



# Global Tea Art

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

June 2016



茶道

GONGFU TEA & BOWL TEA





## ORDINARY TREASURE

One of the topics we get asked about the most is the differences between gongfu and bowl tea, when to choose each of them and how. In this issue, we'll explore the relationship between these brewing methods in depth. And how far would such a journey go without a tea that could be brewed either way like the 2004 Zhengpin cake!

*Love is  
changing the world  
bowl by bowl*

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# From the Editor

In June we move into the hotter, summer months. It may seem strange, but we drink as much tea in the summer as we do in the winter, though we of course migrate to lighter tea: green and white tea, sheng puerh as well as lightly oxidized oolong. Halfway through the year, we hold a session outside in the cooler evening to celebrate the pinnacle of the solar calendar, and another movement towards the latter half of the year.

We now enter the fifth moon in the Chinese calendar, called the Pomegranate Moon. The fifth day of the fifth moon is a very important Chinese holiday called “*Duan Wu Jie*,” or more commonly “Dragon Boat Festival (*Long Chuan Jie*).” In the Chinese world there are Dragon Boat races on this day, and since the 1970s racing has become an official sport celebrated most around this holiday. Families make *zhong zhi* (sticky rice steamed in bamboo triangles), which represent the rice the people of Chu threw in the water to save Qu Yuan. Five-colored strings are also often worn, especially by children, for good luck. You could also try making some delicious vegetarian *zhong zhi* if you can find the ingredients. They are fantastic with some mushrooms, peanuts and lotus seeds steamed in the center of the rice!

Things are going great at the Center. Our new garden is thriving and “Farming Fridays” have turned into a huge success. We have an altar near our vegetables and are growing organic, biodynamic food for guests. We are treating this small garden as a learning experience for when we build a larger farm at Light Meets Life, our future Center. Our aim is to grow as much of our own food as possible and eventually maybe all that we eat. We are also growing tea, but only for educational purposes. Several of our large-leaf seeds sprouted this year, which is exciting since the rate of success is rather low.

A big part of what makes Global Tea Hut so great is the community behind it. We encourage you to reach out to us and let us know how we can include *you* more. We want to acknowledge and see each and every one of you as beautiful tea friends. We very much want you to feel at home here, amongst these pages, drinking these teas and then visiting our tea spaces if you get the chance. It is also helpful if you continue to write about us, blog about us and share this experience with your friends. The larger this community gets, the more realized our new Center will be. And if you don't plan on utilizing our Center, now or in the future, you can still connect to each other and share questions about the tea of the month or experiences sharing it.

This is the perfect time to step outside and share some tea in the park, even offering tea to strangers. We often serve roadside tea at the Center. It is a great way to learn about tea, share presence and loving kindness and celebrate the old adage that “through tea we make friends.” There is no agenda in serving roadside tea. You aren't trying to convert anyone or share wisdom. You don't have to be a teacher and know about all things tea. In serving tea, you really learn all there is to know about tea—from the practical details of handling water and pots, bowls and cups, to the spiritual truths that tea inspires. We have to actualize all the insights we've been discussing. Your aim in this is simple: rest in a present, clear and open mind with a heart full of loving kindness. Share tea. That's it. Give it a try and we think you will find that it is something you enjoy greatly.

One of things we are asked about most is brewing methods. What is the difference between gongfu and bowl tea? When do you use one or the other? Why do you brew tea in these ways and where do these traditions come from? We thought we would devote an entire issue to exploring bowl tea and gongfu tea, including their histories, uses and even *chaxi* for each. We hope that this issue helps you understand the differences between bowl tea and gongfu tea and provides you with some practical advice you can use to improve your brewing.



## Further Reading

- 1) *The Production & Processing of Puerh Tea*, Issue 32, Sept. 2014, pp. 15-24
- 2) *The Three Eras Of Puerh Tea*, Issue 32, Sept. 2014, pp. 29-36
- 3) *The Tea Growing Regions of Yunnan*, Issue 32, Sept. 2014, pp. 11-12
- 4) *Tea of the Month*, Issue 2, March 2012, pp. 2-3
- 5) *A Clear Cup*, Issue 50, March 2016, pp. 21-24

# TEA OF THE MONTH

**T**his month, we needed a tea that was perfectly suited for both bowl and gongfu tea brewing, to suit the theme of this issue. We thought about it for a long time and kept returning to one of the greatest gems of the Newborn Era of puerh, the 2004 Changtai *Zhengpin*. But how could we send that tea out? As you will see, one of the things that makes this cake so beautiful is that the puerh boom and the mainstream market skipped over this tea, making it a very affordable choice at the time. Even now, though it has increased in value, its inflation has not been commensurate with other teas produced during the same period. Though it is less expensive than other ten- to twelve-year-old teas, it is by no means within the range of what we can afford to send to so many hundreds of people around the world! And yet, it *is* the perfect choice...

Eventually, we visited our old friend Mr. Liang, whom many of you will remember as the guide for our 2013 Global Tea Hut trip to Yunnan. We told him about the topic of this issue and that we were hoping to offer the *Zhengpin* to all of you. He smiled, building anticipation for a silent cup or two, and then agreed to donate as much as we needed so that this month would be an abundant one. Whether you

prepare this tea in a cup or a bowl, be sure to raise one to Mr. Liang, whose generosity has made this month's adventure possible!

If we are wise, we learn to revere the ordinary love and support of the people and things that encourage and sustain us every day over the special, extraordinary situations and people that pass through our lives briefly. For example, we love the water that we gather from the spring each week at the Center far more than some of the best waters we've had when traveling on the Tibetan plateau. Yes, the waters up there were better, but these waters nourish all our tea, week in and week out. Similarly, there are teas that we have drunk so many times over the years, growing a deep and lasting intimacy that makes them much dearer to our hearts than the very special, rare teas we only drink on special occasions. We often take such things for granted, even though we know better deep down. This month's cake is one such tea—a tea we've shared hundreds of times, and in every way possible: sidehandle, gongfu, boiled and shared roadside to passersby, etc. And that's why we call it "Ordinary Treasure." Some of you who have been around long enough will even remember that this tea, mixed with the herb Qi Lan (which we

also love to add to it) was our second ever Global Tea Hut Tea of the Month—way back in the "newsletter" days of early 2012.

As a brief intro, and because we all need to return to the basics and refine our understanding, let's discuss puerh tea as a contextual background for some deeper explorations into Changtai, Yiwu and this cake in particular.

All puerh comes from Yunnan, the birthplace of tea. There are two kinds of puerh: sheng and shou. Sheng is the more traditional, greener kind of puerh. It is picked, withered, fired and sun-dried. Sheng tea is then naturally fermented over time, and the older the better. It miraculously mellows from green, powerful, astringent tea to a deep and dark elixir. It also changes from "cool" to "hot," in the Traditional Chinese Medical sense of the words. Shou tea goes through an additional step after the ordinary steps listed above. It is piled under thermal blankets in order to artificially ferment the tea. Aborigines in Yunnan had many ways to turn their tea to warm (again in the TCM sense) including baking, roasting, or even burying it in bamboo.







Ordinary Treasure



Yiwu, Yunnan



2004 Sheng Puerh Tea



Han Chinese



~1200m

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



[www.globalteahut.org/videos](http://www.globalteahut.org/videos)





# 易武山

However, the modern method of piling the tea was developed and then commercialized in 1973 by big puerh factories in an attempt to reproduce the amazing effects that time and natural fermentation have on tea. Of course, they only succeeded in inventing a new genre of tea, rather than actually achieving what nature does over such long periods of time. Succinctly, the difference is that sheng puerh is left green, which means it ages naturally over time (which takes seventy years to reach full maturity) and shou puerh is artificially fermented in piles (which takes forty-five to sixty days to fully ferment the tea). This month's tea is a sheng tea: picked, withered, fired and sun-dried. It dates to the year 2004 and is from the Yiwu mountain region.

The most distinctive steps in puerh production are the *sa qing* (kill-green) and sun-drying phases. The firing, or "*sa qing*," comes after withering. It is done to arrest the oxidation begun in the withering and to "kill" certain enzymes in the tea that make it bitter, which is why it may also be translated as "de-enzyming." In puerh tea, the de-enzyming is done at a lower temperature for a shorter duration because some of these enzymes are important for the fermentation of the tea, which happens in post-production (either naturally or artificially). This also ensures that heat-resistant spores will survive and flourish, as the bacteria and mold are the source of the fermentation. The sun-drying also facilitates and encourages fermentation by reactivating the microbial

worlds that live in the leaves, going about their days in *Horton Hears a Who* style.

