

REACHING FOR THE SKY

Kiwi
businesses
taking on
the world



THE NEW BREW

A WAIKATO COMPANY IS TAKING TEA TO THE WORLD



It's official. The best tea in the world comes from New Zealand.

Gordonton, in the Waikato, to be exact.

There, on mist-drenched, rolling pastures, Zealong Tea Estate grows row-upon-row of organic tea. Award-winning tea too. At the 2017 Global Tea Championships, competing alongside 245 entries from 16 countries with centuries of tea production behind them, Zealong won three categories and took the prestigious People's Choice for Black Tea.

Who knew?

Quite a few it seems. Zealong produces 20 tonnes annually and exports to the world's most discerning tea drinkers throughout Europe and Asia. "People say we're selling coal to Newcastle," laughs general manager Gigi Crawford. "But there's strong demand. In fact, there's so much demand we have to be careful not to sell solely to one country. So we're focused on premium markets."

Zealong sells in outlets like Harrods' and a rapidly growing number of local and international dignitaries are listed among its loyal devotees. Its recent affiliation with the world's largest specialty tea retailer, TeeGschwender, has opened the way for its premium tea to be sold in 123 German stores and to premium buyers across Europe and the UK.

"WHEN BUYERS HEAR WE'RE FROM NEW ZEALAND, THEY SHOW IMMEDIATE INTEREST. FOR THEM IT MEANS PURITY, QUALITY AND TRUST."

GIGI CRAWFORD, GM, ZEALONG

Its 'New Zealandness' is helping. "When buyers hear we're from New Zealand, they show immediate interest," says Sen Kong, marketing manager. "For them it means purity, quality and trust. This is important, particularly in Europe where food safety and environmental standards are now so high."

Zealong tea is the combination of natural farming techniques and innovative production. It meets the highest standards of organic certification and, in the Tea Factory, freshly harvested leaves are prepared according to an ancient art of tea-making and packaged by a team of highly skilled technicians. The final touch is the world-class packaging and retail design which reinforces Zealong's position as a premium brand.

To prove its credentials Zealong has relentlessly pursued official certification in organics, environmental management and food safety.

Five facts about Zealong

TALKING POINTS

1. The name Zealong is a combination of Zealand and oolong, a style of whole-leaf tea
2. Tea leaves come from the camellia bush (*Camellia sinensis*)
3. Founder Vincent Chen chose to plant tea after seeing how well camellias grew in a friend's Waikato garden
4. Despite importing 1500 plants in 1996, Vincent was left with just 132 that survived quarantine
5. Thanks to careful propagation, Zealong now has more than 1.2 million plants over 40 hectares

And it's why Zealong proudly bears the FernMark. "There are so many brands. But there's only one New Zealand," says Gigi. "We must protect what it means. That's why we support the FernMark."

100% pure New Zealand in a cup? Don't mind if I do, thanks.



Flying the flag

"New Zealand has a strong reputation for quality and food safety. So it's critical that we back this up with accreditation. That's why we're part of the FernMark programme."

Gigi Crawford, GM, Zealong



NEW ZEALAND.COM
Licence No.100003

New Zealand Story Group offers a range of services to support New Zealand businesses taking on the world: workshops, video production, perception research and the FernMark Licence Programme. Visit nzstory.govt.nz for more information.