

# GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

August 2018

鐵觀音 陳雨固

ANXI TIEGUANYIN

MASTER CHEN LIANGGU







## CLOUD GODDESS

Anxi Tieguanyin is a must-drink for all tea lovers. Tieguanyin is a quintessential oolong, and Anxi is one of the tea capitals of the world. We are thrilled to steep up a long session of Tieguanyin and Anxi, as well as get to know Master Chen better after introducing him to you last month.

*Love is  
changing the world  
bowl by bowl*

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# From the editor

In August, the weather in Taiwan is still very hot and we drink a lot of greener teas, white teas, lightly-oxidized oolong and, of course, young sheng *maocha* and dian hong. Our Light Meets Life teas also start arriving at this time of year, which is a very exciting as it means we can taste our own creations for this community. We have some very exciting teas this year, including some great dian hong teas and one of the best shou puerh teas we have ever tried!

This month, we are offering the first-ever old student course at the Tea Sage Hut, which is a very important stage in passing on the wisdom of our lineage to the next generation, training teachers who can spread these teachings and brewing methods around the world. We hope to make this an annual tradition, continuing to develop this Way and its positive influence on the life of Chajin globally. This monumental course offers me the chance to briefly clarify the relationship between our tradition and this magazine, an issue to that I hope to devote an longer article to in the coming months.

First of all, let me explain what our tradition is: we practice a way of life centered around tea that includes, most importantly, five traditional brewing methods handed down to us from centuries, or even millennia, of tea practice. Of course, any tradition is nothing but a series of innovations, and these practices have grown and evolved over time, including in our generation with the addition of sidehandle brewing, which we discussed extensively in the October 2016 issue. These brewing methods serve our purpose of brewing tea in all its forms, casually and ceremonially, with an emphasis on creating sacred space that allows people to connect to themselves, each other and Great Nature. Beyond just the precise methods we use to prepare tea, many of which we have shared with you in these pages, our tradition is also a repository for many teachings, verbal and nonverbal, that make this practice much more than a recipe for tea. Like any art, our tea practice includes a general philosophy for how to approach a human life and the world in which that life is lived. This outlook is, in part, conceptual, but it is also spiritual, and in that way, ineffable. These teachings include how to create the sacred space within which tea is prepared, affecting change in the brewer and guests. Of course, our tradition also fosters community—what is called “*sangha*” in Buddhism. This offers us support and guidance on our path.

It is very important that all of you understand that while this magazine was created to support our Center, Tea Sage Hut, emotionally and financially, it is absolutely *not* just a mouthpiece for it. These issues started out as a newsletter for members of our lineage but long ago evolved out of that. Global Tea Hut is a “global” community of tea lovers from any and all traditions (or none). It is a community of tea lovers from all walks of life with many different perspectives, approaches to tea and tea brewing methods. It is there to foster friendship through tea and education in the form of a magazine that is, once again, *not* a pulpit for our tradition. We translate and publish articles from all kinds of different tea people, teachers, lineages, etc., including farmers’ perspectives, scholars, classic texts and much more. We gather *not* as members of one

lineage, but as a community of people who love the Leaf and want to learn and grow together, make friends and hopefully support better, healthier agricultural practices.

This issue is an important return to Anxi, where we spent a part of our annual trip this year. We had such amazing experiences there that, as we promised in last month’s issue, we decided to return there and devote a whole issue to Tieguanyin and the work of Master Chen. As some of the participants in the trip noted in last month’s issue, Anxi is a victim of its success, like many beautiful places that are harmed by the tourism they attract. The popularity of Tieguanyin made Anxi into a tea capital, and large domestic demand turned the surrounding area into some of the largest tea plantations on earth, deforesting mountains to create terraces that extend for kilometers. This tremendous demand also motivated farmers to increase yields with agrochemicals, making the area a gross example of agricultural irresponsibility and the effects of so-called “conventional” farming.

Originally, we planned to only spend a day in Anxi, mostly teaching the trip participants directly about the effects of such monoculture, which are obvious. But after meeting Master Chen Lianggu (陳兩固), we decided to spend three days there, and left feeling like even that was not enough. His amazing life, and the glorious tea to which he has devoted it, has opened a door to an important part of Tea’s history, allowing us to discuss Tieguanyin in greater depth while drinking a beautiful example of why it became so famous in the first place. This also brings hope, allowing us all to not dwell on the problems, but rather focus on the solutions, with shining examples to lead our way into a bright future based on harmony with Nature. We already have all the tools we need, as individuals and societies, to build modern, technologically advanced lifeways that do not destroy our Mother Earth, the source and foundation of our own lives, but rather foster cooperation with Her that supports us physically, mentally and spiritually.



## —Further Reading—

This month, we recommend rereading the September 2016 Extended Edition issue that was all about Taiwanese tea, as Fujian and Taiwan are incredibly related! Understanding Tieguanyin will help you understand Taiwanese oolong and vice versa. All our past issues are in .pdf or .html versions on our website!



# TEA OF THE MONTH



Our Tea of the Month, Cloud Goddess (雲女神), is a beautiful organic Tieguanyin from Gande (感德), Anxi (安溪). It was cultivated by Master Chen Lianggu (陳兩固), whom we met in last month's issue about our annual trip. He was one of our hosts, and he impressed us all with his powerful presence, love of Nature, protected wild forests and incredible devotion to tea, focusing all his energy on his tea processing skills with the aim of improving every year. We were thrilled and honored to introduce Master Chen to you in last month's issue and also so excited to offer you the chance to get to know him better this month, including an article about him on p. 43.

The reason we chose to call this amazing Tieguanyin "Cloud Goddess" is because it was grown on "Cloud Hidden Mountain (Yun Zhong Shan, 雲中山)" in Gande. The grove where these trees grow is stunning, with clear air and forested mountains all around. A bright and clear stream runs right next to the tea garden with water clean and clear enough to drink from. Some trees break the plantation and, along with tons of undergrowth, add dimension and ecology to the plantation. There are boulders around, suggesting a mineral-rich soil ideal for tea growing. This isn't the wild living tea Master Chen grows—there is no way that we could afford that—but this is as healthy as organic plantation tea gets. We didn't need to ask Master Chen about this mountain's amazing name. Instead, we just asked if we could see the mist. He took us up in the morning, and sure enough, we couldn't see a thing long before we got to the parking spot, which was only halfway up the mountain! The entire top two-thirds of this mountain were enshrouded in mist, which tea loves as much as we do. It lends magic to your morning, and you quickly lose your companions and walk in quiet, discovering new tea trees as you go.

The trees in this plantation are all around thirty to fifty years old. They are all Tieguanyin varietal. (Don't get confused: Tieguanyin is both a type of tea and a varietal of tree. More on this later.) Master Chen lets them grow waist high, which is pretty great considering almost all bazillion trees you pass in Anxi are only up to your calves. (As we will discuss later in the issue, Anxi is one of the most over-cultivated tea areas in the world.) The ecology feels vibrant and rich, and we spotted tons of spider webs, which is always a great sign. Master Chen says these gardens have been organic since at least the early 1990s and may have never been sprayed, though he cannot be sure about the previous owners.

Our Tea of the Month was picked at midday by hand, using skilled workers whom Master Chen pays by the day, not by weight. When pickers are paid by weight, they will pick bigger sets to add weight to their bags and move faster and with less care. The hardy leaves of Tieguanyin trees are best harvested when they are more mature. They are picked in bud sets: one bud and two leaves. The bud is allowed to open, allowing for more breadth, astringency, bitterness and fragrance. This is typical for most kinds of oolong tea.

The tea is withered outdoors for thirty minutes and then bought inside to wither for seven hours, with four ninety-minute shaking periods in the middle. The first two shakes are lighter and the second two heavier, tumbling the tea in a great bamboo drum with more force. Then the tea sits and oxidizes until the following morning at around 7 a.m., when the oxidation is arrested with a firing. This is done in a large, hit drum that looks similar to the bamboo drum used to shake the tea, only it is metal and hot. The master feels the leaves and smells them, never leaving the opening, and knows when they are done by sense. After the firing, the tea is rolled three times for a total of thirty minutes. This breaks down the cells and brings the juices of the leaves to the surface. The rolling also shapes the tea. The tea is roasted slightly between rolls, beginning the drying as the leaves are shaped. Cloud Goddess is a ball-shaped oolong, which means it is rolled in a tightly twisted cloth bag by a machine that presses it down with great force and rolls it over metal ridges. The operator guides the ball, turning it toward the center. Finally, the tea is roasted at a low temperature to dry it. A few weeks later and it is roasted again to develop and mature the flavors—once for three hours, next for five hours and once more for three hours. This gives it the classic golden hue of fine oolong.

We find this tea floral, fragrant and gorgeous, with a long-lasting body and a liquor that coats the mouth and throat. It also lingers on the breath long after you swallow. There is a paradoxical strength and depth to this month's tea, as well as a lightness and floral subtlety above the depth. It is incredibly uplifting, and you find yourself soaring into the Cloud Hidden Mountain after just a few cups. We recommend this as a long afternoon session with some good friends or fellow Global Tea Hut members. Quiet goes a long way with this tea, as it is so radiantly upward it deserves some time and space to truly enjoy the experience. This is one of our favorite teas we've shared with you over the years.





Cloud Goddess (雲女神)



Anxi, Fujian, China



Tieguanyin Oolong Tea



Han Chinese



~600 Meters



女神

# A DEEPER SESSION

## Further Exploration into Our Tea of the Month



ver the course of this issue, we are going to explore Iron Goddess tea (Tieguanyin, 鐵觀音), which is one of the most important types of tea there is, and a paramount oolong that every tea lover will come to know and love. Tieguanyin originally comes from Anxi, in southern Fujian. Oolong tea began in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). Oolong processing evolved in Wuyi, in northern Fujian, and slowly spread south to other tea-growing regions like Anxi. Though oolong tea began in the Qing Dynasty, tea farming in Anxi is ancient. There are many wild trees there, including one that is more than a thousand years old, with a six-meter crown shining beneath the sky as testament to the heritage of Anxi tea.

The most renowned Qing emperor Qianlong (1711–1799) was a great tea lover. He loved Tieguanyin and is said to have been responsible for spreading its acclaim throughout the empire, and also for naming it. According to legend, Tieguanyin was discovered by a contemporary farmer named Wei Yin (1700–1775), and was originally called “Wei Yin Tea” until the emperor renamed it. There are actually two different stories of how Tieguanyin got its name, the “*Wei shuo* (魏說)” and “*Wang shuo* (王說),” which means the Wei or Wang “story.” In the coming pages, we will share these legends of how Tieguanyin got its name, but the obvious reasons why it was named thus are the thick juicy leaves of this varietal, as well as its strong and powerful

flavor and aroma, and the patience of this tea—one of the longest-lasting teas there is. The vibrancy of the trees, the processed leaves and the liquor suit the name, in other words.

Many authors, especially in English, write that “all tea is *Camellia sinensis* and that the differences in teas are all in the processing.” This is very misleading. First of all, as we have discussed often, many species of *Camellia* are used to make tea, though *Camellia sinensis* is certainly the most popular. It is also important to remember that processing methods developed over time in response to certain varietals of tea, which in turn evolved in response to a particular terroir. Farmers were learning, honing their skills through some trial and error, as well as a deep connection to a life of tea, trying to process their local varietals in a way that would highlight their greatest qualities and fulfill the tea’s potential. It would not be correct to say that oolong, for example, is just a method of processing tea, because that processing was advanced to suit certain varietals of tea. And as varietals have changed, moving from place to place (whether naturally or carried by people), so too have processing skills adapted and changed, creating a whole array of different teas.

### Anxi & Tieguanyin

Anxi is a tea-growing mecca in Quanzhou, Fujian Province. The name “Anxi (安溪)” literally means “Peaceful

Stream,” maybe referring to the largest river in the area. It is roughly 3,000 square kilometers with tea growing all throughout. The best teas are grown between 1,200 and 1,600 meters, with lowland tea plantations as well. As you drive into Anxi, you are immediately struck by the amount of deforestation in the name of tea production. This always saddens the true tea lover. Though Anxi is one of the largest tea-producing regions in China, and it’s even called the “Chinese Tea Capital (*Zhongguo Chadu*, 中國茶都),” almost all of this tea is for domestic consumption and is therefore produced on a large, industrial scale with terraced hills and mountains to maximize production and heavy agro-chemical use.

In 2012, Tieguanyin faced an international scandal when Greenpeace reported that Tieguanyin and other Chinese teas had dangerous pesticide levels. These reports even reached the domestic market, and many tea lovers in China and abroad started calling Tieguanyin “toxic tea.” Sales started to decline and many farmers began to switch to organic farming methods, sometimes feeling a need for at least local certification to sell their products at all. The boom that had inflated the entire tea industry throughout the 2000s started to crash in Anxi, and prices fell dangerously low (some farmers claim prices fell to 25%). While it is important to note that some scholars were very critical of Greenpeace’s testing methods and argued that the samples from other regions also corrupted the study,





the result is a new market that is, in a strong way, influenced by value in relation to “clean tea.”

This incident and the results are very important, as they demonstrate how the laws of supply and demand can have a huge influence on agriculture and its impact on the environment. Setting aside the Greenpeace study and its relevance, the perception of consumers was that Tieguanyin was “dirty” (which it most certainly was) with such a tremendous amount of plantation tea and heavy agrochemical use. The consumers’ demand for “clean tea,” as well as the price drops, caused the entire market in Anxi to change. This proves that by educating consumers through magazines like this, we *can* make a difference. When global demand for “clean” agricultural products is strong enough, farmers will *have to* shift to survive. We will talk about this in greater detail in next month’s issue, but it is worth contemplating how you vote with your dollar and the effects your purchasing decisions are having on people on the other side of the world! Thanks for allowing for this important message... Now back to our regularly scheduled program, “Anxi and Tieguanyin.”

The tremendous demand for Tieguanyin from the 1980s on, and especially in the early 2000s, caused the tea-growing area to balloon to the 3,000 square kilometers it is today. There are many mountains in this vast area, and differences in terroir mean that the teas from each one can be very different as

well. Like most kinds of tea, geography affects quality and price. This is often very complicated, though. Sometimes places that are super gorgeous attract a tourist industry that makes that place not so beautiful anymore. Often times, the particular mountain a puerh comes from, the gorge a *zheng yan* (正岩) Cliff Tea grows in or the mountain in Anxi County a Tieguanyin comes from are famous for good reason. They are often the ideal terroir for tea in the area and are famous because the tea grown there is consistently of high quality. Over time, as the tea industry in any region expands, new locations that are also excellent for growing tea are discovered or cultivated (we say “discovered or cultivated” because sometimes wild trees are found in a new place and other times people expand into that area). Sometimes these new areas are even better than the famous places, especially if the fame of a mountain or gorge has caused over-production, deforestation and invited the use of agrochemicals. In other words, the fame of a region can cause farmers to destroy the ecology and soil (the terroir) that made the tea great in the first place, though the reputation of a “great tea” often continues long after the quality has started to decrease. The reputation of certain tea-growing areas is always exaggerated and never the whole story. The weather also plays a tremendous role in the quality of any tea, and so do the processing skills of the farmer. Always buy the tea itself, not the story of where it comes from.

Sometimes quality shifts in other unexpected ways, like when the reputation of a newly-cultivated area so outstrips the original that it becomes the new standard. Most historians agree that Tieguanyin varietals and processing originated in Xiping (西坪), but nowadays Tieguanyin cultivation is qualitatively separated by the “Inner” and “Outer” Mountains, and Xiping is one of the “Outer Mountains.” The other Outer Mountains are Da Ping (大坪), Hu Tou (湖頭), Long Juan (龍涓) and Jin Gu (金谷.) The Inner Mountains are Chang Keng (長坑), Xiang Hua (祥華), Jian Dou (劍斗) and the home of our Tea of the Month, Gande (感德). Despite the fact that the Anxi tea-growing area is already incredibly vast (3,000 square kilometers, as we mentioned), the majority of Tieguanyin teas sold in the world are from outside (*wai shan*, 外山), which is akin to many tea-growing areas like Wuyi, where 65-70% of tea is “*wai shan*,” which means growing outside the park area. In Anxi, tea plantations extend for many kilometers beyond the main growing area that made the tea famous, and all this essentially fake, mass-produced tea is sold as “Anxi Tieguanyin,” even though it may be from Zhang Zhou (漳州).

It is always important to buy the tea in front of you, not the reputation of the place where it comes from or any other story about its production. That said, it is also important not to grow jaded and assume that all farmers and tea merchants are out to make a buck.

## VARIETALS OF TIEGUANYIN

### 鐵觀音品種

*There are seven main varieties of Tieguanyin tea, with many wild and new graftings being created as well. Most all Tieguanyin tea still falls into one of the seven varieties: Tieguanyin (鐵觀音), Ben Shan (本山), Huang Dan (黃旦), Mao Xie (毛蟹), Ming Hua (茗花), Mei Zhan (梅占) and Shuixian (水仙). Let's briefly introduce each of these.*

#### *Tieguanyin*

鐵  
觀  
音

All Anxi tea is, of course, called "Tieguanyin," but this is also the most famous varietal of the region, the one all the legends are about. It is incredibly robust and suited to the terroir of Anxi, with thick and strong leaves and a peach shape. The buds very often mutate red or reddish purple, which is caused by a type of pigment called "anthocyanin" that protect the tea from high levels of UV. These pigments are the same as those found in all reddish or purplish plants, like grapes or maple leaves. The long patience, deep body and subtle, radiant fragrance of this varietal make it not only the most famous varietal in Anxi, but one of the most famous in the world. Our Tea of the Month is made from Tieguanyin trees. Unfortunately, the boom in the Chinese tea industry means that a lot of plantations began replacing Tieguanyin with other, often human-made varieties in the 1980s.



#### *Ben Shan*

This is also one of the oldest and best varieties of Tieguanyin. It most likely originated in other parts of Fujian, where it is still grown today, and may even pre-date the Tieguanyin varietal in Anxi. It has thick leaves that are similar to Tieguanyin without the propensity to turn red. The trees are not as hardy, and often require a specific terroir to thrive.

本  
山

#### *Ming Hua*

This varietal is also called "cotton (Mian Hua, 棉花)," as it has downy, whitish buds and may even be related to Mao Xie. These two varieties may be more pest-resistant, and were developed to be thus. Many early experiments in cross-breeding varieties happened before the widespread use of pesticides, so farmers were invested in more resistant strains. These trees are also less vibrant than Tieguanyin, with a subtle orchid fragrance.

棉  
花





# 黄旦

## *Huang Dan*

It is common for tea types and varieties to be confused, like “Tieguanyin,” which is a type of tea to which all of these varieties belong, and also a variety in and of itself. Huang Dan is also like that. This tea is much more well-known by its finished/processed name, “Huang Jin Gui (黄金桂),” which means “Golden Osmanthus.” The leaves of this tea are much more delicate than Tieguanyin or Ben Shan. The finished tea is famous for having a very distinct osmanthus fragrance. It is a very unique kind of tea. Recently, it has been crossed with the Tieguanyin variety to create the “Huang Guan Yin (黄观音)” variety, which we find quite strange in flavor and aroma.



## *Mao Xie*

The name of this tea literally means “hairy crab,” as the buds are covered in downy hairs and said to resemble a crab’s claw. It is common for tea buds to have hair on them, which most biologists argue is a defensive mechanism that prevents insects from eating the sweeter, juicier buds that are not able to protect themselves chemically. This tea is not as hearty as the older varieties, with a delicate and soft floral fragrance. The larger leaves have a stronger serration than most varieties of tea, which may also be the reason for the name. This tea is usually oxidized very lightly.

# 毛蟹

# 梅占水仙

## *Mei Zhan & Shuixian*

These two varieties came from Wuyi, in the north of Fujian. Many of the wild tea trees in Master Chen Lianggu’s forests, which we will discuss later in this issue, are actually Shuixian. Mei Zhan and Shuixian both have large, elongated leaves with strong fragrances. Shuixian is usually floral, delicate and bold, while Mei Zhan is said to have a depth some liken to the Japanese flavor of “umami,” though it is usually referred to by locals as simply “Mei Zhan fragrance (梅占香).” Both varieties are cultivated in Anxi and Wuyi even today, and have also spread to other tea-growing areas.



