

## A Historical Walk Around Kyoto

Photo by Ryotaro Nakajima



### Tea Picking in Uji Tea Field

The town of Uji is well-known for the Byodoin Temple, as the temple appears on every Japanese ten-yen coin. Uji is also famous for green tea. In the 9th century, tea was first introduced into Japan from China. Originally green powdered tea (*matcha*) was introduced in the 12th century. During this period, Uji became the first Japanese tea cultivation area. The original boiled tea was developed for the people, but it was brown. Today's normal green tea (*sencha*) is an improved version of the original tea and was created in the 18th century in Uji. The first leaves of the year are picked in May, and it is the best time to taste the harvest of the year.

### All Kinds of Popular Tea Can Be Made from the Same Tree

All black tea, oolong tea and green tea can be made from the same tea tree. However, treatments after picking tea leaves are different.

- Black tea:** Tea leaves are fully fermented
- Oolong tea:** Tea leaves are partially fermented
- Green tea:** Tea leaves are steamed and dried without fermentation

### Why is the Uji Brand of Green Tea Very Popular even Now?

Theanine is a component of the tea taste. It decomposes, when exposed to sunlight. In Uji, there is a river and a large amount of sandy soil. Drainage is also very good. Fog rises easily due to the river. This fog covers and protects the theanine in the tea leaves from sunlight, and this means that Uji tea contains much more theanine and tastes very good.

### Green Tea Enhances Your Health

Green tea contains various ingredients such as vitamin C and E, flavonoid, [catechin](#)\* (which prevents cancer / decreases blood sugar levels) and theanine (which controls functional regulation for the brain and nerves). However, you shouldn't drink green tea with cold medicine, etc.; otherwise, the theanine will decrease the caffeine action in the medicine.

\* Green tea contains about 7 times more catechin than black tea.