

The proper way to brew Nihoncha

The birthplace of tea is thought to be China, and Sencha came into being during the Japanese Edo period. After that Sencha became the main type of tea in Japan. Almost all teas are drunk after infusing the leaves in hot or cold water. Adjusting the temperature and infusion time according to the type of tea being used is the basic of tea brewing.

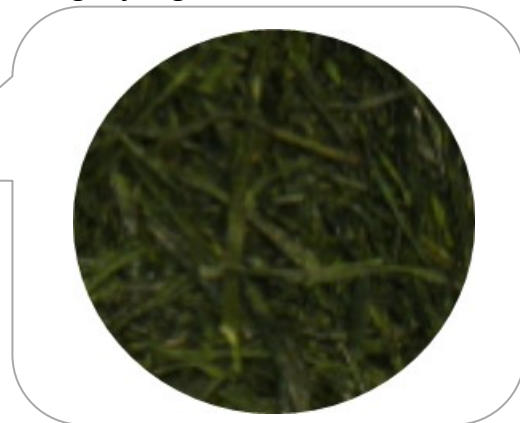
Important points when preparing tasty Nihoncha

- 1 . To understand the characteristics of the type of tea
- 2 . To select tea ware appropriate for the type of tea
- 3 . To assess the water quality (Always make sure to boil the water properly before brewing)
- 4 . To adjust the brewing technique according to the type of tea

1 . The characteristics of tea

(1) Sencha

Sencha is made according to standard production methods and the components are gently dissolved. Tea from the early harvest has high amino acid content and is considered to be of good quality. As the season moves along, the leaves become rich in fiber which in turn makes them harder. Tea picked in summer in general has slightly high tannin content.



【Sencha】

(2) Fukamushi Sencha

Since the leaves are steamed for 2-3 times longer than ordinary Sencha, the structure of the leaves break down easily. This in turn yields a tea with smaller particles. It is best infused for a shorter time than Sencha and is also suitable for making cold infusions. It has a lot of fine tea particles, and because of the sediments one is able to enjoy the rich taste and the thick color.



【Fukamushi Sencha】



※Compared to Sencha, a characteristic of Fukamushi Sencha is its fine particles.

(3) Gyokuro

Compared to other types of tea, Gyokuro has less bitter and astringent components like tannin but one characteristic is that it contains a lot of caffeine, which is a bitter substance. Because of that, an important point is to brew the tea at a lower temperature to extract the amino acids but not too much of the bitter substances like caffeine (which dissolves more easily in hot water).



【Gyokuro】 ※Deep green color and glossy leaves are characteristics of Gyokuro

(4) Bancha (Genmaicha, Houjicha)

Since a lot of different types of Aracha¹ are used for Bancha and Houjicha, the contents differ from tea to tea. These teas are enjoyed for their roasted fragrance and aroma.



【Bancha】



¹ After tea manufacturing (steaming, rolling and drying), the result is called Aracha but Japanese tea is produced in two steps, manufacturing and refining (or finishing), and therefore Aracha is in general not offered on the market.



【Genmaicha】



【Houjicha】



(5) Pan-fired Tamaryokucha

Since the structure of the leaves does not break down much due to the characteristic pan-firing method, the components of the tea do not dissolve too easily and yields several steady infusions. It has a clear and transparent appearance and is best steeped at a high temperature to that one can extract the most of the “pan-fired aroma”.



【Pan-fired Tamaryokucha】 ※Rounded tea leaves are characteristic for Tamaryokucha

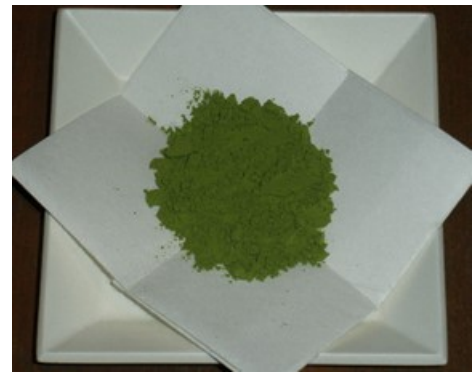
(6) Matcha

The tea plants are covered with reed and straw so that they are not exposed to direct sunlight. After steaming, the leaves are dried without rolling into something called Tencha, then ground

in a stone mill to a fine 1-20 μ m powder which is called Matcha. Since the Matcha powder is mixed by whisking it with a bamboo whisk before it is drunk, all the nutritive components in the tea can be absorbed, including the non-water soluble components. The production and the way of drinking Tencha and Matcha resulted in the formation of Chanoyu, the tea ceremony culture unique to Japan.



