

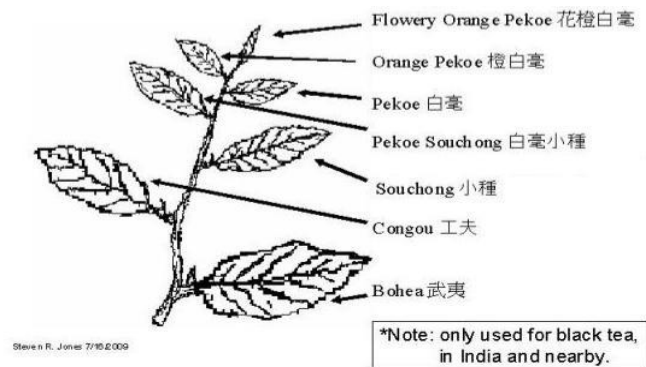


GRADING OF TEA

INTRODUCTION:

In the tea industry, tea leaf grading is the process of evaluating products based on the quality and condition of the tea leaves themselves. The highest grades for Western and South Asian teas are referred to as “orange pekoe”, and the lowest as “fannings” or “dust”. Pekoe tea grades are classified into various qualities, each determined by how many of the adjacent young leaves (two, one, or none) were picked along with the leaf buds. Top-quality pekoe grades consist of only the leaf buds, which are picked using the balls of the fingertips. Fingernails and mechanical tools are not used, to avoid bruising. Certain grades of leaf are better suited to certain varieties of tea. For example, most white tea is processed from the buds or shoots of the tea plant. When crushed to make bagged teas, the tea is referred to as “broken”, as in “broken orange pekoe” (“BOP”). These lower grades include fannings and dust, which are tiny remnants created in the sorting and crushing processes.

Orange pekoe is referred to as “OP”. The grading scheme also contains categories higher than OP, which are determined primarily by leaf wholeness and size.



Grading by size

Although grading systems vary, the size of the leaf or broken pieces is an essential quality. Size is an important factor how tea is prepared as a beverage. In general, larger leaves or pieces require a longer steeping time. Also, if measured by volume, the larger sizes need more tea to produce the same strength beverages



Grading by appearance

Some teas are graded by their appearance. Whole leaves are easier to grade by appearance than broken pieces.

Choppy contains many leaves of various sizes. Fannings are small particles of tea leaves used almost exclusively in tzea bags. Flowery consists of large leaves, typically plucked in the second or third flush with an abundance of tips. Golden flowery includes very young tips or buds (usually golden in colour) that were picked early in the season. Tippy includes an abundance of tips.

1.OP

Orange Pekoe

Main grade, consisting of long wiry leaves without tips.

2.OP1

More delicate than OP; long, wiry leaf with a light liquor.

3.OPA

Bolder than OP; long leaf tea which ranges from tightly wound to almost open.

4.OPS

Orange Pekoe Superior

Primarily from Indonesia; similar to OP.

5.FOP

Flowery Orange Pekoe

High-quality tea with a long leaf and few tips, considered the second grade in Assam, Dooars, and Bangladesh teas. Due to differences in tea picking methods and grading there is no equivalence to most appellation-specific grades in China.

6.FOP1

Limited to only the highest quality leaves in the FOP classification.

7.GFOP

Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe

Higher proportion of tip than FOP. Top grade in the Milima and Marinyn regions, but uncommon in Assam and Darjeeling.

8.TGFOP

Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe

The highest proportion of tip, and the main grade in Nepal , Darjeeling and Assam.

9.TGFOP1

Limited to only the highest quality leaves in the TGFOP classification.

10.FTGFOP[a]

Finest Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe

Highest quality grade.

11.FTGFOP1

STGFOP

SFTGFOP

Special Finest Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe

Limited to only the highest quality leaves in the FTGFOP classification

Broken leaf grades

12.BT

Broken Tea

Usually a black, open, fleshy leaf that is very bulky. This classification is used in Sumatra, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and some parts of Southern India.

13.BP

Broken Pekoe

The most common broken pekoe grade; from Indonesia, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Assam and Southern India.

14.BPS

Broken Pekoe Souchong

Term for broken pekoe in the Assam and Darjeeling regions.

15.FP

Flowery Pekoe

High-quality pekoe. Usually coarser with a fleshier, broken leaf. Produced in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Southern India, as well as in some parts of Kenya.

16.BOP

Broken Orange Pekoe

Main broken grade. Prevalent in Assam, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Southern India, Java, and China.

17.FBOP

Flowery Broken Orange Pekoe

Coarser and broken with some tips. From Assam, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Indonesia, China, and Bangladesh. In South America, coarser, black broken.

Fannings grades

18.PF

Pekoe Fannings

19.OF

Orange Fannings

From northern India and some parts of Africa and South America as well as Nepal .

20.FOF

Flowery Orange Fannings

Common in Assam, Dooars, Nepal and Bangladesh. Some leaf sizes come close to the smaller broken grades.

21.GFOF

Golden Flowery Orange Fannings

Finest grade in Darjeeling for tea bag production.

22.TGFOF

Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Fannings

23.BOPF

Broken Orange Pekoe Fannings

Main grade in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal, Southern India, Kenya, Mozambique, Bangladesh, and China. Black-leaf tea with few added ingredients, uniform particle size, and no tips.