

# Hut Tea Hut

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE  
October 2015

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"CLOUD-HIDDEN" SHOU PUERH  
TEA AROUND THE WORLD  
VOICES FROM THE HUT



# Contents

Issue 45 / October 2015

GLOBAL TEA HUT  
Tea & Tao Magazine



## CLOUD-HIDDEN

We've started a new annual tradition this month: "Voices from the Hut" is one of our most talked about and requested sections. We plan to devote an issue every year to celebrating just how global this Global Tea Hut is! And what better tea to share at such a party than one donated by a member!

*Love is  
Changing the world  
Bowl by bowl*

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# Letter from the Editor



In October, the weather in Taiwan starts to turn perfect—neither too cold nor too hot. We spend more time drinking tea, and without any air-conditioning or fans. This means open windows and doors, and better Dragon Eye charcoal. It also means that we can begin to prepare better teas, like Wuyi Cliff Teas, aged Taiwanese oolongs, aged puerh and sometimes even some nice shou teas start to make an appearance.

When the weather is perfect for tea, a tea lover is in bliss. As your love for tea grows, however, you may also begin to have a curious relationship to the weather. Not only do we appreciate the rain for its relationship to plants and growth cycles, but also drinking a nice tea while it is pouring outside with the door and/or windows open is one of the greatest joys a Chajin can know. The sound and smell compliment the tea so wonderfully, and there is a magical charm in a warm and cozy bowl of tea indoors when it is cold and rainy outside. Such weather adds a glow to shelter, something we so often take for granted, as Tea also teaches us to love the ordinary.

We have a great tea in store for you. It is a very unique one, that will be a surprising and joyful way to bring in the change into cooler autumn winds. This amazing tea brings a lot of energy with it and is a powerful reminder of the connections and friendships this community has brought into our life, since its donor is one of the members sitting here in this circle sharing tea with us all month after month.

Many of you have admired our doctor bag, in which the center bowls travel the earth, spreading tea medicine. As this global community grows, there is a need to stop every now and then to celebrate just how *global* it is! These envelopes are reaching people in more than thirty countries! That is stunning, indeed. It is amazing to have such a strong fellowship of people committed to sustainably-grown tea, and with an approach towards tea that is similar to ours: primarily as plant medicine and a means of self-cultivation. And the community is growing and connecting in ways we could never have imagined when we began this project. Very soon, we will have some big announcements about new ways we hope to connect you all!

In the meantime, we realized that the “Voices from the Hut” section of these magazines is one of the most requested and talked about aspects of receiving Global Tea Hut. In my travels, I find that people have read those articles more often than others (with the exception of the Tea of the Month article, which is, of course, the most widely read). That makes sense, especially since one of the most rewarding parts of receiving Global Tea Hut is the feeling of connection to



a community, and one that you want to get to know. It seemed fitting, then, to devote a whole magazine to “Voices from the Hut”. We asked several friends around the world to write about anything that inspires them locally—tea culture, community, Global Tea Hut—anything! We wanted to hear from you all. We hope you enjoy reading a bit more of what others in this worldwide gathering are doing, and take some of them up on their invitations to go share tea.

Let this issue itself also stand as an invitation to all writers, poets, artists or dreamers out there: *send us your work*. We want to hear about your experience, whether as novice or expert, beginner or master-craftsman. The more we all contribute to this experience, and connecting through it, the more rewarding it will be! As we mark more new and exciting changes in Global Tea Hut—traveling more, exposing you to more and rarer teas, more authors, etc.—amongst all this growth, let us all include more *participation* and *connection* to each other! As the old Chinese saying goes, “Through tea make friends!”

*Wu De*

# Tea of the Month



## SPRING 2015 "CLOUD-HIDDEN" SHOU PUERH TEA

The old man can't speak your language, but his eyes welcome you into his small village home, darkened by the wood smoke that cooks his simple meals. His skin is dark and withered, cracked and crinkled like the folded hills you climbed back and forth on the long bus ride here. You can see all he owns; there's nothing hidden: a small bedroom, a small storage of rice, a kitchenette with an area for firing tea and bit of floor space for eating on mats. There's little distinction between in and outdoors—chickens wander in and out with dirty children, women gossiping in a sing-song language and visitors who drop by for some tea. The humans here live and breathe the jungle as much as the plants or animals, a part of the changing environment...

Tea regards no borders. People often argue about whether tea belongs to China, Japan or India; but tea belongs to Nature, paying no heed to the imaginary lines we draw on maps. There is such a thing as Chinese tea *culture*, but not the

leaves. We can discuss a Chinese way of farming, a Japanese processing or Indian preparation; but the leaves are just leaves, born out of the Earth. This is most especially true of the wild, seed-propagated trees that are the origin of tea, and ultimately all tea culture as well.

Tea was born in the jungles of Southwest China, in Yunnan, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and a bit in India later on. They say the first *Camelia sinensis* evolved around a million years ago, which means that those old trees sat untouched and pristine for an eon before any human even noticed them—steeped only in dew, heated only by the morning sun, and drunk only by streams and rivers. And the seeds wandered the hills, each one a distinct soul like you and I. Like humans, tea trees are sexual and so each seed produces an entirely unique tree. Though they share a genetic heritage, as well as a similar climate which lends them resemblances, they are also all unique. This is why Tea has adapted to so

many climates, for surely in one thousand seeds there is one which is suited to a new environment.

As tea moved east and north, whether naturally or carried by man, the trees adapted: The roots began growing outward rather than straight down and the leaves got smaller in colder climes. This has led some scholars to divide tea into large leaf trees, with bigger leaves, deep roots and a much greater longevity; and small leaf bushes, with wide roots and a shorter life span. In this modern age of industrial, plantation tea—rows and rows of bushes crammed so close together we can't see where one ends and the next begins—it seems almost too magical to imagine that the descendants of those first old trees are still living out in the pristine jungles of places like Yunnan and Laos.

The aboriginal tribes of this part of the world cross the borders often, and sometimes only speak their own local languages. In fact, the northern part of Laos was once part of China—



**"Cloud-hidden"**



**Ban Payase, Phongsali, Laos**



**Shou Puerh Tea**



**Khammu Aboriginals**



Xishuangbanna to be exact—and was annexed by the French around the middle of the nineteenth century. As we said above, Tea doesn't mind our imaginary borders, invented cultures or pride; and sometimes we need to remember that Nature is bigger than our ideas. Drinking tea helps with that, especially amazing tea like this month's, which defies our borders and concepts.

On our first trips to Yunnan in the late 90s, we met tribal people that were completely self-sustained and cut off from all news of modern China. Nowadays, things are changing, and development is fast approaching this part of the world. A lot of that has to do with the growth of the puerh industry. In 1998, tea shops in Kunming (the capital of Yunnan) weren't specialized in puerh, and often suggested we buy green or red tea instead; and at the airport customs officials looked on our puerh tea with askance, not knowing what it was at all. Now, the airport itself is crammed full of puerh shops and Kunming has several huge and thriving puerh markets.

This development has, unfortunately, also reached the villages where much of the old-growth raw material comes from. As prices have risen, many villages have grown rich and others jealous. There is little regulation, leaving Yunnan prone to falsely labeled tea, tea switched from region to region, etc. Take for example the very famous tea from Lao Ban Zhang, which is the most expensive of all raw material (*mao cha*). The spring harvest in this village is only measured in a handful of tons, perhaps seven. However, in the big tea market of Southeastern China, Guangzhou, more than three-thousand tons of tea have some form of "Lao Ban Zhang" on the label. Are they blended? Are they fake? Are there magic elves that spin those seven tons into thousands before Rumpelstiltea shows up?

Other problems have also found their way into the region with the moneys. Before this time, the aboriginal peoples there were mostly self-sustained. It is not entirely evident, therefore, that they spend wisely—often buying disco lights for their trucks, satellite dishes, cell phones and other things that herald the end of traditionally processed tea. Of course, they have also begun planting a lot more tea, and mixing the young with the old (sometimes even using agrochemicals). Young trees aren't always bad, depending how they are planted and cared for.

But all is not lost. The greater development in Yunnan has also brought information, foreign attention and more puerh lovers than ever before—people with an interest in preserving the jungles such tea is grown within. Trees are being leased and protected, and other promising projects are being created to maintain the living tea from this special jungle, the origin of all tea.

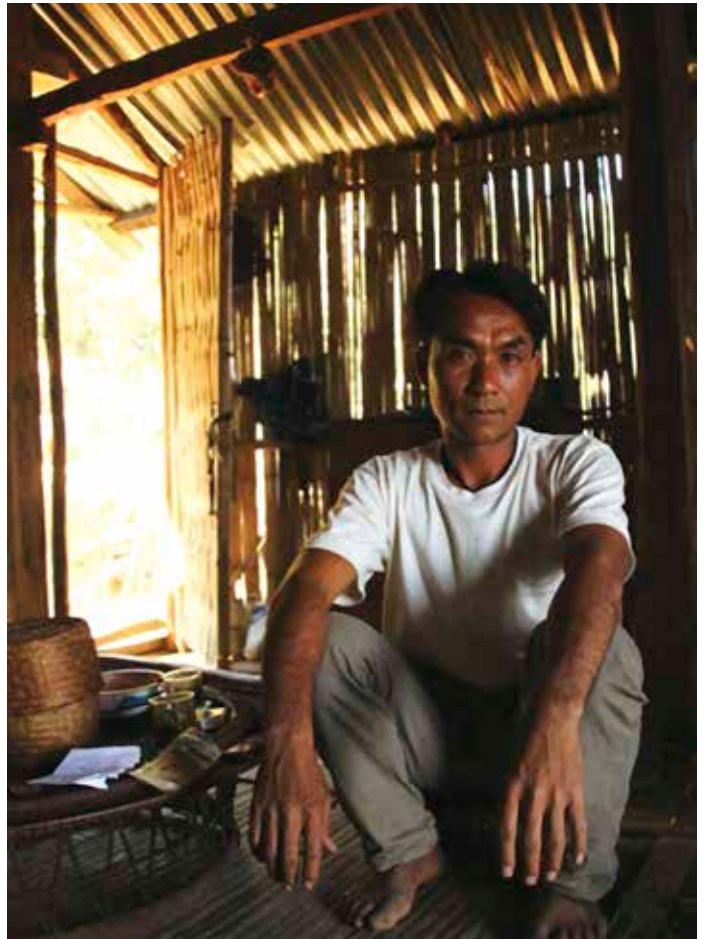
Traditionally, all the puerh that came from Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar was called "Border Tea". This was usually a derogatory term. Such teas were rarely pressed into cakes, and even today aged, loose-leaf Border Teas can be had for much cheaper than the Yunnanese vintages. They say the trees aren't as good or the people there don't process their tea as well, but actually calling Border Tea inferior has always been more of a pride thing. Traditionally, people across the borders didn't specialize in tea as much as those in Yunnan, and sometimes didn't process it as puerh, which partially explains why it has had a lackluster reputation in the past.

