



Global Tea Art

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

January 2016

DONG DING TEA;
TRADITION & INNOVATION

MASTER TSAI YI TZE

古法正凍頂



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GLOBAL TEA HUT

Tea & Tao Magazine



OLD MAN DONG DING

Welcome to another year of Global Tea Hut! We have a lot in store for you, starting off with one of our all-time favorite teas from Dong Ding. This issue also has a translated article from tea expert Lou Yin on Dong Ding and traditional tea, as well as a long-overdue introduction to the donor of this month's tea, and dear brother of ours, Master Tsai Yi Tze.

*Love is
Changing the world
Bowl by bowl*

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Connor Lind, USA



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From the Editor

In January, the wheels move forward and the clock passes twelve again. This is another great opportunity to renew our efforts to create the best tea magazine in the world, as well as a great community surrounding it! There is a lot of work left to do, but 2015 was still a monumental year. We achieved much of what we intended to, introducing you to many of the tea teachers that are important to us, publishing the entire *Cha Jing*, and translating more modern Chinese articles, as we hoped to do. We also reached more countries and tea lovers around the world, increasing membership quite a bit.

One of the most amazing aspects of this project is that all the proceeds return to you, our tea brothers and sisters, in one form or another. There really is no other media like this. Of course, most of the support generated through this magazine goes to support our free tea center in Taiwan, hosting more than five hundred guests from around the world last year! Those of you who have visited Tea Sage Hut will be excited about that, but there are many people here who have never been to our center in Taiwan and may never get the opportunity to visit. And that is why we also strive to invest energy into improving the content of these magazines. We hope that the tea and magazine are great enough for tea lovers to sign up regardless of the fact that the proceeds support the center. In that way, our beloved Global Tea Hut will have a greater impact on the tea world, now and into the future.

Each January, we try to set some goals in writing, committing to a better magazine and experience for this community in the months to come. The first issue of each year is a great time to clean house, make improvements and do our best to more formally declare some of our goals for the coming year. We always feel like Global Tea Hut is transcending itself, getting better as we go. It's a good sign that we continue to be inspired and enthusiastic about the future changes!

The largest difference you will notice for this New Year, starting with this issue, is that Global Tea Hut will now be much more of a multi-media experience. Several key places in the magazine now have QR-codes that link to our brand new video page! We have always tried to include some video content that supports our magazine. Recently, we have been studying and improving our film-making, even investing in some good video equipment to start making short, poignant films. These films will enhance

the experience of reading the magazine. We hope to use the movies to further your tea education and inspire a greater appreciation of each month's tea, as well as the feature of each issue. We are, of course, open to your criticism, comments and support in this new endeavor. We have included a contribution link on the video page, should any of you wish to support this new video project. We still have some video equipment that can help us improve this endeavor.

Our other main goals for 2016 are to travel more and continue translating. Being in Taiwan offers us the chance to travel to tea-growing regions in Asia and offer more journalism to you, exposing you to the history, heritage and culture of different tea areas. We can also explore new and interesting organic teas. We hope to take at least three trips this year and cover each one in the coming issues, finding rare, organic teas along the way. Being in Taiwan also affords us the chance to learn from many amazing tea experts and masters in many different fields, which is why we are committed to continue translating their articles to English. These translations won't just be modern authors; we will also continue translating the sages of the past, bringing nostalgia for the tea of lost eras. In that way, we will all be exposed to a greater variety of perspectives and information. We hope that everyone can find something to learn and be inspired by in Global Tea Hut, from tea history to production, to the spirit and cultivation of Cha Dao.

This is going to be an amazing year for Global Tea Hut! As we grow and expand, we will also improve the experience of reading this magazine, the photography inside, as well as the new videos. May we all have a blessed New Year, full of a thousand bowls of the Elixir!



Watch the first intro
video for this issue now!



www.globalteahut.org/videos



Tea of the Month

SPRING 2015 TRADITIONAL OOLONG

A *nother year and another set of fireworks to herald the amazing teas to come!*

Yet again, we are excited to start another year of Global Tea Hut with a bang. This is one of the rarest and most valuable teas we have ever sent. And through it we get the chance to talk about one of the teachers and tea brothers that has been the most influential to our practice and to the development of this Global Tea Hut, Master Tsai Yi Tze. Those of you who have visited the center will know this legendary tea well, as it is a local favorite. We drink it all the time, in fact. And if you are still on your way here, this will be a chance to sit and share one of our all-time favorite teas: *Old Man Dong Ding!*

Taiwan is a small island with an abundance of magnificent teas. Although Taiwan acts as a sort of caretaker for many of the old puerh teas of Yunnan, it is better known for the local tea produced here. One of Taiwan's most famous oolongs is Dong Ding (or Tung Ting) oolong,

and this is the tea we're sending you this month.

Dong Ding's name comes from the same place as the original Dong Ding bushes—Wuyi Mountain in China—and it means “Frozen Summit.” As the name suggests, this tea knows how to handle a chill in the air, and it can help you do the same. (There is another local story for how it got its name, suggesting that the “Dong” refers to the flexing in the calf muscles required to get up the cliffs to the trees, as it sounds identical to that word in the local, Taiwanese dialect.) Traditional Dong Ding oolongs are expertly roasted, lending them a warming Qi and flavor that's ideal for autumn and winter. Better yet, they love to be infused many times, so they're perfect for warming up a few hours on a cool morning, or just after the increasingly early sunsets of the season.

According to local folklore, the original Dong Ding tea bushes were brought to Taiwan around 1855.

Legend has it that a government official named Lin Fong Tse traveled to Wuyi and came back with thirty-six *Ching Shin* (“purified heart” or “tender heart”) varietal tea plants. He gave twelve of these trees as a gift to a friend in Nantou, who then planted the trees amongst the gorgeous views outside the Nantou town of Lugu. Some of those original plants are still around today, and although a few of them have been overly taxed by cuttings for cloned bushes, there is still reverence for them in the area, and small offerings can sometimes be seen strewn around their roots.

In the many years since the arrival of these twelve plants in Nantou, much work has gone into perfecting the processing of this distinctive varietal of tea. Nantou County tea makers (especially those around Lugu) have mastered the art of charcoal roasting and garnered immense respect for their medium-oxidized, dark roasted Dong Ding oolongs in the past.



"Old Man Dong Ding"



Dong Ding, Lugu, Taiwan



Oolong Tea



Han Chinese/Taiwanese



~750 Meters

*Check out the
Tea of the Month
video to learn more!*



www.globalteahut.org/videos





Our old man Dong Ding is ecologically conscious, organic and thrumming with life. When a farmer stops thinking in terms of weight, Nature will always provide tea. Most insects will not decimate a tea garden if the tea trees have grown strong on their own, rather than through the use of fertilizers. Also, insects attract birds and other predators that balance the ecology over time.

Unfortunately, the region temporarily lost its way when lighter oxidation, unroasted oolongs came into fashion in the 1980's, and many traditional processes were cast aside in favor of the prospect of higher profits. In an attempt to compete with the success of nearby San Lin Xi high mountain oolongs, the farmers of Lugu abandoned traditional processes, and many lost the knowledge and skills behind traditional oolong roasting entirely as a new generation of farmers took over. Perhaps even worse yet, the loss of traditional processing methods coincided with a switch to conventional farming. Realizing that they couldn't compete with the aroma of high mountain oolong (which is, by the way, the best thing high mountain oolong has going for it!), they began to pump their plants full of fertilizers in an attempt to increase their profit margins by drastically increas-

ing amount. Much of the land surrounding Lugu was scorched with harsh chemicals in the decade or so after this shift, and some of it remains fallow or seriously damaged today.

However, in recent years awareness of more sustainable farming methods has become not just a practice, but also a necessity, and the older styles of oolong production have been revitalized by several tea masters who champion this classic style of tea. By now, most farmers in the Lugu area have recognized that an overuse of chemicals is extremely short-sighted, and while purely organic production is still rare, 'chemical load reduction' has become the new buzzword, and an awareness of increasingly sustainable farming practices is ever-growing as farmers see the direct relationship between healthy Earth and healthy plants, between their Tea's

desires and their own desires, and between the planet's well being and their own. And although traditional processing still isn't nearly as well known or practiced as it once was, there is a growing support for it amongst the tea community within Taiwan and abroad.

Traditional Dong Ding oolongs are processed in a specific way requiring great skill. They are typically oxidized around thirty percent and rolled into a semi-ball shape during a process of "tsairou, dingshing and tsaipei." Tsairou is a process of rolling or kneading, requiring strength and endurance. It's often left to strapping young men who work as bamboo harvesters during the off-season. Dingshing is shaping, which is done with a cloth bag to produce the ball-shape. Tsaipei is roasting. These processes are managed by an experienced tea master who can evaluate the tea's oxidation



levels by appearance and aroma at each step of the way.

After the tea has been processed, it is given a final “finishing roast.” The lengthy roasting process is traditionally done in a charcoal fire pit, fueled with charcoal from a local wood, *longyen* (dragon eye) charcoal. During charcoal roasting, the tea is placed in a woven bamboo tray or basket and shaken over a stone pit. In the stone pit, embers gleam from beneath a thin layer of ash. The embers must be continually adjusted and readjusted to get the right temperature and to keep smoke to a minimum throughout the roasting. And although roasting is a very physically demanding process, the tea is often roasted for as long as eight or ten hours straight by a single tea master. Using this process to produce a full-bodied, well-rounded, complex and patient tea such as ours this month requires

immense skill and many years of practice. Indeed, a skillful or unskillful finishing roast can make or break an oolong such as a traditional Dong Ding.

Tea of the Month

In Nantou, the transition to organic farming and traditional Dong Ding production is still fragile, and it needs proponents of real tea around the world to bolster it. Supporting and sharing teas like this organic, traditional Dong Ding is exactly what we love about selecting a Tea of the Month for Global Tea Hut. We hope that you’ll also appreciate that the old way is the best way in the case of this sustainable, traditional tea, and that you’ll share it with friends to spread the love of this time-honored tea even further around the world!

Our special oolong this month is very unique for tea production nowadays. Over time oolong production has moved more and more towards lighter, greener less-oxidized and/or roasted tea. This trend began in Taiwan in the late 1970’s, but has since spread to the Mainland as well. At that time, the quality of life improved in Taiwan by leaps and bounds. Many of the world’s goods were produced here, the way they are in China nowadays. The increase in wealth brought about a cultural renaissance, including tea. As the tea industry thrived, more and more investment moved to Nantou. Small, local farms were replaced with plantations that could create the yield needed to meet demand, and processing shifted more and more towards lighter, greener and more fragrant oolong, which appealed to the new mainstream tea drinker.



Since the Black Dragon first flew—and oolong means “Black Dragon”—it traditionally had a high degree of oxidation and roast. Oolong has always meant semi-oxidized tea, but the range of oxidation was much more narrow in the olden days. And most people who drink oolong will over time gravitate towards aged and/or more heavily-oxidized teas.

