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Green tea — Vocabulary

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National foreword

This British Standard is the UK implementation of ISO 18449:2025. It supersedes BS ISO 18449:2021, which is withdrawn.

The UK participation in its preparation was entrusted to Technical Committee AW/8, Tea.

A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its committee manager.

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ISO 18449

Green tea — Vocabulary

Thé vert — Vocabulaire

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Foreword

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The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 34, *Food products*, Subcommittee SC 8, *Tea*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 18449:2021), which has been technically revised.

The main changes are as follows:

— the Introduction has been revised;

— terms 3.1.1.5 and 3.1.1.6 have been added;

— Annexes A to G have been added to provide illustrated examples.

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Introduction

Tea is grown and manufactured in numerous countries around the world and is blended or drunk in many more. Green tea is produced using fresh tea leaves, which can be from more than one garden or region. There are many factors that impact the flavour of green tea, including the water used for brewing, the preparation method of the liquor and individual tastes.

The two International Standards for black tea, which provide a vocabulary and requirements, ISO 6078[1] and ISO 3720[2], respectively, were first published in the 1980s and are still used today, with the latter having been revised several times. They have played an important role in improving the global black tea trade.

Currently, an increasing number of consumers enjoy drinking green tea not only for its impact on health, but also for its special appearance and flavour. ISO 11287[3] provides the requirements for green tea, and this document provides the accompanying vocabulary. It has been developed primarily for use by the tea trade, to enable clear and open communication, and also to ensure that consumers are not misled.

The quality of green tea is usually assessed by professional tea tasters, whose judgement is based on their experience of tea evaluation, the conditions of the producing area and the preferences of the consuming country. Five factors are considered when evaluating the quality of green tea: the appearance of the dry tea leaf (such as shape, colour, cleanliness and evenness), the appearance and the odour of the infused leaf, and the colour and the taste of the tea liquor. Usually, a chemical analysis of tea is undertaken only when it is specifically requested or abnormal characteristics are exhibited.

This document comprises a selection of terms used in the tea trade all over the world, covering not only the processing of green tea but also the essential aspects of assessing green tea for commerce. Corresponding images for these terms are provided in Annexes A to E. Flavour wheels of taste and aroma are presented in Annexes F and G, respectively, to facilitate the intuitive understanding and application of the terms.

Many of the terms in current use for green tea are synonymous or very similar in meaning, and considerable divergences in usage exist.

Accordingly, this document aims to establish recognized definitions for the terms, and thus eliminate differences in usage, and also to encourage a reduction in the number of terms used overall.

The terms are classified as follows:

— classification of green tea (see 3.1);

— dry leaf (see 3.2):

  — appearance (see 3.2.1);

  — colour (see 3.2.2);

— quality of liquor (see 3.3):

  — taste (see 3.3.1);

  — colour of liquor (see 3.3.2);

— infused leaf (see 3.4):

  — appearance (see 3.4.1);

  — aroma (see 3.4.2).

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Green tea — Vocabulary

1 Scope

This document defines terms for classifying and assessing green tea for commerce.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org/

3.1 Classification of green tea

3.1.1
green tea
tea derived solely and exclusively, and produced, from the leaves, buds and tender stems of the species *Camellia sinensis* (Linnaeus) O. Kuntze, known to be suitable for making tea for consumption as a beverage

Note 1 to entry: The processing of green tea consists of two parts: first, manufacturing and then refining. In the first, tea is manufactured through withering, fixation, shaping (rolling or others) and drying. In the refining process, the products are made by mixing, sifting, stalk extraction and fanning, etc.

3.1.1.1
pan-fired green tea
green tea (3.1.1) whose drying process after rolling is through a hot machine to achieve further shaping and final dryness

3.1.1.1.1
ball-shaped pan-fired green tea
green tea (3.1.1) manufactured with a special process for rolling up the leaf tightly and making green tea ball-shaped

Note 1 to entry: See Figure A.1.

