

Bao Zhong Dave's Hi-Qi Tea

By David Caruso-Radin, L.Ac.

What is Hi-Qi Tea?

Hi-Qi tea is the steeping of tea (leaves from the *Camellia sinensis* plant) leaves to make Qing Cha (Blue-green tea), bringing the maximum effect of clear, clean Qi to the human body.

What is needed to make Hi-Qi Tea?

1. High quality tea leaves. All tea leaf is not created equal. First and foremost it is important that the leaves be "whole-leaf". Whole-leaf tea will almost always be of superior quality to "tea-bag-leaf" tea. In the process of learning about different teas you will learn about which tea is of higher quality and which tea is of lower quality. I would suggest finding a reputable distributor of quality tea such as Teance (www.teance.com). The higher the quality of tea the more steepings you will be able to get from the leaves. With "tea bag" quality tea you can only steep one time (two if you don't mind a very weak second cup). Good quality leaves can give you 3-12 cups of tea, depending on the quality and varietal.
2. Qing Cha style leaves. Bao Zhong is a specific tea whose leaves have been processed to make Qing Cha. Bao Zhong style leaves come from the Oolong strain tea plants and have been oxidized 20%. Historically tea leaves were processed to make Qing Cha in order to provide the maximal level of concentration during meditation. When tea is oxidized it changes the phytochemicals in the tea leaf. One of the things that occurs is that the stimulant property of the tea is increased (the caffeine is made more bio-available); I also suspect that the amino acid L-Theanine is manipulated as well. L-Theanine stimulates the production of the neurotransmitters, Serotonin, Dopamine, and GABA. These neurotransmitters effect our sense of well being (esp., serotonin); and GABA helps to add a calming effect (regulating the stimulating effects of tea's stimulants (caffeine, theophylline, and theobromine). Oxidation also decreases the levels of

antioxidant in the tea leaf. It is my belief that the 20% oxidation of Qing Cha style tea creates a happy balance of stimulation between the stimulant phytochemicals moderated by the calming effect from the increased production of GABA.

3. The appropriate steeping vessel. In my opinion the most appropriate vessel for steeping Qing Cha is a Yixing teapot. A Yixing teapot is a classic teapot made from a mineral rich clay found in a region west of Shanghai. This clay adds minerals to the tea, yet allows for the clear flavor of the tea to come through. More importantly during the steeping process it keeps the brew temperature controlled throughout the steeping process. It is said that after steeping the same style tea in a Yixing pot 10,000 times you can simply add water to the pot to make your tea (no leaves needed). The next most appropriate vessel is a porcelain teapot or gaiwan (the traditional "covered cup"). Porcelain is appropriate for the widest range of tea types (so if you only have one pot and want to steep many types of tea, porcelain is the best option). Porcelain however doesn't retain the flavor or heat as well as Yixing, but still brews a nice cup of tea. The last type of vessel that is appropriate is glass. While glass is usable it isn't nearly as appropriate as Yixing or Porcelain. For a "fine" flavored tea such as Bao Zhong metal is not appropriate, and plastic is also not appropriate.
4. The method for steeping the tea. There are three important factors: Water temperature, Steeping time, and Amount of leaf.
 - a. Different types of tea need different temperatures of water: Red (more commonly called "Black" in English)/Black (Pu-Erh) tea is steeped at 210°F; Oolong tea is steeped at 195-205°F; Green tea is steeped at 150-175°F; I like to steep Qing Cha at the low end of the Oolong scale, 195°F. [The reason many people find Green tea to be bitter is that it typically is brewed incorrectly. It is usually brewed at too high a temperature and for too long a steeping time (which follows).]
 - b. Different teas need to be steeped for different amounts of time: Red/Black tea should be steeped for 3.5-4 minutes; Oolong for 1.5-2 minutes; Green tea for .5-2 minutes. I like to steep Qing Cha for

.75-3 minutes. There are a number of factors that influence steeping time: the variety of tea; the number of steepings you are performing; and the water temperature. The leaves of Qing Cha are rolled, either longitudinal (like in BaoZhong or Buddha's Hand) creating a corkscrew effect (the traditional rolling method) or into a ball (like in Lishan or Alishan). I steep longitudinally rolled Qing Cha as follows: 1st steeping: .45 seconds, and for every subsequent steeping I add 30 seconds; For rolled Qing Cha the first steeping is 1 minute and for every subsequent steeping I add 30 seconds. They say that the first steeping of Oolong style teas (including Qing Cha) offers the most fragrant cup of tea, but it is the second cup that offers the best flavor. When you steep tea numerous times it is reported that the level of antioxidants remains relatively stable whereas the level of caffeine drops precipitously after the first steeping. Experiment and see for yourself how the fragrance and flavor subtly change with each steeping. [Note: Never save "used" leaves for an extended period of time (like overnight, but use freely throughout the day). After tea leaves have been steeped a mold can form over time on the leaves which can be harmful. Also keep in mind that after steeping leaves that you plan to reuse it is critical that you drain all of the tea out of the pot. Teas leaves that are to be reused must never sit in leftover tea.]

How do I brew the "perfect" cup of Qing Cha?

In herbal medicine they say that the difference between a medicine and a poison is the dose. While that is a little overstated for our purpose it is useful to illustrate the point that even with a good thing, more is not necessarily better. Moderation should be the rule in all things. That being said it is important to understand that every human being is different. The amount of leaf, the number of cups, etc. is going to be different for each individual, so it is important for you to evaluate what is most appropriate for you. Play with it, to get the desired effect. What follows is the method I use for making Qing Cha. The amount of leaf and number of cups for you may vary. I find that 3-4 cups brings the maximal amount of clean clear qi and an increased feeling of well-being for my personal biochemistry. Remember that the number of cups for your biochemistry may vary.

Step One: Rinse a Yixing teapot with hot water to warm it and rinse off any impurities that may settle from the environment.

Step Two: Measure the leaf and place in the vessel. I use approximately 0.1-0.2 ounces (1-2 TBS.), per 6-8 ounce vessel.

Step Three: Rinse the leaves in the appropriate temperature water. Oolong and Qing Cha leaves like to be “woken up” (this process also rinses off impurities from the leaf).

Step Four: Steep tea in 195° water for the appropriate time based on the “steeping number”. [Remember to always drain liquid between steepings.]

Step Five: Enjoy.