Baozhong tea: Taiwan's lightest oolong

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Baozhong (also spelled pouchong or paochong) is the least oxidised oolong made. Where a roasted Taiwanese oolong is dark and nutty, Baozhong is pale green-gold, smells of lilac and orchid, and tastes closer to a fine green tea than to anything roasted. If you like green tea but find it too grassy, or you like jasmine tea but want that floral character to come from the leaf itself, this is the one to try.

It also looks different: long, loosely twisted leaves rather than the tight rolled balls most Taiwanese oolongs come in.

Where it comes from

The classic Baozhong is **Wenshan Baozhong**, made in the hills of northern Taiwan around Pinglin and Shiding, near Taipei. Taiwan's tea research station classifies it as the lightly oxidised, fragrant, strip-shaped type of oolong. Taiwan Tea Research and Extension Station

The name means "the wrapped kind": the leaves were traditionally wrapped in squares of paper during processing.

What it tastes like

	Baozhong	A rolled, roasted oolong
Leaf	Long, loosely twisted, dark green	Tight balls, olive to brown
Oxidation	Very light	Medium to high
Liquor	Pale gold-green	Amber to deep brown
Aroma	Lilac, orchid, fresh cream	Toast, nuts, caramel
Feel	Light, silky	Round, warming

Expect flowers and a soft, buttery sweetness, with none of the drying grip of a strong black tea. Because it is barely oxidised, it is also delicate: treat it like a green tea and keep it sealed, cool and away from light.

How to brew it

In a pot or mug: 3g of leaf per 200ml, water at 85 to 90°C, 2 minutes for the first infusion. Strain it off the leaves completely.

Small pot or gaiwan: 5g per 100ml, 85 to 90°C, 30 seconds for the first infusion, adding 10 to 15 seconds each time. Good Baozhong gives four or five infusions, and the second is often the best.

Give the leaves room. Those long twists need space to unfurl; a cramped tea ball will hold them shut and you will get a thin cup. Our how to brew oolong tea guide has the general method.

Buying it well

- **Look for the growing area** (Wenshan, Pinglin or Shiding), not just "Taiwanese style", which describes a method that can be used anywhere.
- **Check the harvest date.** Light oolongs are at their best fresh; a year-old Baozhong loses its perfume.
- **Check the roast.** Most Baozhong is unroasted or very lightly roasted. A "traditional roast" version is a legitimate style, but a different drink.
- **Buy a small amount first.** 25g is enough to learn whether the style suits you.

Where it sits in the family

Baozhong is one end of the oolong spectrum. Move along it and you reach rolled and lightly roasted Dong Ding, the rock teas of Wuyi, and heavily oxidised Oriental Beauty. Our oolong roast levels guide explains what roasting changes, and Taiwanese tea covers the country's other styles.

Common questions

Is Baozhong a green tea?
No, but it is close. It is partly oxidised, which makes it an oolong; the oxidation is just very light.

Is it the same as jasmine tea?
No. Jasmine tea is scented with flowers. Baozhong's floral aroma comes from the leaf and the way it is made, with nothing added.

Does it contain caffeine?
Yes, like any tea from the tea plant. Light oxidation does not mean low caffeine.

Why does mine taste thin?
Usually too little leaf, or leaves that could not open. Use 3g per 200ml in a roomy pot or basket, and do not judge it on the first 30 seconds.

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