

International Tea Day: How Japanese trend of using matcha is catching on back home



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f we had to pick two words to describe the crazy matcha creations that are a big hit in Japan, it would be matcha madness. And even that would not be enough to describe what goes on behind the scenes while putting together innovative creations and food mashups. Head to Japan, and you can enjoy a wide variety of matcha flavoured food. The list includes matcha flavoured Kit Kat aka the Matcha-Green Tea, Matcha Oreo cookies, matcha flavoured Kahlúa and matcha green tea potato chips to name a few. While we are still testing waters with matcha back home, we have definitely moved on from simply enjoying it as a variant green tea. Here's more on the trend.

How matcha flavoured my cocktail

The Japanese powdered green tea lends itself to being used to create desserts and cocktails because of its natural sweetness. Something Nakul Chandra brandhead The Fatty Bao, agrees with, adding, “Matcha is the current darling of the tea world and as trends go, it’s being used in all shapes and forms, both in the kitchen, as well as bars. The fact that green tea in general is currently ‘the’ super food helps a lot winning over customers. Also, matcha is high in antioxidants, but what makes it so versatile is that it’s available in powder form and it’s naturally sweet and grassy notes work well with almost all kinds of desserts and drinks. At TFB, we make the Ta Matcha on our TFB Root to fruit menu, which is a variation of a classic Collins drinks. The basic components of this are alcohol, sweet and sour and carbonated water. We have swapped the sugar/ sweet component with a matcha and sugar syrup, which is made in-house. Adding basil brings a freshness to the drink along with accentuating the fragrance of the matcha in it.” A point Dimi Lezinska, director of beverages, The Good Wife and KOKO, agrees with as they have also used matcha in Konomi, a cocktail prepared using Absolut Mandarin sweetened with lychee and matcha flavours. He adds, “We have made the matcha tea into a syrup, which blends well with the other components of the cocktail. The combination of citrus flavours and lychee accentuate and bring out the taste of the matcha tea.”

Taste bhi, health bhi

So, apart from its natural sweetness, what seems to work in favour of matcha is also its rising popularity as a superfood. French Chef, Gregory Bazire, Brooke Bond Taj Mahal Tea House, explains the same. He says “People these days are

becoming more health conscious with their food choices and matcha green tea — like a lot of other superfoods, has become very popular over the last two years. As chefs, we get excited by aroma, colours and textures, therefore, matcha powder gives us a chance to use it in different ways in the kitchen and bar where its chlorophyll, little astringent taste, followed by a lingering sweetness gives a new personality to dishes and drinks.

At Brooke Bond Taj Mahal Tea House, we have integrated this flavour in a pastry called the Matcha Sweet Dhokla Cake and on the beverages front, one can experience pure indulgence in the Matcha Dessert Chai —a chai that has all the virtue of the matcha green tea to the notes of ginger and cardamom, finished with matcha cream on top.” Chef Phuong Tran, Executive chef at Ellipsis, says, “Matcha has been utilised by the Japanese in savoury and patisserie for many years. At Ellipsis Bakery, we incorporate it into the creme brûlée. The use of matcha across all food applications is well-documented in Japan for many years and is common practice. We’ve just taken on that idea and expanded to our dessert products. We’ve done Matcha ranging from a Matcha Pound Cake to a Matcha Creme Anglaise to Match Doughnuts and Eclairs. The idea of adding milk to matcha certainly is novel— in fact, it just makes sense to translate that idea to sweets. Very high in antioxidant properties, it lends a healthy pleasure to a rather sinful dessert.” And while it’s yet to shine as a primary ingredient, it has successfully earned its space as a tasty addition to any dish.

Chef Sahil Singh, executive chef, Modern Asian Cuisine (Pa Pa Ya), Massive Restaurants Private Limited, sums it up with these words. He says, “It’s a great ingredient for dessert and lends a rich, inimitable taste when used to flavour mild sauces, as well. Matcha is used as an element or as a part of a dish, rather than a

core ingredient, as it has a distinct flavour.” So, while our palate is still getting used to matcha flavoured foods. We have definitely moved on from simply consuming it like any other green tea. Chefs too have started using it to create some create some quirky desserts and interesting concoctions.