Popcorn Tea (Genmaicha): The Toasty Green

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Popcorn tea (genmaicha), in summary:** Popcorn tea is the informal name for genmaicha, a Japanese blend of green tea and roasted brown rice; toasty, nutty, low caffeine, approachable.

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

Popcorn tea is the affectionate British nickname for genmaicha, Japanese green tea blended with roasted brown rice. Some of the rice grains "pop" during roasting, looking like popcorn. The result is a comforting, nutty, lightly green tea that's gentler than pure sencha. Excellent for green tea novices, mid morning drinking, or post meal settling.

What is genmaicha

Genmaicha (???) is a Japanese tea blend:

- **Green tea base:** usually bancha (lower grade everyday green) or sometimes sencha.
- **Roasted brown rice:** adds nutty character, sometimes "pops" looking like popcorn.

The traditional origin: Japanese farmers extended their tea supply by adding roasted rice. The blend became popular in its own right.

How it tastes

- **Aroma:** Toasted, nutty, with green tea undertones.
- **First sip:** Comforting roasted character.
- **Mid cup:** Green tea body emerges; rice adds creamy, full feeling.
- **Finish:** Smooth, soft, lingering toast notes.

Curator Rating: 4.9/5.

How to brew

1. 1 heaped tsp loose leaf or 1 bag per 200ml.

2. Water at 70-80°C (cooler than boiling, protects green tea).
3. Steep 2-3 minutes.
4. Drink black.

Multi infusion (loose leaf)

Premium genmaicha can be re infused 2-3 times. Each subsequent infusion: 30-45 seconds, increasing temperature slightly to 80°C.

Why it works

The roasted character

Toast and nut character is universally appealing. Genmaicha is one of the most accessible Japanese green teas for green tea novices.

Lower caffeine

The rice content "dilutes" the green tea, reducing caffeine to 15-25mg per cup (about half typical sencha).

Comfort food in tea form

The roasted rice flavour is psychologically comforting, like tea + toast in one cup.

Post meal settling

The mild green tea + comforting rice character is excellent after meals.

Use cases

Green tea introduction

Easier to like than pure sencha. Good for green tea novices.

Mid morning

Light caffeine + comfort character. Office friendly.

Post meal

Particularly good with Japanese cuisine but works after any meal.

Cold afternoons

Toasted character is autumn/winter friendly.

Pairing with sushi

The traditional pairing, genmaicha + sushi is excellent.

Pre bed (caffeine sensitive)

Lower caffeine than other green teas. Some sleep tolerant drinkers can have it 4-5 hours before bed.

Caffeine

15-25mg per cup, lower than standard green tea due to rice dilution.

Compared to other Japanese green teas

vs sencha

Sencha is pure green tea, vegetal, marine, full caffeine. Genmaicha is gentler, more comforting.

vs hojicha

Hojicha is roasted green tea (no rice), more roasted character. Genmaicha is roasted rice + green tea (lighter character).

vs matcha

Matcha is whisked, full leaf, premium. Genmaicha is steeped, blended, everyday.

vs gyokuro

Gyokuro is premium shaded green tea, high umami. Genmaicha is everyday roasted rice blend.

UK genmaicha sources

Clearspring Genmaicha

Organic; UK distributed. Solid mainstream option.

Yamamotoyama Genmaicha

Mainstream Japanese brand.

Mei Leaf Genmaicha

Premium specialty version.

Postcard Teas Genmaicha

Premium boutique version.

Direct Japanese imports

Naoki, Ippodo, and other Japanese specialty brands import via UK retailers.

The "popcorn" element

Some of the rice in genmaicha "pops" during roasting, expanding white. These visible "popcorn" grains are part of the name. Quality varies:

- **Premium genmaicha:** minimal popcorn, mostly intact rice (better leaf to rice ratio).
- **Mid tier:** moderate popcorn rice.
- **Specialty matcha iri genmaicha:** includes powdered matcha for richer flavour.

Variations

Matcha iri Genmaicha

Matcha powder added. Richer flavour, vivid green colour, higher caffeine.

Hojicha Genmaicha

Roasted green tea base instead of bancha. Stronger toasted character.

Premium genmaicha

Higher grade green tea base (sencha instead of bancha).

Pairings

- Sushi.
- Japanese cuisine generally.
- Toasted bagels and bread.
- Roasted vegetable dishes.
- Mochi and Japanese sweets.
- Fresh fruit (apple, pear).
- Plain biscuits.

Vegan

Yes, green tea + roasted rice, plant based.

Storage

Airtight tin away from light. Use within 9-12 months. Both green tea and rice are vulnerable to staleness.

Pricing

Mid tier, typically £4-8 for 50-100g loose leaf, or 10-20p per bag.

Buying

Available at health food stores, Japanese grocers, online specialty tea retailers. Use /buy/genmaicha/.

FAQ

What is popcorn tea? Genmaicha, Japanese green tea blended with roasted brown rice.

Why "popcorn"? Some rice grains "pop" during roasting, looking like popcorn.

Caffeine? 15-25mg per cup.

Best brewing temperature? 70-80°C.

Best with food? Yes, particularly Japanese cuisine.

Curator's note: genmaicha (popcorn tea) is one of the most accessible Japanese green teas. Toasted, nutty, comforting, lower caffeine than sencha. Worth keeping for green tea novices and mid morning drinking. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

In short: popcorn tea (genmaicha)

Aspect	The note
Real name	Genmaicha (Japanese); "brown rice tea"
Composition	Green tea (usually sencha or bancha) + roasted brown rice grains
Why "popcorn"	Some rice grains puff during roasting, resembling tiny popcorn
Caffeine	Low (rice dilutes the green-tea caffeine by ~50%)
Taste	Toasty, nutty, slightly grassy; very approachable
Origin	Japan; originally a frugality blend to stretch tea
Best for	Beginners to Japanese green tea; afternoon drinking
Brewing	70-80C water, 1-2 min, just-boiled is too hot

More on Japanese green tea

Continue with genmaicha, sencha and the Japanese green tea overview.

Reference noted

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

The everyday teas in the same family: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Shop the tea range at teas.co.uk for genmaicha and more; UK delivery is free past £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Genmaicha is cheap per cup, which is the price to weigh. Loose genmaicha usually wins, though bags sometimes match it.

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

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