The simplest way of separating oolong tea is to call traditionally processed oolong “red liquor/water (*hongshui oolong*)” and the lighter teas “blue green liquor/water (*qingshui oolong*).” While *qingshui oolong* is fragrant, and often very enjoyable to drink, it also lacks the depth, character and body of traditionally processed oolong. Of course, any given green oolong might be better than any one particular traditional oolong, but in general oolong tea is richer, deeper and more satisfying when it is more oxidized and roasted. You shouldn’t take our word for it, though. As always, we recommend experimentation. The good thing is that nowadays you can have the best of both worlds, and explore organic versions of both kinds of oolong!

As Master Tsai would travel to Dong Ding to get his different organic teas, he would sometimes drink tea with the old, retired grandfather that lived on the farm, Master Su. All the tea production has since been handed over to his son. Though the decades of tea oils soaked into the old man hands would have attracted any Chajin, every time they shared tea, Master Tsai noticed that the oolong was very different than what he was buying. After getting to know the old man better, Master Tsai inquired about this tea. The old man admitted that their farm was producing a relatively traditional Dong Ding oolong compared to what is available in the market nowadays, with more oxidation and roast. But to him it was still not “traditional” enough. He liked his tea as it had

been made long ago when he was young. So every year he would process some of the tea for his own enjoyment, retiring in style, as it were.

After a few years and more rapport, Master Tsai asked if he could commission some of the tea the old man was enjoying, since he too preferred the taste of tradition. The farmers agreed and “Old Man Dong Ding” was born.

There are three main tea growing areas in Dong Ding: The highest is called Fong Huang, which is a relatively newer area to grow tea. Then, by the water, the oldest farms are in an area called “Zhong Ya.” The lowest farms are in Yong Long. Our tea of the month is from Zhong Ya, which is considered to be the “true Dong Ding,” and definitely the place where you could find an old man still making tea in the traditional style!

Like all fine oolong, this tea is processed mostly by hand. It is picked and withered, indoors and

out. The defining characteristic of oolong tea is in the shaking, which bruises the edges of the leaves. This causes cellular breakdown that further semi-oxidizes the tea. Oolong is then fired to arrest oxidation and de-enzyme the tea. After that it is rolled to further break down the cells, release the juices and to shape the tea. Ball-shaped oolong, like this month’s tea, is rolled in a twisted up cloth bag, which compresses and shapes the tea. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, oolong tea is roasted, which seals in the flavors and lends it depth. This stage also protects the tea for storage/aging.

This is one of our all-time favorite teas. It is deep, fragrant and has a long-lasting satisfaction. The Qi moves to the head and uplifts you. It tastes of nuts, plums, dates and often of Chinese medicine (the good kind). There is no greater sentiment than an afternoon without schedule or time, the sound of the kettle growing and a pot of fine oolong to share!

The farmers wither the tea outdoors in the very early morning. The tea must be processed on the same day it's harvested.

Ball-shaped oolong is shaped in a cloth that is twisted up on a bamboo mat.

The tea is often roasted for as long as eight or ten hours straight by a single tea master, late into the night...

The Old Master's wife still helps sort the tea before packaging.







Old Man Dong Ding

Like so many of you, we also sit down with friends to share the Tea of the Month. And though we drank this Dong Ding oolong at a different time than you, we are reminded once again of the interconnectedness we share within this global tea community. Just as we set out altar cups in acknowledgment of our tea brothers and sisters the world over, we also drank this tea with all of you in mind, knowing that somewhere under this global, thatched roof, you'll likely be doing the same! And just as you might discuss your experiences drinking this tea with your friends, we did the same:

☞ The Qi of this tea felt warming and centering. I felt it in the center of my chest when drinking and in the center of my eyebrows when smelling the cup. I also noticed that the sensations stayed more in the front of my head rather than distributing evenly throughout. In my mouth, the tea congealed and swallowed easily. Very soothing on the throat! **-Alec Bridges**

☞ This tea is relatively balanced, sweet and tart in the first two steepings with a powdery, slightly astringent *kougan*. I noticed this especially in the area of the tongue that registers tartness. The astringency then rose to the center of the upper palate. It tasted of dry dates, plumb and roasted almonds. There was a heavier roast apparent especially in first three steepings. My favorite steepings were the third, sixth and seventh because the tartness falls off, giving rise to a mineral sweetness and full body that seems more essential to this tea. **-Qing Yu**

☞ With Winter in full swing, and the changes in weather bringing seasonal colds and coughs, we look to teas to warm ourselves from the inside out. This Old Man Dong Ding is a great example of a tea that does just that. Despite my congested nose, the aroma still rose into my forehead. Effortlessly, it seemed to fly down my throat, stopping only for a moment, requiring a light push. Splashing to the top of my mouth, it felt thick, structured and stayed together as the liquor passed through my lips. My cloudy mind, hazed by a lack of sleep and illness, started to clear. My irritated throat was soothed and coated in the tea's oil. My arms and head started to tingle and the Qi in the center of my chest started to slowly pulse. I felt a warmth rising from my *dantian* (the naval), and throughout my whole upper body. The Qi flickered like a soft flame, as though I was a candle, reaching its crescendo at my eyebrow center. Here, the Qi moved faster, and felt tighter, more concentrated. **-Sam Gibb**

☞ I really liked the roast of the tea, and yet it didn't take away from the flavor. It was perfect and warming. It also caused a lot of salivation after each cup. After many infusions when the roast was gone, the tea still had an amazing flavor that continued for many steepings! **-Joyce**



Check out the video on
brewing tips now!



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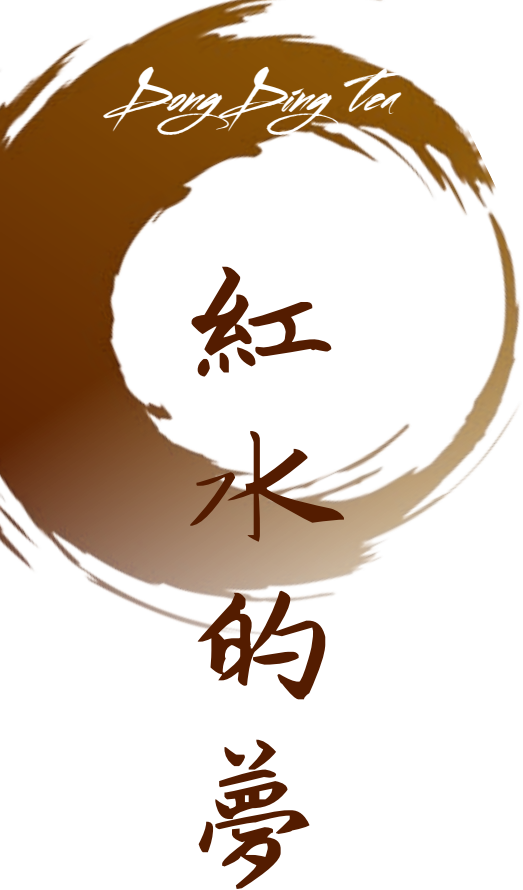
Brewing Tips

We recommend brewing this tea gongfu and staying present with it over many infusions. Notice the way that its aromas, flavors and Qi change as the tightly rolled leaves unfurl and expand in your pot. Feel the “roastiness,” warmth and strength of early infusions shift into mineral notes and a softer feeling in later steepings. And listen to what the leaves want to tell you of their tale.

Oolong and gongfu tea grew up together. They are made for one another. To get the most out of an oolong tea, you will need a gongfu set. This doesn't mean it is impossible to enjoy this month's tea without one, but that you will need to brew gongfu to unlock Old Man Dong Ding's full potential.

Gongfu tea is a skill and mastery that can be cultivated for a lifetime, including deep, internal/spiritual mastery as well as greater skill with the art and craft of brewing—handling the pot, kettle and cups. Consequently, there is no formula or easy step-by-step guide to brewing gongfu tea. On the practical level, you need to focus on the heat. Temperature and graceful movements are the key to mastery in gongfu tea, and all the different aspects of brewing in this way will include temperature as an important factor.

When we brew gongfu tea well we “steal” the tea's essence, as Master Lin often says. If the temperature remains consistent and our movements are slow, gentle and graceful, then we disturb the tea as little as possible and its essence is released slowly over the session. This ensures a more patient tea and a better overall experience, as the shift from cup to cup is smooth and the transition even. This will take a lot of practice...



A RED LIQUOR DREAM REMINISCING TRADITIONAL DONG DING OOLONG

-Yingyin Luo

Last year we made a promise to translate more articles, providing a greater breadth of authorship to Global Tea Hut. We hope to continue to expose you to some of the ideas of tea experts here in Asia. In this issue, Miss Luo discusses the history and innovation of Dong Ding oolong tea and why it is sometimes called "red liquor/water." A bit of history always lends some context to our education. It also helps us to better appreciate why this month's tea is so special.

The pleasant aroma that arises from a properly brewed pot of tea was perfectly brushed into words by the monk Chao Quan (超全, 1627-1712): "As with the plum and orchid blossom, a slight fragrance begins to rise when tea leaves are steeped. Like the slow heat of the coals that roast the tea leaves, the masters take the time to hone their craft in glowing precision."

Among the seven kinds of tea, oolong requires the most craftsmanship to produce. As a result, it is the most complex and profound kind of tea, at least as far as depth of flavor goes. It can be as challenging to brew as it is to produce. However, when prepared properly the "gem of tea," as it is called, offers a subdued "plum or orchid blossom" fragrance that can be transcendent. The unique floral or fruity aroma differs depending on the variety of tea, weather conditions, season of growing and picking, and the roasting process. There are, indeed, many facets to this gem!

Compared to other kinds of tea, oolong also has the greatest variety. As a semi-oxidized tea, it is a combination of the briskness of green tea and the mellowness of red tea. In addition, different varieties, environments and climates, as well as different processing methodologies, all influence the taste and aroma of the finished tea. There is truly a wide spectrum of different oolong teas, each with its own rich heritage, flavor and fragrance! It is, therefore, no simple task to write about oolong tea.

Oolong can refer to a varietal of tea tree or the process of semi-oxidizing tea. Tea categorization is complicated, and so defining tea purely by processing is misleading. There are four major kinds of oolong tea, distinguished by the places they are from: Wuyi Cliff Tea (武夷岩茶), Anxi Tieguanyin (*Iron Goddess*, 安溪鐵觀音), Fenghuang Dancong (鳳凰單叢) and Taiwanese oolong. This article will focus on Taiwanese oolong, exploring its

history, craftsmanship and the development of different kinds of oolong tea in Taiwan over time.