【Tencha】



【Matcha】

2 . Choosing teaware

Gyokuro	90ml teapot	very small teacups (40ml)
High quality Sencha	250ml teapot	small teacups (100ml)
Middle quality Sencha	600ml teapot	medium sized teacups (150ml)
Bancha, Houjicha	800ml teapot	large teacups (200ml)
(for Fukamushi Sencha, the same size as for Sencha is used)		



(90ml teapot) and very small teacups (40ml) (250ml teapot and small teacups (100ml)

※ On the upper left, a “yuzamashi” or hot water cooler.



600ml teapot and medium sized teacups (150ml) 800ml teapot and large teacups (200ml)

3 . Tasting the water

Soft water with less than 100mg/L hardness (about 30-80mg/L) is suitable for making Japanese tea. If hard water is used, the tea will become pale in color, the fresh aroma will be lost and the tea taste strange.

4 . How to prepare the respective kinds of teas

(1) Sencha

(Step 1) Measuring the tea leaves

When brewing Sencha, 2-3g of tea leaves are used per person (100ml) In the case of 5 persons, it becomes 10-15g but in practice, 10g will make a tasty tea. Conversely, when making tea for only one person, the second infusion can be better enjoyed if one uses slightly more leaves, about 4-5g.



(Measuring tea with a teaspoon. (one teaspoonful is about 2g)

(Step 2) Preparing a suitable amount of hot water

By using the teacups (100-150ml, small or medium sized teacups) one can decrease the temperature as well as measuring the water amount at the same time. The teacups are filled to about 8/10. If the teacups are shaped like a morning glory (opening up at the top) 8/10 will be too little so fill the cups a little bit more). The tea leaves will absorb water equal to about 4 times its own weight, and this must be considered when calculating the amount of water.



※fill the cups to about 8/10)

(Step 3) Lowering the water temperature

Lower the temperature to a degree suitable for the type of tea that is used (70°C (158°F) for high quality Sencha, 90°C (194°F) for middle quality Sencha). It is good to use a yuzamashi (hot water cooler) for lowering the temperature.

The temperature can also be easily lowered by using the teacups. Depending on the season, the size and material of the teacups there is a slight difference but usually the temperature decrease by 5-10°C (41-50°F) when poured from one vessel to another. For example, by pouring boiling hot water into a pot, the temperature will decrease to about 90°C (194°F) and by pouring it from the pot, the temperature can be lowered to 80°C (176°F). The temperature will also decrease inside the teacup so adjust the temperature depending on the type of tea. By measuring in the cups like in step 2, measuring the water and preheating the teacups can be done at the same time.



(Usage of the yuzamashi or hot water cooler)



(Hot water being poured into the tea pot)

(Step 4) Extracting the tea components

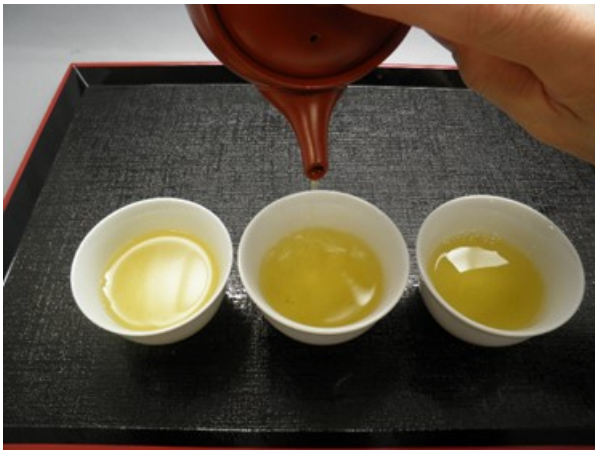
In the case of Sencha, the standard infusion time is 1 minute and 30 seconds.