## Yiwu

The Yiwu tea-growing area is located in the Yiwu Township of Mengla County. The greater Yiwu region encompasses the four townships of Mansa, Mahei, Yitian and Manluo. In ancient times, local ethnic Bulang people were the primary growers of tea there. By the end of the Qing Dynasty, large numbers of Han merchants had arrived in Yiwu and begun growing tea. They founded businesses to engage in the tea trade, establishing a collection point among the six famous tea mountains. In practice,



# XISHUANGBANNA

## YUNNAN



the Yiwu tea district also includes Mansa Tea Mountain. Today, the Yiwu tea-growing areas are approximately 15,000 *mu* (1 *mu* = 1/6 acre) in size and produce approximately 600 tons of tea per year. These areas lie between 820 and 2,000 meters in elevation and have a very marked topography. Yearly rainfall is between 1,000 and 1,800 mm. There are between 1,600 and 2,000 hours of sunshine per year and a relative humidity of 80%. The weather is warm and humid all year round with no frost, making it one of the most ideal tea-growing regions in Yunnan. Yiwu has become the iconic area of Xishuangbanna, the most prominent of the four tea-producing prefectures of Yunnan (the others being Puerh, Lincang and Dehong).

Because there is so much dishonesty in the puerh market, learning to taste the regions is important for the ardent explorer. Though Lao Ban Zhang village produces only approximately seven tons a year, as much as three thousand tons will be sold with labels declaring them “Authentic Lao Ban Zhang Tea.” Yiwu is a very good place to start one’s tasting journey, as it has some very distinct characteristics, all of which you can look for in this month’s tea. Yiwu tea is very thick—perhaps the thickest of all puerh. The liquor is viscous. When you look in the cup, it has the appearance of honey or oil, with a very thick surface that reflects the illusion that it is much more syrupy than it actually is. Yiwu tea transforms better than many teas, which means the flavors change quickly from astringent to bitter,

then to *gan* (fresh mintiness which is more of a sensation than a flavor), and then from sour to sweet. Yiwu tea also coats the mouth and throat a bit more than most puerh teas. These two qualities, of transformation and coating, are not, ultimately, defining, however, since many fine teas will share these characteristics. Nevertheless, they are overtly present in Yiwu teas. Finally, Yiwu tea is most easily recognized by a raw honey aftertaste. The aftertaste reminds one of the kind of honey produced by wild bees that take pollen from lots of different flowers—rich, raw and sweet with hints of grass and hay. Fine Yiwu tea will have all the Ten Qualities we discussed in previous issues, and when it is right it is *really* right. Fine Yiwu tea is among the best Yunnan has to offer.



Since the puerh boom, much of the Yiwu region has become over-commercialized and the quality of tea has decreased as a result. Generally speaking, 2004 was the last year before this major shift. Of course, there are exceptions on both sides: factories/farms that had shifted towards less environmentally ethical principals before 2004 and great, sustainable teas after 2004, like many of the wonderful old-growth cakes that come out of Gua Feng Zhai, for example. Still, there was a change around this time, as more big factories built plantations and began using pesticides, weed-killers and chemical fertilizers to meet the growing demand for puerh tea. Many of these unhealthy practices started earlier, but only in earnest after the mid-2000s when the mar-

ket was large enough to warrant the expense of such farming and the agrochemicals that go with it. This doesn't mean that all pre-2004 tea is clean, but there is a much better chance that it is. And it most certainly is if it comes from older gardens. Actually, Changtai, as a brand and a factory, exemplifies this change quite well, as it began by producing small runs of extraordinary old-growth puerh from Yiwu.

### Changtai Tea Factory

The Changtai Tea Company started with the *Yichang* label, which took the puerh world by storm and carried a small, local Yiwu factory to stardom. The 1999 *Yichang* cake is still a benchmark of the best Yiwu

has to offer. Immediately after its rise to success, Changtai established a new factory in the Xiao Jinggu tea region at the end of 2000. Starting in 2001, they released a series of Changtai Label teas, using the some of the best quality raw tea from large trees in the Jinggu region. In 2003, they released the *Round Clouds and Mist* series, using materials from the Menghai region. Even though they started with relatively strong bitterness and astringency, over the course of these ten years of aging, many of these teas have already started to have an old Menghai flavor. The *Teas Under Heaven* series, the *Chen Hong Chang* series, the *Jinggu* label series, and the *Origins of Si and Pu* series also have some relatively decent examples within them.







*Above is the newer Changtai factory in Jinggu. Below is tea being steamed and sun-dried on the mountain in the traditional way. After many experiments, we have found that tea processed completely at origin is better than tea shipped to a factory for production.*





Starting in 2003, Changtai started growing as a company and factory, and, as with most things, quality decreased as quantity increased. It is now one of the largest puerh factories in the world, and we don't own any of their teas from 2004 onwards. In fact, you could say that their peak was that first, amazing cake in 1999, followed by some very nice Yiwu cakes, then some decent series from other regions, ending their streak of really fine, quality teas in 2003. Not every Changtai tea made between 1999 and 2003 is a gem. Many are just decent. Some of them are neglected prizes, as they are often organic, and sometimes include old-growth raw material. And aside from the 1999 *Yichang Hao*, many early Changtai cakes are quite affordable compared to other cakes of equal age.

One of the things that makes early Changtai tea special is that they processed old-growth tea in very traditional ways, including using wood-fired stoves to create the steam used to compress the cakes. Through several experiments, we have found that tea produced on the mountain where the tea comes from, with steam for compression from the same water that the trees drank from, will be better than when the tea is transported to a factory and blended/compressed there.

In the end, Changtai is a tea business like any other. It is not worthwhile to criticize brands or companies; rather, we should focus on the behavior itself. As tea lovers, we can't be brand-champions. Here at the Center, we are environmental champions. We seek quality tea made in sustainable ways. We are on the side of Tea Herself. Some early Changtai products are nice and made well, with clean tea, but their modern practices are not as commendable. Still, it is through inclusion that we change the world, not exclusion. We invite Changtai to join in the sustainable revolution! Being against anything will only increase the separation that is

the world's greatest problem. Let us therefore awaken all our tea brothers and sisters, and bowl by bowl, cup by cup, we can indeed change!

Though our Tea of the Month, "Ordinary Treasure," does not fall into the years when Changtai was producing its highest quality puerh, it is an overlooked gem. It is real Yiwu tea, with some old-growth blended in, cultivated without any chemicals and processed in traditional ways. The mainstream puerh market passed it over, as an onslaught of new teas were being produced by many factories at the time. Even now, many puerh lovers don't know about this tea. And that, ultimately, is one of the main reasons why it is such a great tea: *it is affordable!* The inflation of puerh tea, especially aged cakes, has taken some of the spirit out of tea, making it harder to enjoy, share or use in offering hospitality to one's guests. Having a nice puerh that is more than ten years old, clean and relatively cheap means you can enjoy this tea often, share it and even put some aside to age. It is, therefore, a treasure indeed!

## Tea of the Month

Every five to seven years, puerh tea turns a corner in its aging process. This tea has been stored rather dryly and has therefore just begun to turn the second corner into adolescence. Tea of this age starts to have hints of age, with spiced, mulled flavors, like sandalwood and mahogany. It has changed a lot over the years, taking on a richer, oilier depth as the years have passed. Like all good Yiwu tea, Ordinary Treasure is full-bodied and thick, with a rich and sweet aftertaste. It coats the mouth. Whether you brew it gongfu or in a bowl, Ordinary Treasure has a deep and serene Qi that relaxes you, pacifying the day. It is great drunk in the afternoon, especially if you have a few hours to relax with some friends.

We hope that this month's tea is a wonderful chance to share some slightly aged puerh with your loved ones. You can learn a lot about how puerh changes over time by drinking examples stored in different conditions and at different ages. This tea is a good standard for ten-year-old tea, as there are much finer and much worse teas from the time period. Let that remind us that some of the most amazing things in life are such because they are ordinary, day-to-day friends! And this 2004 *Zhengpin* is one of our all-around best friends.