As an island on the Tropic of Cancer, Taiwan has a warm and humid climate, with steep and high mountains. Such a rare combination makes it an ideal environment for growing tea. In addition, seventy percent of Taiwan is mountainous, so there is a vast area for tea farming throughout most of rural Taiwan. The tea industry sprouted in the 17th Century when the Chinese started to migrate to Taiwan and then bloomed into an international flower during the Japanese occupation, from 1895 to 1945. Since beginning the now-famous annual tea competitions in the 1960's, Taiwanese oolong has changed radically. Recently, for example, economic ties between Taiwan and China have become possible again, and this has had a huge impact on tea production and sales in Taiwan.



Organic tea farm in Fong Huang, the highest tea-growing region of Dong Ding.



Tradition & Innovation

First of all, it is important to remember that what we call “tradition” now was an innovation in the past. When did oolong tea begin? And what innovations and transformations has it been through along the way? The earliest record of oolong tea can be found in *On Tea* (茶說) written by Caotang Wang (王草堂) in 1711. “People pick Wuyi tea leaves between the *guyu* (穀雨) and *lixia* (立夏) solar terms.¹ Since *guyu* is the first solar term in the spring, this tea is then called ‘the first spring tea’... They spread the tea leaves evenly over shallow bamboo trays and stack the trays on racks under the sun to wither. This process is called *shaijing* (曬菁). When the leaves have lost their green color, they are then ready for drying. The flat ‘*Jie*’ tea from Yangxian (陽羨), Jiangsu (江蘇) is not fired at a high temperature; it only goes through steaming over a low fire.² On the other hand, Songluo (松蘿) and Longjing (龍井) are fired at a high temperature while the leaves are stirred vigorously. As a result, the shades of all three teas mentioned above are closer to one another. Wuyi is the only tea that goes through both high and low temperature firing. Therefore, some leaves are red while others are green. The green leaves are baked over a high fire while the red leaves are baked over a low fire...” This account is obviously a bit different from how

Wuyi Cliff Tea is produced today, and in some ways difficult to decipher without seeing the tea, but gives us a historical reference from the very beginning of oolong production.

Oolong tea first arrived in Taiwan around 1810. The Chinese brought seeds from Wuyi Mountain and propagated them in what is the modern day Ruifang area (瑞芳), New Taipei City. Since then, oolong tea production has spread widely throughout Taiwan. After several transformations in the tea industry, Taiwanese oolong tea began to flourish, becoming famous internationally.

In 1869, Taiwanese oolong tea began to be exported to the US and became renowned there as “Formosa Tea.” Later in the 1920’s, a more heavily-oxidized tea called “the Beauty of the East (*Dongfang meiren*, 東方美人),” was created with a unique fragrance and a stunningly beautiful color. Around the same period, Shuijin Wang (王水錦) and Jingshi Wei (魏靜時) revolutionized oolong processing when they invented the subtle and very aromatic Baozhong tea of Northern Taiwan. Skipping the withering process and moving directly to oxidizing while stirring and firing lends this kind of tea a unique floral aroma.

Two expats from Anxi, Youtai Wang (王友泰) from the Fuji Tea-shop in Taipei and De Wang (王德)

introduced the cloth-rolling technique from Anxi—the traditional way of making ball-shaped Tieguanyin—to the tea industry in Minjian, Nantou. Later, that processing methodology moved to Dong Ding, Lugu. Eventually, this cloth-kneading technique was employed in other areas of Taiwan, starting in the 1970’s, slowly taking over the Taiwanese tea industry. Today, Taiwan is most famous for ball-shaped oolong tea. For a long time, all the ball-shaped oolong was processed much like Anxi Tieguanyin, with higher oxidation and skillful roasting. And Dong Ding was at the center of this.

黑龍飛昇數百年延綿

1) A solar term is any of 24 points in a traditional East Asian lunisolar calendar that matches a particular astronomical event or signifies some natural phenomenon. The points are spaced 15° apart along the ecliptic and are used by lunisolar calendars to stay synchronized with the seasons, which is crucial for agrarian societies. Guyu marks the beginning of the spring, which usually falls from April 19-21 to May 5, while lixia is the following term, which ends at May 20-21.

2) Jie tea was a tribute tea during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties. However, it lost popularity after the 18th Century, probably due to its complicated processing. It is not produced today.

A New Tea Emerges

The first tea competition was held in Dong Ding in 1976. The judge, Zhenduo Wu (吳振鐸), who was the director of the Tea Research and Extension Station in Nantou, awarded first prize to a tea that combined the floral aroma of lighter Baozhong teas with the richer flavor profile of Tieguanyin. This historical decision brought together the two major tea processing methodologies of oolong tea in Taiwan. One is the new formula, which has taken over the mainstream, using lighter oxidation and roast. The new variety of “high mountain oolong” also employs this processing, and has won over a huge segment of the tea

market. The traditional way of making oolong with a rich flavor, warm taste and a red-brick hue of liquor slowly became the minority in Dong Ding, as farmers met the demand for lighter, greener oolong teas. In the beginning, many of these lighter teas were amazing, and some still are, so the innovation itself was genius at the outset. And when it is done well, such light tea can still be marvelous even nowadays.

Besides what can be seen as brilliant innovations in tea production, the 1970’s were the golden era of tea in Taiwan. The economy took off during that period and the prospering tea industry helped facilitate

a thriving bush of tea aficionados, ceremonies, gatherings and tea culture that continues to blossom even today.

You can actually sense the depth of a tea, even with your eyes. Look closely at the photograph and see if you can feel a difference in the dry leaves and/or liquor. What do you sense about drinking these teas?





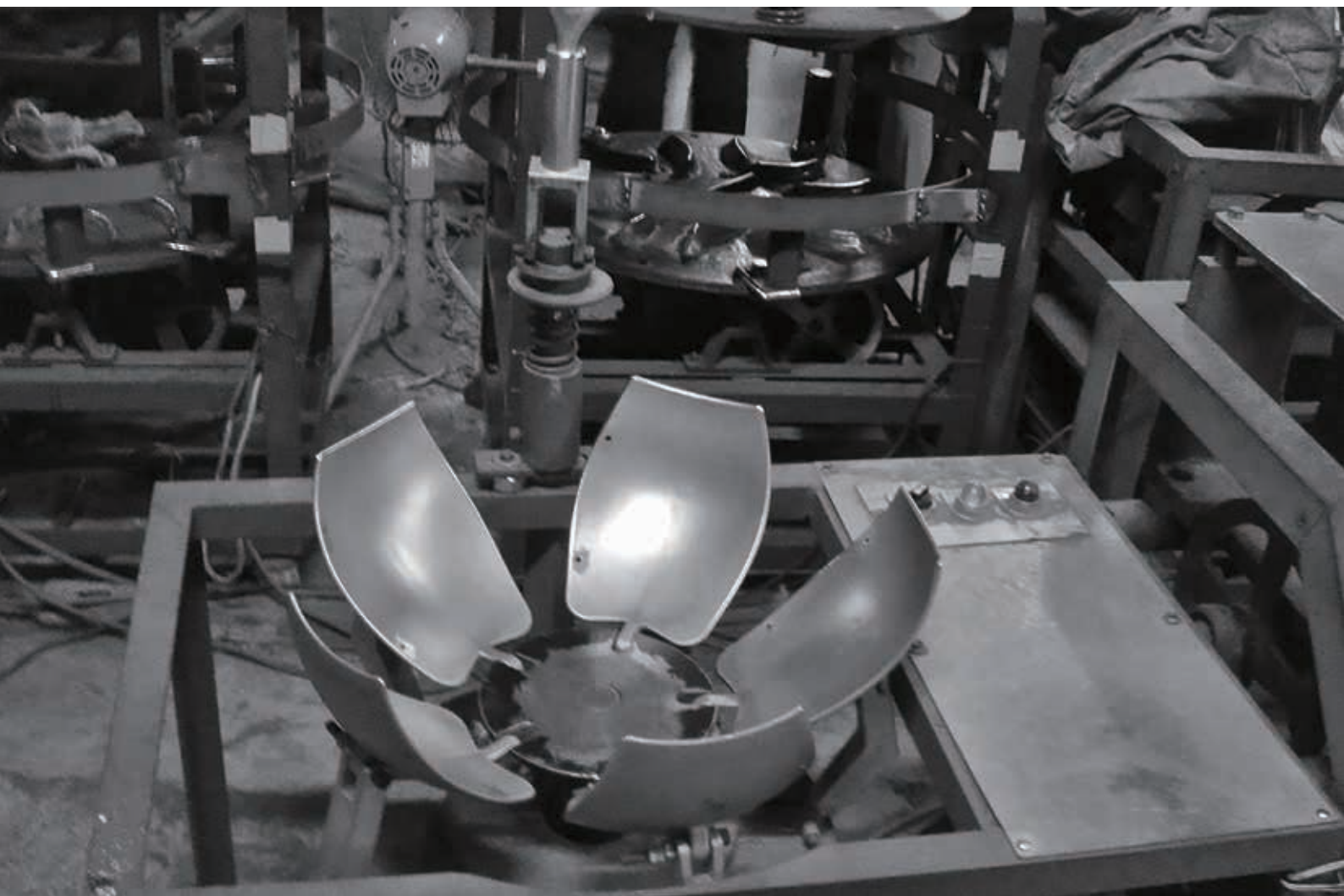
A Craftsmanship Lost

Over the past four decades, ever since the first time a greener tea won the most famous of all competitions in Taiwan, the annual Dong Ding tea competition, tea in Taiwan has become known as a light green oolong tea, with a faint suggestion of the tea it once was. Tea liquor with a rich, complex and yet subdued aroma is what ancient and modern poets lauded in a fine oolong tea. However, it is very difficult to produce in large quantities. Not only is such tea an acquired taste, usually of the more seasoned drinker, but its production also requires a lot more skill and technique. It takes a very long time to learn these skills, let alone to master them. When you add to that the skills needed to brew such tea well, you can see why the industry moved towards lighter, easier to make and brew teas. Furthermore, not many people can withstand the hardships

of artisanal tea farming, especially during the harvest when producers will hardly sleep for weeks at a time. Quoting *On Tea* again, “When it comes to *guyu*, it is a hustle and bustle in places where tea is grown. During those two weeks, most people hardly have the time to eat or sleep.”

Due to the short window of plucking time for spring tea, a lot of farmers started picking younger leaves. Unfortunately, the success rate with the fresh buds/leaves is not that high. Also, while the cost of living has risen, the price of oolong tea has not grown in proportion over the last thirty years. As a result of all these factors, tea farms in Taiwan have increasingly switched to plantation models, allowing machines to replace handmade tea skills for the sake of profit. And local tea growers were slowly bought out by big companies...

In the end, the subtle aroma of fine oolong has been swallowed by the void of mass-produced tea that lacks a real, lasting fragrance or body.



The oils of the tea stain the hands, but the hands also influence the tea. Can you sense the difference from the machines used to roll?



A Red Liquor Dream

Like waves on the sea, when any given trend reaches its highest point, another will certainly rise behind it and take its place. After decades of light-green oolong dominating the market, people have started to miss the special aftertaste of traditional oolong. After one sip of traditional oolong tea, one feels a pleasant, sweet aftertaste that stirs the memory. If one savors this aftertaste, it's almost chewable, like substantial food. In addition, such tea causes more salivation and hence quenches one's thirst quicker and more fully. As a result, searching for the obscure "red-liquor" oolong has become a new trend.

