

Tea House Highlights

Most traditional tea houses are enclosed and sparsely decorated, however, at Shointei, the main area is bright and airy, and is open to the garden outside. Servers dressed in kimono serve *sencha* tea grown locally in Shizuoka Prefecture, and powdered matcha tea from Uji, just south of Kyoto.

The storied history of the tea ceremony unfurls in a picturesque setting at Shointei. Tea was originally brought to Japan by Buddhist monks for use in religious ceremonies, and its first recorded mention is in the *Nihon Koki*, an official history of Japan commissioned by Emperor Saga (786–842 CE) and completed in 840 CE. The modern Japanese tea ceremony as it is known today was developed in the Muromachi period (1336–1573) and was heavily influenced by Zen Buddhism.

Traditional tea ceremonies take place with participants seated on the floor on tatami mats. Both guests and host kneel with their legs folded directly underneath them in a position known as *seiza*. This position can initially be uncomfortable, therefore Shointei provides a *ryurei*-style room with tables and chairs as an option to sitting in the *seiza* style.