



# Global Tea Hut

NEWSLETTER #14, MARCH 2013

It is hard to imagine a time when we weren't gathered round this huge monkey-wood table, nestled in on stools all around its many twists and curves, sharing these teas together each month. Though it has been just over a year, it seems we have been friends for lifetimes, sharing these bowls again and again on our stellar earth journey through ancient forests, dusty old cities, huts by great and wizened tea trees, quaint tea houses overlooking rivers poled by long boats and silhouetted fishermen, snowy hermitages with crystalized windowsills as we share one bowl back and forth, and now sitting here on many continents looking out at so many vistas. The bowl may have changed, but the same tea flows strong, even now...

Talking with a fellow tea lover and dear brother recently, we came to a very important conclusion: that no matter what lineage we find ourselves in, no matter what our brewing methodology or which teacher(s) we have studied under, all tea lineages start and end in the those old trees in Yunnan—the source of all Cha Dao. Whether you find yourself whisking tea in Japan, brewing gong fu or bowl style, with or without formality, all our wisdom ultimately stems from those old trees in that forest South of the Clouds. In our tradition, we include Nature as one of the four source pillars of this lineage, paying homage to the natural lineage of trees that are the precursor for any and all human uses of tea, whether as beverage, hobby, art or as a Way. In that way, we also pay respect to all the other lineages, recognizing our mutual love for tea as a gift from Nature.

It is staggering to think of how much human energy has been devoted to this sacred plant over hundreds and hundreds of generations. Whole villages farmed tea for thirty generations; whilst others devoted every waking moment to making one kind of teaware—one of many! And out of all that tea shared these many thousands of years, and all the ways and means that it has been shared from generation to generation, we get to Global Tea Hut—one pinnacle of this ancient mountain range. Sharing tea with spirit, between old friends and around the world without

moving. “The sage needn't travel, for out her window (or in her bowl) she is connected to the whole of the world.”

Global Tea Hut has become such an incredible tea movement in this world: connecting tea lovers from more than twenty countries, creating a global community we all can reach out to. Wouldn't you host a fellow GTH member to stay with you and share some tea? You know we would! And GTH has also become a great vehicle for connecting small, organic tea producers to the world. Many have expressed great pride in the fact that you are all enjoying their tea, and that it is reaching so many places around the world. Many of you have also expressed that GTH has been instrumental to your tea education, both through these newsletters and the array of amazing teas we have toured through as the months have passed. After about six months, more and more of you reported to us that you have begun sharing these teas with friends and guests, expanding GTH's reach. It is so inspirational to wonder about all the people drinking these teas each month, and all the amazing things they are doing in the world—making chocolate, writing music, painting, instigating vast economic change and many other beautiful works. And these magical teas are in all that work as well.

This year, we hope that you all can participate more in this whole process by visiting our center in Taiwan, contributing feedback or writing articles for these newsletters; or perhaps you would like to be the Teawayfarer one month. Some of you may have some kind of gift you could share with the community, like this month's mind-blowing chocolate! Or like others, share this tea with a group. If you serve tea, you will learn way more about tea and you will also grow as well. Maybe you could go onto our forums and share what you think of these teas, and introduce yourself to the community. The more we all reach out, even just a little, and participate in this experience, the better it will be for all of us!

*A thousand, thousand cups  
Each one the Morning Dew!*

# WHO WE ARE

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. There are several facets of what we do. Below are our main and current projects:

## *Global Tea Hut*

Global Tea Hut is one of our main sources of income, helping to support all of our projects. Members around the world donate money and then tea farmers, merchants or tea lovers donate tea. We connect the two gift-givers. For a minimum donation of twenty dollars a month, members receive a special tea, a newsletter and a gift. All the work involved is voluntary and the tea is donated, keeping expenses to a minimum. We have found that this Global Tea Hut connects tea lovers around the world, and that if you share in the tea with a desire to connect, you will clearly feel the community in the bowl. In joining Global Tea Hut, you can help support all our projects, drink a unique living tea each month, be a part of this community, read about the teas, this tradition and a life of tea and stay connected to our energy and activities here and abroad. For more information visit: [www.globalteahut.org](http://www.globalteahut.org)

## *The Leaf*

Our free, online magazine about tea hasn't had a new issue in over a year, but it will be restarted very soon with an all-new ninth issue. *The Leaf* focuses more on tea information, differentiating it from these more casual/personal GTH newsletters. It is currently electronic only, though we offer free hard copies to the visually impaired. For more information visit: [www.the-leaf.org](http://www.the-leaf.org)

## *Tea Sage Hut*

This is our current center, located in Miao Li, Taiwan. Each year, we host over one hundred visitors from all around the world. At the Tea Sage Hut, guests come and drink tea, eat vegetarian food and have a bed should they need it. We have weekly tea classes and daily meditation sessions each morning and evening. We also help coordinate travel around Taiwan and put guests in touch with tea farmers, tea and teaware shops and events. All instruction, room and board, and hugs are free. We operate on a donation basis, and guests are free to leave as much or as little as they like for future guests, knowing that their visit was supported by past guests and hoping to pay the experience forward. For more information visit: [www.teasagehut.org](http://www.teasagehut.org)

## *Light Meets Life*

In December, we were donated three acres of gorgeous land in the mountains of Da Hu, Taiwan. The land has a waterfall, sakura trees, cliffs, views and abundant verdure. Light Meets Life will be the name of our future, expanded center. It will be a great place to learn about and drink tea as well as to meditate. We plan to have an ecological, organic tea garden for educational purposes and a communal farm to grow our own food. Our new center will be run on similar principals to that of the Tea Sage Hut, only on a larger scale. For more information visit the Global Tea Hut website and click on the 'Our Center' link at the top of the page.





## YOUR TEA OF THE MONTH, MARCH 2013

*Spring 2010 Old-growth Puerh, Wu Liang Mountain, Yunnan, China*

**W**e gather here each month to drink teas that were gifted to us. It is important that we all remember that you aren't buying these teas. You are all donating money to support our various projects and others are donating tea to share with you. This Global Tea Hut is a gift exchange. Some months farmers donate their tea, in part to support our center but also because they want to share their tea with people all over the world in this way. Sometimes, we have a waiting list of farmers who are so excited to share their tea with all of you. Other months, tea masters or shop owners like our dear brother Master Tsai, want to support the Hut and send out some of their favorite teas to help educate you all about different kinds of tea production, preparation methods and/or flavors. Finally, it sometimes so happens that a local tea lover asks for the merit of donating a month's tea to you, choosing one they love and drink regularly to share in goodwill with all the members of GTH worldwide. This month's tea was gifted in such a way, so cheers to our benefactors!

As we discuss so often here in the Hut, we like to divide tea into three main categories: living tea, sustainable plantation tea and 'other'. Living tea is seed-propagated, as tea is a sexual plant and so much natural energy goes into creating each seed. Every seed is unique, like apple seeds or people. Seed-propagated tea trees can live hundreds or even thousands of years, whereas teas planted from cuttings can only live tens of years. Living tea is also grown with enough space between the trees, and each tree is allowed to grow up: deep roots and large crowns beneath the sky. Living tea means a complete ecology of plants, bugs, birds and other animals—making living tea gardens almost indistinguishable from the forest around them. Living tea is also cultivated with an attitude of gratitude and respect: the farmers therefore get to know their trees, conversing with them every day. They are then grateful for whatever amount and kind of tea the trees offer them. Tea loves people, and responds in kind. If tea trees aren't cared for by people they often wither, but after being picked they flourish and grow more vibrantly.

Living tea is, of course, amazing, but it is produced in quantities too small to be shared with all the tea lovers in the world today. There is, therefore, a great need for some plantation tea: made from cuttings, rows of pruned bushes for more convenient picking in larger quantities. For us, however, this must be done in an organic, sustainable way. All of the medicine and healing

tea has to offer us is lost if Nature is harmed in its production. Plantation tea can successfully produce large enough amounts of tea for the whole world to drink tea, and still be done without pesticides or inorganic fertilizers. When a tea farm uses chemical fertilizers, the plants are then surviving almost solely on these chemicals and would die without them. This means that they are not receiving nourishment from the Earth. And since tea plantations are at the tops of mountains, such chemicals run down and have a dramatic environmental effect on the ecologies below as well. Furthermore, such chemicals as pesticides, weed-killers and chemical fertilizers are extremely unhealthy for the humans in this ecosystem, and many tea farmers continue to be poisoned or develop cancer from exposure to them—not to mention the unhealthy effect such chemicals have on those who drink such teas, teas we put in the 'other' category.