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*The da piao, or "large trademark ticket" within every cake, says that the tea is high-quality and made from old-growth raw material harvested in Yiwu.*

*Notice the sheen on the cake. The traditional character for tasting tea, "pin (品)" is composed of three "mouths," symbolizing that we enjoy tea with our mouth, nose and eyes. And in fact, you can learn to discern fine tea with these three senses. Master Lin always says that you can tell quality with the eyes. Fine puerh looks like combed hair. It has plenty of buds, as well. And because the tea is juicy, the leaves resist the compression. The sheen of the cake should be uniform; if the light pools in a glossy way, it means a lower-quality tea. This amazing tea glows beautifully, indeed!*

*The cake has also aged beautifully. The buds are a bright orange and the leaves get darker each year.*







# Ordinary Treasure

*Like so many of you, we also sit down with friends to share the Tea of the Month. And though we drank this Ordinary Treasure 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:*

茶 I found this tea incredibly energetic, especially brewed gongfu style. The fifth infusion eased me into a grounding, deep meditative emptiness, but by the tenth infusion I felt light, fluid, airy and active.

**-Cecelia Lau, United Kingdom**

茶 After climbing one thousand stone stairs to fetch spring water, we returned to sit for a gongfu session. The Yiwu tea seemed to move across my palate with speed, not lingering on any specific note. The loving nourishment I found in this tea was noticeable, leaving me feeling warm and supported. I had a similar feeling the previous day when we steeped it with a side-handle: The tea was less refined, but still held that same expansive motherly nourishment. My conclusion of the two separate brews is that I like this tea lots.

**-Max Nordemann, USA**

茶 As I bring the cup up and breathe in, a subtle warmth fills my nose. I know I will need to go down to the tea, so I inhale deeply. There is an expansion of aroma into the forehead. After finishing my first cup I sit quietly and realize a tingling at the back of my nasal cavity. Flavor and aroma seem to be moving from my mouth into my nose in a way I have not noticed before. This is one of the Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea that had experientially eluded me until now. It seems this tea not only coats the mouth, but the aroma coats the nasal cavity as well!

**-Sam Gibb, New Zealand**

茶 When we drank this tea as bowl tea, I felt the dawn and the sun slowly rising. I was sitting next to a softly rushing river, the smell of campfire smoke lingering in the air. I felt rested, cozy and quiet. When we drank it gongfu, it was resilient, lightly splashing up to my upper palate. The five flavors fully encompassed my mouth. Both were lovely sips. When brewing this tea gongfu, I was able to recognize the pungent honey after-taste that is characteristic of Yiwu tea, which came on more prominently in the later steepings. I often seem to miss this in bowl tea.

**-Tian Wu, USA**



**Check out the video  
on brewing tips now!**

[www.globalteahut.org/videos](http://www.globalteahut.org/videos)







## Brewing Tips

**T**his month, the most important thing you will need advice on is whether you should brew this tea gongfu or side-handle (bowl tea). Choosing your brewing method will set the tone for the session, be instrumental in composing your chaxi and will determine the way the tea feels and tastes as well. There are several approaches we use to decide which brewing method is appropriate, but you can also use your intuition.

At the Center, the most obvious determining factors for choosing between gongfu and bowl tea are the number of guests and quality of the tea. Gongfu tea is much more suited to intimate gatherings. Unless we are teaching a class, we would never choose gongfu tea for a gathering of more than five or six people. This makes bringing the cups in and pre-warming them a bit of a chore, and the time it takes to do so starts to influence the tea, which can easily oversteep and/or cool down. We do often brew gongfu tea for more people, but only educationally. Also, the quality and kind of tea are determining factors for us. Tea above a certain quality demands gongfu brewing (with rare exceptions). This is because gongfu brewing brings out the best in a tea, and very rare treasures that won't have many more sessions on this Earth deserve to be brewed with all the skill we can muster. Certain oolong teas also are better brewed gongfu, as oolong tea and gongfu tea grew up together and are lifelong lovers. That said, we do like to throw a few balls of oolong in a bowl and watch them open!

Aside from quality and the number of guests, you can also decide which brewing method to use based on the energy of the session. If you are trying to create a more ceremonial, meditative space, you will want to choose bowl tea, but if the tea is the focus and you want to treasure each sip, gongfu is the obvious choice. Don't feel like every tea session needs to be silent or reverential. Tea is very much about connecting to others as well. Sometimes we have tea to make new friends or celebrate our old ones, to resolve issues and to have long, important discussions with our loved ones. In such a tea session, where the tea is not the focus, but rather a background comfort that helps create heart space, a simple tea in a bowl is the obvious choice, especially since gongfu brewing demands more attention. There are other ways and means of choosing whether to brew this month's tea, or any tea, gongfu or bowl, but these will help you get started!



# BOWL & TEA

## UNDERSTANDING BREWING METHODOLOGY

茶人: Wu De

They say that the tea master Rikyu became enamored with the man who delivered fish to his home. In those days, the upper class like Rikyu rarely mingled with the peasantry. But Rikyu was a Chajin. He made it clear to the household that any time the fisherman came, he wanted to be there to receive the fish personally. After some years, the two became close. Then, one day, Rikyu noticed that the fisherman had something on his mind. He thought that he needed help, so he asked him what the matter was. The poor fisherman looked at his feet, nervous: “It’s just that...well... I know you cannot, and would not... but my wife and I, well...we want to invite you to our home for tea.” Rikyu smiled. Of course he would go. On the appointed day, Rikyu took his highest student—to honor the fisherman, letting him know he was in no way embarrassed by their

relationship. They drank some tea and had a small meal. After they left, and the gate swung shut, Rikyu stopped, sighed and exclaimed: “That was one of the most transcendent tea sessions of my entire life!” They walked on silently, until the student couldn’t take it anymore. His confusion complete, he stopped his teacher in askance: “Master, I do not understand. That man did everything wrong! He nearly dropped the tea bowl twice, spilled the tea powder and did not whisk it properly, either. And those are just a few of his mistakes. How could that have been one of the most transcendent tea sessions of your life?” Rikyu’s brow furrowed and he looked his student deeply in the eyes: “That man did not invite us to his home to demonstrate his tea brewing skills!”

The story ends there, but if we sketch it forward on our own, we can find a deep and lasting parallel for Zen, as well as the relation-

ship between bowl tea and gongfu tea. For, you see, the very next day we can be sure that Rikyu would be found scolding his students for their mistakes. Imagine his stern face, rebuking that same student for holding the whisk improperly. And yet, even with a mastery founded on decades of practice and insight, Rikyu still found the radiance in the fisherman’s simple tea. That is the spirit of tea, and the way that bowl tea and gongfu tea work together: *refining our skills and keeping us grounded in what tea is really about.*

If you can, like Rikyu, master tea without losing the spirit of simplicity and the beginner’s mind, you will indeed have found the Dao of Cha. There is more tea information to study than a lifetime permits. And even near the end of my life, I hope to be improving and growing my brewing skills. Master Lin often says that the highest gongfu is when we can differentiate every sin-





# GONGFU TEA

*We have five brewing methods in our tradition, which can make tea brewing seem intimidating. That is why so many of you ask us to explain the major brewing methods we use, when to use them and how they relate to each other. For many of us, this will be one of the most useful articles we have ever published. And all of the photos in this article are of this month's tea!*

gle leaf, “for Heaven makes no two leaves alike!” I believe that part of his message in that teaching is that the “highest” gongfu is unachievable, and we must therefore practice humility, on the one hand, and strive to continue learning throughout our lives on the other. That there is always more to learn keeps us open, receptive and unpretentious in our practice. It also keeps things interesting and inspiring, so that we can continue to approach our tea practice with enthusiasm, even after much effort and growth. “Still in love after all these years!” is another of my favorite sayings Master Lin is fond of. I, too, fall more and more in love with the Leaf each year. This powerful relationship between a growing mastery and a connection to the spirit, simplicity and love with which one began is facilitated in our Center by the relationship between bowl tea and gongfu tea. Let us, therefore, discuss

each one individually and then turn to how they work together in conjunction.

