



Tea plantations have turned the once-barren mountains into a land of hope in Guizhou province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Matcha without match

The tea product has brought rapid development to a previously impoverished swathe of Guizhou province, report **Cheng Yuezhu** in Beijing and **Yang Jun** in Guiyang.

Many cities in Southwest China's Guizhou province have benefited from growing tea, but Tongren city has used matcha as a novel approach to creating various tea products in recent years.

Luoxiang village in Nuxi town, Jiangkou county, for instance, has been keeping up and cooperating with companies producing matcha.

Yang Maohua, who's now Luoxiang's Party chief, was a pioneer in recognizing tea planting's potential and started developing the industry in the village.

Before tea was introduced, the village was afflicted by barren land and poverty. Its terrain was mostly uncultivated, and villagers frequently experienced poor harvests.

Like many villagers at the time, Yang left the mountains for big cities as a young adult, working different jobs.

He later returned to his hometown and worked as a driver becoming one of the first locals to earn a decent living.

He decided to devote himself to helping other villagers overcome poverty. He ran for village head and was elected by a majority vote in 2006.

In 2007, Jiangkou county's government planned to develop tea as the main industry in Nuxi town.

While most villagers were skeptical as to whether tea would actually improve their lives, Yang took the initiative to plant tea and encouraged others to transfer their farmland for collective use. That year, the village grew assorted tea varieties on 27 hectares.

Yang continued to experiment with new ways to increase harvests and develop the local tea industry.

He also registered the Luoxiang village tea cooperative and a tea-processing plant, Luoxiang Tea Co, selling nearly 300,000 yuan (\$43,000) worth that year.

The village became one of the first to cooperate with bigger tea enterprises to sell its products outside.

In 2015, Gui Tea Co Ltd, one of Guizhou's biggest tea companies, sought to add matcha to its products.



Above: Tongren Gui Tea produces a variety of matcha products.

Top: Tea planters harvest in early spring in Jiangkou county, Tongren city, in Guizhou province.

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“The traditional brewed tea mainly uses spring tea leaves ... Matcha production allows the tea leaves picked in summer and autumn to be used and generates income year-round.”

Que Conghan, general manager of Luoxiang Tea Co

“The traditional brewed tea is a slow-moving product,” Gui Tea general manager Hu Qingshuang says.

“Its output is greater than its sales, and the market has reached saturation. But, there's considerable demand for matcha.”

The Gui Tea Industrial Park and the Tongren Gui Tea brand were established in Jiangkou county in 2017, after purchasing facilities and successfully developing manufacturing methods.

Luoxiang village started cooperating with Gui Tea in 2018, building a processing plant specially for matcha and signing a long-term contract with the company in technical guidance, sales and brand upgrading.

“With the help of Gui Tea, our plantation has expanded to 1,066 hectares, about 0.2 hectare per capita, and each hectare can yield 90,000 yuan in revenue,” says Que Conghan, deputy head of the village and general manager of Luoxiang Tea Co.

“Our village now has four tea-processing plants and over 260 tea-processing machines.”

One of the most evident advantages of matcha, Que says, is that its raw materials are not as restricted as traditional tea.

“Traditional brewed tea mainly uses spring tea leaves, so the plantations used to only harvest in the spring. Matcha

production allows the tea leaves picked in summer and autumn to be used and generates income year-round.”

The cooperation has helped the village solve the problem of tea sales. And the tea factories have provided sufficient job opportunities for locals — so much so that they now go to other towns to recruit workers.

“Our tea plantations meet international standards and have stricter management requirements,” Que says.

“So, we're able to provide more jobs for villagers, and their salaries are also at least 10 percent more than before. We pay around 2.3 million yuan to our workers annually.”

Yang also says that the tea and matcha production has substantially improved local living conditions.

“Eight percent of households now have a car. Over 300 families have renovated their houses, and many have bought residences downtown.”

More villages in Nuxi are following Luoxiang village's lead. The town hosts over 10 tea-processing plants, including six for matcha, and 18 production lines. About 2,000 hectares of tea fields have been planted.

Tongren Gui Tea has been awarded several international certifications, including the Rainforest Standard, ISO 9001, ISO 22000 and the AIB Standards, allowing it to enter international markets.

“Our matcha powder is now exported to companies around the world, including in the United States, Germany, France and Brazil,” Hu says.

“Last year, our exports accounted for one-tenth of our total sales.”

The company is experimenting with its own matcha products by establishing a matcha institute in Guizhou's capital, Guiyang, to develop a wide range of matcha products, such as cakes, ice creams and biscuits.

