

Hou De Newsletter

August/2006

News

Our last newsletter was in April... time does fly! Sorry for being so “sporadic” in writing newsletters. In fact, we have been working hard to keep our website and offerings dynamic. Since June, we started our *TeaBlog* to serve as a more efficient information channel to our clients.

Our most exciting 2006 Oolong offerings have to be the Shan-Lin-Shi and Li-Shan oolongs and Wuyi yan cha. Thanks to our customers who “enthusiastically” support and trust in our stand of premium quality, several of the finest oolongs were sold out in a very short time! More wonderful Wuyi will come towards the end of August.

In pu-erhs, the Yan-Ching Hao and Xi-Zhi Hao that we introduced have re-define many people’s definition as what is the greatest quality of young pu-erhs. 2006 Yan-Ching Hao and Xi-Zhi Hao will arrive shortly.

Our well-liked Tea Tasting Workshop has been suspended since we closed our local Houston store on Westheimer in February. The exciting news is: we are working with a popular fresh-produce store, *Sandy’s Market*, to host a series of Tea Tasting Workshops. So if you or your friends are in Houston, please keep an eye on our announcement of the workshop!

From now on, you can also use the new URL to find us:

<http://www.houdefinetea.com/>

Lastly, to thank you for the sweet and continuous support, we are offering **Unlimited Free Shipping for any order over \$30** till September/5th! Please use the coupon code “**summerfreeshipping**” during checkout.

The origin of Formosa Oolongs

Taiwan has long been an important marketplace of tea. Its tea culture, dating

back to the 18th century, is best known for the production of fine oolongs such as Oriental Beauty and Dong Ding. An ancient book describes ‘Taiwan county people make their own tea and use meng-chen (yixing) ware’, which hints at how central tea is to this island.

The refined climate meshes with a modern business practices to create what is probably the most dynamic and influential tea market in the world.

To discuss the origin of Taiwan’s teas, let’s first understand two main types of oolongs: stripe-shaped and ball-shaped oolongs, as shown in the picture below.



Stripe-shaped:

Bao zhong (Pao chong),
Wuyi yan cha (rock tea)
GuangDong Feng Huan
Bai Hao oolong



Ball-shaped:

Tie Guan Yin
Formosa High-Mountain oolong
Dong-Ding oolong
Nantou oolong

The two distinctively different shapes represent the two important birthplaces of oolongs: northern part of Fujian province, China, for stripe-shaped oolongs and southern part of Fujian province for ball-shaped oolongs.



The northern part of Fujian province is famous for the Wuyi yan cha (rock tea), and the

southern part of Fujian province is famous for its Tie Guan Yin.

According to an ancient record, there were wild tea trees found in Taiwan in the middle of 17th century already, but not until Yong-Zheng reign (1723 to 1735) of the Qing dynasty had the Taiwanese people began to harvest and sell these wild tea trees. However, the tea trees Taiwan people harvest and make teas in recent two hundred years are not related to those wild tea trees. The ancestors brought the tea trees that are used for making oolongs from Fujian province in China. Along with the tea trees, the oolong making skills were also brought to Taiwan.

The processing skills were brought to the northern part of Taiwan along Dan-Shui river in early 18th century. Hence the oolongs from the northern part of Taiwan are stripe-shaped: most famous, Bao Zhong and Bai Hao oolong. There is one exception: Taipei pin-lin's Tie Guan Yin.

The processing skills of southern Fujian Tie Guan Yin were brought to the central part of Taiwan as early as the KangXi reign (1661~1772). It requires one special cloth-wrapped kneading process, which renders the oolong a unique aroma and a round appearance. The most famous oolong is Lu Gu's Dong-Ding Oolong and Ming Jian's Song Po Oolong. Another important benefit of the tight and round shape is that it enhances the preservation of freshness, as it reduces the exposing surface to the atmosphere. This indirectly leads to the success of the great High-Mountain Oolongs, as the freshness is a key to their highly valued refreshing and floral quality.

Since our ancestors brought the tea plants and the processing skills to the island, the knowledge of oolong making has been so significantly refined and improved. Nowadays, "Taiwan's Oolong" is the hottest tea fashion, except pu-erhs, in mainland China. Taiwan's precious High-Mountain oolongs also greatly impacted the conventional oolong producing concept in China.

