

Global Tea Hut



NEWSLETTER #12, JANUARY 2013

We've laid out our best teaware on a hand-dyed cloth and prepared a favorite tea for you, making this a celebratory tea session. This is a gathering and reunion for us all: our twelfth Global Tea Hut! And let it indeed be a celebration, for this has been an amazing year full of sharing, insight, wisdom and fun. This hut has grown tremendously in this year, literally spreading tea round the world. And now here we all sit at this much, much larger table. Make some room, introduce yourself and pass the bowls round!

This year we have worked very hard to make this Global Tea Hut experience an important part of your month, and a memorable new addition to the whole of your 2012 experience. We hope to make 2013 an even better year, with a greater variety of articles, gifts and all new teas to explore together. Are there any teas you'd like to see repeated? How about any of the gifts? Is there anything you'd like us to write about? If so, send us an email or post on the GTH forums and help us make the second year in this hut better than the first!

This year is promising to be magical for us: as most of you now know, we have been donated three beautiful acres of land with a waterfall, river, cliffs and gorgeous views on which we hope to start building a bigger and more permanent center this year. As a result, each and every issue of this magazine from now on will include an article called "Light Meets Life" in which we will update you on this glorious project. We chose this name for our new center as it expresses all that we hope to create: a place where the sacred light meets every aspect of life, from daily work to meditation, from seed to tea tree and from leaf to bowl. Also, as most of you know by now, we love the word "light" since it implies both purity and divinity as well as levity and humor.

This year we will also see the restart of our free online magazine *The Leaf*. In the next couple months our new editor, Lindsey Lulaloo, will be revamping the website and posting the long-overdue ninth issue. We will be offering a new print-on-demand option

for those who want a physical copy of the issues. The content of *The Leaf* and this newsletter will be different, in order to distinguish the two. We will try to keep *The Leaf* more focused on tea and teaware with a bit of Dao, while this newsletter will focus more on this tradition, spirituality through tea and our personal experiences. It too will contain a lot of tea information, of course, but it will be in a less formal tone than *The Leaf*.

When we began Global Tea Hut, we did so as a one-year subscription. This means that for many of you the time has come to re-subscribe. We will be sending out notifications and reminders, which we hope aren't too tiresome. We plan on sending extra gifts to those that sign up for a second year. Also, at this important time when our new center is about to be under construction, we want to offer you the chance to increase your monthly donations and show our gratitude if you do. Therefore, anyone who increases their support for the coming year will be given a packet of 1970's Puerh in the following month's envelope as a token of appreciation. However, do not feel in any way obligated to do so. We are incredibly grateful for all your support this year, and as we mentioned will be sending extra gifts along anyway.

Every month of this journey has been incredible and meeting so many of you in person, here and abroad, has given meaning and spirit to this center. We pray that this next year we continue that sharing of tea and spirit around the world, and that this center be the first of many, as this gathering also spreads to more people and countries around the world. May each of you find great joy in this tea, recognizing the communal spirit shared by other tea lovers such as yourself all over this beautiful world of ours...

YOUR TEA OF THE MONTH, JANUARY 2013

1990's Menghai 7572 Loose-leaf Shou Puerh, Yunnan, China

For most of us, the weather has turned cold and we need a warm tea to see us through these frigid months. There is great joy in a warm cup of tea when it is cold outside—perhaps even looking out at the snow from a warm place, watching the smile rise from our kettle as a reminder of how comfortable it is to be quietly indoors. This is the season for aged Puerhs, especially Ripe (Shou) Puerh. So this month we decided to send you a 1990's Ripe Puerh from one of our favorite shops here in Taiwan, which we have quite appropriately named the “Upstairs Shop.”

As we have discussed in previous issues of this newsletter, Puerh comes in two varieties, Raw/Sheng and Ripe/Shou. The processing of Puerh tea is rather simple: it is picked, oxidized slightly, fried to kill a green enzyme and arrest oxidation, rolled to break down the cells, and then sun-dried (traditionally, though not always nowadays). The difference between Sheng and Shou then comes post-production. Sheng is left green, fermenting over time, whereas Shou Puerh is artificially fermented by human beings.

It also helps if you understand a bit about the differences between oxidation and fermentation. Basically, fermentation requires the presence of bacteria, like with cheese and wine and oxidation is just breakdown due to exposure to oxygen, like a cut apple turning brown. There is a very informative and well-written article by our own Bob Heiss in issue two of our free online magazine *The Leaf*, which explores this topic in some depth (www.the-leaf.org).

Shou Puerh is first processed like Sheng into what is called “rough tea (*mao cha*)”. This is the tea that is bought at gardens and taken to factories for production—either left as loose leaf Sheng, compressed as Sheng cakes which ferment naturally over time, or artificially fermented into loose leaf Shou or compressed Shou. The artificial fermentation process itself, called “wo dwei” in Chinese, consists of moistening and piling the tea under thermal blankets. The heat and moisture promote the fermentation, not unlike composting.

Shou processing is not traditional to Yunnan, or to Puerh for that matter. Post-production artificial fermentation is what characterizes Black Tea (not to be confused with Red Tea, which is often mistakenly called “Black Tea” in the West, as we have discussed in previous articles). In the 1960's, factories in Yunnan wanted to speed up the fermentation of Puerh, thinking that they could recreate the flavors of fine, aged Puerh in a much shorter time. A good aged Sheng can take thirty,

forty or even seventy years to be fully mature, depending on whom you ask. In the past, when we first became interested in tea, aged Puerh was much more ordinary and it was not uncommon for shops to only drink tea that had been aged seventy years or more. But nowadays scarcity and increased prices have changed things, and many people now consider thirty-year-old tea to be well-aged. Anyway, in the late sixties the big factories wanted to recreate the magic of aged Puerh in a short time. They therefore researched artificial fermentation, studying other Black teas like Liu Bao, and eventually began adapting the process to Puerh. In 1972, they received permission from the government to begin full-scale production of Shou Puerh, which is why books often claim that to be the starting date. Of course, they were not at all successful at recreating the magic of what Nature does to Sheng Puerh over many decades. Instead, they invented a new genre of tea, which must be judged on its own merits; and indeed is. We participate in tea reviews for magazines, and Sheng/Shou reviews are always separate—even the criteria that define quality in these teas are very different.

It actually takes a lot of skill to control the piling process used to ferment Shou Puerh. Unfortunately, many of the factories have lost these skills over the years, though not all. Dangerous bacteria may even be introduced if the piling is done improperly, and ammonia and other harmful chemicals created as well (The amount of some of these chemicals is important to the quality and safety of the tea). For that reason, it is better to buy modern Shou tea from bigger factories that have been doing it longer and have more hygienic facilities. Still, the best option is to buy old Shou Puerh, which is much, much cheaper than aged Sheng.

Also, we have found that the Shou tea produced before the year 2000 was all fermented much more lightly than what is being produced nowadays. These days, the tea is piled until it is fully fermented, at most factories anyway. As we've said, it takes skill to successfully ferment the tea to a desired amount. It is much easier to just leave it to fully ferment. This leaves the tea with a pindy flavor and a hint of ammonia. It also cannot age, but rather just mellows out a bit as the years pass—perhaps growing less pindy if you're lucky. The Shou tea that was made between the 70s and 90s, however, was usually only partially fermented—sometimes even as little as 40% or 50%. This meant that the tea also changed over time, aging like Sheng. In fact, there are some aged Shou teas that only seasoned Pu-



erh drinkers would even know are in fact Shou. One of the appeals of aged tea, of course, is that the earth was cleaner before and the production in Yunnan involved no agro-chemicals of any kind.

Our Tea of the Month is made by Menghai tea factory, the biggest and most famous factory between 1972 and 1998, which is what we call the “Chi Tze Era” of Puerh. The recipe is 7572, which is also a famous cake of Shou Puerh, though this is the loose-leaf version, which is a bit cheaper. Puerh is always more expensive in cake form, as the vintage can be assured and also the tea ages better that way. The 7572 of the recipe is one of many batch codes that were once used only within the factory, but have since become famous. The first two digits (75) refer to the year the recipe began (in this case 1975). This does not signify the date the tea was made, just the invention of the blend itself (Our tea comes from the early 1990’s). The third digit (7) refers to the “leaf grade”, which is a technical term for the size of the leaf from one to nine, nine being the biggest. As you can see, our tea (7) is made up of quite large leaves. This means the leaves were on the tree longer, are more Yin in energy, and by market standards a slightly less expensive quality, since there are less buds. The number seven represents an average of the leaf size. Finally, the

last digit (2) refers to which of the handful of factories were operating at that time (2 for Menghai).

This special tea is great in the winter, with a deep earthy flavor and nice Qi that will warm you up. Such older, higher grade leaves usually came from bigger trees at that time, too. Good Shou tea should be creamy, malty and thick with earthy depth. The liquor is thick and warm, spreading from the chest. You can steep or boil it—drink it from a pot or a bowl. It is difficult to prepare it poorly.

