



冠かぶせ 茶

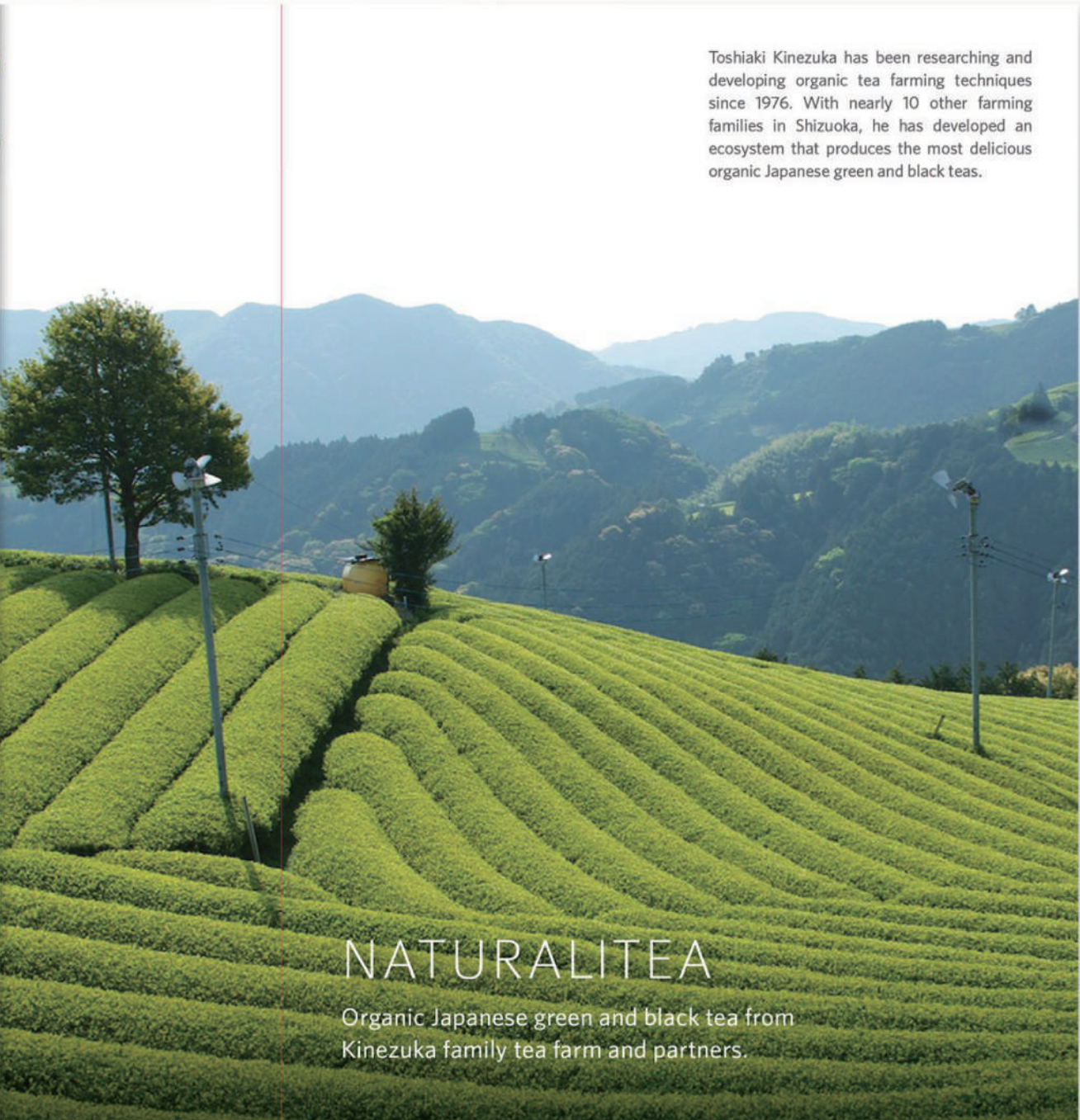


Premium Kabuse 冠(かぶせ)茶 50g

From one of Japan's organic tea pioneers comes a special Premium Kabusecha: Organic Kabuse. Shaded for two weeks before harvest, the deep pine-green leaf needles give a rich aroma of umami savouriness.



