

## **White Tea**

Bai Hao Yin Zhen

(White Fur Silver Needle)

White teas from Fujian are the most highly-prized of their kind. Consisting of only the tenderest furry young buds of the historic “Da Bai” varietal, the leaves of Bai Hao have a characteristic delicate, fluffy, needle-like appearance.

Because its production technique is so simple, it was believed to be the most ancient, historic style of tea. However, the only definite record of this exact production process goes back just 220 years (any ancient records referring to White tea that pre-date this are referring to a completely different style of production). As far back as the 8th century, tea producers had already figured that steaming the leaves immediately after harvesting will most effectively stabilize its qualities. Thus, green tea appears to be one of the oldest styles of tea. Just plucking and sun drying leaves all that precious material too vulnerable.

Production of white tea was extremely rare and unknown to the West (and probably most of China) until the mid-19th century when a small plot of tea trees around Fuding county were discovered. The tender, furry, silvery white buds of this varietal, called Da Bai (“Big White”), were being made into a uniquely delicate style by the small villages in the area. Though it slowly grew in popularity, production was so painstaking and difficult to scale that it remains a highly specialized tea to this day.

Today, white tea is growing in popularity due to the discovery of health properties that match its beautiful flavor. Mechanization processes are being developed to meet demand, but we have sourced a small boutique production to provide you with the purest example of Fuding white.

## **Green Tea**

Genmaicha

Using Japan-grown toasted rice and May-harvested spring ichibancha, this organic genmaicha from the Kinezuka family is a bit of luxury for a reasonable price. Rich in Vitamin B1 as well.

Toshiaki with his wife Kazue and their three children Ayumi, Tamiko and Kazuki run a small, 2 hectare, completely organic tea farm in Shizuoka, Japan. Their fields are

located in Nakayama Village, up in the mountains behind the city of Fujieda. They are about 200km southeast of Tokyo. The Kinezuka Family is considered one of Japan's pioneers for all-natural tea farming.

They produce various types of teas throughout the year, from fresh sencha (steamed green tea) in the spring, to houjicha (roasted green tea) in the autumn. During the winter when the tea plants are dormant, the family shifts focus to their mikan (tangerine) trees that fruit during the cold season.

Toshiaki Kinezuka started farming with all-natural methods back in 1976, so the farm has been grown with organic practices for 40 years. This is a great achievement in the midst of Japan's heavy chemical use in the tea industry. His daughter, Ayumi, initially emigrated to the United States, but returned to take over the family farm and to keep Japanese tea production alive. She works with her brother, Kazuki, on the farms, while her sister Tamiko and mother Kazue take care of quality control for the finished tea and logistics for shipping.

Ayumi has traveled to Sri Lanka to study tea agriculture, and also the production of black tea. In addition to their traditional Japanese teas, the family has applied Ayumi's knowledge to make Japanese black tea, a very rare tea.

## **Green Tea**

### **Meng Ding Mao Feng**

#### **(Meng Ding Mountain Fur Tip)**

Twelve-hundred years ago, the tea of Meng Ding Mountain in Sichuan became one of the earliest teas designated as a tribute to the imperial family. Due to difficulties in transportation at the time, Meng Ding tea was especially hard to come by in the common market. The literati all went to great lengths to obtain this tea and each year composed numerous poems to describe the quality tea of Meng Ding Mountain. Meng Ding Mao Feng is picked in the middle of March. The picking is done entirely by hand, while the leaf is rolled into shape and dried with machines. The result is an economical early Spring green tea that is popular among frequent tea drinkers as a good quality “every-day” tea. Meng Ding Mao Feng’s aroma is like fried chestnuts paired with wild flowers. It possesses the classic characteristics of teas grown in Sichuan- persistent aroma, rich mouth-feel without bitterness, and a slow infusion.

No chemical fertilizer, pesticide, or herbicide was used in the production of this tea

## Oolong Tea

### Dong Fang Mei Ren (Oriental Beauty)

A powerfully aromatic oolong specific to Taiwanese innovation. The leaves are allowed to be bitten by an insect called “Tea Green Leafhoppers.” To ward off the attacking insect, the tea leaf releases chemicals that lend the tea an intoxicating floral, honeyed aroma that is unparalleled by any tea. To develop the fragrance of these chemicals, the tea is then oxidized much further than most oolongs.

The way the leaves respond to this unique process in the tea displaying a beautiful array of colors. This phenomenon prompted another of Oriental Beauty’s many nicknames: “Wu Se Cha” or “Tea of Five Colors.”

Maintaining the growing conditions for Oriental Beauty is a very delicate process and yield is low, making Oriental Beauty, one of the most precious low-elevation teas in the country. Late 19th century during the period that Taiwanese tea began to be released to export markets.

Oriental Beauty experienced a sharp rise to prominence, where it received many nicknames. In a very short period of time, it progressed as follows:

1. An accidental discovery by a farmer who thought his tea was ruined by insects. He processed the tea anyway, and was amazed by the results.
2. Fetched higher market prices than other teas produced in the area, where it received the nickname “Peng-Feng Cha” or “Braggart’s Tea” since the farmers producing the tea were known to brag about the unusually high prices fetched by that year’s production.
3. Took tea competitions by storm.
4. Became highly sought-after by foreign markets. Almost immediately, the tea became an export product and its production was so tailored to meet foreign tastes that it acquired another nickname: “Fan Zhuang Oolong” or “the tea specifically made for barbaric foreigners.”
5. Adored by Queen Victoria who nicknamed the tea “Oriental Beauty,” a moniker that has remained its most common name.