

Award Winning Roasted Jin Xuan Oolong

Harvest: Hand-picked,
medium batch
Spring 2016

Region: Alishan, Taiwan.
Elevation: 1400m

Batch Size: Medium
Medium oxidation
Roasted

Flavor: *Robust, crisp autumn leaves aroma. Roasted sweet corn flavor. Full, complex character. Heady, substantial finish.*

GARDEN

This tea garden is located in the Alishan tea growing region of Chiayi County, Taiwan. Professionals source both Qing Xing and Jin Xuan Oolong teas from this area to be entered into Taiwan's world class competitions. Our source has consistently achieved awards in this competition within the top 5%. He has won first prize twice in the last three years. He is one of the most active and successful competition players in the industry.

TASTING NOTES

With the first brew poured off, the freshly brewed leaves carry a strong roasted character with rich, hearty, fireside notes. After the second brew the aroma of the brewed leaves turns a bit fruity, with warming spice sweetness reminiscent of pumpkin pie. The first brew has a roasted flavor upfront followed by a sweetness like grilled fresh corn. The second brew brings out a more balanced, rich, complex character and smooth texture – a much more integrated flavor profile.

There's a solid roasted base combined with a tanginess that brings out the

complexity of flavor like caramelized apples, but followed by a clean subtly astringent finish that makes it refreshing rather than heavy. These leaves have brewing endurance. They can be brewed 5 to 6 times and still produce a full flavored brew. From the third brew on, the flavor becomes a bit lighter but also more vibrant in character. Cashews and citrus are pronounced. Overall, it's a very well balanced brew, with a complexity that makes it difficult to pinpoint a particular flavor or even character. This is the effect that a quality Dong Ding Oolong should achieve, and this is even more challenging when Jin Xuan leaves are used.

THE STORY OF THIS TEA

This batch of tea was sourced from our friend and tea mentor who is one of the most successful competition players in the industry. He participates in all of the significant competitions in central Taiwan and consistently attains the highest awards. Eco-Cha Tea Club's Batch #1 was also from this source. And this spring he achieved 5th place out of 6,441 entries of that same competition that Batch #1 was entered in last year. This month's batch was entered into the

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Nantou County Tea Trade Association's Dong Ding Jin Xuan Tea Competition, and received the Gold Medal Award. This award ranks within the top 5% of all entries. This competition has been in existence for almost 25 years. It began with the development of Jin Xuan tea production in the early 1990's.

Jin Xuan is a hybrid cultivar produced by the government subsidized Tea Research Extension Station (TRES) in Taiwan and is registered as Tai Cha #12 (台茶12號). It was designed to possess a stronger immunity to naturally occurring "pests" in the regional climate of Taiwan while producing a somewhat larger leaf that increases yield. It is known for its buttery or milk flavor qualities and has a milder astringency and smoother texture.

We are particularly fond of this competition because the standard profile by which these tea entries are judged resembles a traditionally made Dong Ding Oolong tea. In order to achieve this flavor and character profile, the leaves undergo medium oxidation (30-40%), and are then roasted repeatedly to produce a hearty, robust character of tea. This level of oxidation and roasting is closer to a pre-modern

processing method that involves heavily curing the tea leaves to stabilize their consistency and have a longer shelf life. In fact, this type of tea is often considered to increase in quality with age.

Acknowledging that the labor intensive traditional methods that require knowledge and skill are being promoted by this association is encouraging. In our perception, Dong Ding Oolong tea is the most prominent representative of a traditional locally produced specialty tea in Taiwan. And this association has preserved and promoted this local culture by integrating this modern hybrid tea plant with traditionally developed tea making skills.