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Toshiaki Kinezuka has been researching and developing organic tea farming techniques since 1976. With nearly 10 other farming families in Shizuoka, he has developed an ecosystem that produces the most delicious organic Japanese green and black teas.

NATURALITEA

Organic Japanese green and black tea from Kinezuka family tea farm and partners.

The philosophy that has driven Toshiaki Kinezuka for over four decades can be summed up by this statement:

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A GOOD FARMER KNOWS THAT TO PRODUCE GOOD CROPS, ONE MUST FIRST DEVELOP GOOD SOIL. THUS, THE TASTE OF GOOD ORGANIC TEA IS MADE HALF OF TEA LEAVES AND HALF OF THE HEARTS OF THEIR FARMERS.

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What many people don't realize, however, is that soil development and development of the macro environment of a farm is a decades long process. The balance between people, agriculture and nature is a delicate one, but when carefully cultivated, nature actually takes care of itself: predatory insects such as spiders keep pests in check, the tea plants are strengthened against disease, and the soil's balance produces the nutrients necessary to create delicious tea.

This balance is also how we farmers used to farm our crops, before modern science introduced artificial chemicals and pesticides. You might say that this philosophy is a return to traditional agriculture.

Modern agriculture, has unfortunately forgotten what was once obvious to our ancestors. Instead, we return to the roots of agriculture as we develop not only our tea fields, but work to involve nearly ten family farms in the region to produce an environment conducive for the highest quality tea through truly traditional organic farming methods.



When he switched to organic in 1976, Toshiaki Kinezuka was met with skepticism and hostility by his fellow tea farmers. The pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers now available to them were providing large yields, and their harvests sold for good prices. The common sentiment at the time was that tea grown with these chemicals was of a higher quality than tea grown without. Still, they worried that the idea of "organic" tea grown without chemicals would appeal to consumers and draw away business, and they were vocal in their opposition.



HISTORY

Never-the-less, Kinezuka felt the need to farm organic tea was too great to ignore. He saw how the chemicals reduced the fish populations of nearby rivers, as well as populations of insects such as fireflies, which had once been abundant. He knew that any method of farming that relied on killing other life was neither desirable nor sustainable. Besides, his family had grown tea for over ten generations, and their traditional methods of farming had served them well.

It took three years of hard work before he got a harvest that met his standards for quality, but thanks to a dedicated group of consumers he was able to persevere through the first few years and fulfill his dream of creating an entirely organic tea company. That company continues today through his labor, and that of his wife and children.

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Since then, "Organic" has become a common label, with many organizations regulating its use. While we are JAS Certified Organic, the term means more to us than a simple certification can imply. To us "organic" means more than just avoiding pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers. It means creating a space for farming in which the natural processes of the environment can work to the advantage of agriculture, while agriculture fits into the ecosystem without causing disruption. It means understanding the value of the insects that live on the tea and bite the leaves. It means appreciating the role of the weeds growing along the rows. It means recognizing that everything we grow is in some way connected to everything that lives around it.



Using the waste produced through our farming operations, we keep the soil rich and healthy. We make mulch from the manure of our horses to use as fertilizer. We gather weeds from the tea fields to feed the chickens and ducks, which live part of their lives in the rice fields and fertilize the soil; after the rice is harvested, the dried stalks are bundled and taken up to the tea fields to be placed between the rows where they slowly decompose over the winter in preparation for the spring. We give back to the earth so that we can grow good tea now, but also so that the soil will retain its vitality for generations of tea farmers to come.



LABOR

As it stands, the community of tea farmers around our region of Fujieda in Shizuoka Prefecture, and around all of Japan, is gradually disappearing. The population is aging, retiring, and abandoning their fields, and there are few willing to step forward and take their place. Some big tea companies are buying up processing factories, over time coming to control most of the tea market. Farmers must sell their harvest for whatever price is offered, or else not sell it at all. Larger and larger harvests are needed for them to make a living as the price for their tea declines. In these conditions it is no wonder that new generations are not attracted to the prospect of a career as a tea farmer.

