



Global Tea Hut

NEWSLETTER #17, JUNE 2013

In the full and open blossom, the fragrance of life is sweet and makes sense again. Summer uplifts us and the verdure is easy to relax into, everywhere alight with smiling hills, flowers and water, and endless outdoor excursions. The heat renews us and we shed our winter selves, emerging into the sun reborn. Do you find yourself drinking less tea? Actually, this is the perfect time to enjoy more hot beverages, especially in the mornings and afternoons. Most people from hot and humid countries have understood that it is actually unhealthy to drink too many cooling drinks when it is hot outside, and instead opt for tea. Try brewing lighter, greener teas at a lower temperature in the early afternoon. There is no greater joy than a lazy summer afternoon, some green tea and the good company of some friends or even just one's true self!

Most of the world's fine tea has been harvested and processed, though some of the very highest mountains may pick tea into June, like Taiwan's Da Yu Ling for example. In a traditional setting, where quality takes precedence over industry, the artisans have too much tea coming in during the spring to be able to completely finish the process at that time. Traditionally, tea was only ever harvested in the spring, with occasional autumn harvests if and when Nature provides enough buds. In Wuyi, "*zhen yan* (true Cliff Tea)" is still only harvested in the Spring. As the tea comes in during April and May it is withered (indoor and out), fried (de-enzymed), rolled and then lightly roasted to arrest oxidation and put the tea into a stasis. This is because the true roast will take a long time and a small family of artisans don't have the manpower to finish the process during the plucking season. As we mentioned last month, they don't even sleep in the weeks of May! So after resting up, June means that they can start to finish the roast on the teas. As you read this the coals are stoked and the smell of roasting Cliff Tea wafts all throughout the village...

In June we will enter the fifth moon in the Chinese calendar, called the Pomegranate Moon. The fifth day of the fifth moon is a very important Chinese holiday called "*Duan Wu Jie*", or more commonly "Dragon

Boat Festival (*Long Chuan Jie*)". There are many folk stories that tell of the Dragon Boat Festival, and its origins, but most people associate it with Qu Yuan, a famous poet who lived from 339 to 278 BCE in the feudal state of Chu. He is one of China's most revered poets and visionaries. He protested his king's decision to align the state of Chu with the neighboring state of Qin. After many adventures, twists and turns in the story, Qin Shi Huang, king of the Qin state, conquered all the other states and became China's first emperor, starting the first "Qin" Dynasty, which is where we derive the English name "China". Upon the fall of Chu, the great poet Qu Yuan attached a giant stone to himself and threw himself into the Mi Luo River to drown. The dragon boats reenact the people's attempts to rescue him. As legend has it, they beat the water with their paddles to distract the water dragons from his soul and threw rice into the water so the fish wouldn't eat him.

In the Chinese world there are Dragon Boat races on this day, and since the 1970's it has become an official sport most celebrated around this time. Families make *zhong zhi* (sticky rice steamed in bamboo triangles), which represents the rice the people of Chu threw in the water to save Qu Yuan. Five-colored strings are also often worn, especially by children, for good luck. You could also try making some delicious, vegetarian *zhong zi* if you can find the ingredients. They are fantastic with some mushrooms, peanuts and lotus seeds steamed in the center of the rice!

"Searching for the Goddess" by Qu Yuan

*The Goddess does not come; She holds back.
What keeps Her on Her island?
I would look upon Her elegant beauty.
Plowing the water with my cassia boat,
I command the waters of the Yuan and Xiang to smooth
their waves:
'O great rivers! Calm your flow!'
She waits for the Lord who has not yet appeared.
What does She think of while She plays her reed flute?*

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, branching from our roots outward:

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

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

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

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, JUNE 2013

Four Seasons Oolong (四季春), Spring 2013, Ming Jian, Taiwan

As the world grows hotter, our tea gets lighter. We drink slightly cooler and less-oxidized teas, especially in the afternoons. There is nothing like a lazy summer afternoon with a bowl of tea—the mind so softly lost in quiet contemplation. And many teas are even cooling, refreshing us with a feeling of a windswept body. You can also try adding cooling elements to your Cha Xi, like a blue or cyan tea cloth (*cha bu*) or a small dish of water, perhaps with a blossom floating in it. Such touches enhance the clarity and cooling vibrancy of an indoor session in the summer, and guests rarely feel as if they have had a hot beverage. Also, it is potentially unhealthy to drink iced beverages when it is hot, and as we mentioned in the last issue that is the reason most all hot countries, like India and Taiwan, drink tea—even in the summer!

From last month's simple green tea in a bowl, we move to a light Oolong with little oxidation at all. This month's tea is courtesy of Mr. Xie, who many of you met last October in the newsletter and our video of his tea making as well. We met Mr. Xie at Hope Market: a monthly gathering of farmers, designers and craftsman committed to harmonious living, organic produce, and sustainable designs. While the group is mostly environmental and practical, they have donated a booth to us and we use it to fulfill one of our most important goals, which is to serve roadside tea to passersby on a regular basis. We do so without any teaching or agenda—merely a space of calm presence and loving-kindness for all. In that way, guests stop and kick off their shoes, resting in a tea space for a bowl, two or maybe seven. Some chat idly while others immediately drop into a calm meditative state; and still others drift away from their problems and stray into a more perfect world than their mind usually wanders... In any case, the space is theirs to use as they see fit.

It is worthwhile to reprint some of Mr. Xie's story here from the October newsletter for those who didn't meet him and perhaps to refresh the memory of those who were fortunate enough to try his Honey Fragrance Oolong last Autumn:

Aside from providing this month's tea, which you are sure to love, Mr. Xie is a very important part of the scenery at our center, and will be very important for many of you as well, because so many of our visitors come here with a curiosity about how tea is processed. It is very important to experience with your own hands just how diffi-

cult it is to make tea, so that in your own soreness you will develop a tremendous respect for the Leaf. This respect isn't just in the billions of years of evolution, or in the Nature we always wax poetic about: the wind and rain, sun and moonshine, minerals, mountain and water that flow from roots to crown. It is also in the blood, sweat and tears of generation after generation of farmers. And there is a deep reverence in seeing just how much mastery, skill and, dare we say, art in the crafting of the Leaf. And so, with great joy we take as many of our guests as possible to a few different farms to try their hands at tea processing. It is amazing to make your own tea, and take it home with you. If you didn't have enough reasons to come stay with us, here's another: Mr. Xie has formally invited each and every one of you to come to his farm and make tea, eat a nice lunch and take the tea you picked and crafted home with you!

Mr. Xie is a third generation farmer in Ming Jian, Nantou, Central Taiwan. Ming Jian is lower altitude, in the foothills of the central mountain range. In the last few decades, such lower altitude tea has been adumbrated by the popularity of the teas grown higher up, as we discussed with regards to our Oriental Beauty from Beipu County. Though areas like Hsinchu and Miao Li counties, where OB is grown, have struggled since high mountain Oolongs have come to dominate the market, Ming Jian has prospered by providing lower priced teas for export, or large-scale production for the bottled tea market (often called "Ready to Drink"—RTD). Mr. Xie's family has grown small-scale productions of Oolong tea through three lifetimes, since before the higher teas even existed.

When we discuss organic farming and the need to make changes in tea farming—as well as other kinds of agriculture—it's important to remember that the farmers are always the first victims. It is they who handle the agrochemicals in large amounts, and most directly. Furthermore, it is only by humanizing and befriending them that we can bring about change. We must include rather than exclude—educate rather than ostracize.

Like so many other farmers, Mr. Xie started to get the nagging (coughing, wheezing) feeling that these chemicals were harmful to his family, his community and his land. When his wife almost miscarried their second child in 1997, he had had enough. Despite opposition from friends and family, Mr. Xie made a commitment to become an organic tea farmer, no matter the cost. He first attended some organic farming classes held by the MOA organization, which we've discussed often before.

Tea of the Month

From 1997 to 2000, Mr. Xie and his family struggled to maintain their principles. His tea was sub-par and he lost most all his customers. His father, who had been worried when he suggested upsetting the status quo in the first place, was very critical of his decisions. Organic farming is difficult, and it requires a radical change in farming and processing methodology—changes that would take time to learn. Rather than give up, as many would have done, Mr. Xie got a part time job as a painter and carpenter, working day and night—either painting or farming—to keep his family afloat. Finally, in the early 2000's, his acumen for organic farming improved to the point that he was able to take his teas to market again. Since then he has gone on to win awards, been featured on TV and has even heard his father, now a sprightly eighty years old, bragging to others about how his tea is organic and good for the environment.

Mr. Xie's work hasn't stopped with his own farm. He knew that he would have to keep improving his skills, creating new and better teas, and help show his neighbors the value of organic farming, especially since their land and his are close enough to influence each other. He formed a co-op with other farmers and began teaching locals to shift to organic methods, offering them equal shares in their combined enterprise. As more people have joined this local group, the incentive to do so has also increased. To date, more than twenty farmers in the Ming Jian region are organic, including Mr. Xie's immediate neighbors.

Mr. Xie's kind heart shows in his teas. He cares deeply about tea and the Earth. He produces Green Tea, large and small leaf Red Tea, as well as several kinds of Oolong; and all with great skill. To us, he is an inspiration and a kind of hero—the kind not talked about enough these days: It's easy to follow the crowd, maintain the status quo; or to say, "I am just one person. What can I do?" It is difficult to face criticism from family and friends and stand up for what you believe to be right. The problem is that it is too easy for farmers to make more money with agro-chemicals, and to do it with less work. And that's also why so many of them are over-using the fertilizers and pesticides, reducing the average life of a tea bush to fifteen years, all in the name of personal gain. Many of them get cancer from improper exposure to such chemicals, themselves victims as we mentioned above. Mr. Xie is a man who has seen a different way, and more inspiringly lived that way and taught others to do so. And that is the spirit of tea!

de-enzyme and arrest oxidation, rolled to shape and break down cells and then ever so slightly roasted to finish the tea. The light oxidation gives it a delicate floral taste and aroma, hinting at green things like dewy grass. Four Seasons Oolong gets its name from its fresh greenness in all four seasons, flushing so many times each year because of the lower altitude in Ming Jian.