## Tea of the Month

Though the sense of pride continues today, and many puerh tea shop owners would tell you to steer clear of Border Tea, their dislike for it has lent it the very magic that makes it so special today: the



mass-market of China—buying and selling thousands and thousands of tons of puerh—for the most part ignores this tea. This means that the jungles stay pristine, the cost stays low, the tea stays untouched and the aboriginals involved stay pure-hearted. Back in the day, *everyone* making puerh tea either did it because his father's father had or because she loved puerh. More than ninety percent of puerh producers, distributors and so-called "experts" have only been doing this for less than ten to fifteen years (since the boom) and only because they heard the jangle of coins in others' pockets. But across the border, in the remote jungles of Laos, you have a better chance of finding an old farmer who honestly loves tea—a farmer like Insay.



*Insay and his farm of younger trees. The village of Ban Payase was once part of Xishuangbanna, Yunnan. The remote area is clean and simple, as living tea should be.*

Insay has two gardens where he grows and harvests tea. Behind his hut there is a tea garden with old tea trees up the hill. Usually his wife and his son harvest tea there. But they don't make tea at home, they take it up the mountain on the motorcycle, it takes ten minutes to drive up the slope, which is a narrow and dangerous mountain path. On the southern slope of the mountain there is the second tea garden and a tea hut, where Insay withers and fires his tea.

The tea hills in Ban Payase are very beautiful and harmonious, a place you always want to come back to. Insay was discovered by some Russian tea lovers seeking to find pure, wild, old-growth puerh. As we've said—it's worth repeating—the Phongsali Province of Laos actu-

ally was once a part of the kingdom of Xishuangbanna, and therefore a part of "Yunnan", until the eighteenth century when it was taken from China to join French Indochina. This is why there are three-hundred- to four-hundred-year-old trees throughout the area, like those Alexander found in the village of Ban Payase. The trees of this part of the world have ho-hummed as the borders have changed, and sighed when people called them "Chinese" or "Laotian". One wonders, then, if this really is "Border Tea" in a different sense.

The village of Ban Payasi is 1500 meters above sea level in the most rural of all Laotian provinces, Phongsali. It is so remote that the Buddhist religion has much less of a hold on the tribal people here, who

still practice their native shamanism. Unique tea plantations of large old tea trees have been safely preserved. The climate here is perfect for growing tea: cold foggy winters and warm rainy summers. The capital of this Province, also called Phongsali, lies on the slopes of Mount Phu Fa (1625m above sea level). Getting here is quite difficult as the whole area is far from any paved road or airport. Most people use the local river for transportation. The trip usually takes three days—one way. Because of the isolation, people in Phongsali have a simple and natural life style. In this beautiful and ecologically clean environment wonderful tea is produced.



A gorgeous Khammu tea farmer in Laos.

It was here that Alexander found a true lover of tea, caring for old and young-growth trees with equal love and affection. Our tea is a blend of the younger, forty-year-old trees and the older, three-hundred-year-old ones.

Alexander and his partner Timur formed the Russian tea company *Tea Pilgrims, Ltd.* to promote organic, local tea to Russia and the world. They graciously donated this month's tea, which you will find to be a pure example of what "living tea" can be—and in a shou puerh nonetheless! "Living tea" is a term we reserve for tea that is seed propagated; organic, sustainable, and allowed to grow up old and strong; with room between plants and a healthy relationship

with the surrounding ecology, no irrigation and, of course, no agrochemicals. When you drink a living tea, you know it, as you will find this month for sure. Monoculture inhibits tea in so many ways, as it does most any plant species. It is impossible for us to understand or measure the infinite relationships a plant has to its local ecology: the other plant and wildlife that surrounds it.

It is very difficult to find nice, intentionally produced shou puerh these days. Most shou is made from a smattering of what is left over after sheng cakes are made, and of lesser quality raw material (*maocha*) since puerh is expensive and there is a loss of quality and essence in the piling, and since no one would

pay sheng prices for shou cakes. "Cloud-hidden," as we call it, is one of the best shou teas you will ever have, with billowy, expansive energy that fills you up and opens all the pores. This tea leaves you tangled up in the sky, with no direction home. Enjoy a deep session with some amazing people and help us celebrate this amazing, growing community!





*Asked the dream boy  
Where he'd gone.  
Was he always cloud-hidden,  
lost to the touch?  
But the landscape shifted,  
drifted away,  
before he could answer  
we were both wind and clouds.*

*-Wu De*

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## *Brewing Tips for Cloud-hidden*

**W**e recommend brewing this shou tea strong. One of the things we love about tea like this is that it is very forgiving to brew: it doesn't matter if you put too much or too little leaves, steep it too long or too short. Other teas, like Cliff Tea or other oolongs require a bit more finesse to brew. But shou puerh is nice strong or light. Still we recommend putting a bit more in the pot than usual. This is a more lightly-fermented shou that was intentionally stopped, without being piled the usual forty-five to sixty days.

We drank this tea in a side-handle pot using bowls. If you have never brewed tea in that way, you should check out our video on YouTube. This is a great way to hold a bowl in the spirit of "just leaves, water and heat" but also steep the tea, as not all kinds of tea can be put directly into the bowl. This shou, however, has more intact, longer leaves because it wasn't fermented as long as most shou

teas. This means that you could actually put the leaves directly into the bowl, which is something we plan on experimenting with ourselves.

Notice how the warmth spreads outward from the chest and stomach. This is where puerh enters the subtle body. For that reason, it is better drunk from larger cups, or bowls, and in big gulps. Oolong, on the other hand, enters the subtle body through the head (aroma/air) and is therefore better drunk from small cups, with the smallest possible sips. Try taking large sips to facilitate the Qi in your chest/stomach. Enjoy the warmth, especially if you live somewhere that is growing cooler day by day.

Shou puerh like this requires a lot of heat. The hotter your water, the better. Having tried our gongfu experiments concerning temperature, you'll know the importance of heat in gongfu brewing. This is even more essential when it comes to shou puerh like this.

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# JOY IN A CUP

## WE ARE TEA; YOU WILL BE ASSIMILATED

-Sean Newman

*Sean's witty story of falling in love with tea is a joy equivalent to what he found in his cup. Sean and Karen are some of our favorite tea people in the world, and good examples of what this Global Tea Hut community is creating, as they were introduced to us all through another community in Estonia. As more tea lovers meet and find friendship or even family through this community, we find ourselves more and more fulfilled by this project.*

I have read many wonderful tales in these pages, particularly beautiful stories of the leaf being around people for many years before revealing itself and fully entering their lives. I thought I would let you hear an alternative tale of someone being brought to it grumpy, kicking and screaming before finally succumbing to its charms. A likely story perhaps, but it may be one that resonates with others who are new to a life of tea.

Five years ago, my girlfriend Karen and I took a break to the charming city of Tallinn in Estonia (well worth a visit to anyone who has not been, as the people are very friendly, the food is great and it has the most complete walled medieval city in Europe). We loved

the old town and had a great time visiting the amber jewelry shops, the lovely restaurants, the chocolate shop at the Masters Courtyard as well as appreciating the many arts and crafts vendors. All this against the wonderful backdrop of the beauty and energy of the place itself. However, there was one thorn from day one that wouldn't go away. Karen found a flyer for a shop called "Chado" that sold... you guessed it, *tea!* Not only had she found it, but bugged me multiple times per day to go while I reeled out excuses (actually, well-reasoned arguments I'll have you know!) not to. You see, my tea drinking history had been less than stellar. Here in the UK the general brew is either "Tetley", "PG Tips", "Typhoo" or

"Scottish Blend" which do not bring to mind any class or quality. While indeed a brew they do create, something life-changing they most certainly are not. Up until that time, I had been a coffee drinker, eventually stopping a few years before this tale as I felt tired and out of sorts after drinking it. I did not start drinking tea then, as in my opinion it was generally pretty poor swill and I thought of it as limp, bitter and adding absolutely nothing to my life at all. Oh was I about to have my perception changed, and in no small way!