## THE PROCESSING OF TIEGUANYIN FROM TREE TO CUP

### 鐵觀音製作工序從樹到杯子

**Plucking**

**Withering**  
(indoors and outdoors)

**Shaking**  
(lang qing, 浪青)

**Withering/Shaking**  
in 90-minute cycles

**Firing**  
(Sha qing, 炒青)

**Rolling/Shaping**  
(rou nian, 揉捻)

**Roasting Dry**  
(zou shui bei, 走水焙)

**Roasting**  
(hong pei, 烘培)

**Sorting**  
(fen ji, 分級)

**Packaging**

**Preparation**

**Cloud-Soaring**  
(yun teng, 雲騰)



In the earlier section on our Tea of the Month (pp. 3-4), Cloud Goddess, we discussed the processing of the tea we are drinking together this month. In this section, we would like to focus more on Tieguanyin in general. There are, of course, a lot of variations from mountain to mountain and house to house in Anxi, so understanding a more basic formula will be an important guide to understanding all Tieguanyin.

Unlike most other kinds of tea, Tieguanyin is best picked at noon, rather than early in the morning. The strong leaves of this hearty varietal thrive in the sun. The leaves are thick and strong. Like all oolong teas, the best method is to pick one bud and two leaves in sets, though most farmers nowadays pick larger sets to increase yields. Like all oolong, Tieguanyin is made of more mature, slightly to half-way open buds with two leaves (*Zhong dao Da Kai Mian*, 中到大開面).

These more mature leaves are what gives oolong tea its boldness.

Traditional oolong production is semi-oxidized, usually between 40% and 70%, with some outliers like Eastern Beauty, which has heavier oxidation. All of the processing steps in Tieguanyin take into account the thicker, tougher leaves of this varietal, which furthers the argument we just discussed that processing techniques evolve to suit certain varietals. This starts with the withering, which is usually piled more deeply than other types of oolong. The outdoor withering is usually short, and depends on the sun. The indoor withering also lasts longer than other kinds of oolong and can take as long as fifteen to even twenty-four hours.

The most defining step in all oolong production happens during the indoor withering, as the leaves are shaken every hour to ninety minutes to bruise their edges. Usually, with Tieguanyin,

the shaking increases in vigor and is done three to four times. This breaks the cells down, oxidizes the edges more and makes the tea more flavorful. The best oolong leaves will have a red rim around the edges after brewing, but this can only really be achieved when the processing is done by hand. Most oolong nowadays is shaken in large tumblers, which do not bruise the leaves so perfectly or uniformly, and rarely just on the edges. The withering and shaking will continue until the farmer is satisfied with the aroma.

The oxidation process is then arrested by firing. (This is technically not true as oxidation will continue in the tea indefinitely, but it does slow to such a molasses drip that we can for all practical purposes say that it is halted.) The firing of oolong is done in large metal woks that are heated from underneath using a wood-fire stove. The duration of the firing depends on the moisture content in the leaves.





精





Immediately after the firing, the tea is rolled. Tieguanyin is a ball-shaped oolong, which means it is rolled in a twisted-up cloth bag. Traditionally, this was done with the feet, though nowadays the ball-shaped bag is rolled over metal ridges by a machine that presses the bag down and spins it in a circle. This vigorous rolling is yet another example of the ways in which processing techniques have evolved to suit certain kinds of tea. The rolling of the tea is to break down the cells and bring the juices to the surface for brewing. It also shapes the tea. Tieguanyin is, of course, the first ball-shaped oolong. The thickness of the leaves means that the striped rolling across ridged bamboo trays, like the first-ever oolong, which is Wuyi Cliff Tea, would not be strong enough to break the cells down for Tieguanyin. Also, the shape wouldn't hold, since the leaves are so

tough. A more rigorous rolling was required. Rolling Cliff Tea in a bag like that would damage the more delicate leaves used to make Yancha (Cliff Tea, 岩茶).

One of the characteristic steps of Tieguanyin is that it is often gently roasted between rolls to start the drying process before the tea goes through its dry roast, which is different from the final roast that is done to change the flavor of the tea.

After the rolling, the tea is roasted at a low temperature to dry it out. Eventually, it will get two finishing roasts. Traditionally, Tieguanyin is the most roasted of all oolongs, often for up to seventy-two hours! You can think of the traditional processing of oolong as a glass that the oxidation and roast work together to fill up, starting with the fact that such oolongs were oxidized 40–70%. In other words,

an oolong oxidized to 40% has more room for roast, whereas one oxidized to 70% has less roast. (This doesn't apply to modern, lightly-oxidized oolongs, which are fragrant, light and floral, and a heavy roast would therefore just burn them.) Back in the day, farmers would often send *maocha* (毛茶, unfinished, rough tea) to shop owners who would roast it to their customers' tastes. Roasting techniques are often very secret, passed down from father to son and held as dear as great recipes at famous restaurants. Nowadays, many farmers do their own roasting. With the popularity of Taiwanese oolong, Anxi Tieguanyin has also started to trend towards more lightly-oxidized and roasted teas, making many green varieties these days, which brings us to the issue of what traditional processing is and the changes in oolong production in Taiwan.

## Monkey-Picked Oolong

Even to this day, you may hear about so-called “Monkey-Picked Tieguanyin.” It is very unlikely that monkeys were ever trained to pick tea, let alone from difficult-to-reach cliffs where some rare and spectacular tea grows. Like most legends, however, this one probably does have some historical basis, and certain records even point to one specific event.

In 1793, during a trip to China, British ambassadors and emissaries from the East India trade company were permitted inland to visit other nobles, gardens, tea farms and even the emperor's summer palace (though he wasn't there), where they received gifts from the throne. One of the emissaries, Aeneas Anderson, wrote a diary of the trip, which was later published. In it, he says that the Chinese were very reluctant to answer questions about tea or tea processing, and would look on with blank stares, as if they didn't understand the question. He then says that he was told that tea was picked by monkeys. The Chinese considered tea processing methods a very important and state-protected

secret. One can guess that the farmers were instructed to withhold information from the foreigners, and that one farmer made them the butt of a joke that would go on to influence tea in a huge way, as Aeneas Anderson's published record would influence tea shops and marketing back home. In fact, it was a joke that was meant to deflect questions and left the farmers guffawing and slapping their knees until late into the night.

Though we now know that no Tieguanyin is “monkey-picked,” the title is still conferred upon the highest qualities of Tieguanyin in some traditional shops. The legend died, but the name still refers to the best grades of Tieguanyin, which is a tradition we enjoy. It is nice to use this name for a Tieguanyin, suggesting it is a legend. Our Tea of the Month is certainly “monkey-picked!” The trend also applied to some Wuyi tea as well. Our own Global Tea Hut member, James Norwood Pratt, says: “A proprietor's monkey-picked tea is like his calling card, representing his tea philosophy. No traditional tea merchant calls a tea ‘monkey-picked’ lightly!”

優秀中的優秀  
猴子摘烏龍











Of course, it is very important to remember that processing is always far subtler than such a recipe implies. Most of the time when you ask a farmer for specifics like “How long do you...” they always answer, “It depends,” because they are listening to the leaves and watching. They touch and smell, adjust and change, to bring out the best in the tea. The best teas are also never made just for money. They are made by artists who love their craft. This means the heart is involved as well. The path from the head to the hands travels through the heart, after all. The master always works with her entire being.

At this time, there are two main ways of processing Tieguanyin: the traditional style (*chuan tong*, 傳統), and the lightly-oxidized, greener, more modern kind of oolong called “light fragrance (*qing xiang*, 清香).” The main difference is in type and degree of oxidation and/or roast, though primarily oxidation. Taiwanese oolongs have greatly influenced the Anxi Tieguanyin market since Taiwanese tea boomed in

the 1970s and 1980s. Light oolong is oxidized in a much more controlled environment, sometimes even with machines to control temperature and humidity. This tea is very fragrant, but lacks body, depth and patience. It also requires vacuum sealing and, in the case of light Anxi Tieguanyin, refrigeration after production. Lighter Tieguanyin teas come from sets with less opened buds (medium), whereas traditional oolong is often from more open, mature sets.

There are other differences in the processing of these two varieties of Tieguanyin, including the shaking, which is obviously much heavier in traditional Tieguanyin. Some farmers and tea lovers further dissect Tieguanyin, separating the influence of oxidation and roast. In that case, there would be two different types of processing: light (*qing xiang*) and traditional (*chuan tong*), which could then be roasted in different ways as well, which are usually called “heavy/strong (*nong*, 濃)” and “light (*qing*, 清).” However, a light tea can only be roasted so much.

Also, some farmers have started making Tieguanyin sour by shaking it very little or not at all and leaving it to wither longer, delaying the kill-green (*sha qing*, 殺青) phase for anywhere from one to even three days. This is called “delaying until sour (*tuo suan*, 拖酸).” This sour Tieguanyin tends to be polarizing amongst tea lovers, even in Anxi, as some people love it while others think it is a deviation from tradition that is in poor taste (literally).

When the sorting is done by hand, it can take weeks or even months, to finish. This task is often done by women, as the locals consider them to be more dexterous of hand. All of the *huang pian* (黃片) or “old leaves (*lao ye*, 老葉)” are sorted out, along with the broken bits, discolored leaves, etc. Some families also sort the leaves into grades at this point.

These days, we have noticed a growing trend to package oolong in single-serving packets, which wastes a lot of resources. In Anxi, they sometimes even double pack each brew. Prayers for the Earth!

*The body is dropped  
Let go like the leaf,  
Carrying tree essence  
Without knowing  
It's drinking me,  
Drinking Her*

*The Goddess of Light  
Shining through cell windows,  
Of root, trunk, bough and leaf,  
Of me and you  
And what's beyond*

*Without any understanding,  
Vision slowly clears  
The Way unfolds  
Pouring its own  
Cups of tea  
In cellular rhythm*

*Separation is better  
Now that I have seen  
What the world looks like  
As a falling leaf  
On its way home*

—Wu De

# Brewing Tips 茶

冲泡技巧 完成好茶

Our Tea of the Month is an oolong tea, and there really is no better way to brew an oolong tea than gongfu. Gongfu brewing began in the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) in Chaozhou. It spread from there to Fujian and on to Taiwan, where it was preserved, though also changed, until it was returned to China in modern times, where it has become the most popular brewing method. Though widespread, the innovations that occurred in Taiwan and then in modern China have created a vast array of “gongfu” methods, and some have little to no connection to the origin of the brewing. In fact, “gongfu” has become a generic term in China for just about any brewing method.

Though oolong and gongfu tea are married, and this will always produce the best oolong liquor, you can put a few balls of this month's tea (or most any oolong) in a bowl. In fact, watching the leaves of ball-shaped oolong open in a white bowl is a tremendous joy, since more often tea enjoyment is dominated by the senses of smell, taste and touch. The opportunity to also enjoy gorgeous tea leaves in a bowl is always welcome. We love finding teas like this. Ball-shaped oolongs unfurl and unfold like no tea on earth, dancing about the bowl in glory. Fortunately, you have enough tea that you can try a bit of both, which we would highly recommend.

Many of you often ask for some guidance for beginning a gongfu practice. We plan to devote articles and even whole issues to the topic in the future, but for now let's jump in to a basic overview, which can be broken down to the right materials and a simple, basic method to start with.

When it comes to materials for tea, never over-complicate things. Gongfu tea is about simplicity. There are traditionally “four treasures of gongfu tea,” and they are *all* you need: an Yixing pot, a kettle and stove, porcelain cups and a teapot. As we spoke about at great length in our September 2017 issue, there are a lot of so-called “Yixing” pots that aren't made of genuine ore. Be sure to find an authentic pot made of real zisha (紫砂) clay. Choose one from the purplish family of clay (*zini*, 紫泥), as opposed to one of the red pots (*hongni*, 紅泥) or the yellowish-gray pots (*duanni*, 段泥). Traditionally, stoves were all made of a special white clay found near Chaozhou, but such clay doesn't exist anymore and the antique versions are expensive and fragile. We suggest a nice kettle, with a nice pour and a good alcohol stove to preserve heat and gas, electric infrared or charcoal for boiling (charcoal is best). Back in the day, the only place to get cups was the “Porcelain Capital,” Jingdezhen (景德鎮), but nowadays great cups can be had elsewhere. Make sure your cups do not have any strange or industrial ingredients. Also, a tulip shape is the best. A teapot can be any dish (they were often antique plates), ideally with a flat bottom and gently-sloped sides.

With the right tools, one can begin the long road to “mastery,” which is what gongfu tea means. In gongfu brewing, temperature is everything. If the temperature doesn't change from kettle to cup, the tea releases its essence slowly and evenly and the session becomes more “patient,” which means more steepings. We achieve this by showering the pot both before and after every steeping and by pre-warming the cups every time before decanting the tea liquor. We also practice slow, gentle and graceful movements so as not to disturb the tea. In a stable, warm and quiet environment the tea steeps longer and brighter, with more flavor and fragrance. This is analogous to the environments where tea trees thrive, which also have consistent temperature and humidity and are quiet and peaceful—as the tree thrives, so does the leaf flourish in the pot.



Gongfu

Leaves in a Bowl

**Water:** spring water or high-quality bottled

**Fire:** coals, infrared or gas

**Heat:** crab-eye; 90–95°C

**Brewing Methods:** gongfu or leaves in a bowl (gongfu is much better)

**Steeping:** flash, flash, flash and longer

A few balls in a bowl if brewed that way

**Patience:** 15 to 20 steepings / 7 pours

茶 Make sure to pre-warm the cups before every steeping. This is important as it preserves temperature. The shock from pot to cup will distort the tea liquor, causing its texture to fracture and become rough and disjointed.

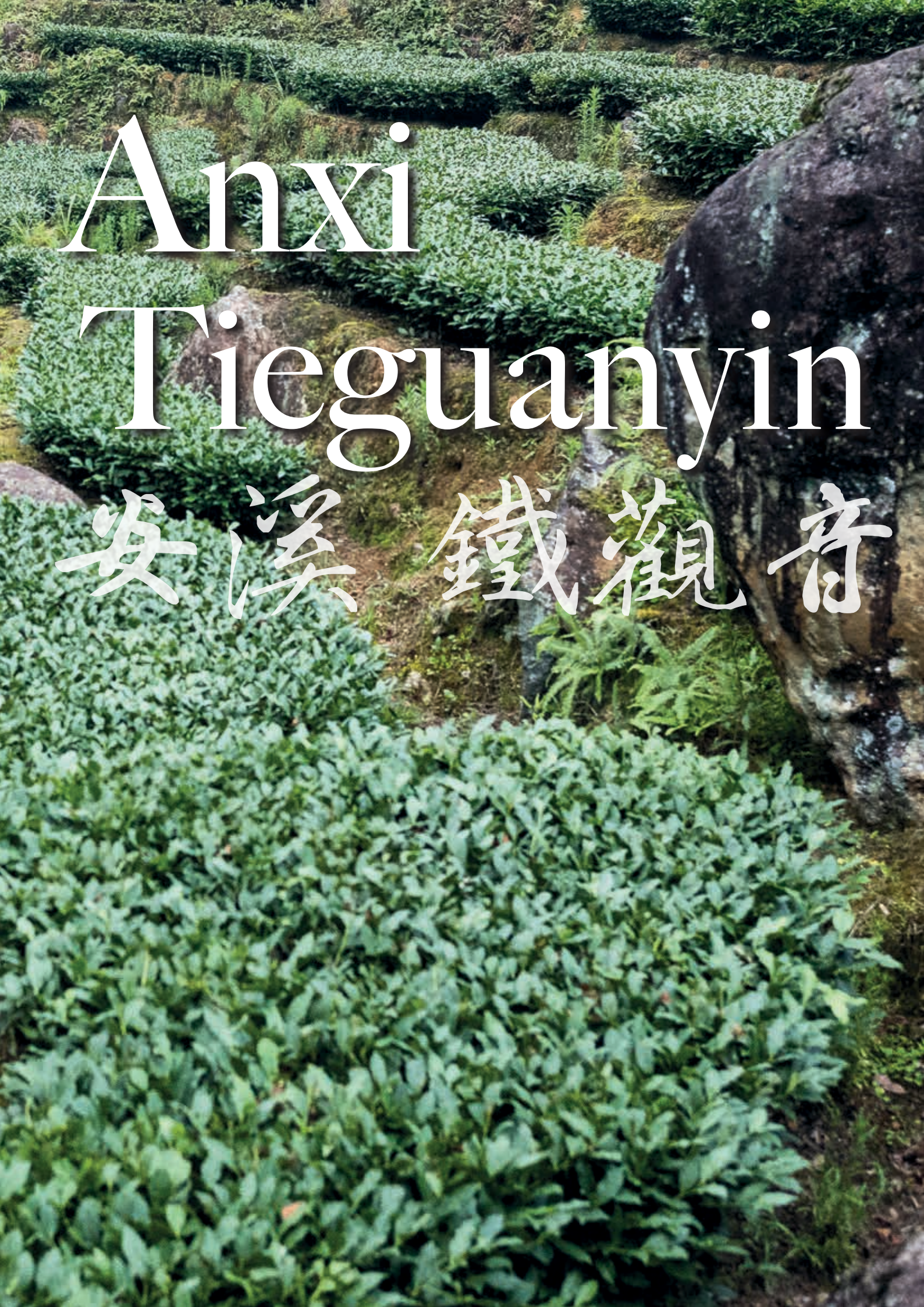












Anxi

Tieguanyin

安溪 鐵觀音



# THE TWO STORIES OF TIEGUANYIN

*There are two legends that tell the origin of Tieguanyin tea in Anxi, both highlighting different aspects of this magnificent tea: the “Wei legend (Wei shuo, 魏說)” and the “Wang legend (Wang shuo, 王說).” We have here a retelling of both. It is great to bring the folklore and mythology to the forefront before steeping up more linear articles on Tieguanyin history and production. Legends bring their own truths, and though they are metaphorical, we need not assume they are therefore “false.” It is a shame that the word “myth” has come to mean “falsehood” in modern times, as metaphors sometimes are capable of conveying experiential and emotional truths better than literal description. Myths certainly aren’t as useful for describing phenomena or the causes of natural or cultural events, but they aren’t intended for that purpose and therefore need not compete with history or science, but rather enrich our understanding. Myths are ways of relating, and can convey respect or reverence, for example, in ways that no literal exploration ever could.*

從天而降  
女神話



從地而起  
聖神話



# 魏說 *The Wei Legend*

**L**ike most Tea stories, this one starts with a farmer... Wei Yin was simple, and like Tea, his best qualities were hiding in plain sight. He went about his chores, tending his tea trees with the same reverence his father and father's father had, as his people had done beyond memory to the legends that Wei Yin would one day join. Every day, he would spend hours in the fields or quietly walking to and from them. There were holidays, weddings and funerals, but most days Wei spent pruning, harvesting, processing and carrying tea to market. Wei Yin didn't talk much, not even to his own wife, but not in a pensive or unfriendly way. He was just simple, shy and uncomplicated, which is to say pure of heart.

When Wei was in his fifty-fourth spring, there was a great drought and many people lost their tea farms, to say nothing of their vegetables and grain—for everyone knows tea is a tree heartier than most. When the following year threatened to be the same, some of his neighbors packed up, abandoned their homes and left to start new lives in the South. But Wei couldn't leave. He had a secret.

When Wei Yin was young, at the time before he was married and when his father was still alive, he once came upon an old hermit on one of the paths that meandered through the forested hills to the tea gardens. Immediately, the young man knew that the old man was special—maybe even an immortal. He followed the old hermit back to his home, which was a small temple in the forest near Wei's neighbor's tea garden. The old man lived in a tiny shrine devoted to the Goddess of Mercy, Guanyin. He told Wei that the temple had been there for centuries, and that every day incense and a candle had been lit for the Goddess. The old cast iron statue certainly looked worn enough to have been there that long. It was the oldest thing Wei had ever seen.