The institute also allows visitors to make their own matcha lattes to provide an enhanced experience and promote matcha culture.

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Designing to drink across cultures

By MA ZHENHUAN in Hangzhou mazhenhuan@chinadaily.com.cn

Swiss designer Didier Rudolph Quarroz's love of Chinese tea culture has inspired him to design innovative new items to brew the beverage.

The graduate of the renowned Swiss design school, ECAL (University of Art and Design Lausanne), developed an interest in Chinese tea after working at a Shanghai-based design company, where he was by chance engaged in a tea project.

His research helped him hone a deep understanding of the differences between Chinese and Western tea products. This made him think about designing items for foreigners to brew Chinese tea.

“I hope to design easy-to-use and modern tea-making tools to help foreigners try Chinese traditional tea and give them an interesting experience in brewing it,” Quarroz says.

In 2017, he moved to Hangzhou, capital of East China's Zhejiang province and a major tea-production base, to explore the possibilities of applying Western concepts in design to the brewing of Chinese tea.

“I want to focus on the tea industry, and Hangzhou is a great fit because of the long history and profound culture of tea here,” Quarroz says.

He opened his design company, Shateso, with the help of local incubator Nihub in the city's Binjiang district.

Quarroz began to concentrate on the design of a tea infuser to make brewing easier for foreigners.



A tea infuser designed by Didier Rudolph Quarroz.

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It's a cone-shaped container with frosted glass and a silicone lid. All users need to do is to put the leaves inside, place it in a cup and add hot water.

“The infuser can be taken out from the cup easily without (users') fingers being scalded by the hot water,” Quarroz says.

He adds that the container with tea inside can be brewed several times by putting it in and taking it out of the water, and the flavor's strength can be sustained at the same time.

Hangzhou boasts a booming tea industry, which has offered the Swiss designer many opportunities to cooperate with local plantations and companies.

“Driven by a love for Chinese tea, I cooperate with local companies and help them to develop new kinds of tea products. Also, we sometimes organize workshops to introduce different teas to the public,” Quarroz says.

Hangzhou also enables smooth business operations, he adds.

“In general, it is easy to start a business in Hangzhou. The government and agencies are ramping up efforts to help and support young entrepreneurs, including those from foreign countries,” he adds.

Quarroz says he plans to design 10 innovative tea-related products by combining Chinese tea culture with international elements.

Qin Jirong contributed to the story.



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Plantations: Hard work lays the roots of success

From page 15

Zhang, of Zhiqiang village, emphasizes the success was also due to the comprehensive support offered by institutes and companies from Zhejiang province. When they encountered difficulties in growing tea, experts from the Tea Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences provided them with technical support.

Because white tea requires a complicated manufacturing process, Yuanfeng Tea Machinery company from Anji donated 31 sets of white tea processing machinery to the tea cooperative in Zhiqiang village.

The sales are covered by Zhejiang Tea Group, which established a company in Yanhe county especially to help build an integrated supply chain.

Fu Gang, Party chief of Dazhai village, says that their villagers only used to grow

tea on a small scale and had little experience in running tea plantations, so, in the beginning, the villagers were concerned whether the plantation would actually turn a profit.

“Thankfully, apart from donating tea saplings to us, Huangdu village also offers us support in growing and management, and Zhejiang Tea Group helps us sell the tea. Our concerns are all resolved,” Fu says.

Since 2019, Zhongzhai township has been expanding its tea planting area, adding more than 330 hectares of newly built plantations in seven other villages, bringing an income of 3.5 million yuan to 3,016 households, 13,172 people in total, including 1,235 impoverished households. The town aims to plant another 110 hectares of tea this year.

According to the local government report, white tea production has become the major industry of the town, not only



A tea planter in Anji, Zhejiang province, checks the saplings which will be donated to Guizhou province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

enabling the residents to seek local job opportunities, but also attracting people there for work or to trade.

The town has been developing eco-friendly agriculture, including livestock breeding, ensuring that all residents

struggling with poverty can make a living by participating in these causes.

Fu says that in 2018, Dazhai village registered 139 impoverished households, 686 people altogether, and by the end of 2019, 114 households and 586 people have been taken off the list.

The remaining 25 impoverished households followed soon after.

Meng Pinghong, an NPC deputy and a researcher with the Guizhou Academy of Agricultural Sciences, says such measures are regarded as a vital element in China's poverty alleviation efforts, as through developing local industries, such as tea-plantation, more of the poverty-stricken population will ensure a stable and increasing income, with their jobs being secured locally.

Yang Jun in Guiyang contributed to the story.