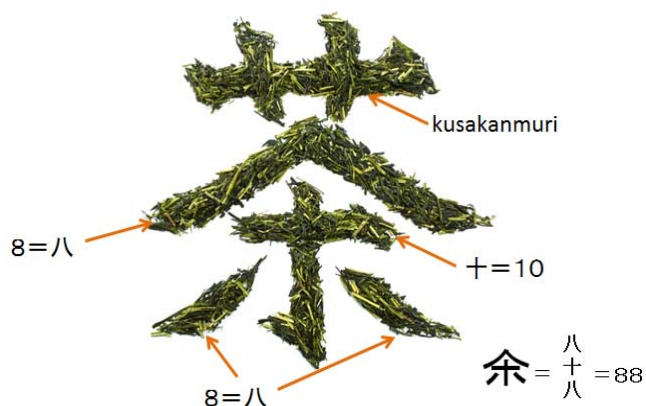


A Historical Walk Around Kyoto

Green Tea-Scented Season



The green tea is essential for Japanese daily lives. The Kanji (Chinese character) of the tea “茶” composes a radical of “kusakanmuri” positioned on the top referring grass and other parts look the combination of the character of “八”, “十” and “八” (meaning 8, 10 and 8 respectively).

There is a Japanese song of “The summer is just around the corner of *Hachijuhachi-ya*” (八十八夜 which literally means the 88th nights). Around May 2nd, the 88th days from the spring equinox, the best season for picking first crop of green tea comes in Kyoto. The fresh young tea leaves of the first harvest of the season are called *Shincha* – new leaves (or *Ichibanacha* – first picking tea). This first grade of the leaves are said to have the highest quality by their soft leaves, flavor and fragrance.

Green tea became a part of people’s daily lives around Taisho Era (1912-1926). It was luxury before that. It is great achievement of the enriched life to drink green tea in daily life. Traditionally it is said that people live long if they drink green tea on the day of hachijuhachi-ya.

The famous tea production area in Kyoto; Uji and Wazuka will hold the tea-picking events in this harvest season. This is one of authentic ways for enjoying Kyoto to pick fresh leaves and drink fresh tea while viewing the green hills of the tea.

There are many long-established Japanese tea shops. They serve many foods of green tea and sweets and we can enjoy them. It may be nice to feel the season of the tea in the early summer breeze.