



# eco cha TEA CLUB

## Heavy Roast Wuyi Oolong Tea

Harvest: Machine-harvested,  
small batch

Season: Spring 2020  
Region: Songboling, Taiwan

Elevation: 400m

**Flavor:** *Warming spices, peaty, smoky aroma. Smooth, mellow character with notes of cocoa and roasted butternut squash. Soothing, smoky, leather/ tobacco finish.*

### BREWING GUIDE:

 9g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

### GARDEN

This batch of tea is from spring 2020 harvest of Wuyi Oolong cultivar that is 100% naturally cultivated, using no chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Wuyi is an heirloom strain of tea from mainland China that was popular in this area some 50 years ago, but was replaced by more prolific cultivars. These tea leaves have undergone 7-8 roastings, using an oven equipped infrared heating elements.

### TASTING NOTES:

We are kicking off our sixth year of the Eco-Cha Tea Club this month, with batch 61! And this month's batch of Heavy Roast Wuyi Oolong is a record breaker in that it is definitely the most thoroughly roasted batch of tea that we have shared to date. We think this tea will be appealing at this time of year — especially for our members who live in colder climates. This is a very hearty, rich, and warming brew. So we like to think it will make the holiday season even cozier!

Our friend planted this plot of heirloom

Wuyi Oolong Tea over five years ago with the intention of cultivating it naturally, i.e. without the use of chemical farm products. It's a small plot of Wuyi tea trees next to a plot of Four Seasons Spring that was planted at the same time, and managed in the same way. The Wuyi trees took significantly longer to mature into healthy, flourishing trees, and they are still noticeably smaller and produce less than their Four Seasons Spring neighbors. This is testimony to the reason that the Wuyi strain was phased out and replaced with more prolific hybrid strains in the last 30 years or so.

Mr. Xie wanted to represent his local heritage by growing the Wuyi strain that originally was grown here. He also wanted to be able to offer a distinctive character of tea. Wuyi has a pronounced and unique aromatic profile, and its hardier leaves have significantly more endurance when it comes to roasting.

The two prominent factors that make this batch special are that it made with the Wuyi Tea heirloom cultivar, and it



# eco cha

## TEA CLUB

### Heavy Roast Wuyi Oolong Tea

Harvest: Machine-harvested, small batch

Season: Spring 2020  
Region: Songboling, Taiwan

Elevation: 400m

**Flavor:** *Warming spices, peaty, smoky aroma. Smooth, mellow character with notes of cocoa and roasted butternut squash. Soothing, smoky, leather/ tobacco finish.*

#### BREWING GUIDE:

 9g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

the leaves have been roasted in a fashion and to a degree that is a first for us! Unroasted, these leaves brew an exceptionally aromatic floral character of tea with substantial brewing power — both in the consistency of the brewed tea as well as its endurance. (Pssst! We'll be sharing an unroasted batch soon to let our members experience this same tea made in a very different fashion, but that's supposed to be a secret!)

In talking with us about the roasting process our friend has repeatedly mentioned that he recalls his grandfather and other family elders saying how Wuyi has an exceptional ability to undergo extensive roasting — far beyond that of other common strains. So he basically put this folklore to the test with this batch. And we think the roasted quality of this batch of tea is something beyond anything we've tasted. We've tasted very heavily roasted tea, but nothing that maintained its integrity like this batch.

The prominent roasted notes in the flavor of this tea are balanced with

sweet caramelized notes, dense cocoa and tobacco notes, and even citrus notes — like pomelo or grapefruit! It really has a lot to offer! And we strongly recommend varying the brewing methods — particularly the amount of tea leaves, to get the full spectrum of flavor and character of the tea. Like almost any tea, when brewed more concentrated, the more subtle and delicate notes are masked and muddled. So make a point of changing up how you brew it to get the full effect!

#### THE STORY OF THIS TEA

The photo in the header is the plot of tea from which this month's Batch 61 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club was harvested in spring 2020. We stopped by today to get an updated photo and show how this plot of tea has grown into its own. Below is the photo we took when we first shared a batch that was harvested from this (then) newly planted plot of the heirloom strain of Wuyi Oolong. That was Batch 4 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club!