This so-called "red-liquor/water (紅水)" oolong is nothing but a vague term actually. In fact, the color of traditionally processed oolong is not really red. This phrase was coined by the mainstream tea industry to separate such tea from the light liquor of the more popular greenish oolong. Still, the phrase

does have historicity, tracing all the way back to 1896. At that time, Taiwanese tea was made in the same manner as Wuyi tea, withered lightly, shaken and then roasted over high-temperature coals. The quality of such oolong is determined largely by the roasting process, and the tea is rich in flavor, with a savory aftertaste.

As tea moves to new mountains, it changes. Terroir is everything in tea. And as a tea varietal is changed by and through its new environment, farmers will also adapt their processing and culture accordingly. This is how all tea production develops. Similarly, the Wuyi varietals brought to Taiwan also changed, and so did their processing. In 1921, two new Baozhong roasting techniques were invented in Taiwan by Jingshi Wei in Nangang and Shuijin Wang in Wenshan. In comparison, Wang's style originated from Wuyi tea and the liquor looked more like shiny red ochre than

Shuijin Wang's, which was greenish in color. As a result, during the first half of the 20th Century, people used "red liquor (紅水)" to refer to the Wenshan Baozhong as opposed to the Nangang green roasting.

The late Ye Ji (季野), the most famous tea connoisseur in modern Taiwanese history, created a controversy in the 1980's by insisting that the "red liquor oolong" is in fact true traditional Dong Ding oolong. As a result, many tea stores and tea fairs followed Ye Ji's point of view, and labeled traditional Dong Ding oolong as "red liquor" oolong in order to differentiate it from the greener and lighter oolong tea on the market. On the other hand, the tea farmers and tea makers in the Dong Ding area were strongly repulsed by the term "red liquor/water." In their experience, when they made mistakes in the roasting process, especially when making lighter/greener/less-roasted oolongs, the liquor would turn reddish.



To them, the term “red liquor” referred to mistakenly processed, downgraded tea. Therefore, the local tea farmers preferred to call tea produced with higher oxidation and roast “traditional oolong” rather than “red-liquor/water” oolong.

There is perhaps a less controversial and more poetic interpretation of calling traditional oolong “red.” Earlier I mentioned that traditional oolong liquor isn’t exactly red, which is true. Like most teas, it is actually a spectrum of colors from red in the middle to orange, gold and yellow at the rim. The epitome of traditional oolong is that it be “red in the heart,” which is a reference I found even in old tea literature. It referred to the otherworldly brew of tea leaves that were roasted to perfection. As tea expert Zhu Chen (陳助) says, “when the tea is aromatic inside and out from the bones and marrow, it does not separate, even if you cut it with a knife.” Therefore, the reddish color referred to by the now-common term “red liquor/water” does not necessarily refer to heavier fermentation or roasting, nor is it due to excess humidity in storage or the misprocessing of tea, as the farmers would use the word. It could perhaps refer to oolong tea that is roasted magnificently—to the red marrow.

Traditional “red liquor” cannot be clearly defined—different people mean different things when they use this phrase; everything from a mainstream kitchen drinker who doesn’t really understand what they are saying other than that this tea is “darker” than what they are used to all the way to farmers who mean tea that is misprocessed. When it was coined in the 19th Century it clearly referred to the tea produced in a specific area of Taiwan. In some ways, the ambiguity of this term is the perfect lens to reflect on the complicated world of oolong tea, and is therefore worthy of so much of our attention.

The defining characteristic of oolong tea processing is that it is



semi-oxidized. By bruising, yet not completely destroying the cell walls of the leaves during the withering and shaking stages of oolong production, the cells will oxidize partially. The degree of “partiality” in this most-complex of all tea production is the key to the huge variety of unique aromas, flavors and tastes in the world of oolong tea. Over time, as more and more innovations and changes have come, the range of oxidation in oolong has also grown, and so what was already a complex genre has grown even more complicated over time.

The Future of Oolong

As we mentioned at the outset of this article, Taiwan is rich in flora because of its mountains and semi-tropical/tropical climate. It is not difficult to find a great place to start a tea farm in Taiwan. As farmers learned the natural environment

and weather conditions, they then tried many variations and production techniques, choosing the best way to dry the tea leaves grown on their own farms.

Tailoring processing to the qualities of the tea leaves is the hallmark of skillful tea production, and a renewal of this trend is growing in the tea industry these days. Years ago, a farmer who made traditional “red liquor/water” oolong, when the market was dominated by green oolongs, was laughed at by all the other tea farmers and sellers. Nowadays, more and more farmers are producing such tea, and the skills required are garnering respect again.

We hosted three “Asia-Pacific Oolong Tea Conferences” from 2011 to 2013 to promote traditional “red liquor/water” oolong. In order to get back to the time when fine oolong tea didn’t need vacuum-sealed packaging, or the machinery and waste that part of the industry creates.



This farm recently shifted their ideology to organic and traditional processing. In two or three years, the trees will be strong, the land clean and the tea can be certified.

There was a time when all tea was wrapped in paper. Traditional charcoal roasting stabilizes the tea leaves, and so vacuum sealing wasn't necessary back in the day. We sought to re-popularize such traditional tea making skills. Therefore, we gave out authentic, traditional "red liquor/water" Lishan oolong in 4 oz. paper packs without vacuum sealing as souvenirs to those who attended these gatherings. With the success of these events and the tea, we hoped to demonstrate the possibility of a heritage revival, hoping that Chajin would enjoy reminiscing older, and maybe better times.

Another new and exciting trend is that "red liquor/water" or "traditional" are no longer phrases reserved for traditional tea processing trends in Dong Ding anymore—the movement has spread throughout Taiwan. Between tradition and innovation, the key to a better balance probably lies in the National Farmers Association,

which has controlled the reputation of many kinds of tea in Taiwan for several decades by holding tea competitions that many farmers, producers, shop owners and aficionados respect. As long as the judges and NFA associates are just, meaning that they are not influenced by financial relationships with the farmers and there is no money involved, the tea industry will be freer and thrive. If such mainstream organizations begin to support and promote artisanal, handmade, traditional teas, along with lighter oolongs, the trend towards better tea will get a huge boost. And there are hints that this is coming!

Influenced by the new economic ties with China, the Taiwanese tea industry is also facing more Chinese competition. It will be difficult for Taiwan to compete with Chinese machinery, price or mass-production. The mainstream tea drinker in Taiwan will now have access to cheaper, more consistent varieties

of Chinese oolong. For that reason, one could argue that one ideal strategy for competing with this would be to hearken back to traditional experience and skill, aiming to make a niche in the larger international market by reviving heritage. We should rekindle the warmth of conventional craftsmanship and tea roasting skills and aim to leave the cold machines out of the photos taken these days—photos that will one day hang on the walls of future tea lovers to characterize this era of tea production. Returning full circle to the beginning of this article, we remember that the monk Chao Quan alluded to the intricacy and subtlety of tea four hundred years ago. As a Taiwanese Chajin, I hope the skilled tea makers with the expertise in roasting will unveil the charming subdued blossom-like fragrance of Taiwanese oolong tea to those who raise a cup four hundred years from now!



Gongfu Tea Experiments

OVER-BOILED WATER

-Sam Gibb

Water is the Mother of Tea, and there is no aspect of tea brewing as influential to the final cup as the water. It is therefore very helpful to do as many experiments with water as you possibly can. We've chosen Sam to write some of these experiments because he is doing them for the first time, which is an important perspective to share.





I remember when I first started making tea with my trusty electric kitchen kettle. After reading some blog posts, I bought a kettle that sets the temperature for you. I had read somewhere that if the water over-boils it is ruined. I doubt I noticed the difference, but I had a fancy kettle that cost me about what I live on for two months these days, and an intellectual justification for buying it. For most aspects of my life at the time, this was enough to warrant buying something.

When I first visited the Tea Sage Hut, Wu De described that water was like a balloon; if you over-boil it, the water bursts. I never completely understood that, but I definitely paid more attention after that. As I read more, I saw that what he was saying aligns with the teachings of the Tea sages of long ago as well. They called water brought to a full rolling boil things like “raging torrent”, “ruined water”, “old man hair” and “dead man’s water”, none of which sound well-paired to tea. This seemed to fulfill one of the two requirements given by the Buddha before accepting something as true:

that it be in concordance with the teachings of the wise.

The most common reason given for not over-boiling water for tea is that it “releases the oxygen” from the water. This wasn’t something I understood at first because I thought this meant the oxygen molecules separated from the hydrogen, which would mean that it wasn’t water anymore. After a thorough examination of a variety of ‘chemistry for kids’ websites, I started to get an idea of what this meant. Oxygen is dissolved into water, held by the hydrogen bonds between the water molecules. As it heats, and the molecules move faster and faster, these bonds break and the oxygen escapes. So the longer the water boils, the less of these oxygen molecules there will be in the water. While these may be replaced as the water cools, as it returns to an equilibrium, there is an exchange of oxygen and gases from the air.

There are also a number of other elements affecting the water quality for tea, apart from just over-boiling:

- Small amounts of solutes in the water can interact with the varying concentrations of gases, changing the composition each time it is boiled.
- Non-gas solutes from the kettle increase in solubility as temperature increases, meaning tiny amounts of metal ions, clay and salts can dissolve and change the character of the water.
- When water containing a high proportion of natural minerals (known as hard water) is brought to a boil it can result in a number of chemical reactions such as the precipitation (turning into a solid) of calcium and magnesium, trace elements like silicates and iron salts, changing significantly during boiling.
- On top of this there are traces of bacteria or mold, sediments from pipes or storage and other synthetic additives present in water, all of which could be affected by the boiling.



The purpose of having some understanding of this is not to enter an intellectual mindset towards this experiment, but perhaps to better understand what's going on in the water we make for tea everyday. Remember, we want to stay open-minded during our experiments. Perhaps what our modern chemistry is pointing toward is the same thing the ancient tea sages knew, or perhaps they understood more... Regardless, I thought this month would be a good time to look at the influence of over-boiling the water. And thus, I would be fulfilling the second, and more important, requirement given by the Buddha for accepting something as true: *In concordance with your own experience!*

What you will need

It is ideal to have two identical kettles. We used a pair of Lin's Ceramics kettles. You can also use two glass kettles if you have them. If you do not have two of the same kettles, you can also do this experiment with matching kitchen pots. You will need two heat sources, one to heat the water and the other to keep it warm. We used an infrared burner and an alcohol burner. However, you could use two gas burners, having one set to a really low flame. Finally, you will need two identical cups. We used tulip-shaped porcelain cups, which are often best for gongfu tea experiments due to their uniformity and consistency. The closer you can get all these elements of the experiment, the more clearly you will be able to discern the effects of over-boiling the water. We do not brew tea in a laboratory, so it is not necessary to have all the elements controlled. Nonetheless, by doing our best to restrict the amount of influencing factors we will get closer to experiencing the factor we are testing.

