

Leafhopper High Mountain Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked
Season: Summer 2017

Region: Guanwushan, Taiwan.
Elevation: 1550m

Oxidation: Lightly oxidized
Roast: Unroasted

Flavor: Floral/pastry aroma. Fresh herbal character with subtle honey notes. Clean, vibrant, refreshing finish.

BREWING GUIDE:



GARDEN

This batch of tea comes from the relatively new Xueba High Mountain Tea producing region in northern Taiwan. This region is noted high elevation farms, ample precipitation, and cooler climate. This late spring batch was allowed to be affected by the Green Leaf Hopper — a tiny insect that feeds on the sap of new tea leaf buds, creating a honey-like flavor in the tea. This magic little bug is responsible for creating Oriental Beauty Oolong as well as Concubine Oolong.

TASTING NOTES

The noticeably yellowish hue on many of the tightly rolled dried leaves shown above is a tell-tale indicator of the Green Leafhopper's presence during the growing season. Tea leaves that are bitten by the Leafhopper undergo a kind of oxidation while they are still growing. The tea tree's immune response to this minute scarring of the leaf is apparently what gives us the unique, robust complex flavor profile of

what is simply called "Leafhopper Tea" in the local Taiwanese dialect.

The most commonly referred to trait in Leafhopper Tea is a honey-essence note in the fragrance as well as the flavor profile. This hint of honey varies greatly from batch to batch of "bug bitten tea", as it is also referred to locally. But the most general characteristic of this tea type is its bold complexity of aroma and flavor. It simply has a substance that clearly distinguishes it from a standard High Mountain Tea.

The constitution of bug-bitten leaves offers a challenge to the tea maker that varies from batch to batch. The leaves must be "read" much more carefully, and processed with an intuition that comes only from experience. This skill in processing these batch-specific leaves is as much of a claim to fame as the bug that is responsible for producing them. A successfully made batch of Leafhopper tea is well-balanced and particularly hearty in character. These leaves have significantly more brewing

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power along with their unique flavor profile. It is the hearty complex character that defines Leafhopper Tea.

Less leaves can be used in brewing this tea as a result of its robust character. And when the brewing concentration is just right, a heady, rich full-flavored profile is attained. We are excited to share this unroasted batch of Leafhopper tea in order to allow Eco-Cha Tea Club members to experience its original character. We find it to be quite distinct from its relatives Oriental Beauty and Concubine tea in that there is a fresh, clean vibrant profile in these lesser processed leaves.

THE STORY OF THIS TEA

Our expressed intention in sharing this batch of tea is to offer Eco-Cha Tea Club members a chance to experience the original unroasted flavor profile of a tea type that, in the local Taiwanese dialect, is simply called "Leafhopper Tea".

This month's batch of tea comes from the most recently developed High Mountain Oolong Tea producing region, located in northern Taiwan. Here in the industry, it is most commonly referred to as Guanwushan, in the vicinity of Xueba National Park. The high elevation slopes of the northernmost central mountain range provide an ideal climate for High Mountain Tea production.

This crop was harvested in June, when the new leaf growth following early spring harvest was allowed to grow naturally. In effect, it was an invitation for the legendary Green Leafhopper to come and perform its magic. This tiny grasshopper-like insect likes to feed on the sap of the new leaves, which results in a chemical composition in the leaf that offers a unique honey-essence flavor in the tea. The Leafhopper is what creates the renowned Oriental Beauty Oolong Tea from northern Taiwan, and the subsequent Concubine Oolong produced in central Taiwan.

In acknowledgement of the presence of the Leafhopper during this growing

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season, the farmer processed his leaves accordingly — allowing them to oxidize significantly more than a standard High Mountain Oolong Tea. The effect of the Leafhopper, combined with this customized processing results in a particularly full-flavored, strong character. Tea leaves of this constitution literally have more substance — providing a rich, vibrant, and complex flavor profile.

Also known as "bug-bitten tea" in tribute to the Leafhopper's effect, it has, only in the last decade or so, become a hot item in the local industry. A prominent reason for this recent spike in demand is that a crop of "bug bitten tea" by default defines it as being naturally farmed, without the use of chemical pesticides. So we not only get a unique, robust character of tea, we also get to support natural tea cultivation in the modernized production of world-class Taiwanese Oolong Tea.

In summary, we are not only endlessly intrigued by the magical role of the the

Green Leafhopper in the making of this tea. We are also thrilled to support the production of a specialty tea that requires natural farming methods. Furthermore, each batch of Leafhopper tea is unique, based on the extent of influence by the Leafhopper in combination with the consequent batch-specific methods of processing it.

Only recently have farmers begun to venture a gamble in producing a crop of tea that is difficult to navigate. There simply is no standard processing method to resort to — the farmer must rely on intuition based experience to determine how to process each anomalous batch of bug-bitten tea!