## **Bowl Tea**

Bowl tea is about simplicity, meditation and sacred space. Bowl tea is for equanimity, so that we learn to turn off the qualitative mind and rest in a higher state of meditation with our tea. On the absolute level, quality is not real. If you take ten grams of the most expensive thousand-dollar tea and ten grams of simple two-dollar tea and put them next to one another in the forest, they turn into twenty grams of dirt. And the frogs don't care which was which. Neither does the sun. Quality is mind-made; it's subjective. In its essence, tea is leaves, heat and water. There is a great power in being able to rest in a sacred space with a bowl

of tea, sharing ceremony with others.

As ceremony, bowl tea connects us to Nature, ourselves and others. When we drink tea in a sacred, ceremonial space we feel a part of the Nature that gave us the tea—as it streams into us and becomes our body, mind and soul. The water in a bowl of tea was literally in the clouds just weeks ago. And the tea is different every season, so we are drinking the weather. The trees connect us to the minerals of the Earth and the light of Heaven, through the sun, moon and starshine they photosynthesize. This is tea as medicine, as it was drunk for thousands of years by aboriginal shamans—long before anyone began refining its processing or preparation. In such a tea space, we also find the opportunity to rest in Stillness, to be meditative and withdraw from the world to an inward state.



Without a viable connection to one's own intuitive wisdom, there is little chance at living skillfully, or mastering any art. We need meditation like we need air. And peace is really as simple as a bowl of tea. It is a natural happening. You can't struggle for peace—that would be like trying to calm water by slapping the ripples away. It is in the water's nature to purify. Even the most turbid water will clarify if you but leave it at rest, in stillness. As soon as the water stops moving, it naturally starts to separate from that which it is not—the mud sinks to the bottom and the water becomes clear. When we sit still, our hearts similarly separate from all that is not real. All our dramas, fears and egoic dilemmas sink down, as the present moment rises up pure and clear. Such clarity affords us the opportunity to acknowledge what is truly important in our lives, to have the perspective to map our journey, make righteous decisions and

be more celebratory of our one and only life on this Earth! A bowl of tea can be a catalyst to such meditative, clear, present and pure space.


The ceremony of sharing tea freely, as an act of kindness—pure hospitality—also facilitates connection with our loved ones. It allows us to make new friends and celebrate the old. In a calm heart space, we can really see the other. We can look into each other's eyes without all the distractions of technology or life. Whether we converse or simply sit together in silence, such a space allows us to really see the other. Such empathy brings harmony between people.

When I first started traveling and teaching tea in the early 2000s, I would prepare gongfu tea for people. If I returned a year later and asked people about their tea practice, many would exclaim, "What tea practice?!" I realized that gongfu tea was inaccessible to many of them. There are too many imple-

ments, too much complication. Bowl tea is accessible. In its simplest form, you only need a bowl of any kind and some hot water. Simply put the leaves in the bowl and add water. The ceremonial simplicity of bowl tea makes it the perfect place to enter the tea journey. And the soul of one's practice is much more important than the skills, anyway. Learning about tea is easier these days, with magazines like this one. Even the skills needed to prepare fine tea are there, if we practice them. But all art must start with the soul.

All the skill in the world is vacuous if it is in service of ego. Would you rather see Anthony Hopkins alone on a stage performing his favorite scenes or *Transformers Seven*? Hopefully you answered the former. But *Transformers Seven* required much more skill to produce. The credits literally take ten minutes to pass by, because hundreds, if not thousands,





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of highly-skilled masters were involved in its creation. There were master lighting technicians, cameramen, CGI masters, and so on. And that doesn't include the second tier of experts, who engineered the cameras, computers or software, for example. And yet, it all lacks the soul of Anthony Hopkins' performance. This is true of any art. A similar analogy might be found in comparing Bob Dylan alone on a stage with an acoustic guitar and a harmonica, brimming with soul, to a pop diva surrounded by fireworks, lasers, highly choreographed dances, elaborate costumes, etc. The soul separates art from entertainment.

There is an old Daoist story in which a master archer was in the town square slapping arrow after arrow into the bullseye. A crowd gathered, cheering him on. But the proud archer noticed that the local oil vendor, whose cart was nearby, was ignoring him. He resented this, stomping over to the cart to scold

the poor oil vendor. "Hey! Can't you see my skills? Haven't you noticed how many bullseye shots I just made in a row? You didn't even applaud me!" The oil vendor calmly replied, "I'm not impressed." The archer was offended and demanded an explanation. "You are skilled, indeed, but I am not impressed. You achieved that through years of practice. If others practiced archery as often as you, they would also have such skill. Without the soul of archery, such skill is meaningless." The archer scoffed, "What would you know about it? You're just an oil vendor!" The oil vendor deftly grabbed one of the gourds in which he sold oil and placed it on the counter. He then covered the small opening of the gourd with a coin—the old Chinese kind with the square hole in the center. And with ease and grace, he then lifted a ladle full of oil and from several feet up poured an elegant stream of oil through the small square of the coin and into

the gourd, filling it without spilling a single drop. He even shook the ladle, causing the last few glistening drops to fall cleanly, wondrously right into the gourd. He then capped the gourd and handed it to the now-agape archer...

In order to learn to love tea, and to work with Her as plant medicine, we must learn to speak the language of Nature. In fact, tea is an interpreter of all the Nature wisdom around us. She helps us to understand what Mother Nature is saying to us. In order to get at the soul of tea, it is better if we start out simply; if we remove all the human elements in the tea, and reduce it—as much as possible—to just leaves, heat and water, communication is easier. In bowl tea, we look at the leaves, heat and water directly, unadorned—eye to eye and soul to soul. This helps us to learn to feel and understand the deeper, spiritual aspects of Tea that should motivate our journey in Cha Dao.



It is important to learn how to receive and drink tea before one learns how to prepare it for others. Just as a burgeoning musician should first learn to appreciate, listen to and love music before playing, we must learn to take in the medicine, and be healed by it, before we can start participating in the healing of others. And that is a huge part of why we start with bowl tea in our tradition. Drink bowl tea until She talks to you, is the recipe we use around here. And when Tea does speak to you, you'll know it!

You may ask why we would then continue drinking bowl tea even after we have started the dialogue with Tea. Why continue with bowl tea if it is just for beginners? After learning the language of Tea spirit, why not move on to more advanced levels, to the finer cups of tea that gongfu brewing facilitates? The answer is that bowl tea helps us to stay free of pretension. Too much skill and mastery can

make you a snob. Like Rikyu, it is important to stay connected to the simple and pure essence of tea, so that we won't miss opportunities to connect with others who are sharing tea with us from their heart, and not out of a skill. Otherwise, some fisherman will invite you over for tea and you'll be focused on his mistakes, finding fault in his tea like a snob, and missing your chance to connect to his heart and to the hospitality he is offering you. Some of the best tea sessions of my life were had with simple monks who knew nothing about tea. I once shared an empty retreat temple in the mountains with a Japanese monk. We couldn't communicate, so we'd drink tea together every day. It was simple green tea, and he made it in a Hello Kitty teapot, decanted into one cracked bowl that we shared between us. But those were, indeed, some of the "most transcendent tea sessions of my life." Conversely, I have been to very elegant tea gath-

erings where "experts" shared very, very expensive tea and I left feeling far less rewarded, having had a much less memorable experience.

In the end, *advanced techniques are basic techniques mastered*. The highest skills are the simplest. As we advance in our tea journey, a true growth and advancement of our skills will be in refining our ability to express Tea spirit, not in covering it with false costume. All our skill should serve Tea spirit, in other words. There is another beautiful story concerning Rikyu that highlights this. A man heard of the great master and traveled by foot across the breadth of the country to study with him. After around a year of diligent practice, the student asked Rikyu: "Master, what is the essence of Cha Dao? I have been here a year now and thought that perhaps you would initiate me into the essential truth of our tradition." Rikyu answered that he would, of course, share the heart of Cha Dao.





“The essence of Cha Dao is this: draw the water, lay the coals, boil the water and steep the tea.” The student was shocked. “That’s it? I traveled across Japan for that? I could have learned that at home!” Rikyu wagged his finger back and forth with a tsk-tsk. “The day you can do *that* is the day *I* walk across Japan, put my head at *your* feet and call *you* master!”

