

## Red, White, or Blue, and then British Racing Green

On June 15, 1989, four months after the Miata was unveiled at the Chicago show, Mazda announced pricing for the roadster, which would launch as a 1990 model. The base price was set at \$13,800.

Option Package A would add power steering, alloy wheels, a leather-wrapped steering wheel, and an audio system with AM/FM radio and a cassette player for \$1,145. Option Package B included all of A plus power windows, cruise control, and speakers built into the headrests for \$1,730. Stand-alone options would include air conditioning (\$795), a limited slip differential (\$250), compact disc player (\$600), floor mats (\$59), and a detachable hardtop (\$1,100).

Standard equipment included the engine out of the successful Mazda 323 GTX rally car, though turned longitudinal, without its turbocharger, and positioned well back toward the center of the car to enhance weight distribution and driving dynamics. The Type B6-ZE powerplant had four cylinders, dual-overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder, fuel injection, and a 9.4:1 compression

ratio. It pumped out 116 horsepower at 6,500 rpm and 110 foot-pounds of torque at 5,500 rpm. It was connected to a five-speed manual transmission with incredibly and delightfully short throws between gears. It could snap the Miata, which weighed in at a mere 2,182 pounds in its basic form, from a standstill to 60 miles per hour in 8.6 seconds. It had the potential to exceed 115 miles per hour and yet was rated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at 25 miles per gallon in city driving and at 30 on the open highway.

The car featured independent, double-wishbone suspension. Each wheel was stopped by disc brakes, which were 9.3 inches in diameter for the front wheels and 9.1 inches at the rear. The wheels were 14 inches in diameter—5.5 inches wide and wrapped with 185/60-aspect tires.

Weight distribution was a perfect 50/50 front/rear with the car empty or 52/48 with the typical driver, passenger, and fuel load. The car sat a snug 4.5 inches off the ground, lowering the center of gravity and enhancing dynamic performance.



The first Special Edition Miata available in the United States was the British Racing Green, nicknamed the “BRG.” Only 4,000 were offered through American Mazda dealerships beginning in March 1991. *Mazda*



The special shade of green paint paid homage to the heritage of traditional British roadsters. In the days before sponsorship was part of international auto racing, a nation's racing cars all wore the same color, and Britain's color was dark green. *Mazda*

The lightweight convertible top could be raised or lowered by the driver, not at the touch of a button but with one hand and while seated in the driver's seat, provided he or she could unzip the plastic rear window from that position before putting the top down. There was a small trunk that provided 4.5 cubic feet for cargo.

The interior offered cloth-covered seats that were both comfortable and held the occupants in position during even aggressive cornering. Standard equipment also included a driver-side air bag, the first for any Mazda vehicle.

The car would be available in three colors: Classic Red, Crystal White, and Mariner Blue. That's right—a car inspired by British traditions, a car built in Japan, a car conceived in America for Americans, would roll off the assembly line in the three colors of the American flag. Indeed, the car wouldn't even go on sale in Japan until September. The car also was available in Canada and Australia in 1989, but it didn't reach Europe and an expanding list of other international markets until well into 1990.

In Japan, instead of being called "Miata," or "MX-5" as it would be known in Europe, the car was simply the Eunos Roadster, Eunos being one of Mazda's home-market sales channels. Japanese buyers had the extra option of Silverstone Metallic paint, a wood-trimmed Nardi steering wheel with similar gearshift knob and handbrake handle, chromed mirrors, wider wheels, special luggage, and even a special TAG Heuer watch.

Mazda showed a special version of the MX-5 at the Tokyo Motor Show in the fall of 1989. In homage to the car's



A print ad notes how good someone will look in basic black. *Mazda*



For the 1992 model year, the Special Edition Miata wore Brilliant Black paint and rode on BBS wheels. Like the British Racing Green car from 1991, the '92 Special Edition had a tan leather interior as well as a tan top. *Mazda*



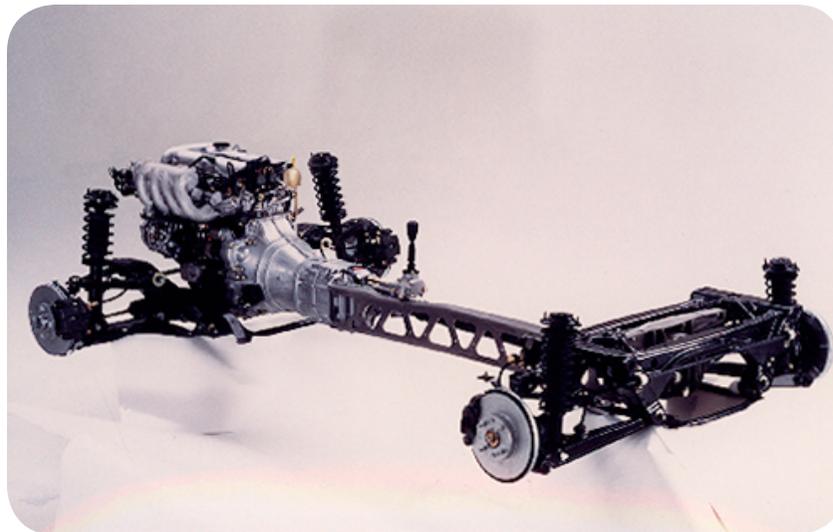
LEFT: Though not an official Special Edition, the Miata was available in Sunburst Yellow for 1992. Only 1,500 such vehicles were offered in the United States, and they have become highly prized by Miata owners. *Mazda*

RIGHT: For the 1992 model year, the Miata's optional removable hardtop got a rear-window defrosting system. *Mazda*





Updates and upgrades for the 1994 model year included a redesigned interior with a passenger-side air bag and door-panel map pockets. *Mazda*



Though there was a new engine providing more power, the Miata's central skeletal structure remained unchanged. *Mazda*

The 1993 model year marked the end of Silverstone Metallic paint, the addition of a Mazda Sensory Sound System, and the new “diamond in a circle” logo replaced the MAZDA block script on the car's nose and wheels. One of the most dramatic of the Limited Editions was done for 1993, with the car in Brilliant Black but with a red leather interior and tonneau, as well as BBS wheels.



The 1994 M Edition wore Montego Blue Mica paint and rode on polished wheels. *Mazda*

There also were Special Editions specifically created for the Japanese and European markets. For example, there was a J Limited Edition in Japan, and all 800 of the cars with Sunburst Yellow paint and Nardi accessories were sold out the first day they were offered. After a Mazda prototype won the 24 Hours of Le Mans race in 1991, Mazda in the United Kingdom offered a limited number—24, one for each hour



For 1994, all Miatas rode on slightly wider wheels and benefited from a larger and more powerful engine. *Mazda*