Huang Da Cha: the roasted, everyday yellow tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Yellow tea has a reputation for being rare and expensive, built on delicate bud teas like Junshan Yinzhen. **Huang Da Cha** ("yellow big tea") is the opposite end of the same category: larger leaves and stems, a long heavy roast, and a price that makes it a daily drink rather than a treasure.

It is made in Anhui, particularly around Huoshan, and it tastes toasty, sweet and comforting: roasted grain, dried fruit, sometimes a hint of chocolate or crisped rice. If you like hojicha, you will recognise the family resemblance, even though the teas are made quite differently.

What makes it yellow tea

All yellow tea goes through an extra step that green tea does not: **men huang**, or "sealing yellow". After the leaves are heated to stop oxidation, they are piled and covered while still warm and damp, which mellows the grassy edge and turns the leaf a yellowish colour.

For Huang Da Cha, that yellowing step is followed by a long, hot roast, which is where most of its character comes from. Two processes, two jobs:

Step	What it does
Sealing yellow (men huang)	Removes the raw, grassy notes; softens the tea
Roasting	Adds toast, caramel and depth

See yellow tea explained for the category, and Junshan Yinzhen for the bud-tea end of it.

What to expect

- **Dry leaf:** big, dark, with visible stems. It looks rough compared with a needle tea, and that is normal.
- **Liquor:** deep gold to light amber.
- **Taste:** toasted, sweet, smooth, with very little astringency.
- **Best served:** plain, hot, after food. It is a good autumn and winter tea.

How to brew it

It is a forgiving tea, which suits its everyday role.

- **Leaf:** 3g per 200ml. The leaves are bulky, so weigh rather than scoop if you can.
- **Water:** around 90°C. Unlike delicate green tea, it can take proper heat.

- **Time:** 2 minutes for the first infusion, then longer for the second and third.
- **Vessel:** something roomy. Large leaves and stems need space.

Buying it

- **Look for the origin**: Huoshan in Anhui is the classic area.
- **Expect stems.** They are part of the style, not a defect.
- **Check the roast.** A fresh heavy roast can taste sharp; it settles over a few months.
- **Do not pay bud-tea prices.** This is the affordable end of yellow tea, and that is the point.

Common questions

Is it a poor-quality version of Junshan Yinzhen?
No. Different material, different style, different reason to drink it.

Does it taste like green tea?
Not much. The yellowing and the roast take it towards toasted grain rather than fresh grass.

Is it the same as hojicha?
No. Hojicha is a roasted Japanese green tea. The toasty character is similar; the processing is not.

Does it have caffeine?
Yes, like all tea from the tea plant. Big-leaf material is usually lower in caffeine than bud-heavy tea, but it is not caffeine-free.

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