## Gongfu Tea

Starting with a true connection to the essence and spirit of our art gives us a pure foundation to work from, and staying connected to the soul of tea keeps us humble and open to receiving tea shared by anyone offering us hospitality. However, the artist soon realizes that she will need to learn the technical skills of her craft in order to better express the spirit flowing through her. There is, one could say, an awful ache in

the artist to translate her vision from the formless spirit into form. And it is frustrating when you lack the skill to translate your ideas to the canvas, and what comes through looks nothing like your inner vision. Learning to grind the paints, how to properly hold the brush and apply the color will help facilitate the creation of that which she imagines. Similarly, a musician must learn to read notes and hold the instrument; the playing must become second nature if she is to express the music inside of her.

By learning to prepare finer and finer cups of tea, we honor the Leaf. We bring each tea to its highest potential. A lot of life has gone into the creation of this handful of leaves. Tea is one of the most labor-intensive agricultures on Earth. And you also worked hard to earn the money to buy your tea, which had to be shipped to you, probably from far away. We honor all that energy by properly prepar-

ing the tea. A famous Ming Dynasty poet said that the two greatest tragedies in the world are the mis-education of youth and the mis-brewing of a fine tea. By playing the violin concerto beautifully, you honor the music itself, the instrument and the composer. Bringing a tea to its greatest potential similarly honors Mother Earth, the farmer and your guests. As you fall in love with tea, you will find a natural desire to refine your brewing, so that She may shine in all Her glory.

In order to elevate our tea to its potential, we have to start by learning to recognize what makes a fine cup of tea fine. We have to hone our sensitivity, refine our palates. And the magic of increased sensitivity is that it means we begin to experience and relate to more of our tea. We begin to peel away the layers and fall more deeply in love, like a married couple spending more and more time together. We are rewarded for our efforts

to increase and expand our sensitivity—bestowed more facets to enjoy. This happens on all levels. A sensitivity to flavor and aroma means we will taste all the many changes in each cup. From there we can learn to experience the texture of the tea. Master Lin often says that as one progresses in tea, over time, one more and more drinks structure. Structure can be so much more enjoyable than flavor and/or aroma, especially since a sensitivity to it is not mutually exclusive to flavor or aroma. Structure doesn't come at the expense of flavor, in other words, but is, instead, an added dimension. And from there we may explore the energy of tea, and the way it relates to our subtle body.

Once we have honed our sensitivity, we then can increase our ease of brewing by practicing all the technical aspects—from laying coals to boiling the water, placing the tea into the pot to carefully covering it in water, steeping time to decantation, and so on... These skills have to become second nature, so that they can be performed without any thought or attention. They must be in our hands. A master athlete has no time to think about what to do with her body. If a ball is flying at you hundreds of miles per hour, you must react without thought. And the concert musician has no time to think between notes: the hand must flow with lightning speed across the strings. Great tea is brewed with such otherworldly grace. In that way, we become an instrument of Tea spirit ourselves—She finds in us a honed and pure channel to come through into the world. And in that way, we are as natural a part of Her journey from seed to cup as the sun that nourished Her, the water that coursed through Her leaves or the gentle farmer who deftly plucked Her without a thought.

Little children dance beautifully. They are free of pretension and ego, and are often in tune with the music in an extraordinary way. Master dancers are also free. One of the

greatest ballerinas once said, “When I am on stage, there is no music and no me. There is only dance.” She obviously dances freely. What, then, is the difference between her performance and the chaotic gyrations of children? Two things: one, she has a lineage. She had a teacher, who also had a teacher, and these teachers passed on to her generations’ worth of dance wisdom. Second, she has skill: she has decades of practice cultivating her skills to be able to express the spirit of the music in ever-refined ways, until, after enough practice, she hones herself down to such a degree that she is no longer there, becoming a pure unadulterated expression of the spirit of the music itself. In the same way, we refine our skills until it is no longer us brewing the tea, but the spirit of the tea brewing itself!

Our tea life isn't just about a greater connection to Nature through the Leaf, but an attunement with our self as well. We must therefore cultivate both inner and outer harmony, a flow from the absolute into the relative. We learn this flow through the practice of gongfu tea, refining our sensitivity and grace as we prepare finer and finer tea over time. We must spend adequate time doing exercises to refine our palates, our sensitivity to tea and its Qi as well as some academic study of tea in order to refine our intellects. We should be able to articulate tea matters and feel comfortable doing so. A mastery of tea includes a grace with all kinds of teaware, preparation, discussion and presentation. We should know dry leaves by appearance and smell and be able to prepare them with a grace and beauty that transcends the ordinary. We should strive to brew the tea the way it wants to be brewed, recognizing its inner nature and becoming a graceful part of that flow. We should also develop our aesthetic sensibilities, in recognition that beauty significantly affects our ability to transform others through tea. A beautiful tea arrangement aids in one's trans-

formation. All of this refinement should temper our spirits and teach us how to live in grace.

The magic of refining your skill through gongfu tea is that over time you come to realize that you are also refining yourself. After enough technical skill is gathered, you realize that it is you who is in the way. The more refined you are, the better your art is. There is an old Chinese story that demonstrates this. The student asked the master how to brush the perfect scroll of calligraphy, to which the master replied: “Perfect yourself and paint naturally!” So, actually, we are mastering ourselves and the art of living a human life through our gongfu tea practice. After all, it is we ourselves who are becoming more and more sensitive and more and more skilled. And as we hone ourselves to the point that we disappear in Her, our mastery will be fulfilled, though never finished growing, refining and transcending.

## *The Wings of Awakening*

Gongfu tea and bowl tea do not meet at a solid boundary that divides them, but rather overlap, helping the teawayfarer to grow in each practice. Sometimes when we take guests out to buy teaware, they are confused about the criteria for buying gongfu versus bowl teaware. Questions concerning the aesthetics of gongfu tea are less relevant, for example, as gongfu teaware is measured by its ability to produce fine tea. Choosing teaware for bowl tea, on the other hand, is much more of a subjective, aesthetic process. You have a lot more room to choose based on the appearance of the teaware. But this doesn't mean that there are no functional criteria in bowl tea. There are. For instance, choosing a side-handle pot that doesn't add flavor to the tea, pours well, etc.; or bowls that are the right size and shape, and have a nice foot so they aren't too hot to hold.



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We also like bowls that are lighter in color so that we can see the tea liquor. And there are considerations for form in gongfu tea as well, like the craftsmanship of a fine Yixing teapot. These are just some of the more obvious ways gongfu and bowl tea overlap. There are many others.

One of the things I am most proud of when it comes to our tradition of tea is the relationship between gongfu and bowl tea. The way these two brewing methods work together to cultivate a Chajin on their tea journey is nothing short of magical. They work together quite harmoniously, encouraging precisely what the other one needs to complete one's understanding of tea. One provides the subtlety and refinement, the understanding and depth of tea skill, and the other provides the ceremony and meditative space. Gongfu tea hones our sensitivity while bowl tea increases our equanimity.

The Buddha said that equanimity and sensitivity are the wings to enlightenment. Awakening and balance must co-evolve. If we increase our sensitivity, experiencing the things we already feel to a greater degree and also experiencing things we haven't felt before because they were too subtle, and we do not at the same time develop our equanimity, we will feel overwhelmed by the added depth. If we feel pushed beyond our limits by a painful experience, imagine if it was heightened by several times. A lot of sensitivity without equanimity means we will be off-balance even more often. Similarly, greater and greater equanimity without sensitivity is like taking drugs, becoming peaceful but numb to life. The ideal is to increase our patience and equanimity while also cultivating heightened presence and perception—being tuned into our experience more often, and with a balanced, peaceful heart, in other words.

In our tradition, gongfu tea helps us to grow our awareness and bowl tea helps awaken our balance.

We learn to refine our palates and our tea-brewing skills while staying connected to simplicity and harmony through bowl tea. The function and coordination we learn in gongfu tea refines our bowl tea, improving our brewing and adding grace to the ceremony; the mindfulness and sacred intention we bring to bowl tea ceremonies is also a valuable asset in preparing fine gongfu tea that changes our lives and the lives of our guests. And believe us, lives can be changed by tea! In mastering these two aspects of tea simultaneously, we explore tea at all levels, from the depths of spirit to the delights of the senses, from simplicity to refinement and from the gross to the subtle.

### *Honoring the Ancestors*

In the Center, we try to practice keeping gongfu and bowl tea a bit apart, in energy and practice. There are many ways in which the two facilitate one another, enhancing and expanding upon what the other lacks. As I discussed above, they do not so much meet as overlap. Still, it is also important to practice them separately and not confuse the energies, and for some very good reasons.