Two days before we were due to depart, we happened upon a street called Uus and much to my displeasure Karen said, "This is the street the tea shop is on. I'm going



to get some tea for a friend. You can stay here if you want.” By this time, I had used up my book of excuses, short of feigning an illness, so I trooped off after her. A couple of minutes' walk found us at the door. We entered where we met the lovely Triin (Triin Juurik whom some of you may know from these pages). For those of you who have met Triin, you will know how warm and welcoming she is. She made us feel at ease and at home. I was on my best behavior and pretended some interest while Karen bought some tea for her friend. Triin asked us what teas we liked and then to my surprise asked us both to pick a tea and she would make it for us. Knowing completely zero about tea I may as well have closed

my eyes and pointed. After looking at and smelling a few, I settled on a Japanese green *sencha* called “Fukamushi”. I guess I chose it because I knew I didn't like “black” teas (which I now know is what we call red tea) and I thought a green would be the safer option. My sister drinks green tea exclusively: a tea-bag in a cup, boiling water poured over and steeped for several minutes. Yup, bitter as hell, and I thought that's what I was in for. Anyhoos, within a few minutes this cup of green tea arrived and was served to me with a smile. While not being too interested, I still appreciated the lovely thing she had done and the way she served it. I took a sip. First shock... *This is lovely!!* So sweet and delicate, gently landing in my

mouth and encircling it with a wonderful, sweet, rich flavor. I cannot tell you enough about the pleasure I experienced in that cup, nor do I have the words to fully describe it here. However, to say I was won over instantly by its flavor would be an accurate statement. So there I was drinking the loveliest cup of tea I can ever remember drinking and not thinking much about anything other than the joy of that sweet pleasure. I was enjoying the atmosphere, smells, the visual interest of such a lovely tea shop and listening to Triin and Karen talking to each other. I was tossing in a few words now and then, having a few sips of this delectable brew when the next shock came upon me. I must have drunk about half the cup

and something amazing happened. I have described it to others as if a temple bell had gone off inside me, like a gong sounding, awakening a clarity that I had not experienced before. If you can imagine feeling completely normal just as you are right now; and then, quickly, from your head down throughout your body, a sharpening of your perception that you had never experienced before. Sight, sound and awareness were all heightened above what I normally perceive into what I can only describe as 'clarity'. An excitement grew in me and I knew I had to find out more about what had just happened, as there was no way I could ignore it. I was compelled to take away some of that tea for myself and explore more. I had meditated a fair bit over the years but this felt like a door had been opened into something else—a sharper reality that I wanted to listen to and take in. We stayed for a while longer emptying our cups, bought some teas and thanked Triin for her hospitality. I headed out shell-shocked into the street.

We were heading home the next day and Karen asked if there was anything I wanted to do before we left. There was only one thing to do: *Go back to Chado*. Triin had told us that the owner Steve (Steve Kokker whom you will all know from these pages) would be there. Sure enough he was, and greeted us warmly when we arrived. He knew who we were, as Triin had told him about our visit and he gave generously of his time. We bought a few more things: a glass tea pot, some more tea and Steve gave me a gift of a little puerh to try at home. I can remember thinking, "Black tea? I'll never drink that!" Oh how wrong I was.

To bring this story up to date: that was five years ago. Since then we have returned to Tallinn every year to enjoy the city, but more to touch base with everyone at Chado and learn more about the spirit of Tea. Five years is such a short time and I'm still a beginner in the art of



servicing and drinking tea and will be for many years to come. However, there has been some progress and growth in that direction. I put that down to several things: what I have learned in these pages, my own effort in trying to feel the tea spirit, but mostly my thanks to Steve for steeping me in his own tea energy. His passing on of tea spirit takes many forms: talking about tea, sharing lovely teas, caring and helping others on their tea journeys, living a tea life himself, showing his passion and creating a movement of tea in Tallinn. When asking Steve about it, he very humbly says that Wu De

is the engine behind all that I see of the tea spirit here (Tallinn). But I think there is a fair bit of Steve in there as well!\* There may be many tea 'engines' out there, but I feel particularly grateful to Global Tea Hut and the Chado gang in Estonia who

*\*A recent survey conducted in Estonia showed that actually 99 out of 100 Estonian tea people felt Steve had much more to do with the spread of tea culture there than Wu De ever would. (And the other 1 was that bum in the park Steve wrote about serving tea to. The one who was drinking cologne.)*



are all helping to change me and this little world of ours, sip by sip...

These ripples of tea spirit are spreading out and have now reached the shores of my young nephew Fraser who is a tea lover aged eleven! He particularly likes Cliff Tea and strong smoky puerh.... go figure? Unusual for one so young, I believe. It is a true blessing to pass on this spirit, especially knowing its journey from Taiwan via Estonia, to become inhabited in the body of a wee boy in the UK. A blessing indeed.

By the way, I never managed to replicate either the taste nor the experience of the Fukamushi when

I brewed it at home. As I learned later, there is a fair bit of the brewer that goes into each cup. For those who have met Triin, you will know that she carries a sweetness and delicacy within her that is unusual to find. I am striving to find these qualities in myself and maybe, with some effort, I may get there—with the help of a bowl or two of tea of course.

*Left: These ripples of tea spirit are spreading out and have now reached the shores of my young nephew Fraser who is a tea lover aged eleven!*

*Right: Steve and Wu De at Hope Market Serving tea.*

*Dedicated to Steve Kokker for his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday who asked me to write this piece several years ago!*

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# BROKEN CAKE PUERH STORAGE

-Shen Su

*Shen created an experiment to test out for oneself the old wisdom that chipping away at cakes is neither best for storage, nor for drinking. Should one really break up cakes completely before drinking as teachers say? Gongfu is always experiential!*

**M**any of you who have visited us here at Tea Sage Hut have participated in some of our weekly gongfu tea experiments. Following a tea session two months ago, we talked about different ways to appreciate, drink, and store puerh tea. What we discussed was what you sacrifice and what you gain by drinking tea in a compressed form versus drinking the same tea in a broken-up form. Furthermore, we also learned why buying tea in volumes of one tong and one cake is popular, helping mitigate the sacrifices of either option.

## *Breaking up a tea cake*

A compressed cake of puerh tea will have layers that are exposed to different amounts of oxygen. Those leaves nearest the surface will be more fermented than the leaves inside. Therefore, breaking up a cake of puerh tea will increase the surface area of the leaves that are exposed to oxygen, thus promoting a more uniform brew.

What you sacrifice by breaking a cake up, however, is the ability to age your tea in the long term. So why do it? I know through exper-

ience that puerh tea ages better in a compressed form. But, what you gain is an improvement in the quality of your tea due to the exposure to air, letting the tea breathe. There is less of a difference in the layers of compression because you've broken it up. Breaking up the tea quickly improves the quality to a certain point that would have been achieved over a greater amount of time in compressed form. It's kind of like a highlight of what is to come. In as little as three weeks you can notice the difference in quality of the brewed tea when it's been broken up. That being said, while the quality of the tea will improve in a short time, that doesn't hold true in the long term. Tea stored in a compressed form will improve far more over ten years than that same tea if you broke it up and stored it for ten years also. (You can read more about storing puerh tea in the 2014 Special September Extended Edition of this magazine.)

The lesson here is that, *if* you have an aged puerh tea cake that you want to drink now because you really like it, you could then break it up and store it in a jar. This will air out the tea and revive its spirit. It will be much brighter and more

alive after it has sat in a jar for a few weeks.

## *Storing a tea cake*

Tea stored in a compressed form creates the perfect environment for bacteria and other microorganisms that naturally exist on the leaves to thrive and slowly ferment the tea over time. (Besides what we know and can talk about, there are many unknown factors in puerh fermentation, as well.) Obviously, if you have a cake that you want to store long term, it's best to keep it in a compressed form. What you run into here, however, is that if you want to taste this tea from time to time to see how it's aging, you inevitably have to break into it. And when you do so, you most likely break off leaves from various layers/parts of the cake, which can be detected in the cup when brewing. That is partially the reason why the first few infusions can fluctuate so much with certain puerh tea. Not only that, but it takes longer for the heat of the water to fully penetrate the compressed leaves to release their essence. But, what you gain is the age-ability of the tea in the

longterm, minus the fact that you have compromised the structure of the cake by breaking into it in the first place!

The lesson here is that *if* you have an aged puerh tea cake that you want to store in the long term, store it in its whole compressed form. And tasting from time to time won't be as good as breaking it up. In other words, drinking your tea piece by piece from a cake is not ideal for storage or for drinking. Breaking a cake up fully is better for drinking and storing it whole is better for storing.

### *Tong and a cake*

What it really boils down to is asking yourself whether you want to store your puerh tea cake in the long term or drink it. What many tea lovers do to mitigate the sacrifices of either choice is buy a *tong* (seven cakes wrapped in bamboo husk) and an extra cake. The eighth cake is for sampling to assess how well your tea is aging, so you don't have to break into the *tong* until you are ready to enjoy the tea, which will age better fully intact. This gives you the flexibility to both store some tea for the long run and break up a tester cake as you decide the age/degree of fer-

mentation you want. Then, after ten years, for example, you might sample your tester cake and decide you really like the degree of fermentation it's at. Then you can break up one of the *tong* cakes completely and put it in a jar for enjoyment. The broken-up tea will be better for consumption and the remaining six cakes will age further. Tea ages better the more there is around it. A *tong* will age better than one cake; two *tongs* will age better than one *tong*, etc.

### *Experiment*

Possibly like you now, after hearing all of this and understanding it at the level of the intellect, I wanted to learn for myself, through experience, what the differences in the cup really were between the same tea in a compressed and broken-up form. This month, I invite you to try the experiment I did:

I took an aged sheng puerh tea cake that was around fifteen years old and broke off roughly forty grams into small pieces that fit into a clay jar with a loose-fitting lid. The remaining portion of the cake remained intact in its cardboard storage box. I stored the broken-up tea for one month, opening the lid

of the jar to allow more airflow two times throughout the month, for a few hours each time. After one month, I drank both teas side by side, using two of the Light Meets Life gongfu set *Lohan* teapots. Any two identical gongfu teapots will suffice. You could also do it with one teapot, drinking the compressed tea first and the broken-up tea second. If you have two teapots, you will need two cups per person to drink them side-by-side. Try to achieve an equal infusion time in each pot. Take notes after each infusion, noticing only the differences in each cup, not which one you think is better or worse. I compared four infusions considering flavor and aroma, but mainly mouthfeel. Try to do as many infusions as possible as you may be surprised how the differences themselves differ over subsequent infusions.

This has been one of my favorite experiments yet because it required more time, energy, and care on my part to carry it out. As always, write to us at [globalteahut@gmail.com](mailto:globalteahut@gmail.com), or add to our Discussion board under the 'Connect' dropdown menu on the website. I'd love to hear your results and I'll gladly share mine with you!



