

Heirloom Small Leaf Type Black Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked,
small batch.
June 2016

Region: Yonglong, Taiwan.
Elevation: 700m

Batch Size: small
Fully Oxidized
Unroasted

*Flavor: Sweet, fruit pastry aroma. Rich, complex, balanced composition.
Notes of dried apricot and papaya. Clean, dry finish.*

GARDEN

This batch of tea comes from Yonglong Village, just above Dong Ding Mountain. Yonglong is known for its rich soil which differs from other locales in Lu Gu Township. This farm is managed by a father and son team who inherited their family tradition as artisans of Dong Ding Oolong. The son is one of the earliest tea makers in the area to begin using their late spring and summer crops to make Black Tea. Like their Dong Ding Oolong, we truly feel that it is some of the finest Black Tea we've experienced.

TASTING NOTES

This is a batch of heirloom Qing Xin Oolong tea leaves harvested in June and made into Black Tea, which has been the annual practice on this farm for the last eight years or so. Although this farm is run by one of the most skilled traditional Dong Ding Oolong Tea producers we know, the younger generation of this father and son team has made some innovations. And we feel that the son's recent R&D of using their summer crop to make Black Tea is a prime representative of a more general trend in the local industry.

We already knew that this is our favorite source of traditionally made Dong Ding Oolong Tea, but in the last couple years, we've come to realize that their Black Tea is also something very special. In a word, it's the balance of flavor and character that we find unique among Small Leaf Type Black Tea makers. This young tea artisan has learned how to process his family resource of heirloom tea in a way that makes an exceptional Black Tea. There is both a purity and substance of character that sets it apart from the majority of Black Teas, delivering a rich, full flavor that is both satisfying and soothing. The aroma is something like fresh baked plum cobbler, yet the flavor is both clean and richly balanced, with a dry lingering aftertaste that has a finish like a good dessert wine or even champagne. The image below is 8 grams of tea leaves that were brewed in the 150ml gaiwan tea pot viewed above, offering 5 brewings of full flavored tea.

THE STORY OF THIS TEA

The tea garden that this batch of tea was harvested from is in Yonglong Village, Taiwan. It is an heirloom crop of Qing Xin Oolong in the sense that the



eco^{cha} TEA CLUB

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original trees were planted about 40 years ago and propagated in the traditional manner. This involves binding down some of the branches of an established tea plant and burying the supple new growth branches enough for them to take root. This is the most guaranteed way of preserving the original nature of the plant and preventing mutations that can naturally occur from using cuttings, or especially growing from seed. Since this method is labor intensive and takes much longer, it was phased out by commercial production of tea saplings to establish new plots of tea much more expediently. The purchasing of saplings also has much greater potential of resulting in variations within a given strain, due to the unknown factors of their origins and cultivation methods.

The quality of tea that is made from these heirloom plants sets it apart from the more recent generations of tea farms that have been established. We showed the photos that we blogged to our friend from a neighboring village who is a 52 year old 4th generation tea farmer, and he instantly recognized the shape and size of the leaves as distinct

from more "modern strains" of Qing Xin Oolong. We are confident in saying that the cultivation practices on this farm along with the strain that was planted 40 years ago distinguish it as a rare and valuable resource. We feel honored that this is our ongoing source of traditionally made Dong Ding Oolong. And we are delighted to share a batch of tea that was harvested in June and processed as Black Tea by the young and talented son of this family-run farm — equipped with its own private on-site factory.