

Tea Tidbits by...



GENMAICHA

This month's tea tidbit spotlights the Japanese tea Genmaicha!

The 'G' is pronounced like the 'g' in 'Goat'. Also known as 'roasted rice tea' or 'popcorn tea', it is a blend of green tea with roasted rice. The roasted rice adds a nutty flavour to the liquor and was originally drunk by the poorer populations of Japan. The rice was used as a filler to bring down the price of the tea, making it the 'people's tea'. Sometimes you will see the odd rice has popped, giving it that 'popcorn' look.

As with most Chinese and some Japanese tea, there is always a legend attached. I love this part about tea!

Legend has it that a servant named Genmai was pouring tea for his samurai. Upon pouring his master's tea, a few kernels of roasted rice fell out of his sleeve into the cup of the samurai. Well!! In a fit of rage for ruining his master's tea, the samurai pulled his katana (sword) and beheaded poor Genmai right on the spot!

Sitting back down and drinking his tea, the samurai discovered the tea had a unique flavour, and rather than ruining the flavour, the samurai thought it to be quite superior to the green tea alone. Well, you may have guessed, he felt so bad for what he had done to Genmai, that he then ordered this to be his morning tea thereafter. To honour his late servant, the samurai named the tea after him: Genmai-cha (tea of Genmai).

And there you have it. Genmaicha is actually served quite often in Japanese restaurants around Ottawa, as their "house" tea. Look for it at your next Japanese dining experience!

