Fu Brick Tea: The Dark Tea With Golden Flowers

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Fu brick tea, in summary:** Fu brick is a dark tea that deliberately grows a golden fungus, jin hua, the way blue cheese grows its mould. Properly made it is safe and smooth; the trick is telling wanted golden flowers from real spoilage.

Fu brick tea is the dark tea that is meant to contain a golden fungus, and that single fact makes a clear, measured explanation especially valuable, because "tea with deliberate mould" is exactly the sort of thing that gets either sensationalised or sold with wild health claims. The truthful position sits between those extremes: the golden growth is intentional, traditional, generally considered safe in proper Fu brick and responsible for the tea's prized character, but it is not the miracle solution some marketing implies.

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

What Fu brick tea actually is

Fu brick (fu zhuan) is a compressed hei cha (dark tea), historically associated with Hunan and the old tea-trade routes to the northwest, deliberately processed so that a specific beneficial fungus, Eurotium cristatum, grows within the brick during a controlled "flowering" stage. The visible result is the famous "golden flowers" (jin hua): tiny golden specks throughout the tea. In good Fu brick these are wanted and are a sign of correct processing, not contamination, and their abundance and evenness are traditionally taken as a quality mark.

Why the golden flowers are wanted

The fungus is not decoration; it does the flavour work, cultivated under controlled heat and humidity in much the way Penicillium is cultivated in blue cheese or koji in miso and soy sauce. Its growth mellows the tea, removes harshness and develops the characteristic smooth, sweet, mushroomy, slightly grain like and very gentle profile that Fu brick is loved for. A well-flowered Fu brick is rounded and comforting with very little bitterness, and the golden flowers are essentially the engine of that transformation, much as controlled microbes are the engine of shou pu-erh. Sparse or absent golden flowers in something sold as Fu brick is a quality concern, the opposite of the instinct an unfamiliar drinker might have.

The safety picture

This deserves a clear explanation, and it has two halves. Properly made Fu brick from a competent producer is safe: the fungus is a specific, studied organism traditionally regarded as safe, the tea has been drunk for a

very long time, and bright, even, discrete golden specking through a clean-smelling brick is exactly what you want to see. The real exception is the same line between stale and spoiled that applies to all aged tea: a brick that smells musty, sour or like a cellar, or shows grey, green or black fuzzy mould rather than discrete golden specks, has not fermented correctly or has been stored damp, and that one goes in the bin without debate. "Golden flowers good, fuzzy storage mould bad" is the one-line rule, and no amount of golden colour rescues a brick that smells wrong.

How to brew it well

Brew it like a gentle dark tea: break off a portion, give it a quick rinse with hot water and discard that first pour to wake the leaf and wash off brick dust, then use plenty of leaf in a pot or gaiwan, water at a full 95 to 100C, and many short, increasing infusions. It is forgiving and famously easy drinking, gives many steeps and improves across them, and suits relaxed longer steeping too.

Keeping a brick

Like other dark teas, Fu brick is made to keep and slowly mellow rather than to be drunk fresh and fast, so a brick kept somewhere clean, dry and odour-free will quietly improve for years. The only real enemy is damp, which turns wanted fermentation into actual spoilage. Stored sensibly it is one of the most forgiving teas to own, which is part of why it was a trade-route staple for centuries, the same keep-it-stable habit the how to store tea guide sets out.

Is Fu brick tea good for you

As real tea, it carries the standard story: caffeine, polyphenols, no miracle. Fu brick attracts strong stomach settling, fat burning and probiotic marketing built around the fungus, but those claims outrun the evidence for the brewed tea as drunk; Eurotium cristatum being interesting in studies is not the same as a cup of Fu brick being a treatment. The real reason to drink it is that it is one of the smoothest, gentlest and most distinctive dark teas there is.

Fu brick at a glance

Aspect	The read
What it is	Compressed dark tea with deliberate "golden flowers"
Golden flowers	Eurotium cristatum, a wanted, controlled fungus (jin hua)
Is it safe?	Yes, when properly made: the intended organism, not spoilage
Taste	Smooth, mellow, earthy-sweet; not musty when good
Brew	Rinse, then full boil, short repeated steeps

Treated as food fermentation rather than spoilage, the "mould tea" framing stops being frightening and starts being ordinary. Explore the family in the pu-erh guide and the dark tea overview, and buy a clean, well-sourced one from the dark tea range or the full tea shop; as across the wiki, go by the cup and an accurate description, weigh up what each cup costs, and UK delivery is free over £35.

Worth keeping on the shelf: the English tea range and loose leaf range.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Begin with the simplest thing here: a small brick, brewed plainly. Other dark teas can wait until week two.

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