

Judging the quality of your Pu-erh Bing Cha by its appearance

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**By Tea Hub**

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As we discussed last week, a Pu-erh Bing Cha's shape and leave presentations on the surface of a cake reveal its quality. A good quality Pu-erh Bing Cha must be in round, regular shape, have even thickness and smooth surface, and tea leaves must be well compressed without breaking into layers. An extremely tightly compressed (flat) Pu-erh Bing Cha will take longer time to age. Those flat Pu-erh Bing Cha normally will become less flat after being aged for a few years and the leaves loosening up during the aging process.

Many experienced Pu-erh collectors know how to judge a Pu-erh by the surface leaves. The quality of leaves and composition of leaves and buds all hold the future of a Pu-erh Bing Cha. Adding tea buds to leaves will make a Pu-erh Bing Cha sweeter. However, it is the strength of leaves that affect the aged taste of a Pu-erh Bing Cha. The balance between buds and leaves is crucial to a Pu-erh Bing Cha's taste. You can find the perfect balance in our Young Green Ancient Tea Tree Pu-erh Bing Cha (<http://www.teahub.com/puerhte.htm>).

We discussed the difference between raw and ripe Pu-erh in the Pu-erh Talk section of our site. Other than the 100% raw or 100% ripe Pu-erh Bing Cha, one common practice is to mix ripe and raw Pu-erh leaves together and compress them into Pu-erh Bing Cha. One famous example of this type of Pu-erh is 80s Zi Tian (purple sky), a 1:1 mix of ripe and raw Pu-erh leaves. We now carry this wonderful Pu-erh online at [www.teahub.com](http://www.teahub.com).

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## Judging the quality of your Pu-erh Bing Cha by its appearance

To many Pu-erh lovers, the appreciation for Pu-erh goes beyond its wonderful taste. A piece of Pu-erh Bing Cha is a piece of arts work by itself. Things like its outside wrap, inside label, and its shape and tea leaves all suggest the level of craftsmanship of its manufacture.

In comparison to regular cotton paper wraps, high quality 100% hand made cotton paper wraps with traditional mold compressed prints not only can provide longer term protection to inside Pu-erh cake, but also are good traditional arts pieces.

Speaking of inside labels, those of Jing Chang Hao Pu-erh are Pu-erh inside label collectors' sought after items. The inside labels of 40s Jing Chang Hao Pu-erh ([www.teahub.com/jingchang.htm](http://www.teahub.com/jingchang.htm)) had a beautiful painting of Qing dynasty tea plucking picture.

A Pu-erh Bing Cha's compressing technique is shown in its shape and tea leave presentations on the surface of the cake. A good compressing technique does not only affect the appearance of a Pu-erh Bing Cha, but also affect a Pu-erh's quality. Comparing to machine compressed Pu-erh Bing Cha, traditional hand compressed Pu-erh Bing Cha is less flat and will age faster. Historically, Jing Chang Hao was famous for their superior compressing techniques and beautiful appearance.

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