The experiment

Start by heating both kettles at the same time. Once one comes close to boiling, "fish-eye" bubbles will start rising from the bottom of the kettle. At this point, drop the heat down or place it on an alcohol burner. You will want this kettle to stay at this temperature while the other continues to boil. Allow the other kettle to reach a full rolling boil and let it proceed to boil for three to five minutes. While this is longer than you would ever allow this to happen if you were brewing tea, it helps to make the difference more obvious until we refine our sensitivity. Perhaps, after trying it once, you can reduce the time and see what happens.

Once you have done this, warm and rinse both cups. Pour water from one kettle into one cup and from the other kettle into the second cup. You should use the same hand to pour both kettles, as changing hands could affect the outcome (that's an experiment for another day). Taste back and forth, starting with the cup containing the over-boiled water. There will obviously be a difference in temperature, but try to focus on the mouthfeel and structure of the water instead. Things like the way the tea coats the mouth, whether the water stays together, where it sits in the mouth, how it swallows and so on...

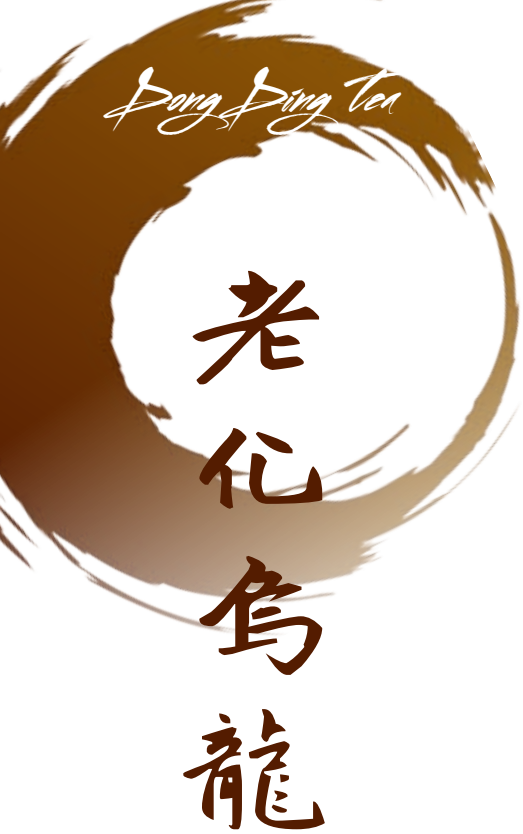


This experiment requires a quiet, focused mind. Try to do it in silence with a notebook on hand to write down the differences you notice. Try this for at least three cups, switching the kettle you pour from first to consolidate your experience.

We would love to hear how this experiment went. Please share with us either via our discussion board on our website or by writing to us at globalteahut@gmail.com

Shifting from cup to cup with two hands actually helps in these experiments quite a bit. It also helps to take notes before sharing, so you don't influence others.





AGING OOLONG

USING TIME TO IMPROVE FINE DONG DING TEA

-Lindsey Goodwin

You may think that aging tea applies more to puerh or black teas, but tea lovers have been aging oolong for centuries. And unlike fermented teas, oolong doesn't need humidity or heat to transform beautifully. You can age it anywhere in the world. Let's explore some of what goes into aging oolong tea, which teas are better for aging and then we'd like to offer you an exciting chance to age some amazing Dong Ding tea yourself!

This issues is all about traditional oolong, especially Taiwanese Dong Ding tea. There is a deep and lasting magic in a fine oolong when it is processed and roasted well. In addition to providing a richer flavor and stronger Qi, a darker roast gives traditional oolongs such as this month's tea another advantage over the more modern, greener oolongs of Taiwan and China—the ability to age well!

The tradition of aging oolong is as old as oolong herself. As with other types of tea, oolong was quickly recognized to improve with age (especially in the long run). Cliff Tea is traditionally aged for a while before it is drunk, and other areas of China have also intentionally and unintentionally aged oolong over the years. Today, aged oolongs are increasingly revered in Taiwan, where you can find oolongs over 100 years old on occasion and more than a few decades old with relative frequency. Here, some oolong teas are marketed as “aged” after as few as six years, but most tea connoisseurs consider an oolong to be truly

aged once it's about thirty, and we've savored a few Taiwanese oolong teas that have been around for one-hundred-something years. We certainly don't expect you to age the can of this month's tea for 100 years, but we'd like to share more about aged oolong with you so that you can know more about what this month's tea (and other traditional oolongs like it) are capable of doing when allowed to sit in meditation for a few decades or longer.

Unless they're stored in poor conditions, most oolongs will become incredible if you simply wait long enough to drink them. And as you will soon see, an understanding of aged Dong Ding will be enriched by experience for some of you, because we have a very special offer this month!

Aged oolongs cover a broad spectrum, from teas that were forsaken for years to teas that won awards and sold for enormous sums before they were aged with the utmost care for thirty years or more (in their sealed, original canisters no less). There are certain factors which

influence the quality of the tea at the end of decades of waiting, and one of these factors is undeniably the quality of the tea at the start of the aging process.

Taiwanese aged oolongs are generally made from a traditional style of rolled semi-balled oolong, such as this month's tea. All other factors being equal, this style of tea (and other darker roast oolongs in general) has an advantage over the greener oolongs when it comes to aging.

One of the key differences is moisture content. Traditional roast oolongs only have about two percent moisture content in the leaves (compared to five percent or more in greener, less roasted leaves), so they change and ferment more gradually and predictably. They are less likely to crumble into dust before their time or require excessive re-roasting to keep them from going all musty and moldy.

In order to have low enough moisture content for stable aging, oolong tea needs a longer 'final roast' during its processing.



湮埋的寶藏



Watch the aging oolong
tea video now!



www.globalteahut.org/videos



This is a natural part of traditional oolong processing in Taiwan and it is still practiced in some parts of China, too. This is why oolong traditionally didn't require vacuum-sealing, or all that extra machinery and wasted packaging. A stable roast meant the tea could be wrapped in simple paper and preserved that way indefinitely. Although a solid final roast and good storage are enough to keep the tea aging well for many years, many tea masters also like to re-roast the tea to keep the moisture content low during aging. Some do this several times a year, or every five years or at other intervals, and it's common to light up the charcoal fire pit or switch on the electric roaster upon discovery of an accidentally aged tea. However, we are amongst another school of oolong aging when it comes to roasting. More specifically, we don't re-roast our oolongs at all. We find that it makes aged oolongs taste more like *roast* than *aged* tea, and that the tea doesn't respond well to the inconsistencies of roasts (which are often done by different people using different roasting techniques over the years).

The instability of oolong teas that are not roasted enough is why many people say that they are not ageable. Since they are unstable, their flavor, aroma and Qi will fluctuate drastically over the first ten or even twenty years of aging, often passing through awkward phases. Eventually, Time stabilizes all things, including awkward tea (and teenagers) but for some time the tea will not be as nice. This is actually true of all green teas, certain puerhs and other teas that you would not ordinarily think of as good candidates for aging.

Because oolong doesn't require moisture or oxygen to store, like puerh does, you can age oolong anywhere. Puerh really is best stored in humid environments, especially if you plan to age it for longer periods of time, but oolong will hap-

pily transform wherever you live. Simply fill a jar to the brim, which reduces oxygen in the container, and seal it with wax. You'll want to put a string in the wax so it will be easy to open. If you want to check on it more regularly you can forgo the wax, but remember that every time you open the lid you are exposing it to unwanted air and moisture—disturbing the tea's meditation.

That said, we're not opposed to a roast just before it's time to drink an aged oolong. Re-roasting the tea before brewing may dissipate some of the 'off' flavors that accumulated during aging, refresh the overall character of the tea and warm the tea up energetically, if it is done with skill. Roasting aged oolong shortly before drinking is relatively common amongst tea lovers in Taiwan, and it's easy to find small, earthenware oolong roasting sets for home use in Yingge (Taiwan's pottery town). Nonetheless, this takes some practice and skill, and could harm your tea so you may want to try it out on simpler teas first.

A fine aged oolong often has a clear surface and a color like amber, notes of prune and Chinese medicinal herbs in the flavor and aroma, and a balancing, powerful Qi. It feels silky in the mouth and smooth in the throat. It has *huigan* (a minty-cooling sensation in the mouth and throat after swallowing) and a sweetness that lingers almost as if it is being exuded from the throat. Although thick-walled purple clay Yixing teapots are generally preferred for brewing aged oolongs, a thin-walled, purple clay Yixing pot is said to be ideal for brewing an aged oolong from Dong Ding (the home of this month's tea), as it will elicit more aroma and Qi from the leaves. But you'll know when you're brewing it well because the leaves will begin to murmur to you of their past, present and future, speaking kindly of their many years spent circling the sun, all the while whispering hints of the illusion of Time...





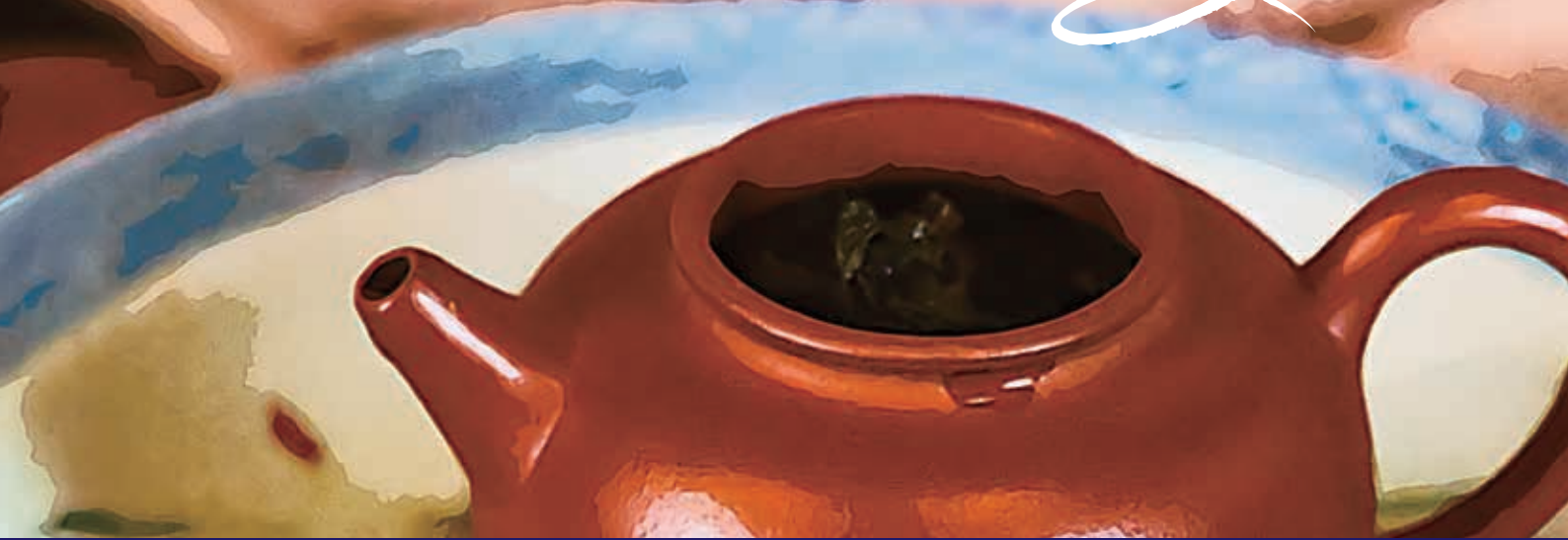
We have some great news for those of you interested in aging some oolong: We have the last of this year's Old Man Dong Ding available in a small quantity of very special jars for aging. We have fifty Yixing jars made from forty-year-old clay, each with 600 grams of Old Man Dong Ding. Amongst Taiwanese oolong teas, none ages better or more famously than Dong Ding; and most tea houses will therefore have one on their menu.