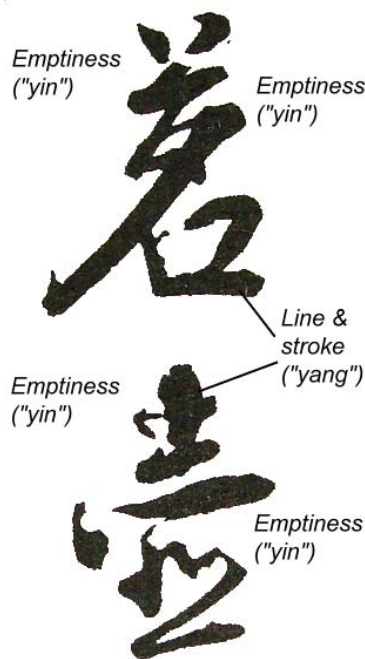
The Aesthetics of Yixing and Chinese Calligraphy



Yixing potters are Chinese artists that use clay to make art in a 3D space. Calligraphers are Chinese artists that use lines and stoke to make art on a 2D piece of paper. But they are all based on the same profound traditional Chinese aesthetic theory.

I once read in a book, "a calligraphy writer focus on how to draw the most beautiful line and stroke, but

a true calligraphy master focus on how to arrange lines and strokes to make the most beautiful shape of emptiness" – here the emptiness refers to the vacancy shaped or enclosed by lines and strokes.



"**Yin and Yang**" are the fundamental elements of all Chinese philosophy, medicine, qi-gong, and aesthetics. Lines and stokes are "yang", the emptiness is "yin". Without "yang", the emptiness is just a plain vacancy. Without "yin", the "yang" lacks the spirit.

Similarly, a yixings potter pays attention to make the most beautiful teapots. A true yixings master pays attention to the spout, the curve of the handle, the shape of the body, and the overall proportion to infuse a vivid spirit to the piece.

The spout, the body and the handle are like the lines and strokes in Calligraphy, and the “emptiness” that is enclosed by the handle or shaped by the body is the “yin” element of the teapot.

So the overall value of a yixing teapot is determined not only by the clay quality, the craftsmanship, the age, and how famous the potter is/was, but also **what “space aesthetics” does the teapot bring to you with its presence?**

What’s New

Some of our latest Pu-erh offerings:

60’s Hung Tai Chang “Lu” Uncooked: the first “antique-grade” pu-erh that we introduce! An extremely rare Hung Tai Chang uncooked cake of the 60’s. Solid old-medicine-like fragrance with an intense camphor-woody and malty sweetness in the background.



80’s Xia Guan Jia-Ji Toucha, Uncooked: the famous Xia Guan “Jia Ji” toucha, before it changed the wrapper to pine-and-crane logo in 1992. Surprisingly aged and smooth taste!



1994 MengHai Da-Yi Semi-cooked Brick: A nicely aged and clearly dated 1994 MengHai semi-cooked brick. Great smooth, round and sweet taste.



2005 1st South-East Asia Pu-erh Tea Trade Memorial Cake, Uncooked 300g: A really



exciting small cake by Chang Tai Factory. This cake was designed and supervised by Mr. Chen Zhi-Tong, author of several important Pu-erh books such as “The Profound Pu-erh

World” and “New-Born Pu-erh Tea Illustrated Yearbook”, to celebrate the 1st south-east Asia Pu-erh Trade in 2005/11. A genuinely extraordinary and exclusive premium cake!

As for oolongs, here is one adorably beautiful Formosa Oolong: Huang Jing Oolong. It was made of a rare cultivar called “Huang Jing Lan” (Golden Orchid). The stems are of pretty golden color, and each leaf has a yellow mark



around the midrib vein. The aroma is lovely sweet and full of orchid aroma.

Our Wuyi yan cha and aged Bao Zhong have received very positive feedbacks. We are so encouraged that we will strengthen our yan cha offerings in the coming weeks. In the mean time, I can strongly recommend the 80’s aged Bao Zhong – a taste and aroma so enchanting that deserve your biggest “Wooww!”



Best Regards,
Irene & Guang