We’ll imagine you drinking it somewhere warm, and with people you love. There is nothing like the rich, dark earthy flavors of an aged Puerh on a cold winter day, except perhaps one prepared and sent with great love from far away and then enjoyed with fellow tea lovers from around the world!

** As we mentioned in previous months, we recommend letting the tea get over its jet lag. Let it sit a week or two and become acclimatized.*

The true meaning of this Way of Tea is only hinted at by words, as much adumbrated by them, and we can but hope to catch a dappled glimpse of it through the leaves we write and say. If there is a Way, a Path of Tea to be walked and lived it is surely in the growing, processing, preparing and drinking. These are the juicy buds of Cha Dao that we must steep our lives in. After that come the secondary leaves—the ones we usually leave for next season—the history, lore and discussion of tea. As a tradition of tea lore, passed on from teacher to student, there is much to say about what tea is to us, yet we mustn't forget that the understanding we share isn't as valuable as the living energy we become when we align ourselves with the harmony in a life of tea. We can't pass on that life lived, merely point out the road and leave behind as many signposts as possible so that future travelers will have an easier trip. This list is one such sign, tacked on a worn old tree you'll find just past the ancient brook...

People often ask what tea 'means', as though it were a symbol scribed on an old temple wall that needs translating. In our tradition we also speak of the essence and meaning of tea as defined in five principles, but these five aspects shouldn't be regarded as something apart from tea to which it occasionally alludes. These principles, rather, *are* the very essence of tea as it is cultivated and expressed in our tradition. We adopt these five primary forms of tea not as the symbolic ends to which our tea practice points, but the very quintessence of our tea life. They are the tea we drink and share—leaves and liquor alike. This steaming bowl *is* these five functions; and if it isn't serving one or more of them then it isn't tea. We define our tea in the gathering, processing and preparing; and more importantly the energy with which we do these things, which should always be in accordance with one or more of these five tenets.

If we view these five values as something to strive for—the culmination of Cha Dao, for example—we will in fact fall short of their attainment. These five essentials *are* tea. They are inherent within it: as a plant, a beverage, a culture and a Dao. As we mentioned above, these five essences are what tea *is* to us, not what it symbolizes. We must therefore demonstrate them in our tea, rather than seeking them beyond it in esotericism. Consequently, the oft-asked question 'What does tea mean?' is not answered by these five principles. However, the question 'What is tea?' most definitely is satisfied by the list below, at least as far as we are concerned.

Though it is important for us to be able to expound what tea is to us as a tradition, and create a valuable lore that we can hand on to future students, there is also a need for caution since ideas are often opinionated, and can be agreed or disagreed with. This list isn't meant to be an argument for what tea should be to everyone; it is instead what we define as our own cultivation and expression of a tea life in this tradition. Our tea must therefore manifest these values; it must be steeped in their water to the extent that the liquor, the aroma and even the very steam that rises from our tea are all imbued with them. This is our definition of tea:

- 1) *Tea is Nature*
- 2) *Tea is Medicine*
- 3) *Tea is Heart and Spirit*
- 4) *Tea is Friendship*
- 5) *Tea is an Act of Kindness*





Tea is Nature

These leaves are earth, soil and rock, wind and water. Through them we drink in the weather. And they are also an expression of what is beyond our planet, absorbing sun, moon and starlight in photosynthesis. Plants don't have a feeling of separation or disconnection from their environment: they breathe in and out, take in the rain and sun, minerals and energy. It all flows through them, open in the receiving and the giving alike. Plants are a part of their environment, connecting completely to the Life that surrounds them. Tea offers us this connection, for we too are a part of this Earth and grew out of it just as it has. As we drink in this herb, the boundaries between outside and in grow fuzzy: at first the tea isn't us, then it is...

We drink tea to revive the connections we have with the Earth and Sky. Tea speaks to us of our own origins in the water and rock, minerals and plants. Without the trees, we would have no food to eat or air to breathe. They are as necessary to our existence as any other aspect of our bodies. And we are related to them in the most intimate ways, as we breathe their air, eat their sustenance and absorb them into our bodies, minds and souls. We must learn to once again feel our dependency on Nature, as our ancestors did. Many people nowadays rarely feel, in their everyday consciousness, just how dependent we are on plants.

Tea is one of the plant kingdom's teachers: a connector to the source that was grown out of the Earth as a guide for us. It speaks a language from a deeper and far older world than the human one we inhabit now.

Tea is Nature in the simplest sense, as it comes from the mountains—away from the city and its noise. There is an old Chinese saying, "Tea brings Nature to society." It is all too easy to disconnect tea from Nature, drinking it in some fine tea house in the middle of the city. But what would Tea tell you if you connect to Nature through it and the leaves themselves were produced in a way that harms the Earth? Would it cry for help?

It is no longer possible for us to ignore provenance as an aspect of our collective value system. The way something is produced and where it comes from are now just as important in evaluating it as how much pleasure it brings. A high-quality tea must therefore be produced sustainably and organically; it isn't enough that it taste nice. We drink tea as a part of the Natural cycle from weather to rock, seed to sapling, sky to leaves. We enter into that Nature-process and find ourselves. For that reason, it's important that tea be respected as more than leaves. It is a tree, and each tree has a soul—a unique beingness we should converse with rather than trying to domineer to suit our taste.



Tea is also Nature in the greater, transcendent sense: The doorway to existence itself. Tea is Nature, as all of Nature went into its creation—without the sun, sky, earth or stars there wouldn't be any tea to speak of. It touches the Dao, and drinking it is often a returning. Our words, however, cannot intrude upon such a sense of completion.

Tea is Medicine

Learning to revere tea as medicine is important to us. Tea is a great healer, of body, mind and spirit. The earliest encyclopedia of Chinese herbs to mention tea stated that it “brightens the eyes.” This is a powerful expression of why Shen Nong, the father of all Chinese medicine, called it the “King of All Medicinal Herbs.” The eyes are brightened when the soul is in harmony with the body.

Tea is ‘medicine’ in the Native American sense of the word: that which aligns and connects us with the world and all life. Medicine empowers us in our connection to the Earth and all life on it. Health of body, mind and spirit succor such harmony and arise from it. Health is very much akin to harmony. When the body functions in harmony, internally and externally, it is healthy. The same could be said for the mind and spirit

as well. In other words, if you have problems drink tea; if you don't... drink tea!

There is a dimension of experience where people can indeed communicate with plants—one that was utilized by our ancestors for millions of years. The knowledge learned from the plants helps align us with the Sacredness of this Earth and our own place in it. Such wisdom heals more than the individual; it also can help us restructure our societies in a sustainable, healthy way instead of endangering all life on this planet as we are doing now through our discordance.

Tea is adaptagenic, helping alleviate any and all ailments. Living teas have a way of finding and treating any of our ailments, whether they are physical or spiritual. Furthermore, most herbs are useful to treat a particular disease and unhealthy if you don't have that illness, whereas tea can be used every day. It isn't just adaptagenic in our bodies either; it suits the spirit of any occasion. There is an old saying that it is “curious that a teapot can suggest both great and comfortable solitariness as well as friendship and society.” Tea has a way of suiting the energy of any gathering, from deep stillness to great celebration.

In this tradition, we cultivate a respect for tea as a healer. The specifics aren't important. While scientists are finding that tea prevents cancer and helps regulate blood pressure, etc., this isn't what we are referring to when we call tea medicine. Tea is more than

just a supplement taken for health benefits. Tea heals. While tea might aid your blood pressure, that isn't the end—or even the essence—of its healing powers. It heals more fundamentally—cosmically, you might say. It can realign us with our source. You drink a few bowls and as the great tea poet Lu Tong says, “The last needn't be drunk, for I am swept up to the land of immortals.” Even amidst the bustle of the city, tea can transport us to a healing space.

Tea is Heart and Spirit

Tea is a spiritual path, a Dao. In living a life of tea we realize that in all we do, we are preparing tea. What we eat affects our tea, as does the way we treat people. One of our masters always says, “If you want to learn to make tea, you must first learn to be a person.” That's easier said than done.

Rikyu left us four virtues of tea: Reverence, Purity, Tranquility and Harmony. They form the basis of any tea practice. We must cultivate a reverence for tea, for our guests and ourselves, our teaware and tea space. We consummate this respect by purifying ourselves, our instruments and our space—for they are truly sacred. A purified space leads to tranquility, within and without. And when we are tranquil, we find a sense of completion, presence. Nothing is missing from this moment. In this way, these four virtues steep seamlessly into one liquor. A single draught of such an elixir can be transformative.

Tea is a reverence for the ordinary moment: the grains in wood or stone, the sunlight illuminating a stream of incense, or the steam from a bowl... It is about finding the sacred in everything, every moment of our lives. As we brew tea with reverence, we are purified; and the more purified we become the more we can brew tea with reverence. Tranquility and harmony are also cultivated within and without. First, we practice outer quietude in order to meet the more powerful inner stillness. When we rest in stillness, it no longer matters that there is turbulence around us. We could then brew tea downtown and still experience and share peace with others.

