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Iron Goddess of Mercy Oolong Tea Steeping Instructions provided by Intelligentsia Tea Traders

Use fresh tap water, preferably filtered to remove chlorine. Bottled waters labeled "spring water" work best. Distilled, mineral, or water labeled as "drinking water" should be avoided as they tend to have too much or too little mineral content to produce an ideal cup. In general, softer water requires a shorter steeping time and harder water requires a longer steeping time.

Oolong teas steep best using a small (12oz or less) teapot. 2-6 oz pots earthenware pots are common throughout Asia and work quite well for this type of tea. A pot with a strainer built into the spout is ideal. Since oolong is ideally made using lots of leaf for many infusions, small pots have the added advantage of reducing costs per pot.

Oolong teas tend to steep best using water 180-205 F. Boiling water will over-extract the tea producing a bitter, astringent cup. A quick way to cool the water is to pour it into the empty teapot. Then pour the water into a cup(s). Using the cool teapot and cups should cool the water to an appropriate temperature. If not, wait a minute or two, before adding the leaves and water to the pot.

To fully appreciate the body and aromatic properties of oolong teas use lots of leaf, ideally 2-3 tablespoons or 6-8 grams for 6-8 oz of water. For a stronger cup, use more tea and reduce the steeping time slightly. Using the proper amount of leaves should allow for a many more infusions using the same leaves. To not steep the tea multiple times is waste of leaf and prevents you from fully appreciating the subtle differences from infusion to infusion. Be certain to pour out all of the previous infusion so that the water doesn't continue to steep the leaves beyond the specified time.

Pour a small amount of water over the leaf and immediately discard. For your first infusion, steep for 10-20 seconds. For a second infusion, pour the water over the leaves and immediately pour off the tea. Do

the same amount of time for subsequent infusions until the tea starts to weaken, then slowly increase the amount of time per infusion until the leaves yield very little flavor. The quality and composition of the water dramatically affects the steeping time so you should experiment to find a time that suits your palate.