Over the years, Wei visited the old monk regularly, bringing him the choicest tea from their harvest and sometimes rice. The old man would sometimes teach Wei life lessons by telling him old stories, though most of the time they just sat together enjoying the peace of the forest shrine.

Years later, when the old man grew very ill, he told Wei that his young apprentice had gone traveling years earlier and never returned. He told him that he needed Wei to tend the shrine after he was gone, until his student returned. "For not a single day," the master began in a frail voice, "not since even my master's master was young,

has there not been a candle and incense on this altar for Guanyin. These prayers must continue." Wei was honored to tend the temple. Even though it meant a lot of extra time, he would leave early every day and stop on the way to the fields to pray, sitting beneath the altar for one hour a day. Over time, this practice began to change Wei. He grew more and more soft. He wasn't distant or withdrawn. Nor would his neighbors have ever suggested he was unfriendly. "He's a quiet man," they would have said. "And for some reason, I like him."

When the third year without rains came, Wei's wife was very afraid, especially since Wei continued spending a large portion of their savings on candles and incense to tend the shrine. When she would confront him, however, Wei would say that now was the time for more prayers, not fewer. "No drought lasts forever. If we cannot accept the times when the Heavens give us less, how will we rightfully celebrate the times when we are given more?" And since there was a lot less farm work to do, Wei did just that: spending more and more time at the little shrine praying and meditating. He continued to offer Guanyin the finest teas, candles and incense he could buy, despite his dwindling savings. Once a month, he would carry firewood to town to sell for a pittance, which was enough to buy some rice for him and his wife.

One night, Wei was at the small shrine praying. He had walked all the way to market that day after chopping wood all morning and was therefore extremely weary. His eyes flickered like the candles and he strayed into a dream... He was walking with his old master, just a step or two behind out of respect, as he had always done. The old man's white topknot was shining, and he had a translucence that was different from how Wei Yin would have remembered him when he was awake. They were walking along a path by the riverbank, where they had often wandered, slowly as people stroll through Nature when they are free. But in the dream, Wei could sense a purpose to the old man's steps, as if he were taking him somewhere. Soon, they left the path and began walking up through the underbrush. The way was steep, and the walk soon became hard work. After some time, they came upon three boulders. The old man stroked the first fondly, patting it the way you would an old friend's back. When they walked around the stone, Wei Yin couldn't believe his eyes, for there in a small clearing sat Guanyin herself!

She was more gorgeous than anything he had ever seen. The white of Her dress

shone like the purest moonlight embroidered with dew. Her skin was porcelain and Her eyes shone like diamonds—clear and sharp, but full of the strongest love and kindness he had ever experienced. It was as if every loving glance of his wife, every smiling eye of a friend and all the caring gazes of his mother were all in Her eyes. Wei Yin fell to his knees and cried. He cried for the joy of Her. She gently raised his tear-streaked face to Hers, and through the warp and woof of the tears She glowed. With the softest and sweetest touch, she bent down and kissed his forehead. She smelled like cinnamon and osmanthus. "Wake up," she said in a voice more beautiful even than the flute he had heard once in town. "Wake up... wake up..." echoed in his mind like temple chants, uplifting and calming him at once—like Tea... Wei Yin's eyes fluttered open and he was in the small shrine. The candle had burned low. He reached up and felt the wetness of his face, covered in tears.

The next morning, Wei Yin left home before dawn. He made his way to the river, now a rock bed due to the drought. After some time, he found the exact spot where he and the old man had left the path and cut into the underbrush. He struggled up the steep slope without a doubt in his heart, excited and smiling beneath the canopy of trees. After an hour or so of arduous hiking, he found what he sought: the three boulders. He patted the first one with a smile, just as his master had in the dream. With a reverent cautiousness, he made his way around. Sure enough, there was a small clearing just as he had dreamed. And there in the center of the clearing was the healthiest, greenest and brightest tea tree he had ever seen...

Years later, all the farmers for miles around had gardens full of trees descended from Wei Yin's strong tree, and the tea from that region was known as "Wei Yin" tea. He never charged his neighbors for the seeds, wishing them health and prosperity when they came for them. The hearty trees could survive even the harshest drought, produced much more tea than any tea tree the villagers had heard of, and, most importantly, the leaves were sweeter, more fragrant and delicious, tasting of cinnamon and osmanthus. Though the fame of this magical tea spread far and wide, even to the Dragon Throne, Wei Yin was far too humble to feel responsible, and was opposed the tea bearing his name. He remained a simple farmer until the end. He'd be happy to know we speak of Her by Her true name nowadays, though we haven't forgotten the power of faith...

# The Wang Legend

**W**ang Shiliang (王士諒) was a scholar with a beard that brushed the scrolls he would calligraph each afternoon. His afternoons were restful. He would do his studying at night, combing through ancient texts and writing his philosophy across meters of scrolls. But in the afternoons, he made calligraphy, drank tea, went for walks or took naps. He especially loved to take a nice walk, return home and enjoy some gongfu tea and then paint a few lines of some verse, his own or classical.

Wang made his fortune selling wool and other goods, retiring to the mountains to write and read, drink tea and go for walks. Though his nose was always in his books, and his hands were always blackened by ink, Wang was a kind man. When he worked as a merchant, he had succeeded by treating his employees like family and never being dishonest with his clients. Even now, retired to this distant peak, his former employees would sometimes visit to reminisce and ask about his health. After tea, Wang would send them away with a little money to buy something for their wives or children. And as it is in all good tales, the good deeds he had planted in life would soon bear a harvest of fruit...

Wang's greatest fortune, the one he would be known for even centuries later, came to him as quietly and gently as his afternoons. In fact, it all started on one of his strolls down the mountain path. One afternoon, he was walking near his house, down some mountain trails, when he realized that a small avalanche had opened up a path to climb up onto the clifftop his path had led him past for years. He wondered what was up there. Wang was a curious fellow, as all scholars should be. He stroked his beard and thought about whether a man his age should bound up some boulders to a clifftop. In the end, he smiled and lifted his robes, carefully climbing up. He wound around the path he had walked most afternoons, only now it was several meters below him. There was a kind of animal track or natural opening to walk up there. Wang found that it marvelous that there was a natural path just above the path his feet had worn below—only this path was opened by Nature. Eventually he stood atop the cliff where his walks always ended, at the giant stone they called "Guanyin Stone," as it was shaped like the goddess. He often sat below it, but today he looked down from above the stone, giv-

ing it a different semblance. Despite being only a few meters above the path, he felt like he could see farther: the distant peaks receding from greens to blues, light blues to the faraway places you can't be sure are mountains or clouds.

Wang looked down at the stone he always sat upon stroking his beard, and though he liked the grander view up here, he wondered where he would sit, rest and think. He looked around behind him and gasped. He had been so enamored by the grand views of the cliffside, he hadn't noticed four of the most glorious tea trees he had ever seen, with strong, thick trunks and huge crowns full of very juicy leaves. The buds were in flush, and looked slightly reddish as they emerged. Wang was a tea connoisseur. One didn't retire to a tea mountain for any other reason than sipping the last of one's days away. Wang knew good tea when he saw it. He plucked two leaves and a bud and chewed on them. They burst in his mouth with a deep and lasting bitterness that covered the whole mouth and throat, like he had just taken a drink of water. The Qi was marvelous, rushing up his legs and filling him with warmth. He plucked another bud set and sat beneath the tree looking out at the mountains from a new perspective. His worries vanished, and the birdsong he hadn't noticed moments ago, lost in his thoughts, rang clear and true. He heard the wind as well, and understood it in ways he hadn't before. This tea was better than poetry, and he hadn't even drunk it yet.

Very soon, Wang's household had carved away the rocks and boulders that had fallen and cleared a new route to the tea trees. Wang's afternoons could go either way now, sitting beneath Guanyin Stone or above it near his beloved tea trees. With the help of some other local tea men, the wild tea trees had produced immaculate oolong tea that was beyond what he'd dreamed when he first tasted the thick, juicy leaves. It was the best tea he'd ever had, and that was saying a lot. The liquor was golden, with a halo around the edges when you held it up to the window. The aroma was strong, smelling of orchids and osmanthus some days and peonies on others. And one sip always brought you right back to that cliffside and that stunning view of all the green mountains around—the kind of vista that overcomes all your worries and allows you to leave behind your human for the Nature part of yourself. In fact, Wang

often told his friends that you needn't walk to Guanyin Stone, since this tea was like stepping off the old stone into the air to ride the currents of immortality.

Over the years, Wang's distant friends would come to visit and marvel at his amazing wild tea. They were as impressed as he was. He often said that the trees were the real reason his heart brought him to this peak. The trees didn't produce much, but he always shared some with his friends when they came, and many wrote that the tea had healed them in miraculous ways. Some were healed of inner troubles, as they struggled to find their way in this world, while others turned to his magical tea when they felt unwell, only to wake up refreshed the next day.

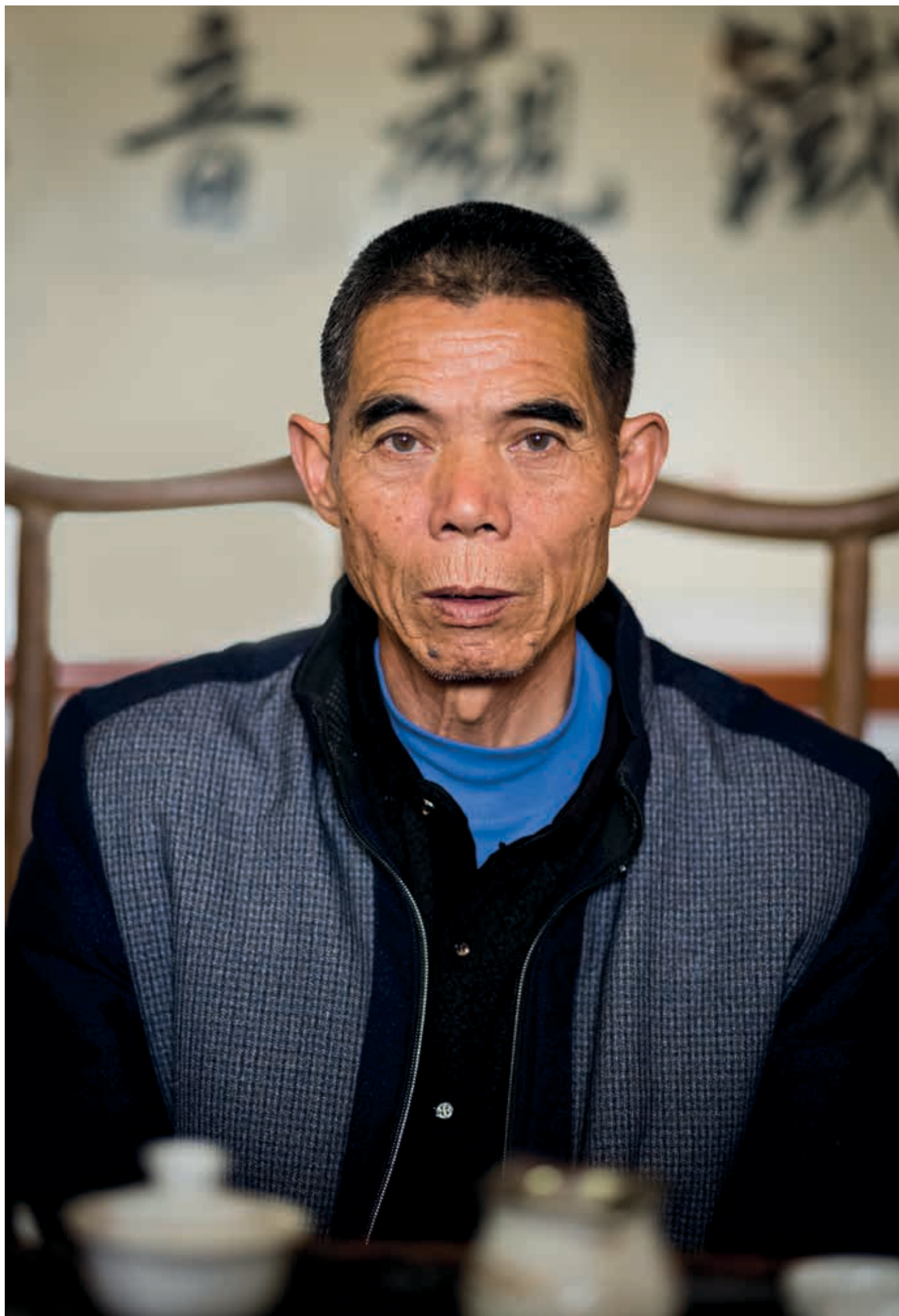
Some years later, the great emperor himself, Qianlong, was traveling south on one of his tours. One of Wang's dear friends was being honored for his service and was going to meet the emperor himself. He knew that the great Qianlong was a true tea lover, often making tea with his own august hands when he could steal away to a corner of the palace and find some peace. He knew that the emperor would love Wang's magical tea and wouldn't have tried such a tea before. He told Wang of this, and he was deeply honored. They secured a precious tea jar made by the best potter they could find and carefully processed each leaf by hand, selecting only the best the trees had to offer. Wang wrote some calligraphy and carefully lacquered it to the jar for his friend to offer to the emperor.

The emperor Qianlong drank the magical tea and was transfixed as only a Chajin could be. The tea was beyond even the tribute teas grown in the imperial gardens. He was taken aback. He quickly dispatched servants to Wang, carrying gifts and other honors, hoping to secure some of each year's harvest for the throne. After his first sip, the emperor had closed his eyes and slipped from time. When he looked up, his eyes were soft. He exclaimed to all those present:

*This amazing tea has a body that is strong and heavy like iron, though it is fragrant and beautiful like the Goddess of Mercy, Guanyin.*

From then on, this magical tea was called "Tieguanyin." The name has lingered until now—just as bold and fragrant as the emperor's first sip.





茶 We were fortunate to meet a direct descendant of Wang Shiliang on our annual trip. This amazing man is seventy-five years old, though all the tea drinking means you cannot see it! He was serving tea in the Wang house, which has been restored.



# ANXI & 感德 安溪 GANDE





*Throughout this issue we will explore Anxi Tieguanyin through the lens of one of its brightest sons, Chen Lianggu (陳兩固). We are translating from a book that was written over the course of several years of interviews with him. In this first part, Mr. Xie retells the stories of Tieguanyin more succinctly and with less poetic license than Wu De did in the previous pages. Then, we introduce Master Chen's home, Gande (感德). The tone of this book is sometimes promotional, which is necessary for such a work in China, but there is still a lot to learn here.*



茶人: Xie Zhiquan (謝志群)

Anxi County is home to one particularly legendary plant: Tieguanyin tea. This fabled tea plant has benefited millions of people throughout Anxi. Around 300 years ago, tea growers in Anxi discovered and cultivated the tea varietal that would go on to become the incomparable Tieguanyin we know today.

Legend has it that in 1723, in Songlintou, Yaoyang Village in Xiping, Anxi County, there lived a tea farmer by the name of Wei Yin (魏蔭) who had been growing tea ever since he was a child. Every morning and evening he boiled some water to brew tea. Being a devoted Buddhist, each day at dawn he made an offering of three cups of green tea in front of a statue of Guanyin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion (also called the Goddess of Mercy). One day, he was up the mountain chopping firewood beside a stone pit named after Guanyin when a solitary tea plant caught his eye. It was growing out of a crack between the stones, and was glimmering most curiously in the sunlight. Delighted, he harvested the leaves from the tree and took them home. Since there was only a very small amount, he strung the leaves together with silk thread and put them in with a larger batch of tea leaves to process. After he finished shaking and firing the leaves, he separated out the special leaves and brewed some tea. It had a very distinctive character and the fragrance was beyond compare. Wei Yin was overjoyed and transplanted the tea tree, carefully cultivating more plants

from it. The tea this varietal produced was heavy like iron and of unique and outstanding quality. So, he named the tea in honor of the Bodhisattva: "Tieguanyin" (鐵觀音), which may be translated "Iron Goddess of Mercy."

An alternate legend, also taking place in Yaoyang Village in Xiping, features a scholar named Wang Shiliang (王士諒). This story also takes place in 1736, the first reign year of the Qing Qianlong Emperor. It was springtime, and Wang Shiliang was attending a literary gathering with his friends at the foot of the southern mountain, Nanshan. Suddenly, his gaze was drawn by a dazzling tea tree, different from all the others, growing wild between the rocks next to the South Pavilion where they were gathered. Quite taken by this tree, he transplanted it into the gardens of the South Pavilion and carefully cultivated it. Later, he made oolong tea from its leaves; it produced an exceptionally fragrant tea that soothed the heart and lifted the spirits of the drinker. That year, Wang Shiliang went to the capital, Beijing, to pay a visit to the prime minister, Fang Wangxi (方望溪), and took some of the tea with him as a gift. Prime Minister Fang presented the tea to the inner court at the palace, and the emperor was deeply impressed with its quality. Seeing that it was heavy like iron, and as precious as the Bodhisattva of Compassion, he named it "Nanyan Tieguanyin (南岩鐵觀音)," or "Iron Goddess of Mercy of the Southern Rocks." And this name lasted the ages.

These mystical tales impart a sense of the rare and precious aura that surrounds Tieguanyin tea. And quite rightly—Anxi Tieguanyin is a brilliant pearl among all China's famous teas. Tieguanyin tea is notable for its natural floral fragrance, recalling orchids or osmanthus flowers, and its unique flavor known as "Guanyin charm." These, along with its exceptional quality and appealing taste, have entranced tea lovers and sent them scrambling to get their hands on it. For more than a hundred years, Anxi Tieguanyin has stood in a league of its own among the countless famous teas in China and abroad, earning its position again and again and becoming famed throughout the world.

The single node-cutting technique, an advanced seedling propagation method, originated from the cultivation of Tieguanyin tea. This technique proved to be a major contribution to the tea industry in China and even the world, and won the National Science Award in 1978.

Tieguanyin tea contains a profound and mysterious power. This legendary tea nourishes millions of Anxi's people, bringing the county tens of billions of yuan in revenue each year. It has helped people lift themselves out of poverty and find wealth, raising Anxi County into the ranks of China's top one hundred most economically competitive counties. What's more, the global reputation of Tieguanyin has even made Anxi known to the rest of the world.

According to a recent survey by the National Tea Technology Economic Research Office of twelve cities throughout China, Tieguanyin is the number one most favored tea among Chinese consumers and holds the largest market share. It has become a mainstay of China's tea market.

Because of Tieguanyin's economic efficiency, from the 1990s through to the early 2000s, the surrounding counties and provinces successively introduced oolong varieties from Anxi to their plantations. This massive trend for planting Tieguanyin stimulated economic development in the nearby oolong-producing regions. The neighboring regions—including Hua'an, Zhangping, Yong'an, Sanming, Shaxian and Yongchun—all became part of this Tieguanyin effect, forming a circle of economic benefit. The successful expansion of the Tieguanyin market became a model for many other tea-producing areas throughout China.

In November 2011, the People's Political Consultative Daily and the National Leisure and Culture Research Center jointly launched the 2013 China Leisure and Culture Salon Series—this was the first time the event had focused on tea. Participants had the chance to come together and evaluate renowned Anxi Tieguanyin teas, experience the endless charm of a traditional tea culture that has been passed down through the centuries and explore new paths toward revitalizing the tea industry.

During an event themed around “The Positive Power of Anxi Tieguanyin,” Anxi County Head Commissioner Gao Xiangrong (高向荣) gave a heartfelt speech that included the following words: “In this era of change, where Chinese tea is experiencing flourishing renaissance, the people of Anxi have seized the moment, and have grown the Anxi tea brand into a world-famous name, a representative of Chinese tea on the global stage. Thanks to these efforts, out of the hundred most technologically advanced counties nationwide, Anxi has risen to first place in terms of the tea industry and ranks among Fujian's top ten counties for economic strength. Tieguanyin has changed Anxi, and even far beyond Anxi it has quietly changed the lifestyles of so many people, bringing beauty into their lives.”

