

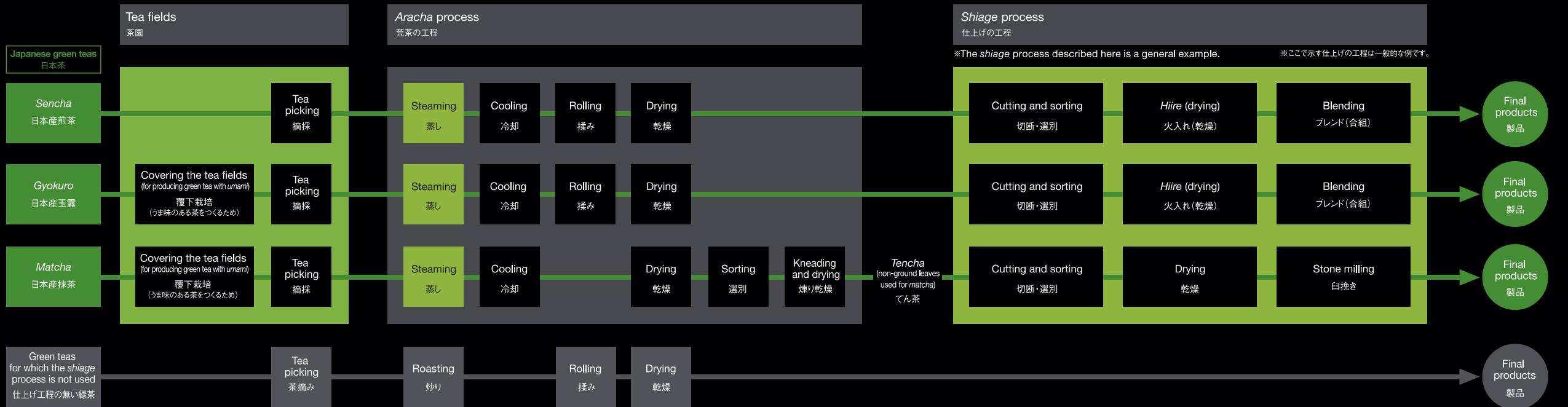
Great care is taken to produce Japanese green tea with aroma and flavor of the highest quality

Our entire manufacturing process is aimed at producing the delicious taste found only in Japanese green tea. There are a variety of operations and processes involved in manufacturing Japanese green tea, from tea field cultivation to tea factory processing, and our highly-skilled team of experts are dedicated to the art of growing and making tea.

高品質の理由は、香り、味にこだわり、手間と時間をかけてつくり上げるから。

すべては、日本茶ならではのおいしさのために。茶園での栽培から製茶工場での加工まで、日本茶ができて上がるまでには数多くの作業や工程があり、そこには茶づくりに携わる人たちの強いこだわりと匠の技があります。

Signature Japanese green teas & related processes 代表的な日本茶の種類と製法



The delicious taste of Japanese green tea begins in the tea fields

Naturally, tea is an agricultural product, and similar to fruits and vegetables, high-quality tea leaves can only be grown and picked after much attention to feeding the soil with fertilizer, practicing irrigation and pruning. Producing high-quality teas with *umami* such as *gyokuro* (refined green tea indigenous to Japan) is labor-intensive, since the tea fields must be completely covered and shaded from the sunlight for a fixed period prior to picking (the *oishita* cultivation method). In particular, cultivating high-quality teas is a precise process, whereby young leaves are picked manually, one by one, according to tradition. Japan has four distinct seasons that affect the period when tea can be harvested, and teas harvested at different times have contrasting flavors. Of the various types of Japanese green tea available, the young tea leaves used for *gyokuro*, *matcha*

and high-grade *sencha* can only be harvested for a short time during spring.

