



## Roasted Jin Xuan Bug Bitten Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked,  
small batch, winter 2015

Region: Fenghuang  
Village, Taiwan  
Elevation: 700m

Batch Size: Small  
Medium Oxidation.  
Medium Roast

**Flavor:** Woodsy, apple pie aroma. Caramelized pecans, hint of smoke, smooth flavor. Bold, vibrant finish.

### THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF THIS BATCH OF TEA

This batch was procured from a friend in Lugu who is a professional tea judge, organic tea farmer, and master roaster who specializes in sourcing and roasting batches of naturally cultivated "bug-bitten tea". In other words, he is specializing in the broad category of tea that was given the name Concubine Oolong in Lugu, Taiwan — following the 9/21 earthquake in 1999. Concubine Tea was derived from its predecessor Oriental Beauty in northern Taiwan. The signature characteristic of both of these teas being that the leaves have been affected by the Green Leaf Hopper (*Jacobiasca formosana* or 茶小綠葉蟬) in their early growth stage. This results in a stunted growth of the leaf involving partial oxidation while the leaf is still growing. The immune system response from the plant results in an altered chemical composition in the leaf that produces a hearty character and typically a honey essence flavor. Generally, a more complex, substantial character results from natural farming, which often includes the participation of the Green Leaf Hopper.

We refrain from giving this batch the name Concubine Tea because it has a different flavor profile than the obvious honey notes that Concubine and Oriental Beauty are known for offering from late spring and summer harvests. This winter batch of Jin Xuan has a character of its own, which embodies the Green Leaf Hopper effect in a unique way. It has the substantial, complex, deeper profile of a winter tea with subtle flavors resulting from the bug-bitten effect. This, combined with a discerning, medium roasting of the leaves over three sessions offers a satisfying brew with a distinct profile.

Mr. Lee sourced this batch of tea from a friend's winter 2015 harvest because he specializes in "bug-bitten tea". This is a category of tea that goes beyond the standard specialty classifications of cultivar, terrior, heirloom strain, and traditional processing methods. This "bug-bitten effect" is highly unpredictable due to the fact that it is not possible to control the extent of the Green Leaf Hopper's effect on the organically grown tea leaves. Literally, each leaf is affected differently. Consequently, this batch-specific condition of the harvested leaves



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requires risk-taking, intuitive skills in processing that are on a completely different level of tea making than any standard production of tea. This is why we hold this type of tea in highest esteem. It is by definition a batch-specific, local specialty that involves innovative methods of production to make a tea that no one else can replicate because the leaves have been "custom-made" by the Green Leaf Hopper.

This type of tea originally became famous under the name Oriental Beauty, which is a regional specific tea produced in northern Taiwan. In the last 15 years or so, tea producers all over Taiwan have been cautiously exploring the natural production of tea that involves the participation of the Green Leaf Hopper. We are dedicated fans of this exploration. We can only believe that this was the way tea was produced before modern agriculture, involving pest control with the objective of maximum yield and consistency. While this is a valid agricultural goal that allows for responsible production, it is very different from traditionally made, pre-modern tea production.

We have a pointed interest in supporting specialty tea production that involves natural cultivation and skilled processing methods. This is the crux of artisan tea. We found a batch of tea from the most recent winter harvest that represents this, and are excited to offer it our club members who have made a commitment to having a share in our exploration of teas that are not found elsewhere.

Beyond the natural cultivation methods employed by local, family-run farms who have generations of experience in traditional tea making, we are also interested in the specialized production of Jin Xuan tea. This is a hybrid strain of Qing Xin Oolong cross-bred with the naturally occurring wild tea tree in Taiwan that possesses inherent immune system genetic traits that allow it to thrive in the local environment. Only in recent years has this strain begun to be made as a traditional Oolong rather than the minimally oxidized, unroasted tea. In our experience, Jin Xuan excels in these traditional production methods. When Jin Xuan tea leaves are sufficiently oxidized and roasted to the appropriate degree — according to seasonal conditions, it offers a fine



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quality, substantial brew that stands apart from the "green Oolong" that has been popularized by large scale tea production. We are excited to introduce Jin Xuan Oolong as a traditionally made tea rather than a minimally processed tea in order to let you know what is involved in the making of an artisan tea.

This month's batch of tea is from the recent winter harvest of a plot of Jin Xuan tea grown in Fenghuang Village, Taiwan. The farmer decided to go organic after last spring's harvest. So no chemical products have been used on these plants since last spring. That means two (summer and fall) seasons of naturally grown leaves were harvested before this batch. The special aspect of this batch is that it is a winter crop that was affected by the Leaf Hopper. This is a rare occurrence that only a few tea makers are interested in. It's a complicated combination of factors to take on in the processing of such a crop. Winter tea is generally less prone to higher levels of oxidation due to a lower moisture content in the leaf based on seasonal growing conditions. On the other hand, bug-bitten leaves are found to have optimal results when sufficiently oxidized — up to 40%. So,

finesse is warranted in processing this winter batch of naturally grown Jin Xuan leaves exhibiting the rare seasonal presence of the Green Leaf Hopper.

This month's batch is exciting because it embodies all the main aspects of what Eco-Cha strives to represent. It was cultivated on a residential farm, it's a small harvest, it was processed using traditional methods, and it was naturally cultivated. All this adds up to sustainable practice in preserving the local specialty tea industry by providing tea lovers with what you want — quality, unique types of tea.