

A vertical photograph of a tea plantation. The background is a soft-focus field of tea bushes. In the foreground on the left, a single tea leaf is in sharp focus, showing its veins and serrated edge. The overall color palette is a range of greens, from deep forest green to a lighter, almost yellowish-green.

NIHON CHA

introduction to japanese tea

A Preamble

Nihoncha is profoundly representative of Japanese culture.

Regularly consumed for many centuries, it is the central element of one of the most complex and beautiful rituals, the tea ceremony or *chanoyu*. This ceremony, deeply rooted in the arts, etiquette, and spirituality, is rich in symbols and meanings, manifested in its components and movements.

Japanese green tea is commonly considered a “restorer of mind and body” due to its various therapeutic characteristics. Research has linked its consumption to the longer lifespan in Japan.

Green tea is part of Japanese daily life: preparing and serving tea represents care for the visitor, a pause to calmly appreciate an interval of time, a moment of contemplation or social interaction.

Therefore, there is nothing more fitting than to present it as the star of an exhibition at Japan House São Paulo.

Its cultivation, production, marketing, and consumption transcend time and geographical boundaries, constituting a vast territory of invisible lines.

In our case, this element is important for understanding the many enduring aspects of traditional Japanese culture, still present in contemporary life, but also because we are in a country with a considerable presence of immigrants and their descendants, who introduced tea production in Brazil.

Given the breadth of this theme, its complexity, developments, and varieties, an exhibition lasting a few months in a limited physical space could only be a preamble to the extensive field of *nihoncha*.

We have therefore chosen to provide our visitors with this exhibition as an introduction, while suggesting that they delve further into the subject, going beyond what is shown here.

For the first time in the conception of a project, we conducted the research for this show in collaboration with various institutions, receiving valuable support from Chado Urasenke of Japan and Brazil, the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, and Fisheries, and two Japanese *nihoncha* associations.

We chose to present nine types of Japanese green tea, giving a step-by-step explanation of their production and describing their characteristics. Visitors can appreciate aspects of the tea ceremony in the video made with the support of Chado Urasenke in Japan and in the selection of significant tea-making utensils from the *chanoyu* collection of Chado Urasenke in Brazil. Furthermore, we present a contemporary tea house made with recycled scrap materials, produced through high technology combined with traditional wood-joining techniques.

A central table displays contemporary accessories and solutions that demonstrate tea's relevance in Japan to this day, near a botanical installation featuring the plant it originates from, *Camellia sinensis*.

Beyond the exhibition, this experience is expanded through a series of events and activities organized by Japan House São Paulo, together with the opportunity to discover related products in our store, café, and restaurant.

We hope this is the first of many chapters in this rich discovery.

Natasha Barzaghi Geenen
Cultural Director of Japan House São Paulo

Nihoncha: an introduction to Japanese tea

In Japan, the tea most commonly served alongside Japan's low-calorie cuisine that emphasizes the flavor of ingredients is Japanese green tea.

Its beautiful color is an all-natural extract from the tea leaves, and its elegant aroma gives a sensation of freshness. Only Japanese green tea can offer such variety in its fusion of flavors. Without the addition of sugar or other sweeteners, the unique taste of Japanese green tea is enjoyed in its pure form and contains many nutrients reputedly beneficial to health.

In Japan, people enjoy a cup of Japanese green tea as a break from everyday activities. Tea also plays an essential part in welcoming important guests as it sends the message that the host wants you to "relax," and taking tea helps to soothe and refresh the senses.

Grown with great care in tea fields situated amongst the beautiful nature of Japan and developed using sophisticated technology, beneficial and high-quality Japanese green tea can help you lead a healthy lifestyle.

In this exhibition, we present nine varieties of Japanese tea:

玉露 Gyokuro

かぶせ茶 Kabusecha

普通煎茶 Sencha

蒸し製玉緑茶 Mushisei-tamaryokucha

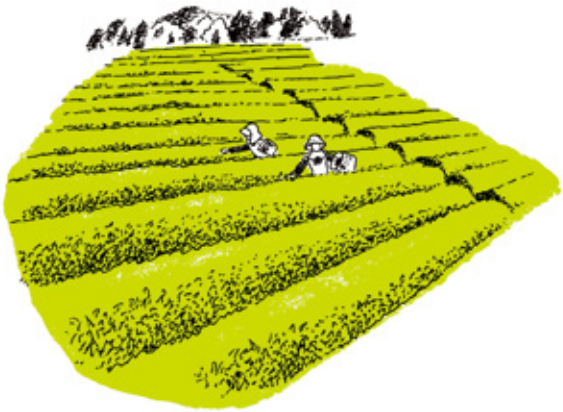
釜炒り製玉緑茶 Kamairisei-tamaryokucha

碾茶 Tencha

抹茶 Matcha

ほうじ茶 Hōjicha

玄米茶 Genmaicha



Cultivation

Tea is an agricultural product, and similar to fruits and vegetables, high-quality tea leaves can only be grown and picked after much attention is paid to feeding the soil with fertilizer, practicing irrigation, and pruning. Producing high-quality teas with *umami*, such as *gyokuro* (refined green tea indigenous to Japan), is labor-intensive since the tea fields must be covered entirely from the sunlight for a fixed period before picking (the *ooishita* cultivation method). In particular, cultivating high-quality teas is a precise process whereby young leaves are picked manually, one by one, according to tradition. Japan has four distinct seasons that affect the period when tea can be harvested, and teas harvested at different times have contrasting flavors. Of the various types of Japanese green tea available, the young tea leaves used for *gyokuro*, *matcha*, and high-grade *sencha* can only be harvested for a short period during spring.



Primary Processing (*aracha*)

Freshly picked tea leaves are steamed to prevent oxidization. This unique Japanese process gives Japanese green tea its special flavour and beautiful color. The tea leaves are then rolled and dried until drawn into a long, thin shape. The end product is *aracha* (unprocessed tea). Although at one time all of these processes were performed by hand by skilled experts, nowadays most teas are processed by machine; however, the manual hand-rolling method serves as the foundation for this technology, and even today, the Japanese art and spirit of making tea is passed down by skilled experts involved in the industry.



Secondary Processing (*shiage*)

An important characteristic of Japanese green tea is the expert's effort to turn it from *aracha* to *shiagecha* (refined tea). This process is so important that each company within the tea manufacturing industry keeps it a secret. However, it involves sieving and cutting the tea leaves so that they can be sorted with attention to color and shape, after which each manufacturer uses their own method of *hiire* (drying) to further enhance the aroma and flavor of the tea by drying the leaves a second time. Lastly, in the same way whiskey is blended, a specialist sorts between the subtle differences in aroma and taste to blend the teas for the ultimate flavor. The subtle aroma and intense flavor unique to Japanese green tea result from this detailed and careful process.

December 5, 2023 – April 7, 2024

Japan House São Paulo

Av. Paulista, 52

Free admission

Tuesday to Friday | 10 am to 6 pm

Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays | 10 am to 7 pm

Mondays | closed

#NihonchaNaJHSP

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Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries of Japan
(MAFF)

Illustrations: Kochi Hajime

Fragrance: Takasago



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