

Tea Tasting Terminology

TERMS DESCRIBING DRY LEAF

BLACK: A black appearance is desirable, preferably with "bloom". This term is used with Orthodox or Rotorvane manufacture.

BLACKISH: This is a satisfactory appearance for CTC and LTP manufacture teas and denotes careful sorting.

BLOOM: A sign of good manufacture and sorting (where the reduction of leaf has mainly taken place before firing). A "sheen" which has not been removed by over-handling or over-sorting.

BOLD: Particles of leaf which are too large for the particular grade.

BROWN: A brown appearance, with CTC and LTP manufacture, normally reflects too hard treatment of the leaf.

CHESTY: Inferior or unseasoned packing materials cause this taint.

CHOPPY: Orthodox (or Rotorvane) manufacture leaf which has to be cut by a "breaker" during sorting.

CHUNKY: A very large Broken from Orthodox manufacture.

CLEAN: Leaf which is free from fibre, dust or any extraneous matter.

CREPY: A crimped appearance common with the larger grade broken from orthodox manufacture, such as B.O.P.

CURLY: The leaf appearance of whole leaf grade orthodox teas such as O.P., as opposed to Winy

EVEN: True to the grade and consisting of pieces of leaf of quite even size.

FLAKEY: Flat, open and often light in texture.

GREY: Caused by too much abrasion during sorting.

GRAINY: Describes well made CTC or LTP primary grades more particularly Pekoe Dust and Dust 1 grades.

LEAFY: Orthodox manufacture leaf tending to be on the large or long side.

LIGHT: A tea in weight and of poor density. Sometimes flakey.

MAKE: Well made (or not) and must be true to the grade

MUSTY: A tea affected by mildew.

NEAT: A grade having good "make" and size.

NOSE: Smell of the dry leaf.

POWDERY: Fine light dust.

RAGGED: An uneven badly manufactured and graded tea.

STALK & FIBRE Should be minimal in primary or top grades, but generally unavoidable in the lower grades of an assortment.

TIP: A sign of fine plucking and apparent in the top grades of Orthodox manufacture.

UNEVEN & MIXED: "Uneven" pieces of leaf usually indicative of poor sorting and not true to the particular grade.

WELL TWISTED: Applicable to Orthodox manufacture. Often referred to as "well made" or "rolled" and used for describing whole leaf grades.

WIRY: Leaf appearance of a well twisted, thin leaf orthodox tea.

MUSHY: A tea which has been packed or stored with a high moisture content.

TERMS DESCRIBING INFUSED LEAF

AROMA: Smell or scent denoting "inherent character", usually at high elevations.

DULL: Lacks brightness and usual denotes a poor tea. Can be due to faulty manufacture and firing, or a high moisture content.

MIXED OR UNEVEN: Leaf of varying colour.

BISCUIT: A pleasant aroma often found in a well fired Assams.

DARK: A dark or dull colour which usually indicates poorer leaf.

TARRY: A smokey aroma.

BRIGHT: A lively bright appearance. Usually indicates a well manufactured tea.

GREEN: Caused by under-fermentation, or characteristic of leaf from immature bushes (liquors often raw or light). Can also be caused by poor rolling with orthodox teas.

TERMS DESCRIBING LIQUORS

BAGGY: A taint normally resulting from unlined Hessian bags

FLAT: Unfresh, (usually due to age).

PLAIN: A liquor which is "clean" but lacking in the desirable characteristics.

BODY: A liquor having both fullness and strength, as opposed to being thin.

FLAVOUR: A most desirable extension of "character" caused by slow growth at high elevations and comparatively rare.

PUNGENT: Astringent with a good combination of briskness, brightness and strength. (More related to best quality North Indian teas).

BAKEY: An over-fired liquor. Tea in which too much moisture has been driven off.

FULL: A good combination of strength and colour.

QUALITY: Refers to "cup quality" and denotes a combination of the most desirable liquoring properties.

BRIGHT: Denotes a lively fresh tea with good keeping quality.

FRUITY: Can be due to over-fermentation and/or bacterial infection before firing. An over-ripe. taste

RASPING: A very coarse and harsh liquor.

BRISK: The most "live" characteristic. Results from good manufacture.

GONE OFF: A flat or old tea. Often denotes a high moisture content.

RAW: A bitter unpleasant liquor.

BURNT: Extreme over-firing.

GREEN: An immature "raw" character. Often due to under-fermentation (and sometimes under-wither).

SMOKEY: Mainly caused by leaks around the dryer heating tubes.

CHARACTER: An attractive taste when describing better high elevation growth, and particular to origin.

COLOURY: Indicates useful depth of colour and strength.

COURSE: Fibre content.

COMMON: A very plain, light and thin liquor with no distinct flavour.

CREAM: A precipitate obtained after cooling.

DRY: Indicates slight over-firing.

DULL: Not clear, and lacking any brightness or briskness

EARTHY: Normally caused by damp storage. A taste which can at times be "climatically inherent" in leaf from certain origins.

HARD: A very pungent Liquor.

HARSH: A taste generally related to under-withered leaf, and very rough.

HEAVY: A thick, strong and coloury liquor with limited briskness.

HIGH-FIRED: Over-fired but not bakey (or burnt).

LIGHT: Lacking strength and any depth of colour.

MATURE: But not bitter or flat.

METALLIC: A sharp coppery flavour.

MUDDY: A dull opaque liquor.

POINT: A bright, acidy and penetrating characteristic.

SOFT: The opposite of briskness and lacking any "live" characteristic caused by inefficient fermentation and/or firing.

STRENGTH: Substance in cup.

STEWED: A soft liquor with an undesirable taste caused by faulty firing at low temperatures and often insufficient air flow. Lacks point.

TAINTS: Characteristic or tastes which are "foreign" to tea. Such as petrol, garlic etc. often due to being stored net to foreign commodities with strong characteristics of their own.

THIN: An insipid light liquor which lacks any desirable characteristics.

WEEDY: A grass or hay taste related to under-withering. Sometimes referred to as woody.