Every one of these limited jars will have a Heart Sutra inside. After cleaning the jars, we will fill them with tea and put in the sutra, sealing the lid with wax. Master Tsai himself has hand-written calligraphy on traditional abundance paper to be put on the outside of every jar, saying "Old Man Dong Ding" in poetic Chinese characters. As the jars are ordered, we will first put them in the meditation hall for two sats, morning and evening, and chant the Heart Sutra over them. In this way, you will have a fine tea that begins its journey with blessings. Unlike puerh, oolong ages well anywhere. It doesn't need a hot, humid climate. In fact, the less humidity the better. All of the proceeds from these fifty jars will go to support the building of our new center, Light Meets Life. Check our website for details!



We have been aging this Old Man Dong Ding for around 5-7 years. Look how much it has already changed!

Feature Story



MASTER TSAI YI TZE LOST, TRAINED, FOUND

-Wu De

Many of you who have been to our center know about the great influence Master Tsai Yi Tze has had on all that we do. He is a teacher, a brother and a great tea sage—one that will surely constellate our sky along with the tea masters of ages past. He shares tea and wisdom with the kind of hospitality that most of us tea lovers have encountered in kindred spirits, as freely shared as the crown of leaves on a tea tree. When you begin to understand how lovingly tea longs to be human, you more easily recognize its spirit shining in the eyes of tea brothers like Master Tsai.

Master Tsai has studied tea for close to thirty years now. During that time, he has become a champion of the environment and very much a hero to all of us here in the Hut. He would bow and humbly step out of the way of our praise, not realizing how deeply we admire all he does, or how often his example is a beacon guiding us onwards.

If ever there was a tea master I long to emulate, it would be this man. His influence on organic farming and sustainable tea preservation has never ceased to inspire me. Master Tsai has done a lot to promote organic teas, helping farmers get certified, convincing them to change to sustainable agriculture, and even buying trees in Wuyi to protect them. He does a lot of work in sustainable tea production that we, as foreigners, could never do. And he does it selflessly and with a modesty that fills the room. We hope that all of you have the chance to meet and learn from him—to be changed by his wisdom and loving-kindness the way we have been.

Master Tsai donated this month's Old Man Dong Ding for all of us to share, so let's raise a cup to him as we are inspired by his life's work...

蔡奕哲





Hints of a Master

Master Tsai was born in Taipei in 1965. Both his parents were teachers at a primary school, and actually met and fell in love through teaching. He has one younger brother, who is also a teacher. But like most Chajin, any conversation about his background quickly shifts to tea. The only part of the story that matters is his beloved Leaf. He still recalls his first tea memory, and recalls it with the far-away-look of someone still crazy after all these years...

At around the age of five, as the seventies were just beginning to hint at a very different Taiwan, a young Yi Tze was spending a lot of time with his grandmother, as many young people do. She was a devout Buddhist, and would take her grandson with her to a small temple in San Xia. He loved the monks there, saying that when he grew up he realized that those monks were actually quite cultivated, with clear hearts and a compassionate selflessness that made everyone feel welcome. He recalls that his grandmother respected them, and that through her he learned to as well.

At the temple, they were offered tea while the adults spoke about Buddhism—a tradition that goes back more than a millennium. You have to wonder how many tea and spirit stories start with such a vignette: a young boy taken out into the mountains to meet monks, tea and quiet, heightened senses, a feeling of a sacred reverence in the ceremonies detected but not fully understood. And that sacred mystery peaking around the edges of his experience so invitingly, like so many adult things, enticed the young boy. Such a scene sets the stage for the life of Tea that follows in a very powerful way, and my imagination begins painting the gaps between his words with all kinds of detail: the old monk's smile, his grandma's weathered hands, the play of light from the

window, the humid forest around the temple...

Master Tsai must have been quite precocious, as he went on to tell me that even at five years old he noticed that the monks served tea with the same grace and kindness to every guest, regardless of their background. We all cherish the memory of a time adults respected us as equals; it's a sentiment that influences all children. But beyond that, there is a deep and powerful insight in the fact that such a young boy even noticed this. There is a very important *koan* in Zen in which the Zen master Zhao Zhou offers tea to different guests alike. (You can read a more in-depth commentary of the *koan* in my book, *Zen & Tea One Flavor*.) It conveys a lot of truth, but most obviously the equality of the tea space, where all our differences are set aside and we can all be monks and nuns for a short while. Master Tsai said that the monks' hospitality still inspires him today.

But let's not forget the tea! Though it is poignant to find out that Master Tsai was introduced to tea in a more sacred setting, it should also come as no surprise that he loved the tea as well. He said that his grandmother would use two bowls to serve him, worried that he'd burn himself the way any good grandmother would. She would add cooler water or tea to a hot bowl and let him drink it. He said that the fragrance was incredible, and helped him settle down. He also quickly noticed that the second, empty bowl held the fragrance longer and deeper, like a sniffing cup; and remembers spending a minute or two closing his eyes and taking deep smells of the fragrant oolong from the empty bowl.

In a montage of a tea master, we have to move from bowl to bowl, skipping over many aspects of a life to get to the leaves once again falling into another pot years later... This time it was when Tea began to speak



to the heart, inviting him to find his destiny.

The devotion of his youth never left Master Tsai, so it should come as no surprise that when we find him next he was in a college Buddhist study group. He studied engineering, which he says has influenced his thinking even until today. "I often have a logical, scientific outlook," he says. Despite the very linear career choice, he often considered becoming a monk. Whilst at his Buddhist study meetings, there was, of course, always tea. Master Tsai found that the tea upset his digestion, which was always sensitive. This would later become a very important fulcrum on which his whole tea journey shifted, but in college it meant that he couldn't join his brothers and sisters in drinking tea while studying. In order to feel a part of the group, he began serving the tea, and found that he loved pouring for the others. Like the monks that inspired his childhood, Master Tsai developed a deep love for the service



Master Tsai was given the first ever certification from the Taiwanese government as a protector of tea mountains. He tirelessly travels the island, and across the Strait, educating farmers and tea lovers on the importance of organic, sustainable farming.





Tea is waiting for me.
Nature is waiting for me...



aspect of tea. That spirit still shines now, though much brighter. There is an even greater joy in sharing tea than there ever could be in drinking it. As we always say, “we aren’t here to learn how to *make* tea, but rather *serve* it.” And though Master Tsai didn’t use our motto when telling us about his past, he embodies it, and obviously has for decades.

Behind Every Teacher

After college, Master Tsai worked for some years as an engineer, got married and had two lovely daughters. But we are Chajin, so our conversation once again returns to Tea, pausing only long enough to steep another cup... In the third important tea session of Master Tsai’s life, his lifelong commitment to environmental protection was born. In

1996, Master Tsai was visiting with a tea producer who offered him tea. He balked, describing how he got sick to his stomach whenever he drank tea, even a little bit. The farmer insisted that *this* tea was different, but Master Tsai knew that his digestive system was very sensitive to tea. After some time, he realized that it was very important to his host that he share some tea, and so he decided to have some out of courtesy, even if it did make him sick. To his shocking surprise, he didn’t feel uncomfortable at all—not even a little bit! Had he changed? Was this tea really special? After a few wonderful cups, each bringing back to him some of the sentiments of the lost fragrance he’d revealed in as a boy, he looked at the farmer in wonder. I imagine a deep smile of satisfaction as the farmer leans back in his chair to tell Master Tsai, “This tea, my friend, is *organic!*”

Master Tsai leans in towards me, smiling: “You see, when I had first started drinking tea in college, the Taiwanese tea industry was going through big changes. In the late seventies and early eighties they started using large quantities of pesticides, weed-killers and chemical fertilizers. And as if that wasn’t bad enough, many of the chemicals sold to Asia were suspect. Some were even found to be incredibly harmful later on. Furthermore, farmers always use such chemicals improperly when they first start out, applying too much of them or too often.” He says that the chemicals in the tea were the source of his discomfort. I agreed, having met many people myself who complain that drinking tea keeps them awake, gives them headaches or upsets their stomach. Oftentimes, these symptoms will completely vanish when they drink clean, organic teas.



With a new passion for tea, and the possibility of enjoying it once again, Master Tsai spent the next four years from 1996 to 2000 casually drinking tea on a more regular basis. He now knew what kind of tea he could drink, and set out on many journeys to various tea mountains seeking out organic farmers. He was surprised by the complete lack of organic tea—from Muzha in the north to Dong Ding and other areas, he couldn't find any clean teas, and many of the teas for sale in shops made him uncomfortable like before. When he would ask the farmers about it, they would scoff, telling him that organic farming was unrealistic, difficult or in many cases emphatically "impossible." He knew this wasn't entirely true since he had friends making organic tea. As he traveled, he felt a growing urgency to do something about the situation. In 2000, he started to become seri-

ous about tea, drinking more and discussing clean tea with his friends who grew organic tea. He says that he started thinking about leaving his job. As the thoughts increased in frequency and urgency, he started discussing it with his wife, until he finally made the leap in 2002.

For the first two years, Master Tsai didn't do very well in tea. "I am not much of a businessman," he says, and we'd agree—his heart is too big, especially in a competitive market like Taiwan. "For two years, until 2004, I also worked in a restaurant cooking. It was a lot less money for me and my family, but somehow felt closer to what I really wanted to be doing." He says that at that time, he focused a lot on the aspects of the restaurant that were related to his dream of opening a tea house. He learned a lot about the role of aesthetics in restaurant décor, food presentation and other arts that

would greatly encourage his mastery of tea and *chaxi*.

