



## QEDtea

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For me, tea is a real passion. I've grown tired of the mediocre quality of some of my favorite teas as offered by many merchants. There really is a difference between fancy names with appealing descriptions and good cup quality. I am starting to wonder if these merchants are really cup-testing the teas before buying. A "few" years ago I offered teas which I purchased directly from producers, not through middlemen. I am contacting some of my past suppliers with the hope of finding teas that satisfy my palate. This is no easy task.

Here's what I've located so far which I feel worthy of your consideration ...

• **Yin Zheng Bai Hao Jasmine Silver Needles** (white tea from Fujian Province, CHINA): My Yin Zhen Bai Hao Jasmine Silver Needles is a tea known for low astringency, intense jasmine flavor, and sweetness in the cup. Exquisite Silver Needles white tea from Fujian province provides the luxurious base for this extraordinary scented tea treasure in which the rich and distinctive flavor of silver needles tea is expertly infused with the sweet, delicate fragrance of fresh summer jasmine blossoms. Its pale, almost clear liquor has a unique, subtle, and complex taste unlike any other grade or variety of jasmine tea - making it a true connoisseur's beverage. Produced in accordance with a 900-year-old scenting technique, this ethereal and rare tea should be prepared with great care. There are various grades of tea called Silver Needles, Yin Zhen being the highest; at one time it was reserved exclusively for the Chinese court.

### ***The tea itself ...***

Specific varieties of tea bushes are selected to make white tea; they include *Big White*, *Small White* and *Narcissus*. The highest-quality white teas are Silver Needles (Yin Zhen Bai Hao) and White Peony (Bai Mu Dan), both of which have various grades. The quality of a Silver Needles white tea is greatly dependent on the season of harvesting. The best is picked in early spring and is subject to numerous requirements. First of all, picking is prohibited on rainy days. In addition, it should never be picked when the buds appear purple; when they are damaged by wind, people, or insects; when they are too long or too thin; or when there is frost on the ground. The highest grade of Silver Needles white tea must also have young tender needle-shaped buds with a uniform shape, and be clean of stems and leaves. Silver Needles is among the most revered of Chinese teas.

### ***The scenting process ...***

The Silver Needles are arranged into "scenting rows", that is, the dried tea leaves are laid in the scenting room in long rows about 18 inches apart. Freshly plucked jasmine petals are then heaped into rows between, barely touching the tea leaves. The dried tea leaves absorb the scent from the jasmine blossoms. To ensure even and complete absorption of the scent, both the tea leaves and the blossoms are periodically churned by workers using wooden rakes. Very high grades of jasmine tea are churned up to eleven times (thus attaining a full floral aroma), then the jasmine blossoms are removed. In my opinion, one of the world's great teas.

### ***The perfect cup ...***

White teas are best when prepared like green tea. Their delicate nature will be destroyed by water that is too hard or too hot. Filtered water or spring water that is not too heavy will produce the best cup. Water that is too hot will cook the delicate leaves and render an inferior-tasting, astringent cup. The ideal water temperature is between 175 and 180 degrees Fahrenheit. Add 1 to 1.5 tablespoons of tea per 8 ounces of water in a cup or teapot. Pour water over the tea and steep for 2 minutes and 20 seconds. Future brewings, adjust to taste.

### ***Price ...***

Packaged in sealed foil bags:

50g **\$7.50** ~ 100g **\$14.70** ~ 150g **\$21.65** ~ 200g **\$28.30** ~ 250g **\$34.75**

50g bag of tea makes approximately 25 cups, 100g = 50 cups, 150g = 75 cups, 200g = 100 cups, 250g = 125 cups.

• **Zheng Shan Lapsang Souchong** (black tea from Fujian Province, CHINA): This tea has an unmistakably smoky note, which for years made it a particular favorite with the "single malt and cigars" crowd of English clubs and drawing rooms. Today, Lapsang Souchong is quite possibly the most famous undrunk black tea in existence. And many people would ask why it still exists at all! Yet it is revered by statesmen and admired by characters of fiction, including England's Royal Family and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*. It is a tea that has acquired 'intellectual' qualities. Nevertheless, its virtues bewilder a great number of dedicated tea drinkers, equally delighting those who take pleasure in its robustness. Lapsang means "smoky", Souchong mean "large bold leaf". Very little has changed in the manufacture of this tea. The initial processing follows procedures common to other Chinese black teas. The leaf is allowed to achieve a lengthy oxidation before roasting, rolling and drying. Much of the work is still performed by hand. In the smokehouse Lapsang Souchong is hung from bamboo baskets above smoldering pine-wood: a process that takes several hours & needs constant attention. These days it is difficult to find high quality Lapsang Souchong made from fine leaf which has been smoked properly and carefully stored. Such tea is very rare!

#### ***The legend ...***

Legend claims that the smoking process was discovered by accident. During the Qing dynasty, an army unit passing through Xingcun (Star Village) camped in a tea factory filled with fresh leaves awaiting processing. When the soldiers left and the workers could get back into the premises, they realized that to arrive at market in time, it was too late to dry the leaves in the usual way. So they lit open fires of pine wood to hasten the drying. Not only did the tea reach the market in time, but the smoked pine flavor created a sensation!

#### ***The tea itself ...***

My Lapsang Souchong is the best grade to come from the place of origin of this great tea, Wuyi city of Tong Mu Guan village, an area simply known as Bohea. The misted high mountains of Wuyi, thick with pine forests, provide the ideal environment for growing top quality tea. Not many people have had the opportunity to try the best grade of authentic Lapsang Souchong – known as *Zheng Shan* - from the original farm. Zheng Shan means "Original Mountain" and only tea leaves picked from the Wuyi area can be called "Zheng Shan". The tea leaves are first withered over pine root fires, then panfried, rolled and oxidized. The leaves are finally placed in bamboo baskets and hung on wooden racks over smoking pine fires to dry and absorb the smoke. These tea leaves are long, thick and black, and when steeped in water produce a bright reddish-orange brew with a powerful smokiness and a subtle hint of sweet fruit (in China called "longan"). In my opinion, one of the world's great teas.

#### ***The perfect cup ...***

Bring water to boil. Add 1 rounded teaspoon of tea per 8 ounces of water in a cup or teapot. Pour water over the tea and steep for 5 minutes. Future brewings, adjust to taste.

#### ***Price ...***

Packaged in sealed foil bags:

50g **\$2.95** ~ 100g **\$5.60** ~ 150g **\$8.10** ~ 200g **\$10.40** ~ 250g **\$12.50**

50g bag of tea makes approximately 25 cups, 100g = 50 cups, 150g = 75 cups, 200g = 100 cups, 250g = 125 cups.