# 茶的 追 隨 團



## THE FELLOWSHIP OF TEA

-Jasper Hermans

*Wu De's recent whirlwind tour of Belgium and Holland found the same ragtag group of Chajin from many different countries traveling around to all the events together. From restaurants to castles, the Zendo to a meditation hall, they shared many adventures, laughs, smiles, hugs and, of course, so much amazing tea. Jasper's stylistic account of the trip is fun to read and full of tea wisdom.*

Over the past three years, I've been sharing tea in many different circles, from the smaller and more comfortable circles of family and friends, to bigger and more comfort-zone-stretching circles of less familiar tea lovers from across the country. After this time, the moment finally arrived for Wu De to come over and water the seeds that have been sown in the Netherlands and Belgium by the handful of people who have dedicated themselves to keeping Tea spirit alive here.

I felt grateful for the opportunity to prepare for Wu De's arrival, and our little road trip through Belgium and the Netherlands. I even felt grateful for the challenges. I have never been a very organized person. And I would definitely not take on

the major role in any play. I'm the actor who would feel way more comfortable with a role that requires as few lines as possible (and I did, in fact, play such a role in my primary school graduation musical). But preparing for this trip required a different approach. I needed to find the courage to get up on that stage and say more than a single line—only to afterwards realize: "What's all the fuss about?"

Through service, I've experienced that mastery is in one way just another word for really good studentship. Having the capacity to be a student of everything in every moment opens oneself to the unknown, and then you're not afraid to make a choice. Through resting in the present moment, being free

wherever we are, we can let ourselves go and act out of a state of *being*. We can quiet that voice in our mind that says it's all not possible or that we are not worthy or good enough. When we are present we have the capacity to be in service of Greatness, and we can flow with whatever the situation asks from us.

This might be easier to put into practice in comfortable and familiar spaces, like when sharing tea with a group of friends, but we can try to stretch our boundaries bit by bit while staying at the edge of our courage. Why do we resist the situations we find ourselves in anyway? The Universe obviously has us wherever we are! And whether there's a reason or not for being there—cosmically fated or coincidence—





that *is* where we are, in *that* particular situation, and no other!

I feel humbled and incredibly grateful for these gracious opportunities for growth offered to me. There is merit in getting people together to sit down for tea, for helping to facilitate the creation of heart space and community. And being able to sit at my teacher's side as a *cha tong* (tea servant), guiding the rhythm of the kettles and observing what mastery of Tea really means, makes my heart spill over with gratitude even more. I wish for all of you many, many challenges knocking at your door. And may you be able to invite them in as dear friends and valued guests, handling them with reverence, care and

respect! Because that will mean true growth.

Amazingly, there was a core group of five or six of us that traveled to all the events in Belgium and Holland, staying together at my house and elsewhere. It was so nice to have a close-knit friendship throughout this journey together. In honor of Wu De's favorite story, I've decided to tell the tale of the voyage in the third person of old:

### *The Fellowship of Tea (In Belgium)*

A fellowship of nine companions and Global Tea Hut members from nine different countries gath-

ered in Brussels, Belgium. One of which was the famous tree-bearded, well-fed Tea brother from Miaoli, Taiwan. There, in a dimly lit room, in the back of a little travelers café in Brussels, on a long, worn and torn wooden table, he shared tea with over two dozen tea lovers, old and new. And *De Cha Tong's* skills in navigating the flow of water were put to the test for the first time.

Many hearts and bellies were filled with tea and words of wisdom. After this successful first stop along the road, the fellowship headed off in the direction of Maastricht, southernmost city in the Netherlands. But not before stopping at the Minnebron, which is said to be one of Europe's best springs to gather water.

And it turned out to be a good spring indeed! When the water jars were filled, the prayers were said, and the fellowship had filled up on Belgian fries, they continued their journey once again.

By the time it was dark, they arrived at the castle of Veasharthelt. After some moments of stretching their legs and settling down, the fellowship gathered once again to receive tea from the wise and large-bellied Wu De. With the sound of rain tinkling on the windows, they sipped their tea in silence. It was unclear if the twinkle in their eyes came from the tea or from the soft candlelight filling the room. Perhaps it came from both. Even though no words were needed, Wu De shared his wisdom anyway, and it sounded like the songs of ancient myths, sung until late into the night. Eventually, they dozed into a rather short but peaceful tea-induced sleep.

The following morning, as the rain seemed to be taking a break, they decided to gather underneath a wise and old willow tree, standing strong just in front of a gorgeous lotus pond in the castle gardens. They set up for tea, and after some bowls of silence, Wu De continued his teachings. The fellowship listened attentively to Wu De's words, well protected from the wind and now and then sprinkling rain by the Old Man Willow's majesty. After many, many bowls were drunk, the fellowship said goodbye to some of their friends, and headed off in the direction of the old port of Amsterdam.

## ***Tea and Zen Towers (The Netherlands)***

The next day they woke up from a good night of sleep and gathered early morning at the Zen center for a full day's program. Whoever would have felt the need for more sleep that morning was in the



good hands of a strong and strict, Yang-energized guide for the morning meditation and rituals. With a firm voice and an even firmer South American accent, the strong, old mistress led them in hard Zen practice. Shaken up by the morning meditation/rituals, they unpacked their gear once again and set up for tea. Along with some new friends, the fellowship sipped from the Zen-filled bowls that Wu De kept pouring so graciously. And although Wu De explained that most of the Zen

he could express was in the bowls we'd just drunk, he also shared some Zen teachings.

The whole day seemed to flow along in harmony with Nature. As the Zendo's morning rituals had been full of Yang energy, suitable to the beginning of a long day, the evening rituals were as Yin as twilight. After a long day of intense Zen sips and teachings, the fellowship peacefully welcomed an evening meditation guided by the soft and kind voice of a master with



*Photography in this article was taken by Tatyana Leonova & Alex Munteanu*

**Left top:** Wu De serving tea at the last event of the trip, leaving the Dutch to create their own community. He reminds us that Tea is the teacher in this tradition!

**Left bottom:** Jasper and Wu in front of a cool tattoo shop they found in the city. Wu helped comfort the owner, whose dog was dying.

**Right top:** Praying over the best fries in the world, which are Belgian!

**Right bottom:** The amazing Helena gathering water from what Wu said was one of the best springs he'd ever tasted.

**Right long:** The now legendary Hoary Willow Tree Session.



an even kinder look in her eyes. After the sit and evening rituals, the gentleness of the evening—the moonlight falling through the skylights and the rain like Zen bells on the roof—together formed the magical backdrop of an even more magical tea session (perhaps the best of the whole trip, though the fellowship would later differ as to whether this or what later become known as the Hoary Willow Tree Session was best). Within the silence of that evening, a powerful lion's roar

resounded throughout their bowls as Wu De seemed to sprinkle some extra magic onto the tea. And if that was not enough to wake one up from a long, deep and sleepy trance, the thunder outside, as well as the thunder of Wu De's words would have been enough for sure!

After a well-deserved rest during the morning and afternoon the following day, it was time to head off to Amsterdam for the last time this trip. It seemed that the message about Wu De and his magic tea had

spread, because they soon found themselves in a room filled with over two dozen people! It wasn't long before Tea was victorious again and Amsterdam was left inspired to build community in tea spirit, practice tea at home and use this plant medicine along the way... The last book of this trilogy will be written by the Dutch, as we make our own tea memories and community until the Return of our Brother...





**Left:** The beginning of the last session held in the city with friends gathered from many countries to share an hour of tea in silence.

**Right:** A casual session on our day off at my house where we were all hosted in such a cozy way. Even on days off, Wu served us tea and taught those of us lucky enough to travel in the Fellowship together.



## *Sowing Seeds*

*Plowing the earth, sowing seeds.  
Plowing the earth, sowing seeds.  
The gardener,  
Not so different,  
From the garden,  
As may appear at first sight.  
The seeds he sows,  
Will soon grow to be trees,  
In his heart too.*

*-Jasper*

洛杉磯土耳其



# LOS ANGELES & TURKEY

*-Chris Sage / Zeynep*

*Chris and Zeynep both live in the City of Angels, but Zeynep is from Turkey. From California to Turkey, they have something to say about tea culture, new and old. There are actually a few Turkish members sitting in this circle around the Hut, and tons from LA. Maybe more of them will meet? Exploring some of the places tea is poured in this huge community is inspiring and fills you with Tea spirit and heart.*



*Chris Sage, L.A.*

For as long as I can remember, Los Angeles has been known as a place of dreamers, a town where people come from all over the world to find themselves and their path in life. Alongside the celebrities and socialites are yogis and healers, each adding their own thread to the tapestry of this place. There is a boundless energy here, that draws you in, where everything seems to be possible and anything you want to be, you can.

Tea houses as we know them haven't yet found a footing amongst the more commercial coffee shops and juice bars, shying away from the limelight. There are a few here and there to be sure, but they tend to be places of convenience rather

than places of community. I would like to think that Tea has always had another plan for us Angelenos, revealing Herself to us through the gateway of Spirit, instead of a to-go cup. Like roots gently pushing through soil and stone, seeking water, She winds her way through secluded gardens, across mountain vistas and even the warm comfort of a dear friend's living room. Tea in Los Angeles is about intimate gatherings, in places amongst friends where we can sit together and connect through our shared love. It's an open invitation to sit with strangers at a hosted event, and share a few bowls in silence before engaging in meditation or a talk about creating a more sustainable world. It's a date on a mountain top under the full

moon, overlooking the twinkling sparkle of the city below...

My wife Mikki and I have opened our home to so many tea wayfarers over these past years; it's difficult to count how many bowls we've shared. From intimate gatherings of a special few to a hundred or so when Wu De is in town, all of them have left behind cherished memories. Our place is not the only place tea is being shared; there are countless tea sessions going on all over town, from the West Side to Silverlake, all brothers and sisters connected by the roots of this sacred plant. In truth, I don't think She would have it any other way...



