Matcha

The process of making matcha is one of inherent thoughtfulness because it's prepared in a stepwise fashion. You can't check your phone while whisking, and it's mesmerizing to watch bright green tea mix slowly into creamy milk. I recommend refrigerating high-quality matcha to preserve freshness and color. If you're not sure about the quality of the matcha that you're using, take a bit and spread it out on white paper. What is the color like? The consistency? Ideally, the matcha that you're buying is bright green and smooth. Is it certified organic? Sometimes, farmers who are practicing organic agriculture may not have the finances or desire to obtain certification. As with any tea or agricultural product, you can always chat with the supplier about sourcing practices.

Matcha has been at the heart of Japanese tea ceremony for centuries; people trained for years, and still do, to prepare it properly. But it has also transformed into the go-to café order of today. Some consider it a more mindful alternative as a home routine to preparing coffee. Matcha, in Japanese tea ceremony, is prepared with just water and matcha powder. No milk. It is served with *wagashi* (artful tea candies that are an art of their own to prepare). The creation of matcha lattes, incorporating milk into the traditionally somewhat bitter drink to sweeten it and make it more appealing to the masses, is contemporary. Luckily, it is delicious and easy to make at home.

Many milk alternatives exist for those who prefer not to drink cow's milk (though I personally think that the best lattes are made with whole milk). Milk from oat, pistachio, almond, soy, walnut, cashew—the list goes on—can all be used in hot or iced matcha lattes, and it is truly a matter of personal preference. I find that a lot of the store-bought milk alternatives have gums and other preservatives in them that can lead to digestive upset. For that reason, the best nut milks and milk alternatives are made at home, or bought fresh at a local food coop.

Hot Matcha Latte

Serves 1

Electric kettle with temperature setting (optional)

Instant-read thermometer

Heat-resistant cup

Electric milk steamer (optional)

Tea scoop (or a teaspoon if you don't have one)

Small fine-mesh strainer (for sifting)

Chawan (a tea bowl, or any small bowl will do if you don't have one dedicated to matcha)

Matcha whisk

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2 tablespoons water, preferably filtered

1 cup (240 ml) milk

1 teaspoon (3 g) matcha powder

Heat the water to 160 to 175°F (71 to 80°C) and transfer it to a heat-resistant cup to cool down. Warm up the milk to about 285 to 320°F (140 to 160°C). If doing this on the stove, cook it at very low heat so it doesn't come to a boil. Alternatively, consider investing in a milk steamer. Sift the matcha into a tea bowl. Pour some hot water over the matcha powder, just enough to cover it. Whisk the matcha and hot water. You'll know you're done whisking when bubbles form at the surface. This should happen in about 20 to 30 seconds. Pour the warm milk into a heat-resistant cup. Pour the matcha over the warm milk and enjoy.

Iced Matcha

Serves 1

I went through a phase of buying bodega ice for daily iced matcha lattes at home. Eventually, I bought an ice-cube tray. The caffeine content of matcha, while high, tends to create a more balanced energy than the sometimes-frenetic feel generated by an afternoon coffee.

12-ounce (350 ml) heat-resistant cup

Tea scoop (or a teaspoon if you don't have one)

Small fine-mesh strainer (for sifting)

Chawan (tea bowl, or any small bowl will do if you don't have one)

Matcha whisk

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2 tablespoons water, preferably filtered

Ice (enough to fill your cup)

1 cup (240 ml) milk

1 teaspoon (3 g) matcha powder

Heat the water to 160 to 175°F (71 to 80°C). Fill a heat-resistant cup with ice then fill three-fourths of the cup with milk. Sift matcha into a bowl. Pour in enough hot water to cover the matcha. Whisk the matcha and water for 30 seconds. Pour the matcha mixture over the ice and milk.

NOTE: It's true that there is a meticulous way to make matcha, and that Japanese tea masters dedicate decades of their lives to perfecting this art. But remember, there is no right or wrong way when it comes to making tea at home. Enjoy the beauty and the imperfections. The key to becoming somebody who drinks tea regularly is to drink tea regularly. The how finds a way of working itself out.



With Tea

Culture, Accoutrements, and Rituals



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WITH TEA Culture, Accoutrements, and Rituals