This tea is best prepared with slightly cooler water and perhaps in a gongfu style should you like (It may also be prepared in a bowl or side-handle pot even). Try using fewer leaves, allowing the liquor a slight, subtle floral grace that suits the season. Drink this tea in quiet early in the morning or late afternoon, perhaps with some delicate music to accompany your journey. You will find that the Qi is cooling, rising up the body in gusts and leaving you extremely refreshed. The mind easily softens, and a view of Nature will empty you with each cup or bowl. Even inside, and especially in the late afternoon, you will find your contemplations light and playful, as if the tea has invited you to leave the world for a bit and dance down some dewy summer path, butterflies flitting about you...

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.

Tea of the Month

This month's tea is Mr. Xie's amazing Four Seasons Oolong. It is a light and green Oolong, produced as many Taiwanese teas are these days: with little oxidation and almost no roast. This tea is picked, withered indoors and outdoors (both very short), fried to





THE FIRST VICTIMS

Article by Shane “Mcphane” Marrs

It was this time last year that I remember crying upon first witnessing the application of heavy chemicals onto delicate tea plants. In particular, I remember the bright, unnatural colors that stain such chemical play: The fluorescent blue swamp of mixed chemicals churning in a glossy, orange, 400-liter bucket, pumped into a fluorescent yellow hose by a very audible, rusty old motor. Not to be confused with morning mist, the cloud of chemicals rains across three rows of tea at a time through a pressurized wand some twelve feet in length. Of the actual spray that lands on the rows of tea, a noticeable amount would catch the slight wind of the mountains, alighting onto neighboring gardens, nearby vegetable plots, adjacent homes and anything within range of its misty chemical grasp. For protection, most farmers wore only paper-thin, loose facemasks, and some wore nothing at all. Navy blue rain pants and orange gumboots completed the standard chemical wardrobe. The shirt didn't really matter because it got soaked anyway and had to be removed and washed immediately after spraying. Alas, it might rain; the pesticide would then wash onto the bedrock of so-called soil, seeping into its cracks and crevices, and the entire song and dance would have to be performed again the following day, or at least during the next precarious sunny period.

Again and again, I would witness this affront on Nature over the course of about three months: the time I spent work-trading on a conventional tea farm in Taiwan. I didn't speak my host-family's language, nor did they speak mine, save their two young children who spoke a handful of English words. It was a wild string of events that even led to this rare opportunity: a foreigner volunteering at a farm and factory for three months in a small mountainside tea village.

My bedroom lay opposite the tea baking room and adjacent to the indoor withering hall. My two favorite aromas in the world are fresh-cut wood and mid-processed tea. I was really in a state of elation upon first arriving, having never experienced the rush of a tea factory and major tea harvest, and in fact only ever reading about it in books or watching it on documentaries. This came immediately after much smaller scale tea farming in Hawaii, which made the leap to a commercial size that much more stimulating. My first two weeks were full of hands-on harvesting and processing of high-mountain Oolong Tea. I partook in every step of the process, from the pluck to the cup, and all

the glorious and dastardly steps in between. And the tales are true, for all the days I worked eighteen hours in those first two weeks, the farm and factory owner worked hours more, sometimes without sleep. Sometimes, through some form of charades, I would be sent off to bed at 8pm, only to be woken up at midnight to help with the night shift. Those were wild nights. From my observations, the time of harvest to the most basic finished product (a semi-ball-shaped, lightly oxidized Oolong) took about fifty hours of continuous work and attention.

My host family was truly wonderful; hardworking and full of love and community. Their children were spitting images of their parents and both succeeded well at school, music and processing tea—a very well-to-do family. The harvesters and factory laborers too (for the most part) were gentle village folk, even behind the cigarette and betel nut addiction that so often presented itself. Their work ethic and drive to create a competition-worthy product was fierce yet humble. Never had I appreciated so deeply what went into processing tea until I'd marched alongside these harvest soldiers. In spite of all that, I hadn't really understood the depth of the phrase “conventional farming” until about three weeks into my stay. For soon after the celebration of the first harvest came the fieldwork, and in this pocket of the mountain, that meant both physical and chemical labor.

I made one friend in particular at the factory who could speak some broken English. He had a lot of common sense, and I think he spoke for everyone when he said he hated mixing and applying the chemicals, but failed to see an alternative. He even understood the impacts these agricultural practices had on the tea, the mountains and the people, yet it was still what he felt he had to do in his life to support his wife and children. That was the general feeling I got: one of entrapment without any means to break free of the chemical cycle so many farmers have found themselves in. How could one not use chemicals and expect to uphold the level of production required to maintain a particular standard of living? How could you not spray when all the bugs would nibble the leaves, the weeds deplete the nutrients and the dirt fail to feed the plants? How could you not spray when everyone else was spraying? The idea of organics was at best mocked as fantasy. My concern for the environment was confusing to most.

I had a few chances to sit down with the individual who sold the chemicals to all the local tea farmers. He enjoyed cigarettes, fine art, calligraphy and crummy tea.



He had a snobby air about him, but he too had a family. I was blessed to eat dinner with them one evening and none of them seemed negatively intentioned towards humans or the Earth. Like any family, they had their strong points and dysfunctions, but nothing that suggested an evil intention behind their line of business. They were honored to have me there and I was honored to be there. There was no one to point my finger at. All of my searching for someone to blame came to no avail. It wasn't the farmer's fault, the local retailer or the entity that is the chemical industry. Surely someone could be held accountable for all the victims involved (like the consumers) couldn't they?

On the deepest level, we are all to blame. The only answer to the question of what is wrong with the world, as the film suggests, is "I am". And I am the solution as well!

The experience was terribly challenging at times. On the one hand, I was gifted this amazing and rare opportunity to learn about an aspect of Nature I dearly love through hands-on experience and by living with a caring family in a small village; and on the other hand I was faced with farming practices that were in direct conflict with my love of tea as a gift from Nature. Searching in the dark for the true light of tea, I finally reached out for help. And that ultimately led me to the Tea Sage Hut. How can I not be forever grateful for this conventional tea farming experience, which while trying at times, ultimately led me to a place that I now consider home; a place where tea and

spirit, Cha and Dao, merge; a place that supports environmental stewardship and organic farming practices; a place where service is of the first order; a place where leaves, water, and wisdom can be shared without any personal profit; a place where laughter is thoroughly exercised; a place where connection is made possible with ourselves, with others, and with Great Nature; a place of community, Dharma, mastery, spirituality, love, healing, movie nights and crazy Zen antics. Who knew such a place existed! I surely wouldn't have had it not been for my chemical romance. During my first visit to the Tea Sage Hut this time last year, I would learn from my then-to-be teacher that it was "the farmers who were the first victims."

It made so much sense, too. They're out there on the frontline; chemical warfare if you will, war against pests and weeds and nutrient deprived soil. Armed with *-cides*, petty facemasks and rubber boots. And why are they spraying all these *-cides*? Because everyone is spraying. And why is everyone spraying? For a web of reasons too interwoven to discuss in detail here, but essentially out of a desire for profit with the prospect of bountiful crops that apparently only chemicals can offer. Not to mention a lack of education on the effects of such agriculture practices, or an education on alternative methods of agriculture.

And so it is: the farmers really are the first victims. They have the most direct contact with these dan-

The First Victims

gerous chemicals and moreover, lack an education and motivation to pursue more sustainable, ecologically driven farming practices, which with they have long been out of touch. They are led to believe that they are stuck in a chemical cycle, which they can't be rescued from, and it's that very belief system which further ingrains and perpetuates that cycle on a commercial scale. But it does no good to complain. My teacher says we must move forward through inclusion, not exclusion, through education and positivity, not negativity.

This is why it's so important that all of you are Global Tea Hut members. There is great truth in the fact that you, as a consumer, are actively supporting the organic shift in Taiwan because the farmers who donate their tea to us are organic and environmentally conscious people. You are promoting clean and sustainable tea farming in Taiwan. Consumers hold the power to affect change because the farmers hear loud and clear where there is demand and

as it increases so do the number of farmers who want to meet and supply that demand!

Every living creature in all the ecologies that are created as a result of organic tea farming (including the farmers!), and every one of us here at the Tea Sage Hut, thanks you from the bottom of our bowl for supporting Taiwan's movement in becoming a greener country. You are making a difference in the lives of the first victims. A thousand, thousand cups of tea to each and every one of you...







GONGFU TEA TIPS

June 2013

The second principal of gongfu tea is 'Graceful Movements'. This mastery of tea is also a mastery of ourselves, and this will require patience and practice. But through mastering tea and the soul, one can indeed achieve a harmony with the Great Dao. In ancient China, many of the highest teachings came from simple fisherman, wheel makers or other craftsmen. In completely mastering a task, they realized that true mastery was impossible without also honing the craftsman herself, and ultimately did so—letting go of personal effort and allowing the Dao to act through them in their work, and by extension their life. And so they *were* qualified to teach even a duke or a king how to live!