For many of you, this is all an important review. If others would like to learn more about living tea, check out the 'Newsletters' section of the GTH website where all the previous months' newsletters are posted in color and for free. There are many other articles about living tea, as well as deeper discussions about other criteria that are useful in knowing and choosing one's teas.

### *Tea of the Month*

This month's tea is a wild, old-growth—and definitely very alive—tea from Wu Liang Mountain in Yunnan. These days, there are many problems that have come as a result of the Puerh boom. Prior to ten years ago, all the people involved in Puerh production were either doing it because they love Puerh or because they came from a long line of tea makers. Today, many have jumped on the bandwagon because they've heard the jingle of coin, as more tourists and tea producers come to Yunnan to find Puerh tea. As a result, a lot of environmental damage has been done and many of the bigger factories have switched from simple, old-growth gardens to huge industrial plantations.

Sometimes it is good for those who practice Cha Dao to seek tea from off the beaten path: regions that the market is ignoring, for whatever reason. Several of the teas we have sent you over the last year or so have been of this variety, like the very first GTH, the Ai Lao

## Tea of the Month

and the Laos tea we sent you in November. Wu Liang is another such region. The roads there are still undeveloped, the people simple and uncorrupted. The tea tends to be pristine, and thus far ignored by the mainstream Puerh industry.

The Wu Liang mountain system belongs to the southern subsection of the Heng Duan mountain chain, which stretches across Yunnan. Along with Ai Lao Mountain, it is located at the intersection of the Qinghai/Tibetan plateau, the Heng Duan mountain range and the Yunnan high plateau. The mountains are high and steep. The highest point is 3,306 meters above sea level, while the lowest is also above 1,000 meters. It is located at the convergence of the Central and South Asian tropical zones. The natural environmental conditions are complex and diversified. Because the area within Wu Liang's borders contains high mountains and deep gorges, there are large differences in elevation and marked climate changes over its vertical range. The flavor of the tea also has large variation and is difficult to represent with a single description.

Our tea this month comes from higher up in the Wu Liang range, which means that the tea is quite unique amongst Puerhs, which are usually more 'jungle-like' in character. This tea is less earthy, having a greater relationship to the sky than to the earth. These trees grew up on high mountains, amongst the rocks and minerals, boulders and sparser veins of lush green throughout. Most Puerhs have deep and loamy relations

with thousands of other species of plants, animals, birds and bugs, and if you inhale deeply while sipping them you will feel the vibrancy of the surrounding jungle. This tea is completely different, however. When you breathe in this Wu Liang tea, you can tell that rather than having conversations with birds and snake poop, this amazing tea has for a long time been in dialogue with the sky and celestial bodies: perhaps discussing its destiny with the moon and love affair with the stars...

Traditionally, the aboriginal people of the area sometimes used bamboo to compress the tea into cones like this for convenience: to carry and brew easily. Each cone is around ten grams and could be a single serving or maybe two. The tea is incredibly uplifting, and very Yin in Qi. Drink this tea with some friends, perhaps outdoors or at least somewhere sunlight is streaming in. You will find the experience bright, refreshing and slightly cool in Nature. It is a great tea to clear the air with, restoring balance and purity. We wish you all an amazing month full of such purity, in all the space you travel through—carrying the spirit of this amazing tea that has already traveled so far to find you, old friend, and to steep into all that you do...

*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.*









## FETCHING WATER

*Article by Shane Marrs*

The last drop glides off the silver-tipped spout and fills the side handle teapot. The iron kettle stands empty. Steam is rising, tea infusing, fire bound coals basking in the brazier. In the Daoist tearoom, sunset orange themes the decor: quiet, dim, and gentle on the eyes. Purple Buddha, our setting sun; jarred tea, our sacred sand; bowl tea, our ebbing and flowing ocean. It's late morning. We sit around the table in silent repose. Silent as we sleep; as we meditate; as we drink tea. Outside, the city bombs with noise, but we make room for the space in which no sound exists. Shoulders draw down, gently, hands join near the hara, and eyelids glide slowly like silk over polished marble. The faintest smile, often visibly without, wets our lips. If it's fine tea—and it is—sweetness sails back on our breath, after first coating the mouth, then effortlessly rolling down the back of the throat like morning dew down a curved blade of spring grass. Awareness increases. The breath becomes more noticeable. The air is still and through that stillness the iron kettle gestures in my direction. A simple exchange is made. Bowl tea is set before each guest and it's time for me to fetch water.

Wherever I go, there I am: from the Daoist tearoom to the Zen Temple—two great traditions manifest in adjacent rooms. The distance is short but the energy shift is great as soon as I pass from room to room, a movement marked by the gentle sound of clanging beads that drape the doorway. The beaded curtain sways like a heavy cape in my careful wake. The path before me now: an arching mosaic of simple wooden steps embedded in a sea of coconut-white rocks. I step dutifully on the wooden path leading to the meditation hall. I hold the iron kettle in my left hand as I touch foot onto bamboo tatami mats. The room is clean and shaded, refined and simple. Here, in this spiritual chamber, this place of purity, this sanctity, a few major players reside: First and foremost, Lord Buddha on the altar, always providing us the opportunity to take refuge in and bow to our Higher Self. Adjacent to the Awakened One sits our one hundred year-old statue of Baisao, the Old Japanese Tea Seller. And in the opposite corner, we find our water, stored in the womb of a Purple-sand jar. Inside, a reef of crystals, charcoal, a broken teapot and other water-enhancing materials decorate its basin. By its side I kneel, moving with the center of my body. I relax the kettle from my hand. Bamboo meets iron. I clasp both hands on the bosom of the jar, close my eyes, and breathe...

We meditate here. We take a seated position, close our eyes, and observe the breath. We sit for the sake of sitting and we vow to attain the unattainable. We generate a particular energy. A blend of frequencies akin to love, gratitude, perseverance, determination, forgiveness, harmony, grace, friendship, liberation, peace, happiness and warming embrace to name but a few of the ingredients that flavor this hall. And who (or what rather) can taste that medley of peaceful vibrations which permeates this space if not the receptive medium of water?

Immediately, I thank the water. Hands still clasping the vessel, through the pores I pour my heart. Sometimes I feel an ocean delicately nudging the inside walls of the jar. Other times, a placid pond in a wild forest. I might sit there for ten or twenty seconds before making a request, often for nothing more than Love and Gratitude at the tea table. What I request of the water is often dependant on the texture of the tea session. In the way that tea, teaware, and hanging scrolls complement the seasons, my askings complement accordingly.

Unsure as to why, the next action is my favorite. A ladle hangs from the wall above the clay vessel. Its handle: a cut of bamboo nodes roughly spaced every half inch; its head: a gourd the shape of an exaggerated pear; its belly: coarsely shattered revealing the womb in which water will enter. This ladle hangs not from some simple hook, but from a jagged curving branch jutting out from the wall. I love reaching up towards the ladle the way plants grow towards the light, slowly and earnestly, avoiding all obstacles. With single-mindedness, I release the ladle from its branchy perch and rest it by my side. I hear tea being drunk back at the table. Bowls being lifted, bowls being lowered.

I remove the lids, first from the clay jar and then from the iron kettle. Everything is open. Steam rises. Raising the kettle, the ladle, and my body in unison, I begin to draw water. The water in the jar is calm and quiet and I intend to keep it that way. It's not so much me drawing the water as it is the water filling the empty space of the gourd. I simply guide the gourd, holding its handle like a long pencil. Ever so carefully, so as not to spill a droplet, the empty kettle and the full gourd unite. With each ladle, water takes on the interior shape of the iron kettle; water laden with gratitude, reflective of consciousness and imbued with loving-kindness. At the correct angle, with just the right



pouring motion, I draw and ladle... draw and ladle... Once appropriately full, I carefully return the ladle to its abode, fasten the lid back on the jar, cap the kettle and rise from my kneeled position.

It's a celebratory ritual: a deep reverence; a slow dance—an honor. It's one of the few things I can honestly say I perform without trying to speed up or make more efficient. If ever I draw slightly faster, *gulp* and *drip* are the indicative sounds pointing to my state of mind. If ever I ladle apace, spilt water is tattooed on the outside of the kettle. If ever I lack presence, uncertainty stains my movements. But when I regulate speed and employ patience, there is no sound, no trace. When I am present, I become *fetching water*. There is so much Joy. In those moments, I learn about myself and I learn to Love.

Exiting the room, kettle in hand, I walk the wooden path and wade through the beaded curtain once again. A simple exchange is made and I rejoin the rhythm of the tea ceremony. All that I can do for the

water has been done—until the next kettle empties. Like a calligraphic *Enso*, the circle is never complete yet always starting. From here, the water will go through countless other influences until reaching our guests in the form of tea. What traces remain from the process of fetching can only be experienced by each individual in each individual brew.

