

Fenghuang Dancong Oolong

Presented by
New York Tea Society



What is Dancong Tea?

- Dan Cong (单枞) is an oolong tea
- It is produced in Fenghuang Shan (Phoenix Mountain) in Guangdong Province, China
- The origins of Dan Cong oolong can be traced to the last stages of the Song Dynasty (960-1279).
- Fenghuang Shan's highest point is Niaoji Shan at 1560m
- Wudong Shan (1391m) is the main Dancong production region.
- Dancong literally translates to "single bush".
- Originally, the mother tree of Dancong is the Shuixian tree.
- This tree grew in the wild where locals would pick them to produce tea.
- Because the trees were growing from seed, they developed different characteristics.
- The locals soon noticed that each tree produced tea with special unique flavor profiles.
- They took grafts from the ones they especially liked and cultivated them individually.
- Over time, this isolated cultivation led to the flavors and fragrances in each variety becoming more pronounced.
- New varieties are still being discovered today.



Dancong Classification

Classification by Tea Bush Shape

Qiao Mu / Da Cong (Large Bush Arbor Tea): the tree is tall, large, and flourishing.
Wang Tian Tea (Looking Up Tea): the height of the plant is around 8 meters
Tuan Shu (Circle Tree): the tree branches grow out like a big round circle.
Chicken Cage: the tree looks like a cage for chickens in a farmhouse.
Girl with Umbrella: the tree resembles girl holding a green umbrella
Large Grass Shed: the tree grows like a shed that the farmer uses to stock grass for the cattle.

Leaf Size

'Da Wu Ye' (Big Dark Leaves)
'Wu Ye Zi' (Baby Dark Leaves)
'Da Bai Ye' (Big White Leaves)
'Bai Ye Zi' (Baby White Leaves)

Historical Events, Stories, Legends

'Dong Fang Hong' (Oriental Red) refers to the Cultural Revolution period.
'Zong Suo Xie' refers to a specific Dan Cong legend.
'Ba Xian Guo Hai' (Eight immortals crossing the sea)
'Ya Shi Xiang' (Duck shit tea)
'Lao Xian Weng' (Old Fairy)

Leaf Color

'Bai Ye' ('White Leaves', actually light green or yellow green)
'Wu Ye' ('Dark Leaves', the actual leaf color is dark green).

Location/Origin

'Wudong' Dan Cong
'Shitou' Huang Zhi Xiang
'Zhongping' Zhi Lan
'Chengtou' Zhi Lan

Cultivars

All Dan Cong teas are made using tea leaves from the 'Shui Xian' cultivar
However, there are hundreds of sub-cultivars developed after many generations of farming

Leaf Shape

grapefruit leaves (You Ye)
persimmon leaves (Shi Ye)
bayberry leaves (Yang Mei Ye)

Appearance of Dry Tea Leaves

'Da Gu Gang' (Big Bone Red)
'Da Hu Qi' (shape like a leech with small ends)
'Si Xian Cha' (Silk Tea)
Noodle Tea
Glue Paper Wings (like the wings of a dragonfly, opened and thin).

Classification by Tea Aroma

Huang Zhi Xiang: yellow gardenia aroma
Zhi Lan Xiang: orchid aroma
Gui Hua Xiang: osmanthus aroma
Xing Ren Xiang: almond fragrance.
Mi Lan Xian: honey-orchid aroma (taste like sweet potato to some people)
Ye Lai Xiang: tuberose aroma
Jiang Hua Xiang: ginger flower aroma fragrance
aka "Tong Tian Xiang", aroma from the sky.)
Rou Gui Xiang: cinnamon aroma
Mo Li Xiang: jasmine aroma
Yu Lan Xiang: magnolia aroma



Single Bush?

- Dancong translates to 'Single Bush'
- The name dancong dates to the communal farming era
- Dancong was the highest grade, harvested from larger, older trees, which have been individually picked, processed, and then blended.
- Fenghuang Oolong gained fame due to the popularity of dancong style tea
- With time, all tea produced in Fenghuang Shan began to be known as Dancong Oolong
- Today, most dancong is produced from single varietal tea groves propagated from the same mother tree to produce a consistent and unique flavor.
- Single tree tea can be found, known as Dan Zhu (Single Tree)
- Dan Zhu is produced from tea leaf material harvested from a single tree

Processing Dancong

Picking

Oolong uses leaves only, no buds. Dan Cong picks the youngest leaves when the bud has just fully opened up

Wilting

The freshly picked leaves are allowed to wilt from 15 minutes to 2-3 hours, dependent on the weather. Once the leaves are silky and soft, they are moved inside to continue to wilt under shade

Shaking/Tumbling

This is the signature step to making oolong. Traditionally, shaking was done on a bamboo tray but is now done in a tumbling machine.

Resting

The tea leaves are then spread out on bamboo trays and allowed to rest for several hours while they begin to oxidize, forming red edges on the leaves

Fixation

The leaves are now heated in a wok to kill the enzymes and halt oxidation

Rolling

The hot teas are then transferred to a rolling machine to be rolled into string shapes

Baking

The leaves are again spread out on bamboo trays to dry out by baking over electric or charcoal heat

Sorting

Stems and leaves are removed from the rough tea

Roasting

Then sorted tea is charcoal roasted for 6-10 hours. This step may be repeated several times with a resting time of approximately 3 weeks in between each roasting.