They say that the Way of Tea is 80% cleaning—inner and outer. We work on purifying our hearts in order to make purer tea, the kind that transports people, heals them and connects them to Nature. This requires humility, purity, a mindful, meditative mind and other wholesome qualities. The student asked his master how to brush the perfect scroll of calligraphy and the master responded, “Perfect yourself and paint naturally!” In that way, we live our Zen-mind in our tea. We perfect ourselves and brew naturally. Our wisdom is then communicated to the world through our tea, which speaks

louder than any words ever could, and much more directly as well.

The most important element in fine tea isn't the teaware, water or charcoal; it isn't even the leaves. It is, rather, the mind of the one brewing. Some of our best, most transformative tea sessions were held in simple surroundings and the tea was nothing to speak of—simple green tea brewed in a cracked, old bowl. Other times you find very expensive teas in elegant surroundings ruined by a lot of ego trumpeting, while the tea is unfortunately neglected. When tea is offered and received pure-heartedly, magic happens.

Living tea is a leaf grown sustainably and ecologically, full of the Qi of the Earth. It is also what we do with that energy once it has been consumed. After conversing with our master, the Leaf, what we have learned and how we apply that wisdom are important determiners of progress. If we do not heed Her wisdom, She may turn her back on us. We must learn to follow her lifeways, living and beaming the spirit of tea. This is to say that the reverence, purity, tranquility and harmony didn't come from Rikyu—he just named them. They are inherent qualities of Tea itself. Rikyu learned them from Tea, just as we must. In fulfilling such qualities in our lives, we live the energy of Tea itself—we become an expression of tea spirit.

Tea is Friendship

Tea has always been the emblem of civilization and peace. “Through tea make friends” is an old proverb expressing the sentiments we share with tea. Tea isn't always deep and transcendent; it is sometimes a time/space of calm joy, where we can celebrate old friends and make new ones. Tea relaxes us and frees us of the egoic discourse we usually have. Calm and joyful, we can leave our egos at the door with our shoes. In the first ever book on tea, the tea sage Lu Yu wrote that having tea each morning was the only time of day that he could be certain the emperor himself was doing the same thing. In Japan, the tea room was the only place people of different classes and stations could meet and interact free from all social constrictions. And having set down all our masks, through tea, people reveal themselves—open up and make lifelong connections.

In the tea space, we are all ordained. There is no class, title or rank. We are all pure and free, which allows us to talk amicably. Tea has connected people, cultures and countries for centuries. Lu Yu also said that the true man of tea never turns down an invitation to tea. Even if our enemy invites us to tea, we go knowing that this might just be the perfect opportunity to make peace.

In this day and age, we often forget the importance of the simpler gifts: a bowl of tea, a deep listen-



ing to our fellow human or perhaps even a real look into each other's eyes. No gadget can ever take the place of real human connection. Sharing time over tea is a tremendous opportunity to connect to those we love. Tea is a peaceful state where friendships blossom or are deepened, and preparing tea is itself an expression of friendship.

Tea is an Act of Kindness


There is no mastery in self-service. In this tradition we don't learn to *make tea* but to *serve tea*. True mastery must be in the service of mankind. As we progress, we come to understand that we serve the evolution of consciousness itself, and that the growth and awakening is an impersonal process—the natural movement of the light into life. In offering tea, we offer our spirit in true kinship. All movement into the sacred realm is an effort to bring back boons that will support our community.

When you serve tea to another with a pure heart, there is an opportunity to give a time and space of healing. In such an opening, people are often transformed. Nothing could be more important. In a troubled time, and facing an uncertain future, it is only the evolution of human consciousness that will save our species. This Earth doesn't have environmental problems, nor does it

have climate problems; it has human problems. And the human problems are not solvable politically or economically, for they are problems of the heart. If there is to be a medicine, it must also be for the heart.

Tea connects very different people. We set up roadside tea blankets and serve tea to passersby, offering them some presence and loving-kindness in a bowl. It is surprising how dramatic an effect kicking off their shoes and sitting on the ground for a bowl or two can have on someone's day. To truly understand something you must get involved—comprehension comes through participation. To understand tea, set up at the park or market, road or temple and serve tea as an act of kindness. In such a moment, guest and host vanish and we find the oneness that we're all grounded in: the light that shines from within.



 In brewing gongfu tea it is important to know what makes a tea fine, which can for the most part be applied to water, teaware and tea-brewing methods as well. Master Lim always says, “If and until you try a fine tea, it’s too hard to tell!” This means that tasting is experiencing. We can, however, briefly describe some of what makes a fine tea great, though it won’t replace tasting teas of many different quality levels to develop your palate.

Fine teas should have no off-notes. The liquor should be clear and vibrant. Each stage in the processing should enhance the tea without leaving a trace of itself. The same goes for tea preparation—and mastery in all things, actually. If you taste the roast it wasn’t roasted masterfully, in other words.

The best teas splash up to the upper palate when they enter the mouth and slide back effortlessly. There is no need to consciously swallow a fine tea, and the very best teas seem to magically disappear down the throat, with no swallowing sensation to speak of. They are comfortable and smooth in the mouth, with a soft, billowy consistency. The best teas tend to conglomerate in the mouth, and are thick like oil. Fine tea also coats the mouth, and you can feel the tea everywhere—anywhere your attention travels. They make us salivate, quenching our thirst.

Great teas travel slowly up the back of the nasal cavity, filling our sinuses with a lovely bouquet of fragrance that is long-lasting. The tea’s taste and fragrance also return on our breath (called “hui gan” in Chinese) for some time after drinking. The longer the aroma lasts, the better the tea, of course. The best teas linger for hours, in the cups and in our mouths/breath.

A fine tea should feel good in our body, with excellent energy that flows all around, calming and relaxing us—communicating to us about non-duality. Fine tea opens us up to Nature, speaking of sun, moon, stars, clouds, weather and earth. Our own Qi starts flowing and blockages are often broken through, bringing great peace afterwards.

Of course, even teas that don’t meet all these criteria can be elevated through better water, teaware and brewing skills. And that, too, is much of what gongfu tea is all about: taking whatever tea and brewing it in a way that takes it to its greatest potential. We preserve all that a tea has to offer in that way, which is one of many ways of showing respect to Tea...





While on holidays back 'home' in Canada, visiting and getting nourished by family and old friends, my mind has entered sufficiently into mind meltdown phase that I can comfortably waft through a couple of recent tea memories. Come along for the ride, scrapbook-style, if you will...

The Last Tea on Earth

As happened everywhere across the planet, the calamitous December 21st came and went without a single meteorite dropping on our heads. Absent, too, were earth-altering volcanic eruptions due to supposed galactic alignments, instantaneous pole shifts, mega solar flares—and no one vaporized into mystical evanescence (we kept our eyes on Siim, just in case, as we suspected that he might be the first to go). As in other parts of the planet, in Estonia too many had let the manipulative forces of fear-mongering media appeal to that part of themselves (or of their collective unconscious), I believe, which is set to respond to images and ideas of catastrophe and mass destruction. There's a part of us attracted to and easily influenced by warnings of the end of the world as we know it. As if we possess an archetype for it, in the Jungian sense. Our media is adept at pushing those arcane buttons and setting into motion a range of irrational fears.

Yet instead of leaving town, or playing Duck And Cover, as some did, or even sitting in calm meditation with one eye slightly open to catch a glimpse of comet trails or UFOs in the sky, a few of us decided to mark the 'moment' by doing what we love best: drinking tea... in a place we love best, our little teashop called "Chado". At 12 square meters, the space inside isn't ready to accommodate too many end-of-the-worlders, yet four staff members, two loyal clients and a few bemused random customers were snuggled inside the shop. At 11.11 UTC, we all raised our *chabeis* filled with one of our favorite teas, the 2010 Ai Lao Shan, and brought in the dawning of the Age of Aquarius with raised cups and big smiles...

A moment later, happy to see that Siim was still with us and serving more tea, we felt thankful that all the hullabaloo at least afforded us a chance to be together, share a few smiles, laughs, hugs and cups of tea. Kind words were spoken and soft looks exchanged which otherwise would not have been, and we felt that, if that moment had any significance at all, it was appropriate to be in the embrace of all the fine teas which surrounded us as we stood, bound by a common love of the Leaf. In the same space was wisdom much deeper than any we mortals are likely to accumulate in our lives, and if there

was any passage involved in that particular time, then we hoped the spirits of tea sages past were to be our guides along the next bends and turns of our voyage through life.

Our loyal customer Stella then handed out one small, rough, uncut sapphire to everyone present, to seal the moment and to encourage, as she explained the symbolism of sapphire: healing, love and faithfulness.

