Hojicha Roasted Green Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Hojicha, in summary:** Hojicha is green tea roasted to a reddish-brown: warm, toasty, low in caffeine, the gentlest Japanese green and an excellent latte base.

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

Hojicha is the roasted Japanese green tea that breaks every rule about Japanese tea drinking and produces one of the most distinctively comforting cups in the tea world. Made by roasting bancha (mature leaf Japanese green tea) or sometimes sencha at high temperatures, hojicha turns the bright green leaves into deep brown twisted leaf tea that brews into a warm amber cup with toasty, nutty, caramelised character. The roasting dramatically reduces caffeine content and produces a tea suitable for evening drinking and for anyone who finds typical Japanese green tea too vegetal or too caffeinated.

This guide covers everything about hojicha: the roasting process that defines the style, the comparison with traditional Japanese green teas, the proper brewing approach, the major commercial products, and how hojicha fits into Japanese tea culture and modern Western retail.

The hojicha production process

Hojicha is produced through a roasting step that distinguishes it from all other green tea styles:

1. **Base tea production:** typically bancha (mature leaves harvested in summer or autumn) or sometimes sencha is produced through standard Japanese steaming methods
2. **Roasting:** the dried green tea is roasted in a porcelain pot or large pan at high temperatures (around 200°C); this is the defining step that creates hojicha
3. **Cooling and packaging:** the roasted leaves are quickly cooled to halt further browning, then packaged for retail

The roasting transforms the tea dramatically:

- **Colour change** from bright green to deep brown (sometimes nearly black for heavy roasts)
- **Caffeine reduction:** roasting volatilises some of the caffeine; hojicha typically has 30 to 50 percent less caffeine than the original sencha or bancha

- **Flavour transformation:** the vegetal/marine character of green tea is replaced by toasted, nutty, caramelised character through Maillard reactions
- **Tannin reduction:** roasting reduces astringency, producing smoother cups
- **Aroma development:** roasted hojicha has a distinctive comforting toasted aroma similar to roasted rice or coffee

Hojicha was developed in Kyoto in the 1920s as a way to use mature leaves (which would otherwise produce coarser, more astringent tea) into a refined product. The roasting process eliminates many of the rougher characteristics of mature leaf tea while developing the distinctive toasted character. Modern hojicha production extends across Japan; Kyoto remains particularly associated with high quality hojicha.

For the wider Japanese green tea family see the sencha overview.

The hojicha flavour profile

Hojicha has a distinctive flavour profile:

- **Toasted, nutty character:** the dominant note; described as "toasted rice", "roasted nuts", "caramel", or "warm bread crust"
- **Mild sweetness:** the Maillard reactions during roasting produce caramelised sweetness
- **Smooth body:** the reduced tannins produce particularly smooth mouthfeel
- **Warm amber to deep brown cup colour** looks more like black tea than green tea
- **Comforting aroma:** the roasted character produces a warming, cozy aromatic profile
- **No bitterness:** even with extended brewing
- **Universally accessible:** almost no one finds hojicha unpleasant

The flavour is one of the more accessible Japanese teas; the toasted character is comforting in a way that grassy sencha or umami rich gyokuro aren't. For Western drinkers wanting introduction to Japanese tea without the green tea vegetal character, hojicha is the natural starting point.

Hojicha caffeine

One of hojicha's distinctive features is the reduced caffeine content:

- **Caffeine per cup** 10 to 20mg; significantly lower than sencha (20 to 35mg) or matcha (60 to 70mg)
- **Suitable for evening drinking:** the low caffeine means hojicha can be drunk in the evening without significant sleep impact
- **Children: ask a pharmacist, health visitor or GP first:** low caffeine plus pleasant flavour makes hojicha appropriate for older children (still discuss with healthcare provider for under-12s)
- **Suitable for caffeine sensitive drinkers:** provides Japanese tea experience without significant caffeine impact
- **Suitable for pregnancy** (in moderate amounts), low caffeine combined with no contraindicated compounds

For drinkers wanting Japanese tea character at any time of day, hojicha is the only Japanese green tea suitable for late evening drinking. The combination of cozy comforting flavour and low caffeine makes it particularly popular as a winter evening drink.

