

昆布汁茶 *Kombu-Jiru Cha* **Kelp-Enriched Tea Broth**



Tea Broth is an essential component of all *ocha-zuké* dishes. Most often the broth is made with just leaf tea, steeped in moderately hot (NEVER boiling) water. However, brewing any leaf tea with *kombu-jiru* (instead of very warm water) can really enhance the outcome.

The **ideal TEMPERATURE** for extracting flavor-enhancing glutamic acid (*umami seibun*) from tea leaves, and from *kombu*, is **65-70 degrees Celsius (about 150-160 Fahrenheit)**.

Once the water's temperature exceeds 75 C (about 170 F), bitter tannins are released and unpleasant murkiness begins to mar the broth. Traditionally, the Japanese have observed bubble action in the pot to measure the temperature of the water. When a few small bubbles begin to appear on the bottom of the pot the liquid is about 65 degrees C (150 F). When bubbles begin to travel up the sides and break on the surface, the liquid is about 70 degrees C (close to 160 F).

When bubbles appear across the surface (no longer just the rim) the liquid is getting close to 80 C (175 F). That is the moment at which you remove the *kombu*.

Use this *kombu* broth to brew tea.





Place tea leaves in a strainer set over a bowl (I like to use a heat-resistant measuring cup so that I know how much broth I have made).

Any kind of leaf tea can be used to make broth. The choice of tea will determine the character and color of the broth:

SEN CHA 煎茶 makes a pale celadon broth with a delicate grassy-herbal aroma.

GENMAI CHA 玄米茶 makes an amber-tinged green broth with a rice-cracker like flavor (pictured here).

HŌJI CHA 焙じ茶 makes an earthy-colored broth with a decidedly roasted flavor.

Pour the very hot kelp broth over the tea and let the broth drip through **WITHOUT PRESSING** on the leaves (applying pressure will release unwanted tannic acid).

Save the spent tea leaves to make **SECOND CHANCE TEA TOPPING** *furikaké* (separate recipe to download from the *ocha-zuké* post).

Any kind of kombu (kelp) can be used but high-glutamate varieties yield more intense broths. Many types of *kombu* are harvested in and around the island of Hokkaido; their varietal names reflect that geography. In English place names begin with a capital letter: Hidaka, Rishiri, Rausu. The exception is *ma kombu*. The *ma* (written 真 in Japanese) means “true, genuine.” Its scientific name *Laminaria japonica* suggests it is Japan’s “true” variety of kelp.

Glutamic acid (glutamate) is present in most foods; it is a major component of protein-rich foods such as meat, fish and eggs. It is also present in significant quantity in mushrooms, beans, nuts, grains, green tea and sea vegetables, especially **KOMBU** (kelp). It is the glutamates in *kombu* that are responsible for its flavor-enhancing power.



Hidaka kombu *Laminaria angustata*

ma kombu *Laminaria japonica*

Rausu kombu *Laminaria diabolica*

Rishiri kombu *Laminaria ochotensis*