



Organic Wuyi Hongshui Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked,
single batch
Summer 2016

Region: Songbolin, Taiwan.
Elevation: 400m

Batch Size: very small
Heavy oxidation
Lightly roasted

Flavor: Warming spice aroma: cinnamon, allspice. Balanced, fruit compote flavor. Tangy, mildly fermented character. Lingering, sweet yet clean finish.

GARDEN

This batch of tea is from the same tea garden as our batch of Wuyi Black Tea that we shared with you a few months ago. These heirloom Wuyi plants were cultivated completely naturally, with no fertilizers or even irrigation! This plot of tea continues to do well, and we are very excited about this harvest that was cured using traditional methods of heavy oxidation and rolling techniques.

TASTING NOTES

This tea has a very traditionally cured flavor profile. It's soothing yet refreshingly satisfying at the same time. Something about the higher level of oxidation and the very lightly roasted aspect gives it a home-made dessert character, like peach cobbler. It has a tangy sweetness with an underlying hearty, rich aspect that makes it a very substantial, yet not overbearing brew. More and more, we find ourselves appreciating this traditional style of heavier oxidation and lighter roast level that offers a broader flavor profile and a complexity that continues to be intriguing and satisfying brew after brew.

THE STORY OF THIS TEA

We were very excited to share the first substantial crop from this newly planted organic plot of heirloom Wuyi Oolong tea in our June batch. That first harvest from this plot was processed as a Black Tea. The farmer saw our appreciation for that unique batch of tea, and was inspired to respond to our enthusiasm and encouragement by processing the second harvest as a traditional Hongshui Oolong — a tea type that had virtually disappeared in the wake of large scale promotion of High Mountain Tea, but has recently gained popularity among local tea connoisseurs. This is living proof that local tea growers in this region are reclaiming their heritage for producing specialty teas. Furthermore, this farmer is an anomaly in his farming practice. Not only is he pioneering farming methods that we have never seen or heard of in Taiwan before. He is also producing some unique and superior batches of tea.

We are proud to be able to share the first two harvests of Wuyi Oolong from new plants grown by truly organic and natural methods and processed by



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hand to produce a unique and quality tea. Normally, this farmer does not harvest leaves from his tea plants during summer, but rather allows them to rejuvenate by going through the peak season of their vegetative phase. In this case however, he decided that a minimal harvest of already matured leaves would "boost" the production of new growth on the plants. So his mother, wife, and sister selectively picked the leaves from these plants, resulting in a harvest that produced a mere 10 kg of tea leaves, which is just enough to share with our tea club members!

As these leaves were slightly more mature than what is typically harvested for expedient processing and consistent quality, they were heavily oxidized, as was common in the region some 50 years ago. This involved about 24 hours of intermittent shuffling of the leaves by hand and allowing them to set for 1-3 hours at a time. In the last several hours, the leaves were put into a large bamboo tumbler to have more impact on the leaves with the goal of uniform and thorough oxidation. Following their exposure to high heat to cease the oxidation process, the leaves were

rolled using the traditional method of a loosely bound cloth as opposed the tightly bound modern method. This traditional method of rolling and drying the tea leaves results in a wholly different profile of flavor and consistency. The effect is a rich, smooth texture with a complexity of flavor that exudes a character of handmade artisan tea.

These plants have been cultivated completely naturally, without any assistance from fertilizers or pest prevention at all. This is the most radical anomaly about this 21st Century pioneering tea farmer. The only assistance he provided to the young saplings was to use a layer of leaf mulch to prevent excessive weed growth that would overtake the new plants, and also to maintain moisture content in the soil after rain. There is no irrigation involved at all in his farming practice. He has just recently begun employing a method of "pressing down" the weeds between the rows of tea plants to allow for mobility and access to caring for and harvesting from the tea plants. We have never seen this practiced before. This is the embodiment of natural farming in the



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tea industry, and we are able to source the initial harvests from this pioneering farmer.

It continues to inspire us and give confidence that we really are sharing something that can't be found on the market. By visiting the sources that we find most interesting and representative of specialty tea producers, we are able to share the fruits of their innovative efforts. This continually reminds us that we are doing something quite special. We are really sharing our explorations of a world that never ceases to provide new and surprising gifts of knowledge about tea culture, and also unique batches of tea of course!