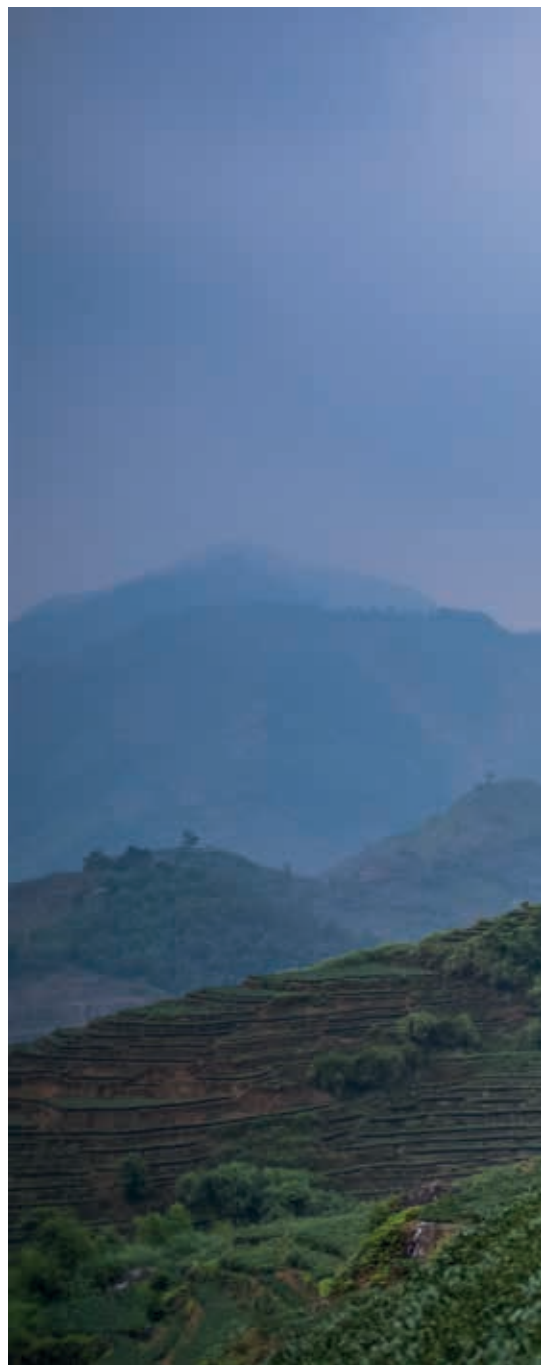
From the 1990s onwards, Anxi Tieguanyin set in motion a new wave of popularity for Tieguanyin, with a focus on health, harmony and style. Anxi Tieguanyin is now recognized as one of China's famous tea brands.

In 2004, the General Administration of Quality Supervision designated Anxi Tieguanyin as a “nationally protected geographical indication product,” meaning that only genuine Tieguanyin produced in Anxi itself may carry the trademark. Tieguanyin tea has become famous not just in Anxi, or Fujian Province, or even China, but in all parts of the globe. Brew by brew, Anxi Tieguanyin has gradually transcended all borders and made its way out into the world.

## A Unique Approach to Naming Teas

The naming conventions for Anxi tea brands are quite unique. If we take a look at the tea industry in general, there are several main approaches to naming teas. One of them is to name the tea after certain features of the location where it was produced—one example is Shui Jin Gui (水金龜), or “Golden Water Turtle” tea, a type of Wuyi rock tea whose leaf grows next to a water hole. Another Wuyi rock tea, Ban Tian Yao (半天妖), is harvested from tea trees that grow halfway up a cliff face, so the first part of its name means “halfway to the sky.” Another convention is to name the tea after an aspect of its physical appearance, such as Baihao Yinzhen (白毫銀針), literally “White Hair Silver Needle” tea. This tea is made from the buds of “large white” (Da Bai, 大白) tea varieties, and the finished tea leaves are long and thin with downy white hairs. Still other types of tea are given names intended to conjure up an image, such as Da Hong Pao (大紅袍), “Big Red Robe,” and Jin Jun Mei (金駿眉), “Golden Horse Eyebrow.”

In Anxi, however, all the teas are named directly for the tea tree varieties from which they are made. (Many of these tea varieties are themselves named after other plants or flowers). This is unique in the tea world. Each region has its own traditions for naming teas and Anxi is no different.



茶 Like most of the greater Anxi area, Gande is covered in tea plantations as far as the eye can see. Most of the local mountains have been completely deforested, and acres and acres of tea have replaced what was once lush bush. At least Master Chen's plantations are organic, sustainable and covered in other trees and plants, including bamboo forests. The rivers in the valleys of his tea have crystal clear water that appear to be very clean, and the tea is left to grow to waist height. The garden above is newly-acquired and on its way to becoming organic. Even the sun is grateful for Master Chen's important work.







Some examples are: Tieguanyin (鐵觀音)—“Iron Goddess of Mercy;” Ben Shan (本山)—“Original Mountain;” Huangyan (黃桠)—“*Huangyan* Plant,” also called Huang Jingui (黃金桂)—“Golden Osmanthus;” Maoxie (毛蟹)—“Hairy Crab,” also called Minghua (茗花)—“Tea Flower;” Meizhan (梅占)—“Divine Plum Blossom;” Daye Oolong (大葉烏龍)—“Big Leaf Oolong;” Qilan (奇蘭)—“Miraculous Orchid;” Shuixian (水仙)—“Daffodil;” Rougui (肉桂)—“Cinnamon;” and finally Bai Mudan (白牡丹)—“White Peony.” Each unique varietal is harvested and processed individually, so each name denotes a high-quality leaf varietal and also the brand name of the finished tea from that varietal.

Since the tea brands are named directly for their varietals, the distinctive style, characteristics and merits of each varietal are presented very clearly in the finished tea. This allows consumers and tea aficionados to truly appreciate the authentic, original flavor of each tea varietal, as well as the differences between them. Anxi’s abundant tea varietals allow it to produce a diverse array of teas, providing a multitude of choices to delight consumers in all sectors of the market.

This tea-naming practice, which emphasizes the distinct characteristics of each varietal, has led Anxi’s tea growers to place special importance on the discovery, breeding and cultivation of top-quality tea plant varietals.

Thanks to its long history of cultivating different varietals, Anxi has earned its reputation as a “treasure trove of tea varietals.” At present, there are more than seventy oolong tea varietals being cultivated in Anxi, many of which are classified as “top-quality tea varietals.” In 1985, when China selected an initial set of thirty officially recognized “top-quality tea varietals,” six of them were from Anxi: Tieguanyin, Benshan, Huangyan, Maoxie, Meizhan and Daye Oolong. In 1998, the Anxi Tea Research Institute bred two excellent new varietals: Xingren tea (杏仁茶), or “Almond Tea,” and Fengyuan Chun (鳳圓春), literally “Phoenix Round Spring.” The Fujian Provincial Crop Varieties Certification Committee approved these two for promotion as top-quality varietals from Fujian Province.

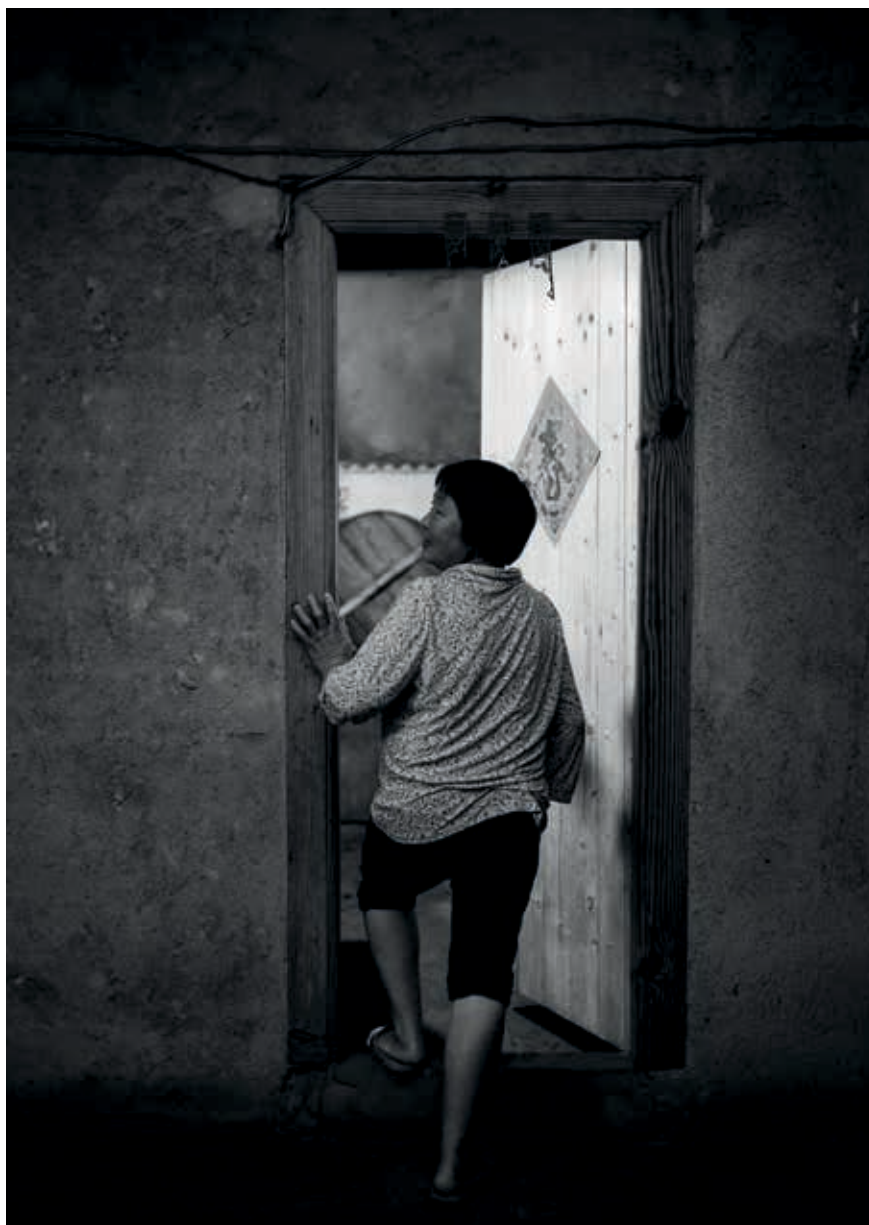
Anxi County is rich in tea leaf resources, and its abundant varietals display many fine characteristics. Some people in Anxi, like Master Chen, have used and developed these resources very effectively, preserving the quality of the leaf and assuring the sustainable development of the local tea industry. Every day, Anxi’s tea workers continue to infuse this age-old industry with new vitality and exuberant energy.

## The Charm of Gande Tea

“Clouds rise and mists swirl; the landscape is rich with beauty: jade-green mountains, graceful waters, and fragrant tea leaves.” This is how the famous tea village of Gande is described.

It sits on a southeast-facing slope of northwestern Anxi’s misty foothills. Climate-wise, this area falls in the mid-to south-subtropical zone, with 78% of the land area covered in forest. The village is located in the same administrative district as Fujian Province’s Mount Yunzhong nature reserve, with its highest peak, Mount Taihua, reaching an altitude of 1600 meters (the reserve’s name literally means “amid the clouds”). The local tea plantations are largely situated between the altitudes of 500 and 800 meters above sea level.

The territory of Gande township covers a total area of 221.78 square kilometers, including 38.67 square kilometers of Tieguanyin tea plantations. The plantations produce a yearly output of 5,000 tons of tea, representing a value of 1.3 billion Chinese yuan.





The area has a population of 62,000, with the local farmers earning the highest net income per capita of all the rural workers in Anxi County. Over the years, Gande township has collected a host of honorable titles, including “satellite town of Fujian Province,” “Fujian’s star tea village,” “national-level ecological village,” and “China’s number one tea village.”

Gande has a long history of tea production, stretching back over a millennium. Today, the slopes of Gande are abundant with Tieguanyin plantations. If you enter the tea village during harvesting season, you’ll see every household busily picking and processing tea leaves, and the air above the village filled with tantalizing wafts of fragrant tea. This is a must-see for all tea lovers.

All the villages near Gande township have been engaged in a construction and improvement initiative called the “Five Changes,” namely: 1) sealing roads; 2) “greening” the environment; 3) improving air quality; 4) expanding power supplies; and 5) “beautifying” the villages. The results have been quite impressive, and the whole area has an aura of mystical beauty about it.

Times are a-changing, and Gande Village is growing with the times. To cement its reputation as a star tea village, the locals have embraced innovation and progress, crafting their growth strategy around the cornerstones of “ecology, quality, branding and culture.” Step by step, we hope they will follow in the footsteps of Master Chen and develop healthier organic tea, leading the way for other farmers.

In order to achieve this goal, Gande Village has embarked on a systematic sustainable development project, constructing eco-friendly tea plantations. They are also actively exploring a new model that involves converting belts of tea plantations back into forest, which are planted with osmanthus bushes and deciduous trees. Nearby, tea plantations are spread with rice straw as mulch and planted with soybeans as a cover crop to provide green fertilizer; daylily plants are also grown on the edges of the plantations and terraces. All of these measures contribute to improving the ecological impact of the tea plantations, creating a new model where eco-friendly plantations exist alongside the forest, rich in biodiversity and symbiosis between the tea and other plants.

✿ *Life is still very simple in Gande. Many of the houses are still built of mud bricks, with winged roofs if the owner can afford them. They are built with three sides, a wall in the front and an open courtyard where residents dry food, husk rice, and, of course, wither their tea. Everyone is open and friendly, and you can stop into any house in the village for a cup of tea and a meal. Sometimes, as Bob Marley sang, “the mostest live in small!”*





The local government provides subsidies for sheep manure sourced from the grasslands of Inner Mongolia, and has vigorously promoted sheep manure as a main ingredient in fertilizer. This boosts the organic matter in the soil, improving soil quality and hence the quality of the Tieguanyin leaf.

In terms of improving sanitation quality, the growers of Gande are deeply conscious of the fact that safe, healthy tea is essential to the development of the industry. In addition to increased government supervision and guidance, the locals are also proactively exploring modern tea production operation models, learning from models used in French vineyards. Thanks to these efforts, the local tea enterprises have become leading players in terms of food safety. There are several operation models made up of various entities, such as: tea enterprise + professional workers' cooperative + farming households; leading enterprise + farming households; and tea brand + plantation estate. These structures allow for accountability and monitoring of sanitation quality at every level, using modern organic methods to promote growth across the whole industry.

Gande benefits from the excellence of its people, with experts emerging in all different fields. Outstanding talent is especially abundant in the tea industry, with untold numbers of master tea makers, technicians and tasters. Gande Village is also implementing an initiative to train ten thousand people in the tea industry, establishing community-based tea processing research institutes with the participation of tea-making experts, such as Master Chen Lianggu's Tieguanyin Tea Studio and the Gande Tieguanyin Tea Research Association. These organizations provide tea growers with a platform for training and sharing their experience, allowing them to learn from each other's strengths and upgrade their tea-processing skills.

Building on the foundation of traditional Anxi Tieguanyin processing techniques, the tea growers of Gande have been bold innovators, developing several new methods for the *zuo qing* (做青) stage of leaf processing, including the *xiao qing* (消青), *hui qing* (回青) and *tuo qing* (脫青) methods. Thanks to Gande Tieguanyin's superior quality, it has found favor with

consumers and enjoyed great success on the market, attracting crowds of tea merchants to Gande. The Gande tea village has become a bellwether for the Tieguanyin oolong tea market.

Gande Village also places great importance on tea culture, with the ethos that "culture is a pillar that supports the development of the tea industry." The township has organized a variety of tea-related cultural activities: they held the King of Tea competition; formed Anxi County's first town-level tea art performance group along with a children's tea art performance group; and held a county-wide Tieguanyin tea photography competition. They also organized visits from photographers, painters, calligraphers, writers and other artists from around China to gather and record aspects of the local culture through their art, infusing Gande's tea industry with a deep sense of cultural significance.

Each year, the people of Gande make an offering to a deity called the Tea King to express their thanks and pray for blessings and good fortune for the tea in the coming year. This traditional folk custom has been passed down for generations, and represents the people's hopes and efforts to create a better future. These varied cultural activities contribute to the appeal and accessibility of Gande Tieguanyin, raising the profile of the village and its tea.

The township of Gande has put a lot of resources into founding and consolidating tea companies and brands, investing one hundred million yuan to establish Gande as a first-rate tea capital and build the Gande Tieguanyin Tea Culture and Innovation Industrial Park. They founded more than sixty professional tea cooperatives, including Master Lianggu's Laogu cooperative plus the Qingyun and Yifang cooperatives. Ten of the associated tea labels—including Longxin, Qingyun, Qitai, Yifang and Dezhen—were awarded the official title of "famous tea brands of Fujian Province."

To better apply scientific principles to their tea planting, Gande Village places great value on collaboration with scientific research institutes. The Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University established a research station for postgraduate and doctorate students of ecology at the Laogu tea cooperative,

and also set up the Anxi Tea College, a branch of the university that provides practical scientific tea education. With Gande's tea plantations providing the experimental base for academic tea research (and teaching), they launched several ecological research projects in the areas of soil testing, soil improvements and rebuilding the ecosystem of the tea plantations.

As we mentioned above, Gande was honored with the title of "China's number one tea village." The China Business Enterprise Management Association awarded this title based on Gande's "Ten Advantages:" the most outstanding tea growing environment; the most extensive implementation of tea science and technology; the most refined tea processing techniques; the greatest number of expert tea technicians; the best quality tea leaf; the highest plantation output value; the most vigorous tea trading market, the highest income for tea farmers; and the most tea brands and the richest tea culture.

The beautiful landscapes of Gande Tea Village, with their scenic mountains and rivers, are set to become even more boundless in years to come.



茶 This is a traditional raincoat made of bamboo, like Master Chen wore when he was young. The sign above reads, "Anxi Tieguanyin tools." Master Chen says he keeps it up on his wall as a reminder of where he comes from, so he will never forget to stay humble and work hard. He also smiles and says that these old coats keep one much drier than the modern, plastic kind.



安溪铁观音  
劳动工具





# Gongfu Teapot

## 功夫茶壺



An important part of our tea practice is making the space for gongfu experiments, so that when asked, we can speak from our own experience rather than from what someone else has told us. The more that we experiment, the greater our understanding grows as does our ability to brew tea. But how do the conditions and guidelines of the experiment themselves influence our results? Are we showing up for the experiment with a clear mind like a beginner, letting go of what we think we may or may not know? Does the experiment lean one way or the other? On the one hand, we have to let go of the idea that some kind of certainty or objectivity within our tea is possible, but then, on the other hand, we must prevent other participants from affecting our results.

We always seek a middle ground between subjectivity and objectivity, conducting our experiments in silence and then comparing notes afterwards. For this reason, it is helpful to do the experiment twice, once in silence, independent of one another, and once with discussion, learning and developing our tea practice together.

As many of you know, we have never offered the results of a gongfu experiment in these pages, since we want you to explore and conduct experiments without being influenced by our results. Experiential understanding is, after all, the aim of gongfu experiments. However, we thought that it might be nice to offer you a window into our process, which may offer you a guideline for how to better conduct your experiments at home.

The ideal experiment is often done with a group of tea lovers, and best done twice. The first time, we conduct the experiment in silence and take notes, not even discussing them afterwards. Then, we meet again a few days later (or whenever possible; you can even do the experiment twice in the same session if you want to and have the time, perhaps taking a break between each time), discuss our results from the previous time and see if there is concordance, questioning each other and learning together. This is a good place for the most experienced in the group to answer questions and guide those who weren't able to experience the difference. Often times, one person will add dimension to the experiment, and beginners often bring incredible and new perspectives to the table,



# DIRECTLY FROM THE POT OR USING A PITCHER

*A Behind the Scenes Look  
at Gongfu Experiments in the Hut*



茶人: Connor Goss

opening doorways for future exploration, which is further evidence that we all must cultivate the beginner's mind.