Even if this reverence towards water is just poetic heritage, there's something special about it and that changes people. Moreover, if when I finish fetching water and I myself have become more grateful and loving as a result, that's going to have an affect on everyone in the tearoom. Whether my consciousness changes the water or not doesn't really matter; through it all I am changing myself in a way that benefits others—that's what really matters.



# HOW TO BE A GUEST

Article by Dan Smith

Leave your ego at the door, Wu De reminds us. Take your shoes off outside and leave your ego with them. You will be much more comfortable at the tea table without them. But do you know how? It's easier said than done, and maybe this guide can help you practice.

The great majority of Asian people leave their shoes at the door as a custom. Practically, spiritually and metaphorically speaking this act leaves the excess dirt outside. Some in the West do as well, but most don't. If you've yet to adopt this custom, I implore you to adopt it and see how it changes your life. You will feel a newfound respect for your home and frequently be reminded to shed the 'dirt'.

The mind is silly and a 'small self' ego often clouds vision. It seeks opposition to distinguish its *small* self. When drinking tea someone made for you, have you ever found yourself thinking: "This tea is dirty and full of chemicals" or "Should have used a particular piece of teaware or material instead of *that*" or "Ah! My host is making tea like this; their skill isn't as great as mine." Well, yes, it's natural for the human mind to discriminate and distinguish, but try to keep it in check. These thoughts may be somewhat valid: we *do* want to drink clean teas and be good to Mother Earth; we *do* want to improve our tea ware and skills. But do we really want to be encumbered by these thoughts, or worse vocalize criticism while being served tea? The Japanese tea master Takeno Joo said, "Criticizing others' tea says more about your own tea than theirs." Just enjoy the tea.

In this tradition, one way that we describe our path is that we are learning how to serve tea; not make, discuss trivia or 'get into' it. We can also extend this focus on serving tea to being served tea as well, how to drink tea. In our effort to do our best in serving teas to others, we know that the tea session is an extraordinary opportunity. See yourself, see this tradition and the higher self in the person serving tea to you as well. The tea session is special for them too. Be a good guest and leave your ego at the door. Receive the tea; never reject it with your thoughts or words. Your words will probably very obviously influence your host, and I think your thoughts will too. Even if you don't vocalize any of these sorts of thoughts, they will get in the way of the tea session and disrupt the potential for a harmonious interaction between host and guest. If, in fact, the tea is full of pesticides, slow down and think of another

way to drink less or cut the time short. There is a time to talk about responsible teas and beneficial teaware or brewing methods and you can use your own judgment. Maybe wait for the server to initiate these topics. If their mind is straying far from the moment and the tea, you might gently try to bring it back, the same as you'd try to bring your own back when you are brewing tea. "This tea is wonderful. Thank you, now I can breathe," for example.

Don't bring your own tea! Admittedly this took me a long time to learn (despite warnings from my teacher) and I've learned from some mistakes. What are you really trying to do by bringing your own tea anyhow? Innocently yet naively share a special tea you've discovered or rather just blatantly show off? You may think the former, after all you're both tea lovers, but there's a real danger of the latter being felt. This is their time to shine, to have pride in their tea, and practice their hospitality by sharing it with you. Lastly, but not least, don't bring your own tea to a tea shop to share with the proprietor, either. Some of our own Global Tea Hut members who are also tea vendors may be more enlightened and there might be times when it can work, but generally speaking tea shop people have their egos very tightly wrapped up in *their* tea and see any teas coming in from the outside as a threat and chance for opposition, even competition. Oh yes, I learned this the hard way... not again.

Wu De also reminds us "Never turn down an invitation to tea." If you really can't make it, maybe the timing doesn't work out due to responsibilities, then reschedule. By accepting and saying yes you're also affirming life and your respect for tea. Remember that every tea session, every meeting is unique and precious, it's a chance to 'show up' and be present.

一茶一會

*yi cha yi hui* (Chinese)  
*ichi go ichi* (Japanese)










# GONG FU TEA TIPS

*March 2013*


 Do you remember the very first gong fu experiment we ever did? It is an important one, and as we have mentioned many times it is important to repeat all these experiments several times. In our first experiment, we poured tea into a cup and then poured half of that into an identical cup, and half of that into a third. You can actually do this experiment with as many cups as you wish—we have gone as far as the eighth cup. As most anyone who has done this experiment has concluded, the tea gets worse with each successive cup. The aromas and flavors are weaker, and the Qi less predominant. But why?

The first principle of gong fu tea is to maintain temperature from kettle to drinker. This is nigh impossible. These principles, however, are rather deep and operate on several levels. Much of what gongfu tea is about is maintaining the purity of the tea from tree to drinker.

Imagine that you had access to the most pure, healing mountain spring and you wanted to build a channel to bring the water down the mountain so more people could benefit from it. What factors would you consider in building your channel if money was no issue? Of course you would want to use good materials (teaware) like nice copper, silver or even gold piping. Then, the second important factor would be to keep the pipe as smooth and straight as possible, as every turn, twist or bump on the way down would deteriorate the juju of the water. Getting pristine water to the bottom would be impossible, but you could preserve much of the healing power if you followed these and other principles. If you understand this analogy, you understand the first principle of gong fu tea about maintaining temperature (energy/Qi) from kettle to cup...

Any surface that the water/tea liquor touches causes a loss in temperature, Qi and a greater distance from the brewer. This is why the tea from cup to cup loses its essence. You can also repeat this experiment with water as well. And we have another experiment to further clarify this issue: After you are done with a tea session, and ready to get up, pour one last steeping into your teapot and go about your day. Return to your tea space in a few hours, after the last steeping has sat for a while and try drinking the tea directly from the spout of your pot. What is it like? Is it smoother? Is it more flavorful? What is the difference between drinking from the spout and a cup?

This experiment opens up worlds of energy work related to gong fu tea. You can explore the effects resistance has on the water and/or tea liquor. Is the resistance different with different materials? How can we keep this process smoother and more direct? There are so many variables in tea preparation, and mastery is an endless journey. But the road is the happiness, not the destination...









# DRINKING GLOBAL TEA HUT

*Experiences of our readers around the world*

## *Waiting on a Friend*

*Timo Einpaul, Estonia*

I sit on the pier, watching the reflection of the tall trees on the other side of the shore, steam rising from a bowl in front of me. It is as if the Leaf is softly whispering in your ear a long forgotten truth. And then suddenly it is perfectly clear. It all comes back to you, whatever 'it' might be—you cannot define it in the ordinary sense as such stories are not told in words. The untold legends of the past and those that belong to the future. As James Norwood Pratt so beautifully put it: "Water and Leaves: a microcosm of infinitive charm and possibility, a hologram of the Dharma, the merest adjunct of Zen but in itself containing the Teaching Entire." In that moment, I feel the whole story within a single sip: From the beginning to the end. If there was a beginning, if there was an end...

This morning, like many others, I wake up while it is still dark outside. I prepare a light meal, mop the floor and clean the tea space. I light a candle and sit down. I am waiting for my friend. I don't really know what impulse drives us to meet in these early mornings. I can think of many, but I feel none of them would do our meetings any justice. My friend would call it a

return to the mundane... to return home, to the daily ongoings and find the sweetness of life; to gird up your loins and feel the home in every movement and every touch—there is a kind of beauty there that sends you with every step that you take, he would say. He is a poetic guy, and I love him for that—and might be right. But as for me, I just feel the texture of the tea pot in my hands, wondering how it can be that a piece of clay can have so much life and wisdom in it. Tea teaches me to see life in the smallest thing and appreciate it in a single sip. In fact, She would teach me about anything, as long as I'd be willing to ask and to listen. Often I tend to foolishly cover my ears, but I can rely on Her persistency. Eventually when I'm done with my petty games and I am ready to listen, She will be there, willing to repeat Her lesson again. I am grateful for both the sweet and the bitter notes. Often I might not understand the lengths of Her intentions and I don't necessarily need to, as I know I can trust the soothing melody of the kettle coming to a boil, steam swirling towards the sky...





## *Moments of Inspiration*

*Jaanus Leplaan, Estonia*

Tea has an amazing ability to connect people and strengthen friendships, but an even more remarkable ability to connect us to ourselves. Having tea as my sole companion in moments of quiet meditation has deepened my appreciation for this incredible opportunity and experiences I have been given.