3.1.1.1.2
long-shaped pan-fired green tea
long-shaped fired *green tea* (3.1.1) with a long strip appearance manufactured with a special process of twisting

Note 1 to entry: See Figure A.2.

3.1.1.1.3
flat-shaped pan-fired green tea
pan-fried *green tea* (3.1.1) manufactured with a special process for flattening leaf and making green tea flat

Note 1 to entry: See Figure A.3.

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3.1.1.2
roasted green tea
green tea (3.1.1) whose final drying is by hot air

EXAMPLE Hojicha is widely known as roasted green tea.

Note 1 to entry: See Figure A.4.

3.1.1.3
sun-dried green tea
green tea (3.1.1) dried in moderate sunlight

Note 1 to entry: See Figure A.5.

3.1.1.4
steamed green tea
green tea (3.1.1) whose enzymes are inactivated and fixed by steaming

Note 1 to entry: See Figure A.6.

3.1.1.5
broken green tea
graded green tea
green tea (3.1.1) that is crushed during processing

Note 1 to entry: See Figure A.7.

3.1.1.6
matcha tea
steamed green tea (3.1.1.4) that is finely grinded and whose leaves are grown under the shade

Note 1 to entry: See Figure A.8.

3.2 Dry leaf

3.2.1 Appearance

3.2.1.1
bent
<dry leaf> not *straight* (3.2.1.33), slightly curved

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.1.

3.2.1.2
bird tongue-like
small (3.2.1.29) and flat buds similar to the tongue of a tit

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.2.

3.2.1.3
blister
<dry leaf> swelling on the leaf surface caused by too rapid removal of moisture during manufacturing

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.3.

3.2.1.4
blunt
<dry leaf> with no sharp tip

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.4.

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3.2.1.5
bold
large and *open* (3.2.1.22)

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.5.

3.2.1.6
clean and neat
evenly sorted without any stalk, fibre or extraneous matter

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.6.

3.2.1.7
coarse
<dry leaf> containing an abnormal amount of old and rough leaves

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.7.

3.2.1.8
consistent
<dry leaf> consisting of leaf with the same grade and comprising pieces of approximately equal size

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.8.

3.2.1.9
curly
<dry leaf> rolled with a curled appearance

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.9.

3.2.1.10
dusty
containing an abnormal amount of *small* (3.2.1.29) tea particles and/or dust

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.10.

3.2.1.11
fannings
predominantly broken smaller leaf particles

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.11.

3.2.1.12
fibrous
containing a noticeable amount of shredded stalks and fibres

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.12.

3.2.1.13
flaky
<dry leaf> hard and flat due to rolling with withered, hard or *coarse* (3.2.1.17) leaf

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.13.

3.2.1.14
flat
<dry leaf> spreading out on a single plane

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.14.

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3.2.1.15
grape-nutty
rolled into balls or granules of equal size during the manufacturing process

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.15.

3.2.1.16
hairy
<dry leaf> containing a noticeable amount of thin hair

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.16.

3.2.1.17
inconsistent
<dry leaf> improperly sorted with different sized leaves

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.17.

3.2.1.18
loose
not tightly curled or rolled

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.18.

3.2.1.19
lump
loose (3.2.1.18) granular tea with dull yellow colour

Note 1 to entry: It is usually manufactured using coarse leaves.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure B.19.

3.2.1.20
narrow
small (3.2.1.29) size in width

Note 1 to entry: Applicable principally to flat-shaped tea.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure B.20.

3.2.1.21
needle
long and thin similar to the leaf of an evergreen pine tree

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.21.

3.2.1.22
open
<dry leaf> not curled but unfolded

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.22.

3.2.1.23
orchid-like
flowerlike shape with one bud and two leaves, pliable nature

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.23.

3.2.1.24
refined
uniform in colour, size, shape and texture

Note 1 to entry: This is not limited to quality attributes.

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Note 2 to entry: See Figure B.24.

3.2.1.25
rough
with irregular and *coarse* (3.2.1.7) appearance

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.25.

