



# eco-cha

## TEA CLUB

### Traditional Lugu Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked, med. batch  
Season: Winter 2018

Region: Dalunshan, Lugu, Taiwan  
Elevation: 1000m

Oxidation: Medium  
Roast: Light-medium

**Flavor:** *Sweet, roasted yam, fruity aroma.  
Balanced, toasted, nutty, stone fruit flavor. Clean, zingy finish.*

#### BREWING GUIDE:

 8g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

#### GARDEN

This batch of tea is from a plot of tea on the lower slopes of Big Wheel Mountain, just below the Shan Lin Xi region. This farmer cleared a section of his uncle's bamboo forested land, and planted tea about 19 years ago. He is committed to crafting Oolong Tea in the traditional manner that originally made Lugu famous.

#### TASTING NOTES

Batch #43 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club is from a farm located just below the Shanlinxi High Mountain Tea growing region, in south-eastern Lugu Township. This plot of tea was planted about 20 years ago, and has been maintained by Mr. Zhang, an independent tea producer — who we see as an authentic traditional tea maker. He manages the entire production of his tea himself, and processes it in his own modest home factory, without the help of air-conditioning. This is a rarity in Taiwan these days. He sells all his tea to a small group of long term loyal customers who buy his seasonal produce.

The medium oxidized leaves have undergone extensive, repeated roastings that have resulted in a very balanced, integrated character. The initial steepings offer a freshly cut wood aroma with a toasted nutty flavor. This proceeds to open up into a sweeter, more complex profile that is strikingly reminiscent of roasted winter vegetables, including parsnip, caramelized onion and butternut squash.

The brewed tea is substantial and smooth, with a limpid appearance and a clean, refined character. It is this combination of factors that represent careful moisture depletion when the leaves were being cured, as well as skillful oxidation and roasting. In sum, a fine example of a traditionally made Oolong Tea. The most striking quality of this brew in our experience is the later notes of oatmeal cookie and caramel, perfectly balanced by a crisp, dry finish!

The uniformity of coloration in the brewed leaf reveals that the oxidation was done masterfully, without obvious bruising or damage to the integrity in the leaf structure. This combined with



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the fact that the leaves have remained supple and mostly green in appearance show the time consuming and painstaking care that went into the post-production roasting.

Finally, we want to mention our bonus gift included in this month's edition of the tea club. We were able to procure some of the newly harvested spring tea from Mr. Zhang before he began roasting it. We wanted to offer our Tea Club members the experience of comparing and contrasting the finished product from last winter's harvest with the unroasted spring harvest. This sample of unroasted spring tea will allow the tea club to know the effects of roasting in the flavor of the brew.

### THE STORY OF THIS TEA

Mr. Zhang's father cultivated tea on their homesteaded land in Xiaobantian, on the southside of Lugu Township, where he grew up in the midst of traditional tea making. At 20 something, he decided to embody his local tradition by clearing land to cultivate his own plot of tea. For the last 20 years, he has managed his

own humble, privately owned plot of tea. Throughout this period, he also acquired seasonal work in tea factories in Lugu, Shanlinxi, Alishan, Fanzaitian, and Lishan. In a word, he learned the ropes of tea making in a comprehensive way, like most tea farmers of his generation. Lugu hosts the highest concentration of tea makers in Taiwan, and is a hub of specialty tea making culture.

This farm is at the foot of Dalunshan (Big Wheel Mountain), which is the beginning of the Shanlinxi High Mountain Tea growing region. Mr. Zhang employs relatively sustainable farm management, with minimal fertilization and pest control. This allows his tea trees to be more self-sufficient, even though it compromises the volume of his seasonal yield. He is committed to keeping it simple by investing less in farm products, and accepting the lower volume of produce. He believes that this has resulted in his trees producing leaves with more constituents, which make better quality tea.

We are excited to meet another farmer in the heart of Oolong Tea Country that is a



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modest legacy to the local culture he was born and raised in. We'll be sure to show up in his home when the next harvest happens to see his simple operation in action. There are only a handful of factories like his left, with no climate control or mechanized shelving to make the job easier. It's the hard work and skill that make a traditionally made Oolong Tea stand apart. And this is one fine example!