I smiled then at the little incidence of alchemy that had just unfolded. We had transformed what was to be a feared event into something joyful and bonding. It was a reminder that we can take any event or situation in our lives which we or others have labeled negative and transform it into anything we choose. Quite simply, really. If scientists are beginning to suggest that we have the power to even reprogram our DNA, our seemingly set personalities and thinking patterns, then we most certainly have the power to transform an event our egos might otherwise wish to label as negative into its more joyful opposite.

Beach Blanket Oolong

This year me dear old Mum decided she was tired of taking on Christmas (and all the associated dinners, suppers, wrapping, dishes, dramas...) and took her hubby and I to, of all places, Bermuda. A super deal on Jet Blue helped seal the decision. Artificially frosted window panes with sub-tropic sun streaming through them and plastic reindeer leaning up against palm trees were anachronistic to this Canadian-born northern dweller, but pleasing to my sun-starved body and soul. I tried to make tea in as many non-traditional places as possible, with my have-Yixing-will-travel pot and tulip cups: in the hotel lobby to serve tea to staff used only to Lipton's and coffee; to trust fund kids who had heard vaguely that tea's healthy; to my Mom inside a busy JFK terminal with hot water courtesy of Dunkin Donuts. You make the best with what you have!

Most memorable was the time I was sitting on the beach, my last morning there, with Mr Xie's Honey Oolong steeping in the salty air. Sun was piercing bright, waves were crashing onto that little slab of earth in the middle of the Atlantic and my spine was straight. Two cups were set out in front of me—I wanted to see if the second would somehow attract someone to me, as it often does. I drank a few cups, sending some thanks to Mr Xie and hoping he'd somehow know that his tea was being enjoyed on another subtropical island far from his own. Yet no one strayed from their beach chairs or volleyball games to see me. I had meanwhile noticed two staff



members dismantling a large tent-like cabana nearby. My thought was to walk up to them and offer some tea, but I thought I'd first try out my faltering psychic powers and attempted to send them a message to come up to me and ask what I was doing. I closed my eyes, dreamed of Jeannie and tried to tell them, "Hey guys! Come over!"

After a few moments of amusing myself in this way (Who was it who said that simple things amuse simple minds...?), they were still messing about with aluminum poles and tarpaulin. So I just poured tea into the cups and walked over to them. "Would you like a little tea break from your work?"

They stopped and smiled those broad, wide Islander smiles, all white teeth (Well, a few were missing, but who was counting?) and dark, glistening skin. The older, more rotund of the two was the first to speak, after emitting a guffaw of joy. "Ha! I was waitin' for you to offer! What took you so long?!" I smiled back. "I saw you sittin' there, meditatin', looking so peaceful, drinkin' your tea and I thought, 'How could that guy be so selfish, drinkin' tea by himself, when is he going to offer us some?'" We all laughed as I handed them the cups.

The older one was from another island paradise, St Lucia, the younger one with fewer teeth was a local. Both said they liked tea a lot, in fact they grow their own, like peppermint and chamomile, but they hadn't ever had a chance to drink any other tea. The only teas availa-

ble in this nominally British territory are the teabag kind, and they know they're not the best. We sipped the oolong and there was a moment of silence, as the winds from the Bermuda Triangle whipped the cream-coloured sand around our feet. Then the smiles were back, accompanied by nods. "Very nice!" said the older one. The younger one nodded deeper, and mumbled "Yes, yes, nice."

We chatted for twenty minutes or so as I poured them cup after cup. Nearby, some millionaires were getting married on the lawn and a string quartet's plaintive tones merged with the sea winds picking up. All along, the sun poured down on our bare torsos and the tea seemed to seep ever deeper. The younger guy said that he felt more calm than he did before, the older one said he felt happier than he did before; natural effects not only of clean tea but also of clean human communication, too.

"Yeah! I was sayin' to myself, I sez, 'When is dat guy gonna come offer us some tea,' and you came! Dat's great!" The lines between sender and receiver, giver/taker, talker/listener all blur when contact is established. Telepathy is perhaps another aspect of alchemy.

I am learning more and more of how the power of tea, together with space and calm, and some friendly intent, can transform ordinary social situations which are often indirectly limited by ego, fears, habits and social constrictions, into extraordinary moments of human connection... and lovin' every step of the way...

Light Meets Life

光壽無量

We got to have tea for the first time on our land this month, using the river water that flows there to brew some slightly aged Pu-erh and conducting a welcoming ceremony. There is so much inspiration when you see the universe respond to your creative endeavors, especially when they are selfless. And our center will definitely be, first and foremost, a place of service. Outside our current center we have a “free tea” sign, and that legacy will definitely continue in the new center as well, only it will mean so much more since we will also have our own tea farm as well.

Imagine driving down a long road with a river down to your right, strewn with gorgeous boulders. Just beyond are lush green mountains and crags. You turn and cross a bridge and head up into those mountains further, coming to a gate that says “Light Meets Life” (the Chinese adds “to infinity”). Inside, there are peaceful gardens—lotuses, koi ponds, bridges and Zen stone gardens. There is a large house in which you find free tea classes, tea rooms and amazing teas and teaware to try. You are escorted to your residence in a simple bamboo dorm and take a nap, weary from travels, falling asleep to the sound of the waterfall that commands the property—tumbling down cliffs and stones. You are awakened by a bell that signals a simple vegetarian lunch followed by nice tea... The surrounding mountains and cliffs are beautiful so you casually stroll inside to eat and have tea. You can have a meditation retreat, make friends, laugh and celebrate, as well as participate in the tea and vegetable farming that is going on all around. Imagine also, if you can, all of us in the Global Tea Hut meeting once

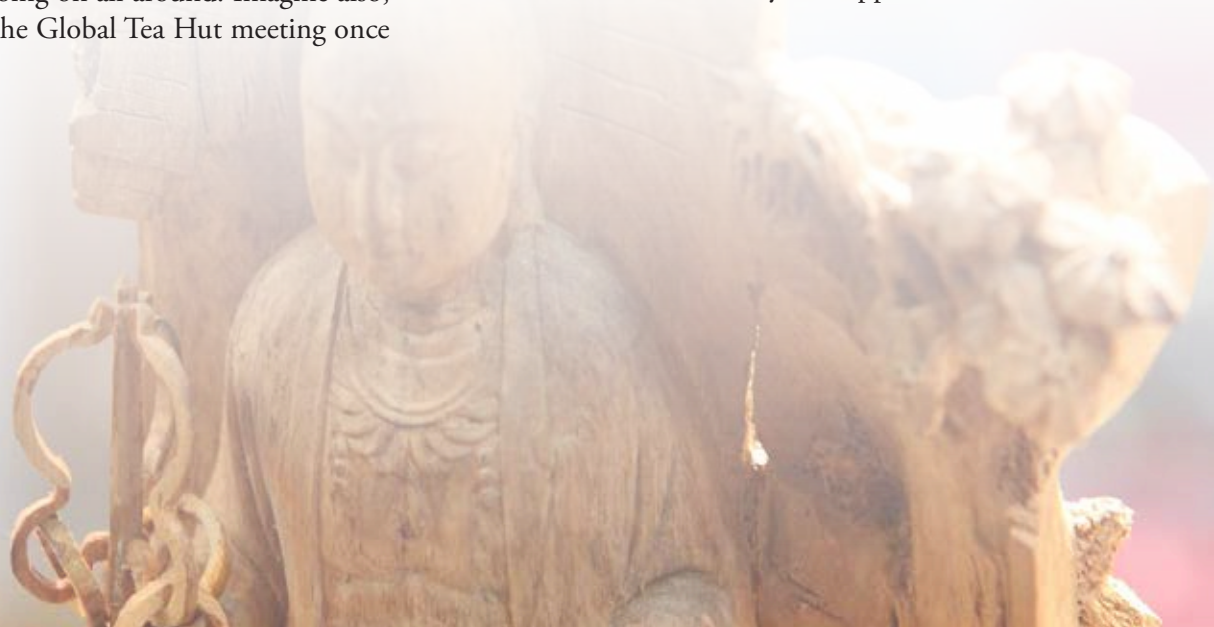
a year for a week-long celebration, sharing teas we’ve found, hugs and stories and talking/laughing long into the night around a bonfire; imagine longer retreats each year where we can all travel deeper into our meditation; and, of course, there will be ample tea courses all the time. Like now, our center will be a place where you can make new friends, crossing paths with people from all over the world!

We have the land! We are halfway there. Now we need to raise around 500,000 USD. This amount will allow us to build a large main house with a dining hall, kitchen, tea rooms and a hearth; three large guest houses and a nice-sized meditation hall. It will also be enough to cover the property in amazing landscaping: flowing rivers, fishponds, flowers, gardens, decks, nice old trees, etc.... And, should we meet our goal, we will also have enough to build sustainably, including a vegetable garden and an organic, ecological tea farm with terraces and different kinds of tea trees, as well as a small tea-processing hut.

Should any of you like to contribute to this project, make a check out to Global Tea Hut and mail it to:

Global Tea Hut
2441 Beverley Ave. #6
Santa Monica, CA 90405
United States

Or [contact](#) us for other ways to support.