Lately I've had some trouble concentrating, feeling as if my mind was constantly filled with a hundred unimportant thoughts. I work as a university café manager and the first months of the year tend to be among the busiest. Naturally, things come up and change all the time. Between work and hobbies it can get quite hectic sometimes; and finding time to rest, reload and to ground myself is not always easy. Rising early and having a tea session first (or maybe third) thing in the morning provides a rare moment in the day to do just that: quietly meditate and feel connected to Nature. One such morning was especially inspiring and made me scribble down these lines...

I woke up with the dawn to see my beloved Merilin, who works as a chef, off to work. I practiced some yoga as I always do in the mornings and after that decided to drink, for the first time, the 1990s 7572 shou Puerh that had been resting on our tea shelf, getting over his/her jet lag.

It was a calm morning with a couple of early-risers walking their dogs on half-melted, half-frozen snow and a gentle late winter breeze in the air. As I was sitting in our tea space next to the window, facing one of Wu De's paintings, drinking tea and meditating, I felt calmer and more centered with each cup. The view from our 3rd-floor apartment is very typical of a Tallinn residential area: five-story brick and concrete apartment buildings, a little parking lot and some trees and bushes scattered around next to sidewalks and pathways. Being winter time in Estonia, all the trees and bushes had shed their leaves and looked like brooms growing out

of the snowy ground, except for two pine trees right outside our window.

After my third cup I dropped a couple of snow chrysanthemum flowers (the ones we received as a gift with the GTH newsletter) into my tea bowl and steeped the tea with them. As I was sipping this lovely brew, meditating and resting my eyes on those two pine trees swaying gently in the breeze, I began to feel an even deeper sense of calmness and clarity. My body felt physically lighter, as if gravity had lost some of its power over me. I felt my mind emptying, freeing itself from the constant stream of thoughts, like letting go of some excess weight I had been carrying around for months. People often describe such feelings as being at peace or being one with everything.

Drinking my last cup of tea that morning I felt inspired and incredibly thankful for being a part of this ever broadening circle of tea brothers & sisters and being so fortunate to share these special teas and moments with all of you!

Holding a bowl with tea leaves, still warm from the liquid that a moment ago became a part of me, thoughts of Steve, Wu De, my friends at Chado tea shop and even friends I haven't yet had the pleasure to meet entered my mind. Feeling so grounded and connected, I realized once again how important it is to take some time and space for oneself. It also reminded me of an old Dalai Lama joke that goes like this: The Dalai Lama walks into a pizza restaurant and asks the chef: "Can you make me one with everything?"



# Light Meets Life

## 光壽無量



ur new center is going to be an amazing place, where the hearth is always going, a kettle ever-ready to be laid on the coals and tea flowing steadily. Wherever you are in the world, tea lovers everywhere will have a home—a place to learn to serve tea in the ancient spirit of leaves and water, shared freely and without any personal profit. Basically, our aim is to connect over the three basic needs we all share in common: tea, food and a place to stay. Everyone who comes here gets tea'd, fed and a bed! And if you are out there having a bad day somewhere, you have but to remember that tea is being shared here and brighten up your day. Others have found great comfort in the fact that they always have a back-up plan: why be scared to take a risk, in business, love or life, when you can always move to Taiwan and learn about tea if things take a wrong turn?

Let us make one thing clear: it is our aim to build not just the best tea center in the world, but the best that has ever existed! We aim to have a Puerh cave, a huge library of vintage teas, beautiful gardens to stroll through, awesome tea rooms and tea houses, comfortable residences, a huge vegetable garden with enough energy to feed all our guests and lots of activity. We will learn to serve and share tea spirit, cook and eat together, meditate every morning/evening with longer retreats annually, and celebrate around bonfires, dancing and singing together!

There is one other important thing to share about this Light Meets Life project: We envision many other such centers around the world, first in the beautiful mountains near Los Angeles, and from there to other places in the world. Let this center be the roots of a large tree that seeds tea centers all around the world. People could do world tours, staying only at free tea centers where food and free tea abound...

This last month we kicked off our first fundraising campaign in LA and San Francisco. Everything went incredibly well and many of the pieces have started coming together. Much more important than raising money and/or awareness about this project, we moved enough people that some have stepped forward with the intention of filling key roles. Donations are, of course, a wonderful way to support, but it is always more meaningful to fill a cause with your own energy and love. The money, after all, represents your work and energy. When you

work for a cause like this great tea center, your love is the very mortar the bricks are made of. It was so amazing to see confirmation in this way. Here are some of the meaningful roles that have been filled:

- We found a beautiful person willing to help us with non-profit fiscal sponsorship until we can apply for our own non-profit status. This means that within the next few weeks all donations to Light Meets Life will be tax deductible!
- The awe-inspiring way in which Greg Wendt and Jared Krause have stepped up as financial advisors and aides towards the material realization of this process has moved us to tears!
- A huge community of volunteers who helped make all the events in LA and SF so successful, including those who offered space, carried water, boiled water, steeped tea, donated food, etc. It was so great to work with you and see the results.

We did five public events and several private ones over the course of three weeks in LA and SF. Each of them was amazing in its own way. The local tea community was incredibly supportive, showing up to help prepare the tea, make food, answer questions and help carry the message. Many of the guests expressed how they were inspired by the events and willing to donate to the cause in whatever capacity. We thought you would like to hear about some of the public events we held:

### *Dawn's Magically Transformative Transportation Tent Tour*

The first event was a party held at Dawn's wonderful house of tea. We put a parachute over her roof and covered the floor in Persian carpets and pillows. In the house, there was delicious tea-inspired food and boiled tea served in biodegradable paper cups. People walked around sharing boiled Puerh and discussing a brighter future. The rooftop was then a silent space for deeper





tea sessions. Guests wandered up in shifts and meditated over three bowls of tea, a bell signaling a change in ceremonies. The two energies flowed into each other beautifully, from meditative and quiet to a calm celebration downstairs. It was an amazing testament to Tea's magical, adaptagenic qualities—to be both celebratory and deeply meditative. Many new friendships were forged, and without sacrificing a deeper connection to tea. The tent on the roof was like stepping into a time machine, and you felt like you were sharing tea in some ancient, tribal place where old and modern mingled so poignantly.

### *The Wellness Center*

At the Daoist Wellness Center, we held a lecture and shared boiled tea. We discussed the ancient relationship between Daoist practices and tea, covering everything from traditional Chinese medicine to the philosophy of tea as it relates to harmony with Nature. The space was filled to capacity, and everyone

left with a deeper understanding of tea and how it fits into a modern spiritual practice.

### *The Atrium*

This beautiful and creative office was the perfect venue for a night of tea. Café Gratitude generously donated some delicious veggie treats. We had three tables set up, each one offering one of the three bowl teas in this tradition: leaves in a bowl, side-handle pot and boiled tea. Guests wandered from table to table experiencing the different preparation methods and energies in the three teas. Each table was silent for some time, followed by some gentle Q & A. Another amazing thing about this event was that each of the tables was served by a student, which gave the local tea community the chance to serve tea to guests and deepen their practice. We also got to see the Light Meets Life video on a huge screen, which was incredible.

### *The Ethos Gallery*

We had a gallery opening at the Ethos Gallery in Los Angeles. Tons of people showed up to share in boiled tea and have a look at Wu De's art, supplemented by some local female artists who create in honor of the Goddess. Once again, Café Gratitude showed up with super-delicious and heart-warming food! The owners, Lisa and Eddie, are incredible people who are committed to using conscious art to shift this world towards light and the crowd they attract is proof enough that what they are doing is working! If you are in the LA area, the exhibit will be up all through March. Be sure to check it out. All the proceeds from sales of the art will go towards the building of our center. You can learn more about Ethos Gallery at: [www.ethosartgallery.com](http://www.ethosartgallery.com)

### *A Tea Gathering at Samovar Tea Lounge in SF*

We held a small workshop at one of the three Samovar locations in SF, hosted by the kindhearted Jesse Jacobs who has been a long-time ambassador of tea in America. It is an amazing café with great organic teas and delicious snacks. It was so great to see the employees talk about their love of tea, enough to attend a workshop, and the service they are doing for the community in

promoting tea to a world that so desperately needs it. There were some very dear people at this event, and we successfully created a heart space right in the midst of the city—once again proof of Tea's amazing healing properties.

The whole trip was a huge success, and everyone delved deeper into tea and heart. We would like to bow deeply to all those who came out to support us, and all those who served in so many amazing ways: driving, supplying tea or teaware, serving tea, donating food, serving tea or answering questions, filming or taking pictures, donating time or money. It was so inspirational to meet with such glorious confirmation that what we are doing is working, and that such tea centers are wanted and needed in this world...