After our discussion, we conduct the experiment a second time, trying to verify our results from the previous sessions, with the hope that we will experience the results more deeply the second time, having had a discussion with our fellow Chajin. This deepens our experiential wisdom. This time, we continue our discussion throughout the experiment, learning and growing as we go.

We wanted to offer you a glimpse into this process for one single experiment. It is not our intention to spoil this experiment for you. You should also conduct this experiment on your own and may find different results. The purpose of showing you our results

is just to offer the framework itself, so that you can conduct experiments of your own.

Though there is good reason to never show the results of an experiment, we also feel like many of you may wonder what kinds of things we are looking for when we do these experiments. Of course, we all have the wonderful *Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea* to guide our exploration, but each of us comes to an experiment with our own degree of sensitivity and ability to experience one or many of these qualities. We also have our own descriptive language for writing down what we experience when doing these experiments. For this reason, we thought that just this once we would open up our notebooks and share what normal tea lovers with varying degrees of experience

(though we are all really beginners) write down as they conduct one of the early gongfu experiments, using a pitcher or pouring directly from the teapot.

We hope that the differences in the participants' thoughts and experiences, as well as the overall framework of this experiment and our notebooks, inspire you to repeat this experiment with your tea friends. Hopefully, with such guidelines and the *Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea*, you can also continue to explore gongfu tea, experiment more often and understand why traditional brewing methods evolved and were passed down to us. Taking the time to practice now and again, without losing a love or enjoyment of tea, can really be beneficial to one's sensitivity, skill and self-cultivation.



# 茶 THE EXPERIMENT 道

## WHAT YOU NEED

We always recommend using a tea you are very familiar with when conducting experiments. When drinking new teas, the experience will distract us from the teaware or method we are trying to focus on. We also recommend brewing the tea lighter than you are accustomed to. Too much flavor can distract you. Removing distractions is very helpful in general, whether it be in the *chaxi*, the tea or the teaware. Keep everything simple and focused on the experiment itself. We rarely choose to decorate the *chaxi* (tea stage) for experiments, choosing a simple runner and the materials we need. You will, of course, need a brewing vessel (a purple-sand Yixing pot is ideal for gongfu experiments like this one). You will also need two porcelain cups per participant, and if they are identical, you will find such experiments much easier to do. And finally, you will need a *cha hai* (茶海), a pitcher. For this experiment, we chose to use a zisha pitcher made of identical material as our pot so as to evaluate the influence of using a pitcher at all, rather than the influence of the material it is made of (but you could conduct the experiment with any pitcher).

## INSTRUCTIONS

Bring your water to temperature, then rinse your cups, pot and pitcher, followed by the tea. Place the pitcher and one cup right next to each other (maybe on a tray to catch spills). Decant the tea evenly between the pitcher and the cup next to it, and then pour the tea from the pitcher into the remaining, empty cup. Now you have one cup that was poured directly from the teapot and one of liquor that passed through the pitcher into the cup. Take one cup in each hand and taste back and forth, beginning with the cup from the pitcher and then back to the other one. It may help to have a two-column table drawn out with the *Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea* down the margin. That way you can make sure you are trying to experience all of them and compare the differences. It also helps to do this with a fellow tea-lover and share your findings afterwards. Just remember: *maintaining silence throughout will help you focus on your own experience!* Once we finished drinking three cups, we concluded the first part of the experiment, not sharing any of our observations, and then waited a few days before beginning the second part of the experiment.





# Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea

1. Fine teas immediately splash up to the upper palate. The best teas travel across the top of the mouth, moving upwards as soon as they enter our mouths.
2. Great teas travel to the back of the mouth naturally, without having to push them back. They transform through the five flavors smoothly and quickly: bitter, astringent, gan (we'll define this one in a second), sour and sweet.
3. The tea is smooth in your mouth, feeling viscous and soft.
4. A nice tea also swallows naturally; you need not push it down. Look for a pinch in the throat as a sure-fire sign of a lower quality tea or poor preparation.
5. Fine tea coats the mouth. Anywhere you take your attention within your mouth, you will feel the tea.
6. Fine tea also coats the throat, leaving it warm, soft and comfortable.
7. The best teas cause salivation.
8. Fine teas have a very important feature that the Chinese call "*hui gan* (回甘)." *Gan* is akin to the minty, cool feeling of peppermint or the air on a cold winter's day. The word "*hui*" means "remembrance," so this term refers to a return of the gan on the breath. If you breathe out of your mouth after swallowing a fine tea, you'll find your breath is very comfortable, cool and refreshing.
9. Fine teas have a lingering fragrance that slowly rises up the back of the throat and into the nasal cavity. After drinking a fine tea, you sometimes get up and still find the aroma in your nose.
10. Great teas have a deep Qi that relaxes you, slowly spreading to the whole body in various ways. Tea enters the subtle body in different places and then catalyzes a flow of energy (Qi) in many types of vibrations, like spirals around the spine, upward-moving subtle sensations, etc.

## PART I: SILENT EXPERIMENTATION

### *Rivo Sarapik*

The first thing I noticed is the difference between the colors of the liquid. I know it is not exactly the aim to compare, but the one from the teapot looks more vibrant, deep and lush, whereas tea from the pitcher looks a bit desaturated and pale.

#### *Teapot*

There is also difference in the fragrance of the tea. Tea from the pot smelled more fully, offering several nuances that take time to notice and absorb. The fragrance satisfies my senses. Yet tea from the pitcher is bland, watery.

The structure of the tea was very different as well. Tea from the pot felt full but light in the mouth. It filled the upper palate and whole mouth evenly. After swallowing I could feel it moving all over my body.

#### *Pitcher*

Tea from the pitcher felt rough and heavy on my tongue. The taste was bland, watery, and it felt burning in my mouth.

### *Signe Sillasoo*

#### *Teapot*

The tea was smooth, round, sweet, silky, soft. It splashed up to the upper palate immediately. It then traveled to the back of the mouth easily. I noticed that the color of the liquor was darker as well.

#### *Pitcher*

Tea was angular and rough in the mouth. Some steepings felt unpleasantly hot in the mouth. It was harder to swallow, requiring more effort to push it down. The tea had more of a pleasant fragrance. The colors of the steepings were lighter.

### *Jaanus Leplaan*

#### *Teapot*

Tea liquor feels more alive in the mouth compared to the pitcher, and splashes everywhere more easily. It caused a lot of salivation, feeling thicker with a more smooth, creamy mouthfeel. It was full-bodied with the structure feeling softer and more pleasant in the mouth. The Qi felt more calming and grounding compared with the tea from the pitcher.

#### *Pitcher*

The tea from the pitcher was less lively in the mouth, not traveling back in the mouth easily. The structure of the tea liquor felt harder, not moving comfortably in the mouth. It felt shallow and thin. The fragrance travels up the nasal cavity easily and is more noticeable than the fragrance from the teapot.

### *Connor Goss*

#### *Teapot*

Swallows more easily, less effort, smooth mouthfeel, heat seems more full and penetrative, more splash, stays hotter longer in the cup, cooler, swallows easier, well coating.

#### *Pitcher*

Pinches somewhat when swallowing, cooler than teapot, it feels somewhat shattered or lifeless, though more uniformity over each steeping (at least visually), hotter this time (largely because teapot was steeping too long, becoming cooler). This liquor was much rougher and the fragrance also did not linger as long—either in the cup or in the nostrils, making me wonder about the effect the pitcher was having on the aromatic oils in the tea.



## PART II: DISCUSSION & RE-EXPERIMENTATION

The second part of this experiment began with us having a short discussion about what we each observed and experienced in the earlier stage, and then about what the benefits or downsides there are of using a pitcher versus a teapot. Everyone had relatively similar results during the first part of the experiment, though there were a few outliers among the participants. These made our discussion interesting and worthwhile. Despite the outliers, it was incredible to see how aligned everyone was in a shared experience! Some form of objectivity, or at least “inter-subjectivity,” can really bring the results of these experiments home. It helps a lot to know that others are also experiencing what you are. The discussion also highlights just how malleable humans are, and the importance of objective parameters during experiments to ensure what we come to discover is from our own experience and not influenced by what someone else has said or done. This is why it is essential to do the experiment in silence if you are only doing it once; though twice, like we have done, is often better as the discussion also helps make things clear. It also opens us up to the perspectives of others, which can focus on details we didn’t notice and help draw our attention to them the second time around.

With that in mind, after sharing our results and discussing together as a group, we tried brewing three cups again, quietly taking notes and observing some of the things the other participants tuned in to during the first experiment that we may not have noticed.



### *Rivo Sarapik*

#### *Teapot*

It took little effort to swallow, like liquid gel—creamy, oily and rich. There were more nuances of taste that took several sips to discover. It also gave a pleasant aftertaste, which made me want to have more.

#### *Pitcher*

It stayed mostly on the tongue; I did not feel it coating my mouth evenly. The feeling in the mouth after swallowing the liquor was unpleasant, rough and messy. It was not inviting for the next cup.

### *Signe Sillasoo*

#### *Teapot*

The texture of the tea was creamy, smooth and soft. Again, it splashed up to the upper palate immediately and was easy to swallow. I could feel more fragrance this time; it was lightly floral, sweet. The fragrances of the steepings (from teapot and pitcher) were even more noticeable the second time. The colors of the steepings were darker.

#### *Pitcher*

These steepings felt unpleasantly hot, burning in the mouth. I felt more in the first part of my mouth, near the tongue. The taste was angular and rough compared to tea from the teapot. It required more effort to swallow the liquid.

### *Jaanus Leplaan*

#### *Teapot*

The liquor felt thick, coating the mouth easily and causing salivation. It traveled to the back of the mouth more easily, feeling livelier in the mouth and splashing the upper palate. There’s a more noticeable sense of *hui gan* after each cup.

#### *Pitcher*

The liquor feels thinner in the mouth, causes only a little salivation, doesn’t coat the mouth evenly, and has difficulty traveling to the back of the mouth. The structure feels harder and less smooth.

### *Connor Goss*

#### *Teapot*

Hotter, more noticeable fragrance that lingers on the palate, smoother, splashes at the back of the mouth, swallows easily, maintains temperature in the cup longer and more of a pleasant experience overall.

#### *Pitcher*

Sharper, does not swallow easily, less splash, lacks structure and smooth body, does not move as effortlessly, pinching throat when one swallows the liquor. This time around, I noticed a difference in the quality of the heat, due to our discussion. I was clearly able to focus on this after the others mentioned it. This cup was much cooler.







# TIEGUANYIN

PLANTING & GROWING

種植和生長





*Master Chen is very skilled at crafting high-quality teas, but he also emphasizes the need to begin with a good raw leaf. It's like the old saying: "Even the cleverest wife cannot make a meal out of rice that isn't there." Growing a good leaf begins from planting the tree. Master Chen gives us an introduction to the three elements that he is rather particular about: selecting the tea varietal, selecting the land and employing healthy cultivation methods. In tea processing, the previous step informs the latter ones and is essential for crafting fine tea.*



茶人: Xie Zhiquan (謝志群)

According to Master Chen, the first step in producing a good leaf is to select a high-quality tea varietal to grow. Tieguanyin is the most precious of all the oolong tea varietals, so Tieguanyin plants are a good choice for the main tea plantation varietal.

When selecting seedlings to cultivate, we must be very careful to only select pure Tieguanyin seedlings whose leaves display the characteristics noted in the traditional descriptive phrase: "red-bud, crooked-tail peach" tea. The buds are sturdy and reddish-purple, and the leaves are round and plump with crooked tips or "tails" resembling a flat peach (Saturn peach) in shape.

It's best to choose year-old seedlings. The seedlings should be elegant, robust and healthy, with no signs of disease or insect damage. The main "trunk" should be at least 15 centimeters tall, and the stalks should be at least 3–5 millimeters thick. The root system should be intact and well-developed. Ideally, the seedlings should be transplanted along with the surrounding soil to ensure a good survival rate and robust, healthy plants.

## Selecting the Land

Once we have seedlings from a quality tea varietal, we need to choose an optimal planting environment for them to grow in.

Tall mountains produce good tea. Master Chen's tea plantations are situated on a mountainside at an altitude of around 500 meters, with an excellent natural environment. Far from the nearest villages, the area is surrounded by forests, with swirling mists and fresh, unpolluted air. The soil is red, and more than a meter in depth. It's an environment that is ideally suited to cultivating tea.

## Healthy Tea Cultivation

### Establishing a Plantation

When establishing a new tea plantation, Master Chen tills the topsoil to a depth of at least 50 centimeters, then uses straw bricks and the red clay-type soil to build up the higher-level parts of the plantation, with the edges sitting about 25 centimeters higher than the rest of the plantation's surface. During ploughing, the topsoil is shoveled off and put aside. Later, it is returned to the planting furrows once they have been dug, boosting the amount of organic matter, fertilizer and nutrients present in the furrows.

In terms of terrace plantations, where it's not possible to till a very wide stretch of land, Master Chen believes that the planting area should be kept within a width of about 1.5 meters. The tea seedlings should be planted in a single row, with their trunks about 50 centimeters out from the inner

terrace wall. They are best planted in triangular clusters of three plants, about 40 centimeters apart. This way, the tea plants have enough space to grow up healthy and strong.

### Planting

When it's time for planting, the roots of the tea seedlings are evenly coated in a watery slurry of red clay soil. This helps the roots retain moisture, increasing the chance of the plant successfully taking root and surviving. Before planting, the furrows are spread with organic fertilizers, mixed farmyard waste or compound fertilizers. The organic fertilizer should be mixed in evenly with the red soil in the furrows, then covered with a top layer of red soil before planting. This is to prevent the root system from being "burned" by direct contact with pure fertilizer. The planting furrows are dug about 10 centimeters deep.

The seedlings must be planted upright and steady, with two-thirds of the main stem above the surface of the earth. A layer of soil is piled loosely around the roots, and then the seedlings are given a thorough watering to make sure the roots take hold and combine with the soil. Then a layer of plant matter or rice straw is spread on top to keep the moisture in, protecting against the sun and boosting the seedlings' chance of survival. Seed-propagation is rare these days, but Master Chen says it ensures healthy trees.





茶 One of the largest tea markets in the world is in downtown Anxi. Every morning thousands of kilograms of tea are traded here, with several giant halls like those shown here filled with shops, stalls and farmers sitting around with their teas on wholesale in bags. The second floor is filled with a museum and more standard shops. Master Chen said that a lot of the tea sold here is not from the Anxi area at all.

### *Cultivating “Strong, Broad, Lush & Dense” High-Yield Tea Trees*

In the early stages of cultivation, ensuring a high survival rate is very important. Any dead or struggling seedlings must be replaced promptly to ensure the plantation contains a healthy tea plant population if yield is to be high.

After the surviving seedlings have successfully taken root, they must be raised into robust tea trees. Fertilizer must be spread regularly and thinly. During the year of planting, the growers must be sure to properly cultivate the new shoots in each season (for this purpose, the year is considered to have four seasons: spring, summer, high summer and autumn). In autumn, any protruding shoots can be pruned to a reasonable degree to encourage the remaining leaves, trunk and twigs to flourish. With gradual cultivation, the tea plants are shaped into high-yield tea trees, “strong, broad, lush and dense.” The healthier the tea trees are, Master Chen reminds us, the better quality the tea!

In the spring of the second year, the shoots should be pruned lightly and some leaves harvested so that the trees continue to grow full and lush. The trees should also be pruned to keep them at a uniform height, around 50–60 centimeters. The tops of any shoots exceeding this height are trimmed. In the summer and high summer, any new shoots exceeding the specified height of 60 centimeters can also be pruned off.

In the autumn, a small amount of pruning can occur, again trimming any shoots that exceed the desired height and leaving the lower shoots intact. This is also done to encourage a full shape. After autumn changes into winter, the whole treetop should be trimmed, again pruning any twigs that are over the required height. Then, the trees are fertilized for the winter, usually with organic fertilizer or compost. The plantation is treated with lime sulfur to guard against insects and disease, and ensure the tea plants make it safely through the winter and continue to thrive.

In the third year, the trees can be further fertilized and cultivated. With the foundation of healthily maintained trees, tea harvesting can begin. Only the uppermost shoots and leaves above a certain height are harvested; this way, the growers can harvest the leaves and continue to shape the tea plants at the same time. (For more on this flat-top harvesting technique, see “Oolong Tea Harvesting Techniques” in *A Comprehensive Guide to Oolong Tea Standards* 烏龍茶標準綜合體, released by the Fujian Province Standards Bureau, July 10, 1990.) If each individual plant is cultivated into a high-yield, “strong, broad, lush and dense” tea tree, and forms part of a superior tea plant community with a high survival rate, then a magnificent, high-yield and high-quality tea plantation will take shape.

Master Chen has some firm opinions when it comes to cultivating tea plants. He believes that it’s important not to plant the tea trees too densely in Tieguanyin plantations, as this can be detrimental to the development of the individual plants. When processing





raw Tieguanyin leaf, the leaves should be plump and the shoots stout and sturdy. If the tea trees are planted too close together, the trunk and branches are unable to grow thick and robust, and the leaves and shoots will be thin and fragile, influencing their quality when harvested. So, it's important to leave enough space between trees to encourage the thick branches and plump leaves required for a high-quality Tieguanyin.

On the topic of tree height, Master Chen believes that the low height favored in some of today's tea plantations is not the best choice; rather, he maintains that the tea plants should be cultivated to at least a height of 50–60 centimeters. If the plants are too short, the higher temperature and humidity close to the ground make them vulnerable to insects and disease. It also means that in times of heavy rain, the lower leaves and twigs get splashed with muddy water, which can be unhygienic. In addition, the taller the plant, the deeper the roots; this means that shorter plants have shallower root sys-

tems that are mostly concentrated in the surface layer of soil. Shallow roots weaken the plants' drought resistance, making them less likely to survive a heavy drought. So, it's very important to maintain a suitable height to cultivate nice wide, bushy treetops with an abundant yield. A certain height is also beneficial for air flow between the tea plants, as well as the ease of tending them.

In Master Chen's tea plantations, the main fertilizers used are mixed farmyard waste, Inner Mongolian sheep manure and compost. The tea plantation is spread with mixed plant matter, and soybean plants are interplanted among the tea trees to serve as "green manure." Yellow-flowered daylily plants grow at the edges of the plantation and on the walls of the terrace steps. For assistance with insect and disease control, Master Chen turned to the Gande Village Agricultural Technology Station, engaging their agricultural technicians as instructors. He studied agriculture techniques such as how to predict disease

and insect habits and use natural deterrents to insects—in other words, how to use organic techniques to produce guaranteed safe, clean and healthy tea.

## *A Cooperative*

When it comes to managing tea production, Master Chen is not interested in ensuring his own venture stands out ahead of others; rather, he strives to enable the surrounding tea growers to grow and develop together, jointly building a flourishing organic tea industry in the area. With this philosophy in mind, in 2011 Chen Lianggu established the Anxi Laogu Professional Tea Cooperative, a union of 107 tea-growing households. The cooperative drew up a standard of conduct to promote the specialization and standardization of healthy, clean and organic tea plantation management methods and the selling of tea products. He has a sincere desire to help shift agriculture in Anxi.



The leading members of the cooperative established a development strategy: “green development and intensive cultivation of ten high-end brands.” Their aim was to produce outstanding raw leaf resources by strengthening practices at the first step of the process: tea plant cultivation and plantation management. This, together with meticulous processing, would allow them to produce top-quality, high-end tea brands.

The professional cooperative led the way in strengthening knowledge and training regarding healthy tea cultivation and plantation management. Experts from the Anxi County Bureau of Agriculture and Tea and technicians from the Gande Village Agricultural Technology Station were once again invited to give further technical training. As was the case with Master Chen’s plantations, their teachings strengthened environmentally-friendly methods for the control and prevention of insects and disease. These included forecasting pest and disease damage and natural deterrents to insects. These measures were effective both in dealing with crop damage and improving the sanitation quality of the tea, guaranteeing that the tea produced by any member of the cooperative was safe, organic and healthy for consumption.

