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Should You Be Using This Weird  
Ingredient for Better Skin?

BY ANNE BAUSO, ASSISTANT DIGITAL EDITOR, DECEMBER 21, 2015, 9:30:00 AM



With promises to calm redness and ward off free radicals, the latest miracle skin-care ingredient is actually centuries old. Finely milled green-tea leaves, or matcha—historically the key player in traditional Japanese tea ceremonies—is experiencing a modern revival in skin care.

Green tea has long been touted as a potent yet gentle antioxidant that's suitable for all skin types (making it a great alternative to potentially sensitive-skin-irritating vitamin C). Often listed in skin products' ingredient as *camellia sinensis* leaf extract, green tea is also thought to have effective anti-inflammatory

properties. Matcha boasts these benefits and then some (think of the vitamin-packed powerhouse as a highly concentrated, souped-up version of green tea).

"Matcha is pulverized green tea, made from the entire leaf," says dermatologist Judith Hellman. "It contains catechins, a type of polyphenol, making it into a powerful antioxidant. The catechins help trap and inactivate free radicals in the skin, thus thwarting many of the signs of aging. The powder form is much more concentrated than the liquid form we drink." As for those skin-soothing claims? "Green tea is an amazing anti-inflammatory agent, so it helps treat rosacea and even acne," Hellman says. "Applying matcha directly to the skin, like in the form of a mask, is really effective. And it's also really easy to make a matcha mask." (More on that below.)

Want to try matcha for yourself? I highly recommend **Plantfolk Apothecary's Matcha Antioxidant Face Mask**, a dry powder that combines the tea with white clay and soothing chamomile oil (just add a few drops of water). If a clay mask sounds too drying for your December skin, follow Hellman's lead and whip one up yourself. I tried this genius version, courtesy of Sarah Lee, cofounder of Glow Recipe, an online shop that sells all-natural Korean skin-care products. All you need is matcha (I love the organic one from Vitacost), honey, yogurt, and one egg yolk. Combine the four ingredients in a bowl and gently brush the mixture over your face (a million bonus points for how incredibly cooling and refreshing the formula feels). Leave it on for up to 40 minutes (don't forget to snap a selfie!), then feel awesome about your better-protected, calmer, all-around happier skin.