

From: **Dafydd Green**

Date: Wed, Sep 5, 2012 at 11:53 AM

Subject: Tea Arrived Successfully!

To: Roman Kaplunov <roman@daoli.eu>, Miha Jesenšek <info@daoli.si>

Hi Roman and Miha,

Just a quick note to say that the tea arrived safely today - it's a lot of tea! I can't wait to dip in. Thanks for your help with this, Roman, and I'll let you know what they're like as I go on.

The review

Buying tea from outside of China is often a unfulfilling affair; one either expects to receive one small package of a flavourful variety or a vast amount of flavourless, insipid leaves. The former seems almost to be the most disappointing as it doesn't satisfy a tea lover's needs, and so when I came across Daoli's tea package offering, not only did I come to realise that this would broaden the range of leaves sitting in my cupboard, but it would also provide me with a stock that lasts an age and ensure that I fulfill an insatiable appetite for Chinese tea.

Working with Roman to create the right package was an absolute pleasure. His knowledge of the local market and its offerings are second to none, so I very quickly found myself in the hands of a specialist. My brief for Roman was to find 10 varieties of tea that spanned China's tea-covered hills, and also represented the rainbow range of teas on offer. The list that I received back from Roman after his market consultation had not only ticked these boxes, but also set my taste buds in anticipation for the package that would arrive. This was the final list:

1. Huang Zhi Xiang Dan Cong (Wulong) from Guangdong
2. Xin Yang Mao Jian (Green) from Henan
3. Anji Baicha (White) from Zhejiang
4. Zhuye Qing (Green) from Sichuan
5. Liu'an Gua Pian (Green) from Anhui
6. Keemun (Red) from Anhui
7. Tai Ping Hou Kui (Green) from Anhui's Huang Mountain
8. Wild Tea from Yunnan
9. Dahong Pao (Wulong) from Yunnan
10. Yinya Pu'er (uniquely indescribable)

When the package arrived, I was also delighted to find that Roman had included some added treats in the form of Gongting Pu'er and some additional 'cooked' pu'er cakes. It would be an understatement to say that my cupboard was small to contain the load, but in all fairness to Daoli, this is exactly what I had asked for - a range of flavourful teas that would last what feels like an eternity.

To make the most of these leaves, one really needs a traditional Chinese tea set to draw the goodness out of the leaves, and take a journey along each

variety's flavour trajectory. However, given the sheer amount that I have, I quite often use a cafetière and top up with hot water in order to develop the flavour of the leaves. Yet here are some varieties such as the Houkui that demand a tea set, and it would be a waste to do otherwise.

The green teas that I received were of superb quality, and Roman did a very good job of choosing a range of green teas that expressed the depths of character that these leaves possess. From the full-bodied Liu'an Gua Pian to the fragrant Mao Jian, drinking these teas is an absolute pleasure and a revitalising experience. Sourcing such high quality teas in China is difficult in itself, and Daoli's ability to collect leaves for this package was impressive. The Houkui was a surprising tea in form and taste, and I had never seen such an amusing leaf!

I had previously tried Daoli's Tieguanyin and Ginseng Wulong, so I was very much looking forward to a deeper and earthier variety of Wulong. What impressed me most about the offerings that I received was the attention to detail. Often overlooked by tea traders, it makes a difference to have leaves that look fresh, enticing and full of flavour. When I opened each Wulong package, I realised that Roman had put in a lot of effort to find the very highest quality teas. Another key feature of Daoli's offering is that it seeks to fulfil the customer's needs and that it provides new experiences. I had never tasted wild tea before, and it was interesting to try a tea that is difficult to categorise, but maintains such unique characteristics. To complete the whole loose leaf offering, the only red tea in the package (Keemun) produces a cupful of rich tea with deep notes that develop into almost fruity hints as the brewing continues.

In touch with my request that the package represent the local flavour and characteristics of Chinese teas, the added Pu'er that I received put into taste the sheer variety of teas that Yunnan has to offer, as well as the uniqueness of leaves that its soil produces. The added benefit of receiving Pu'er is that they not only survive the test of time, but develop in taste as the years go by. With this in mind, I was very grateful to Roman for providing these cakes because they will provide exquisite drinking when the time is right.

Overall I was extremely satisfied with Daoli's tea package and believe that it was a worthwhile investment. The price seems high at the beginning, but one quickly realises that for the amount received, and its quality, the whole offering is in fact a bargain. I have such a surplus that I am able to give some of this tea as gifts, and also entice others into drinking tea. I was very impressed with the efficiency with which these teas were procured, and also the swift delivery. In spite of the impressive mountain of tea leaves in front of me that I can't wait to start brewing, I am also looking forward to the next time I contact Daoli for another package!

Dafydd Green
Oxford, UK