In Chinese the effortless work of a true master is called “*Wu Wei*”. This is saying that they perform from the still center where they meet the universe; where they are channeling the Divine. In the West, it is often mistakenly assumed that mastery is *mastery over*—that it means control over the medium/situation/etc. True mastery isn't about control. Quite the opposite: true mastery is about letting go. The greatest athlete or dancer cannot describe how they do what they do, because they don't know. Mastery is finding that place in you that meets the universe and acting from it. If their mind is involved then they aren't performing at their peak, at the level of a master! It is only when we step out of the way, and merge with the medium, that we have attained mastery. That is as true of tea preparation as it is of life! And anything we conduct out of our still center will move others towards that place, and that inspiration will be our mastery and our purpose.

Most of us come to tea brewing without the ability to have graceful movements. This is in part because the methods and teaware are foreign to us, and therefore awkward. We will have to spend some time familiarizing ourselves with a kettle and how to place (not pour!) the water into the pot, how to hold the pot when dispensing the exalted liquor, and even how to hold the cup or bowl as we drink. Over time and repetition, these skills steep into our hands and into our spirits just as the essence of the tea steeps into the hot water.

One thing we can all work on to make our tea brewing more graceful is to try to be more ambidextrous. Part of what makes us awkward, in tea brewing and in life, is that we are off balance—favoring one hand to do most things in life. If we are right handed, the tendency is to brew a clunky tea in which everything is done with the

right hand, while the left side of the body sits idle. This will never be graceful, balanced or harmonious. We must practice involving our entire body in our tea brewing, and the two hands should work in great concert—passing teaware fluidly back and forth, and with grace and elegance, resting the truth that both hands are indeed one body!

Try switching your tea brewing around occasionally: holding the kettle with the right and teapot with the left, or vice versa. You must be able to perform any action with both hands in the end. Involve both sides of your body fluidly. As we mentioned in previous issues, it is good to divide the tea space in half and only do things on the right with the right hand, and similarly only do things on the left with the left hand. This often means passing things from one hand to another, which is a good practice for achieving greater grace and fluidity (tea is liquid, after all!). Over time you will find your tea brewing becoming more balanced, and ultimately coming out of the center. For as both hands, and both sides of the body (our Yin and Yang) are equally skilled, and cooperating completely, the whole process then begins to arise out of the center, as it should. This, then, will begin to translate to other areas of your life, and you will find that you walk, eat and sleep with greater harmony and balance as well...

*“Simplicity, patience, compassion.
These three are your greatest treasures.
Simple in actions and thoughts,
you return to the source of being.
Patient with both friends and enemies,
you accord with the way things are.
Compassionate toward yourself,
you reconcile all beings in the world.”*

—*Dao De Jing*—







MUSICALITEA

Article by Kaiya

One of the earliest homework assignments new tea students are given here at the center is to begin making music selections for their tea sessions. We pair music with our tea sessions here the majority of the time, we've sent you two collections of beautiful tea music, and I always touch on music selection in my articles on tea, but we've never really shared about this important aspect of the tea ceremony in an article before. But before we delve into the various considerations that go into a skillful choice of music, we should first touch on the question of why we include music at all, as silence is often an equally attractive backdrop for a session with a fine tea.

The main advantage of drinking silent tea is that, in theory, there is nothing distracting you from the tea. Even music that is in perfect alignment with the tea can be something I am paying attention to other than the tea, or a bit of a crutch, doing some of the work for me. But when I quiet and still my mind within silence, keeping undisturbed and focused, I can sink down into the deepest roots of the Earth or soar to the furthest heights of the Heavens with my tea.

Although really well-chosen music also can inspire such dizzying sessions, there is something extra-special to the intimacy, simplicity and pureness of such journeys taken with "just the two of us". Other times I don't choose music because the natural sounds of the environment are so exquisite, such as crickets at night, songbirds in the morning or a cool, rainy afternoon—even the so-called mundane sounds of everyday life outside the window can be nice punctuations between the silent spaces of a quiet session.

As with all things tea, though, we can't get lost in the heights; there are practical considerations to keep in mind. If, for example, I am in the city and the tea space isn't very well insulated, I will often play music simply so that the entire session isn't punctuated by horns, shouts, cat fights, (some of you have had the pleasure of listening to our drunken karaoke singer), and so on. I may choose music because I am serving a large group of people or one or two extremely talkative or restless individuals.

In these cases, music will naturally put the guests at ease and give their busy minds something to focus on in between steepings or while water is boiling. It will also begin to bring them towards and introduce them to the energy of the tea they are about to meet, if it is well chosen.

And the more I let the tea choose the music instead of me, the better the choice will be.

This letting-go of personal preferences, desires, and tastes is vital for all tea preparation. Instead of telling tea which teapot She is going to go into, which cups She's going to be drunk from, and so on, I ask Her which ones She prefers. I am serving tea, after all, not making tea, and in the same way I would do my best to make an honored guest in my house as comfortable as possible, I want to do the same when I serve tea—both serving tea to people and serving the goddess Tea herself. Music is no exception.

I didn't have many tea preferences when I got here. I hadn't bought any teacups or teapots before, didn't have bad habits of choosing them according to what I wanted. I was lucky; I didn't have a lot of rubbish teaware I needed to throw out after spending a lot of money on it like many people. But I did grow up in a musical family, playing and listening to music constantly since I was a child. I went to live shows through high school, university and beyond, and had quite a large music collection. It was a big part of my identity. I had developed very solidified preferences, desires, and tastes in music, in other words, and frankly speaking, I just didn't like the same music that Tea likes. But listening to the music I liked was just another kind of mental noise getting in the way of my tea, and frankly, I have found that nobody enjoys drinking my mind!

When you drink tea, the tea becomes you, and you become the tea. That tea's energy merges with yours and you begin to vibrate with it. The very same is true of music. Even more so, because music is pure vibration without any physical form. When you listen to music you become it as well; it permeates you just as Tea does, so it's very important that the vibrations are as complementary as possible, or your guests will feel uncomfortable as conflicting energies literally pour into their bodies! So you must choose music which shares an energetic frequency with the tea.

The final factor in choosing music is the environment. Not just the environment you are in, such as the weather or time of day, but also the environment you wish to encourage and create. Of course, you should also have selected a tea that has that energy or once again you will be in conflict, but for now let's assume you've made a perfect selection. Actually, environment is the most basic aspect of music selection and is the perfect place to begin with a few elementary homework assignments.

Having spent our whole lives waking, working and going to sleep, we all naturally have an awareness of



the difference in energy between the beginning, middle and end of the day. So the first and most basic homework assignment is to choose a music that is well-suited to the morning, one for the afternoon, one for the evening and one for any time of day. For extra credit, choose a few moods, such as tranquility, loving communion or calm joy. You can cheat a little, by looking for music that actually contains titles that are obvious, for example “Morning Ragas” is a favorite album of ours, as a guide.

Traditional instrumental music, especially Indian or Chinese, Zen music, ambient sounds, chanting, meditation or yoga music, are all good genres to begin searching through. If there are lyrics, it’s often better if they’re in another language to avoid distraction, but many of our favorites here have English lyrics too. At some point, I strongly recommend spending a session or at least the first half of a session with each of your teas in silence, familiarizing yourself with their energy, and then looking for a song or even a whole album that compliment that tea specifically. (Keep a notebook!)

You will also find that many albums can go with not only any time of day but also with any tea. Keep a list of those albums with notes about their unique qualities for reference until you know them like the back of your hand and don’t need to look at your notes anymore. These are necessary for those times when you just need to quickly put on something that works, such as when you are asked to brew a tea you are unfamiliar with, or for guests you don’t know. It simply doesn’t work to begin something, re-

alize it’s not a good choice, then turn off the music, flip through your library, and start over in the middle of a session.

We all know the joy of sharing and discovering new music with friends, and tea is the same. Of course, these are only guidelines, but the three considerations of guests, energy and environment are good places to start. There will always be exceptions. If I brewed tea with music for ten meditators, simply because it was a large group of people, for example, I would probably miss out on what would have been a great silent session—one whose depth and profundity would have been greatly enhanced and strengthened by the large number of people, rather than hindered by it. Tea is flexible and yielding and ever-present to the situation, so we must be as well. I hope your tea introduces all of you to some beautiful new music, and please remember to pass on the favor and share your discoveries in the forums with everyone this month!



Light Meets Life

光壽無量

One of the most amazing aspects of this project is the way in which it has manifested effortlessly and organically, as if the universe wanted Light to Meet Life in the mountains of Taiwan. We have been envisioning a larger center to host more guests for years, and as you know from previous issues the donation of the land came out of the blue. We were stunned when a local donor was over for tea one day and let it slip that he was buying land for us. Then, recently we found out that the property size has been increased by further donations, allowing us to circumvent certain zoning restrictions and build the center we envision. From aid in gaining non-profit status to financial guidance and advice, from the donors to all the fundraising events—the conformation and support we have received so far is overwhelmingly heart-wrenching and fills us with inspiration!

There is a common mistake in architecture where designers try to conform the landscape to the buildings, but if one wishes to live in the mountains then one wishes to live in the mountains. Why buy mountain land and then level it? Why buy a forest and then cut down all the trees to build a house? We know of a magical art gallery/event center in San Yi, Taiwan that demonstrates a more natural, Dao-

ist approach to building: The architect who owns it hit a mountain spring when he was digging the foundation and the land soon flooded. His colleagues and friends all told him he would have to abandon the project and build elsewhere, but he saw this as an opportunity instead of a misfortune. The result is a beautiful set of buildings surrounded by water and connected by bridges, with koi

ponds, waterfalls cascading from floor to floor, etc. We also very much hope to design our new center in harmony with the land—its contours and energy, flowing and flying with the cliffs, the trees, the river and the waterfall there.