# eco<sup>cha</sup> TEA CLUB

## Heavy Roast Wuyi Oolong Tea

Harvest: Machine-harvested,  
small batch

Season: Spring 2020  
Region: Songboling, Taiwan

Elevation: 400m

**Flavor:** *Warming spices, peaty, smoky aroma. Smooth, mellow character with notes of cocoa and roasted butternut squash. Soothing, smoky, leather/ tobacco finish.*

### BREWING GUIDE:

☞ 9g

☕ 300ml

🌡️ 95°C

🕒 3 minutes



These photos depict how this naturally cultivated plot of tea has produced progressively healthier and more prolific crops of tea over the last four years. With natural farming, the trees mature more slowly, as they must fend for themselves and build immunity to naturally occurring pests without the artificial assistance of chemical farm products. But as our friend from whom we source this tea explained to us today, when the trees eventually develop a stable immunity, they are significantly different in their constitution than conventionally farmed tea trees. And this means the quality of leaf that is harvested from these trees is also notably different.

Now let's talk about the post production processing that went into making this month's batch of tea, namely — roasting. These leaves are from this year's spring harvest, and underwent medium oxidation, with the intent of roasting them significantly. But little did our friend know just how much roasting he would end up doing! These leaves were roasted for a total of about 100 hours!



The photo above shows the conventional tea roasting ovens that were used for the initial roastings. And the next photo shows a relatively new design of an oven that is equipped with infrared heating elements that are mounted inside a perforated stainless

# eco<sup>cha</sup> TEA CLUB

## Heavy Roast Wuyi Oolong Tea

Harvest: Machine-harvested,  
small batch

Season: Spring 2020  
Region: Songboling, Taiwan

Elevation: 400m

**Flavor:** *Warming spices, peaty, smoky aroma. Smooth, mellow character with notes of cocoa and roasted butternut squash. Soothing, smoky, leather/ tobacco finish.*

### BREWING GUIDE:

9g

300ml

95°C

3 minutes



steel cylinder that slowly rotates. So the oven has normal electrical heating elements to maintain a constant atmospheric temperature. And the infrared elements are a supplemental heat source that emit infrared waves, which are particularly effective in penetrating the leaves, resulting in a significantly more uniform effect.

With conventional ovens, it's virtually impossible to transform the constituents in the leaves as evenly. The surface is inevitably more exposed and hence more roasted than the center of the rolled leaf. This is how our friend was able to roast this batch of tea so

extensively, without scorching the outer surface of the leaves. He has been working with this oven for a few years now, and finally becoming adept at it. Our friend is one of the most successful competition players we know, and it's his roasting skills that have brought him this success.

We tasted this batch after its initial processing — before being destemmed or roasted. It was noticeably oxidized, but the amount of stem material, along with the apparently varied levels of oxidation among the leaves frankly confused us! We just didn't know what to make of it, and decided to graciously decline the offer to procure some of the harvest... Then, six months later, we were served a pot of tea in our friends' home. Fair enough, we were told that it was the same batch of Wuyi from spring harvest, but we didn't recognize it at all. It had been destemmed by hand, and then roasted for... literally months-on-end. The results offer a thoroughly roasted character, but not burnt. It's got campfire notes for sure, but also, citrus, cocoa, roasted winter squash, tobacco... it's just rich! So here



# eco cha

## TEA CLUB

### Heavy Roast Wuyi Oolong Tea

Harvest: Machine-harvested,  
small batch

Season: Spring 2020  
Region: Songboling, Taiwan

Elevation: 400m

**Flavor:** *Warming spices, peaty, smoky aroma. Smooth, mellow character with notes of cocoa and roasted butternut squash. Soothing, smoky, leather/ tobacco finish.*

#### BREWING GUIDE:

 9g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

we are, sharing this batch of tea after all!

And in stark contrast to the new-fangled infrared tea roaster above, the contraption below also provides an essential function in the roasting process. This is a pre-modern design of a rice hulling machine. In this case, it has been repurposed to sift out the crumbled tea leaves and tea dust as the leaves undergo the roasting process.

We include the photo of the hulling machine to indicate that this is very much a hands on process — in addition to the initial processing of the leaves upon being harvested. There is a massive amount of time — as well as grunt work — that goes into each batch of whole leaf tea that is produced. So it's not just the natural farming and the rare specialty strain of tea trees. It's deep and comprehensive understanding of everything from the time of planting the trees, to the day of each harvest — several years later, and then beyond with the post production roasting process.

This is how we came to determine this batch of tea to be special enough to share with the Eco-Cha Tea Club! Please post your comments below for all of us to consider and learn from!