### *Zeynep, L.A. & Turkey*

**M***erhaba* my Family in tea! I wanted to share a shot of a village tea house on the North Aegean coast of Turkey. Like the zillions of rural Turkish tea houses, the open air structure is in the main square as is customary along with its humble, roughshod architecture. This is the beating heart of the village or town where people linger to drink tea, smoke and play backgammon all the live long day.

This particular village is nestled in the skirts of legendary Mt. Ida, known as the place where Olympian gods watched over the Trojan war, where Zeus and Hera first fell in love and where she, Athena and Aphrodite held their first beauty

pageant. Much like the entire Aegean coastline, these lands are littered with ruins from antiquity as they were home to ancient seafaring leagues and subsequently conquered by the Persian, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires. An altar to Zeus is a short drive up one hill as well as a temple to Athena, whose remaining columns tower over the ancient ruins of nearby Assos, a town 3,500 years old and once home to Aristotle. How sublime to stumble around Athena's temple ruins early in the morning gazing down at the azure Aegean waters and the Greek isle of Lesbos straight across. I poured some tea from my thermos on the temple floor as a humble offering.

This region, Adramyttion, is also reputed for its high level of oxygen and the bounty of pristine spring waters that flow down Mt. Ida. It was home to early nomadic tribes that came from the Toros mountain range down south and before that from the steppes of Central Asia, origin point of Turkic people, who were once shamanic nomads. I happened upon a tiny ethnography museum owned by a descendant of the particular tribe that settled in these parts and became woodsmen. What was most interesting was to see the uncanny similarity between the yurts, motifs, weaponry and garb of these tribes and those of the Americas. I guess the point I'm feebly trying to make is the oneness we ancestrally share



from the farthest reaches of Mongolia down to the Latin Americas and everywhere in between!

The rainy, deeply forested ranges of the Black Sea region, that stretches horizontally across northern Turkey from the Eastern Marmara Sea to the Caucasus mountains, is where tea is sourced. The Black Sea port city of Rize is the main center of production, hence the common name for Turkish tea: *Rize cay*. It doesn't compare to the plethora of living teas we drink in Global Tea Hut, insofar as diversity, medicinal powers, rich liquors or purity of harvesting. Nor do the aluminum double boilers that sit on stoves all day compare to the exqui-

site finery of Asian clay kettles and pots, yet the intentions remain similar: that of brotherhood, bonding and sipping like there's no tomorrow.

To brew tea, water is placed in the bottom of a double boiler and leaves on top. Once the water boils, the leaves are steeped and off it goes, brewing for hours. It's served with two sugar cubes in a glass tulip shaped cup, which is first filled with the brew then topped off with hot water. You request it either "dark" or "light" namely how much brew to water you want. It's a red tea and a quality cup is referred to as "rabbit's blood": Our twisted way of describ-

ing the crimson color, I guess, and its strength.

Though not much of a picture, if you look on the previous page, you'll be amused to see my trustworthy glass cup and thermos on the counter as I waited for this particular tea garden proprietor to provide me hot water to brew a roasted oolong. That was a succor for the two weeks I was there. I carried that thermos around like a pacifier, grateful I didn't ditch it in antiquity ruins and then in the chaos of Istanbul. Once one has tasted old-growth tea, there ain't no going back, even though I alternated between it, *Rize cay* and (gasp!) coffee.





Turkish coffee *schmaufee!* Turks drink more tea than the day is long. Tea gardens pepper every square. Wherever there's a business, there's a tea hut a stone's throw away. Young men march up and down the streets defying all laws of spillage as they swing dozens of glass cups on a tray peddling tea to any and all around the clock.

My own glass cup and strainer created quite a stir especially on airplanes, with one hostess stopping to remark how wonderful the oolong smelled. Another gushed at how cute my "kit" was and "what is it?" Waiters I came to know would see me approaching with my rattling "kit" in hand and quietly go to get

me hot water. It was like an unspoken understanding of shy curiosity and service. I left a small amount of change on this tea hut owner's counter for providing me water so early in the morning and upon realizing it he marched over and tossed the money through the car window as I was discreetly trying to pull away.

This is the thing I love about tea culture: its ancient, global, communal and its an offering no matter what form it comes in, even if it's hot water for oolong.

Thank you for reading and letting me share a bit of my background. I am so grateful for the fabulous monthly envelopes—not

only for the wisdom contained in the magazine, but the experience of precious leaves that I know will last a lifetime, and also for the delightful gifts that are often made by members around the world. What a gift Global Tea Hut is, unifying and enriching us all around the globe!



*Left: Ruins nearby Assos.*

*Right: Wu De speaking in Mikki & Chris's garden, L.A.*

# 2015 PHOTO CONTEST

-Robekkah Ritchie  
1<sup>st</sup> Place

*Robekkah's photo "Reflections" was the winner of our first annual tea photo contest. Here, she reflects on "Reflections". We wanted to give Robekkah's work a full page spread, so you will have to turn the magazine to look at it in all its glory, as it is a horizontal piece.*

What an honor to share my passion for the creative with all the Global Tea Hut members throughout the world! Though I studied fine arts and have been creative since I was very young, I haven't expressed myself through photography in quite some time. I spent a few months bringing my camera along on our tea excursions throughout Berlin, from under the spring cherry blossoms to summer lakes and at home compositions/tea sessions. Ironically, this image was the very first one I took with the photo contest in mind.

News of the photo competition inspired me to pick up my camera again and start experimenting more with the visual aspects that tea offers us. Tea touches all our senses, from hearing the water boil and be poured, to smelling the leaves and liquor, tasting (the obvious one), feeling the warmth of the bowl in our hands, entering our bodies and lastly taking it all in with our eyes. Of course there are layers upon layers to be explored within each sensory experience (not to mention the energetic side of it) but it was interesting also to try to express tea, which encompasses so many of our senses, using only the visual aspect of the experience.

As is the nature of art (and Tea for that matter), everyone will have their own experience, insights and interpretations. I am grateful to share with you some of my reflections on this piece and what it represents for me, and I am grateful that everyone will see and inter-

pret it differently. Reflections have a powerful symbology for me, and Buddhist teachings often use water as a metaphor for the mind. Only when water is unmoving can it then become clear, still and capable of reflection. Interestingly, "capable of reflection" in English can have two meanings, not just the act of reflecting, mirroring, or showing an image but also the ability to self-reflect, contemplate and meditate. Our inner world reflects and is reflected in the outer. This photo for me encompasses different kinds of stillness: stillness of the tea within the bowl, and allowing our focus to shift to an internal experience, etc. The reflection within the bowl is also one of stillness—we use the winter months for contemplation, bringing our energy inwards, as the leafless tree also represents. The tree reflected in the bowl (which was actually my first tea bowl gifted to me by my dear friend Shen Su) is outside the window above where we have our tea table, aiding as a constant reminder to the fluctuations throughout the year and within ourselves, ever changing and growing.

Tea has become such a powerful medicine for me, supporting my relationship to myself, others and our great ever-giving Mother Earth. Tea brings warmth and life into the cold dark winters, giving that healing connection to our green Earth when I feel I need it the most. It often feels like a whole world is contained within my tea bowl, and in many ways it absolutely is when I reflect on the countless forces that

have come together to create it. Within the stillness, we can connect to the vastness of our human experience and from it comes a great gratitude for the opportunity to share the many expressions of it; whether it be sharing silence with loved ones across the globe, or a photographic expression of creativity inspired by Tea!



深思熟慮



# 優質茶行



## THE BEST TEAHOUSE IN BARCELONA

-Antonio Moreno

*Starting a tea house with real character, class and fine tea is difficult in the West. But what's even harder is turning one into a mecca for tea lovers from all over, staying open for eleven years and all the while maintaining integrity and devotion to Tea spirit. And Antonio is the main reason why Čaj Chai is one of our favorite commercial tea ventures in the world. But let's dive into Spanish tea culture and some modern history as well...*

If you mention tea to your average Spaniard he'll be quick to point out that Spain is a "coffee country" or that Spain has a "coffee culture". I always ask them to think about that for a second: Do we actually have a coffee culture? How many people bother to ask themselves what exactly they are drinking or where it might have been cultivated? At this point, I go out on a limb and say there's probably more people interested in tea culture in Spain than coffee culture because Spain just has a coffee habit! Unfortunately, any discussion on tea will quickly become a tea versus coffee debate if you let it. Unless you're talking to a tea person, of course—a rare but growing breed!

When we opened Čaj Chai in 2004, our modest tea proposal

seemed utterly ridiculous to the overwhelming majority, and they certainly were unashamed to share their skepticism.

"A place specialized in tea? A what? A *tetería*? What is that?" (Note: "*Tetería*" is the word for teahouse... But, since they never heard the word before, they were befuddled, wondering how I could possibly open a business specializing in "*tetas*", or "tits"). Once I'd clarified the matter they'd usually say something like, "Oh, sorry." With a slight contortion of the face, "Do people actually drink tea in Spain?"

Most everyone thought we'd close before the year was through—nobody would have imagined we'd still be here eleven years later. But back then, if I jumped in their skin

a second I could totally understand their logic, if not their conclusion, though certainly not their blatant disregard for polite courtesy before recklessly trampling on our dream. But yes, I really did understand them, at that time, and even today—bars and restaurants open and fold in Barcelona's old town like that's their job!

I've always been an optimist, a dreamer and a bit naïve, too. The concept behind Čaj Chai teahouse was never that of an ordinary teahouse, but of one specialized in importing pure unscented teas from around the world, discerning quality, placing importance on *terroir*, the art of cultivating the Leaf, traditional handmade and handcrafted teas, mindful brewing and



spreading ancient tea culture and wisdom from around the world. We thought that people would appreciate a simple, alcohol-free, calm space—a cultural oasis, in a cosmopolitan city like Barcelona.

