

805

*The Buddhist monks Eichu, Kukai and Saicho bring tea from China back to Japan for the first time*

The tea of that time is called "Dancha" – tea leaves are crushed into powder after steaming and drying and formed into balls, which are then dried over fire; before preparation (boiling in hot water), the ball is then pulverized again.

815

*Eichu serves Saga, the 52. Japanese "Tenno", a bowl of tea and can inspire the emperor with it*

815-894

*First tea plantings in several regions of Japan at the instigation of Tenno Saga*

Kukai, who is close to the emperor, introduces him to tea, so that at the instigation of Saga, the first tea plantations are subsequently planted in various regions of Japan, including the region of today's Shiga Prefecture.

From 894, a halt in relations between Japan and China causes a temporary cease in the development of Japanese tea culture.

1186

*Zen monk Eisei plants tea seeds brought from China in various places in Japan*

In addition to the tea seeds, Eisei also brings a new way of preparing tea from China – pouring / whipping hot water over the tea powder instead of boiling it in the same.

1200

*Eisei's student Myoe plants tea seeds at his behest in Togano'o, near present-day Kyoto*

13th c.

*During the 13th century, only tea from Togano'o is considered "real tea"*

Tea competitions revolving around distincting "real" tea from other, "non-genuine" tea establish as a popular pastime among members of the nobility and the warrior caste.

Invention of shading tea plants to imitate the cultivation conditions in the wooded Togano'o region.

14th c.

*Spread of the cultivation of high-quality ("real") tea throughout the Uji region*

15th c.

*Further spread of tea in the Japanese upper class via Buddhist temples and monks*

Creation of an ostentatious (matcha) tea ceremony by tea masters Marato Shuko (1423-1502) and Takeno Joo (1502-1555).

Development of dedicated tea rooms and pavilions; increasing use of Japanese tea utensils instead of Chinese ones.

16th c.

*Perfection of the Japanese (matcha) tea ceremony by tea master Sen no Rikyu (1522 – 1591)*

Aesthetical orientation of Rikyu's tea ceremony at the "wabi-sabi" aesthetic (imperfection + transience) coined by him.

1654

*Founding of the Mamokuchi Temple in Uji by Chinese Ingen Ryuki (1592 – 1673)*

At the influential Mamokuchi Temple, Ingen Ryuki propagates infusing tea leaves instead of powder tea (matcha) for the first time.

At the same time, further development of the Chinese side handle teapot to the Japanese "Kyusu" teapot.

1738

*Nagatani Soen (1681 – 1771) develops a method for rolling the tea leaves after steaming*

Nagatani Soen's invention marks the birth of Sencha tea as we know it today.

1739 ff

*Mendicant Baisao (1675 – 1763) spreads the preparation and use of Sencha tea among common people*

Baisao propagates the enjoyment of simple Sencha tea among ordinary people – on foot on the streets of Kyoto with shouldered wicker baskets, he barter tea for everyday necessities and recites wisdom and poetry to his "Sencha-Do".

1835

*Kakei Yamamoto refines the method of shading tea bushes with rice straw*

1841

*Eguchi Shigeyuro develops a technique for rolling Tencha leaves and calls the result "Gyokuro"*

1859

*Opening of major Japanese commercial ports for export to the West*

Trade agreements with the USA, the Netherlands, Russia, Great Britain and France also bring Japanese green tea to Europe, where the high demand soon makes it Japan's strongest export product alongside silk.

1885

*Patenting of the 1st machine for steaming and rolling tea leaves by Kenzo Takabayashi (1832 – 1901)*

The patent for Kenzo Takabayashi's tea processing machine is one of the first patents ever filed in Japan; Takabayashi also develops and patents a machine for drying the tea leaves.

The availability of processing machines initiates a trend towards the omission of the withering phase from the processing cycle.

20th c.

*The development of agrochemicals enables an ever-increasing level of crop control*

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the development of increasingly efficient agrochemicals has enabled an ever higher degree of crop control. Examples include the use of high-nitrogen fertilizers in favor of a more pronounced umami taste and the avoidance of pest infestation and "weeds" by pesticides, fungicides and herbicides.

The improved crop control and mechanization of tea production enable the cultivation of tea on leveled surfaces (instead of the trad. tea mountain), thus favoring the development of larger and more productive tea growing areas in Shizuoka and Kagoshima.

1913

*Development and market launch of the first (mechanical) picking shears*



1953

*Establishment of the national registration system for tea cultivars by the Jap. Ministry of Agriculture*

1956

*Patenting of the first hand-held (1 person) picking machine (mechanical) - from 1962 on electric*

1960's

*Development of a pragmatic standard for the (asexual) propagation of tea cultivars through offshoots*

1971

*Portable 2-person picking machine achieves up to 60 times the output of hand picking*

As a consequence, the tradition of annual tea picking (women used to go to the tea mountains for several weeks in spring to pick) disappears from Japanese society in the relevant regions.

1970's

*Increasing replacement of native tea plants in Japan's tea gardens by cultivars*

By 1980, 77% of all tea plants in Japan are "Jabukita", a cultivar considered as particularly easy to care for, high-yielding and tasty.

Overall, the mechanization and automation of tea production, the trend towards cultivars in general and Jabukita in particular, as well as the use of pesticides and the Japanese's taste preference for "umami" during the 2nd half of the 20th century lead to an ever-greater standardization of Japanese green tea and tea culture in Japan.

today

*Tendency towards (re-)diversification of cultivars and processing variations and towards eco-cultivation*

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a trend towards greater diversification of processing methods and cultivars, resulting in a greater variety of the Japanese tea portfolio. At the same time, efforts towards more ecological cultivation are increasing.