In our work, we have made it a project to acquire some abandoned fields and restore them for organic cultivation. Unfortunately, we are not equipped to handle such a widespread problem all on our own. That is why we are working to teach our organic cultivation

methods to other farmers in the area. We also take on trainees to teach them to become new tea farmers in our community. We hope that in doing so we will create an organic community capable of revitalizing the land as well as the industry. We want all tea farmers to have the tools to grow strong, vibrant tea, and to organize strong, vibrant communities; to represent themselves and be fairly compensated for their hard work.





HARVESTING

Tea is harvested three times a year, in the spring, summer, and autumn. Spring tea is processed to become green tea, such as sencha, kabusecha, and genmaicha. Summer tea is processed to become bancha (autumn green tea) and roasted tea, known as houjicha (also a kind of green tea).



KAZUKI KINEZUKA

PROCESSING

SPRING	SUMMER	AUTUMN
ICHIBANCHA	NIBANCHA	AUTUMN GREEN TEA
STEAM	WITHER	STEAM
▼	▼	▼
ROLL	ROLL	ROLL
▼	▼	▼
DRY	OXIDIZE	DRY
▼	▼	▼
GREEN		GREEN
▼		▼
POWDER	BLEND WITH ROASTED BROWN RICE	ROAST
POWDERED TEA	GENMAICHA	HOJICHA

First processing for green tea is done by Kazuki Kinezuka. Tea that is harvested in the spring and autumn is brought to the factory to be processed the same day. Steaming is the key factor in the initial processing of Japanese green tea. While Chinese green tea is fried in a large wok after harvesting, Japanese tea is steamed to prevent oxidation. The steaming time has a large impact on the flavor, aroma, and appearance of the final product. Shorter steaming times produce asamushicha or chumushicha, while longer times produce fukamushicha.

Tea such as ours, which is grown on mountain sides, is exposed to more environmental stresses than tea grown on flat areas, such as shorter sun exposure and larger temperature fluctuations. The result is that mountain-grown tea has thinner leaves and thus is better suited to shorter steaming times which cause less breaking. The environmental stress also results in tea with a higher quantity and variety of aromatic phytochemicals, and the shorter steaming time preserves this complexity. Tea grown in flat areas has more sun exposure and grows much faster. The thicker leaves produced are better suited for long steaming times, and the resulting brew has a darker, more opaque color and a strong aroma. We make fukamushicha, but most of the green tea that we produce is asa- or chumushicha.



BLACK TEA PROCESSING

First processing for black tea is done by Ayumi Kinezuka. While there are very few insects among the tea plants in the cool spring, the summer heat provides them with a perfect environment. During the summer, a type of small, green insect called unka inhabits the tea plants and bites the leaves. This causes a reaction to take place within the leaves that alters the flavor. The change, though bad for the flavor of green tea, is well-suited to the production of black tea!

After harvesting, the summer leaves are delivered to the black tea factory. First, they are left to wither in a well-ventilated room. After that they are sent down to special rolling machines, imported from Sri Lanka, that bruise and cut the leaves. This allows a more rapid oxidation, the key factor in producing black tea. After being left to oxidize, the leaves are cooked to prevent further oxidation, and then dried.



WITHER



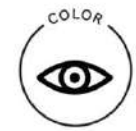
ROLL



OXIDIZE



DRY



TAMIKO KINEZUKA

FINAL PROCESSING

Final processing of all the tea is done by Tamiko Kinezuka. This is mostly done immediately prior to delivery, so as to maintain the best flavor and aroma. This step involves checking the shape and condition of the leaves, and the smell, taste, and color of the brew. During the spring, the tea is examined every day to determine the grade of the leaves, and whether or not to remove the stems.

A final drying is the most important step in this process. Certain teas, such as kabusecha, require a low temperature and slower drying time to maintain the desired flavor. Spring tea also has a distinct flavor for the second month after harvesting, and so a lower temperature is used during this period. The method for drying also changes with the season. For example, during the spring most customers prefer a milder flavor in their tea, while in the winter they prefer a stronger, roasted flavor, and so drying time and temperature must be decided with these factors in mind. After this, the tea is packaged and sent out to consumers.