I lived in Prague in the 90's. The Czech Republic tends to be known for its beer, but a beautiful new tea culture has started growing there since the 90's, which is a perfect counterpoint to the Bohemian pub culture. Tea houses are ideal places for earlier in the night, or the day after partying, and more recently have become a temple for people in search of some deeper, peaceful hours of repose with something warm.

I moved back to Spain in 2002 and I really missed the tearooms

I had grown accustomed to frequenting in Prague. Being so close to Morocco, the only tearooms you could find were of the Moroccan Whisky and 1001 Nights variety: serving cheap aromatized tea accompanied by hookah (*shisha*) pipes, and a side of blatant disregard for water quality and preparation. Upon my arrival in Barcelona, I began working as a translator and music journalist. My long time partner and soon to become ex-girlfriend was having very serious problems with alcoholism. In a desperate attempt to jump-start her life and renew our relationship, we embarked on a mission to open an authentic teahouse like the ones we loved in her native city of Prague. I thought that if people frequented the existing Barce-

lona teahouses, they surely would flock to one infused with the spirit of Tea, dedicated to quality and culture! We really hoped this would be the beginning of a new chapter, one of new purpose and direction for her, and I trusted the power of our intentions. Ultimately, it *was* a new chapter, for us both, but not how I would have envisioned it, and not all pleasant, of course.

Ay... Those early days weren't easy: our relationship ended terribly twelve months after opening. I was deeply heartbroken, but I persisted with the teahouse despite having never intended it to be my life or livelihood (I envisioned myself a writer and musician). It was very difficult on a personal level, but also economically.

I stopped writing for music magazines immediately, but it wasn't feasible to quit my job translating books. I wasn't able to hire anybody for the teahouse either, since there were so few customers. So, for the first two years I was *always* at the teahouse translating or serving tea, but usually translating. Gradually the weight of these two activities shifted and after two years without a day off I quit the publishing house and dedicated myself exclusively to tea. Recently a tea brother put it this way: if you set up a tearoom business with business in mind and nobody comes you'll be depressed and soon fold. If you set up a tearoom with tea in mind and nobody comes you still have delicious tea to enjoy and share!

So you see, Čaj Chai wasn't set up with great economic aspirations as a tea business, but as a tea lifestyle for my partner and an inner confidence that a city like Barcelona could really benefit from good tea. It was a romantic pursuit and Bohemian endeavor. Also, it was extremely difficult on every level: There we were offering nothing but pure artisanal tea—no coffee, no smoking (we're talking years before the anti-tobacco laws were passed), no alcohol, no soft-drinks and not even aromatized tea. They thought we were crazy *and* stupid! In fact, when we opened the only thing keeping us from being a complete entrepreneurial suicide was the sugar on the tables!

## Changes in Barcelona

Looking back over the last few years, I feel that Spanish society as a whole has taken steps towards an evolution of consciousness, concern for health and a more open mind towards the unknown. Barcelona has steadily become home to increasingly more vegetarian restaurants, yoga studios and once the anti-tobacco laws were passed,

smokers stopped feeling like they were sacrificing something upon entering a non-smoking space like a tea house. Today, Barcelona is anxious to know more, not just about tea but about everything artisanal. There has been a huge transition! It's not freaky to be a tea drinker anymore. Perhaps it's still strange to be a tea purist as we are, or to think of tea as plant medicine, but when we explain why, transmitting our love for the Leaf, people understand it or, at the very least, they tend to accept it.

More and more people are looking for a moment of peace and quiet, stopping to seek solace in a cup of tea. More and more people are surprised we don't have WIFI, but then understand why a teahouse ought not to have it.

I used to be content to just introduce people to the world of tea at all, but now that tea, the beverage most consumed after water, is becoming fashionable, I feel it's important for people to understand the repercussions of unsustainable cultivation on our Earth and ecosystems. It's more important than ever to purchase responsibly and support organic and sustainable agriculture and the small tea producers who have been performing this intense and beautiful manual labor for hundreds or even thousands of years, supporting ancient tea culture so it isn't lost.

In the last eleven years Spain has seen a huge development in the tea being offered in cafés, restaurants and hotels. It's much more acceptable to be a tea drinker, although more discerning tea lovers will still find it nearly impossible to find a teashop or tearoom that can satisfy them. We've witnessed the shift from teabag to loose tea, although this shift is only beginning and the loose tea is often of very poor quality. I've seen that increasingly younger people are discovering tea, and older generations are also eager to dive into the world of tea and discover its deep, dynamic and cycli-

cal nature. Tea is a living plant and each crop is different, each year is different, each season we meet new friends or reunite with old friends from previous harvests. More and more people are interested in tea ceremonies and even choose to celebrate an occasion with one. Also, more and more people are inquiring about our monthly Global Tea Hut gatherings and our group of supporters is growing beautifully! We are now ten in Barcelona (more in other parts of Spain) and can't wait for Wu De to come for the second time in 2016!

From the heart, I thank all the tea growers of this ancient medicinal plant, guardians of this precious treasure who have dedicated their lives to spreading tea culture and wisdom. I bow before my masters of tea and meditation. I thank everybody who has supported us throughout these years... It's because of you that we are here so many years later.



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# TEA PRAYERS

THE ISLAND OF A THOUSAND GODS

-Dave Melladew

*Working with Dave this summer in Bali was one of the best tea experiences Wu De has had. Dave is the founder of the Oriental Medicine Program at an amazing resort in Ubud. The property was stunning, with some of the best and most healing water we have ever tasted, not to mention stunning views of jungle, mountains and waterfalls to sit within and alchemize into tea magic. Even reading a thirty-minute vicarious trip to Bali is a good vacation, indeed.*

Although I had known Wu De for only a short period of time and had spent just a few days in Taiwan visiting the Tea Sage Hut, I felt a certain familiarity upon seeing him again in Bali. When Wu De arrived it felt as if we picked up where we had left off. He smiled, hugged me, and away we went. I suspect that many people who meet Wu De, even for a short period of time, experience that same sense of familiarity...

I have been studying Daoist and Buddhist philosophy since I was in my early twenties and have been practicing martial arts since I was eighteen. By the time I was in

my mid-twenties, Daoist practices such as meditation and qigong had become part of my regular routine. When I was twenty-eight, I decided to go back to school and train to become an acupuncturist. As a boy raised in suburban New Jersey, I had almost no exposure to Asian culture growing up. Strangely enough, by the time I was thirty, I found myself fully engaged in many of the practices of traditional Chinese culture.

About three years ago, I moved to a place often referred to as the "Island of a thousand Gods", Bali, Indonesia. I was to become the acupuncturist at a wellness retreat called COMO Shambhala Estate.

The estate offers many wellness programs. Amongst others, guests can immerse themselves in cleansing programs, Ayurvedic programs, and stress management programs during their stay here.

Upon arriving, I noticed that this was the ideal place to implement more of the many healing modalities of Traditional Oriental Medicine than just acupuncture. So, I created an Oriental Medicine program based upon the Daoist concept of the Eight Branches of healing: meditation, qigong, diet, herbal medicine, geomancy, *feng shui*, *tuina*, and acupuncture.





## ***Meeting Wu De***

During my first semester of studying acupuncture in San Diego, California, I met Andrew Taylor. Andy and I would go on to be classmates, friends, and for several years, roommates. I consider Andy to be a close and personal friend and overall amazing human being. It was through Andy that I met Wu De.

I knew that Andy had been living in Taiwan for the past four years studying the language and furthering his studies in Oriental Medicine. He also told me that he had been volunteering at a tea center. I didn't really know what that

meant, but I was very interested. I had some exposure to tea in San Diego through a friend. I immensely enjoyed sitting for tea and talking philosophy with other fellow tea drinkers. Although my experience was very limited, and my knowledge quite superficial, I did realize that it was something to explore further. I also knew that it could be a great compliment to what I do for a living. When I arrived at the Tea Sage Hut in Taiwan, it was obvious right away that this was tea drinking on another level. There at the Hut, tea was a meditation, it was a qigong, and above all it was a way of life, a Tao.

## ***Bringing Wu De to Bali***

Upon arriving back in Bali after spending time at the center, I immediately started trying to figure out how I could get Wu De to bring his tea here to COMO Shambhala Estate. Interestingly enough, it was during a session of pouring tea for my manager that I convinced her to allow Wu De to come to the estate as a "Visiting Teacher". Thankfully Wu De was very open to the idea. He agreed to come this past July.

In Wu De's time here at the property he would conduct daily group tea sessions for guests,

private gongfu sessions, and numerous other activities like gathering water and giving talks on health and longevity.

## The Estate

COMO Shambhala Estate is built on a beautiful sprawling piece of jungle in the Ayung river valley just north of Ubud, Bali. The property starts from the top of a hillside with beautiful views of the river valley, and stretches all the way down to the river itself. Some areas of the estate are perfectly manicured tropical gardens. Other areas are untouched lush jungle with wild monkeys and tropical birds. The property is dotted with waterfalls and pristine swimming pools that are all fed by natural spring water. It is full of places that are ideal to sit for tea sessions. The spring that feeds the property is one of the eight holy springs of Bali and is simply referred to as the “Source”. The Source would be a focal point of Wu De’s trip.

## The Mother of Tea

Every morning, Wu De, Andy, the guests and I would walk in silence to the Source located about halfway down to the river. The Source is a beautiful little spring that pops out of the jungle on the side of the valley. A small temple has been built up around it to allow locals to gather the water and perform ceremonies.

Upon arriving at the Source, offerings of local flowers, usually frangipanis, were made at the temple. We would then proceed to collect the water from the spring. Wu De would conduct a small prayer of gratitude and blessing for the water. From there, we would climb back up to the top of the hillside to the



estate’s main temple. At the main temple, the local *mangku*, or village priest, would come to perform a daily cleansing ceremony to bless the water and us. This blessed water would then be used in that day’s tea ceremony.

