

## Eco-Farmed High Mountain Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked,  
small batch

Season: Fall 2020  
Region: Shalixian, Taiwan

Elevation: 1200m

**Flavor:** *Nutmeg, honey, pastry aroma. Balanced, savory character. Green leafy vegetable and mild curry notes. Clean, subtle spicy finish.*

### BREWING GUIDE:

 9g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

### GARDEN

This batch of tea was harvested from a certified organic tea farm in the remote farming area of Shalixian, in southern Nantou County, Taiwan. It is an isolated plot of tea deep in the Yushan Mountain range, offering ideal climate conditions. We brought this batch of tea to our friend in Lugu to lightly "dry roast". It's an exemplary batch of naturally farmed tea.

### TASTING NOTES:

Batch 59 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club is an Eco-Farmed High Mountain Oolong Tea sourced from the same farmer as batch 51, but from a different plot of tea. This month's batch is from their primary farm, where they grow artichokes, coffee, and fruit, as well as an ongoing variety of vegetables for their own consumption. It's at a slightly lower elevation than the plot from where Batch 51 was harvested, but it is more remote and further up the main river valley that leads to the Yushan Mountain range. The majority of tea trees on this farm appear to have

adjusted more successfully to organic living than their higher elevation cousins.

This crop of tea is the most recent growth picked from new branches on the trees that were allowed to grow for four months or so, similar to our recent batch of Traditional Hong Shui Oolong that we offered last month. As with last month's batch, this tea was also affected by the Green Leafhopper, and other pests. This is inevitable, given that this is an organic farm and the summer months are most susceptible to bugs!

The most obvious difference between last month's batch and this month's is in the processing methods. This batch of tea that was harvested at 500m higher elevation, and in a much more remote mountainous region, was processed similarly to a High Mountain Tea, but with a bit more oxidation. The oxidation level is the result of more outdoor and indoor withering, as well as shuffling of the leaves. These leaves require this extra manipulation due to their natural "toughness" as a result of not being the tender new growth immediately



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following a previous harvest or pruning.

What these leaves have to offer as a result of the relatively slow, natural growing phase is their substance. They simply have a lot more constitution. So while they do not offer the fresh, fragrant, and delicate profile of a standard High Mountain Oolong when brewed, they have much more composition. And this composition brews slowly and steadily, with significantly more endurance. We suggest a 1:16 ratio of leaf to water. We used about 12g of tea in the above 200mL gaiwan style teapot.

It starts off with a warming spices/mild savory aroma, and brews a smooth, thick texture, with floral, honey, and tangy notes, and ends with a balanced, sweet/dry, lasting finish. It brews steadily and consistently for several brews. Don't be surprised if the first and second brew are a bit timid. These leaves take a bit of steeping to open up. But those first brews offer their own special introduction into the character of these leaves. The lighter more subtle notes are revealed before the more

substantial constitution issues forth.

These leaves were baked at low temperature (80°C) for three separate intervals of six hours each — for a total of 18 hours. While this doesn't really qualify as "roasting", it has a significant effect on the flavor profile in terms of transforming any green, grassy character into a more mild, sweeter, pastry-like flavor profile. It also ensures that any remaining moisture in the leaves, and especially stems is removed, which in effect cures the leaves. This means that the flavor profile and nature of the leaves is much more stable, and able to maintain their character over time. Watch the tasting video for the full review!

### THE STORY OF THIS TEA

Batch 59 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club is from a certified organic farm located on the periphery of Yushan National Park. Yushan, or Jade Mountain is not only the highest peak in Taiwan, but also in all of east Asia. This farm is the closest developed land to the park, in a remote mountain valley.

The logo for eco-cha TEA CLUB features the brand name 'eco-cha' in a lowercase, sans-serif font with a small leaf icon above the 'o'. Below it, 'TEA CLUB' is written in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font. The background of the entire page is a scenic photograph of a paved road winding through lush green mountains under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

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This batch of tea was harvested on September 3, and we slept out at the farm to be there when the team of pickers arrived at 6:30 a.m. to capture the event. We are so impressed with this couple's work and the story of how they came to transition their inherited family farm to being certified organic that we are making a documentary video of it. A husband and wife manage this farm that has been fully certified for 3 years now. They began transitioning to organic ten years ago when they decided to stop using chemical farm products. More about that story in the documentary. Stay tuned!

The tea trees were allowed to grow naturally following the spring harvest, with no further harvest or pruning through the summer months. Allowing substantial new growth nourishes the plants and strengthens their root base. Only the growing tips of the new branches were picked by hand, but leaf growth was slower, as the plants already had a new growth phase in the previous months. So these leaves were thicker, a bit tougher, and with considerable more substance than if it

was new growth immediately following a harvest, or even more so — a pruning.

We can see how naturally these tea trees are allowed to grow. It's a wholly different farming method than conventional farming, and the produce from a farm like this is also next level. In our perception, based on continually visiting tea farms in Taiwan for over 20 years, this source is a rare and precious find. The combination of a pristine geographic location with an ideal micro-climate for tea production, and the natural farming methods are just not to be found. In a word, we love this farm, as well as its caretakers!