Bi Luo Chun: The Delicate Green Snail Spring

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Bi Luo Chun, in summary:** Bi Luo Chun ("Green Snail Spring") is a delicate early-spring Chinese green of tiny downy buds rolled into spirals. It is fruity, floral and easily ruined, so brew it cool and short and buy it fresh.

Bi Luo Chun, "Green Snail Spring", is one of China's most famous green teas and one of the most easily ruined, so clear guidance here is unusually practical. It is a very delicate, early-spring tea made from tiny buds and young leaves, rolled into tight spirals and covered in fine white down (the trichomes, or fuzz, of young tea shoots). That fuzz and that delicacy are the whole story: they explain its prized character, its high price and exactly why so many people brew it badly and blame the tea.

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

What Bi Luo Chun actually is

Bi Luo Chun is a green tea from the Dongting mountain area of Jiangsu, pan fired and picked very early when the shoots are tiny, so a small amount of tea needs an enormous number of buds picked by hand, which is part of why the real top grade is expensive. The leaves are rolled into characteristic snail-like spirals and carry a heavy coat of fine white hairs. In the cup it is light-bodied, fragrant, fruity (often described as apricot or peach) and floral, with a gentle sweetness rather than the brisk grassiness of many greens. Traditionally it is interplanted with fruit trees, which folklore credits for its fruity aroma; the clearer explanation is cultivar, terroir and early picking.

What the white fuzz means

The downy coating is a real quality signal for this style: abundant fine white hairs indicate young, early picked shoots, which is what Bi Luo Chun is supposed to be. The nuance is that fuzz alone is not proof of greatness, since some lesser teas are fuzzy too, but for authentic Bi Luo Chun a good coat of down is expected and its absence is a warning sign. When brewed, the hairs can make the liquor look slightly cloudy or hazy; that is normal for this tea and not a defect, which is worth saying because newcomers sometimes think a good Bi Luo Chun has gone wrong.

Why it is so easy to ruin

This is the heart of it. Because the leaf is so tiny and tender, Bi Luo Chun is even less tolerant of heat and time than ordinary green tea: boiling water or a long steep turns it instantly bitter and destroys the delicate fruit and floral character you paid a premium for. The single most common disappointment with expensive Bi Luo Chun is brewing it like a sturdy tea. It is also fragile in storage, the fine leaf staling quickly, so it should be bought fresh in small amounts and drunk soon.

How to brew it well

Use cool water, around 70 to 80C at most, a relatively generous amount of leaf, and short steeps. A traditional method is to add the water first and then sprinkle the delicate leaves on top, rather than pouring hot water forcefully onto them, precisely to protect them. Expect a slightly hazy, pale, fragrant liquor and re-steep gently a few times. If your Bi Luo Chun tastes harsh or bitter, the near-certain cause is water that was too hot or a steep that was too long, not the tea, the same lesson the how to brew green tea guide applies across the family.

Is Bi Luo Chun good for you

Because it is green tea proper, you get the usual picture: caffeine, catechins, a little L theanine and no miracle. Being a young-bud tea it is relatively rich in those compounds, which is a fair, modest, real point and not a special power. The real reason to seek out Bi Luo Chun is its delicate, fragile, fruity floral character, one of the loveliest cups in green tea, and that is reason enough.

Where it sits among Chinese greens

Bi Luo Chun is one position in a single, navigable family rather than an isolated mystery. Almost all Chinese green tea is pan-fired, dry-heat fixed in a wok or drum, which is why the family tends to taste gentle, nutty and mellow and is more heat-tolerant than steamed Japanese green; Bi Luo Chun sits at the extreme delicate, downy, early-bud end of that spectrum, alongside Mao Feng, with Anji Bai Cha, Taiping Houkui, Liu An Gua Pian and gunpowder at other points on the same map. The rule of thumb: the downier and more bud-rich the tea, the cooler and shorter the brew, a point the Chinese green tea overview develops.

Bi Luo Chun at a glance

Aspect	Detail
What it is	Pan-fired green from Dongting, Jiangsu; tiny early-spring buds rolled into snail spirals
The white fuzz	Fine down from young shoots; a real quality signal, with a normal slight haze in the cup
Flavour	Light-bodied, fruity (apricot, peach), floral, gently sweet
Brew	70 to 80C, generous leaf, short steeps; water first, then sprinkle the leaf
Storage	Fragile: buy fresh in small amounts, drink soon

When buying, treat the name and the legend as marketing rather than evidence: a heavy coat of fine white down and a fresh harvest are real quality signals, a poetic origin story and a famous label are not. Buy small and fresh, keep it sealed, opaque, cool and dry, and judge clarity, sweetness, the fruity-floral character and a clean lack of harsh bitterness in the glass. A fresh one is worth seeking out from Teapigs, Pukka, the wider

green tea range, or the full tea shop.

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