

THE OOLONG ALCHEMIST AND HIS ELIXIR - PART 2

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In the first part of the "Oolong Alchemist and His Elixir" series, we learned about the art and dedication involved in oolong tea production to understand why our protagonist, Sean, earned the nickname "alchemist." However, only one of the four topics on our agenda was addressed, Oolong 101 (Basics). In this second installment, we will continue our journey by delving a little into external aspects that influence the production of this meticulous tea. These topics reveal how our Alchemist not only needs to understand the production of Oolong concerning internal aspects of his company, [Trilliant Tea Industry](#) but also needs to understand nature, always keeping in mind that he has no control over it.

Let's continue our Oolong journey, knowing where we come from and where we are heading.

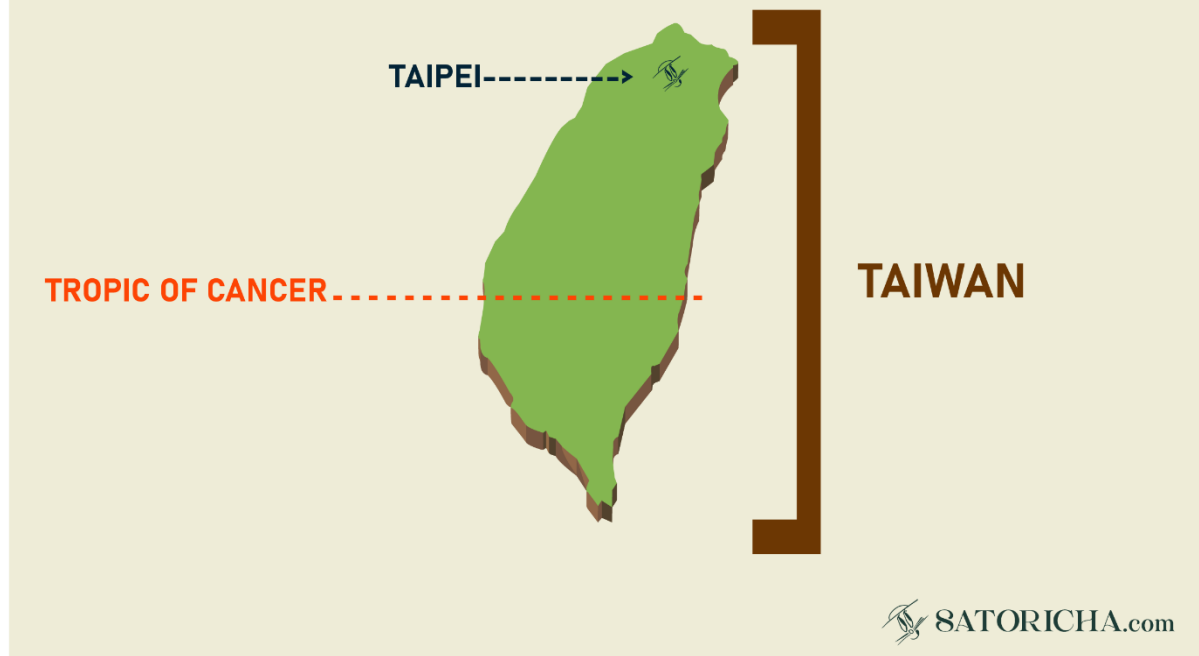
TROPIC OF CANCER

There is a saying that the best fragrances come in small bottles, which Taiwan attests to. Taiwan's territorial area is 36,197 km². To put it into perspective, Taiwan fits fifty-four times into Mexico and seventy-six times into Argentina. However, its size has not prevented it from being a global reference, being called one of the four "Asian Tigers." This is no different regarding tea because Taiwan is the leading country in Oolong production, thanks to aspects mentioned in the previous installment. We already know that Taiwan has a vast amount of mountainous terrain and that its territorial extension is not very large. However, we still need to understand how its location influence and all the surprises it holds.

Taiwan is located in the Pacific Ocean, which means that, like many countries, it is affected by the La Niña and El Niño phenomena, but this is nothing compared to the Tropic of Cancer. What is the Tropic of Cancer? If you have had the opportunity to see a map or globe, you will notice that some have a red line at the top that goes through the middle of the map; this is the famous Tropic of Cancer. However, it is not simply to divide the earth at a specific point; it is a solar marker that aims to delimit the climatic zones.

Concerning Taiwan, the Tropic of Cancer divides its climate in half, causing Taiwan's upper part to have four seasons, while the lower part of the island only experiences a tropical climate (similar to Honduras's climate, where there is only a dry and rainy season).

THE LOCATION OF THE TROPIC OF CANCER IN TAIWAN



Jacobiasca Formosana

This little friend is smaller than a grain of rice and is found all over Taiwan. That's why we find the word "Formosana" in its name, which refers to the location of Formosa, that is, Taiwan.

JACOBIASCA FORMOSANA



TEA JASSID

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The importance of the *Jacobiasca Formosana* lies in its role as a pest that primarily attacks tea bushes by biting the youngest leaves. This stress on the plant prompts it to generate specific types of chemicals in response to these microscopic bites.

One aspect that cannot be overlooked is that no one can determine or influence the presence of this insect; just as there can be too many, there can also be very few in different seasons.

As you can see, the Tropic of Cancer and the *Jacobiasca Formosana* have not been directly linked to oolong tea. This is because both belong to a category that no human can control; however, they can influence it. I'm referring to nature.

So, what is the role of these two elements in Oolong production? Well, the Tropic of Cancer determines the climatic zones, conditioning the terrain where the tea will grow, from its type of soil and minerals to the various adversities or climatic conditions that the plant must face. Here is where humans can influence with the types of cultivars, as they can adapt the cultivar with specific characteristics they desire, from leaf size to

resistance to frost. However, this requires time and dedication because nature always controls the final result.

On the other hand, the tea jassid or *Jacobiasca Formosana* forces the plant to generate chemicals that change the taste of the tea. Although what we drink is a liquid, its chemistry is extensive. While it is true that the jassid is considered a pest, this pest is actually a small tea producer who knows how to give its touch to Oolong.

Thanks to the tea jassid, there are Oolongs like Oriental Beauty, which comes from mountainous areas and is characterized by its honey notes. Of course, the presence of the jassid must be just right, as if too little tea would not yield those unique characteristic notes of that Oolong. If there are too many better flavors of honey notes in the tea, the problem is that too many Jassids reduce the harvest quantity of teas since leaves stop growing after being bitten.

In the first installment of "The Oolong Alchemist and His Elixir," we discussed the importance of the human factor in oolong. In this installment, we focus on something that we often, if not always, overlook but is crucial not only for obtaining a wonderful cup of tea but also for our survival: the natural factor.

While Taiwan has been a pioneer in the knowledge and production of Oolong, its strength in innovation has been thanks to:

- Mountainous conditions: These make it possible for tea to be harvested by hand, meaning there is constant human-nature interaction.
- The influence of the Tropic of Cancer: It has allowed Taiwan to understand that it does not have total power over nature and its elements, making resilience a necessity.
- The tea jassid: It reveals that when humans are one with nature and respect and care for it as they should, nature honors us with sweetness or, in this case, honey notes in our cup.

In this installment, we covered two more topics on our agenda, leaving us with the most important and exciting part of our journey: getting to know the Oolong Alchemist and his elixir.

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