3.2.1.26
rounded piece
abnormal amount of *small* (3.2.1.29) rolled ball-shaped leaves similar to rope

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.26.

3.2.1.27
shotty
very tightly rolled similar to gunpowder

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.27.

3.2.1.28
short and broken
containing a noticeable amount of *small* (3.2.1.29) pieces and short strips

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.28.

3.2.1.29
small
less than normal of the grade

3.2.1.30
smooth
flat, even and bright

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.29.

3.2.1.31
spiral
curved and twisted

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.30.

3.2.1.32
stalky
containing an abnormal amount of stalks

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.31.

3.2.1.33
straight
even and not *bent* (3.2.1.1)

Note 1 to entry: Opposite to bent.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure B.32.

3.2.1.34
sturdy
robust, tender and heavy

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.33.

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3.2.1.35
swallow's tail
similar to the tail of a swallow with an angle between bud and leaf

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.34.

3.2.1.36
tadpole shape
round with a tail at one end

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.35.

3.2.1.37
tight
rolled firmly during manufacturing

Note 1 to entry: Opposite to *loose* (3.2.1.18).

Note 2 to entry: See Figure B.36.

3.2.1.38
wiry
rolled tightly with a noticeable amount of *tips* (3.2.1.39)

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.37.

3.2.1.39
tips
tight (3.2.1.37) leaf with buds or shoots

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.38.

3.2.1.40
tippy
containing noticeably high levels of buds

Note 1 to entry: See Figure B.39.

3.2.2 Colour

3.2.2.1
brown
<dry leaf> undesirable umber colour, due to bad manufacturing

Note 1 to entry: It is also applicable to the colour of infused leaf.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure C.1.

3.2.2.2
black
blackish
dark
undesirable colour due to aeration not being stopped in-process

Note 1 to entry: See Figure C.2.

3.2.2.3
bright
glossy
<dry leaf> shiny, light reflecting surface

Note 1 to entry: One of the desirable characteristics of tea. Opposite to *dull* (3.2.2.5).

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Note 2 to entry: See Figure C.3.

3.2.2.4
deep green
dark and vivid green colour

Note 1 to entry: It is also applicable to the colour of infused leaf.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure C.4.

3.2.2.5
dull
<dry leaf> dim in colour

Note 1 to entry: Opposite to *bright* (3.2.2.3).

Note 2 to entry: See Figure C.5.

3.2.2.6
dull green
<dry leaf> undesirable green colour without glossiness, caused by improper fixation or made from dewy leaves

Note 1 to entry: It is also applicable to the colour of infused leaf.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure C.6.

3.2.2.7
jade green
desirable colour of leaf that is *deep green* (3.2.2.4) and fresh

Note 1 to entry: See Figure C.7.

3.2.2.8
light green
<dry leaf> desirable green colour

Note 1 to entry: It is usually found in tea made from bud or tender leaves.

Note 2 to entry: It is also applicable to the colour of infused leaf.

Note 3 to entry: See Figure C.8.

3.2.2.9
not uniform
<mixed leaves> having different colours

Note 1 to entry: See Figure C.9.

3.2.2.10
pale
lacks intensity of colour

3.2.2.11
red
reddish
undesirable colour of leaf, indicative of poor fixation

3.2.2.12
silvery
bright (3.2.2.3) white/chalky colour

Note 1 to entry: See Figure C.10.

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3.2.2.13
taupe
pale (3.2.2.10) and brownish-grey colour, lacking glossiness

Note 1 to entry: See Figure C.11.

3.2.2.14
uniform
having the same colour throughout

Note 1 to entry: See Figure C.12.

3.2.2.15
yellowish
of yellow colour

Note 1 to entry: It is also applicable to the colour of infused leaf.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure C.13.

3.2.2.16
yellowish green
<dry leaf> mixed green colour with a little yellow

Note 1 to entry: It can be found in many *green teas* (3.1.1).

Note 2 to entry: It is also applicable to the colour of infused leaf.

