Matcha Tea Bags vs Real Matcha Powder: Not the Same Thing

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Matcha bags vs real matcha, in summary:** Matcha tea bags are usually green tea with a dusting, or matcha steeped and binned, not whisked whole leaf. Why the bag defeats matcha.

"Matcha tea bags" sound like a convenient way to have matcha. They are mostly not matcha at all, or not matcha in the way that matters, and understanding why saves both money and disappointment.

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

What real matcha actually is

Real matcha is shade grown green tea leaf, the technique on the shade grown tea page, stone ground into an ultrafine powder that you whisk into water and drink whole. That is the entire point: you consume the leaf itself, suspended, not an infusion strained off it. The vivid colour, the body, the umami and the higher caffeine all follow from drinking the powdered leaf rather than steeping and discarding it, the distinction the matcha vs green tea page draws.

What is usually in a "matcha tea bag"

Most matcha teabags are one of two things: an ordinary green tea with a little matcha powder added for colour and marketing, or matcha enclosed in a bag and then steeped and strained like normal tea. Both miss the point. In the first you are mostly drinking green tea with a matcha dusting; in the second you brew the powder and throw most of it away in the bag, getting a pale, weak shadow of what whisked matcha delivers. Neither is fraud exactly, but neither is the matcha experience people think they are buying.

	Real matcha powder	Matcha tea bag
What you drink	The whole powdered leaf, suspended	An infusion, leaf discarded
Colour and body	Vivid, full, frothy	Pale, thin
Caffeine and umami	Higher (whole leaf)	Lower (steeped only)
Often actually	Matcha	Green tea + a little matcha

	Real matcha powder	Matcha tea bag
Preparation	Whisked	Dunked

Why steeping matcha defeats it

The defining feature of matcha is that the leaf is so finely milled it stays suspended in the water and is drunk, not infused and removed. Seal that powder inside a bag and steep it and you have converted matcha back into ordinary, rather weak, green tea while still paying matcha prices, the very mistake the matcha vs green comparison warns against. The bag format fundamentally fights the thing that makes matcha matcha.

When a matcha bag is still fine

This is not a purist tantrum. If you simply like a green tea with a gentle matcha note and the convenience of a bag, a matcha teabag is a pleasant everyday drink, judged as flavoured green tea rather than as matcha. The error is only in expecting it to deliver the colour, body and lift of a whisked bowl, or in paying a premium believing it will. Bought for what it is, it is fine; bought as a shortcut to real matcha, it disappoints.

The genuinely convenient alternative

If convenience is the real need, the answer is not a matcha bag but a good culinary or "latte" grade matcha powder, which whisks or shakes into milk or water in under a minute and actually delivers matcha. A small electric frother or a shaker bottle removes nearly all the fuss while keeping the whole leaf in your cup, the practical route the ceremonial vs culinary matcha page sets out. Real matcha made quickly beats fake matcha made conveniently.

How to buy matcha that is actually matcha

Buy powder, not bags, and judge it by colour, smell and freshness: vivid jade green, sweet and grassy rather than hay like, finely milled, from a reputable source and used quickly because matcha stales fast once open. Match the grade to the use, ceremonial to whisk and drink, culinary or latte grade for milk, the split the grade page explains. The single rule that avoids almost all matcha disappointment is simple: if it is in a steep and discard bag, it is not really matcha.

The verdict

Matcha tea bags are not the matcha you think you are buying: they are usually a green tea with a matcha dusting, or matcha sealed in a bag and steeped then discarded, which removes the whole leaf body, colour and lift that define matcha. Judged fairly as a flavoured green they are fine and inexpensive; judged as matcha, or paid for as matcha, they disappoint. If you want real matcha with real convenience, skip the bag and keep a culinary or latte grade matcha powder with a cheap frother. Browse our green teas and buy by what you actually want the cup to be.

Common questions

Are matcha tea bags real matcha? Usually not in the way that matters: often green tea with a little matcha, or matcha steeped and discarded rather than whisked and drunk.

Why is a matcha bag weaker? Because you infuse and throw away the leaf, instead of drinking the suspended powder, which is the whole point of matcha.

Is a matcha bag a waste of money? Only if you expect real matcha. As a flavoured green tea it is fine; as a matcha shortcut it disappoints.

What is the convenient real option? A culinary or latte grade matcha powder shaken or frothed into milk or water in under a minute.

If you want matcha that behaves like matcha, it is worth browsing our matcha powders, choosing a ceremonial style to whisk and a culinary or latte grade for quick milk drinks, alongside our green teas if a gentle everyday green is really what you are after.

Related on the wiki: Matcha: Powder vs Tea Bags vs Ready-to-Drink.

Shopping notes for this topic: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. The rest of the tea shop sits here, real matcha powder included, with UK shipping free above £35.

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Matcha bags reading

- The history of tea
- Loose leaf vs teabag
- Tea tasting for beginners
- Tea and caffeine
- Herbal tea
- Green tea
- Tea storage
- Tea ethics & sustainability

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- Green tea
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