





Making tea

As a rule, put one teaspoon of Pu-Erh per cup in a teapot. Pour boiling water onto the tea and let it brew for three to five minutes, over a teapot warmer if possible. The tea can be refreshed once or twice with more boiling water and is best sweetened with maple syrup.

It's Tea Time!

Pu-erh tea is one of the oldest teas in China and is traditionally picked from the Quingmao tea tree. A shop in the Chinese city of Kunming offers several hundred varieties of this tea. As with wine, the older the tea, the better its flavor and the higher its price.

► This is no ordinary tea. Not one of those greyish-colored teabags filled with peppermint, fruit or fennel that are first drowned in hot water, then left to stew for hours in the teapot. Tea as appreciated by the Chinese is completely different, not just in terms of flavor. It is a symbol of tradition and culture and links the present day with the ancient dynasties. All of China's emperors enjoyed tea, from the Han dynasty whose emperors ruled China from 206 BC, to the Qing dynasty that ended in 1911. Far from being merely a thirst quencher, it was savored in a formal tea ceremony.

Chinese tea culture has already existed for 2,500 years, and the traditional drink is wreathed in numerous legends. Tea is said to make the drinker immortal, according to one of the oldest stories about the monk Fa Yao, who lived during the Southern Dynasty between 420 and 587 AD. He lived to the age of 99 – almost immortal at that time, when life expectancy was much lower than today. Monks and scholars alike drank a lot of tea, since its ingredients stimulate thought processes and keep the body alert, for example during prolonged meditation.

Modern Chinese people also appreciate good tea such as Pu-Erh, one of China's oldest teas. It is still picked from the Quingmao tea tree in Yunnan Province as it was centuries ago. The Pure Pu'er tea shop in the town of Kunming, also in Yunnan Province, exclusively sells this kind of tea. Hundreds of different varieties are stacked on the shelves and sales counters at Sanshi Street 6. Tea leaves are also offered here in the form of compressed slabs or cakes, and are beautifully packaged. No paper teabags here, if you please. Visitors to the shop can sit down on stools and test one of the varieties offered. Some of these teas are over 100 years old. The same applies to Pu-Erh tea as to good wine: the older it is, the better the flavor and the higher the price. One British tea trader charges around US-\$ 110 for a cake of Imperial Beeng Cha Aged Pu-Erh.

"Pu-Erh tea links the past and the present, and that is just what our shop fixtures are meant to reflect," says Cyrus Sun, Product Manager at Evonik Degussa China. That is why, besides wood as a traditional, natural material, kiwi-green ACRYLITE® P95 was installed on the walls and counters. "Pure Pu'er wants to position itself between the olden days and the modern age. The interior is an embodiment of the brand," Sun says.

The shop design therefore creates the right sales atmosphere. At the same time, the sheets brighten up the room. ACRYLITE® P95 is fully illuminated because the incident light from behind is evenly distributed over the entire sheet by the material's incorporated diffuser beads. No scratches or signs of wear are visible even in this bright light because the luminous green ACRYLITE® is insensitive to both and stands up to everyday wear and tear.

The kiwi-green sheet refers to the original green color of the tea leaves (Pu-Erh is a green tea that only acquires its reddish-brown color after processing). The floral patterns on the sheets creates a further link with the tea leaves. "It is very easy to apply decorative elements to ACRYLITE®. That would have been much more difficult with glass," Cyrus explains. "The décors can be printed on the material or bonded to its surface."

As the centuries-old custom will have it, each tea on sale at the Pure Puer shop comes from Yunnan Province, more precisely from Mount Jing Mai near the southern town of Xishuangbanna. There, the leaves are subjected to a special post-fermentation process, whose precise details are a well-guarded secret. All we know is that storage, which can last from six months to 60 years, triggers post-fermentation. This gives the tea its red to brown color and earthy, almost smoky flavor that was much appreciated by the emperors of China, for its medicinal properties as well as its taste. Tea stimulates the body's meridians, whose various points are also treated during acupuncture. Traditional Chinese medicine early discovered tea as one of its remedies. The famous Pu-Erh tea is believed to lower levels of blood fats like cholesterol, and to break down body fats more rapidly in dieters. These properties make it popular in Europe too, much to the delight of the Chinese, who are keen to preserve the ancient tea culture in the modern world. What was appreciated by the emperors of yore must be useful today as well. Tea is good for the mind and promotes well-being, and is much too precious to end up in a teabag.

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