They also focused on the use of organic fertilizers. As with Master Chen’s plantations, bean plants were interplanted with the tea, and daylilies were grown on the terrace edges, which both increased the profitability of the land and provided organic green manure for the tea plants. Osmanthus flowers and cherry blossom trees were planted around the edges of the tea plantations, growing into a forest and creating a wonderful natural environment on the tea mountain. Likewise, the same principles were applied to pruning and harvesting, creating the desired “strong, broad, lush and dense” tea plants that make up high-yield, high-quality Tieguanyin plantations.

Master Chen also devoted himself to researching tea harvesting and processing, making constant improvements, organizing the tea growers from the collective and facilitating exchange between expert tea growers so they could share their experiences. He organized community discussions and joint efforts to tackle technical prob-

lems, continually improving tea processing techniques and increasing the overall quality and economic efficiency of the tea.

With the cooperative as a platform, Master Chen also organized the purchase and sale of the tea produced by the cooperative’s members. He founded the Lianggu Famous Tea brand, with the ethos “quality tea, quality stores, quality brand” and “solid roots, solid origins: doubly solid tea” (this is a wordplay based on Chen Lianggu’s name: the character 兩, *liang*, means “two,” and the character 固, *gu*, name means “solid” or “sure;” so his name can be literally interpreted as “doubly solid”). He built up the brand and raised awareness of the need for innovation and competitiveness. The Laogu Professional Tea Cooperative established a name for itself and continues to expand and break new ground on the tea market.

## The Master’s Workshop

In May of 2013, Master Chen founded his eponymous tea brand in his hometown of Huaichuan Village in Gande Township, called “Master Chen Lianggu’s Tea Studio.” His workshop was quite unique in that it was the first place in Anxi County to provide a space for public discussion around the continuation of an art that is part of China’s national “Intangible Cultural Heritage: Tieguanyin tea processing.”

The workshop contains a microcosm of the traditional Anxi Tieguanyin oolong manufacturing process; the space is neatly equipped with all of the traditional tools needed for every step in the process: shaking, air-drying, pan-firing, rolling, wrapped-rolling and roasting. The walls are vividly adorned with all sorts of tea-related knowledge: Anxi’s tea history and culture, planting and processing techniques, the origins of Tieguanyin and advice for how to produce a good batch of tea.

The platform of the tea studio has allowed Master Chen Lianggu to hold gatherings for tea growers and expert tea makers to converse on the art of tea, and to compare and discuss various teas. Here, they can exchange knowledge and experience, give and receive lectures and training, and tack-

le key problems together. The studio provides an innovative and lively space for exchange within the tea community. The interaction, discussion, sharing and improvement that it encourages are propelling the art of traditional Anxi tea processing to new heights.

Master Chen Lianggu’s Tea Studio has earned widespread recognition. It has garnered praise within the tea industry for its innovative “master’s studio” model, which enables it to promote the nurturing of local tea industry talent, fostering talented leaders and skilled teams. What’s more, this effect radiates throughout the whole province, supporting talented people to better contribute to industry development, continually strengthening the competitiveness and sustainable development of the tea industry as a whole. Training more experts allows them to contribute to the continuing growth and technological development of the Anxi tea industry.



茶 Master Chen is working hard to create both wild, old-growth gardens of living tea and organic plantation tea that has a higher yield. With the latter, he teaches many local farmers to go organic and allow their trees to grow taller and live longer, recognizing that the leaf is the tree’s expression of its environment. A healthy tree = juicy leaf + processing skill = fine tea.







# MASTER CHEN LIANGGU



*Master Chen is a champion of Tea, from organic plantations to the preservation of wild, living, forest tea. He has spent a lifetime honing his tea processing skills, hoping to get better each season. His love of Nature and of Tea is an inspiration to us all.*

茶人: Wu De (無的)

Master Chen Lianggu is a true tea master. These days, the title of “tea master” is thrown around far too casually. In Zen we say that the “masters” are those who have passed away, and the rest of us remain students of Zen so long as we live. The best relationship to one’s craft is ever-evolving, growing and deepening, and the true master remains a humble student even unto the last breath: a student of the Leaf. However, if there must be “tea masters,” it is not those of us who practice the preparation of tea, but rather the farmers who steward the land and trees properly and process the tea with a skill that brings out its highest potential. While it is easy to cultivate respect for *all* tea farmers and their hard work, very few meet these two criteria: first, a reverence for Nature and the true guidance of a tea garden ecology that allows healthy tea trees to thrive, providing space and freedom as opposed to domination over tea trees in a plantation; and, second, a living practice of the tea-processing skills cultivated over centuries that take the freshly-plucked jade leaf and transform it into a masterpiece. Such a farmer is more than one who plucks here, sprays there, or shows up with a weed-wacker once in a while—such a one is an artist and a liv-

ing “tea master.” Unfortunately, there are few such masters left these days.

When we meet someone who has devoted their life to the mastery of an art or craft, their presence inspires us, for we all have in us a desire to walk such a path and find our way. Such people live their path in every waking breath and become a symbol of the creative process. When this process itself is in harmony with Nature and the Sacred, there is even more power in their presence and life. Yet such people are always humble; they look down when you compliment them and suggest that it is the art that is great, not them. Master Chen Lianggu is a living example of this. He is devoted and humble. His great and very much earned respect in the tea world hasn’t changed him at all: his life and clothes remain simple, and his smile as bright and pure as the small village where he was born.

Chen Lianggu was born in 1965, the Year of the Snake, in the small Huaichuan Village (槐川村) in Gande Township (感德鎮), Anxi. At 500 meters above sea level, the small village still boasts fresh air, clean water and vibrant gardens all throughout. Even now, the population is but 2,000, spread over kilometers of mountain green. Like most of China, the old

mingles with the new here, and one finds traditional houses covered in paintings, dragon lintels and winged roofs right alongside more modern concrete buildings. But the new houses haven’t changed the lifestyle of their inhabitants too much, as they still are out watering gardens, hoeing the fields with old tools and ambling down the streets to share tea with neighbors in the evening after a hard day’s work farming. Master Chen joins them, working hard to make tea by day and drinking tea with friends afterwards. His simplicity is his success.

Recently, the village of Huaichuan was named a “longevity village (*chang shou cun*, 長壽村)” and became the subject of a documentary due to the large number of people who live to be ninety years old or more. There may be more than thirty such elders alive even today. The clean air, high-altitude, fresh spring water and fertile land used to grow organic vegetables all contribute to this longevity, but so does the tea they drink every day. A simple life isn’t just about living long, though; it also has a shining quality to it. Very few doors are locked here, and people smile a lot. Master Chen is a product of such pure hearts and bright smiles. He comes from a beautiful home, surrounded by Nature.









Chen Lianggu is the second youngest, and only boy, of six children. His family was quite large, which was more common in those days, a trend he has continued. He has three daughters, two sons and eight grandchildren. And every one of them shares his open-hearted hospitality and love of kindness. When he was young, things were much, much simpler. He gets a faraway look when he speaks of his childhood, mentioning that “we suffered... and bellies were never full. Life was hard, in those days, but we didn’t know any better, as that’s how it was for everyone.” Being born in a tea village in a capital tea region that has been producing tea for centuries meant that he was drinking tea from birth and tending tea gardens from the time he could work. “Even at a young age I had a love for Nature and the outdoors, exploring the forests all the time,” he says.

In many ways, a person is the culture and place where they grew up. For a tea lover, the best way to understand this is through tea. Not only are all doors open in the evenings, and you can walk into any home for some tea, but farmers in rural tea-growing regions like this had a tradition of “*gong cha* (供茶),” which entailed leav-

ing a large pot of tea and some bowls by the roadside for travelers that the host would never meet. Sometimes these pots were outside the home, but they were also often left on trails through and around the mountains as refreshment for weary workers or travelers. Imagine, if you can, taking the time out of your busy schedule to hike twice a week to some distant spot to refill a large pot of tea and clean some bowls, all for guests you may not know and who would certainly never thank you for the gift!

As a man, Master Chen helped his father process tea and also began working as a carpenter to support the family. He said, “The village was so poor that people often couldn’t pay for my work, though they needed it badly. I would do the work anyway. Sometimes, they would pay in food or other products. Those were hard times.” Knowing his precision, patience and skill in tea production, we can only assume that he was a very skilled carpenter, and that the time spent doing this affected his tea processing. Master Chen lost three of his fingers from the middle knuckle down in a carpentry accident that occurred during this period. Though this was most certainly traumatic, he is stalwart enough to know life isn’t

easy—never has been and never will be. His strength shines through this, physically and spiritually, and was also shaped by it, no doubt.

In the 1980s, life improved for the village as the market for Tieguanyin tea began to develop and tea farmers were able to earn more. Master Chen’s father saved up and was able to build the family a new home on a hill at the edge of the village. The traditional house with colorful walls, wing-tipped roofs and a lovely courtyard surrounded by wooden rooms still stands today. His ninety-one-year-old mother still lives there—herself a subject in the documentary film about the longevity of the village. She still gardens and cooks for herself and is sound of body and mind. People in southern Fujian speak Minnanese (*Minnan Hua*, 閩南話), which is amongst the most active dialects of China, and most elders cannot speak Mandarin. Though we cannot communicate with her, the welcome in her eyes and smile is enough to make returning to his old home a joy. During our annual trip this year, we had the pleasure of drinking tea just outside the home, where Master Chen and his relatives served us bowl after bowl of gorgeous tea. We were all transported on Nature’s currents.





茶 These wild gardens are the most vibrant small-leaf gardens we have ever visited. We have never found such ancient, wild forests of tea outside of Yunnan. Master Chen is really doing something very unique in Anxi, and he has created a tea unlike any we have ever tried. If you order this month's Expansion Pack (p. 49), you will have the chance to taste what such an ecology creates. Around here, we try to never speak of tea as "crappy" or even euphemistically as "low-quality," as tea left alone to its own devices always turns out amazing. If a tea is, indeed, "low-quality," it is always due to the human factor, never Heaven or Earth. Either poor quality agricultural practices were used, motivated by greed, or the farmer lacked the skills necessary to process the tea properly to make a fine tea.

As the economy improved, Master Chen returned more and more to tea farming as a way of life, slowly doing less and less carpentry and following his ancestors into his destiny as one of the greatest tea masters of our age. Though things were improving materially for him and his neighbors, he watched as more and more mountains were deforested to make plantation after plantation of tea grown in rows. And then the chemical industry followed. Master Chen says that when he was twelve years old, he consciously realized a deep love, respect and connection to Great Nature that has never left him. He felt this change deep in his being, though at that time, he was not sure what he could do about it.

## Wild Tea

Master Chen saw tea terraces taking over Anxi as the demand for Tieguanyin skyrocketed. Growing up, the people of Huaichuan Village would go into the mountains and pick wild tea for drinking. "It was a part of everyday life," he says. He thinks that this tea is, in fact, a part of the longevity of the previous generation, which begs

the question: Will it last? Will the next generation live as long? Like all true tea masters, Chen Lianggu was lit by a love for tea. "I can't remember ever *not* loving tea." He wanted healthier tea for his friends, knowing oh-so-intimately the effects of plantation tea, monoculture and agrochemicals, having lived through that change and seen the impact firsthand. The growth and industry were good for the pockets of the farmers, and certainly improved their quality of life, but what is all that without one's health?

Around ten to twelve years ago, as the mountain forests were retreating from human encroachment, Master Chen decided to get involved. He purchased three large swaths of forest to protect, which was quite the investment: Yun Zhong Shan (雲中山), Xing Shi Shan (醒師山) and Bi Jia Shan (笔架山)—all large forests covered in wild tea. The trees here are all wild, self- and seed-propagated trees mostly related to Shuixian and Tieguanyin varieties. Sometimes the term "wild" is used loosely, especially in the puerh industry, but our meaning is tea that is self-propagated, even if the original trees were brought here long ago by humans. And Master Chen's forests are most certainly wild!

These three forest gardens are verdant ecologies, filled with plants and animals of all varieties. There are great guardian trees and a thriving underbrush as well. The tea trees are magnificent! Many are more than one hundred years old, and several are between two and three hundred years old. Like most old-growth tea forests, there is a palpable shift in your being when you enter, and it's not just the mist or humidity the tea trees love. There is something spiritual about these gardens. These are the oldest small-leaf tea trees we have ever seen. Their trunks fork just above or below the ground, often making one tree appear like several. They are actually the same varieties that are so dwarfed in the plantations that literally surround all of Anxi, making the transition from the plantations that surround you on the drive up to these forests, and then walking into and amongst the old trees themselves, all the more pronounced. (Sadly, the distinction from human to Nature is like this nowadays.) There is a magic to their long, sinewy trunks that often hang over the paths through the forest, creating a kind of tunnel you walk through that steals the breath away. This forest feels like straying through the dreams of a tea lover, lost in bliss...



Everywhere life thrums through these forests. Seeing the spiders and hearing animals, the birdsong that rings through the mist, you feel as healthy as the garden you walk through. The trees are covered in moss, and rich with life. The leaves are thicker, juicier and more vibrant. You pick one and taste its creamy sweet bitterness, feeling all the energy that has gone into its creation: from mountain life absorbed through deep roots to mist and rain, sunshine and the vibrant ecology. Master Chen says that “whatever we do to Great Nature, we do to ourselves. She formed us; She nourishes us and it is through Her bounty that we live.” Master Chen’s brand is called “Ye Shi (野實),” which means “Care for the Wild.” He hopes that whoever drinks his tea feels a love for Nature, and is reminded of our connection and dependence upon Her. We have certainly felt that drinking his wild tea—a richness beyond the ordinary that only a cup can tell...

## From Wild Leaf to Masterpiece

Though Master Chen also grows organic plantation tea, like our Tea of the Month, his passion is for his wild tea. The old trees are harvested only once a year, and the trees are carefully monitored to make sure that they are never over-harvested. Most of the trees need to be climbed, requiring scaffolding. It takes thirty people a week to harvest these gardens, while seven others, along with Master Chen, process the tea by hand.

The wild tea is processed much like traditional Tieguanyin, though they have adapted to the larger, thicker leaves. There is an outdoor withering of around thirty minutes, indoor withering and shaking for around eight hours, firing, three rolling periods and then a roasting before the tea is sorted by hand to remove unwanted leaves and stems. All of this is done with the care and skill such tea deserves.

Over the last five years, Master Chen has won many awards for his tea and grown to great fame. He is now a “Grandmaster (大師)” in the eyes of the local tea industry and the government. Others have even begun to follow in his footsteps, protecting

and using wild tea. On our trip, we casually bumped into the mayor and several other government officials of Anxi on a walk down the road. They mentioned to our group how much they respected Master Chen, hoping that his work would inspire all Anxi farmers to produce healthier tea and return the surrounding mountains to forest, mentioning also that they had plans to help him increase his project and its influence.

The very low yield of these wild forests, coupled with the intensity of the harvest and processing, make this wild tea expensive, especially as its renown has grown. On our trip, everyone was given a small wooden box filled with this wild tea, and we know that many of the Global Tea Hut members there were unaware of just how princely a gift they had been given! Though he has made a name for himself, Master Chen remains humble and true and uses the proceeds towards purchasing more wild tea gardens to protect, creating organic plantations and returning cultivated land to wild forests.

Master Chen’s humility is evident when you interview him about all this, as he often reverts to simple statements like: “I just wanted to make healthy tea for my friends—tea like we drank in our village when I was young.” In fact, he recreated a very special honey tea that was once common in the village, and to which he attributes the long life of the villagers. In fact, many of the travelers on our trip found the honey tea session to be the most powerful on the trip. This special tea is made from wild Tieguanyin leaves that are processed to completion like usual. The next step is to collect wild honey, which Master Chen says is also a dying art. He often has to hike to very rural homesteads in the area, where elders still find and gather the wild honey of the forests. The tea is roasted for hours in a large wok, slowly adding the honey. It is roasted until it is crisp and hard, without any stickiness. Old buddha’s hand (*fo shou*, 佛手) fruit is collected and sun-dried. This is a Chinese fruit that is related to bergamot that has been a Traditional Chinese Medicine ingredient used primarily to treat the throat for centuries. The sun-dried buddha’s hand is added during the roasting with the honey. The result is an amazingly vibrant and sweet tea

filled with the forest energy of the wild tea, the amazing honey and fruit—all of which create a powerhouse of Nature energy that is incredibly uplifting to drink. This tea is not for sale. Master Chen only makes it to share with friends and family, or at the request of very special friends (perhaps?).

All of Master Chen’s tea is processed with incredible heart. He walks his talk, living and breathing tea. He is always striving to improve, hoping that each year he is better than the last, though knowing that the best tea is a cooperative effort between the weather (Heaven), the garden (Earth) and the human being guiding this transformation. “Whatever you do, must be done with absolute commitment and heart,” he says. “I make tea. I want my tea to reach its highest potential and that cannot happen if I am motivated by money. I must learn and grow, practice and work. And I must do all of this with my whole being. Without heart, there is no great tea, like anything.” He hopes that all Chajin who drink his tea feel this effort, and that it helps motivate us to find our own path of heart. A human being needs a path of heart to thrive: something to devote yourself to heart and soul. Master Chen Lianggu is a living example of such devotion. Every time you are with him, you leave inspired to give more of yourself, better yourself and work harder to manifest heart in your life and career. His tea is an extension of that life, from Great Nature to cup. And following the journey of these incredible leaves from the long drive up to the awe-inspiring hike into the old-growth forests, through the tree-climbing harvest to the incredibly skilled processing is enough to restore the term “tea master” to its former glory.



茶 This candid photo was taken from a distance as Master Chen inspects some roasting tea to see if it is time to roll it again. It shows his clear love for the Leaf.







# Global Tea Hut Expansion Packs

## EXPANSION VII: WILD LIVING TEA VS. PLANTATION TEA

*We've developed a new and exciting way to expand your tea education. We offer three or four of these expansions a year. Each will come with two or more teas that expand upon the topics we are covering in that issue, allowing you to taste more, rarer and sometimes higher-quality samples, in order to learn more about various genres of tea. This month, we have the pleasure of drinking some incredible samples from Master Chen's various farms, including the old-growth trees we discussed in this issue and the previous one. This is a wonderful opportunity to understand the human relationship to Nature through tea.*

Over the years, we have shared simple, clean teas that remind us to celebrate all the simple moments of our lives, as well as bright and transcendent examples of rare and unique teas that epitomize their genres. But there will always be a much greater variety of tea than we could ever send you, both in kind and quality. Some teas are too rare to get in the amounts we would need to send with our magazine, and others are just too expensive for our friends to donate, no matter how strongly they support our message. And yet, a large part of the motivation for including tea with this magazine is so that the education in tea we are providing isn't just intellectual, but experiential. Drinking twelve unique teas together every year is more than half of what Global Tea Hut is all about! And now, it will be about more.

Many of you have been emailing us over the years asking for a way to go deeper into the rarer genres we cover, how to get more of a particular Global Tea Hut tea and other questions concerning furthering your tea education by drinking more and different examples of the many kinds of tea we talk

about in these magazines. The issue is that we aren't tea merchants; we are a tea school. And we don't have a lot of experience buying tea online, so we don't know where to send you. Also, in our commitment to stay ad-free and not endorse any one tea brand, merchant or shop, we prefer to abstain from recommending any given tea merchant, even if they are a friend or supporter of our Center.

The idea is that when we can, we release a limited-edition expansion on the topic covered in that month's magazine, affording you the chance to drink at least a couple more samples of the type of tea we are discussing. Often, these extras will be rarer and/or important to your journey exploring that kind of tea. Each expansion pack will be exclusively for Global Tea Hut members. We will keep the expansions transparent, letting you know our cost for the tea, shipping and how much we think is a fair minimum donation. As with all our work, you will be able to choose the amount you donate based on the cost of the tea and the minimum suggested donation. Our goal is to keep each and every expansion pack

as affordable as possible, with little to no mark-up. The expansion packs will be limited, and distributed on a first come, first served basis. If we find that demand for them is high, then we will try to make more next time.

These Expansion Packs have offered you the opportunity to taste some rare and special tea that we cannot afford to send as Tea of the Month samples, or perhaps the quantity is too small to offer to the community in that way. This month's expansion is a bit of both.