Continuing our trend of serendipitous encounters with people that will be of great service to the manifestation of this project, we recently went to stay in Sun Moon Lake and wound up randomly choosing a new guesthouse that provided us with a very important piece of the puzzle. We have known that we want to have a main hall, a meditation hall and two rows of residences: one for

short-term guests and one for long-term stay. The guest house in Sun Moon Lake was built by two brothers in the style of the old wooden houses that Japanese built all over the island when they controlled Taiwan—many Japanese were actually in Sun Moon Lake at that time (and





were incidentally responsible for bringing the fabulous old-growth, large leaf Red Tea here that we all know and love). However, there are sadly very few builders/carpenters/architects left with the knowledge and skill to build such houses. The brothers researched, experimented and designed their guesthouse by themselves, and did most of the construction personally, by hand. It was amazing to see in living focus the very design that we hope to build for all of you!

The houses are designed in a row, with a single roof, which economizes construction costs. The gap between each of the houses is good for maintenance and also makes each one soundproof and quiet. We hope to use dark, Taiwanese wood which lasts a long time and has a nice fragrance—noticeable when you come into the houses. The whole building will be surrounded by a one-meter-wide, deep moat, which serves three purposes: firstly, there are snakes and other critters in the mountains of Taiwan, and having a moat around the residences prevents them from entering; secondly, it is aesthetically pleasing to cross a small wooden bridge into one's residence. It lends the building a safe, otherworldly feeling (plus we can also fill the moats with beautiful koi fish). Finally, having such water all around the building is an excellent building feature according to Daoist geomancy (*feng shui*). And the fact that our building will also have a mountain behind them makes them doubly fortunate (actually the Chinese phrase 'having a mountain behind one' means that one is extremely abundant).

Inside, there will be a raised platform with enough sleeping space for four to five people, a small tea area with cushions, and a low table that can double as a study area. We hope that this lounge/tea drinking area will have nice views and many windows like at the guesthouse we visited! Each tea area in our residences will come equipped with a kettle and teaware so guests can practice in their rooms. The brothers in Sun Moon Lake designed a nice, simple bathroom with a built-in Japanese tub, which is very affordable and lends the small house a sense of comfort.

We discussed our project with the owners of the guesthouse. They were happy to lend us their designs, and were very inspired by our vision, offering to come and help build as volunteers, as well as to connect us to some of the sources they used for materials. In light of that, the pictures here are a pretty accurate representation of what our residences will look like at the new center, with some minor changes that will make the buildings suit our purposes. The permanent residences will be similarly built in a row, only with slightly smaller rooms suitable for one or two people.

We will be able to house around twenty short-term guests and ten long-term residential students at any one time, allowing us to double the amount of visitors we can host each year! It is amazing to see all the details of this project start to come together: from non-profit status to a professional financial proposal, from building designs to an increase in acreage! As our dear brother Jared always says: "The more it takes

Light Meets Life

form, the more it takes form!” It sounds simple, but it is actually deep, for the more our dreams and visions take shape and form, the closer we are to realizing them. And in building a dream, every detail makes the whole project that much more real, like imagining that we were sleeping and drinking tea in the new center, seeing what our residences will look like in the flesh; and more importantly, imagining them filled up with all of you each year, emerging refreshed and smilingly making your way to the main hall for breakfast, some tea and a hug...

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.







ADAPTATION

Article by Wu De

Adaptation is an important aspect of mastery, in any art, any endeavor or spiritual path. Pre-fabricated answers prevent us from moving with the changing medium, and in tea that always results in an inferior brew. There is no way to formalize a brewing methodology into concepts that will allow you to be in harmony with the kettle, the water pouring, the tea steeping and serving. There is no book or lesson that can map out how a human should live skillfully, as the world and life are always changing and transforming. As the balance shifts, so must we. When we approach our lives with hypotheticals or pre-thought-out agendas, it is like showing up to an exam and filling in all the answers without even reading the test—no matter how much you’ve studied, you will still fail. To live skillfully is to be prepared, practicing and studying, but we still must read each and every situation from a clear and focused still point and then only choose the balanced and harmonious way.

Making tea helps us return to that still point, to learn how to act in balance with the moment. We must adapt to water temperature, the height of the pour and an infinite amount of other factors as we brew. Sometimes we must also move through what are seemingly mistakes—in life and tea—regaining balance as part of an over-all harmonious path. It is like crossing a high wire: sometimes you have to pause and wobble around a bit, regaining your balance before continuing on. Similarly, we sometimes dribble tea on the table or knock over a cup and we then need to adapt to the unexpected yet again, just as we previously adapted to the guests, the tea pot, kettle, amount of leaves, etc.

In tea preparation, it helps to return to the still point before each brew, making sure your heart is centered and unobstructed before you pick up the kettle to steep. It is a nice practice to never lift the kettle with an unsteady heart. First take a few breaths and center yourself, gathering your heart to the present moment and breathing out all thoughts. Then only lift the kettle and start pouring. Also, stay with the tea, and don’t drift away in conversation or onto other things. Practice being with the tea in the steeping, pouring and serving—until it is out of your hands and into the guests’.

In living this practice, we learn to return to the still point and listen; and then to respond in a way that leads to balance and harmony in all things. Every situation that arises in a tea session, and in our lives, is neutral; it has no

charge. It is only our thoughts *about what happens* that can be charged. It is only in our mind that the situation is good or bad, desirable or undesirable. In reality it just is. Try brewing from the still point and you will learn why this Cha is a Dao, as you find yourself steadily responding to the vicissitudes of life in a way that promotes balance in all things.

When we form ourselves based on what we desire and what we prefer, forming opinions and preferences, we become partial. This contorts our spirit away from the still point and leads to suffering, since life will never unfold in the way we are partial to. When we have pre-fabricated answers, we pour the wrong water on the wrong tea and put it in the wrong pot, complaining afterwards: “But you said to put green teas in this pot!”

“Ah, but not *this* green tea!” Replies the master.

It is important to spend some time watching a teacher and learning how to prepare tea, just as it is important to take council from the wise and follow their lifeways, but ultimately the skill must be in our hands and hearts. That is gongfu. It is not the armor that makes the samurai, and even if you steal his sword and armor he will still defeat you, for his skill is within him. My master once made better tea with mason jars than I had with nice *Zisha* and silver. You repeat and repeat the lesson until it becomes you, the way the student of martial arts repeats the forms over and over again until he becomes them. At that point, he starts to transform them to suit him, to flow with their spirit—carrying it with him always. You sit the master down in front of any tea or teaware and he brews a nice cup, and from tea he has learned to live in this way as well: no matter what situation arises, he finds balance, even when it means stumbling, rolling or maybe retreating. There isn’t a formula for how to make tea any more than there is one for how to live.

As we more and more learn how to return to the still point within, listen and then respond towards balance and harmony in all situations (perhaps starting with our tea) our lives then begin to be in greater harmony with the Dao. As that happens, our responses not only lead toward balance and harmony, but come out of it. The beginner walks across the rope that is only a foot high, and still mostly falls off, but the master can successfully traverse the high wire once the art and skill of balancing is within. And when you start living out of harmony and balance, wisdom and insight arise more easily and the skillful path becomes apparent, leading to greater heights and the ability to balance much more dangerous chasms—ultimately



leaping into flight and soaring through the Heavens to join the Immortals, your earthly remains a dwindling splash of color beneath the hills. The master leaps and hops across mile-high gorges and chasms, traversing paths the ordinary ones can only look up at with awe, wondering how he does it and how he got up there in the first place...

If tea didn't have the ability to change and flow, grow and adapt—both as a greater tradition and in each individual session, steeping and cup—it wouldn't have traveled so far in space and time. All the warmth, fellowship, medicinal connection to Nature and deep spiritual communion within oneself and with each other are manifest in the tea of ancient Shamans, Daoists mendicants cloudwalking ancient peaks, Zen monks and nuns and more modern martial artists who developed a gongfu tea based on grace and harmony. The spirit of tranquility and harmony within tea is formless, and therefore finds expression in so many tea trees, tea bowls and pots and brewing methods: from the simple, unprocessed leaves tossed in the shaman's bowl, to the single bowl of whisked tea passed ever-so-silently around the monastery to the graceful and refined teapot dancing from cup to cup 'neath the wide silk sleeves of a gongfu master...

In Cha Dao it is very important that we form our own intimate relationship with tea and tea preparation,

following our intuition rather than a formula. Tea wants to travel and flow, like the liquid it is, and tea preparation has been changing and growing since its inception, through infinite expressions as it has been prepared by very different people, in time and space. As the centuries passed, people found new ways of processing and refining the leaves, and new ways of preparing them that helped them heal their relationship to their own time, providing the connection to Nature, themselves and each other that they needed. In this time, we also have our own unique tradition. One new and incredible aspect of learning Cha Dao today is that we can draw from all the traditions—as geographical, linguistic and ideological barriers are broken, the great tea traditions, teaware and brewing methodologies have found themselves in the same room, learning from each other and sharing the spirit of tea in new and exciting ways.

When we first realize that we need to embody the teachings, we often make the mistake of rebelling or sometimes not studying at all. There is truth in the need for adaptation and balance, inner harmony and true understanding. But until then, learning is important as well. Until we have mastered a routine enough to understand its ins and outs, practice, listening and humility are also important.

Adaptation

Tea wants us to adapt it to *our time* and *our life*, but not if it means a loss of its spirit, a death of most all it has to offer. We have as a species quite often made the mistake of killing a thing to dissect and analyze it, thinking that means we understand it, and that such a truth is worth the loss. However, understanding our world and how to remodel it in a way that is more comfortable for humans at the expense of our world itself is like destroying your house to understand what is in the walls and how the plumbing works. What does it matter if we understand how to synthesize chemicals and create supercomputers and faster, more industrialized food production that can support larger populations if that growth and those processes themselves destroy the Earth and end our species?

In other words, our adaptation should come out of the spirit of tea.

