

eco-cha

TEA CLUB

Competition Grade Wuyi Oolong

Harvest: Machine-harvested, small batch

Season: Winter 2020
Region: Songboling, Taiwan

Elevation: 400m

Flavor: *Bold floral aroma. Substantial, balanced herb/flower character. Heady, lasting vegetal/floral finish.*

BREWING GUIDE:

9g

300ml

95°C

3 minutes

GARDEN

This batch of tea is from winter 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 leaves have been destemmed by hand in preparation for competition.

TASTING NOTES:



The dried leaves of Wuyi Oolong shown to the left were destemmed and sorted (discolored leaf removed) by hand — leaving only the prime produce in preparation for competition. We are offering this competition grade batch of Wuyi Oolong tea to the Eco-Cha Tea Club following last month's batch of Heavy Roast Wuyi to provide the experience of how much variation is possible — using the same raw material. This batch is unroasted, preserving its fresh, fragrant character.

The aroma that exudes from the brewed leaves as well as the tea is an amazingly fresh floral profile with a vegetal base that is strikingly full and heady. The flavor of the tea is similar — with a smooth, silky texture on the palate and a clean, refreshing finish. The overall profile of the tea is bold, with a balanced and substantial character. It is prominently floral in the nose, but green leafy vegetal on the palate. And the finish just keeps on going!

Wuyi was once the specialty tea cultivar of choice in the historical Songboling tea growing region in southern Nantou



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County. But it got replaced with more prolific cultivars in recent decades. We are grateful to have a chance to experience this tea strain that really does stand on its own in comparison to the more popular strains. It has a robust character when made as a lightly oxidized, unroasted tea. And its hardy nature is able to withstand extensive roasting that other strains cannot.

THE STORY OF THIS TEA

Batch 62 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club comes from the same plot of tea as last month's batch. When we tasted this month's batch of unroasted Wuyi Oolong, following the heavily roasted batch that we shared last month, we were inspired to offer these two very different characters of tea back-to-back. Tasting these two batches of tea that were made from basically the same raw produce (different seasonal harvests), but processed differently, provides an educational experience on how significant processing methods are in determining the final product.

Our friend planted this plot of Wuyi Oolong in 2015. He decided to cultivate a

plot of the now rare Wuyi cultivar to be able to offer a specialized tea type that is tribute to his local tradition. Wuyi was commonly cultivated in Songboling prior to the introduction of the modern hybrid strains of Jin Xuan, Tsui Yu and Four Seasons Spring. Wuyi was phased out primarily because this strain produces much less yield than the modern strains. Throughout the 80's and 90's especially, this region went for quantity over quality. Now, in the last decade or more, tea makers are trending back to producing more quality and specialty teas.

Partially influenced by our cooperation with him as our supplier of teas from this region, he decided to cultivate this plot of Wuyi Oolong naturally. We represented an international demand for naturally cultivated tea, and he was inspired to meet this demand in this respect. So this tea is grown without the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Batch 4 of the Eco-Cha Tea Club was the first proper harvest from this farm. Below is a photo of the farm at around one year old. The plastic ground covering was only used in the first year of establishing the farm to prevent weed growth that would bring

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more pests, and to maintain moisture in the soil. After the trees reached a stable stage of growth, the ground covering was removed and replaced with peanut, sesame, and tea seed husks to do the same job naturally.

When we revisited the farm a month ago to get some current photos, we were very happy to see how healthy the tea plants are. It's not often that an organic grower can cultivate tea trees that are as flush as these, not to mention that Wuyi is a relatively challenging strain to cultivate successfully. This story is the kind of stuff that keeps us inspired to show up at the tea tables and on the farms of local producers to encourage them to keep doing what they do best. We, the consumers, really are a major influence in

keeping this precious tradition alive.

Our friend is one of the most successful tea competition players in Taiwan. He had this month's batch of tea destemmed by hand in preparation for entry in a national organic tea competition. But instead, he offered the first batch of meticulously gleaned tea leaves to us, and forewent entry in this year's competition, because he didn't have time to prepare a second batch. We only discovered this weeks after we asked to procure this tea, and were a bit remorseful, but also very grateful to be offered this tea.