(Tea leaves after 1 minute and 30 seconds infusion)

(Step 5) Pouring the tea into the cups

It is important to pour a little by little a couple of times into each cup in order to adjust the amount and the strength of the infusion. This is called “mawashitsugi” in Japanese, and if you have 3 cups, pour it in the order of 1, 2, 3 and then back 3, 2, 1, repeating this until you have poured all the tea. If hot water is left in the tea pot, components will be extracted before the second infusion so pour until the last drop.



(Mawashitsugi. Pour a little by little into each cup)



(Color of the liquor after brewing)

(Step 6) Preparing the second infusion

To extract the components more easily, use slightly hotter water for the second infusion and steep it for about half the time (about 45 seconds). It is good to use an extra cup for measuring the amount of water.

(2) Fukamushi Sencha

(Step 1) Measuring the tea leaves

When making Fukamushi Sencha about 2g of leaves and 60ml of water is used. In the case of 3 persons, 6g are used.



(Measuring tea with a teaspoon. (one teaspoonful is about 2g)

(Step 2) Preparing a suitable amount of hot water

By using the teacups (100 ml, small teacups) one can decrease the temperature and well as measuring the water amount at the same time. The teacups are filled to about 8/10. If the teacups are shaped like a morning glory (opening up at the top) 8/10 will be too little so fill the cup a little bit more). The tea leaves will absorb water about 4 times its own weight, and this must be considered when calculating the amount of water.



(measuring the water amount) fill the cups to about 8/10)

(Step 3) Lowering the water temperature

Lower the temperature to a degree suitable for the type of tea that is used (70°C (158°F) for high quality Sencha, 90°C (194°F) for middle quality Sencha). It is good to use a yuzamashi (hot water cooler) for lowering the temperature.

The temperature can also be easily lowered by using the teacups. Depending on the season and the size and material of the teacups there is a slight difference but usually the temperature decrease by 5-10°C (41-50°F) when poured from one vessel to another. For example, by

pouring boiling hot water into a pot, the temperature will decrease to about 90°C (194°F) and by pouring it from the pot, the temperature can be lowered to 80°C (176°F). The temperature will also decrease inside the teacup so the temperature is adjusted depending on the type of tea. By measuring in the cups like in step 2, measuring the water and preheating of the teacups can be done at the same time.



(Usage of the yuzamashi or hot water cooler)



(Hot water being poured into the tea pot)

(Step 4) Extracting the tea components

Since the leaves are broken into finer parts in the production process, Fukamushi Sencha is steeped for a shorter time than Sencha. 30 seconds is the standard.



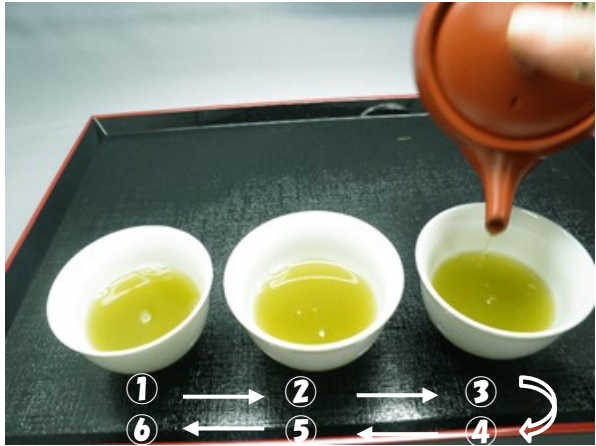
(Tea leaves after 30 seconds infusion)

(Step 5) Pouring the tea into the cups

It is important to pour a little by little a couple of times into each cup in order to adjust the amount and the strength of the infusion. This is called “mawashitsugi” in Japanese, and if you have 3 cups, pour it in the order of 1, 2, 3 and then back 3, 2, 1, repeating this until you have poured all the tea. If hot water is left in the tea pot, components will be extracted before the second infusion so pour until the last drop. Since the tea contains a lot of fine particles one has to pour it quickly.