Wu De is coming to Los Angeles and San Francisco to do some fundraising from Feb. 17th through March 7th. There will be workshops, tea tastings and gatherings. He is also going to have an art show at a gallery in Los Angeles which will include specially produced tea art, which will be auctioned off to support the new center. If you would like to attend any of these events or help us raise money for this project in LA or SF, or if you have an event or idea for one that Wu De can attend, please contact Colin Hudon at: **(303) 842-4660**

We thought you would like to read a bit more about the center from a flier we are putting together for Wu De's trip:

Light Meets Life 光壽無量

Light Meets Life is a center in Miao Li, Taiwan devoted to service, sustainable life, tea and meditation. We are a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, cultivating and expressing an awakening of harmony through tea. We believe that tea wisdom which has no

connection to any financial motivation, good or bad, is very necessary in this modern world and therefore strive to build schools, centers and other tea spaces in the true, ancient spirit of tea—leaves, water and wisdom shared without any personal profit.

Why Asia? Why Taiwan?

It is important for us all to understand why we've chosen Taiwan to build our center, especially when you could support a tea center anywhere in the world, perhaps even locally. While it is also important for us to have local places to learn and serve tea, we have chose Taiwan to be the center of this tradition as it is closer to tea's origin.

Taiwan is the capital of tea culture in the world, with a vibrant love of tea that is unrivaled anywhere, longer lasting continuous traditions, tea events and publications, as well as production and processing of tea and teaware on a grand scale. There are an amazing amount of tea masters, scholars, farmers and producers in Taiwan. And though such people abound in all tea regions of Asia, Taiwan is conveniently situated right in the mid-

16 dle of all the major tea areas: China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Korea and Japan. This makes it geographically ideal. And the tea culture here has been influenced by all the surrounding tea traditions, importing tea traditions and teaware from all of these countries. In Taiwan, students are our center will be at the very center of tea vast history, as well as the place where tea is being produced and stored, prepared and shared. Finally, Taiwan is gorgeous: full of kind and welcoming people, amazing mountain vistas and bamboo forests...

The other thing to remember is that this is a global tea tradition. We have students from over twenty-five countries around the world, and host one to two hundred visitors a year. And many of you have told us that one of the best things about staying here is that at any given time you will make friends with other tea lovers from far away. People come here and stay a week or two and leave lifelong friends with a brother from Spain and a sister from Russia or LA. Therefore, aside from being near the origin of tea, we need a center where we all can gather, no matter where we are from originally.

Sustainability

Light meets life in all the aspects of our lives. It is time for humanity to once again embrace lifeways that bring the Sacred into all that we do; it is time for us to live with dignity again. We are dependent aspects of the natural world, and the way we build and live should flow through and with Nature—in harmony with this earth and each other. That is our destiny as children of the sun. From the very start, our center will be a paragon of sustainable communal life. We plan to use local resources to build, harvesting rock and bamboo from the land to build and using Daoist geomancy (feng shui) to situate all the buildings properly, so that the structures we compose are but notes in the natural symphony that has been playing on here long before we asked the earth's permission to build. We will also utilize the stunning natural waterfall on the land to generate power and create a recyclable and sustainable water system. There will be solar panels to generate electricity and heat water. We also hope to use permaculture to cultivate as much of our own food as possible, offering simple vegetarian fare to all guests. And finally, light will meet life in the organic, ecological tea garden that will form the center of the land, providing guests the opportunity to experience living tea trees.





A big part of a sustainable community is in the society of human beings who live there. Our center will be a place of natural abundance, surely, as well as an abundance of joy. After all, “light” doesn’t just mean purity and the sacred; it also refers to levity and humor! We will have fun, dance and sing, live and love together with ever-smiles lighting up our hearts. There should be joy in equal measure to serious work. Let happiness be sung in these mountains!

The Way of Tea

Light meets life in tea. This magical herb is a healer of separation, the Great Connector. Tea realigns us with our higher truth. It connects us to Nature, through the earth, water mountain and weather, as well as to the Heavens through sun, moon and starshine. Tea also connects us to each other, creating harmony between people.

All the tea classes at our center will be completely free. There will also be free room and board for tea lovers

around the world to come and study tea farming, processing, preparation and inner transformation. We will not sell any tea or teaware, keeping the center pure for personal growth in harmony with tea itself: freely shared abundance. People from around the world will come to hold tea gatherings, lectures, seminars and workshops; tea merchants will have access to unendorsed information that will keep them connected to the deeper wisdom that tea offers. We will help educate people around the world about sustainable, ecological tea production as well as how tea can be prepared in a way that facilitates inner growth and harmony with oneself, Nature and one’s fellow man.

Our center will be a bastion of tea and teaware, antique and modern, for students around the world to come and learn from. There will be an abundant collection of amazing teas, and all to be freely shared with guests. We will also have a Puerh cave, where friends can store their tea to age in Taiwan should they live where the climate isn’t suitable for aging Puerh tea.

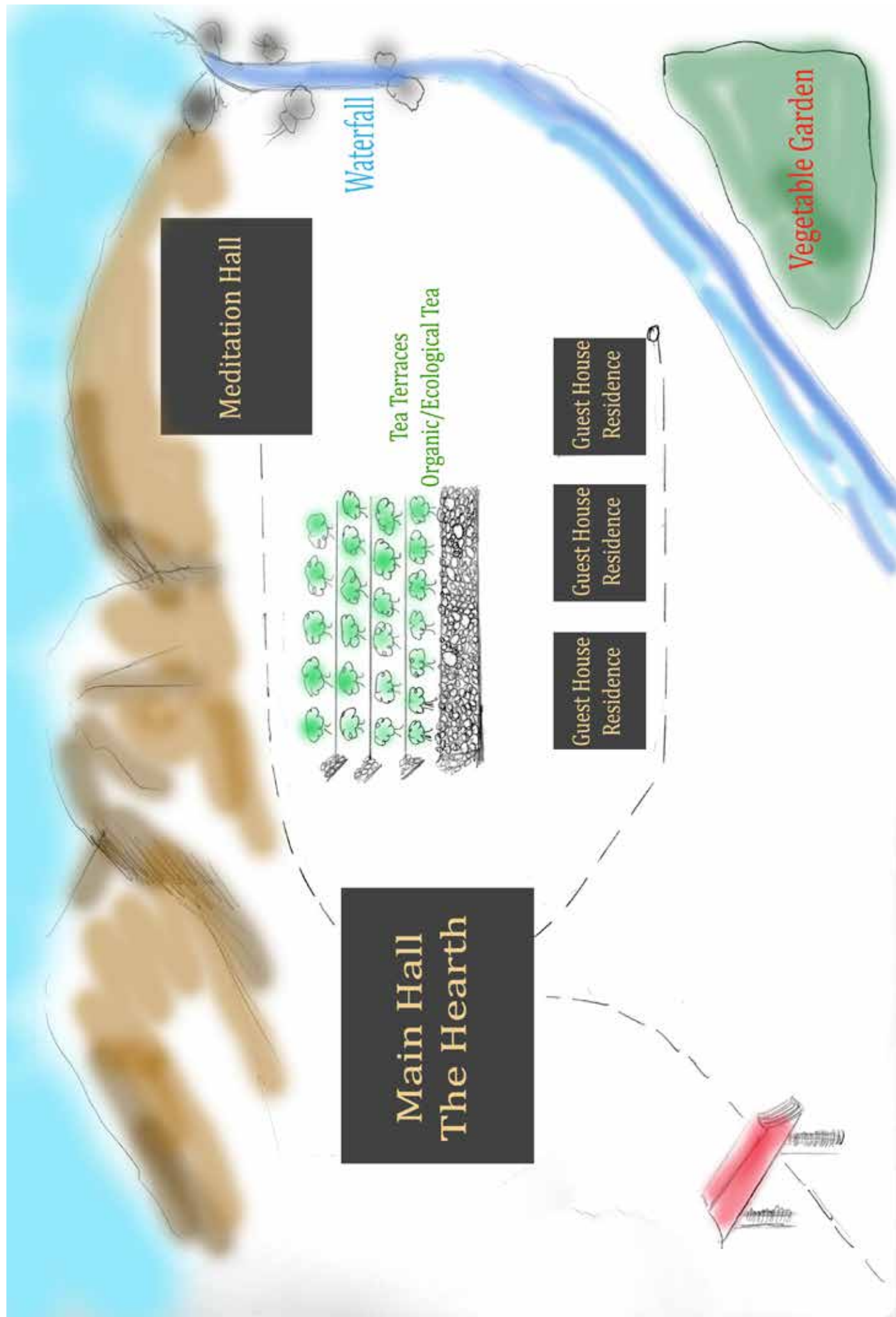


Meditation

Light meets life in us. This earth doesn't have climate problems; it doesn't have environmental problems; it has human problems. And all of our problems are in the heart, so the medicine must be for the heart. In a sustainable, environmentally-friendly community, the most important factor in its success is the human element. The people at the center must be in harmony with themselves, each other and Nature. And meditation is a great aid in this. By meditating together every day, and having periodic longer retreats, we can achieve more lasting harmony in our tea and in our lives.

