

The history of *Fukamushi-cha*

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Summary

Fukamushi-cha was a new style of tea that was developed and successfully spread at a time when the export of Japanese tea at a low, and tea producers needed to switch focus on the domestic market. The first producers of fukamushi-cha set out to create a flavorful, high-priced tea, and they found that the most important process for producing Japanese green tea, *Sencha* is steaming.

Also Fukamushi-cha has greatly contributed to the spread of tea utensil culture. In response the sharp increase of fukamushi-cha popularity in the early 1970s, manufacturers developed new tea processing equipment, too.

The Japanese tea industry faces many of the same problems today as it did then, and studying the background of fukamushi-cha can provide valuable insight into formulating new strategies. It also presents an opportunity to examine the unique Japanese method of green tea production, in which the tealeaves are steamed.

Introduction

Fukamushi-cha or Fukamushi-Sencha (literally "deep-steamed tea") is a type of Japanese tea which is produced by steaming the leaves for a longer time than standard sencha (the most common type of Japanese green tea). It was developed around 1960 in the Makinohara area of Shizuoka, Japan. At the time it was called the "Free Style Tea".

Although fukamushi-cha was developed only a short time ago, it is said that its flavor has changed. Many of the people who were involved in the development fukamushi-cha are advanced in age, and unless their valuable stories and insights are not recorded today, they risk being lost forever. With this in mind, this study will gather data from interviews and documents on fukamushi-cha, compare the differences with today's fukamushi-cha, and further bring to light the history of the tea.

Materials and methods

1. History: One of the reasons this new style of tea successfully spread was that it was developed during a time when the export of Japanese tea had declined to only 10,000 metric tons per year, and tea producers needed to switch focus to the domestic market. When tea export was at its peak, tea from the Makinohara area of Shizuoka Prefecture—one of the top tea producing regions in Japan—received high acclaim for its bitter and astringent taste internationally, but was considered an inferior tea in Japan. In an effort to improve this, local tea producers experimented with several methods including fukamushi-cha. In the late 1960s a "Free Style Tea" category was added to the National Tea Competition, and in the late 1970s, "fukamushi-cha" was the only tea in the category to become an official category on its own in the Competition. Thanks to the efforts of tea dealers and producers, fukamushi-cha spread throughout the Kansai and Tohoku areas, and although there are no official statistics, today it is said to account for as much as 60-70% of the sencha produced in Shizuoka Prefecture.

2. Processing equipment: In the 1950s fuel oil and gas began to replace wood, charcoal, and coal for fuel for steaming machines, improving both quantity and quality of the steam. When fukamushi-cha was first developed, there were no specialized tea processing equipment for the tea, and although efforts were made to improve existing steaming machines to increase the intensity of the steaming, it was not until 1965 that a belt-conveyer steaming machine was developed that could generate intense steam without damaging the leaves.

It was then replanted throughout the prefecture and mass production possible was made possible through the use of tea plucking machines. In 1963 the food machinery manufacturer Terada Seisakusho developed a rear forced air primary rolling dryer (a dryer that blows air from the back side), making it possible to efficiently dry large quantities of steamed leaves. This was a groundbreaking invention in fukamushi-cha production as the intense steaming process tends to cause moisture to remain on the leaves.

In response the sharp increase of fukamushi-cha popularity in the early 1970s, manufacturers developed tea

processing equipment specialized for the long steaming process. (See below for a brief overview of the development of fukamushi-cha tea processing equipment)

In 1974 Terada Seisakusho developed a steamed leaf predryer, which removes excess moisture on steamed leaves in the fukamushi-cha production process. And in 1975 they developed the scattering dryer, a larger dryer capable of more efficient drying than the primary rolling dryer. The 1960s was a time of experimentation for fukamushi-cha processing equipment, and by the 1970s there were a wide range of equipment available. Since tea processing plants today use nearly the same equipment and many functions are handled by computer, quality is nearly identical no matter where it is made. It is only the quality of the leaf used in production that differentiates fukamushi-cha products from each other.




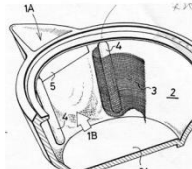






Development of Fukamushi-cha Tea Processing Machinery

		
The rear forced air primary rolling dryer, developed in 1963	The steamed leaf predryer, developed in 1974,	The scattering dryer, developed in 1975,

3. Tea utensils: Teapots with tea strainers specifically for fukamushi-cha have been developed as well. Today roughly 90% of tea utensil wholesalers' teapot sales are fukamushi-cha teapots. Fukamushi-cha has greatly contributed to the spread of tea utensil culture. (See below for a brief overview of the development of the fukamushi-cha teapot.)

Since fukamushi-cha contains very fine tea particles, they tend to clog conventional tea strainers. When the tea first began to be sold, many tea dealers were flooded with complaints from customers. First, the problem was addressed by placing a fine mesh cover in the strainer. Then a specialized fukamushi-cha wire tea strainer was created. Many innovations were developed in order to attach a wire mesh to a ceramic pot.

The development of the fukamushi-cha teapot

 	 	 	 	 
Miki-Chakoshi, patented 1974, Kaneko-en	Toku-mushi Kyusu, patented 1978, Yamaichikato	A) Kago-ami B) Obi-ami, the early 1980s	C) Soko-ami, the early 1980s D) Kiyocha, around 1983-	E) "Sawayaka" stainless steel around 1982- F) "Sasame" Tokoname ware, around 1983-

Discussion

Japanese green tea is produced by steaming. Fresh tealeaves are steamed to neutralize the enzymes that cause oxidization, after which they are kneaded and dried. Fukamushi-cha is steamed a little longer than it is necessary to neutralize the enzymes in order bring out the desired flavors. The first producers of fukamushi-cha did not set out to create "deep-steamed tea". Through their efforts to create a flavorful, high-priced tea, they found that long steaming resulted in the desired effect. One reason why the tea has become popular is because it has a good flavor. However, much of the tea known as fukamushi-cha today is not actually "deep-steamed".

The long steaming process gives it a milder aroma but richer flavor with less bitterness and astringency. It also gives the leaves a yellow tinge and makes them more fragile, causing them to break down into a

mixture of dust and small pieces. Nowadays, due to demand from tea dealers for fukamushi-cha to have a vivid green color when it is brewed, some producers steam it only lightly but in such a way that it keeps the same distinctive color and crumbly texture of traditional fukamushi-cha. Therefore, classification of the tea today is not based on the length and intensity of the steaming process.

The tea variety "Yabukita" began to spread across Japan around the same time fukamushi-cha was developed. Today Japan grows many different tea varieties and possesses sophisticated tea production techniques passed down from previous generations as well as a wide variety of advanced tea processing machinery. The groundwork and potential for creating high-quality Japanese tea is there. When thinking about the potential possibilities for Japanese tea, there are many clues to be found in studying the development of fukamushi-cha.

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