In our article on Master Chen Lianggu (陳兩國), we spoke about his amazing forests of wild tea trees and the hand-processed Tieguanyin he makes from it. These are the same forests that inspired and moved all the participants in this year's annual Global Tea Hut trip. Of course, we could not afford, nor is there enough of this tea, to send as a Tea of the Month, but we wanted to make it possible for you to try some if you are interested. This tea comes from one-hundred- to two-hundred-and-fifty-year-old trees, and is all hand-picked, often using scaffolding, and then hand-processed to bring out the best in these precious leaves.



雲女神



茶 Cloud Goddess

野生茶



茶 Wild, old-tree Tieguanyin



This rare tea is all ordered long before the season, and sells out immediately, so we are lucky to even have this small amount. It can be brewed leaves in a bowl, with just a few leaves, or, more ideally, brewed gongfu. (There is enough that you can try both.) Watching the balls open in a bowl is a treat, but gongfu brings out the best in oolong tea. Either way, the Qi of this tea is powerful and has the vibrancy of an ancient forest, so be sure you have set aside time for a long session.

*The aim of this expansion pack is to let you try the difference between wild, living, forest tea and organic plantation tea. This will help you to understand what we mean when we say “living tea,” and what the characteristics that define living tea make a tea into: seed-propagation, room to grow, biodiversity, no agro-chemicals, no irrigation and a positive stewardship by the farmer defined by a love of tea, not financial motivations. This comparison allows for a true, experiential understanding of these principles.*

## This Expansion Pack comes with

- 茶 1 10g tin of wild, old-growth Tieguanyin
- 茶 1 more 10g serving of our Tea of the Month, Cloud Goddess (雲女神)

*This amazing Expansion Pack is \$25 + \$10 shipping*

[www.globalteahut.org/expansions](http://www.globalteahut.org/expansions)



# TIEGUANYIN

## HARVEST & PROCESSING

## 收成和製作





*Master Chen is among the best tea producers we have met. In this article, Mr. Xie takes us deep into the production of Tieguanyin at Master Chen's processing facility, including all the intricacies that go into the creation of this magic tea. There is always more than a description can convey, though. Many times when you ask a master how a certain step is done, they answer, "It depends!" Most of the skill is in the hands, not the concepts used to describe the process to us. Nevertheless, understanding the skill required to make our tea deepens our appreciation.*



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**M**aster Tieguanyin tea maker Chen Lianggu (陳兩固) tells us this: "To make a good brew of Tieguanyin, one must master three steps: selecting the leaf, protecting the leaf, and 'making' the leaf." Let us take a further look at these three steps:

### *Selecting the leaf* (*xuan qing*, 選青)

In Chinese, fresh tea leaves are referred to as *qing* (青), which literally means "green." The first step is to select high-quality Tieguanyin tea leaves. The leaves must be harvested from tea trees that grow in high-altitude mountain areas, with a good natural environment, no pollution and red soil rich in organic matter. The very best Tieguanyin tea leaves are those whose color and shape fit the traditional description: "red-bud, crooked-tail peaches."

The fresh leaves should be suitably tender. The new tea tips should be picked in sets of one bud along with two or three leaves; in other words, the two or three nearest the tip of the shoot, which may be only partly opened. The leaves should be whole and unblemished, with no signs of disease or insect damage.

### *Protecting the leaf* (*hu qing*, 護青)

Freshly picked, fine-quality Tieguanyin tea leaves must be treated with as much care as a newborn baby throughout the first part of the manufacturing

process. The leaves must retain their fresh, lively state from start to finish. This is the only way to achieve an optimal result from the oxidation process, and to truly create the unique Tieguanyin color, flavor, fragrance and shape.

This is the origin of a common saying among tea farmers: you can't use "dead" tea leaves; you must use "living" leaves if you want to make good tea.

### *"Making" the leaf* (*zuo qing*, 做青)

This process is crucial to the character of the tea, and involves three steps: sun-withering, shaking, and airing. Together, these three steps form a process known to tea farmers as *zuo qing*, literally "making the green" (recalling that "green" refers to the raw tea leaf).

The *zuo qing* technique is the key to Tieguanyin's unique flavor and quality. To produce a truly great brew, the tea maker must painstakingly master every technique and step of this meticulous process. It takes real depth of knowledge to produce a good Tieguanyin. The *zuo qing* process in particular requires great flexibility and technical skill. Those who are proficient in the art of tea-making are able to "watch the tea while making the tea," as well as to "watch the weather while making the tea."

"Watching the tea" means adapting the *zuo qing* method according to factors such as: the age and water content of the tea leaves; whether they were picked in the morning, noon or evening;

and the changes that occur due to oxidation during the *zuo qing* process. Every step must be fine-tuned, including how many times the leaves are shaken and how heavily, plus how long the leaves are air-dried.

"Watching the weather" means observing factors such as wind direction and precipitation and adapting accordingly. Is there a southerly or northerly wind? Is it sunny, or rainy and overcast? A southerly wind brings high temperatures and humidity, which means the tea leaves oxidize more quickly. This calls for light shaking and piling the leaves in a thinner layer. A northerly wind means low temperatures and humidity, and hence slow fermentation. This requires more thorough shaking and thicker piling to boost oxidation. A northerly wind, coupled with a well-controlled *zuo qing* process, produces the best quality tea. (This is because northerlies bring cooler weather, resulting in an ambient room temperature of around 20°C. At this temperature, the enzymatic oxidation in the leaves occurs more slowly, which is beneficial for the quality, flavor, fragrance and freshness of the finished tea.) Hence, a lot of experience is needed to master all these factors and to produce an excellent Tieguanyin tea.

Of course, Heaven and Earth are also needed to make fine tea, meaning the right weather and the right garden, soil, ecology and tea trees. This means that the source material must be great, and from strong and healthy tea trees that grow in a vibrant environment. The more healthy the trees, the better the leaves for tea.





There are more than twenty steps involved in processing Tieguanyin. They happen in the following sequence: Harvesting→ sun-withering/airing→ shaking→ indoor withering (the shaking and withering steps are repeated multiple times)→ kill-green→ rolling→ speed-wrapping→ wrapped-rolling (the speed-wrapping and wrapped-rolling steps are repeated multiple times)→ roasting→ drying over heat. Each of these steps must be meticulously controlled; there's no room for the slightest sloppiness. Considering that a literal interpretation of *gongfu* is “time and effort,” this tea truly lives up to its name as a *gongfu* tea.

## Harvesting

The best quality teas are those harvested in the spring and autumn. There's a saying that roughly means “Spring has water; autumn has fragrance.” In other words, for spring tea the emphasis is on the taste, while for autumn tea it's the fragrance that stands out.

**Harvesting period:** The harvesting period for spring tea generally begins ten days prior to the *Lixia* (立夏, “Start of Summer”) solar term on the traditional Chinese calendar and finishes around

five days after the end of *Lixia*. This period falls from late April to early May. The harvesting period for autumn tea begins ten to twelve days before the *Hanlu* (寒露, “Cold Dew”) solar term and finishes eight to ten days after the end of *Hanlu*. This period stretches from late September to early or mid-October. The autumn tea harvesting period can be prolonged according to the growth of the leaves, which varies by altitude (in high-altitude regions, the new shoots grow more slowly).

**Harvesting time:** The tea-picking begins each morning once the dew has dried, at around 9 a.m., and continues until around 4 p.m.

**Harvesting criteria:** The tea is harvested by picking the tender shoots at the tip of each branch or twig. The shoots are picked in clusters that include the bud and the next two or three leaves closest to the tip. Shoots that remain particularly tender are sometimes picked with three or four leaves.

**Harvesting method:** The leaves should be picked using the “cupped hand” method. This involves taking the young shoots between the thumb and forefinger and pinching them off with an appropriate amount of force. During harvesting, it's important to avoid squashing the leaves to make sure they

don't sustain damage or leak any “juice.” The young tea tips must be preserved in their entirety, with no bent or snapped leaves, and no damaged leaf edges.

As such, it's important not to grasp the leaves too tightly during picking. The harvesting method involves cupping the tea leaves in the palm of your hand as you pick; once you have a handful, you deposit them into the tea-picking basket, to avoid over-stuffing your hand and crushing the leaves. Modern tea farmers have now begun using small shears to harvest the leaves, using one hand to snip the shoots and the other to collect them. This results in cleaner cuts and increases speed and efficiency.

The leaves in the tea basket must not be packed too tightly, to avoid damage or yellowing. Once a suitable volume is reached, the tea leaves must be promptly transported to the processing location to be spread out and aired, to avoid too much direct sun exposure out in the plantation. The leaves must be packed loosely and gently and transported quickly, to prevent any damage or yellowing and to make sure the leaves retain their freshness and life when they arrive at the factory or workshop.

With Anxi oolong tea, great importance is placed on processing the various tea varieties separately, so each variety is





茶 Above and directly left you can see the tea withering outdoors. Then it moves indoors (far left), where the shaking begins. The effects of the withering are evident in the decrease in moisture and the darkening of the leaves' color. The shaking is what causes the leaves to turn reddish around the edges, which is also a sign of shaking by hand, as a machine will bruise the leaves all over, without such precision. The master constantly smells the tea to know when it is done withering. It must be stopped at a precise time.

both picked and processed individually. When it comes to picking Tieguanyin, the purity of the leaf is especially important, and other leaf varieties must not be mixed in. This preserves the quality and purity of the final Tieguanyin tea product.

Because Tieguanyin is such a valuable tea, the tea harvesters are very particular about harvesting the tea shoots at a consistent degree of maturity to produce the required fine quality and flavor. Therefore, within the same tea plantation, leaves are harvested and processed in several batches as the shoots mature at different times.

A day's harvest is divided into three periods, resulting in "morning leaf," "afternoon leaf" and "evening leaf." "Afternoon leaf" is harvested on clear days from after midday until around 4 p.m., and is the highest in quality, so it is managed and processed separately.

### Sun-Withering (Outdoor)

Once the leaf is harvested, it is then sun-dried, provided the weather is clear. Sun-withering improves the quality of the end product.

**Sun-withering function:** This step uses the heat of the sun to evaporate the

water and activate the enzymes in the freshly-picked leaves, speeding up biochemical transformation. (On cloudy or rainy days when sun-withering is not possible, the leaves can be blow-dried or naturally air-dried).

**Sun-withering time:** The best time for sun-withering is around 4–5 p.m., when the sunlight is weaker and gentler. This prevents the possibility of overly strong sunlight scorching the tea leaves.

**Sun-withering method:** The leaves are spread out on white cloth in bamboo drying pans or containers. The tea farmers use these cloths to preserve the cleanliness and hygiene of the tea leaves. The leaves are spread in a layer approximately 4–5 centimeters thick. The leaves must be turned over regularly during the sun-withering process to ensure that they dry evenly. This must be done gently to avoid damaging the leaves.

**Sun-withering process:** Depending on the strength of the sunlight, the sun-withering process takes anywhere from fifteen to forty minutes. When they are sufficiently dried, the fresh leaves lose their original luster, and their bright green color becomes duller. They go from rigid to soft, with the leaf tips drooping slightly. At this point they should be moved into the drying room and spread out to await the shaking process.

**Test data:** After sun-withering, the leaves had lost 4.8% of their water content. (We recorded the water loss data given in this article from on-site tests on an experimental batch of tea leaves at each stage in the manufacturing process. The percent values are calculated with reference to the original water content.)

### Shaking & Indoor Withering

Shaking or tumbling the tea leaves, *yao qing* (摇青), is a unique technique that contributes to the special character of Tieguanyin and is crucial in determining the quality of the final tea.

Shaking causes the fresh tea leaves to move around and rub against each other, resulting in a certain amount of damage to the cell tissue in the leaves, and to the leaf edges. This encourages the evaporation of moisture and advances the biochemical reactions catalyzed by the enzymes in the leaves.

The technicians carefully control the shaking and withering steps, producing the desired speed of oxidation and moisture loss in the leaf. The tea leaves gradually undergo chemical and physical changes that will improve the quality of the final tea. Altogether, this process takes more than ten hours.



Achieving the perfect degree of oxidation during the shaking stage to produce an excellent Tieguanyin requires a wealth of experience, plus flexibility and technical precision.

As Master Lianggu puts it, Tieguanyin tea-making is an endlessly profound topic; one could study and practice it for a lifetime without exhausting the subject. In particular, the shaking technique requires great skill and adaptability—true understanding is simply not replicable by machinery. The shaking technique must be adapted differently for each season, each day, and even for each batch of leaves on a single day. It relies on the meticulous observations and accumulated experience of the master tea maker to achieve just the right result.

Under the careful manipulation of the experienced tea maker, the tea leaves are alternately shaken and then allowed to sit and air dry; these two steps are repeated several times. Under the influence of enzymes, the compounds in the leaves slowly begin to oxidize, causing a host of complicated biochemical transformations. This results in the natural floral fragrance and “Guanyin charm” that Tieguanyin is known for.

Following closely from this stage, the tea leaves undergo a series of further steps, including kill-green, rolling, wrapped-rolling to shape the leaves and roasting. All these steps culminate in a finished Tieguanyin: a tea that is known for its outstanding character in terms of color, aroma, flavor and appearance.

With today’s “light oxidation” method, the leaf is generally shaken three times, or occasionally four (lighter shaking results in lighter oxidation). The leaves are tumbled only a few times during each “shake.” (In the past, heavier oxidation was favored, meaning that the shaking step was repeated five or six times, with more revolutions each time.)

#### *First shaking:*

*“Shaking to make the water flow”*

After the initial sun-drying (or withering) step, the fresh leaves have lost some of their moisture and have become somewhat withered. The first shake should be done gently.

This initial shaking evenly redistributes the water content in the leaves and shoots, and is commonly known as “moving the water” or *zou shui* (走水). As the leaves roll around in the shaking

apparatus, the movement redistributes the moisture. It also damages some of the leaf cells, catalyzing enzymatic oxidation.

**First shaking:** This step is done using a tumbling apparatus made of woven bamboo. The leaves are tumbled for 1.5–3 minutes, at a rate of 32 rotations per minute. When shaken sufficiently, the tips will stick up, and the leaf surfaces will appear slightly glossy. If you pick up a handful of leaves, they will feel slightly oily.

**Withering:** After shaking, the leaves are spread out on large round bamboo trays and arranged on racks in the drying room. The tea leaves must be handled gently to avoid crushing them. They are spread out in a layer about 4–5 centimeters thick; each bamboo pan can hold 1–1.5 kilograms of leaf (the pans vary from 1–1.2 meters in diameter).

The temperature in the drying room is controlled with air conditioning, and is maintained between 18–22°C. With the right temperature and humidity, the compounds in the leaves will slowly continue their physical and biochemical changes throughout the drying phase.

After the leaves have sat for around 1–1.5 hours, they are observed to check for the desired changes: the leaves should display a slight greenish-white hue and feel soft to the touch. The tea farmers refer to this as *luo ruan* (落軟), “falling into softness.” The leaves become soft due to a certain amount of moisture loss after airing. Upon reaching this state, they are ready to be shaken a second time.

**Test data:** During the first withering phase for the experimental batch, the temperature was set to 18.5°C, with 70% humidity.

#### *Second shaking:*

*“Shaking the leaves to life”*

Master Chen describes the purpose of the second shaking as “shaking some life into the leaves.”

Shaking the leaf a second time evenly redistributes the moisture once more, reviving the tea leaves that have been left wilted and withered after the initial withering phase. This leaves the tea leaf firmer and fresher. Tea farmers call this process *huan yang* (還陽) or “bringing back the Yang” (陽, Yang, is the principle associated in Chinese philosophy and medicine with the sun, and positive or masculine energy).

**Second shaking time:** The leaves are shaken for around 5 minutes, at a rate of 32 revolutions per minute. During the second shaking, the tea leaves give off a noticeable vegetal aroma with a subtle hint of sweetness. The leaves turn slightly red around the edges—the tea farmers call this “cinnabar edges” or *yinzhu bian* (銀朱邊). The tips of the tea shoots stick out and turn red, while the second leaf in each cluster reddens slightly at the edges, and the third leaf doesn’t yet display any redness.

**Withering:** After the second shaking, the leaves are returned once more to the airing house. This airing phase lasts for around 1.5–2 hours. The leaves are observed after 1.5 hours, to check whether the leaves have lost enough moisture (they should be drier than before), and whether they have become soft and slightly oily to the touch.

From witnessing Master Chen’s tea-making process firsthand, the following observations could be made from the experimental batch of tea 1.5 hours after the second shaking phase: the temperature in the air-conditioned room was 18.5°C, with a humidity of 77%; and the temperature was kept more constant than during the first airing phase. (These observations were made at 8:30 p.m. on October 3, 2013; the natural ambient temperature outside the air-conditioned airing room was 24°C.) The humidity, however, was 7% higher than the 70% humidity of the first airing phase. This indicates that the leaves were losing more moisture into the atmosphere the second time around.

Closer observation revealed that the vegetal smell of the tea leaves had faded, but the leaves still felt somewhat firm to the touch, and not sufficiently soft, indicating that they had not yet lost enough moisture. So, the leaves were left to sit under observation rather than proceeding to the third shaking phase.

After 2.5 hours, Master Chen evaluated the leaves again and determined that it had developed enough to meet the requirements, and the third shaking phase could begin.

#### *Third shaking:*

*“Shaking to bring out the red edges”*

The goal of the third shaking phase is to advance the process of oxidation in the leaves. This phase requires the greatest amount of adaptability, and the leaves





茶 This large basket is a traditional way to shake tea leaves that we have only ever seen in Anxi. The basket swings from a rope that attaches to the center, and you swing it around in circles to dance the tea, using a motion that is very much like tai chi, which is true of many steps in tea processing. And like most steps in tea processing, masters like Chen Lianggu make it look super easy, but then when we tried it, most of us were unable to get it swinging in a rhythm, and even spilled tea leaves all over the floor. When it is done right, however, it makes a beautiful swooshing sound, and the tea tosses perfectly, bruising the edges as you swing the basket around. Most oolong production these days is done with machinery. The shaking machine is a large bamboo cylinder that tumbles around like a clothes drier, shaking the tea by rolling it up the sides, which are ridged on the inside. Even when farmers do shake by hand, it is usually done with the same circular tray that is used to wither the tea indoors, as shown to the right. The swinging basket we found at Master Chen's tea factory is therefore quite unique, indeed.



must be carefully observed. The length of time that the leaves are shaken must be adapted according to their moisture content, color, luster and aroma. Generally, the leaves are shaken anywhere from 15-30 minutes. The change in the leaves is observed every 10 minutes.

The leaves are shaken until they give off a clean, pure aroma and feel soft and oily to the touch. The topmost leaf in each cluster should now display the cinnamon-red color on 50% of its surface. The second leaf will be curled, making a spoon-like shape, and the edges will display an uneven red color, extending inward in places to cover a total of around 30% of the leaf surface. The veins on the back of the leaf will also be reddish. The third leaf in each cluster will also show some reddening around the edges, covering around 15% of the leaf. The stalks will also be reddish. The leaf will have a noticeable floral fragrance as well as the unique Tieguanyin aroma known as *huang kouwei* (皇口味), "magnificent flavor." Once the leaf displays all of the above characteristics, the shaking phase is completed.

After the third shaking phase, any leaves nearest the tip that have over-oxidized and turned completely red are removed; this results in a clearer, more golden liquor from the finished tea, with a fresher, purer flavor.

Next, the leaves are returned to the airing room to continue oxidizing until they are ready for the kill-green phase. For leaf harvested in the afternoon, the third shaking phase is usually finished around 10-11 p.m. the same evening. The leaf is then left to air overnight until about 6-9 a.m. the following morning, when the kill-green step begins.

Master Chen emphasizes the importance of making sure that the tea has sufficiently oxidized before going ahead with the kill-green process. The tea makers usually start checking the leaf promptly from 6 a.m. onwards on the second morning. If you can smell a floral fragrance upon entering the air-conditioned airing room, it's time for kill-green. (The tea farmers have a saying for this: "If it smells leafy, leave it; if it smells fragrant, take it.") Each step makes way for the following one.