For more on caffeine see the ultimate caffeine guide.

Hojicha vs other Japanese green teas

The Japanese green tea family, side by side:

Tea	Caffeine	Character	Best for
Hojicha	10 to 20mg	Toasted, nutty, comforting	Evening, children, caffeine sensitive
Bancha	15 to 25mg	Mature leaf vegetal, mild	Everyday afternoon
Sencha	20 to 35mg	Bright vegetal, marine umami	Daily afternoon focus
Genmaicha	20 to 30mg	Sencha + toasted rice	Comfort, mild caffeine
Gyokuro	30 to 50mg	Premium shaded, sweet umami	Special occasions, focus
Matcha	60 to 70mg	Whole leaf, vivid, focused	Morning energy

For a household building a Japanese green tea collection, hojicha sits at the evening end of the daily rhythm; matcha at the morning end. The combination provides Japanese tea options suitable for any time of day. See the matcha overview and the genmaicha overview.

How to brew hojicha properly

Hojicha is one of the more forgiving Japanese teas to brew:

1. **Use freshly drawn cold water** brought to a rolling boil. Unlike most Japanese green teas, hojicha takes near boiling water (95 to 100°C); the roasted character isn't damaged by hot water the way delicate green tea would be
2. **Use 1 to 2 teaspoons of leaves** per 200ml cup
3. **Steep for 30 seconds to 1 minute:** much shorter than typical herbal teas; hojicha extracts quickly
4. **Strain or remove leaves**
5. **Drink neat or with a small amount of milk for hojicha latte**; hojicha is one of the few green teas that works with milk
6. **Re brew:** hojicha gives 2 to 3 reasonable infusions

The hot water tolerance is what makes hojicha the most forgiving Japanese green tea for casual brewing. Unlike sencha (which needs precise 70 to 80°C water), hojicha brewed with boiling water still produces an excellent cup. For drinkers who don't want to manage water temperature carefully, hojicha is the practical Japanese green tea option.

Temperatures for sencha, matcha and genmaicha are set out in the water temperatures guide.

Hojicha latte

One use case worth highlighting: hojicha latte. The roasted character pairs particularly well with milk; the resulting drink is smoother and more comforting than matcha latte:

1. Brew strong hojicha (2 teaspoons per 100ml of water, 1-minute brew)
2. Heat 200ml of milk (whole dairy, oat, or almond all work)
3. Pour the hojicha into the milk in a tall glass or mug
4. Sweeten with vanilla syrup, honey, or sugar to taste
5. Optional: dust the top with hojicha powder for visual appeal

Hojicha latte has become increasingly popular in Japanese cafes and Western specialty coffee shops; the toasted character provides a comforting alternative to matcha latte without the higher caffeine. For evening drinking, hojicha latte is one of the most pleasant warm milky drinks available.

Hojicha powder

One specific format: powdered hojicha. The roasted tea is ground to a fine powder similar to matcha powder; can be:

- Whisked into milk for instant hojicha lattes
- Used in baking (cookies, cakes, ice cream) for distinctive toasted character
- Dusted on desserts as a flavour and visual element
- Added to smoothies for caffeine light energy

Powdered hojicha is widely available from specialty Japanese tea importers; the format provides flexibility beyond traditional steeping.

What we stock

Browse the green tea range. Mainstream British shops stock little hojicha, and the widest choice comes from specialist Japanese tea importers.

For comparisons across the wider Japanese green tea landscape, see also: Teapigs, Twinings, Pukka.

Why hojicha belongs in the cupboard

Hojicha is one of the most underappreciated Japanese green teas in Western retail. The combination of distinctive toasted character, low caffeine suitable for evening drinking, broad accessibility for non Japanese tea drinkers, and pairing flexibility with milk and food makes it one of the more useful Japanese teas for Western tea cupboards.

For drinkers who find typical Japanese green tea too vegetal or too caffeinated, hojicha provides an accessible alternative that still delivers Japanese tea character. The toasted comforting flavour is particularly appealing in autumn and winter; hojicha latte is one of the most pleasant warm drinks for cold weather evenings.