Should any of you wish to contribute or have any ideas for ways to help us realize this vibrant dream, please contact us. You can donate at the Center page of our GTH website or send a check to:

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

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









# SPIRALS

Article by Lindsey Goodwin, Arthurian Mythologist

When you are on a spiritual path, you probably find that your route is often a circular or spiral one. You begin at one point and, after months or years of moving and growing and learning and changing, you return to the same place: This could be a physical place, an understanding or a state, but no matter what form this takes, you will likely notice two things about it:

1. It is exactly the same.
2. It is brand new.

In *Zen & Tea One Flavor*, Wu De described this journey as a ring around the inner edge of a warped tea bowl. In the framework of this metaphor, you could think of a spiritual path as an upward spiral. Each time you complete a loop upward from the lowest point toward the rim, your viewpoint will be unmistakably changed. It may be conspicuously higher, or nudged in or out a bit, lending you an entirely new perspective on what you once saw as truth.

Recently, I experienced this kind of shift in perspective with regard to organic and conventional tea farming, as well as old tea trees and younger tea bushes. My journey involved six years in time, over 100,000 miles in physical distance and many, many lessons learned. To tell it, let's start where most journeys start: in the beginning.

I used to be a tea geek. I read as much as I could, tasted as much tea as I could, and thought that an understanding of tea was a mixture of knowing many facts about tea and perceiving through taste and smell as much as I could. I was living in the United States and working as a professional in the tea industry. And I wanted nothing more than to visit a tea origin. I wasn't too particular about which one, and I had connections in India, so the choice seemed clear. Off to India I went.

My trip was to Darjeeling, where tea tends to be of better quality and tends to be more sustainably produced than in the rest of India. My primary destination was a biodynamic tea estate. My stay lasted a few short weeks, during which time I was able to clearly, even viscerally, understand some of the major differences between conventionally grown tea and organic and biodynamic tea. In my journal from that time, I described the land encompassing the biodynamic tea

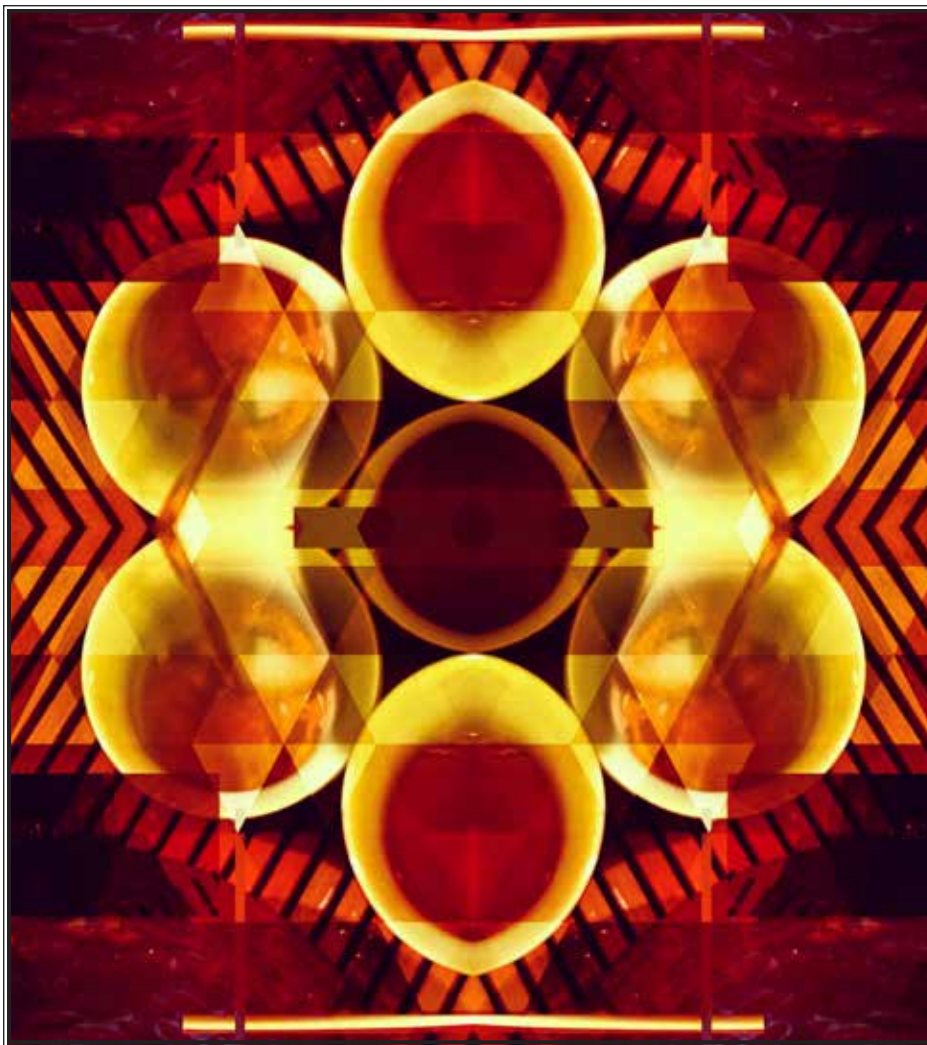
fields as "magical" (a word I rarely used in this phase of my life) and effused about the living earth there, detailing the abundance of trees, herbs, butterflies, earthworms, birds, spiders and other living beings working together with the tea plants to create something far bigger than the sum of their parts. I was wholly convinced of the environmental superiority of organic tea.

A few years later, I visited Japan. I spent most of my time in the land of the rising sun on small, organic tea fields in the mountains of Shizuoka. Streams ran through the fields. Birds flitted about. Orange trees scattered their fragrance with the help of the breeze and bamboo forests moaned in the wind. Spiders spun webs, which glistened with dew each morning as the sun rose over the mountaintops. One of the farmers and I harvested wild herbs and plants for a tea celebration, and the guests of the festivities all plucked tea together from a diminutive, sloping patch of tea bushes. It was a stark contrast to the low-elevation farms in Shizuoka: monocropped, with cloned tea plants as far as the eye could see, and a sickly haze of chemicals looming in the stagnant air.

During that visit, I also interviewed several farmers about the importance of organic production. Organic tea became, in my mind, not just something that is better for the earth, but better for the tea producers, in terms of their health, their mental/emotional well-being and their economic outlook. On a different level from before, I was convinced that organic tea is better than conventional.

Later that same year, I visited Taiwan for the first time. Taiwan is a country that's easy to fall in love with. The people (including the conventional farmers) are so friendly and welcoming. The landscapes (including those of conventional farms) are absolutely stunning. The teas (including some conventional teas) are opulent, lush and seductive. Aloft amidst the heady perfume of such wonders, I began to slowly forget the distinction between organic tea and other teas. Whereas the 'conventional logic' ("It's *practically* organic. We only used pesticides when we really *need* them!") hadn't worked on me in India and Japan, it began to seep into me in Taiwan. "The farmers are good people and the earth seems healthy enough," I reasoned. "Certainly, it can't be that bad to drink conventional tea, too..." I conveniently ignored all signs to the contrary during





*Gorgeous Tea-inspired Photography  
by Adam Yasmin*

that first voyage to Taiwan, as well as the following year leading up to my return to Taiwan.

Fortunately, my second trip to Taiwan was a longer one. By that time, I was living as a sort of international tea nomad, traveling to various tea origins and tea cultures and eking out a living by writing articles about what I learned. (Yes, I was still a tea geek.) Just beyond the beauty of Taiwan's landscapes and people, I began to see the darker side of this 'practically organic' production more clearly. It was the ideal preparation for my first visit to the Tea Sage Hut.

By the time I reached Wu De and his teachings of "organic tea only", I was finally ready to receive the message that had been called out to me for so many years, through so many experiences. There are myriad organic teas in the world. I am not losing anything by turning down the conventional teas and embracing the organic ones. What could I possibly gain by buying conventional teas? In buying conventional teas, wasn't I merely seeking a tea experience to add to my list of tea experiences? I've traveled that road already, and I now understand that it is simply an unending ego game of wanting more (and then more, and yet more still, *ad infinitum* until the grave). Yet, at the same time, I slowly began to understand that it was not about rejec-

tion of conventional farming as inherently "bad", either. I began to realize that it simply *is*, and the main thing that I can do is change my relationship to tea rather than try to change the nature of tea production itself (something I had tried a few times to do through tea journalism prior to that point).