Sometimes it seems that the mind that motivates each of these tea practices frustrates the fulfillment of the other in actual application. They are not really so strongly antipodal, actually, but it can seem so to the Chajin trying to work with bowl and gongfu tea. The discriminating mind that helps us judge and evaluate, sensitize and refine in gongfu tea is a barrier to the meditative space that bowl tea is facilitating. Conversely, the relaxed, ceremonial and tranquil acceptance of bowl tea can, at times, be a barrier to a growing hypersensitivity for all the minutiae in gongfu tea—from the effects of various types of teaware to the subtle variations in

mouthfeel from tea to tea. When the energies of the two brewing methods are confused, they frustrate the culmination of either one. Part of why they work so well in a life of tea is that they are practiced separately. It is, in other words, their friction that is powerful, just like it is the space between pieces of charcoal that causes heat, rather than the pieces themselves. It is the effects of a gongfu practice that benefit bowl tea, just as the meditative mind that is encouraged by a bowl tea practice will help one make progress in gongfu tea. They are like a beautifully harmonious couple that is healthy and whole because they give each other the space to be unique, encouraging a more complete version of each by being separate, yet in relationship with the other. There is a dot of gongfu in bowl tea, and vice versa, but they also taichi in harmony because they are distinct.

The more important reason why we must be careful how we share these two practices from one space, the Center, is that we must honor their unique sources and heritage. Our bowl tea tradition is old, shamanic and meditative. It is passed on through the spirit. Our gongfu tradition comes via Master Lin in Malaysia. They are different practices from different lineages, and we who build houses of tradition that hold more than one must work to make sure that all the lineages which inhabit this Center are happy and working healthily together, each honored and respected individually. Though there is fusion, it must be done with care so that neither is damaged by the relationship, and both are, rather, encouraged and grow in benefit by being together.

As an analogy, let's say that we practiced a deep and spiritual kind of drumming, related to all the drumming traditions of the world. It is older than any one of them. And then, we travel to Spain to learn flamenco guitar. While we are in Spain, we are sure to practice only flamenco,

bringing nothing of our previous ideas, traditions or practices with us, so that, as much as possible, we may fully absorb the flamenco way. And our flamenco teachers are old-school—very conservative and traditional. Their music changes our lives and our approach to music in general. Later, as we progress further in music, we see that this percussion we've learned can work very well with flamenco, and we can even envision an album composed of both. Our first goal will be to make sure that our flamenco teachers are

honored to have their influence on our album. We don't want them to scratch their heads and wonder what we have done to their precious tradition. Instead, we want them to smile in understanding, bragging to their friends that their tradition is on such a beautiful album.

Hopefully, you can see why this analogy works. Bowl tea is the drumming and gongfu the flamenco. Master Lin is also a very old-school teacher and we want to make sure that the brewing method he has handed down to us

is respected and honored, and that it benefits from being “on the same album” (or in the same Center) as bowl tea. And that is a big part of why we practice our different brewing methods separately.





## Balance

As you can see, bowl tea and gongfu tea are both apart and one and the same in spirit. They work well together, facilitating a holistic approach to tea brewing that allows us to understand all facets of the tea world. In that way, our tea is able to reach into all the areas that allow for cultivation and service. There is a lifetime in either of these methods, but somehow the practice of both serves to awaken the sacred ceremonial plant medicine and refined cul-

tivation that tea has always been to people.

The Yin and Yang balance and the flow of the Dao revolves the essence. Everything is just as it should be, and without the need to steer, balance resolves itself, of its own accord. That is the point at which we find our way, and all the ten thousand words cannot say a thing about the infinitely small, yet vast as all the Heavens, point of harmony we then stand precariously

poised upon. A cup in one hand and a bowl in the other—one eye open and one closed in meditation, the Buddha serves up his inner, unsaid (lotus held high) and outer, spoken sermon all at once. You could drink the lotus-bowl in the cup, just as you could find the sermon-cup in the bowl. But it is much better if we receive the flesh and the spirit, the bones and the blood of the teachings!



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# THE LAST TWO DRUNK TOGETHER

茶人: Shen Su

*Many of you will have forgotten by now, but we started a series in 2014 discussing each of the “Eight Bowls” of our tradition, which are the aspects of practice in a life of tea. Since the last two are bowl and gongfu tea, we thought we would publish them together and send you all the Eight Bowls as a gift this month. We will also post the previous six discussions on the “Further Reading” section of our blog.*

Through drinking the previous six bowls in our series on the Eight Bowls of this tradition, a deep sense of connection has settled in and taken root. Mental chatter has subsided, though an inner dialogue nearer the heart rustles beyond words. The space around is quiet and a sense of balance and healing has swept over mind and heart. It feels as though nothing need be taken away from this moment, nor added to it. It is perfect just as it is.

So many of the beautiful people who visit us at the Hut are inspired by the Leaf. Some of them are moved to tears of joy, and gain a sense of connection to something that has been missing from their lives. In many cases, whatever the experience, guests want to bring it back home with them and share it with others. They clearly feel the connection to themselves, to others and to Nature, and as a result they wish to invite Tea into their lives. They often ask how they can do just

that. What do they need? Where do they start? How can they become a Chajin, too? And we always recommend starting with bowl tea...

All too often, without any proper initiation or introduction, we tend towards the more complex and refined methods of brewing tea. The fact is, we live in a complicated age and are conditioned to prefer complexity. But with so many brewing methods and such a great variety of tea, teaware and approaches, it can be daunting and confusing to even know where to begin. You step into a tea shop and are immediately confronted with countless combinations of cups, pots, bowls, utensils, etc. This doesn't even take into account brewing methodologies, kettles, heat sources, flower arrangements, scrolls, other decorations and secondary elements. The list of things to learn trails on and on, leaving you confused and uninspired, and you're still left wondering how to invite that feeling of connection into your life.

Bowl tea, which is what we recommend all guests start out with, is simply leaves and hot water in a bowl. This is the oldest method of brewing tea, and by steeping in this way, we stay connected to the roots of Tea. It is the easiest way to invite Tea into your life. What better way to lay your Tea foundation than to start brewing with the oldest and simplest method? This method reminds us what drinking tea is really about: connection to ourselves, to each other, and to Great Nature. It is as easy as finding an appropriately-sized bowl (even a rice bowl will do) and some loose leaf tea. For those new to bowl tea, we often suggest drinking at least three bowls in silence each morning for one week and then reflecting on the difference that this practice makes in your life. What was it like starting each day of the week in silence with a warming bowl of tea close to your heart? What effect did it have on the rest of your day?



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## Five Methods, One Way

There are five main brewing methods in this tradition. Many of you who have visited us have experienced all five of them. If you have, you may remember that bowl tea accounts for three of the five brewing methods. The other two methods are gongfu tea and whisked tea. Bowl tea has been subdivided into three of the brewing methods mainly because of the changes in tea processing over the years. True bowl tea is simply leaves and hot water in a bowl. As time went on, different processing methods gave rise to a larger range of finished teas. Some processing methods result in smaller, curled leaves or compressed leaves, many of which aren't suitable for placing into a bowl and adding hot water, as is the nature of bowl tea. In order to brew such teas with the essence of simplicity, certain adaptations were made. Most notably, the

side-handle tea pot was introduced. In that way, the greater variety of teas produced these days can still be enjoyed bowl style. In the third style, we boil certain teas in larger side-handle pots or *kamas* and then pour or ladle the tea into bowls. You can watch all three of these brewing methods on our Youtube channel.

Bowl tea is about equanimity and balance. It symbolizes surrender to the way things are. There is no "right" or "wrong" in bowl tea. The tea is just as it should be and can be freely adjusted bowl by bowl, ceremony by ceremony. It gives us the chance to set aside our discriminating mind, to let go of the human elements that can at times get in the way, and remember what we are really here for—*connection!* And when it comes to connection, heart is what really matters. It's not what we do, but *how* we do it, and so

brewing tea with one's heart is at the core of bowl tea. The intention with which we brew and share tea plays a far greater role than our brewing skills, in other words.