Note 3 to entry: See Figure C.14.

3.3 Quality of liquor

3.3.1 Taste

3.3.1.1
astringent
drying, pungent sensation

3.3.1.2
bakey
<liquor> with noticeable characteristic due to high temperature during drying

3.3.1.3
bitter
<liquor> with unpleasant taste with a harsh and pungent after taste

3.3.1.4
body
<liquor> fullness and strength

Note 1 to entry: The opposite of *thin* (3.3.1.24).

3.3.1.5
brisk
<liquor> with live and vigorous taste

Note 1 to entry: The opposite to flat or soft.

3.3.1.6
burnt
<liquor> with unpleasant taste due to abnormally high temperatures during manufacturing

Note 1 to entry: A degree worse than *bakey* (3.3.1.2).

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3.3.1.7
character
<liquor> desirable quality easily recognizable from its origin or particular district

3.3.1.8
clean
pure
<liquor> with no foreign flavour

3.3.1.9
coarse
rough
<liquor> with undesirable harshness due to the presence of mature leaves, stalks or fibres in dry leaf

3.3.1.10
contaminated
<liquor> with an abnormal flavour caused by a foreign odorous substance such as a spice, fruit, oil, herb, etc.

3.3.1.11
flavoury
with intense taste and aroma, usually associated with tea grown in high mountain regions

3.3.1.12
fully fired
<liquor> slightly over-fired during manufacturing

Note 1 to entry: A degree weaker than *bakey* (3.3.1.2).

3.3.1.13
grassy
tasting like fresh leaves

3.3.1.14
mellow
<liquor> with a pure, rich taste

3.3.1.15
musty
<liquor> contaminated by mould or due to improper storage

3.3.1.16
plain
neutral
neither rich nor with any distinctive unpleasant or negative characteristics

3.3.1.17
pungent
<liquor> with a marked briskness or astringency without bitterness

3.3.1.18
round
smooth, full and *mellow* (3.3.1.14)

3.3.1.19
smoky
<liquor> with over-burned odour or taste, usually caused by a defect in drying

3.3.1.20
stale
<liquor> losing freshness due to long storage or storage under bad conditions

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3.3.1.21
strong
<liquor> with powerful tea characteristics

Note 1 to entry: The liquor is not necessarily *thick* (3.3.1.23).

3.3.1.22
sweet after taste
desirable taste of liquor with a sweet taste after drinking

3.3.1.23
thick
<liquor> with abundant substance

Note 1 to entry: The liquor is not necessarily *strong* (3.3.1.21).

3.3.1.24
thin
weak
<liquor> undesirable taste, lacking in *thickness* (3.3.1.23) and strength

3.3.1.25
umami
desirable rich taste of green tea liquor due to high levels of amino acids

3.3.1.26
washy
thin, watery and less characteristic

3.3.1.27
woody
containing an abnormal amount of stalks in tea

3.3.2 Colour of liquor

3.3.2.1
apricot green
desirable *clear* (3.3.2.4) and *bright* (3.3.2.2)*green* (3.3.2.7) with yellowish colour

Note 1 to entry: See Figure D.1.

3.3.2.2
bright
<liquor> clean and vivid in colour

Note 1 to entry: It is a desirable characteristic, usually associated with careful manufacture.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure D.2.

3.3.2.3
brown
<liquor> *dull* (3.3.2.6) colour due to incorrect fixation during manufacturing

Note 1 to entry: See Figure D.3.

3.3.2.4
clear
<liquor> pure and clean colour, without any *precipitates* (3.3.2.9)

Note 1 to entry: See Figure D.4.

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3.3.2.5
dark green
colour like emerald

Note 1 to entry: The degree of colour is deeper than *green* (3.3.2.7).

Note 2 to entry: See Figure D.5.

3.3.2.6
dull
<liquor> undesirable colour that is neither clean nor lively

Note 1 to entry: The opposite of *bright* (3.3.2.2).