For the following nine months, I went on a sort of tea fast as I traveled through Taiwan, India and Europe. Although I bought prepared tea, accepted gifts of tea and bought organic tea as gifts, I didn't purchase any tea leaves whatsoever for myself. I let teas come to me and opened myself to whatever was there before me. I was amazed by the teas that reached me in this way. There were beautiful organic teas that were gifted to me by dear friends, the handmade red tea that Wu De gave me along with my blue-rimmed tea bowl, and teas made with love and served to me at meditation courses, as well as countless teas that I would not have actively *chosen* to drink, but was grateful for nonetheless.

Then, shortly after I made Taiwan my new home last fall, I visited Mr. Xie, an organic farmer whom you may remember from our October mailing. He explained how his success with organic farming had encouraged others in his area of Nantou County to convert to organic production as well. The importance

of financial energy flowing into new organic tea farms became very evident to me, and I was touched by this revelation.

Two weeks later, I made a purchase of tea for myself for the first time in nine months. But it was entirely different from any purchase of tea I've made before. The most noticeable difference was that the tea spoke to me in a way I had never felt before. On the day I bought it, I had no intention of buying tea, nor any desire to buy any. (After all, I live in a tea center. What more could I possibly want!) But something in that tea called out to me on a very deep level. I understood that it was not a purchase for me, but something larger. The tea was an organic tea from Ali Shan, Taiwan—a region where conventional tea production is causing some serious environmental repercussions, and where organic tea production is virtually nonexistent. The tea was from a farm under organic conversion, which means it wasn't entirely clean. And while these points may have counted against the tea in my mind in years past, this time it counted as a huge advantage. By then, I had accepted that conventional production exists, and had shifted my perspective to include choosing organic tea not because conventional tea is bad, but because organic tea is wonderful and because I want to support it wholeheartedly. It was the largest volume of tea I had ever bought for personal use.

But don't worry—I didn't gulp it all down greedily or force all our guests to drink it as a 'default tea' until it was all spent. Not coincidentally, the tea is a traditional roast oolong, which means it can age well. When this oolong spoke to me, it made its intentions clear: it wanted to be aged and, when it is ready to be drunk 20 years later, it will stand as an example of what kind of change is possible in the world. Since then, I've seen this tea speak to other guests, who have bought some for themselves and as a way to support organic production in Taiwan. It has been such a joy to watch this tea reach out and connect to others in a similar way to how it connected to me, and such a pleasure to sense that in 20 years, this tea will not be an outlier, but

a forerunner, a messenger, a revolutionary. This, in part thanks to the economic support that I and many others have provided to this fledgling organic field in the midst of a sea of conventional ones.

And then, a few weeks ago, I took a trip around Nantou County, Taiwan, with someone who had grown up on an organic farm. Together, we explored a wide array of tea farms in the area (which is commonly referred to as "Tea County"). We investigated everything from old-growth tea trees and organic farms to chemical-soaked swaths of cloned plants, seeing up close what was really happening to the land when it was treated with chemicals.

We began our trip with organic, old tea trees, feeling the life force in them and walking amongst them for an afternoon. Later, we saw organic farms, then farms which use chemicals on occasion. As our trip progressed, we headed to areas that have been less environmentally friendly. At one point, I even got sprayed in the face with pesticides as we passed one farm on a scooter, but after the initial shock wore off my concern was mainly for the worker who applies the chemicals for hours at a time, for the plants that were being sprayed and for the environmental fallout from such activities. At several points along the journey, we witnessed the aftermath of harsh chemical treatments, where several decades after chemicals were overused, the land is still being actively rehabbed to get it back to where it was before these transgressions against the land occurred.

Throughout the trip, my companion pointed out many of the things that were happening to the tea plants and the tea gardens on a deeper level, such as the infestation of a single, pesticide resistant type of insects and a detrimental mold (bad news for the plants and the farmers) or the presence of lots of spiders and varied undergrowth (good news for the plants and the farmers). And we both observed a clear difference in the feeling of the different types of tea gardens. For me, this feeling was a mix of the visible and the energetic. After looking closely across this spectrum of gardens and







*Gorgeous Tea-inspired Photography  
by Adam Yasmin*

plant 'lifestyles' (if you will), I found that it became surprisingly easy to determine whether a plant was happy with its existence or not. And it wasn't a simple matter of how glossy its leaves were or how many new buds it lifted up to the sky. After all, these factors can be heavily influenced by the use of chemical fertilizers and the like, much like a person can appear healthy by taking toxic steroids for muscle tone or laying in a tanning bed for that 'healthy glow'. Instead, it was a sort of intuitive understanding, a communication with the plants akin to the signal the organic Ali Shan oolong sent me last autumn.

During this trip, I learned many lessons, but one stood out above the rest. It became crystal clear that organic tea is not merely 'better' than conventional tea. It is the tea that I love and the tea that I want to support, not just for myself, but for the earth and for my sisters and brothers on it. When it comes to buying tea to prepare for myself, give as a gift or serve to others, organic tea is the only tea that I am not just willing, but *thrilled* to support.

In many ways, this echoes my previous views on organic tea, but during this trip around the upward spiral of my tea path, my vantage shifted in one crucial aspect: It is not a judgment upon those who steep con-

ventional teas, buy conventional teas or even produce conventional teas. It is a simple acceptance of what is, and a choice based on that acceptance.

As I said, I used to be a tea geek. I read as much as I could, tasted as much tea as I could, and thought that an understanding of tea was a mix of knowing many facts about tea and perceiving through taste and smell as much as I could. I was living in the United States and working as a professional in the tea industry. And I wanted nothing more than to visit a tea origin.

Now, I am a tea lover. I serve as much as I can, communicate as much with tea as I can and know that an understanding of tea is a mix of knowing many truths about tea and perceiving it through the senses, as well as a deep connection that goes beyond time and space. I am living in Taiwan, learning about the Leaf, and loving a life at origin. A loop closed, a spiral upwards, a journey continued...





# UNIVERSE IN A BOWL

Article by Kaiya

A few weeks ago, I traveled south in Taiwan to a new Vipassana Center. Ten days later, I was given a ride to the nearest train station by a kind fellow meditator. As we drove along through the beautiful scenery, I learned that she was the owner of an English school, and she was looking for a teacher. But this wasn't a normal English job; it would have been a dream come true for me a few years ago, the best job in the country by my standards. She wanted someone with a passion for the outdoors who would inspire Taiwanese children to interact more with the natural world, to design hands-on coursework and go on weekly field trips, hiking, biking, identifying birds and animal tracks, farming, vacations abroad, you name it. The pay would be generous, and every manner of outdoor activities would be at my fingertips. Add to that free room and board, close proximity to the Vipassana center, working for a fellow meditator—my mouth was watering in spite of having spent the last ten days eliminating the old habit patterns of craving!

I spoke to my new friend at length about her vision, describing my own childhood and education. I had the incredible good fortune to be born to a mother who was not only a lover of Nature, but also willing to sacrifice all of her time and energy to my education. She schooled me at home and instilled in me a deep love for and a sense of connection to Nature. As a result, I spent little time indoors. I finished school long before public schools got out each day and always spent those hours outside in the woods. I built forts, tracked wild animals, collected grasshoppers, butterflies, beetles, snakes, lizards, turtles, frogs, fish (I even had a pet bee who didn't fly more than two feet away from me for a week). I knew half the Audubon Society's field books for Florida wildlife by heart, down to how many scales there are on a female six-lined racerunner's tail. We took lots of field trips and our family vacations were always spent camping. My heart has always gone out to my Taiwanese students in this regard.

The education system in this country is incredibly unfriendly towards the development of anything other than academic skills. This naturally compounds the tendency in all developed societies for children to become attached to technology. Everywhere you go, it seems children are unplugging themselves from machines just long enough to plug themselves into another one. Seeing my enthusiasm, the obvious question

was: "So why don't you move on down here and take the job?" I did my best to explain what we are doing in Miao Li and why it's so important; and that I couldn't possibly leave, even for the best job in Taiwan. But, I'm pretty sure she was still giving me the *How can making tea for people possibly be that important* face when she dropped me off.

Later, during the long train ride back to Miaoli, I realized I was still craving. I started looking at this job, and what it had to offer. First, I had to face the fact that part of my attraction was pure selfishness. For many years of my life, most of my pleasure came in the form of canoeing, rock climbing, mountain biking, and other such activities; activities I have sacrificed, all of which and more were abundantly available in and around the location of the job. Realizing this was nothing more than a craving for experiences, I was able to put that aspect of my craving down pretty quickly. But it reminded me how vital it is to do work that offers something deeper, not only for myself but for whom-ever benefits from my work. And this job was indeed offering something on that deeper level, something incredibly important in fact; reconnection to Nature. It's something we talk about often around here.

