Dong Ding oolong: Taiwan's roasted classic

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Dong Ding (??, sometimes written Tung Ting, "frozen summit") is the rolled, roasted Taiwanese oolong: the middle ground between the fresh green high-mountain teas and the dark, heavily oxidised ones. Expect a golden cup, a smell of toasted nuts and butter, and a rounded sweetness with none of the sharpness of a green tea.

Taiwan's tea research station traces it to **Lugu in Nantou county**, where the style was developed, and notes that the method has since spread to other growing areas. Taiwan Tea Research and Extension Station

Origin and style are two different claims

This is the thing to understand before buying.

- **"Dong Ding"** on a label may mean tea grown around Lugu, or tea made anywhere in Taiwan in the Dong Ding style.
- **"Dong Ding style"** is explicitly the second.

Neither is dishonest, but they are different purchases. If the place matters to you, look for the growing area, not just the name. If what you want is the roasted, rounded flavour, a well-made tea from elsewhere in Taiwan can suit you just as well, often for less.

The roast is the character

Dong Ding is moderately oxidised and then roasted, traditionally over charcoal, in more than one round with rest between them. The roast is where the toast, nut and caramel notes come from.

Roast level	What you get
Light	Floral and fresh, closer to a high-mountain oolong
Medium (traditional)	Toasted nuts, butter, honey; the classic Dong Ding
Heavy	Dark caramel, cocoa, a hint of smoke

Roast level is a style choice, not a quality grade. Ask the seller which one you are buying, and when it was roasted: a fresh roast tastes sharper and settles over a few months. More in oolong roast levels.

How to brew it

In a pot: 3g per 200ml, water at 90 to 95°C, 2 minutes for the first infusion, then longer.

Gongfu style: 5g per 100ml, near-boiling water, 20 to 30 seconds to start, adding a few seconds each round. Rolled leaves open slowly: the third infusion is often the best.

Give the leaves room: these are tight balls that expand enormously. A cramped infuser holds them shut and gives you a thin cup. See how to brew oolong tea.

Buying it

- **Ask where it grew**: Lugu, Nantou, or elsewhere in Taiwan.
- **Ask about the roast**, level and date.
- **Beware bargains.** Authentic Lugu tea is not cheap; very low prices usually mean the style rather than the place.
- **Store it sealed and dry.** Roasted oolong keeps far better than green tea.

Our Taiwanese tea page maps the country's styles, from Baozhong at the light end to Oriental Beauty at the dark end.

Common questions

Is Dong Ding a black tea?
No, it is an oolong: partly oxidised, then roasted.

Is it the same as Tieguanyin?
No. Tieguanyin is a Chinese oolong from Fujian, though roasted versions can taste similar.

Why does mine taste burnt?
Either a heavy roast that is not to your taste, or a very fresh roast that needs a few months to settle.

Can I re-brew the leaves?
Yes, several times. Rolled oolongs are among the best value teas for repeat infusions.

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