



eco-cha
TEA CLUB
Pinglin Qing Xin Black Tea

Harvest: Machine harvested,
single batch

Season: Spring 2019
Region: Wenshan, Taiwan

Elevation: 600m

Flavor: *Fruit compote aroma. Stone fruit character. Smooth, oily texture. Tangy/smoky, dry, preserved plum finish.*

BREWING GUIDE:

 5g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

GARDEN

When we visited our Baozhong Tea maker to check out his new fancy tea leaf sorting machine, he pulled out last year's reserve of Black Tea made from Qing Xin tea leaves, and allowed to settle for one year. This is the same strain of tea that is used to make Baozhong Tea. It's an exemplary Small Leaf Black Tea, and there was just enough to share with the Eco-Cha Tea Club!

TASTING NOTES

Batch #56 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club is a Pinglin Qing Xin Black Tea — summer 2019 harvest, from the same source as last month's edition of award winning Wenshan Baozhong Tea. This is the first batch of Black Tea we have sourced from the Pinglin region in northern Taiwan, and it is further supporting evidence of the fact that high quality tea can be made from low to mid-elevation farms. We were lucky to have sourced the remainder of two consecutive days of last summer's harvest that were combined to provide

just enough to be shared with the Eco-Cha Tea Club! Black Tea reaches its peak of quality after at least one year of aging.

These immature leaves from the same Qing Xin tea trees that made the Wenshan Baozhong Tea that we shared last month were masterfully cured as Black Tea to offer a very satisfying brew. The most immediately striking quality is the mouthfeel — it's amazingly thick and rich — almost syrupy, but without any sugary consistency. So smooth. The flavor is dense and mellow, with tangy fruit notes akin to plum cobbler as well as tart stewed apples, with subtle undertones of warming spices — like star anise and cinnamon. There is a distinctly mellow, rich quality that presumably comes from being aged for a year. The aftertaste is complex, with soft tangy sweet notes balanced by something that is almost smoky, but not — like preserved plums or stewed prunes.

Our respect for the maker of the two most recent editions of the Eco-Cha Tea Club has deepened, even though we knew he made good tea, since he is our

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ongoing source of our in store Wenshan Baozhong Tea!

We feel fortunate to have the opportunity to provide an educational experience for our Tea Club members by having two consecutive batches of tea that were from the same farm, same trees, but processed to be completely different types of tea with totally different flavor profiles. This batch of Qing Xin Black Tea is one of the finest Small Leaf Black Teas we've come across since there has been a growing trend among Oolong Tea makers to make Black Tea with their summer crops.

The name "Small Leaf" refers to the tea strains that are mainly cultivated to produce Oolong and Green Teas. Black Tea generally is made from Large Leaf strains, although mainland China has been making Black Tea from various Small Leaf cultivars for... a long time!

THE STORY OF THIS TEA

Batch #56 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club is a Black Tea made from the Qing Xin cultivar, grown in the Pinglin tea growing

region in northern Taiwan. This Black Tea is made by the same artisan tea maker who made the top 5% award-winning Baozhong Tea we offered as Batch #55 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club. His spring and winter crops are made into Wenshan Baozhong tea, for which his family has a legacy, and his summer crops are made into high-grade Black Tea.



The photo above is of the living room wall of this farmer's home — crammed with top ranking awards, and a photo of his father with Taiwan's first elected president in the late 90's. This living heir of a lineage of tea masters is the most unassuming, down-to-earth tea maker we know. We've only really gotten to know him in the last

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couple of years, and our respect has only deepened.

We talked about Small Leaf Black Tea making with him over a year ago, and how it is widely available in central Taiwan, where Eco-Cha is based. At the end of the conversation, he offered us a sample to take home and suggested that we let a few of our tea farmer friends in central Taiwan do a comparison in order to understand why his Black Tea is significantly more expensive. Now, a year later, with this batch of tea we procured for the Eco-Cha Tea Club — we are



convinced that his point was well made. It's quite possible that the sample he gave us last year was indeed from the same batch of tea we are sharing this month!

To the left is the batch of Qing Xin Black Tea being shared this month with the Tea Club. It was made in summer 2019 and aged for one year. High-grade Black Tea reaches its peak of quality after "resting" for at least a year after being made. This batch, like our current in-store batch of Wenshan Baozhong Tea, is a combination of two consecutive days of harvest. Combining different days of the same harvest can offer a more well-rounded flavor profile. This batch of tea was destemmed and sorted by machine to produce only the highest grade leaf from this harvest.

The name Small Leaf Black Tea is to be distinguished from the strains of tea plants that are traditionally used for Black Tea making. Primarily, Black Tea is made from large leaf strains of tea, the most common of which is the Assam strain that was originally cultivated in India. Large leaf type cultivars are akin to the wild tea tree that naturally occurs in the

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mountainous regions of northern India, Southeast Asia, Southwest China, and Taiwan. In Taiwan, there is also the indigenous strain of tea — simply called "Mountain Tea", along with a hybrid of the Assam strain and the indigenous strain. This hybrid is Tai Cha #18, also called Red Jade, or Ruby Red.

Small leaf type cultivars are presumably the result of centuries, or even millenia of tea cultivation in China. The majority of Oolong and Green Teas are made from small leaf type cultivars. The Qing Xin cultivar is by far the most widely cultivated tea strain in Taiwan, as Taiwan mostly specializes in Oolong Tea making. Other small leaf type strains that are popular in Taiwan are Jin Xuan (Tai Cha #12), Tsui Yu (Tai Cha #13), Four Seasons Spring, Ying Xiang (Tai Cha # 20), Qin Yu (Tai Cha #22).

When we drove up north to source this month's batch of tea, we told its maker that we wanted to see his fancy new tea leaf sorting machine that he recently invested in with a neighbor who is more of a merchant than a farmer. Yet, this photo shows how real and unpretentious

they are. They are tasting several days of produce at the same time, in the way that most tea makers and professionals assess tea. They just put leaves in a bowl and pour boiling water on them and intently, with a lifetime of experience, assess their quality. The moments of silence that pass in this utterly simple procedure carry a weight that is tangible. If only we could read their minds!