Living in cities, eating processed foods, butchered meats, prepared meals and packaged snacks, surrounded by concrete, plastic and technology, the majority of people on Earth today are surrounded by mind-made landscapes. An awareness of our connection to and dependency on the Earth is dwindling. There is a sense that we take care of ourselves, that our technological creations are our own, that Nature and technology are separate, but the truth is that everything we live on and depend on comes from Nature in one form or another. As long as this sense of disconnection grows, humanity is in great danger, and it's incredibly important—vitally important—that we do whatever is necessary to rekindle that sense of connection. So where better to begin than with the children of one of the most technology-sick countries in the world? On top of that, I argued, I'd be close to a Vipassana Center, working for a Vipassana meditator, who told me she'd be supportive of time off for retreats and volunteer work throughout the year. This would mean that I could also supplement my service to the kids with a more purely selfless service to a high cause indeed. After all, there aren't many contributions to human consciousness you





*Gorgeous Tea-inspired Photography  
by Adam Yasmin*

could assign greater value to than helping people come out of their craving and aversion and attaining equanimity.

Thus, with a ten-day course and all the benefits of Vipassana looming large in my mind, plus an hour-long drive through gorgeous countryside amidst descriptions of a really attractive opportunity, I did my best to turn my mind back to Tea, and Miao Li. Frankly, after the last ten days it seemed almost a Universe away, though in fact I was nearly home. Perhaps my ego was seeking a bit of revenge for the punishment I'd just put it through, or maybe it was just the impressionability of an emptied mind, but I was biased towards the dream job. My first thoughts were doubts of the depth of what we offer to guests at the Tea Sage Hut. "Ok," I thought, "but my life has totally changed from being a full-time student there, there's no doubt about that. Aha!" The dream job debater quickly seized upon this: How selfish you are, working for your own personal growth but offering less to those you serve!

But then I started remembering my progress down the path of Cha Dao. That first bowl of tea, which eventually led to a plane ticket to Taiwan, which then led to drinking tea every day, removing a couch and buying tatami, and eventually clearing out

a whole room and having a place to pray and meditate instead of a place to watch television. I realized that every step of this process was actually a huge change in my life, representing a major shift in my consciousness. Although it may be true that there are those who come here, have an experience and move on, I have seen dozens and dozens of you reading these words now with my own eyes setting their feet on this same path of transformation I've walked. I've seen the shifts in consciousness and the changes in lifestyles; I've seen the shifts from self-service to greater and greater service to others. I've seen people come with a bunch of money to buy themselves tea, going home having spent the money on tea but planning to give it away and serve it instead of keeping it for themselves. And if that isn't enough, just look at the existence of Global Tea Hut itself. So many of you have not even visited this place yet, and still you feel its resonance and necessity so deeply that you part with a bit of your precious energy every month and send it our way so that we can continue to do the work we are doing here!

One of the magical qualities of tea is that it works non-verbally. It seeps into the cracks and joints of our bodies and souls, filling them with light and warmth and love and wisdom, whether we know it or

not. The more open we are, the more deeply it penetrates. In Vipassana, the teacher again and again reminds us, however, to work ‘intelligently’ with a ‘perfect understanding’ of the technique. It works on its own, but it is wise to take a closer look at what you are practicing from time to time. Otherwise, you may find yourself practicing mechanically, without inspiration, or even incorrectly, which means you aren’t open and aren’t absorbing much of your tea. Tea wants to help you, but you also have to help yourself to get the full benefit.

In truth, you’d find it a much easier writing a list of the deeply important truths not found in tea than those that are. Actually, I’m only saying that to be open-minded. Personally, I can’t think of even one, so if you’re like me your work would be over before it started. The expression “The Universe in a bowl” is one I’ve heard more than a few times. But how often do I actually take the time to gaze consciously into that vastness as I drink my tea, and how often do I simply allow it to do all the work and enjoy the sense of expansion that pervades my whole being as I drink? Both are important.

This life is extraordinarily brief. Where are the decades that have passed me by? No more than one blink, one breath, and now here I am, in this moment, and so it will go and in one more such blink, one more such breath, I will find myself at my death. Our relationship to the end of our life is directly related to our relationship to our life right now. But with all the hustle and bustle of daily activities, daily mind, it’s incredibly difficult to learn anything or practice anything amidst all the noise. This is one of the reasons for meditation: it’s a quiet, controlled space in which to practice facing all the difficulties and pleasures of daily life, learning to face them with balance and poise and harmony. But we have to learn to carry that practice out into the real world, and tea is an extraordinary tool for doing just that.

Practice being born anew each time you sit down to tea, conscious of the delicate and ephemeral moments of a tea session. As with our own lives, the life of this session shall pass quickly and then dissipate, and our task is to learn and grow as much as we can from the lessons that are offered to us in the time between our births and deaths. For me, if I’ve chosen a session of conscious practice, I find that it is often best to look at a single aspect and focus on that, but don’t get stuck in any one way of doing things. For example, I might notice that although the tea in the pot is the same, every single steeping, indeed even each sip within each steeping, is totally unique. I stay with this truth from sip to sip and don’t wander from it. How do I relate to this? Do I have a favorite steeping, one I wish I could drink repeatedly instead of accepting ‘inferior’ ones? Or do

I rejoice in its uniqueness, setting it free, allowing the brevity of the experience to intensify its sweetness and beauty? Do I cling to it, trying to possess it, wishing it could last forever? From there, how do I relate to my friends, loved ones and fellow human beings on a day-to-day basis? Do I treat them like they are the same person every day or treat them differently depending on if their behavior toward me is the ‘steeping’ I prefer the most? Or do I set them all free so I can rejoice in their eternal rebirth, their ephemeral nature, the sweetness and intensity of their Being, without any preferences or attachment to which face they are wearing today?

I guarantee that if you notice you aren’t drinking your tea in this way, you will also find you are not relating to the world in this way either. And the lessons go on and on: pleasure, craving, aversion, service, sensitivity, equanimity, brevity, humility, respect, listening, presence, peace, laughter, love, connection, joy, purity, Nature, birth, death, beauty, all these and more can be practiced and mastered through tea. In fact, why not challenge yourself? Take a good hard look at yourself, a moral inventory. Find some lesson or positive quality that you are lacking in your life, and then find it in your tea. Or even just think of a lesson at random that you haven’t realized before or can’t see right now. Whatever it is, it’s in there, and once you begin to recognize that your tea is steeped in the wisdom you are seeking, you will begin to find it is giving you the answers to your life as well. Drinking tea daily, conscious of this, has the power to lead one to life wisdom.

For a few moments, I really did want to take that job, and really wanted to find an avenue of thought to justify doing so. I do think it’s incredibly important for someone to do the work my friend is trying to do, and I am even trying to find her a good teacher to fit the bill. And Vipassana has unquestionably been one of the most important changes in my life: an incredibly important tool. In fact, we strongly encourage all our students to go and incorporate it in their lives. But for me, it’s tea that fills in the gaps and breathes the full breadth of life into my practice. Tea is my rung of the ladder we are all building to raise the consciousness of this planet. Tea is just my rung. You can’t say one rung is more or less important than another one, because they all have to be there for the ladder to be complete. Whatever you are doing, there are people climbing through your own rung on the ladder every day. Use your tea practice wisely to deepen your understanding of why you do what you do, to find the deepness in it, and see to it that you make the most of every opportunity, whenever someone comes climbing along.

Fortunately, I was able to transmute all the doubt, craving and selfish energy generated by this experience into tremendous inspiration and increased dedication to our work here; and the desire, of course,





to share. I want to thank you for this opportunity. There is a great debt I owe to each and every one of you every month we meet beneath this roof and share this tea. As with meditation, tea is a training ground for daily life; and as with daily life, everyone is completely in control of what they get out of it. When a guest comes here, they make the choice where they will fall on the spectrum. It is our fervent hope that all of you will make that physical journey one day, and that in the meantime you find the answers in these teas.


Am I alive to collect pleasant experiences, or actualize deep soul-changing wisdom? Am I passively wandering through life or actively learning how to live it? It's up to me and me alone. Just as I can choose to sit down and merely take pleasure in tea, extracting

what I want from it, or become a student of the Leaf, bowing my head with respect and a desire to learn. In the meantime, it is my great honor and pleasure to remain here, holding the space necessary for any of you to come at any time and make your choice with each cup and every bowl, just as you can choose to—right now, in this moment!



