

eco-cha

TEA CLUB

Alishan High Mountain Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked, small batch
Season: Late winter 2019

Region: Meishan, Taiwan
Elevation: 1200m

Oxidation: Light
Roast: Unroasted

Flavor: *Mild savory, fresh pastry aroma. Balanced herbal character with notes of fresh thyme and sage. Light buttery finish with a hint of vanilla.*

BREWING GUIDE:

 9g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

GARDEN

We continue to be delighted with our source of Alishan Tea that we discovered a few years ago. It is a residential farm, run by a husband and wife team, with an onsite factory, and surrounded by pine and bamboo forest in the Alishan High Mountain Tea area of Taiwan. It embodies pretty much everything we aspire to support in the local industry, and represent to tea lovers around the world.

TASTING NOTES

Batch #50 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club starts off 2020 with a freshly harvested Alishan High Mountain Oolong Winter Tea from our ongoing source in Meishan Township. This very small batch of tea was their final day of winter harvest. The leaves were not yet fully mature, and offer a fresh, distinctly aromatic and complex flavor profile.

The brewed leaves offer a fresh foresty aromatic bouquet with mild savory undertones. The brewed tea has a delicate texture, yet carries a complex, heady finish with flavor notes that are

difficult to pinpoint. Subtle savory herb notes with a touch of sweetness that could be floral but not overly perfumey. It's a particularly satisfying profile overall. It has some of the classic winter High Mountain Oolong character that resembles the winter tea that was prized 20-30 years ago, but is rare nowadays.

When we saw these freshly picked leaves being processed, we had a sense that they would resemble Dong Pian Tea, with their young stage of growth yet substantial thick feel to the fresh leaf. This is what sets this batch of tea apart from the more standard harvest that preceded it. It's also why the farmer determined this very minimal yield to be worth the cost and effort to harvest it.

We feel that this fresh, vibrant, character with subtle nuances is a great way to begin the New Year. We look forward to hearing your experience of these hearty yet delicate leaves that were the newest growth from the winter season.

THE STORY OF THIS TEA

This was the final day of winter harvest

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for our source of Alishan High Mountain Oolong Tea, and we were able to procure enough of this very minimal batch to share with our Tea Club. This date was 3 days after Li Dong (立冬) in the lunar calendar, and the winter harvest of High Mountain Tea had for the most part been completed in central Taiwan.

The last day of winter harvest consisted of leaves that had not yet reached maturity, but had already slowed in their growth and needed to be picked before they became tough and leathery. The smaller leaves were thicker than usual, due to the slow winter growing season — and this is what makes them special. The time of harvest does not officially qualify them as “Dong Pian” tea, but their character is very similar. The relatively minimal water content in the leaves that have grown slowly during the drier winter season offers a unique flavor profile that is both delicate in flavor and pronounced in its aromatic qualities.

Dong Pian Tea is basically the bumper crop following the winter harvest. It is leaves that were very immature at the time of winter harvest, but continued to grow

after the harvest to reach a mature enough stage of growth to warrant a harvest. Dong Pian is more common at lower elevations, where the climate remains warm enough to keep the plants active. It is also more commonly produced with the Jin Xuan and Four Seasons Spring strains, which are more prolific and less sensitive to growing conditions. Dong Pian is very rarely produced at higher elevations, especially from the Qing Xin Oolong strain. So this crop is the closest we get to Dong Pian at this elevation, at least from this farm.

We actually figured this minimal batch was already spoken for when we watched the initial stages of processing on the day we visited. So we were delighted to hear that we could procure a small amount of it. The cost of labor to painstakingly harvest and process this minimal crop is not profitable for the farmer, but it’s just too hard to let go! So we again feel privileged to be able to have a share in this singular batch of tea that represents the specialty tea industry in Taiwan.