

Da Bai: The Big Bud White Tea Cultivar

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Da Bai cultivar, in summary: Da Bai ("big white") is the large-budded Fujian cultivar behind classic Silver Needle and Bai Mudan: necessary for the style, but not a guarantee of quality on its own.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Da Bai: The Big-Bud White Tea Cultivar. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/da-bai-cultivar/>*
Da Bai is the plant behind the most famous white teas. This sits in the cultivar cluster beside [what is a tea cultivar](#).

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in January 2026.

What Da Bai is

Da Bai, literally "big white", refers to the large-budded Fujian cultivars prized for the downy, silvery buds that classic white tea requires. Those plump buds are exactly what high-grade Silver Needle (Bai Hao Yin Zhen) and Bai Mudan are made from, and they give white tea its delicate, hay-sweet, soft character, so the cultivar enables the style rather than merely flavouring it. Region matters alongside the plant: the Fuding and Zhenghe areas of Fujian are the classic homes, and cultivar plus place plus careful drying together make the grade. See [white tea](#) for the category and [silver needle](#) for the flagship style.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Da Bai: The Big-Bud White Tea Cultivar. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/da-bai-cultivar/>*

Aspect	Da Bai ("big white")
What it is	large budded Fujian cultivars selected for downy, silvery buds
What it makes	classic Silver Needle (Bai Hao Yin Zhen) and Bai Mudan white tea
Why it matters	the plump, downy buds are exactly what high grade white tea needs
Classic homes	Fuding and Zhenghe areas of Fujian
The caveat	necessary for the style, not a guarantee: place and processing decide the grade

Necessary, not sufficient

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Necessary, not sufficient , Da Bai: The Big-Bud White Tea Cultivar. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/da-bai-cultivar/*

The single most important point is that the plant is necessary but not sufficient. A tea sold as "Silver Needle" from the wrong cultivar, or made carelessly, is simply not the same tea, because cultivar, place and processing finish the cup together. So treat the cultivar name on a label as a useful hint about flavour direction, not a grade. It tells you what the plant was bred to be capable of, which is genuinely informative when choosing a white tea, but always read it alongside the things that actually finish the cup: where it was grown, how it was processed, how fresh it is, and how it tastes to you. A famous cultivar grown carelessly or dried badly is not rescued by its reputation, and many fine teas are skilful blends rather than single-cultivar, which is normal rather than a deception.

Why the cultivar matters here

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why the cultivar matters here , Da Bai: The Big-Bud White Tea Cultivar. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/da-bai-cultivar/*

The reason Da Bai is worth a page is that it explains, concretely, why genuine Silver Needle looks and tastes the way it does, and why cheaper imitations differ. The plump, downy, silvery bud is a property of the plant first, before any processing skill is applied, so a tea sold as Silver Needle from a different plant cannot present the same way however carefully it is made. That turns "why is this one so much better" from a mystery into a checkable chain of plant, place and processing. It is also a clear illustration of why the cultivar layer is real knowledge rather than jargon: a cultivar is a real, propagated plant selected for concrete traits, and those traits have measurable consequences in the cup, which is exactly why two white teas from the same region can taste very different.

Variety and cultivar

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Variety and cultivar , Da Bai: The Big-Bud White Tea Cultivar. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/da-bai-cultivar/*

One distinction worth keeping straight: beneath the named cultivars sit the two major botanical varieties. *Var. sinensis* is the small-leaf, cool- and altitude-tolerant plant that leans delicate; *var. assamica* is the large-leaf, tropical, vigorous plant that leans robust. That division sets the broad palette before processing does anything, and cultivars such as Da Bai are the named, selected plants within it, here a *sinensis*-side Fujian selection bred specifically for big, downy buds. Holding "variety" and "cultivar" apart is not pedantry: it is what stops a famous plant name being read as a quality certificate. See [what counts as tea](#).

Want to buy a good one?

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Want to buy a good one? , Da Bai: The Big-Bud White Tea Cultivar. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/da-*

bai-cultivar/

Seek a genuine Fujian Silver Needle or Bai Mudan, judged on the cup rather than the cultivar name. Browse the [white tea range](#), the [silver needle range](#) or the full [tea shop](#). Buy on the cup and the per-cup price rather than the marketing, and free UK delivery is over £35.

[Browse the tea range](#)

Reference noted

Source: [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Reference noted , Da Bai: The Big-Bud White Tea Cultivar. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/da-bai-cultivar/>*

- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

FROM THE CURATOR *teas* · Take the simplest thing on this page that fits your routine. Range and ritual are for week two.

More on tea cultivars

- [White tea](#)
- [Silver Needle](#)
- [Aged white tea](#)
- [What is a tea cultivar](#)
- [Tea oxidation explained](#)

Source: [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Da Bai: The Big-Bud White Tea Cultivar. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/da-bai-cultivar/>*

More from the tea wiki

- [Green tea](#)
- [Black tea](#)
- [Oolong tea](#)
- [White tea](#)
- [Herbal tea](#)
- [Caffeine in tea](#)
- [How to make tea properly](#)
- [Loose leaf vs teabag](#)

Earn rewards on Teas.co.uk

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

Create your free account

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



Teas.co.uk · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@teas.co.uk · 3-click cancel at teas.co.uk/cancel/