(Mawashitsugi. Pour a little by little into each cup)



(Color of the liquor after brewing)

(Step 6) Preparing the second infusion

To extract the components more easily, use slightly hotter water for the second infusion and steep it for about half the time (about 20 seconds). It is good to use an extra cup for measuring the amount of water.

(3) Gyokuro

(Step 1) Measuring the tea leaves

When preparing Gyokuro about 2-3g of tea leaves and 10ml of water is used per person. Using slightly more leaves (10g) for 3 persons is the standard.



(Measuring tea with a teaspoon. (one teaspoonful is about 2g)

(Step 2) Preparing a suitable amount of hot water

By using the teacups (40 ml, very small teacups) one can decrease the temperature and well as measuring the water amount at the same time. The tea leaves will absorb water about 4 times its own weight, and this must be considered when calculating the amount of water.



(measuring the water amount)

(Step 3) Lowering the water temperature

Lower the temperature to a degree suitable for the type of tea that is used. In the case of Gyokuro, we want to extract as much of the umami that comes from theanine as possible and hold back the bitterness and astringency. This is best done in 50-60°C (122-140°F) water. It is good to use a yuzamashi (hot water cooler) for lowering the temperature.

The temperature can also be easily lowered by using the teacups. Depending on the season and the size and material of the teacups there is a slight difference but usually the temperature decrease by 5-10°C (41-50°F) when poured from one vessel to another. For example, by

pouring boiling hot water into a pot, the temperature will decrease to about 90°C (194°F) and by pouring it from the pot, the temperature can be lowered to 80°C (176°F). The temperature will also decrease inside the teacup so the temperature is adjusted depending on the type of tea. By measuring in the cups like in step 2, measuring the water and preheating of the teacups can be done at the same time.



(Usage of the yuzamashi or hot water cooler)



(Hot water being poured into the tea pot)

(Step 4) Extracting the tea components

In the case of Gyokuro, we want to extract the umami thoroughly and also bring out the rich taste. Therefore it is steeped for a longer time than Sencha. 150 seconds is the standard.

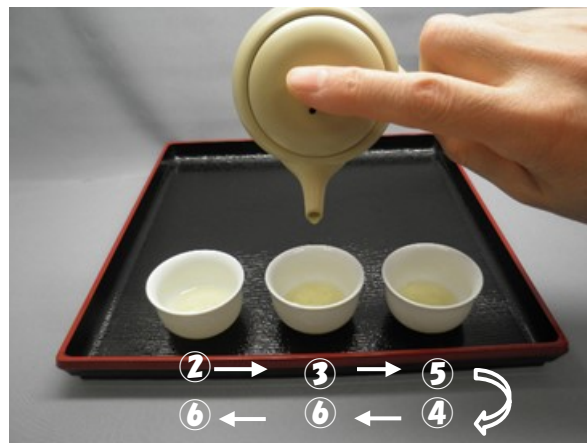


(Tea leaves after 2 minutes and 30 seconds infusion)

(Step 5) Pouring the tea into the cups

It is important to pour a little by little a couple of times into each cup in order to adjust the amount and the strength of the infusion. This is called “mawashitsugi” in Japanese, and if you have 3 cups, pour it in the order of 1, 2, 3 and then back 3, 2, 1, repeating this until you have poured all the tea. If hot water is left in the tea pot, components will be extracted before the second infusion so pour until the last drop.

In the case of Gyokuro, do not drink it in one gulp but enjoy it by spreading it across the tongue slowly.



(Mawashitsugi. Pour a little by little into each cup)



(Color of the liquor after brewing)

(Step 6) Preparing the second infusion

To extract the components more easily, use slightly hotter water for the second infusion and steep it for about half the time (about 1 minute). It is good to use an extra cup for measuring the amount of water.

(4) Pan-fired Tamaryokucha

(Step 1) Measuring the tea leaves

When preparing pan-fired Tamaryokucha, about 2-3g of tea leaves and 100ml water is used per person. That will become about 10-15g for 5 persons but in practice about 10g is a good amount. When preparing tea for one person. When making tea for one person, the second infusion can be better enjoyed by using 4-5g of leaves.