Our center will be an open meditation center, embracing all forms of quiet meditation. We offer a meditative space, simply and purely without any agenda or attempt

to promulgate a particular worldview, philosophy or religion. Here, you will find free room and board and a quiet meditation hall to practice as much and how you like. We simply offer you the space to have a personal retreat in the quiet mountains, so full of vibrant and supportive energies. We also offer meditation instruction for those who need it, as well as two annual long retreats, during which the center will be closed and all will participate collectively.



We find ourselves blessed; for we belong to a new piece of this Earth. As you may know from December's issue of Global Tea Hut, a beautiful piece of land was donated for us to build a permanent center in the mountains. In the Native American sense, it is actually we who have been donated to the land. Ownership of anything, let alone land, falls subject to the Laws of Nature: Change and Impermanence. What devas, sprites and fairies know of such land ownership? They are the Guardians of the land and have been so since the beginning. We are mortal guests. Therefore, if there is to be any sense of Land Guardianship on our part, it must begin with the feeling that we belong to the land and not the land to us. If we are to be deemed caretakers of the land, we must responsibly court Her, and with gratitude, accept the resources She so freely offers; space to build a physical center, a river to fetch water and mountainside soil from which to grow food.

Let this article be an informal request on my part, asking permission of the Land, its spirits and all its intelligence to grow food. Please grant me Your rich medium in the form of life-giving soil, so that we may responsibly, organically and sustainably cultivate Your land, thereby nourishing ourselves and all passersby with an abundance of healthy food. May we establish a perennial relationship and a harvestable crop of joy, a raised-bed of consciousness and a renewal of surrender, and may we wax and wane between Love and Gratitude. Please allow us the impetus required to burst forth towards the light, bearing deep roots, and thus breaking the illusion that we are separate from this land.

As you may have guessed by now, we would like to grow much of our own food at the new center, and ultimately progress towards self-sufficiency. Naturally, we want to be stewards of the land, exercising sustainable and organic agricultural practices stemming from a rich variety of environmentally driven farming methods, such as Biointensive farming, Natural farming, and aspects of Biodynamics and Permaculture. I briefly spoke on Biodynamics in Decembers' GTH. In a similar manner, I would like to discuss each topic here as it pertains to growing food at our center. Please keep in mind that I am no expert on any particular field of farming but that my thumb is green and my mind open.

Sustainability

This month I'll begin by touching on sustainability with respect to our garden project. Sustainability is the ability of a system to support itself. That means over the course of its life, a sustainable system should produce energy equivalent to or in excess of the energy consumed. With the cost of food and energy on the rise, and as resources become scarcer, an efficient food system able to sustain itself is on the great perennial path. Essentially, what we take we must replenish and that's why a significant portion of our food system will be allocated to compost crops: crops used mainly for composting. If our garden bed is to sustain itself we must supply it with nutrient-dense, humus-rich compost to replenish the soil. In a time when modern agriculture wages war on our arable land depleting soil





fertility, growing soil through composting and proper land management/guardianship will play major roles in achieving a high degree of sustainability.

In our garden we will include simple and effective techniques to reduce, reuse, and recycle. For example, crop rotation, companion planting, supplying compost, mulching and cover-cropping are all means of reducing water consumption and protecting the soil. Redirecting greywater, rainwater and discarded water from tea sessions (of which there shall be many!) is a simple approach to reusing more water when needed during the hot subtropical summers in Taiwan. Pollution is nothing more than an unused resource. Of course, composting will be our main method of recycling raw materials and food scraps, transforming dead and inorganic matter into life-giving humus.

We are also very lucky to have ample access to bamboo from the surrounding groves, water from the nearby riverbed, and rocks which permeate and penetrate the mosaic-like land to which we belong. Bamboo in particular is a wonderful mascot for sustainability in terms of its perennial nature, speed of growth, multi-functional use as food, tool, and building material, and its ability to endure. I cannot imagine this garden project, in terms of practicality and sustainability, without

the use of bamboo as material for raised beds, fences, trellis, water catchment canals, boundary markers and agriculture tools, to name only a few of its potential uses.

Sustainability requires observation, planning, preparation, and action. It's a long time coming before our food system will actually materialize. Things will adapt and change until that time, but let these simple articles lay a strong foundation, enclosing a space open to a wide variety of environmental content. For now, please envision not some dainty and neatly fashioned vegetable garden, row by row, but an intensively packed, naturally chaotic, well-designed food system. It will optimize space and resources and will replenish the soil; it will flow, rotate and change with the seasons; it will yield fruits, vegetables and herbs, of which colors, shapes, and sizes will abound, and the soil will be black as the darkest Sheng Puerh. It will promote biodiversity and generate a welcome space for insects, weeds and unpredictable weather patterns; it will strive towards being a self-sufficient closed system not reliant on external input; it will start small and progress naturally; and it will work with rather than against Nature, as should we all...

Wu De is fond of saying that with the medicine of one plant, it is possible to tap into the medicines of all plants. I wholeheartedly believe this to be true. I've also found that my interactions with various medicinal plants has fueled my dialogue with Tea and that, conversely, my interactions with tea have helped me to more deeply understand the medicine in other plants.

I've been an avid tea drinker since 2005, but I didn't begin to truly fathom the Tea spirit until much more recently. Since I started drinking bowl tea a little over a year ago, I have slowly begun to understand the incredible healing power within Tea—something which initially led me to it, but something which I had failed to access on a more profound level until encountering this tea tradition.

The main thing I've learned so far is that, when it is approached as an act of healing, the simple deed of steeping and drinking Tea has an astounding ability to heal body, mind and spirit. Tea performs this healing in three main ways, some of which can also be clearly seen in other areas of life, such as other herbs that we consume and foods we eat, or how we interact with people and animals. However, it does so in a way that is (for me and, likely, for you) particularly direct and clear. For this reason, I'll outline the ways in which I've found Tea to be healing before expanding upon the topic to talk a bit about healing herbs.

Tea & Awareness

Tea generates awareness by behaving like a mirror. When we heat our water, steep our tea leaves and sip our tea with a peaceful mind and a pure heart, we are rewarded with an elixir worthy of miles of poetry. When we are agitated or imbalanced in some way and we perform the same basic actions, our tea will inevitably taste harsh or dull—a reflection of our states of being when we made it.

Tea & Presence

Tea helps us to be present. As we make and drink tea, we start to settle into the moment more. We start to notice the subtleties of our drinks—their perfumey aromas, their lingering aftertaste, the ways they shift our energies and our surroundings. Also, much as many of us do in seated meditation, we begin to notice the subtleties within ourselves: the patterns that are repeated in our minds, our habit energies, our perceptions, convictions and goals which, as much as our egos might balk at it, amount to far less than what is

contained in what is right in front of us at this very moment. And so, we begin to drink in peace, with an expansion of awareness and a clearer recognition that there is nothing of importance in this moment other than the tea that is before us and indwelling us.

Tea, Receptiveness & Gratitude

In drinking tea with presence, we become a mirror back unto Tea—reflecting ourselves into it and it unto ourselves. As we start to treat Tea with love and respect, and to experience more receptiveness and gratitude toward it, we find that it responds with exponentially more. This path leads us higher and higher until the love, respect, receptiveness and gratitude we feel with Tea begins to spill over into all aspects of our lives (including, potentially, dialogues with other herbs and plants, as well as with other people whom we can help to heal with the medicine in Tea and other plants).

Tea & Self-Healing

Tea helps us heal ourselves. Once we recognize the connection between our states of mind and the tea we drink (and how we drink it), the same simple act of preparing and drinking tea promotes mindfulness and insight. How this healing takes place is immensely personal, and differs widely depending on the insights we need and the insights we find in it, but it is also universal; as it fills in the gaps for you, it does for me. One person's anxiety, another's depletion, a third's sadness—it is no matter that our individual 'problems' are different. Tea simply gives of Her bounty what is needed.

Tea & the Healing of Others

As we have discussed elsewhere in GTH newsletters, our tradition is not about how to make tea, but about how to serve tea. Ultimately, the recognition that we are all one becomes central to how we prepare tea. While it is imperative that we learn to drink tea before we can serve it, the goal is not healing the self for the sake of healing the self, but healing the self to enable the healing of others. Paradoxically, when we begin to prepare tea in this way (for the benefit of others), the healing process within is catalyzed even further. But that's not a goal! It's merely a pleasant side effect of the process.



Healing Herbs

Like Tea, herbs are not usually medicine in the “take remedy x, fix problem y” mentality with which so many people approach medicine today. Rather, Tea and herbs are medicine in the sense that they are substances which place us in harmony with Nature and with all that *is*—a far deeper healing than one could ever hope to gain from a pill! In beginning to understand this, I’ve recently begun a heart-to-heart with several types of herbs akin to my more longstanding communion with Tea. While I’ve only just begun this exploration, I’d like to share what I’ve learned with you and to ask that those of you with deeper insights share your understandings in the form of an article for these newsletters or in the form of a conversation the next time we catch up in Taiwan or elsewhere in the world.

