



## Health benefits, convenient format drive sales of Matcha green tea



**Matcha tea, known for its vibrant green hue, is hitting its stride in the U.S. where household penetration is currently low but sales are climbing double-digit year-over-year – representing significant consumer interest and growth potential, according to recent research.**

U.S. sales of Matcha green tea powder grew more than 50% in 2014 and sales of ready-to-drink products more than doubled, according to recent research from the Sage Group. It predicts the jump is not a flash in the pan, but rather sales will continue to grow 25% annually for the next three years.

Yet, the ingredient is far from over-saturated, according to *Packaged Facts*. It notes: "The current demand for Matcha is heaviest on the coasts, and in major metro areas," with 30% of households in New York and 29% of households in California buying green tea in bag or loose form, compared to 21% of households nationwide.

It adds: "Nutritional and artisanal food trends mean that Matcha mania is destined for coast-to-coast appeal."

This suggests the trend is in early days and has significant growth potential for companies interested in jumping aboard, suggests Matcha green tea supplier Aiya America, Inc.

Based on this potential and trends observed at trade shows, Aiya America Sales Representative James Oliveira says more players and larger companies will begin to offer products that contain Matcha in unique formats, such as ice cream, baked goods, drinks and other applications. This echoes a prediction made earlier this year by the Sterling-Rice Group.

Interest in Matcha is fueled in part by consumer desire for healthier drinks, Oliveira explained. He noted that because Matcha is ground green tea leaves the entire amount of antioxidants in the leaves are consumed whereas when tea is steeped some of the antioxidants remain in the tea bag or are lost in processing.

Companies also are drawn to Matcha because it is an easy ingredient with which to work, Oliveira said. He compared the dry powder to sugar or flour – which allows it to be incorporated in baked goods as well as with wet ingredients to create drinks or other foods.

Depending on the application, manufacturers will want to select different grades of Matcha. The highest quality Matcha, sometimes known as ceremonial Matcha, is best suited for drinks. Ingredient grade Matcha is better used in non-beverage formulations, he said.

### Aiya's finished products

While Aiya supplies Matcha as an ingredient to finished product manufacturers, it also sells directly to consumers – providing the powder in large bags and tins for traditional use and in smaller sachet packages for on-the-go consumption.

The Matcha To Go blend includes ceremonial Matcha and dietary fiber that keeps it from clumping for an easier blending experience to make unsweetened Matcha tea. For consumers who prefer a slightly sweeter drink, Aiya's Matcha Zen Café Blend combines pure Matcha green tea powder with a touch of cane sugar, Oliveira said.