For many years, Master Tsai dreamt of a place where he could share his bliss with others. He knew that wisdom is nothing if not shared with the world. Of course, the Dao made way for him and his *Long Cui Fang* (龍翠坊) teahouse was created. The two characters "Long Cui (龍翠)" come from the classical novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*. It was the name of the place where one of the characters, Miao Yu, lived. Miao Yu was the one who understood tea best. Amidst the hustle of Taipei, *Long Cui Fang* is a gem. There is no sign or billboard outside. It is tucked away in a small alley, and known only to those who seek it out. Tea is by appointment only, and when you arrive there is not any tea for sale on display, only spirit. His experience studying aesthetics is definitely evident



when you visit *Long Cui Fang*. Like any great tea space, full of spirit, you are immediately calmed upon entering. Everything is understated and so tastefully decorated to encourage a powerful tea session. And as a result, so many of our guests have had transcendent sessions here.

Nature Bodhisattva

In his quest to champion organic tea, Master Tsai went out into the fields, meeting farmers and their families to make changes. The next part of his story is a montage of him climbing mountains, driving the length of Taiwan and spending endless hours drinking tea, talking to locals about the importance of organic farming for the health of their families, their customers and Taiwan's beautiful mountains. For those of us who know Master Tsai, it's very easy to see him hiking trails, picking tea and laughing with farmers, as they become fast friends. He has worked tirelessly to make shifts in the Taiwanese tea industry, out of his deep love for Tea and Nature.

In 2013, the government of Taiwan proclaimed Master Tsai the first ever Protector of Tea Mountains (社團法人茶山保育協會); it is a well-deserved honor. In Sanskrit, "*bodhi*" means "enlightenment" and "*sattva*" is, amongst other meanings, a "warrior." Master Tsai is definitely a champion of Mother Earth, and a peaceful warrior we can all be inspired by, especially when it comes to his greatest creation, the masterpiece of love that won him this very award...

When we turn the conversation to what I believe to be Master Tsai's opus, his eyes light up like his even brighter smile. "Making organic tea is hard work, and farmers often have difficulty in the beginning." In 2013, Master Tsai began the Tea Mountain Preservation Society (茶山保育協會), which is a brilliant model for sustainable tea production that has the potential to

influence a lot of environmental work worldwide. He said the real insight for the TMPS began years earlier when he was traveling the breadth of Taiwan trying to convince farmers to try organic farming: "I realized very quickly that the key is and always will be the farmers' families. You see, if a farmer struggles to make fine organic tea it won't sell. And if the tea doesn't sell, the farmer's wife or father will question the change. They will criticize him for listening to a city person from Taipei, arguing that they don't understand the farmer's life." Master Tsai said that farmers often have trouble making as much tea for the first few years after they switch to organic farming, and that the quality often suffers as well. "With organic farming they could lose part, or even most of their crop to bugs, especially if their neighbors are spraying, which means more insects will come into their fields." And it takes more skill to process fine organic tea. "Facing the criticism of friends, family and neighbors who are succeeding with inorganic practices requires a much stronger determination than a lot of farmers have, and that means that many of them won't continue even if we do offer to buy their tea!" He says emphatically.

In 2012, Master Tsai had the idea for the Tea Mountain Preservation Society. "I knew that I had to think of a way of changing the farmers' minds. There had to be a way to make them try organic, sustainable tea production that would also satisfy their families, so that we wouldn't have to worry about them going back to conventional farming during the first few years, and the stress of the transition period which may result in less or even lower quality production." The TMPS works on a brilliant system that is so inspiring, and, as we said, has the potential to change a lot of environmental programs around the world: Master Tsai and the other members find a farmer willing to participate and measure



their acreage. They then determine an average amount of tea produced each year, both from interviewing the farmer about past harvests and through the amount of trees per acre. With that data, they can then determine the average amount of money he will earn per year producing tea. After that, they find twenty-five to fifty participants who like that kind of tea, from that area, and divide that amount of money amongst them, signing a five-year contract to contribute that amount every year. Then, they divide the harvest amongst the members based on whatever amount is produced that year. At the end of the five-year period, they can renegotiate with the same or different members. In this way, the farmer is being paid to steward the land, as opposed to earning money based on the weight of tea he or she produces. "Because of this payment system,



the farmer's family can rest assured that he will be paid the same amount, even if there is a drought, pest infestation or if the tea is not processed as well. They also don't need to worry about finding a market for their tea. Their money for the next five years will be secure. Such stability will bring peace of mind and the farmer can then focus on improving the quality of tea. And their family will also be happy!" Master Tsai says with the grin of an inner child.

The brilliance of Master Tsai's program is that it encourages farmers to get away from thinking in terms of amount/weight. Traditional farmers had sacred bonds with Nature, and were grateful for whatever they were given. When we demand an amount of produce from Nature, we often use unhealthy agricultural practices to get what we want, like spoiled children. This

often comes at a price that is detrimental to our Mother Earth. Paying farmers to be stewards of the land, and contractually obligating them to care for it in an organic, sustainable way for five years is a radical shift in philosophy and worldview that can effect amazing changes in the way the farmers relate to their work, and to the way that tea lovers purchase tea. For the farmers, it is a chance to have more stability and the financial freedom of a steady income no matter what amount of tea they produce each year. Master Tsai says that "once they are free of the whole concept of 'pay by weight' they can focus more on the land, and on the quality of the tea." And the tea lovers who support such a project will, of course, feel more connected to the tea they receive by participating in the story of change, visiting the farm and connecting with the farmer personally. They also will

be grateful for whatever amount of tea they receive, and treasure it all the more for the positivity that it represents. Such a tea is not only healthier for the body and the environment; it's healthier for the soul!

You will be pleased to know that we are working on developing a cooperative effort between Global Tea Hut and the Tea Mountain Preservation Society. We are hoping to start two five-year contracts with farmers: one that will be a tea of the month once each year, coming to you all with this magazine; and a second sponsorship that will be open to the participation of all our members, so that those of you who feel inspired to do so can have a more intimate connection with a farmer and receive some special tea as well. Stay tuned for more details about this in the coming issues and on our website!



Four Chapters

Master Tsai divides his life's work into four phases, each of which was important in his journey, and the creation of an organic legacy. The first phase was from the mid to late nineties to the early 2000's. During that time, Master Tsai was traveling the length and breadth of Taiwan trying very hard to convince tea farmers that organic, sustainable tea farming is not only possible, but that there is a market for it. "This was an uphill journey. Many places I went, farmers would sneer at the 'city man' who didn't understand, complaining that it would be impossible to make a living in an organic way." He says with great emotion. Through much effort, Master Tsai did win over more farmers than you would think one man could, but then again that man has one of the most heartfelt, infectious smiles I've ever known.

The second chapter in Master Tsai's tea journey is all about quality. He says that once he found some farmers who would make organic tea, he set out to improve the quality of the tea. He puts it quite plainly: "If organic tea is not as good, or even better than the alternative people still won't buy it." This meant educating himself on tea farming and processing, helping farmers to produce the kind of tea that the customers want to drink. This also meant a deep devotion to the aesthetics of tea and the preparation of fine tea. Master Tsai told me many times that his work in a restaurant to supplement his income helped teach him about décor, ambience and presentation, all of which lend beauty to a *chaxi*. "When guests have a better experience, and the tea is presented well, organic tea is respected the way it should be." We couldn't agree more!

Tea leaves are an unfinished product, which is where a lot of the charm lies; and the reason so many of us are seated around this Hut. Therefore, a lot of the quality

in the final cup depends on the skill (gongfu) of the one brewing. Training himself in tea brewing was also critical. Master Tsai has successfully created a beautiful, tranquil space in Taipei where people can drink fine organic tea prepared by master hands, fulfilling this part of his journey in the process.

The third bend in the road is tea mountain protection. Master Tsai has figured out exciting, progressive ways to protect tea growing areas in Taiwan, Yunnan and even Wuyi Mountain. As we discussed earlier, his preservation efforts have since resulted in the creation of the Tea Mountain Preservation Society (茶山保育協會), which now boasts several members. Master Tsai has recently handed over management of the organization to students so that he can focus on the most recent chapter of his tea book.

Master Tsai has made education the focus of his current work, teaching regular classes to local Taiwanese. He says that this is extremely important, "For as organic tea becomes more popular, and the market for it becomes more and more evident, sharks will be attracted. People will use 'organic' as advertising to sell tea. And some of it will be fake. We must therefore learn to distinguish what real organic tea is." When we asked him the best way to discern organic versus inorganic teas, his answer was simple, but resonant: "meditation." He said that meditation leads to the sensitivity needed to discern what is in tea. He teaches tea brewing classes, along with more detailed courses on appreciating and understanding organic tea.

Master Tsai has begun giving courses in Mainland China, Taipei and sometimes even on the radio in Taiwan. His influence on Chinese tea lovers is great. Though he can't teach most foreigners, he says that Global Tea Hut is one of the most powerful influences on sustain-

able tea in the world, and that as its support grows he sees a real chance for change through the impact this global community can make. He wanted you all to know what an honor it is to share this month's tea with you, and that you are always welcome to come visit him for a cup of tea if you are ever in Taiwan!

The Sage Becomes the Ordinary Man

Master Tsai's card expresses his philosophy best: "Lost, Trained, Found." In his words: "In this loud world, full of such dust, we all lose our heart (*Lost*), after cultivation (*Trained*), we again find our heart (*Found*). One day we naturally breathe in and then out, realizing that we actually never lost anything. Our Heart was always with us!" Sometimes Master Tsai and I have a deep connection, eye to eye. I think we both see Her in the other. During one such meaningful moment his eyes grew deep and far away: "I still have so much left to learn," he said with a heartfelt falter in his voice and the now moist eyes of a deep and lifelong Dao, "Tea is waiting for me. Nature is waiting for me..."

That She is waiting for us to show up more fully, train ourselves and be better people was one of the greatest lessons he'd ever taught me, reminding me just how much I love him and the Tea spirit that shines through him. She is, indeed, waiting for us...





*Watch Master Tsai at his
tea house now!*



www.globalteahut.org/videos



ELEMENTS OF CHAXI

-Shen Su

Over the course of the next several months, we hope to improve your ability to arrange, appreciate and enjoy chaxi arrangements. This will enhance your ability to serve tea. Never underestimate how much the ambience of a tea space can influence your guests' experience.

In our last article on *chaxi* we reviewed the basics, dappling in more surface level, practical concepts, but not forgetting that if we are to master anything we must first master the basics! This month, I'd like to discuss the specific elements of a tea stage in a little more detail. It's been almost two years since we last covered this topic in our magazine, and for any of you who have visited our center more than once, you'll know that things change fast around here! Physical aspects of the center are improved, the way we brew tea is refined, and the center schedule adapts towards more structure, not to mention we as individuals change drastically as we learn to more skillfully wade through the vicissitudes of life. As such, our *chaxi* has shifted over the years to suit the needs of our growing center and with a now much larger Global Tea Hut membership; it's about time to review the elements of *chaxi* once again!