There are many times when the ability to let go and just enjoy tea as it is becomes very useful. And in those situations, having a bowl tea practice will serve you well. For example, say you find yourself returning home to visit your family, and in an attempt to catch up with her son or daughter, your mother offers you a mug with hot water and a tea bag steeping inside. It's possibly over-steeped, and the water was probably scalded... and is that a Starbucks mug? But then it hits you: it's not over-steeped, the water isn't scalded and the mug doesn't matter; it's actually your mother trying to connect with her son or daughter over a cup of tea! None of the





brewing parameters matter. The temperature of the water, amount of leaf, length of infusion, and so on, all have no bearing on the ability to connect with family. The mother in this example surely wasn't trying to demonstrate her tea brewing skills. The tea in that moment was perfect just the way it was because it was being used as a medium for connection, as it has been for thousands of years.

## Balance

Too much bowl tea, however, leads to lazy brewing. Tolerance is a good attitude, but it is not a Way of Life, a Dao. I don't say this lightly, because as a student of tea I am currently finding that fine line between tolerance and setting boundar-

ies—bowl tea and gongfu tea. We don't simply cast aside all form and structure when it comes to bowl tea. Otherwise, why not just drink tea in a dumpster from a broken, dirty bowl? We can skillfully draw certain lines, and there are other brewing methods that help us find balance between equanimity and sensitivity.

One final thing to remember is that it is important to maintain contact with the practice of bowl tea throughout a life of tea. It is not a method to simply start with and then set aside. *Advanced techniques are basics techniques mastered.* Bowl tea is only one of the wings on the bird of enlightenment and must be in balance with the other: *sensitivity*. It is important to always return to our roots and be reminded of what we're really here for, especially when we feel lost or out of balance. It is often said around here that we have

never lost our connection to Nature, but rather the *feeling* of connection to Nature. Calm your mind, take a few deep breaths, and bowl by bowl let that feeling return to you...

It is powerfully humbling to know that leaves and hot water placed in a bowl, as you are doing, was practiced thousands of years ago. Let that thought inspire you! May each bowl bring you closer to that feeling of connection that is never lost! Remember, there is always a bowl of tea waiting for you here at our Center. May that thought warm you when you are cold, delight you when you are sad, awaken you when you are tired, and motivate you to make time and space for Tea in your life. I raise my bowl and offer it to you now as a reminder that life itself is an offering to Great Nature.

## The Final, Eighth Bowl: Gongfu Tea

Gongfu tea is a mastery of tea brewing achieved through self-discipline. It is the eighth (and final) bowl of a life of tea. Does this mean we've reached the end? Have we summited the peak of the mountain, left the world of dust behind and achieved the pinnacle of Cha Dao? Is it time to enjoy the finest cups of tea, one after the other, and never look back? Or... is this the very beginning? The very start of our journey returned? The top of the mountain may bring with it perspective, but we must ultimately head back down into the valley below and put that perspective into practice. In Zen, it is said that in

order to climb the mountain, we must start at the peak, asking ourselves what the true goal is...

In this tradition, we welcome Tea into our lives by starting with bowl tea and then slowly progressing towards gongfu tea: towards brewing tea with grace and beauty in a way that transcends the ordinary. The aim is not to move from one brewing method to the next, treating it as a means to an end in some hierarchical system of achievement. It is not as if we graduate from bowl tea and then move on to gongfu tea, though it *is* important to start with bowl tea to build the foundation that connects us to the Spirit

of the Leaf upon which we can then develop the skills necessary to brew gongfu tea. And when that time comes, and one begins one's journey into the grace and beauty of gongfu tea, it is also important to see how it complements the other brewing methods and other aspects of a life of tea to bring about balance. For gongfu tea is the externalization of the inner harmony cultivated in bowl tea. That stillness and alertness found within yourself during bowl tea is then translated through the slow, gentle, graceful movements of gongfu tea.

With the attention to detail required to brew a really fine cup of





tea, it can seem like the very beginning of something that will take a lifetime of self-discipline to master. How honored are we that such a brewing method, refined over hundreds of years, is still available to us now, passed down and preserved from teacher to student, giving us yet another beautiful means by which to serve an awakening of presence through tea!

### ***Mastery, Participation & Service***

Mastery comes through participation. If you only ever read or

watch videos about serving tea, you will never develop the skills necessary to brew finer and finer tea. My teacher says, “the extent that you participate is the extent that you can master something.” Gongfu tea is about mastery, and as important as a firm intellectual understanding of it is, it is a poor substitute for even the smallest bit of participation. The extent that I participate in gongfu tea is the extent that I can master it.

But mastery towards what aim? This is a tradition of service, and mastery without the concept of service is empty (and not in the insightful Buddhist sense of the word). Service is quite possibly the

core concept of mastery, for what good would any form of mastery be if it weren't used in service for the benefit of others? What good would it be to master anything and then take it to the grave with you? In fact, the only way mastery can ever reach its full potential is when it is shared in service to others.

### ***Becoming What You Do***

My teacher says there is a misconception that mastery is about control and that more and more control means more and more mastery. In a crude analogy,



we could say that control allows you to navigate a river in any direction you please with a great input of finite energy. Mastery, however, allows you to harness the energy of the river itself and become a part of its *limitless* flow! Not necessarily going where *you* want, but wanting to go with the natural flow of the river—in other words, *becoming* the river. Mastery is about becoming the very thing you do and communing with your environment as opposed to controlling it.

Practically speaking, gongfu tea seems to require a great deal of control, as you pour the kettle, steep the tea, hand out the cups, discard the waste water and so on. And in the beginning, control may indeed be an essential aspect of learning to prepare tea this way, but mastery will then be about *becoming* gongfu tea and learning to brew the tea the way it wants to be brewed. There is a big difference between the one who makes gongfu tea and the one who *is* gongfu tea—the one who controls the process and the one who lets the tea brew itself.

## Slowing Down

Nowadays, with so much access to information and experiences, it's difficult to focus on one activity and become a master of anything. It's all too easy to accumulate hobbies and experiences, unfortunately becoming a tourist of everything and a master of nothing. There was a time when most people were masters of what they did, and loved what they did. It was about taking the time and doing what they loved slowly and properly. Doing what we love shouldn't be diluted by making it quicker and more convenient, but rather slowed down and appreciated through more participation. Why would anyone want to speed up what they love doing? If it really is something you love, wouldn't you rather it be done slowly and

properly? And tea is all about slowing down. The faster we move from task to task, the more energy we waste thinking about what to do in an imaginary future. Gongfu tea teaches us to be present unto what is in this moment! As the Old Sage says, "Nature is not in a hurry, yet everything is accomplished."

## The Finest Cup of Tea

In a more linear sense, the aim of gongfu tea is about brewing the finest cup of tea possible, brewing the tea to its highest potential and appreciating all the fine qualities it has to offer. Master Lin says that by preserving temperature and disturbing the tea as little as possible with slow and gentle movements, we "steal" its essence. This means that the tea releases itself slowly, gently and gracefully over the session. By preparing the tea this way, we not only increase our sensitivity and learn to brew and appreciate finer and finer cups of tea, but we start a dialogue with the Leaf that reminds us to learn to brew the tea the way it wants to be brewed, as opposed to how we want to brew it.

This practice is not just about understanding and cultivating the skills to brew a fine cup of tea. I have good tea and teaware and I know the mechanics of brewing gongfu tea well, but my master still brews tea *far* better than I. It's not so much in knowing your tea or teaware as it is in knowing yourself. As Master Lin often says, "If you want to brew tea well, you must first learn to be a person."

Wu De often says that the point at which tea becomes a Dao is when you realize that *in mastering tea I am mastering myself*! It is about carrying that which I cultivate at the tea table out into as many daily activities as possible. Then, ultimately, as I learn to brew tea with grace, I am in turn learning how to live a life in grace.



最好的一杯茶是無茶





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# SERVING BOWL TEA & GONGFU TEA

茶人: *Estonian Tea Community,*  
*led by Steve Kokker*

*Steve asked the whole Estonian tea community to share their experiences serving bowl tea versus gongfu tea at public gatherings. They all then realized they didn't serve enough gongfu tea and spent a month doing so. What they have to say about the two brewing methods provides insight into understanding these methods as service. In this tradition, we don't learn how to make tea, but to serve it!*

**A**s a group, we here in Estonia host tea gatherings every Friday, with a different person serving each week. Almost exclusively, we serve side-handle pot tea. The reasons are several: it's the most convenient for groups of eight to ten, in terms of both volume of tea made per steeping as well as the ability to serve this number of people comfortably without engaging in acrobatics; it doesn't call so much attention to itself as to take away our emphasis on a relaxing atmosphere conducive to inner flights; and finally, it is our habit to do so. While the first two reasons are demonstrably logical and practical, likely the main reason we serve in this way 90 percent of the time is the third: *habit*. It's what drives most of our actions, after all.

