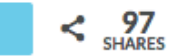


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Sweet or Savory, This Food Trend Gets the Green Light



Cheryl Fenton | November 13, 2017



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No one can ignore dishes and drinks boasting the signature bright green tint of matcha, or Japanese green tea powder. Show guests an emerald muffin or a seafoam cocktail, and they're immediately captivated. Consider it one of the top food trends for 2017.



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“It’s such a shockingly bright green pallor. It can’t help but strike people who see it,” says Jordan G. Hardin, editor at WorldofTea.org and beverage director for [Alfred Tea Room](#) in Los Angeles, where they serve an Insta-worthy matcha-white chocolate dipped croissant. “The color is unbeatable.”



Matcha Pancakes from Tico

Matcha’s going mainstream, and everyone’s going green. Pinterest reports 4.3 million matcha recipes saved to its user boards, and matcha has been hashtagged over 2.7 million times on Instagram. And most of these mentions are way beyond the everyday latte.

Ever since Häagen-Dazs' 1996 introduction of matcha ice cream, restaurateurs have been bringing the ingredient to the table in creative ways: seasoning veggies, melting with butter atop lobster, adding to batter, sprinkling on eggs.

Matcha's good looks aren't the only things making other menu trends green with envy. Centuries of health benefits and intense umami are also superstars.

Zen monk Eisai is credited with introducing matcha to Japan in the 12th century to help with meditation practices. The tea is rich in L-Theanine amino acid, which promotes a calm energy, unlike other caffeinated peak-and-crash vibes. Matcha also has 10 times more antioxidants than regularly steeped green tea, including catechins known to lower cancer risks and blood pressure.

“ The green tea powder is also a matcha made in heaven for cocktails.

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Its unique cultivation is what takes matcha to the next level of green tea goodness. Translating to “powdered tea,” matcha is the pulverized dust of whole leaves. Plants are grown in chlorophyll- and antioxidant-boosting shade for three weeks. The leaves are handpicked, gently steamed and dried flat, becoming *tencha*. Veins and stems are removed, and the *tencha* is stone-ground into one of the world's finest powders (similar to talc, with about 10 microns per particle). Because you're drinking or eating all of the leaf, you reap all of its benefits.

The flavors of matcha vary, imparting dominant grassy notes with secondary sea and vegetal sweetness. “Some can be brothy and intensely umami, reminiscent of buttered vegetables, while others can be bright, sharp and sweet,” says Hardin.

Matcha’s culinary explosion is mostly in the sweets category – a potential outcome of coffee shops ties. There are lemon matcha tarts at Bibble & Sip in NYC and matcha-infused cereal bowls at Yoko Matcha’s Miami food truck. But don’t discount its effectiveness in savory hot dishes, like soups and ramen. It’s a nice punch for dishes that crave earthiness and color, such as karaage chicken with matcha salt at San Francisco’s Nomica.



Matcha Box 20 from Explorateur

“I love working with Matcha because it’s such a versatile ingredient,” says Leo Asaro, executive chef at [Tico](#) in Boston. “It is made from green tea leaves and is an antioxidant, so it works well for brunch items. Especially if you’re looking to cleanse from a night of a couple cocktails. I also love the color.”

Tico serves up matcha pancakes on their weekend brunch menu. “It makes the pancakes a lot more interesting than just regular pancakes,” Asaro says.

The green tea powder is also a matcha made in heaven for cocktails, such as the Matcha Box 20 at [Explorateur](#) in Boston and the Matcha Gimlet at Manhattan’s [Davio’s Northern Italian Steakhouse](#).

With all this menu domination, it’s clear that matcha is one gastro-craze getting the green light.



Written by Cheryl Fenton | November 13, 2017

Cheryl Fenton knows her five food groups – fruits and veggies, meats and poultry, cheese, bacon, and fries. She loves sarcasm over very dirty martinis and steak dinners (medium rare, if you please), and she’s never met a poutine she doesn’t like. Because life is all about balance, she makes time for a healthy lifestyle with hikes accompanied by her two rescue dogs and bike rides along the Mystic (dogs not included).