its familiar deep green colour, its slightly vegetal taste and its fine needle shape. Pan-firing gives you:

- a **pale gold-green** cup rather than a deep green one,
- a **toasty, nutty, gently sweet** aroma instead of a grassy one,
- a **curled** leaf, because pan-fired tea is not rolled into needles,
- **less astringency**, which makes it forgiving to brew.

If you have tried sencha and found it too much like spinach, this is the Japanese tea to try next. If you like Chinese green tea, it will feel familiar.

How to brew it

Kamairicha is one of the easier Japanese teas to get right.

- **Leaf:** 3g per 200ml.
- **Water:** 80°C. A little hotter than sencha, because the toasty notes want the heat.
- **Time:** 60 to 90 seconds for the first infusion; 30 seconds for the second, a touch hotter.
- **Vessel:** a pot or basket with room; the curls are bulky.

Do not use boiling water and do not leave it to stew: it is still green tea, and it will turn bitter. See how to brew green tea.

Kamairicha, tamaryokucha, hojicha: keeping them straight

Tea	What it is
Kamairicha	Japanese green tea, fired in a pan rather than steamed
Tamaryokucha	Curly Japanese green tea, made in both steamed and pan-fired versions

Tea	What it is
Hojicha	Japanese green tea roasted **after** it has been made; brown, not green

Pan-firing happens early, to stop oxidation. Roasting happens at the end, to change the flavour. That is the whole distinction. See tamaryokucha and hojicha.

Buying it

- **Look for "kamairi"** or "pan-fired" on the label.
- **Check the region**: Miyazaki, Saga and Kumamoto are the classic areas.
- **Check the year.** Japanese green tea is best in its own season.
- **Store it:** sealed, cool, dark and away from strong smells.

Our Japanese green tea page covers the rest of the family, and green tea: pan fired or steamed explains the two processes.

Common questions

Is kamairicha rare?
It is a small share of Japanese production, so it is less common in UK shops than sencha, but it is not exotic in Japan.

Is it the same as Chinese green tea?
The firing method is similar; the cultivars, growing and finishing are Japanese, so it tastes of both worlds.

Does it have less caffeine?
No meaningful difference. Caffeine depends on the leaf and the brew.

Why is my cup clear rather than cloudy?
Pan-fired tea sheds fewer fine particles than steamed sencha. A clear cup is normal here.

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