

Assam, India Tea Adventure 2022

Dugar Consumer Products, Private Ltd. - Guwahati



When I think about blending tea, I am thinking of adding herbs, flowers and flavors to loose leaf tea. But in terms of CTC (Cut Tear Crush) tea, blending often means something a little different. Processing CTC tea produces four basic grades: Broken Orange Pekoe, Broken Pekoe, Fannings and Dust. The BOP is usually in the form of a small pellet and is commonly used in brewing while the fannings and dust are often used in teabags. However, leaves plucked vary from season to season and garden to garden. The process of blending CTC pellets from a variety of seasons and gardens is used to produce a blended tea of consistent quality and flavor. This process must be closely monitored by frequent tea tastings and adaptations to the recipe. In addition, combining various grades offers a variety of characteristics. Blending BOP with Dust produces a tea with a strong flavor AND a quick infusion. The blended CTC can be further blended with various spices to create the Masala Chai made and sold by the Indian Chaiwallahs.

We visited Dugar Consumer Product Private Limited just outside of Guwahati for a factory tour by Rishabah Dugar. The family has been in business since 1948 and initiated as Shree Hanuman Bhandar, was the first registered buyers to join the Guwahati Auction Tea Center in 1970. Bimal Dugar started the current company in 1987. The family business was incorporated in 1993 with the establishment of Dugar Consumer Products Private Limited exclusively for blended and packaged



tea. Rishabh, Bimal's son, took over management of the business in 2017. They produce twelve different blends. I was surprised to learn that they had a blend of BOP CTC and Darjeeling leaves. I thought that would look odd, but he showed us a sample and the Darjeeling leaves are very small (They are the Chinese variety.) I discovered it is a very popular blend and that even blending CTC with herbs and other botanicals is a common practice. I always thought of CTC as plain tea with no additives. This company also offers blended green and oolong teas.

According to the internet: The company has come a long way since then, extending years of quality service to major player of the tea industry. Armed with a state-of-the-art blending unit and a sophisticated tea-testing facility manned by professionals, it is now regarded as one of the most reputed tea blending and packaging houses in the country today. DCPL's factory office and blending unit is at Amingaon off the National Highway. In just eight years, DCPL has created a niche with its Upkaar range of blended teas, packaged in tune with the demands of the modern consumer. Each package caters to a specific segment of the market



and comes in different forms metalized poly pouch, metalized poly zipper, stand pouch, carton and pet jar. The attractive packs conform to the specifications laid down by the Tea Board of India, preserving the freshness of Assam and Darjeeling teas within.

Dugar does not process tea but buys tea primarily from the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre. The flavor and quality of the product depends on how fine the blender is at selecting teas from the best gardens and tasting them to perfection. Their team of professionals can

taste up to 1,000 cups or seven batches per day using 2.5g of tea in 150ml of water for the right ratio. This consistency of quality ensures the best blends throughout the year. After extensive tasting a very secret recipe is developed for blending. Machine blended tea ensures consistency of quality after elimination of impurities present in loose teas. Loose teas do not necessarily create quality. Dugar has a fully automatic five-stage blending facility with a capacity of handling 30 tons of tea in eight hours. The best teas bought from the auction are fed into this blending unit. After cleaning the tea feeds into the blending machine. With an adjustable speed of 5-8 revolutions per minute, the automated blender deposits tea in poly-lined jute bags, machine-stitched and stored. The factory is also capable of packing tea in pouches, packets and jars of various sizes. The packets are sold both wholesale and retail under the Uphaar brand. Rashiba showed us examples of the blended tea.



Assam, India Tea Adventure 2022

Lunch with the Dugar Family – Guwahati



After the factory tour, we were invited into the Dugar home next to the factory. It is a beautiful large contemporary house with a lush garden area. We met Bimal, the “grandfather” and Nirmala, Rishabh's mother. We also visited with Avi, Rishabh's wife, and the mother of their young twin boys, who obviously were the stars of the home. They are a very friendly and welcoming family. Before sitting down to a traditional Indian lunch we were each presented with a gamosa in a small ceremony. They first stretched out the shawls before Nirmala placed them over our heads individually.



This type of greeting is unique to Assam. It was such a special experience. Even the metal covered tray holding the gamosas is a traditional cultural symbol called a Xorai.



We enjoyed some relaxed conversation about the house, the business and the kids, before moving to the dining room where the table was set with Indian brass dishes and decorated with banana leaves from their backyard. Our very formal vegetarian lunch was served by Nirmala and Avi in small brass dishes. There was a couple of vegetable salads, plain yogurt which



they made themselves, bundi bhujia (crunchy snack), veggie curry, alu dum (curried potatoes), hara pyazi (Spring onions) paneer palak (curried cottage cheese and spinach), roti (leavened bread.) We also had rosgolla (sugary dumpling dessert) and buttermilk to drink.



Afterward we sat outside enjoying a cup of Dugar tea made with milk and sugar and walked in the garden where they also have a menagerie of animals. There were a variety of dogs and even a small herd of cattle. I told Nirmala she had a paradise here in the city and she agreed that she loved spending time in the garden. After the hustle and bustle of the factory, the afternoon was personal and relaxing, Diwali was coming up in a couple of days and workers were busily decorating the bushes and trees with tiny lights. I'm sure it was lovely twinkling in the night, but we still had places to go and things to do before returning to the hotel.



Hara Pyazi Sabji

Spring Onion is a veggie which many of u might use just to garnish in salads or soups. This Spring Onion Sabji is a simple yet yummy side dish to go with chapathi or even rice. Chopping spring onion might take some time but it is not a difficult task. It will reduce in amount once it gets cooked so u might have to watch out the amount of spring onion u need for your family.

[Preparation Time- 15 mins : Cooking Time- 20mins]

Ingredients:

- Spring Onion – 3 bunches or 4 cups(loosely packed)
- Oil – 2 tbsp
- Salt – as needed
- Chilli powder – 1 tsp
- Turmeric powder – 1/4 tsp
- Besan/Chickpea flour – 1/4 cup



Instructions:

- Wash the spring onions well and chop it with the help of a scissors. U can use a knife too, but I feel scissors is much easier. Discard the tail end and end head part. Heat a pan with oil and add the chopped spring onion.



- Add salt, chili powder and turmeric powder. Sauté and cook covered for 5-7 mins until soft yet crunchy. It will reduce in amount



- Add besan/chickpea flour and sauté. It will be sticky first. Roast it in medium flame until golden brown and separated. Switch off the flame.



Tips:

You can add sambar powder instead of chili powder too.

Sift besan before adding it to this Sabji to avoid lumps.

You can add finely chopped normal onions too.

Optional: Add 1 cup chopped tomato before final roasting