When observing the tea leaf, there are several signs that indicate whether the leaf is ready for kill-green. The red edges of the leaves will be even more prominent than before, with the surface and veins of the leaf displaying a dark red color on both sides, manifesting as irregular spots or vein-like lines. Faint dark-red patches will emerge, resulting from oxidation. The leaves will appear plump and glossy. The tea stalks will be light green with a hint of red. The coloring of the buds and leaves will resemble a partly-ripe banana, with green stems and leaves, red edges and reddish spots at the center of the leaves.

When the leaves give off a fresh, clean aroma with no grassiness, and a faint floral, orchid fragrance, the leaves have reached the optimal degree of oxidation. At this point, the kill-green phase must start without delay. Otherwise, the tea will continue to oxidize, and the fragrance will continue to change. Certain compounds in the leaf will be used up, and the fragrance will become volatile, resulting in a vastly inferior tea. Fine tea is all about timing.



On the other hand, if the leaf is not yet giving off this floral aroma or displaying the signs of sufficient oxidation as described above, the tea makers must wait a bit longer. Sometimes, depending on the air temperature, the leaf can be removed from the air-conditioned drying room and piled into large covered baskets to increase its temperature and speed up oxidation. It must still be watched carefully to catch the right moment for kill-green to begin.

Producing a quality tea requires three elements to come together in harmony: the heavens (or more literally, weather), the earth, and the people who make the tea. The fourth element is timing; accurately identifying what the tea farmers refer to as “pan time” is all-important.

Master Lianggu puts it this way: a tea maker selecting the right moment to begin kill-green is like an artist painting the eyes on a dragon—once you have painted the body, the eyes are the final touch that suddenly brings the whole dragon to life.

If the oxidation has developed beautifully and kill-green is begun at the exact right moment, the tea is guaranteed to be a good brew; if not, it will be noticeably inferior. Mastering the nuances of nimbly combining objective rules with subjective human judgments is one of the unique skills of Anxi’s tea makers.

### Extra shaking:

In today’s tea processing, the leaves are harvested while they are relatively tender, and the degree of oxidation is quite light, meaning that shaking is done quite lightly, too. (From the 1990s onwards, Anxi oolong tea processing techniques improved greatly. The leaves began to be picked while younger and more tender, and the degree of shaking and oxidation became lighter to adapt to this. These changes resulted in a more delicate, fragrant tea.)

These days, the leaf is generally only shaken three times and the withering phases in between are relatively long, allowing the leaf to oxidize slowly. However, some leaves need to be shaken four times. This includes coarser, older leaves and “evening leaf” picked between 4–5 p.m. (for the latter, there is no sunlight left in the day to carry out the sun-drying phase, so the leaves have a higher moisture content from the beginning).

Leaf with a higher water content must be shaken gently to avoid damage.

For this type of leaf, the oxidation process cannot be finished on the same evening. Since the moisture content is greater, the leaf is more resilient. After the three shaking phases, by the next morning the tea in the air-conditioned drying room still hasn’t developed the required pure, fragrant aroma, and doesn’t display the degree of redness needed to indicate sufficient oxidation. In this case, the leaf must be shaken once more; this is known as *bu qing* (補青), “supplementing the leaf.” This fourth shaking phase lasts between 5–15 minutes, or sometimes longer depending on whether the leaf displays enough oxidation.

By the time the extra shaking is done, the sun will have come out, bringing higher temperatures and faster oxidation. The leaf will usually start to become fragrant within 1.5–2 hours, and kill-green must commence right away.

## Kill-Green

The goal of the kill-green process is to halt enzymatic oxidation in the leaf. This is done by rapidly heating the leaf, which deactivates the enzymes and stops the biochemical reactions they cause. This fixes the color, fragrance and flavor of the tea leaf after it has undergone the shaking and drying phase. It also ensures the correct degree of moisture loss.

**Kill-green temperature:** This depends on the leaves, but is roughly 230–270°C.

**Kill-green volume:** Depending on the capacity of the cylindrical kill-green machine, the leaf is usually heated in batches of 3–4 kilograms at a time.

**Kill-green time:** 3–4 minutes.

**Extent of firing during kill-green:** When the tea is first loaded into the cylindrical kill-green machine, it will make crisp, crackling sounds, caused by the leaf cells rupturing. It should be fired in the machine until the leaves make a rustling sound as they roll around in the barrel and feel slightly prickly to the touch if you pick up a handful. At this point, the tea is ready to be removed.

Master Chen reminds us to “fire young leaves for a long time, and old leaves for a short time.” This is because young, tender tea leaves have a higher water content, while older leaves have a lower water content.

**Kill-green—three scenarios of success and failure:**

### 1. Sufficient firing:

The resulting finished tea will have a clear liquor with a pure flavor.

### 2. Under-firing:

In this scenario, the tea leaf will retain too much moisture, resulting in a somewhat cloudy liquor in the final product. If under-fired, the leaf will turn what is known as “stinky yellow” or *chou huang* (臭黃). The enzymes are not completely deactivated, meaning that the tea will continue to oxidize, and even degrade as time goes on.

### 3. Over-firing:

This causes too much moisture loss, and parts of the leaves become scorched and charred. The leaves become similar to dried *maocha* in color and luster: brown, dry and rough with no lubrication. The liquor from this tea will have a burnt taste.

Once the leaf is removed from the kill-green machine, it is kneaded very lightly so that the leaf tips and edges that have dried up due to the high firing temperature fall off and can be sifted out. This will eventually produce a clear golden tea liquor with a reddish tint and no cloudiness or sediment.

**Test data:** After the shaking phase was complete and before kill-green, the leaf had lost 16.7% of its moisture. After kill-green, it had lost 56%.

## Shaping

The tea leaves are shaped in two steps: rolling and “wrapped-rolling.”

**Rolling:** The tea leaf is transferred to the rolling machine while still hot, then taken out after about two minutes of rolling.

**Goal:** This first shaping step causes the leaves to shrink and roll up into strips, and rolls some of the “juice” out of the leaves.

**Wrapped-rolling:** This is a special technique that molds the outward appearance of the Tieguanyin *maocha* (semi-processed leaf). It must be repeated several times to achieve the best shape.

The traditional method for wrapped-rolling was to wrap the leaf in white cloth and roll it by hand. This hand-rolling technique was summarized by the following steps: “roll, press, rub, grasp, draw back.” The leaf underwent



several repetitions of wrapped-rolling alternated with roasting. As you can see, shaping the tea leaves was quite a strenuous task. These days, tea makers use speed-wrapping machines and flat-plate rolling machines, which have improved the efficiency of the process as well as the final results.

**First wrapped-rolling phase—“triple wrap, triple roll”:** After kill-green and the initial (non-wrapped) rolling, the leaf is wrapped in white cloth and rolled a little by hand to knead the leaves together slightly. Then it is inserted into the speed-wrapping machine, which wraps it into a ball shape. Next, it is transferred to the rolling machine and rolled with pressure applied for about two minutes.

After it's taken out of the rolling machine, the ball of tea leaves is unwrapped

and put into another machine that separates the leaves again. This speed-wrap→roll→loosen process is then repeated twice more.

**First roast:** After the first wrapped-rolling is complete, the curled-up tea leaves are briefly roasted for around three minutes at a temperature of 100–120°C. As well as heating the leaves, the machine also sifts out dust. The heat causes further evaporation, softening the leaves to facilitate the second rolling.

**Second wrapped-rolling phase:** As per the first phase, wrapping and rolling is repeated three times.

**Second roast:** The tea leaves are separated once more and put back in the roasting machine at 100–120°C for about another three minutes, which prepares them for the third wrapped-rolling phase.

**Third wrapped-rolling phase:** Again, this phase employs the “triple wrap, triple roll” method. (For old, coarse leaves, a fourth wrapped-rolling phase is added at the end.)

After all the wrapped-rolling phases are completed, the leaves are ready to be oven-dried. The balls of tea leaves don't have to be unwrapped immediately; they can be placed directly into the drying room at about 20°C for six to ten minutes, until the balls have tightened up a bit more, before the oven-drying begins.

These roasts are just to dry the tea, and should be distinguished from the later, more intense roasting that is done to mature the flavors of Tieguanyin tea. Roasting is traditionally one of the skills that is most important in oolong tea production.



茶 Wooden paddles can be used for the firing (kill-green) or hands if one is experienced. The key is to only touch the leaves, not the hot wok. When rolling, a cloth is pushed down along a bench, growing tighter with each successive roll, until the tea inside is a fragrant ball of wonder that is so pungent, one can smell it from a meter away when it is opened.



## The Final Roasts

There are two methods for the final roasting of the tea:

### 1. Machine-roasting:

Family-run workshops generally produce tea on a smaller scale, and use medium-sized electric roasting ovens. The tea is stacked into the machine on fourteen large sieves. The leaf is spread out to a thickness of around three centimeters, with each sieve holding around one kilogram of tea. If the tea is spread too thickly, it will heat unevenly and will not dry right through, turning the leaves yellow and influencing the quality of the finished product.

The leaf is slow-roasted at a low heat of 70–75°C for about 1.5–2 hours. For the first twenty minutes, the door of the oven is left ajar to let the evaporating water escape. After this, the door is closed and roasting continues. The result is finished dry *maocha*.

### 2. Roasting on a bamboo frame over a charcoal fire:

As Master Chen puts it, “Tea is a lord, and the flame is his subject.” The leaf must be slow-roasted over a low flame. The charcoal fire needs to be closely tended and kept under control; if, exhausted from the effort of the *zuo qing* process, the tea maker lets the flame get out of hand and burn too wildly, then all the previous hard work that went into producing a good batch of tea will go to waste.

The flame-roasting process is carried out in several steps. The first roast is done at a temperature of 90–100°C. Each roasting frame holds about 1.5–2 kilograms of tea. The leaf is turned over every five to six minutes to make sure it roasts evenly. After an hour of roasting, the leaf is tipped out of the frames to allow the heat to dissipate and the moisture to redistribute evenly. This ensures that the leaf will heat through properly when roasting continues.

The second roast is a slow roast over a low flame of about 70–80°C. The leaf still needs to be turned over from time to time. It is then roasted until the *maocha* is finished.

**Test data:** The weight of the final product was 20.2% of the original weight of the raw leaf. In other words, it took about five kilograms of raw leaf to produce one kilogram of finished *maocha*. Tea is very labor-intensive. It takes a lot of hard work to produce tea.

## Finished Tea

The leaves of the Tieguanyin that Master Chen produces are tightly twisted, heavy and evenly shaped, forming spiral shapes like the head of a dragonfly. They are a glossy dark “black” in color, with hints of darker and lighter greens. (When we talk about the color “black” in the context of oolong and Tieguanyin *maocha*, we don’t really mean a pure, inky black, but rather a dark blackish-green.) The stems are sturdy and dark green with a hint of red. The tea liquor is a clear, light golden yellow. Its fragrance is delicate and lingering, with a natural aroma of orchids. The taste is sweet and refreshing, prominently displaying the famed Tieguanyin flavor known as “Guanyin charm,” *guanyin yun* (觀音韻). The aroma and flavor last through many steepings. After brewing, the left-over leaves are similar in color to the skin of a half-ripe banana, and appear plump and shiny like the curly wood-ear fungus often used in Chinese dishes. The leaves develop faint red spots and take on a silk-like luster.

It is an outstanding tea with a rich mellow flavor, highly sought after by tea lovers.

### “Hard Work Will Naturally Come to Fruition”

A good brew of tea is infused with the essence of the tea maker’s tireless work and rich array of skills.

As Master Chen says, “A good tea is made with the heart. Tieguanyin in particular requires special care and focused attention.” Tea-making is not like the goods manufacturing industry, where with one push of a button, a factory will begin ceaselessly producing hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of identical items.

The process of producing a quality Tieguanyin tea is really the application of experience accumulated over a much longer period of time, of quick wits and deep wisdom. It’s the unification of timely intuition with physical and mental ability, requiring full engagement of both mind and spirit.

One could say that an excellent Tieguanyin is a result of the skillful blending of the tea master’s experience and spirit, meticulously brought together to create a fine work of art.

When a tea maker produces a good “brew” of Tieguanyin, the emphasis is on the cooperation of heaven, earth and people; the perfect combination of movement and stillness. (The term “brew” is used here to mean “batch”—when tea makers produce a small-scale batch of tea, perhaps only a few or up to ten kilograms, they refer to it as a “brew” of tea.) In the trifecta of “Heavens, Earth and Human,” or *tian, di, ren* (天, 地, 人), the word 天, which literally means “sky” or “heaven,” indicates a favorable climate. 地, the earth, means a suitable natural environment for the tea to grow. The contribution of 人, people, is the exquisite skill and technique that goes into making the tea. Stillness, or *jing* (靜), is the silent element—the tea leaf itself, which must be of high quality. Movement, *dong* (動), indicates human consciousness and the initiative to act on one’s own subjective judgments. The tea maker’s rigorous and elaborate processing techniques sculpt a high-quality raw Tieguanyin leaf into a finished tea that is outstanding in color, fragrance, flavor and shape.

Thus, all this hard work naturally comes to fruition, culminating in a top-notch “brew” of Tieguanyin.



茶 This tea is roasting in a bamboo basket at a low temperature in between rolling. The moisture is removed as the tea is shaped. It will return to the rolling station a few more times until the thick leaves reach the desired ball shape. Rolling by hand requires much more work than with a machine.



鐵觀音





# TeaWayfarer

*Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and Tea are becoming as the Tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of Tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month, we would like to introduce Resham Daswani.*

I felt it on the plane over to Taiwan. It was a feeling I had once known so incredibly well when I was younger, and during those magic hour moments of feeling completely nestled in the rhythms of nature. Only this time, the feeling wasn't outside of me; it was slowly and gently wrapping its arms around me, becoming me. As soon as I got out of the taxi, I saw Wu De and Tian Wu, and since that moment, life has never been the same. Tian Wu, who was ultimately the final piece of my orchestrated discovery of Global Tea Hut, served me my very first tea ceremony.

In a way I feel there is no need to share more than this—words are surface-level at most. The best I can do is say that in the days and weeks I spent at the Hut, every day was a shift of great magnitude. I was in full surrender from the inside out. It was like I blinked, and everything that no longer served me was gone. Instead, there was an instant recognition of something I knew so well, a rebirth into awareness and the encounter of divine intelligence on a deeper level than I had ever experienced before.

I clearly remember during one of the evening meditations, I traced through a vast map that seemed to light the way home—a compass of sorts to the Source, and as I followed, every nucleus of every cell in my body felt transformed. It was like a battery being charged, yet I understood it was inner self-realigning to the ways of the Earth. I understood how all the dots of my life, right from the beginning, were so intrinsically connected, like a myriad puzzle that reveals a picture in the end. Everything was happening in a timely, perfect arrangement, and I began to find peace and a long-awaited comfort in that. The sacred directions of the heart always led the way, even when my head thought otherwise; Sacred had placed me in this room, with these new brothers and sisters, at that very moment in time.

I remembered things I hadn't thought about in decades, like how when I was younger, my dad had an export business for toys, and this meant that anything I received to play with was a sample of what was traded. For the longest time, all I remember playing with were dinosaur figurines and porcelain tea sets, and I spent countless afternoons serving tea to the entire Triassic period of reptiles. I then caught myself wondering if Tea in China would statistically contain traces of dinosaur considering the massive population that roamed the continent, but likely that's just the nerdy side of me.

She immediately began to show up in every way; my inner desires began manifesting outwardly. This non-verbal communication was and still is so full of strength and grace. I feel extraordinary blessed to have found the Leaf. She who never stops sharing, nurturing, healing and guiding... How does one begin to express the daily celebration of such depths of compassion? Perhaps we honor Her by the very way we live each day, as we seek to humbly step forth in love and in gratitude for the abundance of knowledge shared. To me, I try to orient to being the better version of myself every day, whilst experiencing the difficult yet necessary importance of constantly getting "human stuff" out of the way.



茶人: Resham Daswani

Tea ushers me down the Path I seek to walk and gently helps me heal my shadows when I stumble over them. She has opened me up to a community of brothers and sisters whom I see myself in, and a connection to the Feminine. This community has changed my life, as it has so many of yours.

I can always return to the bowl, turn inward and seek clarity and wisdom. I am beginning to see and live my purpose and am often brought to tears by all the divine moments of how this journey unfolds. This happened many times on our recent Annual Trip as we were blessed to sit and meditate amongst old trees. The familiarity, the wisdom and messages between the spaces of the trees echoed in the spaces of our beings, and the knowing that once upon a time in a not-so-distant past these trees were young, and our ancestors sat with them, and together they grew, learned and shared the ways of the Earth through whispers in the wind.

My journey with Tea is one of conscious evolution. Tea has become a way of life, and I am often surprised by the simplicity of not really being surprised by certain outcomes when you trust in truth. I am thankful as She has given me a better understanding of the traditions I was raised with and am honored that this is a path I get to learn in. I am dedicated to creating more space and sharing her in my home city, more so with the intention for Hong Kong. I believe that this is where Her medicine is reverently required and just ready to be transformed. I know I will consistently ebb and flow, but as I sit with this bowl, writing to a global community filled with great souls and an abundance of love and support all around, anything is possible. I hope to share tea with all of you one day.



# Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Organics & Tea

茶道

茶主题: Classics of Tea

茶主题: Sun Moon Lake & Elevation

茶主题: Masterpiece Era Puerh



Global Tea Hut is looking for an SEM and Facebook ad professional to help us set up and optimize evergreen SEM and Facebook campaigns in order to reach people we might not otherwise reach. We want to work with someone who is deeply experienced in this field, and who will be thoughtful and loving. Volunteers have done a great deal of the groundwork already. We need the right person to take their efforts the last mile. For compensation we can offer tea and a small monetary consideration. Let us know if you can help!



Check out our new "Brewing Tea" video series on our YouTube channel, where we explore the philosophy, history, practicalities and experiments involved in improving your tea practice.



The 2018 Annual Photography Contest is underway. Submissions are not limited to Global Tea Hut members, so tell your friends. The winners will be published and receive gifts of tea and teaware.



We have created a vast array of teaware for this community, both for bowl tea and gongfu tea. There are also some amazing Light Meets Life teas this year, including a gorgeous shou puerh, some dian hong cakes, a sheng puerh and an aged Liu Bao as well!



Our third annual Zen & Tea Retreat in Spain is coming up from October 1st through the 9th. For those of you who have never attended, this is a superb chance to cultivate yourself, deepen your meditation and grow your tea practice, all in the gorgeous Pyrenees Mountains. We practice silent walking meditation down the trails every day and do a day-long hike in silence in the middle of the retreat. You can read about previous retreats in the Feb. 2018 and Feb. 2017 issues, or learn more at: [www.casacuadrau.org](http://www.casacuadrau.org)

## Center News



Before you visit, check out the Center's website ([www.teasagehut.org](http://www.teasagehut.org)) to read about the schedule, food, what you should bring, etc. Make sure you apply early for courses as they fill up fast. This is why we need a bigger, more awesome Center.



We have opened all the ten-day courses to service! This is exciting for those of you who have already taken a ten-day course and want to come serve one. You can apply on the website. This is also another way to visit if a course is full!



Some of you who have been here recently know that we are expanding. We have already moved to a much bigger office building, with tons of room for the future. We now are saving to expand the magazine design/photography office to a bigger space.



We are saving up to buy or lease a van to drive you around during service periods and to take you to the tea farm and mountain to fetch water during courses.

## August Affirmation

### I follow my Dao

Do I love what I do with all my heart? Do I remember how short and precious life is? I must follow my heart and do what I love with all my being; only then will I find fulfillment in this life. Only then will I find my purpose.



# 雲女神



[www.globalteahut.org](http://www.globalteahut.org)

*The most iron-goddess Tea magazine in the world! Sharing rare organic teas, a magazine full of tea history, lore, translations, processing techniques and heritage, as well as the spiritual aspects of Cha Dao. And through it all, we make friends with fellow tea lovers from around the world.*

GLOBAL TEA HUT

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