(Measuring tea with a teaspoon. (one teaspoonful is about 2g)



(Step 2) Preparing a suitable amount of hot water

By using the teacups (100-150ml, small or medium sized) one can decrease the temperature and well as measuring the water amount at the same time. The teacups are filled to about 8/10. If the teacups are shaped like a morning glory (opening up at the top) 8/10 will be too little so fill the cup a little bit more). The tea leaves will absorb water about 4 times its own weight, and this must be considered when calculating the amount of water.



(measuring the water amount) fill the cups to about 8/10)

(Step 3) Lowering the water temperature

Lower the temperature to a degree suitable for the type of tea that is used (70°C (158°F) for high quality tea, 90°C (194°F) for middle quality tea). It is good to use a yuzamashi (hot water cooler) for lowering the temperature.

The temperature can also be easily lowered by using the teacups. Depending on the season and the size and material of the teacups there is a slight difference but usually the temperature decrease by 5-10°C (41-50°F) when poured from one vessel to another. For example, by pouring boiling hot water into a pot, the temperature will decrease to about 90°C (194°F) and by pouring it from the pot, the temperature can be lowered to 80°C (176°F) . The temperature will also decrease inside the teacup so adjust the temperature depending on the type of tea. By measuring in the cups like in step 2, measuring the water and preheating the teacups can be done at the same time.



(Usage of the yuzamashi or hot water cooler)



(Hot water being poured into the tea pot)

(Step 4) Extracting the tea components

For regular pan-fired Tamaryokucha, 1 minute and 30 seconds is the standard steeping time.



(Tea leaves after 1 minute and 30 seconds infusion)

(Step 5) Pouring the tea into the cups

It is important to pour a little by little a couple of times into each cup in order to adjust the amount and the strength of the infusion. This is called “mawashitsugi” in Japanese, and if you have 3 cups, pour it in the order of 1, 2, 3 and then back 3, 2, 1, repeating this until you have poured all the tea. If hot water is left in the tea pot, components will be extracted before the second infusion so pour until the last drop.



(Mawashitsugi. Pour a little by little into each cup)



(Color of the liquor after brewing)

(Step 6) Preparing the second infusion

To extract the components more easily, use slightly hotter water for the second infusion and steep it for about half the time (about 45 seconds). It is good to use an extra cup for measuring the amount of water.

(5) Bancha (Genmaicha, Houjicha)

(Step 1) Measuring the tea leaves

When preparing Bancha (Genmaicha, Houjicha), about 2-3g of tea leaves and 100ml water is used per person. That will become about 10-15g for 5 persons but in practice about 10g is a good amount. When making tea for one person, the second infusion can be better enjoyed by using 4-5g of leaves.



Measuring of tea with a large spoon (approximately 6g per spoonful)

(Step 2) Preparing a suitable amount of hot water

Use large or medium sized cups, and prepare only the amount of water suitable for the number of persons you are preparing tea for. The tea leaves will absorb water about 4 times its own weight, and this must be considered when calculating the amount of water.

(Step 3) Use boiling water

Bancha (Genmaicha, Houjicha) is not enjoyed for its taste but rather, appreciated for its fragrant roasted aroma (or brown rice aroma) and in order to extract as much of this as possible boiling hot water is used.



(Pouring boiling hot water)

(Step 4) Extracting the tea components

For ordinary Bancha (Genmaicha, Houjicha), about 30 seconds steeping time is standard.



(Tea leaves after 30 seconds infusion)

(Step 5) Pouring the tea into the cups

It is important to pour a little by little a couple of times into each cup in order to adjust the amount and the strength of the infusion. This is called “mawashitsugi” in Japanese, and if you have 3 cups, pour it in the order of 1, 2, 3 and then back 3, 2, 1, repeating this until you have poured all the tea. If hot water is left in the tea pot, components will be extracted before the second infusion so pour until the last drop.



(Mawashitsugi. Pour a little by little into each cup)



(Color of the liquor after brewing)

(Step 6) Preparing the second infusion

For the second infusion, use boiling water and pour the tea immediately without letting it steep.