Often times, adaption—in tea, life and history—comes out of one of two unskillful motivations: a need for the quick and convenient, or an egoic attachment. Mastery is about doing things properly, mindfully and in the time that it takes to do them. If tea is your passion, your joy and your solace, why on earth would you want to speed it up? To achieve mastery of tea, and learn from it how to live life and achieve mastery there as well, one must devote all of one's energy to each and every aspect of the process. Speeding things up or making things more convenient results only in a loss of quality—on every level! This is as

true for tea as it is for clothes, food or life. If you rush, things are done poorly. We must take our time and find joy in properly preparing tea. Then we can learn to adapt and personalize our tea in a way that is in harmony with the spirit of tea, rather than with our need to make things move faster—a delusory chase after a future that doesn't exist, ultimately hastening life towards our deaths. While it is true that the master sometimes chooses the quicker and seemingly more convenient road, she does so because that is the more balanced road and not because it is quick or convenient. Choosing quick and convenient even most of the time is like writing “B” on most of the answers to the test without reading them—it will get you an ‘F’!

Mastery in any Dao is about listening to the medium, and asking it about how to respond. We still ourselves and respond towards harmony, not out of our own partiality, which leads only to contortion, distortion and then suffering when the Universe refuses to align itself with our partial and limited vision. If you form your tea practice based on your own likes and dislikes, then there is no Dao, no path and no growth. If your attitude to tea is simply ‘drink what you like in the way you like’ then there is no growth, no movement and no possibility of progress; and you will find yourself drinking a lot of tea that doesn't suit you as well. Adaptation should be in response to tea. The master asks her tea how it wants to be brewed, rather than telling it how she wants to brew it—just as the master



farmer responds to Nature and grows/processes the tea in harmony with its inherent growth rather than imposing his designs upon it, which results in inferior, industrialized tea.

It is common to find someone brewing tea in a piece of teaware the tea doesn't want to be in, and they themselves have reached the level that they can 'hear' the tea telling them that it isn't as nice in that pot, but they still continue to brew tea that way because they are attached to the "pretty red pot", and/or it has sentimental value because "John gave it to me." As you can see, tea always teaches us how to live as well. We all know the person stuck in a rut in their life who keeps receiving sign after sign from the Universe to change course, head North, but who won't give up a southerly course, despite all the growing misfortunes, because they are partial to it or it has sentimentality and they can't imagine the change.

True adaptation isn't about which way is more convenient; it is about which way leads to balance and harmony in all things. The real master's skill changes and flows and she is unattached to how things turn out, which tool she uses or how the medium responds to her touch. She quickly switches pots for the one that makes better tea, no matter how long she's used the previous one. Any attachment would not only slow down her progress, but put her off balance in the new and changing situations to come. We don't possess anything anyway—things, peo-

ple and relationships flow through us as we experience the world in an embodied spirit. Make tea the way it wants to be made, and allow the tools you need to flow through you.

Understanding true flow and adaptation, you can find the mastery of tea in your marrow. And in mastering tea, or any other Dao, we master ourselves and our lives, and learn to navigate any situation we find ourselves in. Learn to personalize your tea and make it your own, but grow and adapt out of the spirit of tea rather than your ego or a need to be quick and convenient. In that way, nothing can be a mistake and all will arise out of and lead towards harmony with the Dao...





SOLITARY

Article by Nick Dilks

I remember heading off into the forbidden countryside of Snowdonia, North Wales to do my first 'solitary retreat' sometime towards the end of the 90's. Forbidden because the whole area was sealed off due to a 'foot and mouth' disease scare, and livestock were being killed and burnt by the thousands across the UK, and the penalty for wandering into a forbidden zone was around \$7,500.

Hardly an auspicious occasion for this journey into the unknown, but a farmer had agreed to let me up into the small shepherd's hut in the middle of nowhere on his land for fourteen days. As I pulled up to the gate, he greeted me with his mutton-chop grey sideburns, flat-cap and green wellies. I trod through some chemical foot-bath and loaded my two-week food supplies into the trunk of his car. As we scaled a cliff-like road up towards my destination he warned me in his thick Welsh accent: "Now, don't go wandering off, mind. . . About 20 meters from the hut should be a'right but no more!" It was clear that this was going to be a very solitary. . . solitary!"

The Buddhist movement that I was in the process of getting ordained into was very keen that its trainees get to spend some time alone for at least two weeks as part of the process of making this commitment. This sounded mental to me but the theory was that it is almost impossible to know oneself thoroughly until one has experienced who you are away from other people. I suppose that a Vipassana meditation retreat gets about as close as possible to this amongst other people . . . but it really is a completely different experience being absolutely alone, as I soon found out!

In my first decade as a novice Buddhist, I spent about two years on Vipassana-style retreats but it was the yearly 'solitary' that taught me the most things about myself(s)! Reading was discouraged, so I really had absolutely nothing to do! On my debut I could not even go for a walk, so I would do some daily exercise, prepare and eat food, meditate. . . and then sit on a chair looking at the wall or out of the window. . . that was it. How I wish I had discovered tea back then! What an awesome way it would have been to spend some of my time.

Needless to say, my mind showed all of its craziness: I even started talking to the sheep in the neighboring field after a week—when I could avoid the trio of geese that threatened me most times when I stepped off the porch! If those guys weren't around, I would sometimes spend hours

throwing stones at a tin can on a wall just outside the house—anything to avoid this intense being with myself, away from distractions and other people.

I wonder if we can truly know ourselves until we have truly been alone in this way? This is probably why Tibetan novices go off and do their three year/three month/three day retreat before they can become a Lama. I found that a lot of hidden tendencies came up very strongly away from my friends and other general distractions. I worked in those days at a very busy Buddhist center in Manchester, England, so I was meeting people and doing things from dawn until late at night. Even in my meditation practice back then I was 'striving' to concentrate on my breath or to develop loving-kindness. Away from this in the silence of those Welsh mountains, all of the things that I was unconsciously avoiding turned up to volume ten. It was, shall we say, very humbling indeed! (I am very fortunate, though, to have always been amused by my foibles!)

But the peace that came at times and the self-knowledge and the confidence that I gained from this process made it all worthwhile. The shepherd's hut had a mezzanine bedroom in the wooden rafters with a beautifully fierce Padmasambhava shrine. As the incense burned, the silence around was the most profound I have ever known, and at times I descended into a depth of peace where it felt like my whole self was unraveling into bliss.

As I descended the mountain fourteen days later, my energy was amazing. (You really realize how much energy you waste talking when you only have the odd chat with some sheep for a fortnight!) And as I drove back to Manchester, I felt like Tom Hanks in *Castaway*, returning to civilization with a new love and gratitude for . . . other people. Over the years, I have had many occasions to agree with Sartre's view that 'Hell is other people' but at that moment he could not have been any more wrong! The confidence and clarity that I got from emerging from this mythical 'ordeal' was profound too.

I was quite the greenhorn back then. A year before, I had been a beer-guzzling member of the university rugby team who lifted weights and listened to Oasis all day. I was, shall we say, rarely in a refined state of mind. No wonder my first experience was so intense! As the years



善
世
道
心

went by, the solitaires become easier as the roots of awareness seeped more deeply into my being and old patterns died away. It has been a while now since I went on a solitary, though I am thinking of perhaps doing one in August or perhaps next Chinese New Year, so my thoughts turn back this way. Now that I am a lover of tea I am excited to take this with me into that space for the first time.

For all of you who have never spent more than a few hours or a day alone, I would recommend that you try it. Take some tea with you and enjoy some long tea sessions away from everything: just you and the Leaf and the country air. You may find out some things about yourself

like Chia Tao, the wandering Chinese poet from the Tang Dynasty:

*The solitary bird
loves the woods;
your heart too
not of this world*





COUNTING MOONS

Article by Steve Kokker

Joni Mitchell indeed never lies. In *Big Yellow Taxi*, the First Lady of Folk sang, “Don’t it always seems to go, that you don’t know what you got ‘til it’s gone.” It was the cry of a generation stuck in a world which seemed to be accelerating, ever-changing and out of one’s personal control. It’s also the same cry of anyone who’s ever avoided living in the present and then later regretted that they didn’t make the most of things when they had the chance.

This theme is on my mind, this year at the Tea Sage Hut in Taiwan, because one of the recurring teachings to us students that has arisen over the last few weeks has been: take advantage of everything available here. We’re encouraged to make full use of our access to teachings, a teacher, the chance to work on ourselves, to grow, learn, to absorb the atmosphere, ask questions, actively participate in our own growth and to tease Kai Ya—to make full use of that which surrounds us. This reminder has somewhat the same effect as when the Zen master strikes his students unexpectedly with a cane during less-than-focused meditation: ‘Hey! Be awake! Live this moment!’

This idea is poignant to me as one of my *idee fixe* over the last few years has been exactly this: how we often tend to not be conscious enough to fully live out the moments we find ourselves in. I regularly find myself reminding others (I’m sure frighteningly tediously) that, “There may never be another chance to do this!” or “Hey, we’ll never live another last Friday in May 2013 again—let’s enjoy it!” or “This is your last summer as a fifteen-year-old, so don’t waste it!” or “Wow, look at that full moon... how many more of those will we see in a lifetime? 400? 100? Let’s enjoy!” It is the principle of *ichigo ichie*, which a Tea Life sharpens in people.