Herbs, Presence & Awareness

Let’s start with awareness and presence (Never a bad place to start!). It is certainly possible to add an element of ceremony to your use of herbs (as many shamanistic traditions do), increasing awareness and presence through the aid of ritual. This can be one way to

sidestep the Western concept of ‘fixing’ a problem and move towards a more holistic understanding of herbs as medicine, and towards a more harmonious state of being. Personally, I find that using herbs in the forms of topically applied essential oils or bath sachets can be great ways to do this. Some herbs (like the Snow Chrysanthemum) are even better when they are drunk like tea, and this is also a wonderful way to generate presence through herbs, and to better understand and interact with herbs as healing agents.

Herbs, Receptiveness & Gratitude

Similarly, cultivating receptiveness and gratitude toward herbs helps us tap into the vast healing potential they have to offer. You probably wouldn’t walk up to a great healer and say, “Hey, you! Fix my problem right now.” Yet so many of us do this with plants all the time, be it in the way we purchase foods (“Now with spirulina!”) to the way we select products such as shampoo (“Strengthens hair with pomegranate and grape seed extracts!”). When we approach herbs (or foods, or pretty much anything for that matter) without receptiveness and gratitude, we don’t get much in return. But when we open ourselves to the healing capacity of herbs

24 and thank them for what they give, we are able to access a much deeper level of healing.

This can be seen in many ways, both experiential and scientific. As I've already mentioned, the experiential lesson of receiving and being thankful for Tea is an accessible aspect of Tea's healing. The same is true of herbs. Recently, I was sick with a cough and cold, and Wu De boiled some Puerh with Snow Chrysanthemums for me. In addition to his act of aware and present tea preparation, there were elements of my own receptiveness and gratitude that played a large role in the herb's healing effects.

Had I simply bought a pill and swallowed it without a second thought, would I have experienced the same kind of healing as I did from sitting around with my teacher and my tea brothers here at the center, meditating and celebrating over bowls of awe-inspiring tea? I doubt it, and so does the scientific community. It turns out that not only does the consumption of hot beverages foster healing for many ailments; a positive of community and the act of tasting a substance (rather than swallowing it as a pill) both promote overall wellness and the physical healing process.

Herbs & Self-Healing

While the above aspects of healing with herbs relate in a fairly straightforward way to the healing process of Tea, I find that for the third mechanism by which Tea heals (facilitating self-healing), herbs differ a bit from Tea. Tea is an incredibly versatile healing agent capable of addressing a wide range of conditions, be they of the body, mind, heart or spirit. Few herbs can compare to the adaptability and gentleness of Tea (though *tulsi*/Holy Basil and a few others are known for their panacea-like curative properties).

For this reason, I find that it's helpful to know something of the traditional uses and precautions surrounding a given herb before you start to use it for healing. However, there's still much to be learned from communicating with herbs as you would with Tea.

Learning to understand the language of plants in general is conducive to self-healing with herbs, and it feeds back into your tea practice. You could think of it as learning to speak a specific dialect of a specific language (Tea/modern English) versus learning to speak a root language (Plant/Latin). Fluency in the specific language accelerates the understanding of the root language, and absorption of the root language enriches insights about the specific language. In this way, experiential understanding of herbs can benefit our tea practices, and a strong tea practice can stimulate intuition about the use of other herbs.

Herbs & the Healing of Others

The specificity of the healing capabilities of herbs also makes healing others with tea a little different from healing others with herbs. Given the different structure of rewards and potential dangers, I certainly don't recommend going around prescribing powerful herbs to people without caution. That said, if you can open up a non-verbal dialogue with plants and with other people, there is enormous potential for healing others with herbs. A few things that have helped me explore the capacities of herbs include:

- * Listening to the plants by myself first, taking the time to get a feel for them before serving them to others
- * Playing around with preparation methods (such as steeping vs. boiling or different water-to-herb ratios) to see what each herb prefers
- * Limiting the types of herbs I use to gain greater insights into what they offer
- * Making the herbs I use communal property of the tea center rather than "my" herbs
- * Taking a pulse on the people for whom I'm preparing herbs, noting the mood of the person / group, the time of day, the weather, etc. before making a selection
- * Being receptive to what the herbs tell me and being thankful for what the herbs have to offer



**Prayer of Thanks for Snow Chrysanthemum**

Snow Chrysanthemum,
We thank you for your heat.
You rose from the frozen mountaintops,
Ablaze in scarlet and saffron hues,
To warm our bodies,
To melt any coldness in our hearts,
And to burn away the ego
Which gives us the illusion of separation.
For this, we offer our thanks.

Prayer of Thanks for the Tea Goddess

Oh, Great Tea Goddess,
You are the sublime hidden in the mundane,
The intersection of the earthly and the divine.
We thank you for all that you give to us,
Expecting nothing in return.
May we receive your wisdom in each sip,
In each steeping of your leaves,
In each breath of your rising steam.
May we share your blessings with others,
And heal within by healing without,
Recognizing through You that all is one.



It is said that as a student of this tradition, one does not simply learn how to make tea, but how to serve it. In one sense, this is meant literally, as in the learning of how to prepare and serve tea to guests who frequent our wayside hut. (Wonderful, beautiful guests from near and far. Please know that we are learning to serve you tea!) We are intimately working with water, teaware, tea and heat sources to better communicate with this Leaf so that it may seamlessly convey its messages of Truth and Nature to us. In developing the skills to prepare tea with grace and gongfu, it is not so much us serving you as it is the Leaf serving you through us. Dearest Camellia has so much wisdom to offer and the avenue of Tea has been chosen to drive that wisdom home to us. In service, we are the road-keepers, sweeping the dust that inevitably settles from the many vehicles of truth that pass.

There is so much more to consider, directly pertaining to serving tea, both functional and aesthetic, seasonal and logistical, musical and spiritual, but I would like to consider the many other faces that tea-service takes indirectly: For this is not a pompous place; we are not here to simply serve tea and offer some sort of escape or bliss-out experience. We are not just here to brew and imbibe tea blind to the problems that the world faces today—in fact it is just the opposite. Tea brewed and consumed in the manner conducted here can open our eyes to the underlying reality that is. This is a thriving and dynamic tradition, very much alive, with a great purpose in mind: one that seeks to promote self-cultivation, meditation, sustainability, community, and a greater sense of connection with ourselves, one another, and Nature. Tea is the Great Connector. This sort of mission requires a lot, to say the least.

As a relatively new student learning the very basics, serving tea, for me, much more often means fetching water, buying groceries, doing the dishes, preparing meals, taking out the trash, watering plants and cleaning doggy doo-doo. What has this to do with the service of tea? What have these menial responsibilities to do with the art of serving tea, and in a greater sense, with the art of living? Lucky for all of us, we have a lively, beautiful, and functional center, in large part due to a small group of people (including all of you!), and in particular, a teacher within that group who can allow Tea to serve through him. Therefore, in order for that opportunity of service to arise, simple daily tasks and everyday errands must be carried out. That's where we, the students, come in. That's very often our role in serving tea. For while it may seem silly, not a drop of tea could be had, had the bills not been paid; the dishes not been cleaned; the bedding not been bought; and the physical space that makes so much of this possible not been duly tended to and made available to all of you at any time for free. All of the grandeur to be found at this center is not without the smallest detail: never negligible, but often unnoticed. To answer the questions I posed before, then, it becomes a little clearer that learning to serve tea means learning to carry out the responsibilities that make the literal service of tea possible. (Yes, that includes cleaning dog poop. It's in the fine print.)

Naturally, my answer to the question, "What are you doing in Taiwan?" is that I am a student of the Leaf: a student of Tea. After all, I've moved halfway across the world and committed my time to some wayside joint called the Tea Sage Hut! What I'm learning is that being a student of tea means to be a student of serving tea, and to be a student of serving tea, within





the realm of Cha Dao, ultimately means to be a student of service. Tea is the medium through which we serve, and it's a very conductive medium at that. But is an act of service carried out with ill-will the same as an act of service carried out with Love? Am I fetching water because I have to, or because I love to? Does it make a difference? On the surface level, fetching water might look like fetching water, and two different water samples might look the same, but from where they were sourced is paramount. So too, it is worth asking where our service is sourced from. An inner Spring nestled within the Heart of compassion, or a rusty tap spouting from the ego? From where you source your intention makes all the difference in the energy that radiates from you out to the world. Just like the koans of Zen; anything you say or do in the right frame of mind is the right answer, and anything you say or do outside of that mind is the wrong answer, even if it's the right answer! Spirituality has nothing to do with what you believe in and everything to do with your state of being.