If you are building a Japanese tea collection, hojicha adds its own roasted variety alongside sencha, matcha and genmaicha. The four together cover the full daily rhythm: matcha for morning energy, sencha for

afternoon focus, genmaicha for comfort breaks, hojicha for evening winding down.

Buying hojicha in the UK

Hojicha availability in British supermarkets is limited but improving as Japanese cuisine and the matcha boom drive interest in adjacent Japanese teas. The accessible UK route in is via the major specialty premium tea brands and via Japanese cuisine focused retailers; for deeper exploration, specialty Japanese tea importers carry single origin hojicha from Kyoto and Shizuoka, plus powdered hojicha for cooking and lattes.

The teas.co.uk green tea range sits within the wider teas.co.uk shop; free delivery to UK addresses starts once the basket is above £35, and the cost per cup printed on each product card makes pack sizes and brands easy to compare. For households drinking hojicha most evenings, the per cup cost is broadly comparable to a quality black tea blend.

Frequently asked questions

Is hojicha a green tea or a black tea? It is technically green tea (made from *Camellia sinensis* processed to halt oxidation early); the brown colour and toasted character come from the post production roasting step, not from oxidation. Categorise it with green teas, not black.

Can I drink hojicha at bedtime? The caffeine is low (10 to 20mg per cup, roughly a third of a quality black tea) so most caffeine tolerant drinkers can have hojicha within an hour or two of bed without issue. Highly caffeine sensitive drinkers should still cut off earlier or switch to a caffeine free herbal. See the caffeine reference.

Does hojicha contain L theanine? Yes, in moderate amounts; the L theanine combined with the low caffeine produces a particularly easy, focused character that fits evening drinking. Less L theanine than gyokuro or matcha but enough to contribute to the relaxing quality.

Why does hojicha look like black tea? The roasting step browns the leaves dramatically through Maillard reactions; the dry leaf and brewed cup both look more like a light black tea than a typical green tea. The processing pathway is still green tea pathway despite the colour.

Can I make hojicha lattes with non dairy milk? Yes; oat milk and almond milk both work beautifully with hojicha and are arguably better than dairy because the toasted character pairs naturally with nutty plant milks. Soy works too. Coconut is the only milk that competes with rather than complements the hojicha character.

What food pairs with hojicha? The toasted character pairs excellently with Japanese desserts (mochi, dorayaki, anko), with British biscuits and shortbread, with plain madeleines or financiers, and with caramel flavoured baking. Avoid pairing with delicate fish or fresh fruit which the roasted character will overwhelm.

How long does hojicha keep? Stored in an airtight container away from light, heat, and moisture, hojicha keeps well for 12 to 18 months. Better storage tolerance than most green teas because the roasting has already volatilised the most fragile compounds.

Is hojicha good for cold brewing? Yes; cold brewed hojicha is excellent and has the unusual quality of looking like iced tea (deep amber) while still being green tea. Use 8g per litre of cold water, refrigerate for 4

to 6 hours. See the cold brew guide.

Hojicha in the British tea cupboard

For most British drinkers, hojicha occupies the late afternoon and evening slot, particularly through autumn and winter when the toasted character feels most appropriate. The hot water tolerance, low caffeine, smooth no bitterness character, and milk compatibility make it one of the more useful Japanese teas for everyday Western drinking. A 100g pouch of quality hojicha gives roughly 30 to 40 cups, making it reasonable per cup value despite the specialty status.

For anyone putting together a Japanese tea kit next to their British staples from Yorkshire Tea or Twinings, a sensible four tea Japanese collection is matcha for morning energy, sencha for afternoon focus, genmaicha for comfort drinking, and hojicha for evenings. This kit covers the full Japanese green tea spectrum and provides options for any time of day. For brand context across the British retail oolong and green tea sections see Teapigs, Clipper, Pukka, and Dragonfly.

Cited

- EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine (2015)

If you want the shopping shortlist: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Browse the wider tea range; above £35, shipping within the UK is free.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Spend less on prestige, more on freshness. Hojicha bought two months ago beats a gift tin of it kept for three years.

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
- Loose leaf vs teabag

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.