As a productive Virgo, I’ve always been keen about not wasting time, but for much of my life that has been in order to maintain a state of motion for its own sake. As a teenager, of course I would read during bus rides to school, but when I realized that I could transform the horror that was wasting time waiting for the bus or even walking to the stop, I started utilizing that time to be productive too; one nosy neighbor used to call my mother to say, “Stephen was actually writing while walking on the street today! He should look out more where he’s going!” I would make a to-do list or jot down very important ideas while walking, as well as use the time to memorize high-falutin English words. I’d always have a book with me no matter where I

went so I could read while waiting for less punctual friends, and I’d multi-task while watching TV or having a bath. No regrets about all that; I did get lots of cool stuff done. But it took years to realize the waste of time in this compulsive utilization of time. Action, just for its own sake, and not properly directed and motivated by one’s higher self is not optimal usage of our short time on Earth. I’ve learned (and am still learning) to be more focused, and choosy about how I spend my time—to be conscious of the preciousness of it and yet not be obsessed with having to zip to and fro in a masquerade of productivity. If the moment requires stillness and non-action to be nourished, so be it; a compulsion to ‘do something with it’ can destroy that which it has to offer. Taking advantage of what’s around us can be as subtle as simply opening up to what’s there, shutting off a part of our questioning mind, or simply...listening. No action, no effort, and yet so much abundance. Here at the Tea Sage Hut, where some hard lessons come up frequently and where living in an intentional community naturally leads to facing oneself in the mirror, the best way to take advantage of our time is through non-resistance (‘surrender’ is the preferred term).

Ultimately, after a lifetime of fretting over how little time we actually have in this life (all those books to read! So much to see and do!), I finally realized that there is no big tragedy in having little time, or even that many opportunities happen but once—the trick is simply to fully live out each moment you do have, and that way one never feels lack. I spent half my life relating to the outside world from the other side of a camera lens, and somewhere in the back of my mind was the unstated thought, ‘I will enjoy/appreciate this moment/scene later, when I look at the photo’. Nothing wrong with creatively expressing oneself, but I was avoiding direct experience of a moment by partially shielding myself from it with a camera and the feeling that I needed to capture/do something with it. Atom Egoyan’s genius film *Calendar* expresses very deeply the drive to live vicariously through some other medium and its ultimate consequences.

Ichigo ichie. Those words now hover not only over every tea session of mine but as often as I can, I keep that thought floating gently, unnoticed in the space between me and any moment I’m living. “This is the first and last time for this moment” sensitizes us to the present in a delicious way; there’s a giddy joy in it, as well as a hint of melancholy—the two elements which together get so close, so deep to an essence of our humanity.



Getting Close

So while here at such a rare place as the Tea Sage Hut, I do my best to keep focused and alert to the present. I know from the past how nourishing my time here has been, how far-reaching the consequences if only I remain open to teachings, if I do not approach them through filters created by a whining mind which doesn't want to accept something, thinks it knows better, or flicks on the *Be Critical* switch. The same goes for any interaction in my life. The point is not to accept anything and everything whole and without any kind of intelligence—wisdom is needed to know what is mine, what is not mine; we all know what happens to the Yes Man. However, without emptying our cups regularly, without remaining open to what's around us, we say “No!” to our own growth.

I thought I'd share a few of the reminders which I have used to keep myself from lapsing back into busi-

ness and the resulting reaction against that which is. These help me stay rooted to what's currently real and valuable to me (versus continuing to run past programs of what was once interesting or valuable, i.e. running on automatic pilot like we so often do):

- *Stifle the ever-complaining mind.* Part of the brain will forever like to whine about the situation we're in for what it is and for what it is not. There is no effective way of maximizing the present when part of you is reacting against it. If I'm bent on thinking that Wu De spends too much time talking about *Kill Bill*, or that the Garbage Truck Song disturbs my hallowed meditation time, I'm by definition shutting myself off from more subtle lessons. Sure, I can learn them the next time, or in the next life, but if I'm ready for them, it could probably be done more expediently right now.

Counting Moons

- *Be present but not obsessively so.* The thought that ‘this opportunity might never again arise’ need not become compulsive and lead to an attempt to squeeze out every last drop of a situation, to force things out which are not naturally forthcoming. We need not feel the need to get to the very bottom of a subject discussed with a friend or to push out tears of joy when beholding a yellow blossom covered with dew. This will not necessarily extract more juice from our experiences, it may distort them. This balance between taking full advantage of an opportunity and not going overboard, driven by a light panic of ‘this may be the last time’ takes a while to figure out. It may not yet be the time to have this experience, and perhaps nothing more is needed to make this moment complete. Yet when somewhere underneath our fears or mind noise, it feels right to say “I love you” or “I really appreciate your friendship,” do it! When the impulse to reach out and hug, touch, caress is there, do it! The chemistry and timing may not occur again and we’ll have thrown away an occasion to connect with another. No need to falsely create a moment; certainly no need to short-change it either.

- *Choose your regrets.* Regret is an insidious feeling that the ego often uses to unleash a whole watershed of self-blame and pity. It’s an insidious strategy to wedge distance between us and The Moment. Use regret wisely. I choose to very, very rarely regret those things I have done, rather those which I failed to do. This at least offers the chance for future redemption and decreases the likelihood of me failing to pay homage to a later moment when the time comes. I choose to not spend much time regretting past behavior which could have undeniably been more tactful, caring or less selfish. However, there is some heart-wrenching which accompanies the knowledge that I failed to give my father the last shave of his life, for example. I arrived as an orderly was half-done with it and didn’t respond to my inner impulse to ask him to let me take over. That familiar, lying, cowardly voice stepped up the volume and told me that next time I will do it, or that maybe I shouldn’t ask this question for whatever reason. There was no chance to repeat this beautiful moment later. Or that one night I didn’t follow my impulse to drive out to see my grandmother when I knew she wasn’t feeling well. An impulse told me to drop by; my mind told me other things. That night, I learned the next day, she had died, and I live with the knowledge that I did not properly close a circle as best I could, and I easily could have, were it not for various frequencies of mind noise. I regret not having provided more assistance to friends who came to me in need because I was not sufficiently rooted in the present. These memories do not cripple me but they sharpen my attentiveness to similar situations and strengthen my resolve to not repeat the same errors. If there is a potential to offer someone a moment of human connectedness, and I ‘know’ it’s the right time to do it, I try to offer this.

- *Keep an eye on the balance.* The complaining mind will do much to destabilize one’s balance into believing that something is not as it should be; a major road-block to being fully in the present. While the complaining mind is present to some degree in everyone, it tends to be activated most when one is off-kilter. But we’re human bodies too. When you’re tired, or run down, haven’t eaten properly, or reeling from an emotional blow, defenses are low and that’s when resistance to what is strengthens. Aside from meditation and mantras to keep away negativity, making sure some basic needs are attended to is essential: are you getting enough down time, exercise, proper food, rest, social and work time? Sometimes a good sleep, a day off, a proper meal, or a laugh with a friend is all that’s needed to get back on track.

So... full moons. Indeed, how many more will we see in our lifetimes? Some finite number for sure, and likely less than we’d like to think, considering that many will be obscured by clouds or remain unseen as we stay inside, sleep, party or don’t bother to look. And when one’s remaining time here on this plane can be reduced to a shockingly small number of full moons left to enjoy... well, it makes us a bit less likely to take them for granted. Every event in our lives that we cherish can be thus numbered (how many more tender moments with this person; how many more chances to learn from this lesson in this way; how many more delicious matcha rolls or crumbly chocolate chip cookies, etc.).

Being conscious of these crazy, finite numbers is no cause for alarm or lapsing into depression. They are just the sounds of bells ringing, signals to stay awake and start acting a bit less from the brain space and more from the heart, as our higher selves would like us to...

P.S. Doing this also makes much better tea!







LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED

Article by Lindsey Goodwin

Wu De recently painted a message to all students and guests on the wall above the kitchen table. The painting reads:

HOUSE RULES (non-negotiable):

1. Hug everyone in this house every day.
2. Be in Love.

Last month, I discussed the first rule of Tea Sage Hut. Writing on that topic was a great way for me to absorb related lessons more deeply and, I hope, to help others along their journeys. Now, it feels like a good time to focus on the second rule both for my own learning and for others who may benefit from reading this.

Our Awe of Love

Love is the most powerful energy that exists in this universe. It is an immense creative force which fuels our interpersonal connections, our connection to Nature, our work, our play and much more. Monuments to Love (such as the Taj Mahal), our countless Love stories (told in film, novels, songs and other media), and even the ways in which we use (over-use / avoid) the word “Love” all reflect our deep awe of Love’s incredible power.

Our awe of Love carries within it both wonderment and fear. Why we would approach Love as beings full of wonder is easy to understand, but what about the fears of Love that so many people experience? If Love is a natural state of being (as so many spiritual people have claimed over the centuries), what is it that people fear so much about it?

Feeling Love is a powerful experience backed by infinitely powerful energy. And yet Love is often seen as a weakness, a vulnerability. This viewpoint has its own truths, but it is an extremely limited view, one which is confined to the egoic self. People with this viewpoint “Love” out of want and react to Love out of fear. They relate tumultuous emotions to “Love”, and react to these emotions with an imbalanced and unskillful way of living. In this egoic state, “Love” is not an all-powerful creative force, but a re-

straint, a burden. It is something to grapple with rather than something to embrace and let emanate from you.

On what would seem to be the extreme end of the spectrum of Love as something to be feared, many enlightened writers have penned romantic tales comparing the act of loving to the act of dying. And yet, we so often find that these stories resonate deeply with us not at the level of fear, but as echoes of the eternal Divinity found within us. These wise souls’ stories trigger in us a recognition of loving and dying as forces which kill egos and initiate transformations which expand consciousness far beyond the boundaries of the solitary self.