Premium Midori First Flush 初摘みみどり 100g

The best of the best Japanese sencha green tea. Tea farmers in Japan call the very first buds of spring picked immediately **Hashiri Shincha** (走り新茶). For those who know a little bit of Japanese, **Hashiru** (走る) literally means "to run", but farmers use the form **Hashiri** to mean "the very first harvest"



Spring Midori First Flush 春の香みどり 100g

The 88th night (八十八夜, Hachijuhachiya) — The traditional beginning of the tea harvest season, the 88th night from the beginning of spring, **Risshun** (立春). For tea farmers, this day marks the beginning of the **Shincha** (first flush) picking season. Tea leaves which are picked during two to three weeks following this day are the most highly prized in Japan.



Yabukita Midori First Flush やぶきたみどり 100g

Yabukita is the cultivar of tea plant considered most suitable for Japanese sencha for its flavour and aroma. The first flush of young leaves undergoes the steaming, drying and rolling process, but we do not carry out the finishing process of separating the leaves from stems as we do with the Premium and Spring Midori First Flush.



Setoya Midori 瀬戸谷みどり 100g

Before scientists specialising in tea in the 20th century began identifying types of plants, Japanese tea began with what we call **Zairai** (在来) tea plants. These are plants grown from seed instead of cuttings, each with its own flavor profile, and when harvested as a field create the natural, historical tea drunk for nearly a thousand years. Setoya is the name given to the area in Fujieda City, Shizuoka Prefecture, where many of our fields are located.



Deep Steam Yabukita Midori 山の深蒸し茶 100g

The first step of processing green tea is steaming leaves. Traditionally, Japanese green tea is not steamed too deeply. However, deep steamed tea is receiving more popularity in Japan because of its deep green color. You will enjoy the difference between Yabukita Midori, which is lightly steamed, and Deep Steam Yabukita Midori, which is deeply steamed.



Aged Midori 深みどり 100g

It is said that the founder of the Tokugawa clan of shoguns, Tokugawa Ieyasu, was very fond of taking shincha harvested in May, placing it in a container and aging it. This aged tea is now called **Kuradashi** (literally "removing from the warehouse"), and generally refers to tea that has been aged for at least one year. In Japanese, this tea is called **Fuka-midori** or "Deep Green".



Stem Tea: Kukicha: Midori くい茶みどり 100g

Kukicha Midori is made from the stems of first flush leaves carefully separated during the production process. The final product is a brilliantly bright green colour with a rich aroma.



Powdered Sencha: Edible Tea 食べるお茶 50g

Green tea has so much in it that is healthy, as many of you already know. This "Edible Tea" is made from our Yabukita Midori, processed into a fine powder filled with catechin, polyphenols, and vitamins. We want you eat it all.



Japanese Black Tea: Setoya Momiji 紅茶・瀬戸谷もみじ 100g

Bathed in the bright sun of midsummer, this is pure Japanese black tea made from the new leaves that grow in the early mid June summer time. We have imported processing machines from Sri Lanka, a country famous for black tea, to create our own black tea processing factory, and have spent the last decade creating our own unique processing method.



Genmaicha 玄米茶 200g

Utilizing Japan-grown rice and spring first flush tea leaves harvested in mid-May, this genmaicha (brown rice tea) is a small luxury from Shizuoka. The aroma of the toasted brown rice fills the air as it brews, and the taste of the tea is complex.



Genmaicha with Matcha 抹茶入り玄米茶 100g

Blending spring first flush tea leaves and genmai(roasted rice) coated with JAS certified organic matcha green tea powder, we have produced a deliciously blended Japanese tea. The brilliant green color of the matcha and the toasty aroma of the genmai is a harmony of senses that give the tea a new dimension.



Houjicha ほうじ茶 200g

Roasting Autumn-harvested tea leaves over a strong fire allows us to produce the roasty flavor and aroma of this tea. While autumn-harvested leaves are usually strongly bitter, the roasting process removes the bitterness and leaves a powerful aroma.



Premium Houjicha 上ほうじ茶 100g

Deep roasting premium first flush tea leaves harvested in May at a high temperature, this Premium Houjicha reveals rich flavors. In comparison to our Houjicha, produced with autumn-harvested bancha, the delicacy of the spring leaves translates into a much stronger roasted flavor.