There is a role of service to be played here, and it's not so much the corporeal act of carrying it out as it is the intention with which you perform it. This is no simple task either. If actions speak louder than words, then intentions break the sound barrier. I am inspired

by Dharma Master Cheng Yen who said, "We must be willing to do and be happy to bear." There is a lot to do as a student of the Leaf and that can be challenging, but where will growth and development come if not from somewhere outside our comfort zone. Surely, there is little room for growth when you're having a good time! Let us be happy to bear, and let that happiness overflow into what must be done, in the form of pure intention.

Again, we must reflect; to be a student of tea within the realm of this tradition means to be a student of tea through service, and to truly perform that service, a particular frame of mind must be achieved (a state of presence, in other words). Therefore, a student of tea must also be a student of mastery of mind.

Let us not get carried away though, nor get caught up in the role of a student or server; it's not about that. I don't want to portray this life as something too serious. Life is pretty simple here: we drink tea, meditate, eat well, sleep and work. The idea is to be willing to do whatever is required of you in any situation with great intention and presence, and be happy to bear that responsibility. Easier said than done, but it's a challenge worth accepting...

When you begin down an Eastern path, and Cha Dao mostly heads East, you quickly realize the important role language can play in our thinking, and consequently our insights. For the most part, we come to love the ancient spiritual words in languages like Sanskrit and Chinese—for their subtlety and breadth. There is one English word we’ve come to like better than its Eastern equivalents, however: “Enlightenment”. When most people think of “Enlightenment” they see in the word the “light” and are reminded of the light in us, which we all travel towards. But “light” in English has another meaning: not heavy! Being enlightened means, literally, lightening up! Don’t take yourself serious, or anything else for that matter. There is an old Indian saying: “beware the spiritual/religious man that takes himself seriously!” And many of you know how we here do so love laughter and humor. We thought that these newsletters might be getting a bit heavy and that we would en-lighten them up.

Last Spring we sent you a small piece of porcelain teaware. Do you remember? Well, at the time, we forgot to include a description of what it was exactly: as those of you who’ve looked on the forums know, it was in fact a teapot lid rest for brewing gongfu tea. As the months went by, all kinds of wacky and wonky testimonials started to roll in to our center accompanied by great guffaws and hijinks! People had used the little lid rest as a cup, a scoop, a shaving cream dispenser and, in the case of Colin Hudon a fingertip cover for extending his middle finger...

Below is one funny account of receiving the mysterious “white thingamabob” from our Spanish brothers. We hope you find the whole thing as funny as we did. We are going to put up a thread on the forums to share the other funny uses this gizmo was put to, so let us know if you thought about using it as a thimble or as part of a Kaiya incinerator (Unfortunately, the porcelain wasn’t conductive so we had to revert to copper to keep the death ray functioning)...

Initially, I was perplexed about the gift that came with our GTH newsletter, but after rejecting various possibilities as to its purpose, I ultimately decided it could only be a cup... and soon learned it was a very special cup indeed! Its slightly rounded bottom makes it perfect for cultivating awareness! And since I had also chosen an irregular stone as part of my Cha Xi, it took even further skill to fill the cup gracefully. Each time I picked it up to drink and set it back down was an exercise in presence as I tried to stop it from warbling and spilling... Time after time I judged my aptitude as a reflection of my meditative state and oneness with the tea and its expression in my physical being. I was so grateful for this wonderfully simple yet challenging GTH gift! It wasn't until after I explained this to our GTH group that one of them told me she had read on the forum that it actually was a lid rest... To think I had put it to such great use!



Guest & Host

From now on, we plan to introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you each month in these newsletters. We hope that this helps us all get to know each other better. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and tea are becoming, as the tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of the tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to show you some glimpses of such beautiful people and their tea. We thought we'd introduce you to our old friend San Bao.

Greetings to all tea brothers/sisters/friends out there!

This tea story started in 1998 in Bali, where I lived at that time. (I was born 40 years before in Germany.)

It all began when I met my teacher (Daniel Reid) and his wife (Snow) in Bali. Snow made the first cup of tea for me. She channeled the energy of Kuan Yin (who took me on as her student) and the rest is a long and wonderful journey.

I studied with Dan and Snow in Chiang Mai. Those five months were filled with Chi-gong, healthy living, cleansing the body and drinking tea.

Since 2002, I have been blessed with the task of making tea for many people in two health resorts on Koh Samui, in Thailand (that island and country which Kaiya forgets to mention in most GTH issues!!!).

The first time I heard about Wu De was through *The Leaf*. Then, I bought *The Way of Tea* and loved it. And, finally, I visited him in Miao Li. Although I can only stay in one or two days at any time, upon leaving the tea center I feel rejuvenated, as though I have been in a timeless space. For me, there is something deep and old between Wu De and myself.

When I read the story about Baisao in Wu-De's book, I was blown away. Not only do our names sound similar, but, like Baisao, I serve tea based on donation and I am fond of writing tea poems. Here's one tea poem I wrote:

*If you have any trouble
Drink a cup of tea
If you have no trouble
Drink a cup of tea*

The tea teaches me so deeply. When I am in Taiwan, I am happy about the great Taiwanese people I am able to meet, the mountains and their misty pathways. And in Thailand, I am happy about all the people who come along for tea. There is always silence and ruckus as well, as sometimes I make tea for 20 to 30 people from

many different countries. It is not always "meditative"—though someone always tells me how it showed them something deeper.

I do not "know" much about tea. My first Zen master—Zeane Lao Shin—took me as his cook, because I had no "idea" about cooking... and sometimes I have that feeling about the tea as well. Every time I visit Taiwan, another door opens and I keep learning. And I am grateful for all of it. For now, my friends, that is all. Blessings, Love, Light, Health, Success and great teas wishes to you!

Just one more story: Through tea, sometimes we not only meet friends. My brother Yeshe met his wife through tea, and I met my beloved ten years ago through tea. So, take a deep look into those with whom you share tea... you never know what may happen!



The Global Tea Hut website now has a forum up, where we can all discuss this month's tea and ask or answer questions, as well as share our experiences. It is a great way to meet some of your brothers and sisters in the hut. Come and join us:

www.globalteahut.org/forum

(We are also on Facebook and Twitter now!)



We have launched the new video series! The first video is an introduction to this Global Tea Hut. The second is about bowl tea. The third is about Mr. Xie. You can visit our Youtube channel via the GTH website or watch the video on the new page at our site. We will be launching regular videos including a new one about *Light Meets Life* and others about brewing methods in this tradition.



There are currently 130 people in Global Tea Hut from all around the world: countries like Spain, **Thailand!**, Russia, Estonia, Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada, USA, the U.K. and Taiwan. Our accountant, Kaiya the Magnificent (and Merciful) says that once we get to around 120 people all our financial worries will vanish and we'll live happily everafter, forever and ever... Membership will be limited to 200ish members!



If any of you are interested in seeing these newsletters in color, you can read them on the Internet at the GTH website, under the link for 'newsletters'. Some of the photography is worth taking a peak at.



You are all welcome to visit our center in Taiwan. All classes, as well as room and board are completely free of charge. We have tons going on. You can read more at:

www.teasagehut.org

We weren't able to send the envelopes without having them registered. This is because the post office informed us that they will be mishandled that way. If your envelope is returned to us, we will send it back. If it gets lost, please let us know. Try to choose an address where someone is sure to be home during the day to sign for it. Also, remember to pick it up from the post office. If you really, really require unregistered post, let us know...



WuDe will be in LA and SF from 2/17 through 3/7 doing workshops, events, discussions and an artshow all to raise money for the new center. If you are interested or would like to participate in any way contact Colin Hudson at: **(303) 842-4660**



If any of you have any ideas about how we can raise the funds to build our new center or would like to make a donation yourself, please contact us through any of our websites.



Let us know about what you think of Global Tea Hut so far, either by contacting us or expressing your thoughts on the new forum. We would love to hear your comments or criticism. We are here to serve and make this experience better for everyone, bringing us all closer together.

www.globalteahut.org
www.teasagehut.org
www.the-leaf.org

Be happy!



TEA SAGE HUT PROJECTS

Our center

- Expenses (essentially covered by local donations and Global Tea Hut)
- Food and entertainment, trips and gas for visitors who wish to see Taiwan
- Bowls and tea for every guest to take home
- A Puerh Cave on the third floor
- A library of vintage teas for future students to study from
- A Large collection of various teawares to learn from

Future Center

- ~~Mountain land (We got it! Check this one off)~~
- Building (We will need from between 300 and 500,000 USD)
- Gardening (both landscaping and vegetables for eating)

Publications

- *The Leaf, Tea & Tao Magazine* (Online and free at: www.the-leaf.org)
- Translations of some Chinese texts for free distribution
- Printing of pamphlets and introductions for free distribution
- The purchase of copies of Wu De's books: *Faces of the Master*, *Tea Wisdom*, *Way of Tea* and *Zen & Tea, One Flavor* for free distribution at our center

Videos

- We still need around 500 USD worth of equipment
- We are also looking for a way to better host/share the videos