An article on the elements of anything wouldn't be complete without due respect to Nature, for what are the elements if not aspects of Nature Herself? Remember that when you are creating a *chaxi* for your tea ceremony that it is akin to building a temporary altar. A beautiful, thought-out and well-designed *chaxi* honors Nature as we bring

the elements together in a balanced way for a brief period of time. Like an altar, the elements should be balanced and focus one's attention towards the center, where the god or goddess rests, or in our case, where the Tea is made.

When crafting your *chaxi* it is important to first consider the size of your tea space and the number of guests. This will help guide all other decisions. In this way, function comes first and form second. A large tea space with many guests will generally require a far different set of elements than that of a smaller tea space with less guests. It is so important that your *chaxi* function well for the occasion, just as a teapot should primarily function well and then delight the eye. A beautiful teapot that doesn't do its "job" ends up a display piece, and that is a shame. No matter how beautiful the teaware, it must work well first... Clearly, the ideal is a teapot or *chaxi* that both functions well and stirs the aesthetic spirit in all of us! Just as the ideal for food should be that it is nutritious and delicious; but nutrition must come first.

Another important initial decision will be to create a rustic or elegant *chaxi*. This distinction is a good generality to begin with, as most all *chaxi* will either be refined our sim-

ple (*wabi*). At this point, the theme of our tea stage starts to unfold as we envision our *chaxi*. Here are the main elements we'll use to create our arrangements:

Chabu

The *chabu* or tea runner/cloth will often be one of the first elements we look to. It will play a huge roll in determining whether your *chaxi* will be rustic or elegant, simple or refined. *Chabu* can be made of cloth, bamboo, sticks woven together, rattan, straw, and a variety of other materials. They can range greatly in shape, color and pattern. One thing to consider before choosing your *chabu* is what type of tea you will be brewing. For if you brew a dark tea in a large company, then a white, or easily-stained cloth should be avoided (unless you want stains on it), since you will have to pour faster the more guests you have in order to keep the liquor consistent. When you choose a *chabu* it will quite literally lay the foundation for your tea ceremony, as upon it all other elements will find their place. (You could also choose to use a piece of wood or stone, something unique or even nothing.)





Boat or Pillow

With the *chabu* chosen, the next element will play the role of focusing our attention on the center of the stage. This is important to remember, because if the other elements are out of harmony with the theme of a *chaxi*, it can actually draw our attention away from what's most important—the tea! The boat or pillow will act as a surface between the base of your teapot and the *chabu*. Usually we use a boat in gongfu tea as it catches water that is showered over the pot, whereas a pillow is anything to rest your teapot on, more often used in bowl tea.

It is probably important to note here that in gongfu tea, function plays more of an important role than form, which doesn't mean we rule out form and beauty from gongfu tea sessions. Likewise, bowl tea, while seemingly more designed with form in mind, still must con-

sider function. They obviously overlap; we might say that in both gongfu and bowl tea, we start with function and work towards form, but with bowl tea, form is often more pronounced in the end. This has to do with the aim of both brewing methods, but that is a topic for another discussion altogether.

Since this element should focus our attention on the center of the stage, it should therefore contrast the *chabu*, while remaining in harmony with the theme and overall feeling. Sometimes, the simplest rattan trivet is enough to find that balance. Other times, a very elegant, shallow dish is just the right touch.

A noteworthy exception here is when you don't use a *chabu*. One such example would be a larger, flat piece of wood, upon which you wouldn't need the addition of a pillow.

A problem I sometimes forget is to carefully choose the height of the pillow. A pillow that raises the teapot higher can prove difficult to use with a larger company for bowl tea. Flat or shallow pillows are more functional. If you find yourself seated on the ground, however, a raised pillow would prove advantageous to brewing.

Tea Utensils

Scoops and sticks are often used together. The scoop is to display the tea and the stick can then guide the loose leaf into the pot and sometimes act as a spout cleaner should some leaves clog it up. One major difference I've noticed at the center over the years as we serve more people in larger numbers is a general



“The value of a piece of teaware is reflected in the tea it makes and the state of mind it brings to the space.”
—Rikyu.

Jin Shui

shift away from scoops and sticks, unless they are very suited to the theme and don't constrict movement or get in the way. That being said, these will still be important elements for most people as they are extremely practical and can fill space nicely on a large *chabu*. Definitely don't feel forced to use them both. Sometimes, the scoop or dish used to hold the tea is all you will need. As we add more elements to our *chaxi*, the choice becomes increasingly difficult. We need to take into account all the other elements to find balance. In fact, great skill and aesthetic appreciation are required to create a *chaxi* that values emptiness as much as form. More is definitely not always better.

As you may have guessed, there is a huge range of both scoops and sticks from bamboo and copper to ceramics and even horn.

One more element you will want to consider is the waste-water basin, or *jin shui*. This is the vessel into which discarded water goes. Out of respect, we clean our tea and teaware before our guests. It is therefore essential to have a *jin shui*.

In bowl tea, we almost never display the *jin shui* for the entire duration of the tea ceremony, but rather only for the cleansing in the beginning. For the rest of the ceremony, it is generally kept out of site under the table or off to the side. Unlike the other elements, where having more variety to choose from offers great versatility, only one *jin shui* is necessary for all practical purposes. While its role is mainly functional, don't hesitate to use a beautiful *jin shui* in your *chaxi* if you have one. Otherwise, any large, open bowl will do.

In gongfu tea, the *jin shui* is usually present on the tea table, as we warm the pot and cups at each infusion, so it's very important to have nearby. Because it's on display, a smaller, more refined *jin shui* is nice to have. This could mean a larger water basin is needed off to the side to pour off the water from the smaller one.

In this tradition, we find the art of *chaxi* useful in our ceremonial approach to tea. A functional and aesthetic *chaxi* is a great way to welcome and honor your guests to the tea space, and definitely influences everyone's experience. We are fortunate to have this luxury to use as yet another tool towards cultivating a life of Tea. In that light, we craft our *chaxi* and invite you to join us for tea!



Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It also pays homage to the wonderful idea of Tea becoming human and influencing lives. 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 Connor Lind:

We all know the story: First, you're looking for an alternative to coffee. You go to the grocery store and find some tea bags that strike your fancy, or make a trip to your local tea shop and try their strawberry "black" tea (which I now know is actually red tea). It all seems very interesting, but there are just too many categories of tea and it soon becomes overwhelming. You read a few books or blogs and discover how "real" tea drinkers prepare their tea with *gaiwans* and thermometers. Perhaps you order a few oolongs or white teas on the Internet and start inviting your friends over. They commend your mastery and tell everyone they know about their friend who's "really into tea," and now you're the definitive subject matter expert for your inner circle. Soon you discover puerh, buy a few cakes, and want to start a blog of your own. Tea. What a beverage! This was my story, and the story of those who had taught me about tea in the States. Before my first journey to Taiwan, I was locked into this paradigm. I hardly allotted any time for Tea Sage Hut, maybe one or two nights maximum during my epic two-week pilgrimage to the Island of Tea. Why would I? The tea was "out there." It was on the slopes of alpine peaks, waiting to be conquered and consumed...

The forecast for my trip to Taiwan was rain. Lots of it. Somehow, in my meticulous preparation for a tea-soaked escapade, I missed the fact that it rains in Taiwan. With a change of plans, I decided to nonetheless begin my trip at Tea Sage Hut, and inquire how I could still wander about and buy some tea once I got there. When I finally arrived at Tea Sage Hut, I was informed we would begin with an early-morning sitting meditation. We followed with a silent breakfast while the team prepared the main room for a tea ceremony. OK, I'm in Taiwan and tea is being served. *Let's see what they've got.*

The moment Shen Su began serving bowl tea, I was spellbound. Simultaneously captivated by the spirit of the ceremony, and horrified by the previous errors of my ways, I sat still and drank bowl after bowl. *This is the first time I'm drinking tea,* I thought to myself. One moment, one sip changed everything!

I spent years treating tea as a commodity: Something I just had to figure out; something to buy and taste and





compartmentalize. At Tea Sage Hut, I realized that I was not there to study tea. Tea was there to teach me about myself! Tea Sage Hut shared practical knowledge about tea, teaware, and preparation, but with a critical reverence for tea and the natural world. This subtle yet powerful cultivation of humility was later expounded by Wu De's description of Rikyu's Four Virtues of Tea, which have since remained the guiding principles for all aspects of my life. Without a shred of doubt, I spent the remainder of my two-week trip at Tea Sage Hut!


The folks at Tea Sage Hut put their whole being into every cup. The tea feels and tastes different because it *is* different. Call it mastery or not, but with Global Tea Hut, you're in the presence of love for life itself. Undoubtedly, I loved tea before I visited the Hut. I wouldn't have traveled halfway around the world if I didn't. What the Hut taught in such beautiful simplicity, however, was how easy it was to obscure love with self-centeredness.


I'm forever grateful for my time there, and am looking forward to meeting the rest of the Teawayfarers in this wonderful community...


Inside the Hut

 In Los Angeles, there are Global Tea Hut events often. To reserve a spot, email Colin at livingteas@gmail.com. The community in LA also has a Meetup 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 for more info. In Madrid, Spain, GTH member Helena hosts a monthly GTH session. Contact her at helenaharo@hotmail.com.


 In Moscow, Russia, there are frequent tea events. Contact Tea Hut member Ivan at teeabai@gmail.com or Denis at 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.


 In Melbourne, Australia, Lindsey hosts Friday night tea sessions at 7/7:30 PM. Contact her at 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.


 In Tallinn, Estonia, *Chado* tea shop holds events most Friday evenings at 7 PM. Contact events@firstflush.ee for more details. In Tartu, there are tea gatherings held every Wednesday evenings. Contact 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.

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

 In Helsinki, Finland, there are regular tea sessions. To participate, contact Ville at ville.sorsa@helsinki.fi.


 In State College, Pennsylvania the Penn State Tea House holds biweekly tea meditations. Contact Tea Hut member Teddy Smith at txs397@psu.edu for more information.


 In South East Queensland, Australia, Connor holds regular tea ceremonies. For more information contact him at connor.goss1@gmail.com.


 In London, UK, GTH member Lera holds regular tea sessions on Tuesday evenings at 8 PM and Thursday afternoons at 1 PM, as well as other tea gatherings at various locations throughout the month. Contact her at withtlovers@gmail.com for more details.

Center News

 Before you visit, check out the center's website (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 all going fast, and two are already sold out, 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!

 Please make some comments under the new videos and let us know what you think of the multi-media Global Tea Hut. Does it facilitate better understanding of the topics? How can we improve them or the magazine. We want to hear from you!

January Affirmation

Am I resolved to grow this year?

We all need to surrender to our own process, to let go of the things that are holding us back. Am I devoted to growing and changing? Can I let go of that which does not serve my highest self?



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The best tea magazine in the world, sharing rare organic teas, a magazine full of tea history, lore, translations, processing techniques and heritage, as well as the spiritual aspects of Cha Dao. And through it all we make friends with fellow tea lovers from around the world...

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