If you view Love as something to be feared at this stage in your journey, that’s okay. There’s “nowhere you can be that isn’t where you’re meant to be.” That includes fearing Love in all its awe-inspiring glory. And it also includes wanting Love without perceiving that it is all around you, all the time, and without deeply knowing that you wouldn’t even exist if it weren’t for the ceaseless Love of the universe. Experiencing that on a profound level takes work, but right now, acknowledging that you aren’t there yet is a pivotal step. From that recognition, you will find that there are ways to get from fearing Love and craving Love to being in a deep state of Love, one borne out of an expanded perspective.

That path is what I’d like to talk about in this newsletter and the next one. In this issue, I’ll be talking about loving people. Next newsletter, I’ll talk about other expressions of Love, such as loving your work, loving tea and loving the Divine.

I don’t dare claim to have mastered any of these forms of Love. If I’ve learned anything at all from interacting with those more enlightened than I, it is that spiritual work is a process, not a goal. There’s great wisdom in returning to work on these themes over and over again with new understandings and new perspectives from your work in other areas. I encourage all of you (and myself!) to see that all of these topics loop back into each other: Tapping into the Universe’s boundless Love in any of these forms causes Love to overflow into all areas of your life. Find the channels which carry Love’s flow through you. Turn on the faucet—let the energy swirl, stream and spill into your tea, into your relationships, into your work and beyond...



Loving Your Higher Self

If you do not have Love within you, you cannot share Love. If you do not know how to accept and forgive yourself unconditionally, you cannot accept or forgive others with any kind of consistency. I could go on with these trite-and-true basics, but you get the drift...

However, it's not quite so simple. There is a big "-->WARNING<--" to note: Do not mistake loving your egoic self for loving your higher self. Possessions, external beauty, status and the like are only transient, surface traits which do not reflect who you really are. And feeding your ego's ideas of what you "Love" about "yourself" will bring you great suffering when your circumstances change.

So, the skillful means of loving oneself is not in focusing on the Love of who you appear to be, but who you actually are. Who are you, then? *You are a Divine being.* (Don't believe me? Read it again. If it helps, say it out loud: *I am a Divine being.* Really feel it.)

When you can feel the Divinity within yourself, celebrate it! Be aware of that Divinity when you meditate and when you drink tea. Honor it and trust it when you make decisions, be they big or small. Learn how to be and Love your Divine self. And each time you work with these different types of Love, allow the Love of your higher self to deepen as you merge more and more into it.

Through spiritual practice and honoring your higher self, you can change your relationship to yourself drastically. As you learn to make decisions that feed your Divinity rather than your ego, you will find that your interactions with others are utterly changed.

Perhaps this shift occurs because more self-acceptance leads to more acceptance of others, or because you become a much happier person when you follow your bliss, or because being honest and authentic with yourself allows you to be more authentic and honest with others. It could also be that resting in your higher self provides an awareness of your own completeness, thus freeing you from neediness and other unhealthy relationship behaviors. Whatever the reason, you will likely be able to forge much closer, deeper relationships with others when you are able to Love yourself.

Beyond that, spiritual work helps you to know that, as a Divine being, you are a fragment of the same (wonderful, lovable) stuff as everyone else. This has many implications, but now I'll focus on just one: Each time you interact with another person, you are interacting with another aspect of your Divine nature. So loving another means loving yourself. Helping another means helping yourself. Forgiving another means forgiving yourself. And so on. You don't lose anything by loving. You are giving of yourself to yourself, and the Divine essence in both of you is learning from the perceived exchange.

Love is All You Need

From where I stand now, the difference between what people usually think of as “Love” and conscious, unconditional Love is summed up by one simple statement: *Love does not want or fear anything.*

Unconditional Love is accepting of other people’s higher selves regardless of the situation at hand. Conscious Love recognizes that there is nothing to want (because you already have all that you need; others can’t fix things for you in any kind of a lasting, meaningful way and no external circumstances can satiate your internal sense of lack) and there’s nothing to fear (because Love is a creative power, not a destructive force, and there is nothing whatsoever to be lost if you approach Love with the right understanding of it).

Unconditional Love doesn’t place demands. It doesn’t have ultimatums. It is for the sake of being and it gives for the sake of giving. And by loving yourself unconditionally, you can begin to share unconditional Love with others, and to amplify that Love back to each other.

Loving a Romantic Partner

The pattern of fearing Love and reacting to Love with imbalance applies to all sorts of relationships, but it is generally most visible in the realm of romantic Love. Many romantic relationships are based on especially unrealistic desires and irrational fears, and are not rooted in Truth.

For me, romantic Love was like this for many years. “Love” meant feelings of needing to be with someone coupled with fears of real intimacy. In retrospect, this was merely a means to distract myself from real growth. I was focused on striving for flimsy external changes instead of on initiating substantial changes from within. So much drama and distress because I was afraid to accept things as they were and work from there! Through spiritual practice, all that changed...

When the universe decided I was ready, I met Merlin (Yes, that’s his real name!). From the start, our relationship has been refreshingly free of neediness, drama, games, projections, assumptions and expectations. Instead, the focus has always been celebrating the Divinity we see so clearly in each other. Complete trust, acceptance and forgiveness are easy for us to share. Despite this, we’re not dependent on each other. Rather, we relish having space to walk our paths separately, then return to each other to share what we have discovered along the way.

Through my relationship with Merlin, I’ve begun to see unconditional Love brimming over into other areas of my life. It gradually teaches me to see the Divinity not just in Merlin, but in everyone. And what a beautiful lesson that is turning out to be!

Loving Friends

Developing loving relationships with close friends can be one of the healthiest things you ever do, especially when these friends are part of your living community.

I’m not talking about pals or chums here. Sure, those kinds of friends offer surface-level overlaps and perhaps deeper bonds, but their essential function is to enable your garbage rather than help you get over your ego drama and do real spiritual work.

True friends, on the other hand, have an ability to see beyond the transitory phases of who you appear to be and to peer into the depths of your true nature. They’ll give you space to grow into your higher self. They’ll also give you an earful of truth when it’s necessary for growth, even if hearing the truth is painful. Above all, they want what’s best for the real you. These kinds of friends are treasures. Love them and grow with them!

Loving Family and Community

People often quip that the true measure of your spiritual development is how you respond to spending a week with your family. I’m lucky (My family is great!), but many people are not so fortunate. Still, even in dysfunctional families, there is often some sense of sticking by each other no matter what. Sure, you might disagree or even fight, but when it really matters, you’re there for each other.

The same holds true in a spiritual community. The difference is that (presumably) everyone is there to do spiritual work. As people on a spiritual path, members of such a community are more likely to be able to identify human interactions as opportunities for growth. That doesn’t mean that we don’t disagree (or even fight). We do! But the way we do it tends to be different. We strive to recognize the best in each other, accepting shortcomings while simultaneously encouraging each other to improve based on where we are now.





former never happened. And if you're anything like me, then your mind is *really* gonna hate that.

So to be a spiritual student without flipping out on your teacher, you have to work at not resting in your ego and not resting in your mind. Conveniently, this leaves you the opportunity to rest in your heart. Do that. Linger there. Get real cozy. Once you do, you'll likely find that it's where the real you wanted to be all along AND that it's easy to Love your teacher (and pretty much everyone else) from that resting spot.

Another important distinction to make when talking about loving a spiritual teacher is that "teacher" and "student" are merely roles, and at a deeper level what's happening during teaching is a transfer of energy. Worldly people often see spiritual teachers as swindlers who take resources from students while offering little in return. This is a flawed view. As I mentioned above, it's not possible for anything to get lost in the exchange when giving Love consciously. Beyond this, Love for a true spiritual teacher is amplified back many times over (even if your teacher gives you nothing but hassle on the surface level). Powerful energy flows from spiritual teachers to students, and this energy is a form of Love. Along with external teachings, this energy fosters enormous growth in students who are ready to welcome it. As this is something which goes far beyond loving an individual person (and as it is something I am only now beginning to understand), I'll talk about it more in next month's newsletter. Until then, much Love to all of you, and may Love pour through you in all that you do!

Loving a Spiritual Teacher

Wu De is my spiritual brother, my housemate and my dear friend. But he is also my spiritual teacher and, as such, is in a separate category.

Loving a spiritual teacher is different from any of the other kinds of Love I've mentioned so far. Why? A spiritual teacher's job is to break down your ego, and your ego is going to hate that. On top of that, a more Zen spiritual teacher (such as Wu De) tends to break down your mind in particular ways, like telling you to do one thing, then telling you the opposite a few days later and pretending the





USING OUR TRUE NAMES

Article by Jasper Hermans

Since I stepped onto the spiritual path I'm hiking now, it's become more challenging to stay connected with the family and friends that I grew up with. During this relatively short life (I'm only twenty years of age), I've often felt like I'm racing along at an incredible speed. And coming back home to my parents' house after an internal and external journey, in which time cannot be measured, nor the transformation that has taken place within my being, is often jolting. Even a thousand empty peanut butter jars wouldn't be enough to symbolize my transformation, and I instead come home, open the drawer to get some peanut butter and find it's still the same jar, almost as full as when I left. In light of the changes within my being, showing my true face and recognizing the true faces of my family and friends is a challenge. By the time we recognize what we know in each other, we realize that we've become different people.

And, of course, there are frustrating times when I long to go back to the center or monastery and be with people with whom I can share from the heart, and with whom I could live in peace. But such projections aren't truth, and going away wouldn't always be skillful, or even helpful for that matter. These people are beautiful people too, and they have guided and taught me along the way, so giving back some wisdom and presence by way of thanking them, and learning to just be with them, is, I feel, the best thing I can do. But it hasn't been easy to return home to ordinary life after any of the retreats or trips I've taken—not until now.

