



eco-cha

TEA CLUB

Red Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked
Season: Fall 2018

Region: Zhushan, Taiwan
Elevation: 800m

Oxidation: Heavy
Roast: Unroasted

Flavor: *Raspberries and rhubarb pie aroma. Notes of sugarcane dried mango. Clean, sweet/tangy finish.*

BREWING GUIDE:

 8g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

GARDEN

This tea garden is at the highest part of the Shapingding tea growing region. It is nestled deep in the foothills of the high elevation Fanzaitian region. This micro-climate offers considerably more rainfall and diurnal temperature variation than most other Shapingding tea gardens. This farmer has over 30 years experience in tea making, and this rare batch of Red Oolong is testimony to his advanced skills.

TASTING NOTES

Appearance of the dried leaves is the first step in assessing any loose leaf tea. We can see by the coloration that these leaves are partially oxidized, with both green hues and darker tones. This is the first sign that it is a traditionally made Oolong tea. In recent trends, tea made in this fashion has been given the name "hong Oolong" or Red Oolong. It's actually just a new name for an old recipe.

Red Oolong has been popularized in Taiwan with the support of the TRES (Tea Research and Extension Station)

who encouraged tea farmers in southeastern Taiwan to follow their recipe in order to create a differentiation value from other tea growing regions. This promotional effort has proven successful, and Red Oolong has gained popularity in the last decade or so. But this is not why we chose this batch of tea to share with the Eco-Cha Tea Club.

The truth is that the recently popularized type of tea that has been given the name Red Oolong is actually a form of Small Leaf Black Tea. The reason being that the leaves of the commonly known Red Oolong are basically fully oxidized — making it by definition a Black tea.

This month's batch of tea is clearly not fully oxidized, as we can see just by looking at the dried leaves. But the effect of partial oxidation is also evident in the color of the brewed tea, the flavor profile, and most definitively in the appearance of the brewed leaves, which are a combination of greenish and reddish hues. This is a result of using processing methods that were



eco-cha

TEA CLUB

Red Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked
Season: Fall 2018

Region: Zhushan, Taiwan
Elevation: 800m

Oxidation: Heavy
Roast: Unroasted

Flavor: *Raspberries and rhubarb pie aroma. Notes of sugarcane dried mango. Clean, sweet/tangy finish.*

BREWING GUIDE:

 8g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

developed prior to the modernization of tea making. In short, it is a traditional Oolong tea recipe. And the one specific step that properly earns the name of Red Oolong is that the leaves were gently rolled using the primary rolling machine prior to tumble heating/cease oxidation.

OK, enough visual assessment. How does it taste? This batch of tea that was processed in the fashion of a pre-modern traditionally made Oolong really does have both Black tea and Oolong tea characteristics. It's flavor is similar to a delicate Black tea, but it's aroma and finish are more of an Oolong. It's complex and refreshing like an Oolong, but with enough sweetness on the palate to be reminiscent of a Black tea.

The best results are attained by treating it like a Black tea in terms of brewing methods. Use less leaves and brew it for short intervals. This brings out the complexity without letting it become too astringent. When brewed correctly, it is smooth on the palate, with tangy fruit undertones and a clean finish. It's

this intriguing combination of character that puts this tea in the in-between zone of Black and Oolong tea.

THE STORY OF THIS TEA

This tea garden is on the highest slopes of a small tea growing area of Shan Ping Ding in Zhushan Township in Nantou County. The area was initially developed with the onset of Jin Xuan, or Tai Cha #12 over 30 years ago. But these plots of tea are at a high enough elevation to warrant Qing Xin Oolong cultivation. And this micro-climate of a deep valley offers more conducive growing conditions than most farms at 800m elevation.

This batch of Qing Xin Oolong tea that was harvested in September and processed to become a Red Oolong. In Taiwan at least, this is a new name for an old style of tea making that 50 years ago was simply called "Oolong Tea". Red Oolong (or Hong Oolong) has been promoted by the Tea Research and Extension Station to be produced in south-eastern Taiwan to offer this area a differentiation value in the style of tea they produce. It has been successful in



eco^{cha}

TEA CLUB

Red Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked
Season: Fall 2018

Region: Zhushan, Taiwan
Elevation: 800m

Oxidation: Heavy
Roast: Unroasted

Flavor: *Raspberries and rhubarb pie aroma. Notes of sugarcane dried mango. Clean, sweet/tangy finish.*

BREWING GUIDE:

 8g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

popularizing the name, but in our experience, the commonly available Red Oolong is almost synonymous with Small Leaf Black Tea. It looks and tastes like the leaves are fully oxidized.

This is what inspired us to share this batch of tea that was produced in Nantou County. We consider this batch of tea to be properly named Red Oolong, simply because the leaves are obviously only partially oxidized. The flavor of the tea has aspects of a Black Tea character while maintaining the fragrant, aromatic complexity of an Oolong.

The initial stages are basically the same as Oolong tea processing — with solar withering, indoor withering, and shuffling, but there is one step that makes it definitively a Red Oolong. The leaves are delicately bruised using the primary rolling machine BEFORE the tumble heating/cease oxidation step. We've been told by traditional Oolong tea makers that this was common practice before the modern mechanization of tea processing — in other words, when everything was done by hand (and foot!).

We were introduced by a mutual friend who is apprenticing with Mr. Zhang. Our friend who introduced us has a PhD in soil science and inherited his family's organic tea farm about 5 years ago. He has been ardently learning the science of tea making ever since, and we've repeatedly heard him comment that he was very lucky to meet Mr. Zhang. We can see why he feels this way. Mr. Zhang manages his own small farm and does the processing himself, with the help of his younger generation tea farmer friends, who are committed to learning from him. We've watched him making tea twice in the last month, and it has been very educational.

He is employing pre-modern tea making techniques while being completely competent in each step of the modern tea making process — coming from of 30 years of hands on experience. He has a meticulous streak in him that sets his methods apart from the norm. We feel that this batch of Red Oolong represents his skill and dedication. Mr. Zhang brewed it for us on our first visit to his home. He also gifted us with a sample of it when we left. We knew we needed to share it with the tea club after brewing it again at home.