Once during Wu De’s stay, Wu De and the guests went to the holiest spring in Bali, Tirta Empul. Tirta Empul literally means “the place where holy water erupts from the ground”. It is a nine-hundred-year-old temple that sits on a beautiful natural spring. There are several wading pools fed by the spring water. In the wading pools, there are beautiful fountains made of stone that feed into the pools. Each

fountain is said to cleanse different aspects of the person bathing beneath its waters. One fountain is said to cleanse your dreams, one your past karma, one your skin, and so on. There are about fifteen different fountains.

After performing a small offering and ceremony at the entrance temple, the guests submerged themselves into the wading pools of Tirta Empul. A cleansing ritual was performed at each fountain. For nine hundred years, the Balinese have lined up day after day at each of these fountains. They have prayed to the same gods, performed the same rituals, and concentrated on cleansing each of these aspects of their



being. Tirta Empul is one of the most powerful places in Bali.

After the cleansing, water was gathered. Another ceremony was conducted in the main temple by the high priest of Tirta Empul in order to bless the water. Due to the fact that Tirta Empul is such a significant spiritual spot for the Balinese, the high priest of the temple is held in high regard. The water he blesses is considered to be very special. The guests then returned to the estate and used that water for that day's tea session.

### *The Guests*

One of the most interesting things to observe during Wu De's visit was the guest's reaction to tea. The guests staying here did not come to the estate for tea. Most weren't even aware that Wu De was here until they arrived. Much of what we did in the time that Wu De stayed with us was to engage the guests and try to inspire them to sit with us for tea. The beautiful thing was when they did, they absolutely loved it. Most of the guests had never experienced any type of tea ceremony. They knew very little about it. They did not realize that tea was a "thing", a practice or a

way of life. However, when they did come, they became fully engrossed. Some of them struggled to sit still and be silent. However, after drinking a few bowls of tea, most guests settled in and began to relax. Many guests ended up coming to multiple tea sessions and some even expressed interest in visiting the center in Taiwan.

It was beautiful to see people be introduced to the depth of Tea and Her lessons. It was also beautiful to see Wu De convey that message through, of course, the tea itself, but also through his words of wisdom born out of drinking tea as a way of life these years. They all left seeing Tea in a completely new light.

Another amazing aspect of Wu De's visit was his impact on the staff. All of my fellow staff members that attended Wu De's tea sessions have become Chajin. Several of them have also become members of Global Tea Hut, as well as regular drinkers of tea both at home and work. They also realized how complimentary a life of tea could be to the very essence of what we teach and practice at the estate.

## *Favorite moments*

One of the beauties of this property is the variation of landscape and terrain. Each area of the estate imbues a different feeling. A great aspect of Wu De's time here was the full use of each area for tea drinking. We sat for tea all over the estate, with each location offering a unique experience to that session. Some areas were more favorable than others. It was interesting to note the differences and how they matched my own experiences when doing qigong and meditation in those areas. Some of Wu De's favorite spots to sit for tea, unbeknownst to him ahead of time, turned out to be my favorite spots for practicing qigong; showing me once again, that tea ceremony and qigong are really one and the same. But my absolute favorite moments came at the end of the day or early in the morning when there were no guests. We could then sneak off to different secluded spots to drink tea. There was one evening where we drank some very special aged puerh tea in a small outdoor pavilion during the soft fading light at the end of the day. It was just Wu De, Andy, and I drinking tea and laughing. It was a true highlight of the trip for me.

## *The Full Moon*

We arranged to schedule Wu De's last day here at COMO

Shambhala Estate to be on the full moon. Full moons in Bali are very significant. They are celebrated every month with copious ceremonies, music, and offerings. This one, however, was a blue moon, the second full moon of the month, and the energy of the locals on the island was particularly high.

Wu De performed this last tea ceremony beneath the sky on a beautiful open space of grass. We laid out an amazing old piece of wood on which Wu De had become fond of serving tea on. We surrounded it with cushions and candles. It was the perfect little set-up to enjoy some amazing tea beneath the gloriously large blue moon. Although that evening the sky was a bit cloudy, there was a moment about eight bowls into our session when the full moon broke out

from behind the clouds and shone brightly down on us. The sight of this beautiful scene evoked an audible gasp from the guests. This was a magnificent culmination of two weeks of drinking beautiful tea in Bali, with friends both new and old.

## *What I learned*

One of the main things that became crystal clear during Wu De's visit is that tea is truly medicine. Not only is it medicine, it is the epitome of traditional Oriental Medicine.

Every aspect of sitting for tea embraced the essential elements of what I try to cultivate in my own practice and everything I try to teach guests here at the estate.



Tea cultivates stillness of the mind, awareness of the internal world, the body, the breath, and our Qi. It also sharpens the senses and increases awareness of the external world and the environment around us. It helps us appreciate the healing effects of clean water and the calming impact of Nature.

Tea requires sensitivity and practice of harmoniously blending the five elements of traditional Oriental Medicine: water, fire, earth, metal, and wood. It is through balancing these elements that it helps us maintain both our internal and external equilibrium. When we use this harmonious blend of elements to create the perfect bowl of tea and then ingest that tea, how could that not heal us?

## Gratitude

I am extremely grateful that Wu De, Joyce and Andy were able to come here to Bali. I am also thankful for the two weeks I got to drink tea in one of the most beautiful places in the world with people I consider to be part of my family.

I realize that the sense of familiarity that I have with Wu De is born of the fact that we've shared tea together. Although it had been only a few times prior to him coming to Bali, it did not matter. When you ingest the love that Wu De puts into every bowl of tea, it is inevitable that you will feel this connection to him. Then, I think of all of the hundreds and hundreds of people to which Wu De has served tea. I realized that they too must also feel that same sense of familiarity.

After Wu De left the island, there were certain residual feelings left behind. There was a feeling that my practice here had become deeper. There was a feeling that Tea was now a permanent element of what I do here at COMO Shambhala Estate. When Wu De left, there was a sense that the Island of a thousand Gods was no longer the same—somehow full of tea magic, as if the thousand gods were all drinking happily now...



茶在愛沙尼亞



# TEA TIME IN ESTONIA

-Steve Kokker

*In his ever-charming, witty style, Steve guides us through these past years of Tea spirit and community growing in Tallinn. Over the years, Wu De has visited three times, including a very recent return. Each time, more and more people have come out to support because the community there has done so much to foster Tea spirit between visits. Estonia is an amazing country, and much more so because the famous, funky and frolicky Steve Kokker peddles his tea and shares his great heart there.*



After preparing for and then living through fifteen events, twelve days in two countries with Wu De, one does need a, shall we say, pause... The two of us shared a heartfelt fare-thee-well at Tallinn's cheek-pinchingly cute airport, both of our heads and hearts reeling partly from sleep deprivation and socialization overload, but mainly from as-yet undigested memories of endless dozens of beautiful moments of human connection. As an antidote to the round-the-clock schedule of the past few weeks, I then did something quintessentially Estonian: I headed straight to a bog. With tea added to the mix, I lived out what to me has come to mean 'Tea in Estonia': preparing tea, alone, in a bog.

For most (Western, urban, if I may be so presumptuous) readers of this magazine, the word "bog", if it brings anything to mind at all (perhaps as much as "deciduous vegetation", "liquefaction", or "glacial till" might) likely reminds one of the word 'swamp', which doesn't exactly kindle the flames of a Western heart. At best, it might trigger some associations with scary-in-childhood fairy tales: moss-dripping, tree-like creatures creeping around slimy elf- and warlock-infested landscapes where monsters rise from dark pools of oil-like water and where few are heard from again.

I want to say that nothing could be further from the truth. However, a number of my Estonian friends also seem to share this vision of

bogs, perhaps having been fed since childhood stories about bottomless lakes full of witches emerging at night to dance and pull unsuspecting trespassers down into their murky depths with them. I have yet to find many locals who are as enthusiastic about skinny dipping in these dark bog lakes as I (even adults will shirk away from such an invite, muttering something about the cold temperature or just not being in the mood right then and there, but likely being swayed by childhood tales spun by parents themselves similarly terrified in their childhood).

But I digress, yet again...

Tea in Estonia, then, for me personally, goes something like this: the slam of a dusty car trunk



announces the start of a trek, backpack full of tea equipment, through mosquito and blueberry-infested woods. Mainly pine and fir. Eventually, thick tree roots emerging from the ground give way to softer, grassy soil, and the bushes and trees get smaller and smaller. Then, a wooden walking trail appears. Pixar-designed dragonflies appear before you and announce the beginning of the bog—and the end of annoying flies. For bogs are dragonfly and butterfly kingdoms; mosquitoes and horseflies simply do not have the *magic quotient* to be allowed entry.

Step off the wooden trail and be prepared to either sink knee-deep or get your feet soaked in a sponge-like thick layer of golds and greens, browns and yellows. This mossy

substrate is home to insect eating plants by summer and by autumn, cranberries (those delicious wonders John Oliver recently, nastily referred to as tasting “like cherries that hate you!”). Keep walking and you will pass those darkened pools some locals say they are even scared to look at for too long, and soon find some place to park your tail to set up for tea.

The hours you spend drinking tea there, as I did today, will pass in a vortex of sorts, as time stops to exist and linear experience vanishes the moment the dragonflies appear. And if you pick a powerful tea, like the 1970s Liu Bao I prepared today, be ready for a transformative experience. Ducks and geese might fly overhead, momentarily obscuring

those suspicious con trails, and the eerie sounds of wind sweeping its way through distant clusters of trees will compete with the roiling water. *Just keep going... Just keep floating...*

The sounds are few here, and the stillness has a downward pull to it. Bogs are deep. The energy feels recharging, just what is needed after fifteen workshops in twelve days! For while Solo Bog Tea might be my version of ‘Tea in Estonia’, there is a slightly different definition extant in the bubble surrounding Wu De’s visit here, before and long after...

