

## ***Kamairicha* (Tea)**

A specialty of the Takachiho area, *kamairicha* is a tea almost exclusively made in the surrounding Nishiusuki District of Miyazaki Prefecture. Statistically, this variety of tea makes up about one percent of all green tea made in Japan. It is lighter in color than other green teas and served at a slightly warmer temperature. *Kamairicha* has a flavor comparable to some Chinese teas and is appreciated for its rich fragrance.

Most Japanese teas use a steaming process, but *kamairicha* is made through a “pan-roasted” technique that carefully heats, turns, and massages fresh leaves, giving the tea a signature curly-edged look. The tea is not allowed to oxidize through exposure to air, making it distinct from some popular Chinese teas like oolong.

The intricacy of the creation process leads to production of smaller batches, making *kamairicha* a delicacy. Even so, in the Takachiho area this tea has been a daily staple for centuries. Today there are thirty-three tea farms in the area, all family-owned and run, that continue to carefully cultivate and protect their tea heritage. One of these farms, Kai Seicha-en (Kai Family Tea Farm), was recognized with a Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Award in 2015 for the superior fragrance of their tea.