



eco-cha

TEA CLUB

Traditional Hong Shui Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked,
singular small batch

Season: Summer 2020
Region: Fenghuang, Taiwan

Elevation: 750m

Flavor: *Complex fruity aroma. Stone fruits and honey notes. Heady floral dry finish.*

BREWING GUIDE:

 8g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

GARDEN

This batch of tea comes from Phoenix Village, next to Dong Ding Mountain in Lugu. Our source of Shan Lin Xi High Mountain Oolong harvested a tiny crop of summer growth from his family tea garden in their back yard and processed it the way his grandpa used to (but with the help of machines!). We were in the factory that night, and got to see tradition in action!

TASTING NOTES:

What makes batch 58 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club qualify as a Traditional Hong Shui Oolong?

4 Reasons:

1. Origin
2. Growing Season
3. Processing
4. Flavor Profile

This batch of tea leaves was harvested from a family plot of tea in the heart of Taiwan's Traditional Oolong Tea making region: Phoenix Village in Lugu

Township. It's a small plot of Qing Xin Oolong tea trees located in the backyard of our friend's traditional 3-sided farmhouse, one side of which is their home-style tea factory.

This crop was harvested from the tips of the new growth that followed this year's spring harvest. So the plants were allowed to vegetate and grow naturally for three whole months, producing new shoots of around 30cm. The leaves picked from the tops of these new branches have a more substantial composition than the fresh new growth that only grows about 10cm before it is harvested. This plot of tea was left alone since spring harvest. So zero pesticides allowed for the Green Leafhopper and other pests to contribute to the character of this crop of tea.

The leaves at the tips of this more matured new growth grew more slowly, making them thicker and tougher than the standard tender new growth that is typically harvested with 50 days after pruning or the previous harvest. This calls for traditional processing methods,



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which basically means more of everything preceding the tumble heating/kill green phase. So more extensive solar withering, indoor

THE STORY OF THIS TEA

Batch 58 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club is a Hong Shui Oolong made in the traditional fashion by our friend in his home factory in Phoenix Village, Taiwan. He let his family plot of tea behind their traditional 3-sided farmhouse continue to grow after spring harvest in April until the last few days in July. This allows the tea trees to rejuvenate by growing naturally during the most vegetative phase of their annual cycle. He then harvested just the tops of the new growth before pruning his trees for fall harvest. To the right is a photo of his 80 plus year-old mom harvesting last summer's crop.

The summer crop is most suitable for heavily oxidized Oolong Tea or Black Tea. Black Tea made from Small Leaf Type tea trees such as this plot of Qing Xin Oolong or the various hybrid strains that are prevalent in low to



mid-elevation tea growing regions is a new trend among traditional Oolong Tea makers in recent years. This has impacted the production of a type of tea that pre-dates the name of Dong Ding Oolong Tea.

Tea farmers in this village and throughout Lugu Township, as well as Zhushan and Mingjian most commonly processed their crops of tea in the fashion that is now called Hong Shui (i.e. Red Water) Oolong. The name Hong Shui is a recent reference however. Before the name Dong Ding Oolong was popularized by the Lugu Farmers' Association, it was simply the style of



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tea that was made locally, and gained popularity for its distinctive character. Now it is used to refer to a tea that has been intentionally well-oxidized, and is not abiding by the modern quality standards of Oolong that say the brewed tea should be more golden than reddish in color. Hong Shui Oolong is simply a more traditional tea type with a different character profile than Dong Ding Oolong — and one that tea lovers both locally and abroad are learning to appreciate more and more!

This crop of tea amounted to a mere 15 kg of finished product! A whole day and night of harvesting and processing, including a hired team of pickers, and then about 20 hours of processing the leaves to produce this batch of tea! Followed by a second day of hired out rolling and drying...This is clearly another element of what defines traditionally made Oolong Tea. It just doesn't amount to much, when considered in terms of labour vs. volume of produce.

Our friend could have just pruned back the summer growth in preparation for the more standard production of fall

and winter harvests. But we have been nagging him about this traditional style of Oolong that we know he has real skills in making, which is so hard to come by! So in response to our phone call a few days before this harvest — asking once again if there is a chance... he said he will make a batch from the tips of his summer growth. We were so happy!

After a ridiculously long day that began at dawn with harvest preparations, we watched Mr. Chen carry out this four step process. The leaves are exposed to high temperature in the tumble dryers. Then they are wrapped in cloth and stuffed into the stainless steel "steam box". Then they are put in the "half-moon shaped" roller (blue machine in the corner). Then they are spread on the conveyor belt dryer to cool down. Finally, they are bundled in cloth, and left to sit overnight. Then they are brought to the rolling and drying factory for another full day of final processing. This, this is what is entailed in making Traditional Hong Shui Oolong Tea! And he carried out the entire production of this very minimal batch by himself.

A photograph of a tea plantation with several workers wearing hats and jackets, tending to tea bushes. The scene is outdoors with tall bamboo poles in the background.

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withering, shuffling by hand, and tumbling. Finally, and most significantly, the still withering stage prior to tumble heating was about double the norm for modern Oolong processing, AND the trays of tea leaves were covered with another tray to contain the heat and moisture exuding from the oxidizing leaves. This enhances the thorough oxidation of the leaves.

The extensive summer growth preceding the harvest, and the skillfully implemented heavy manipulation of the more substantial leaf material by a professional Dong Ding Oolong Tea master result in an exemplary batch of traditionally made tea in Taiwan's heart of Oolong Tea Country.

The full flavored character reflects the mastery that evolved from pre-modern tea producing methods — which our friend learned from his grandfather as a teenager. It's a rich, fruity, complex flavor profile with classic mineral notes, and a vibrant, truly satisfying finish. This, this is the real deal when it comes to traditionally made Oolong Tea from Nantou County, Taiwan!