Japan's unique "steaming" method produces the beautiful green tea color

To prevent oxidization, freshly-picked tea leaves are steamed. This unique Japanese process gives Japanese green tea its own special flavor and beautiful color. Following this, the tea leaves are rolled and dried until they are drawn into a long, thin shape. The end product is *aracha* (unprocessed tea). Although at one time all of these processes were performed by hand by skilled experts, nowadays most teas are processed by machine; however, the manual hand-rolling method serves as the foundation for this technology, and even today, the Japanese art and spirit of making tea is passed down by skilled experts involved in the industry.

Producing the subtle aroma and strong flavor of *shiage* requires great skill

An important characteristic of Japanese green tea is the effort of the expert in turning it from *aracha* to *shiagecha* (refined tea). This process is so important that each company within the tea manufacturing industry keeps it a secret. However, it involves sieving and cutting the tea leaves so that they can be sorted with attention to color and shape, after which each manufacturer uses their own method of *hiire* (drying) to further enhance the aroma and flavor of the tea by drying the leaves a second time. Lastly, in the same way that whiskey is blended, a specialist sorts between the subtle differences in aroma and taste to blend the teas for the ultimate flavor. The subtle aroma and strong flavor unique to Japanese green tea is a result of this detailed and careful process.



Oishita cultivation, a labor-intensive shading method, is the key to producing high grade green tea. 高級茶の栽培で、大変な手間をかけて行われる覆下栽培(おいしさをいはい)。



The spirit of green tea making was inherited from traditional masters, and even in today's highly mechanized society, we can still see these expert skills including the hand-rolling method all across Japan. 熟練の技、手揉み技術。機械化された今でも、日本全国にその流派が残っていて、匠の心は継承されている。



Blending is performed by a specialist who sorts between the subtle differences in aroma and taste. 微妙な香りや味を感じる専門家によってブレンド作業が行われる。

日本茶のおいしさは、茶園からはじまっています。

言うまでもなく、茶は農作物です。野菜や果実と同じく、土づくりをはじめ施肥や灌水、剪定などの手間をかけてこそ、優良な生葉を安定して栽培・収穫することができます。日本固有の玉露など高級茶の栽培ともなると、うま味のある茶を作るために、摘採前の一定期間だけ茶園をすっぽりと覆い、日光を遮る(覆下栽培)という大変な手間をかけます。特に高級茶では、摘採の際にも、新芽を一芽一芽、昔ながらの手摘みで丁寧に収穫します。また、四季のある日本では茶の収穫期が限られ、時期によって茶の味わいが変わります。なかでも新芽は春の一時期にしか収穫できないもので、これが玉露や抹茶、高級煎茶となります。

日本独特の「蒸す」という工程が、美しい緑茶の色を映し出します。

収穫した生葉は新鮮なうちに蒸気で蒸し、酸化酵素の働きを止めます。この日本独自の「蒸す」という工程が、日本茶特有の香味や美しい色を生み出すのです。その後、段階的に茶葉を揉み、乾燥しながら、細長く整形。こうしてでき上がったのが「荒茶」です。これらの作業は、かつてはすべて熟練の職人によって手づくりされてきました。ほとんどが機械化された今も、機械の原理は手揉み技術が基本となっており、現在も、製茶に携わる人たちによって日本の技と匠の心は継承されています。

熟練の技で「仕上げ」、繊細な香りと深い味わいを生み出します。

日本茶の大きな特長の一つが、「荒茶」以降の「仕上げ」に匠の技が注ぎ込まれること。そのこだわりは製茶業各社が、その技を企業秘密にするほどです。この工程では、ふるい分けや切断によって茶葉を選別し、美しい色や形にこだわり、もう一度各社独自の「火入れ(乾燥)」をして、茶の持つ香りや味をさらに引き出します。そして、ブレンド。ウイスキーでいえばブレンダーにあたる専門家が、香りや味の微妙な違いを感じ取りながら、理想の香味へと茶を調合します。こうした細やかで丁寧な熟練の技があるからこそ、日本茶には他には真似のできない繊細な香りと深い味わいが生まれるのです。