Tamaryokucha: Japan's curly green tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Most Japanese green tea is rolled into fine straight needles. Tamaryokucha skips that final shaping step, so the leaves stay curled and comma-shaped, which is why it is also called **guricha**, "curly tea". It is made mainly in Kyushu, in the south of Japan, around Ureshino in Saga and in Miyazaki.

The cup is softer than sencha: less sharp, less grassy, with a gentle citrus note and very little astringency. If you find sencha too brisk, this is the Japanese tea to try next.

Two versions, one name

This is the part that confuses people. Tamaryokucha is made two different ways, and the leaf looks similar either way.

Version	How the leaf is fixed	Character
Steamed (mushi-sei)	Steamed, like sencha, then dried without the needle-rolling stage	Fresher, greener, closer to sencha
Pan-fired (kamairi-sei)	Fired in a hot pan or drum	Toastier, rounder, a little nutty

Japan's agriculture ministry treats the pan-fired version as its own type: the tea usually sold as kamairicha. MAFF on Japanese tea types

So if you specifically want the pan-fired style, look for "kamairi" or "pan-fired" on the label. The curl alone does not tell you which one you have.

How to brew it

Tamaryokucha is forgiving by Japanese standards, but it is still a green tea.

- **Leaf:** 3g per 150ml (a little more than you would use for sencha, because the curls are bulky).
- **Water:** 70 to 80°C. The steamed version prefers the cooler end.
- **Time:** 60 to 90 seconds for the first infusion.
- **Again:** a second infusion at a slightly higher temperature for 30 seconds is usually excellent.

Use a pot or basket with room for the leaves to move, and a fine strainer: steamed Japanese teas shed small particles and the cup is often slightly cloudy, which is normal.

Buying it

- **Check whether it is steamed or pan-fired.**
- **Look for the region**: Ureshino and Miyazaki are the classic areas.
- **Check the year.** Japanese green tea is at its best in the year it was picked.
- **Store it like matcha:** sealed, cool, dark, away from strong smells.

Our Japanese green tea page maps the family, and green tea: pan fired or steamed explains what the two processes do.

Common questions

Is tamaryokucha the same as sencha?

No. Sencha is rolled into needles; tamaryokucha is not, and it tastes softer as a result.

Is guricha a different tea?

No, it is the same tea. Guricha is the nickname for the curly shape.

Why is my cup cloudy?

Steamed Japanese teas release fine leaf particles. It is normal and does not mean the tea is dusty or poor.

Does it have less caffeine than sencha?

Not meaningfully. Caffeine depends on the leaf, the dose and the brew, not on the shape.

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