Matcha Latte: What It Is and Why Home Wins

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Matcha latte, in summary:** A matcha latte is whisked matcha plus steamed milk and sweetener, a pleasant modern cafe drink dramatically better and cheaper made at home with culinary-grade matcha.

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

A matcha latte is whisked green matcha powder with steamed milk and a little sweetener: the Western café adaptation of traditional Japanese matcha, and one of the most popular café drinks of the last decade. The cup is bright green, gently sweet, properly caffeinated, and dramatically better at home than in chain cafés.

At a glance

Aspect	The answer
What it is	Whisked matcha + steamed milk + sweetener
Grade to use	Culinary/barista, not ceremonial (milk masks it)
Best milk	Oat (plant) or whole dairy; avoid rice/pea
Caffeine	~120-160mg per cup (2g matcha)
Café cup	Often pre-sweetened syrup, mild matcha, ~£3.50-5
Home cup	Fresher, less sweet, more matcha, ~£0.50-0.80

What a matcha latte is

A standard café matcha latte is:

- 2g matcha powder (usually culinary grade)
- whisked with a little hot water
- steamed milk added
- sweetener (syrup, honey or sugar)
- optional vanilla, cinnamon or cocoa for variants

It is the Western adaptation of Japanese matcha tradition. Ceremonial matcha is whisked and drunk neat; the latte added milk and sweetener, which made the powder accessible to drinkers who find pure matcha too austere or bitter.

Where it came from and why it took off

The matcha latte grew out of the late 2000s superfood craze that brought matcha into mainstream Western drinking. Starbucks added it to the UK menu around 2013, which accelerated adoption, and by 2018 to 2020 it was a standard offering at most UK chains (Costa, Caffè Nero, Starbucks, Pret) and most independent coffee shops.

It caught on for a handful of straightforward reasons: superfood marketing around matcha, a gentler caffeine hit than coffee, a vivid green cup that photographs beautifully, lower bitterness than coffee, and a flavour distinct from both coffee and ordinary tea.

Café cup versus a home cup

Most chain lattes use pre-mixed, heavily sweetened matcha syrup, lower-grade powder, sometimes a little synthetic matcha flavouring, and powder that has been sitting. The result is a sweet green-coloured drink with mild matcha character. Pleasant, but not the real thing.

At home the gap is dramatic. Roughly £15 to £25 of equipment (a bamboo whisk and a small bowl, see the matcha kit) plus £15 of culinary matcha makes about 30 cups. The matcha latte recipe, step by step for hot and iced gives the exact method, quantities and timings; the companion matcha guide makes the same home-beats-café point. The home version is more vivid, less sweet, more umami and far more matcha-forward per cup, at roughly £0.50 to £0.80 against £3.50 to £5 in a chain.

Choosing your grade

Culinary grade (£8 to £15 per 30g)

Made for lattes, baking and smoothies. A touch more bitter than ceremonial, but the bitterness is masked by milk and sweetener. The practical choice for everyday lattes.

Worth buying in the UK: Clearspring Organic Japanese Matcha (culinary), Teapigs Matcha, and Pukka Supreme Matcha Green.

Premium culinary / barista grade (£15 to £25 per 30g)

The mid tier. Better for café-style lattes that want to taste closer to ceremonial quality. Mild, smoother and vivid green.

Ceremonial grade (£25 to £50+ per 30g)

Made for whisking neat, and wasted in a latte, where milk and sweetener hide the delicate qualities you are paying for. Keep it for matcha drunk on its own; the how to make matcha guide covers that.

Best milk

- **Oat milk.** Best plant-based option; steams beautifully and complements matcha's character.
- **Whole dairy milk.** The traditional café choice. Rich and creamy.
- **Almond milk.** Lighter, with a slight nutty note.
- **Soy milk.** Closest to dairy in mouthfeel, but can curdle if overheated.
- **Avoid:** rice milk (too thin) and pea milk (too savoury).

Caffeine and sweetening

A matcha latte carries about 120 to 160mg of caffeine (2g matcha), higher than a typical cup of tea and close to filter coffee, so keep an eye on the load if you drink several a day.

Café versions are usually heavily pre-sweetened. At home you control it:

- **Sugar:** the standard, 1 to 2 tsp.
- **Honey:** pairs beautifully with matcha's umami.
- **Maple syrup:** adds caramel notes.
- **Stevia or monk fruit:** sugar-free options.
- **None:** lets the matcha's own character show.

Dropping the sweetness is the single biggest improvement over the chain cup, the same point the wider is sugar in tea bad guide makes.

Variations worth trying

- **Vanilla.** Add ½ tsp vanilla extract.
- **Iced.** Matcha, cold milk and ice. Excellent in summer.
- **Honey.** Honey in place of sugar.
- **Lavender.** A floral speciality.
- **Salted caramel.** Indulgent.
- **Mocha matcha.** Matcha plus cocoa (a bit divisive).
- **Pumpkin spice.** The autumn variant.

When to reach for one

- **Coffee alternative.** A different, steadier kind of lift.
- **Afternoon comfort drink.** Caffeinated but gentle.
- **Café visit at home.** The same drink for a fraction of the price.

FAQ

What is a matcha latte? Whisked matcha, steamed milk and sweetener; the Western café take on traditional matcha.

How much caffeine? About 120 to 160mg per cup (2g matcha), higher than typical tea and close to filter coffee.

Best matcha for lattes? Culinary or premium culinary grade. Ceremonial is wasted here.

Cost at home vs café? Home: £0.50 to £0.80 a cup. Café: £3.50 to £4.50.

Best milk? Oat for plant-based, whole dairy for traditional.

Curator's note: matcha latte is one of the most improved by home prep drinks in modern café culture. The chain version is sweet and processed; home version is properly matcha forward. Once you whisk your own, the £4 chain version permanently disappoints. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Reference noted

- PubMed: Matcha green tea and human health

If this piece pointed you somewhere, these are the obvious places to land: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. The whole tea range is here for matcha lattes at home; UK postage is free from £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Home matcha lattes win on price per cup by a wide margin. A tin of culinary matcha beats sachets most of the time.

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