Drinks / Japan

Ceremonial Matcha

The heart of the Japanese tea ceremony — ceremonial-grade matcha sifted fine, whisked with a bamboo chasen in just-below-boiling water into a bowl of vibrant, vegetal green with a cap of fine, persistent foam. Sweet and savoury at once, it tastes of the shaded tea field in early spring.

Time 10 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 2 g Ceremonial-grade matcha (sifted)
- ☐ 70 ml Water at 75–80°C (just off the boil)

Let's make it.

01 Pour a small amount of the 80°C water into the chawan (tea bowl) and swirl it around to preheat the vessel. Tip the water out and dry the bowl thoroughly with a clean cloth. A cold bowl will instantly drop the water temperature and prevent the foam from forming properly. While you work, let the just-boiled water rest uncovered in the kettle or a jug for 2 to 3 minutes to reach the target temperature of 75–80°C — an instant-read thermometer is helpful, but the moment active boiling stops and the first wisps of rising steam soften, you are close.

02 Measure 2 g of matcha (about one heaped chashaku scoop, or one level teaspoon) and pass it through a very fine sieve directly into the warmed, dry chawan. Matcha clumps on contact with humidity, and unsifted matcha whisked into water produces lumps that float stubbornly on the surface rather than dispersing into foam. Use the back of a small spoon to press the powder through if it resists. The sifted matcha should settle in the bowl as a thin, even, vivid green layer with no visible clumps.

03 Pour the 80°C water in a thin, slow stream over the matcha, aiming for the side of the bowl rather than directly onto the powder to avoid splashing. Take the chasen (bamboo whisk) and, holding the bowl steady with one hand, whisk in a rapid W or M motion across the surface — not circular, which creates large bubbles — moving the wrist quickly from side to side. Whisk for 20 to 30 seconds until a layer of fine, tight, uniform foam covers the entire surface. The bowl should stay still; only the wrist moves. Lift the chasen gently at the end to avoid leaving a hole in the foam.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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