# TEA SENSE & SENSIBILITY

Article by Steve Kokker

 just now returned from my first ten-day Vipassana course (Goenka tradition). Intense. I loved it; I hated it. It was enriching; it was irritating as hell. I look forward to a future course; I'll never do it again. I was so grateful for the opportunity; I couldn't wait to leave. It's one of those kinds of experiences... Meditating for 11 hours a day gives one time to think of a great many things other than one's inner nostrils and leg cramps, and many a time my mind wandered to the issue of sensitivity as it relates to tea. While I literally returned hours ago and need to quickly write an article for this newsletter's deadline, my experience, especially after plunging into the accumulated and at times suffocating demands of samsara/koyaanisqatsi/daily grind, is too fresh to write about how, if at all, it has influenced my life in general or my tea specifically (it's been over two weeks without even a sip of proper tea!). However, a few general, stream-of-consciousness thoughts for now about the issue of sensitivity:

One of the most exciting aspects of this meditation technique is its aim to sharpen one's sensitivity towards sensations—physical sensations—which arise,

and likely form a neat feedback loop with thoughts and emotions. This aspect was thrilling for me as I have for a long time, albeit higgledy-piggeldy, attempted to hone my general sensitivity through a variety of means. Again, during mind wanderings throughout the long periods of meditation, I recalled a long list of *My History of Sensory Awareness & Total Lack of Awareness*. Perhaps listing a few of my previous ventures here might be inspiring for some readers as small tips on how to incorporate habits of sharpening our dulled, overwhelmed senses into everyday life.

I think it was on Vipassana Day three, among the most challenging of days, I suddenly recalled with bemusement my teenage attempts at self-hypnosis. Lying on my bed, plugged into my bulky Walkman, I'd listen to hypnosis tapes which directed listeners in monotonous intonations to pass one's focus over different parts of the body, systematically, one by one. For hours, I'd try to bring my focus to every inch of my body and see: Can I feel anything there at all? As a 15 year old, there were certain parts of the body which held particular attraction and which sometimes distracted away







from the hypnosis, but in general, I never afterwards forgot about trying to sense what, say, my kneecap or left shoulder blade was now sensing. Never forgot, that is, except when I wasn't lost in other thoughts and doings.

I also sporadically, where possible, have tried to walk around barefoot after realizing at some point that my feet had lost almost all sensitivity by being even more shielded than the rest of my body from complex surfaces and textures. Practicing some alternate healing therapies like reiki, Alexander Technique and ayurvedic massage which all emphasize focusing on the sensations of energy flow in certain parts of your body concomitantly engender a closer connection to your own physical sensations, hauling otherwise easily-distracted awareness back to oneself. Giving any form of massage with as much presence as possible also demands one to be aware of subtle information flowing through your fingertips, using them as highly refined sensors. Such subtlety is actually possible to experience all over the body.

At some point along the ride, I picked up a few good clues of how to keep other senses sharpened, by, say, walking alone or with a similar-minded pal in Nature, coming to a sudden stop and asking: What

are all the sounds I hear? How many different bird-songs are there nearby? Can I hear the overhead trees rustling or the distant traffic? Or: What precisely is in my field of vision right now? Can I telescope onto the various shades, layers, tones of my visual landscape? Or: What exactly am I feeling right now: cold or warmth where, numbness or prickling where? Or: What different odors are there? Can I smell the water over there, or tree leaves, and is there a smell to snow? Playing this little game of selectively zeroing in on only some of the infinite sensory signals we're constantly being bombarded with (and filter out) is fun, grounding, and trains the dancing monkey mind to at least occasionally 'Stop! Look! Listen!' and just *be*. That's the last thing the mind wants.

These various tricks/techniques have been good daily reminders to be more present, more sensing, and were good preparation for Vipassana, but never before had I been able to be so overwhelmingly focused entirely on bodily sensations for such a long period of time. Or at least trying to be; after the course, as people shared their experiences, it was clear that everyone had encountered the same phenomenon of finding it absurdly difficult to keep the mind from generating all sorts of noise, whether in calling up past conversations,

one's first kiss, the lyrics to the Muppet Show's song *Rainbow Connection*, all the great things you'll do once free again, making a mental list of things to Google once you get home... Many had visions of abstract shapes and figures, of past friends, or, as a few guys smilingly recounted, more than a fair share of erotic daydreams. As if the mind wants to be anywhere, anywhere but rooted in the present and focusing on what is actually happening now.

Still, mind wanderings or not, my nose all throughout the course felt like it was twitching like a rabbit's from all the intense focus on it; it and other parts just seemed to spring from listless lifelessness to buzzing vibrancy. That's the benefit of increased awareness: feeling alive, feeling the flow of life, being a part of it and not, as usual, apart from it.

While I found that I didn't miss anything during the course (not tea, not chocolate, not YouTube or Reddit; certainly not the phone, not even my 'friends' status updates; the only things I did miss were smiling, laughter and exercise), I did wish to have been able to drink some fine tea in the very midst of heightened sensory exploration. I wanted to see whether Wu De's already incred-

ibly helpful advice to sense tea as it enters the body, to bring the focus to the back of the throat and to 'follow' the tea as it becomes us, would be even more startling in that state than it is already. I occasionally tried installing a few Vipassana Add-Ons of my own, like, bringing the narrowed, sharpened focus of my awareness into my mouth, over every bit of my tongue, my palate... until everything got all twitchy and tingling in there too.

So... the moral of this rambling article (forgive me, I need a good night's sleep; who could have thought that 10 days of silence could be so exhausting!) is one that we already know from reading through these newsletters... awareness and tea (be it preparation, serving, drinking) are bound in a beautiful dance of splendid companionship!







# TEA WAYFARER

*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 the beautiful Adam Yasmin.*

I'm humbled to be a part of a group of interconnected tea people such as yourselves. I hail from the 'Entertainment Capital of the World' also known as the 'City of Fake', aka Los Angeles. How can one be of authenticity in such a city? Believe me, I ask myself that on a regular basis. Yet some of us live here in the desert-by-the-sea.

My background is that of a musician; someone sensitive, perceptive, intuitive, and adaptive to changing scenarios. Whilst performing world music in San Francisco in the beginning of 2009, I was introduced to Gong fu Cha at Om Shan Tea, an urban tea oasis in the center of the city. Immediately, I was entranced by the care and presence of 'leaves and water' while being in a cultural and intellectual hub. Om Shan Tea quickly became my mecca, my home away from home; and eventually in the beginning of 2010, I began my own practice of Gong fu Cha and shared it with friends and strangers alike throughout the city—akin to Wu De and the gift of 'Roadside Tea', yet off the road and in various art galleries throughout Los Angeles. Meeting Wu De in the beginning of 2012 was a turning point in my practice, having already been introduced to Cha Dao via his student Colin in Venice Beach.

I pour tea into my musicianship and musicianship into my tea and photography, as I craft digital fine art, all entirely produced via my iPhone only. With the ease of intuitive technology and keen observation, I craft my TE|A|RT similar to how one would paint. Some pieces are meditative and solem, while others are otherworldly, abstract, and surreal—all with the approach of beginners mind, perceptive to nuances within the dynamics of the resulting imagery.

Five years into the world of Gong fu Cha and Cha Dao and I've yet to begin to attain a holistic viewpoint on 'leaves and water'. Looking forward to traveling in the name of music|art|tea and making it to Taiwan to participate in the manifestation of 'Light meets Life', to meet the leaves at their home, and to connect in person with you, fellow tea drinkers...

My tea art: [www.teaometry.com](http://www.teaometry.com)

Further observations: [facebook.com/illuminadam.art](https://facebook.com/illuminadam.art)

Instagram: @illuminadam

Email: [adamyasmin@gmail.com](mailto:adamyasmin@gmail.com)





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](http://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 150 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) said that once we got to around 120 people all our financial worries will vanish and we'd live happily everafter, forever and ever (He lied!). 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](http://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...



Wu De's trip to LA and SF went splendidly, and we raised a lot of money to support the new center! More events are happening in LA. If you are interested or would like to participate in any way contact Colin Hudon at: **(303) 842-4660**



Baelyn Neff took precepts in this tradition, becoming the third person to cross such a threshold and devote their life to service in this tradition. Her tea name is "Tien Wu", which means "Heavenly Dance" and she is that indeed!



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](http://www.globalteahut.org)  
[www.teasagehut.org](http://www.teasagehut.org)  
[www.the-leaf.org](http://www.the-leaf.org)

*Be happy!*



## Our Projects

### Our center (Tea Sage Hut)

- 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 (Light Meets Life)

- ~~Mountain land (We got it! Chek this one off)~~
- Building (we will need from between 500,000-1,000,000 USD)
- Gardening (both landscaping and vegetables for eating)

### Publications

- *The Leaf, Tea & Tao Magazine* (Online and free at: [www.the-leaf.org](http://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 alternative ways to better host/share our videos