After returning from my stay in the Tea Sage Hut during March and April of this year, I felt that there was a difference. I felt I had fully begun to live a life of tea and that I was taking home with me this beautiful tradition, knowledge, wisdom (and many other things that are not possible to describe in words); and I could serve them tea! I had something to share with those I love—something that doesn't require words; that doesn't require them to sit in a "strange" position in silence for some time; that doesn't require them to talk about spirituality, feelings, God, Buddha or anything else. The only thing they have to do is to just drink tea! And it doesn't matter if they understand all that Tea has to offer, what treasures are hidden in Her, because they can just accept, perceive and feel Her in any way they want or are capable of.

And what I found to be truly beautiful is that although they might only notice the smell or taste of the Tea, Her spirit, energy and power are still entering every cell of

their bodies. And without them maybe even noticing it, there are, although maybe very subtle and small, things shifting within their beings from the very moment that they take their first sip. With some attention and awareness, I've found that these subtle changes are noticeable—right then and there in that very moment: a little smile, a spark in their eyes, the energy that they are radiating or maybe even some sensitive words that they would otherwise maybe not have shared. A heart space is opened in which we are able to share more from our heart and call each other by our true names. And that creates space to reconcile our different understandings and meet each other on a more profound level.

Now I feel that whoever takes the time to sit down in my tea space to share tea with me, I have the opportunity to offer them something truly beautiful and precious. I just make space in order for tea to travel—the Tea and this tradition do most the work—to let Her teach us what She wants to teach and guide us where She wants us to go. And in that space, magic happens...

Even when there is nobody sitting next to me to share a bowl of tea, I still often feel as if I'm serving tea. I'm serving tea to all the people that I have served tea to in the past and to all the people that I will serve tea to some day in the future.

The whole world is present within the leaves, the bowl, the water and our bodies. Therefore, I have the opportunity to serve tea to the people that are physically present within my tea room, and I also have the opportunity to share tea with the people that are not present within my tea room—with all of you—even on the other side of Mother Earth. I share tea with all the people I've known or haven't yet met. Maybe I even share tea with those who have already passed away, like my grandfather who passed six years ago. All is present within these leaves, this bowl and every cell of my body.





Dear Grandfather,
I pour this bowl of tea for you,
After you've called me to show me the fresh leaves on the
trees outside.
At a moment that summer is manifesting,
My being was in a state of winter.
Your love for sunflowers is present in me,
And I share with you this moment,
Looking out of the window at the beauty of Nature.
We transcend time and space to walk together in the gar-
dens of our Being.
Flowers bloom,
Birds sing,
And I hold your hand as you guide me....

I cry tears of joy,
As we share these bowls together.

TEA WAXTARER

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. Those who are around her call her the "Tea Goddess," but she is much too humble to agree. Triin Juurik is a powerful woman with goddess energy bubbling just under the surface, and everyone feels lucky to be able to work with her.

I am a girl from the north: a small country of 1.3 million Estonians.

Mine is rather a coffee nation, but I got exposure to tea during the three years of my life spent in big tea drinking countries like USA, where I did lots of traveling; and England, where I went after my Social Work studies and where I worked with manic-depressive and schizophrenic people. I became a real teaholic in England (I admit I really enjoyed teabags back then, but how could I have known better?). I also worked briefly at a teashop in Berlin.

I had a very happy childhood, close to Nature and surrounded by loving people. Tea for me was a remedy when sick and something to keep you warm in such a cold country. I wasn't a very ambitious child. When someone asked me who I wanted to be when I grew up, the answer was: "A clerk, and I'll sell nice things in a shop." And now I am just that—at a teashop called *Chado*. It's tiny, but filled with an enormous amount of magic and beauty. I'm enjoying every aspect of it!

For all this, I cannot thank Fortune enough for meeting Steve (who you all know from his cool articles here in the GTH newsletters). I came into his office after my return from my travels abroad.

Soon, it will be seven years from the day when I started to help him with his work. (What work—I mean pure fun!). He is a dear friend and one of the kindest and wisest human souls I know. I've learnt so much from him. It warms my heart that we now have formed a community of tea lovers here in Tallinn.

When we finally saw Wu De in his chicken-yellow hat, stylish walking stick—right out of one of his scroll paintings—and open sandals, despite an Estonian snowstorm last October, everybody couldn't help but fall in love with him instantly. The room where we held workshops was so full of tea-spirit, that even the steam from the bowls formed shapes of hearts. The depth of experience in drinking tea changed for all of us who attended those gatherings. It turned into a meaningful ceremony, as most of you have experienced yourself. It made me more humble and respectful towards Living Tea and offered so much more in other aspects of my life. I made room for a tea corner in my flat where I'll enjoy tea hopefully with more and more friends. My first

GTH newsletter arrived exactly on my birthday and it's much awaited every month. I have a funny habit of hugging it before opening it each month.

I'm most thankful for good coincidences and a life that never tires to surprise.

Most likely I won't see you all eye to eye, but we can notice each other's reflection in the teacup when we raise it with GTH's tea, and we can feel the tea spirit that connects us.

Also... My head is often in the clouds and I like origami!



The Global Tea Hut website has a forum, 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 a great video series online now. There are many videos about this tradition, tea brewing, the center and Wu De's travels and work. They are all very inspiring to watch. 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 all the time so check back!



There are currently 160 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 things are abundant nowadays so we should all 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...



Wu De' is planning a trip to Russia this July. He will be doing workshops in both the east (Siberia) and the west (Moscow, St. Petersburg). We are also planning a bunch of events for this August in LA.



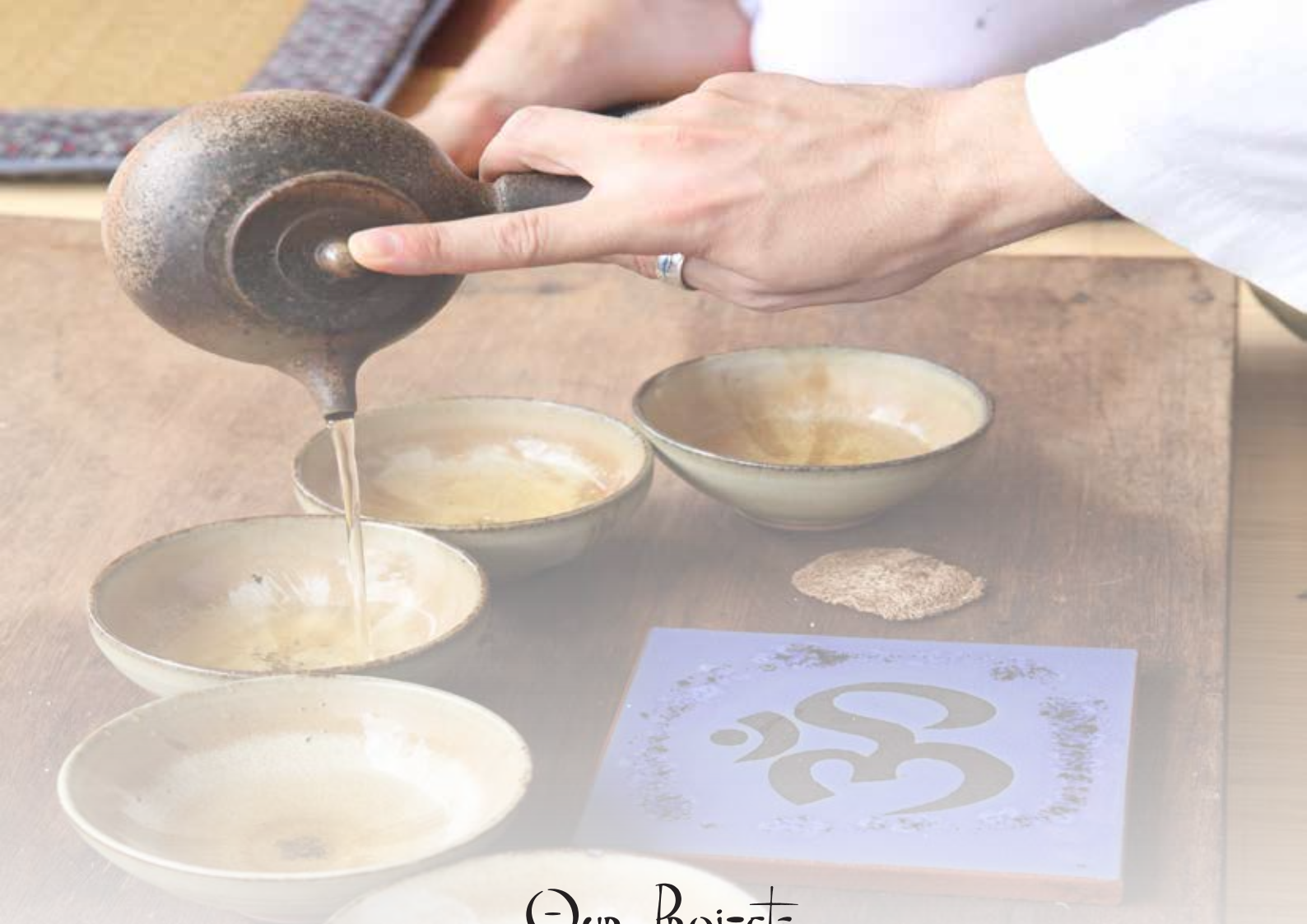
Atonio, our dear Spanish brother and past Teawayfarer, gave birth to a healthy baby boy this month! His name is Max Moreno. Congratulations to him! You are in all our prayers. Max is officially the youngest GTH member to date!



Our center here in Miao Li, Tea Sage Hut, just got a new kitchen! As many of you know, this was a long time coming. The new kitchen is gorgeous, complete with a kitchen god, new cupboards, stone counters, a kuan Yin, and much more. Come over and share a meal!

www.globalteahut.org
www.teasagehut.org
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 1,000,000-2,000,000 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 alternative ways to better host/share our videos