

# Made in Japan /// Umbrella Tea House



**A**s its name suggests, the Umbrella Tea House is a lovely blend of two Japanese traditions. A portable, tatami-floored room enclosed within a frame of bamboo ribs covered in fabric resembling *washi* paper, it is a collaboration between the Tokyo architect Kazuhiro Yajima and the Kyoto umbrella-maker Hiyoshiya Workshop.

Pooling their artistic sensibilities and technical know-how, the pair infused the tiny structure with the appropriate calm and serenity for serving and savoring tea. But with a good yank of a fishing rod that attaches to its pinnacle, the entire contraption folds up into a single, tidy bundle.

Long fascinated by Japan's elegant, paper-covered umbrellas, the architect dreamed of utilizing their classic, radial structure for a building project. The chance came when he was invited to create a teahouse for the World O-Cha Festival held in Shizuoka Prefecture in 2010. While the tea ceremony master Soshin Kimura acted as a creative consultant, the umbrella-maker helped translate Yajima's design to an architectural scale.

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Measuring 2.75 meters in diameter, the teahouse is supported by a single bamboo stalk that Hiyoshiya Workshop split lengthwise into 50 slender strips; each of these was then cut in two, spliced and stitched back together to make the hinged ribs that hold up both the roof and wall. The milky white fabric is glued on top of this delicate bamboo framework. True to form, two doors—one low for the guests and one high for the tea master—turn the tent-like enclosure into a bona fide tearoom.

*Tokyo-based American architect Naomi Pollock writes on Japanese design for the Financial Times, Wallpaper and Architectural Record. Her books include Modern Japanese House and Made in Japan: 100 New Products*