Note 2 to entry: See Figure D.6.

3.3.2.7
green
most popular natural colour of leaf found in nature

Note 1 to entry: See Figure D.7.

3.3.2.8
muddy
dull (3.3.2.6) with abundant fine particles suspended

Note 1 to entry: See Figure D.8.

3.3.2.9
precipitate
matter that settles to the bottom of liquor

Note 1 to entry: It is usually found in a liquor containing a large amount of tea dust.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure D.9.

3.3.2.10
yellowish green
<liquor> colour that is more yellowy than normal *green* (3.3.2.7)

Note 1 to entry: See Figure D.10.

3.4 Infused leaf

3.4.1 Appearance

3.4.1.1
bright
<infused leaf> desirable and live colour of infused leaf

Note 1 to entry: See Figure E.1.

3.4.1.2
broken
<infused leaf> crushed and not complete

Note 1 to entry: See Figure E.2.

3.4.1.3
coarse
<infused leaf> *hard* (3.4.1.10) and mature

Note 1 to entry: It is usually found in tea made from matured leaves with noticeable stalks or fibres.

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Note 2 to entry: See Figure E.3.

3.4.1.4
consistent
<infused leaf> regular in physical appearance

Note 1 to entry: One of the desirable characteristics in infused leaves.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure E.4.

3.4.1.5
dark
<infused leaf> brown colour and *dull* (3.4.1.6)

Note 1 to entry: See Figure E.5.

3.4.1.6
dull
<infused leaf> with low reflection of light from the infused leaf

Note 1 to entry: The opposite to *bright* (3.4.1.1).

Note 2 to entry: See Figure E.6.

3.4.1.7
fat
<infused leaf> tender, thick and rich in substance

Note 1 to entry: See Figure E.7.

3.4.1.8
fine
<infused leaf> of high quality consisting of lots of buds and young leaves

Note 1 to entry: See Figure E.8.

3.4.1.9
fresh green
<infused leaf> green, clear, *bright* (3.4.1.1) and alive

Note 1 to entry: See Figure E.9.

3.4.1.10
hard
<infused leaf> firm to the touch

Note 1 to entry: It is usually found in *coarse* (3.4.1.3) leaf.

Note 2 to entry: See Figure E.10.

3.4.1.11
inconsistent
<infused leaf> mixed in different tendernesses, sizes, thicknesses, shapes and colours

Note 1 to entry: The opposite to *consistent* (3.4.1.4).

Note 2 to entry: See Figure E.11.

3.4.1.12
open
<infused leaf> unfolded

Note 1 to entry: See Figure E.12.

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3.4.1.13
red stalk and leaf
<infused leaf> red colour and red stalk caused by improper fixation during manufacturing

Note 1 to entry: See Figure E.13.

3.4.1.14
scorch spot
<infused leaf> black or yellow spot that is burnt on the surface

Note 1 to entry: See Figure E.14.

3.4.1.15
soft
<infused leaf> comfortable and not firm to touch

Note 1 to entry: The opposite to *hard* (3.4.1.10).

Note 2 to entry: See Figure E.15.

3.4.1.16
thin
<infused leaf> neither thick nor rich in substance

Note 1 to entry: The opposite to *fat* (3.4.1.7).

Note 2 to entry: See Figure E.16.

3.4.2 Aroma

3.4.2.1
burnt
<infused leaf> undesirable characteristic due to an abnormally high temperature during firing

3.4.2.2
caramel
special aroma like *burnt* (3.4.2.1) sugar

3.4.2.3
chestnut flavour
flavour like roasted chestnuts

3.4.2.4
clean
<infused leaf> free from impurities

3.4.2.5
fragrance
pleasant and flowery flavour

Note 1 to entry: It is a desirable characteristic.

3.4.2.6
fresh
desirable characteristic aroma that is *clean* (3.4.2.4) and refreshing

3.4.2.7
fired aroma
aroma of fired tea due to the stage of drying

3.4.2.8
fruity
with a fruit flavour

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