Yet somehow bogs do relate to the series of events held in Tallinn and Helsinki in August and September. Perhaps not directly, but energetically. See, Estonians bring to the table a readiness to connect deeply

that for many others would require a lot of work to get at. There are fewer layers here of self-protective wrapping, of clinging to material aspects of life to define one's existence. So the more spiritual lessons in our kind of Tea practice absorb quicker than I've seen elsewhere. Of course, I may be romanticizing some, and there are plenty of exceptions to this sweet rule, but in general, people are quite willing to slip into a meditative space here, which makes Wu De's words and presence all the more compelling.

Estonians are not the folks you would gather to have a lively discussion full of questions, shared personal opinions and intellectual, analytical banter. Yet if you wish for a deeper experiencing of emotional, spiritual issues, for them to be absorbed like water into the golden red spongy moss of the bogs, then this is the place. During this visit, Wu De's talks were a mix of Heaven (Tea as a way of spiritual cultivation) and Earth (how to brew Wuyi oolongs), and the people gathered seemed present, alert and appreciative.

The tea culture in Estonia has changed so radically since the time I started my small importing business in 2004, and even from the time Wu De first visited in 2012. It often makes my head shake in a rather foolish-looking and dopey display to consider the enthusiastic readiness with which people have embraced Tea over the last few years.

When I began this project, several people said, "Don't waste your time—Estonia is a coffee country. You won't make any money and people won't be interested in tea culture." Turns out they were partially wrong: while making money in Estonia still often appears a Herculean endeavor requiring morally shaky shrewdness, the interest in tea both as a healthier beverage alternative to coffee and as a meditative practice has been heart-stirring and

head-spinning. Most importantly, we now have a tea community here of helpful angels who independently make tea 'happen' in Estonia; they are the heart and soul of what Tea has become in Estonia.

When Wu De first visited, we were worried about finding enough people to fill the workshops; this time, we were more concerned about how to accommodate everyone! More and more people come to these sessions, as well as to our weekly tea gatherings, to find a space where powerful teas are served in an atmosphere conducive to feeling before thinking, to for once prioritizing life's most important aspects over the daily grinds which often convince one of all-importance, and to opening deep pathways of connection to the heart.

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*The tea culture in Estonia has changed so radically since the time I started my small importing business in 2004, and even from the time Wu De first visited in 2012. It often makes my head shake in a rather foolish-looking and dopey display to consider the enthusiastic readiness with which people have embraced Tea over the last few years.*

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Of course, we all write similar words about heart space on these pages month after month; they might run the risk of sounding trite, contrived. And what a shame that would be as living more 'through the heart' is what can save us all from a lot of suffering! Beyond any nice words I could attempt to conjure here, it is the expression on the faces of the participants of these tea sessions which speak volumes.

I recall one evening in particular, a Saturday evening tea session which ended as softly as if a snippet of silk had landed onto a plush carpet: After a few hours of silence, Five Element Tea and Wu De channeling other-level wisdom, all the

participants remained sitting on the floor, staring at the floor. It almost always happens that people don't want a tea session to end, but this time was special. Even after Wu and I stood up and left the front of the room, after I turned music on, and even started cleaning up, people remained, transfixed, neither here nor there. For about fifteen minutes! Only slowly, eventually, did people muster the strength to push themselves up and back into linear time. Pure magic! I think I shall always remember the looks on their faces. I was deeply touched; if any note of disturbance was in my heart then, it was thinking of dear, beloved friends who happened to not be there that evening.

For me personally, what I appreciate most about Wu De's visits, aside from college-like moments in my flat, moments of Goof Bliss and hearing my name being chirped out as "Stiff!" every few minutes, and yet *not* counting the prerequisite visit to *Pizza Americano* (which I will be digesting through Christmas), is what these visits do to the people I love most in their aftermath. Wu De's enthusiasm, solid and focused presence and overflowing love of Tea encourages the same in others. After he leaves, the people in our tea group feel like their commitment is sharpened, that the reasons for following a Tea path are clearer and that the sheer desire to do onto others as was done to them grows naturally from the heart.

One more sip then of this Liu Bao, offered up symbolically to this blue-green imitation of a mini helicopter buzzing in front of my face; one last in-breath of bog-filtered air, as I am filled with the one predominant feeling after this latest series of workshops: *Gratitude.*







# Tea Mayfarer

*Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these magazines in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. 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 share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month we would like to introduce Robekkah Ritchie:*

**W**here to begin... So many aspects of my life come together rather perfectly with Tea. It really is a natural extension of everything I love: Nature, meditation and art. From a young age, spending hours in our garden talking to the plants, being raised by Buddhist parents and staying at the Theravada monastery near our hometown in Canada, along with my love for the creative made meeting Tea in a meditative way a perfect fit.

I was first introduced to living tea from our dear tea brother Shen Su. We were raised in the same village in Canada and Shen's mother was my caretaker from a very young age. Though we attended elementary and high school together, ironically we only became close when we both left our hometown—I went to Germany and Shen went to travel the world. On his travels through tea farms and other exotic places, I would get delightful packages full of tea and we would occasionally meet in person back in our hometown at Christmas.

Being in Taiwan, just sort of... 'happened', really (along with everything that ever 'happens', but that's besides the point). While in Thailand doing fieldwork for my doctorate in Buddhist studies, I had the opportunity to bounce over to Taiwan to visit my dear old friend in 2013 at the renowned and mysterious "Tea Sage Hut". I thought, "Taiwan is practically a neighbor to Thailand. I'll go for Christmas!" Visiting Shen would be the closest I would get to being around family on that side of the globe, and he had told me stories of his new life in Taiwan, the Hut, teaching children, and Tea. However, I was still completely clueless as to what actually went on over there. So I went! Meeting Tea as medicine, as meditation and as a creative expression of myself felt so right in so many ways, and Tea has become an integral part of my life here in Berlin ever since.

The years leading up to my trip to Taiwan, I was wishing/wanting/looking for a way to better share with others the serenity and beauty that my life was overflowing with. Many people I met were rather intimidated or uninterested in sharing silent meditation. I am often so baffled at how my wish to share was answered so incredibly and perfectly with Tea. Being able to offer silence, healing, connection to Mother Earth and all the



other gifts that giving Tea brings is one of the greatest honors I could ever imagine. Tea is open and available for all, with no dogma or interest in the different lines of division we often put between ourselves and others.

Tea has brought new depths to my relationship with myself and my partner, whose life has also been dramatically transformed through this sacred plant. It brings us such incredible joy and deep gratitude to share this gift with others. If you are ever passing through Berlin, there is a hot bowl waiting for you!

[Robekkah.ritchie@gmail.com](mailto:Robekkah.ritchie@gmail.com)

*Robekkah's photograph and the runners up of our 2015 Tea Photo Contest are the gift for this month. Her amazing work was chose by several of us anonymously as the best of the year. We look forward to more!*

# Inside the Hut



In Los Angeles, there are Global Tea Hut events every Thursday at 6 PM and Sunday at 9:30 AM. To reserve a spot, email Colin at [livingteas@gmail.com](mailto:livingteas@gmail.com). The community in LA also has a new meet up page: (<http://www.meetup.com/Los-Angeles-Tea-Ceremony-Meetup/>).



In Barcelona, Spain, Global Tea Hut member Antonio holds tea events each month at Caj Chai Teahouse. Contact him at [info@cajchai.com](mailto:info@cajchai.com) for more info. In Madrid, Spain, GTH member Helena hosts a monthly GTH session. Contact her at [helenaharo@hotmail.com](mailto:helenaharo@hotmail.com)



In Moscow, Russia, there are frequent tea events. Contact Tea Hut member Ivan at [teeabai@gmail.com](mailto:teeabai@gmail.com) or Denis at [chikchik25@gmail.com](mailto:chikchik25@gmail.com) for details.



In Nice, France, GTH member Sabine holds regular tea events at the Museum of Asiatic Arts. You can email her at [sabine@letempsdunthe.com](mailto:sabine@letempsdunthe.com).



In Melbourne, Australia, Lindsey hosts Friday night tea sessions at 7/7:30 pm. Contact her at [lindseylou31@gmail.com](mailto:lindseylou31@gmail.com)



In Brisbane, Australia, Matty and Lesley host a monthly ceremony on the first Sunday of every month. Contact them at [mattychi@gmail.com](mailto:mattychi@gmail.com)



In Tallinn, Estonia, *Chado* tea shop holds events most Friday evenings at 7 pm. Contact [events@firstflush.ee](mailto:events@firstflush.ee) for more details. In Tartu, there are tea gatherings held every Wednesday evenings. Contact [kaarel.kilk@hotmail.com](mailto:kaarel.kilk@hotmail.com) for more information.



In Almere, The Netherlands, GTH member Jasper holds tea events every 4th Tuesday of the month at 7:45 pm. Email him at [hermansjasper@gmail.com](mailto:hermansjasper@gmail.com).



In England, Nick Dilks holds regular Tea events all around the UK. For more information, please contact him at [livingteauk@gmail.com](mailto:livingteauk@gmail.com).



In Finland, Ville, Tertti and Bosco hold regular tea sessions. Contact them at: [ville.sorsa@helsinki.fi](mailto:ville.sorsa@helsinki.fi).



## Center News



Before you visit, check out the center's *new* website ([www.teasagehut.org](http://www.teasagehut.org)) to read about the schedule, food, what you should bring, etc. We've had a big increase in our number of guests lately, so if possible please contact us well in advance to arrange a visit.



Our 2015 Light Meets Life cakes are here. We have some amazing teas this year. Check the site regularly for details. They are going fast, so if you want one you should order soon!



If you haven't yet, check out the "discussion" section of our webpage. There is now a place for you to leave reviews of every month's tea, as well as your experiences with the gongfu tea tips!



Help us figure out ways to connect this community: we are looking to create and develop some kind of accessible GTH database/platform. Let us know if you can help or have any ideas! We want to support dialogues and gatherings amongst members, solidifying this community!

## Affirmation

***Am I my community or a separation?***

*Real community in spirit functions when we feel like 'these are my people'. How can I work to encourage a feeling of soul family in my tea community?*