We have been to some degree letting our gongfu practice slip. We've all become quite comfortable (in ways we might not have previously

imagined!) with serving groups of people from side-handle pots (or sometimes making boiled, or bowl tea), and finding the motivation to practice gongfu skills at home can sometimes be challenging. It's easy to fall into *wrongfu*, or some variation of gongfu that doesn't go quite all the way. For example, preparing tea in a small yixing and pouring into small cups but maybe not showering all the time, or maybe slowing down the pace for some reason, feeling the coordinated flow of temperature control slip away like rising steam... Sure, there's respect toward the tea, it tastes and feels great, and all the right equipment is there... but it still isn't really gongfu.

And yet, we are in this tea life for the long run, which is why we decided to up the ante for ourselves and make April our gongfu month. Our dear Herkko had an eye-opening experience serving gongfu style

recently and proposed that we all make a concerted effort to do this in public more often; out of that was born an Estonian-style thirty-day challenge. Without the gentle nudges or even welcome pushes of caring friends, we might all be standing several steps behind our current positions. As we ready ourselves to step up to the serving trays, then, I thought it might be a sweet idea for us to offer our thoughts about gongfu style serving versus other styles.

Here are a few voices from our community, musings about the differences between serving gongfu style and offering side-handle or bowl tea service. As a group we speak more clearly than as individuals.





茶 If I had to sum up the different characteristics of serving tea with a side-handle pot and serving gongfu, I'd use the words *mystery* and *mastery*. Not long ago, I gained a direct, personal sense of the contrast between these two at a public tea gathering of our tea community, *Teeline*, where, instead of using the customary side-handle pot, I decided to prepare tea gongfu as best I could. It turned out to be one of the deepest personal lessons I've learned about serving tea.

A true side-handle pot always feels deeply shamanistic. Paired with larger bowls, serving with a side-handle to a larger group has always felt to me like a shamanistic ritual. Bowl by bowl, people take off to unknown lands and I myself find some space between servings to focus also on my inner journey. There is always a true *mystery* up in the air. I tend to feel that at least in my tea servings with a side-handle pot, it is more about taking people to different states of consciousness and being, with tea as a humble guide through this journey.

When I did my first public gongfu tea gathering, I was instantly astonished at how different the frequency of serving is. It was not about mysterious insights anymore, but about really *getting the tea done*. All the movements and guidelines built up a fast tempo for my mind

and I didn't find any time for my personal meditations. My only question at the end was: is this rushing really the *mastery* of gongfu?

Having of course done many gongfu sessions by myself or with two to three friends, it strangely never felt so different from side-handle pot sessions. But a public gathering instantly put the serving skills into a new light. For the first time, I really asked if I am capable. Do I know how it works? In gongfu, there is a clear set of parameters and a certain framework for brewing, so I also have to focus my mind to follow them and it feels like there is no time for any mysterious insight. I then had a light of intuition switch on, and realized that the real *mastery* behind gongfu *is* meditation, while at the same time also serving a fine cup of tea.

***Herkko Lab***







茶 There is much more “happening” in gongfu tea—more activity for the curious brain to catch hold of. *What is that utensil? Why such particular motions?* These are just a few of the common questions one is likely to hear. While the questions may be good, the questioning mind is often unlikely to be satisfied by an answer. I personally am thus more likely to prepare tea gongfu for a smaller group, with people I know and with whom I have drunk tea previously. Even then, sometimes when people are fidgety and restless, I’d prefer to prepare bowl tea. Gongfu tea indeed demands concentration for bringing out the most from the leaves, and to experience the tea fully—from both parties, the host and guest alike. While it is true that, in most cases, concentration develops naturally over the course of a tea session, I’d rather not see tea drinking as a means to an end. For me, some days can simply be off—perhaps it was from going to bed too late, eating unhealthy food or from a nagging worry or whatnot. But on such days as that, I’d rather leave all the precious wares aside and enjoy a simply prepared bowl of tea.

*Timo Einpaul*

茶 When it comes to comparing bowl tea and gongfu tea, the difference can be and had better be very distinct. Bowl tea is more like a hermit monk with his few things and modest way of living. He is serving others with his simple actions. And those actions really depend on the current situation that he is a part of. Nothing goes wrong because he can’t do everything as he wants. But all he does is a teaching. At the same time, gongfu tea is more like an artist with a lot of skill in his field. He serves others with his talent, which he has honed to mastery. While the monk is mainly teaching with his peace and simplicity, the artist uses a rather exact or even pointed way to share his heart. Of course, they have a lot to study from each other, because the monk is relaxing in the beginning while the artist is searching along never-ending trails to mediate the Divine. How are those heights different from the beginning place he left behind? Can he also rest in the same place where the monk is?

*Hanno Padar*

茶 As I sit here, sipping a nice cup of “*baobao cha*,” I am quietly wondering about tea and the many ways of making it...

Well, at times, I feel that bowl tea is like a sunny and peaceful day, or warming like a song around a campfire; it often feels alone by the lake or with a few friends near the river. All is easy, all is carefree. It’s about simplicity, about enjoying the moment, about being thankful. It also offers a chance for deep talks with a friend or looking deeply into your own soul.

Making tea in a side-handle pot is convenient and functional. It offers a friendly feeling of confidence, which is very important in the beginning. It’s about celebrating a circle of friends and a chance to drink life-giving tea by creating a sparkling and magical atmosphere.

Gongfu tea, on other hand, is almost like trying to create music: a trial to compose a beautiful symphony where all the instruments play in harmony. It takes a lot of patience and profound wisdom to be a good composer, a lifetime’s worth. You have to hear the music, hear the whispers of the water and the sounds of the fire, feel the clay, and most importantly, hear what the leaves are telling you. Only when you “love every note, every tone,” like Estonia’s national treasure, and one of the world’s greatest living composers, Arvo Pärt, our fellow tea brother, says, can you “create music that speaks!” Only then can you be peaceful, free and happy. Therefore, only when all of your movements come from the center of your heart can you make tea that makes another heart sing!

After many years of drinking and serving tea in these various styles, I am so thankful that there are so many ways to brew, and therefore endless possibilities for learning and growing!

*Triin Juurik*



茶 I love spending time in the forest. I leave early in the morning so I can be in the midst of this beautiful land, light and soundscape all through the day. My go-kit for these journeys is always a bowl and leaves. I look for a spring so I can be a part of the same water feeding the trees and flowers, birds and animals. I sit down for a quiet moment (as much as possible while surrounded by the gorgeous polyphony of this amazing orchestra of Mother Nature) and let myself be taken on a journey. I sit with a smile on my face, light steam arising from the bowl in my hands, and I look at the beautiful leaves dancing in the water, becoming this gorgeous elixir of life. I am mesmerized by this beautiful choreography in my bowl and around me. I am humble and grateful. As I finish the last sip, I open my eyes and continue my journey—full of love and life.

I’ve been serving tea for a bit more than a year now. When serving tea gongfu or in a side-handle pot, there is always this one beautiful moment, which I sometimes wish would last forever. As I have poured the last drop into the bowl in front of me, I put the pot down and then... I do not pause or stop, but emotionally I take a step back to expand the moment and feeling by seeing this beautiful setting of bowls, tea and steam. I take a calm and light in-breath to savor the moment, and with the next out-breath I hand out the bowls with gratitude to be able to serve this tea. And as I collect the bowls again, I smile for the little circle of life in front of me. All finished in one breath. I find that the same energy is awakened in serving tea, bowl or cup, gongfu or sidehandle—all leaves and Nature

*Loore Martma*





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席ARRANGING CHAXI  
BY BREWING METHOD

茶人: Shen Su

*Continuing our series on setting the stage for tea, we thought that this month it would be relevant to discuss how gongfu versus bowl tea affects chaxi arrangements. Some of you have asked for a more detailed exposition of actual arrangements, with discussions of the themes and details that went into them, so we have also included four chaxi, two for each brewing method.*

There is so much to learn in a life of tea! It truly is a steep learning curve, and no matter how much detail I think I've uncovered in my studies, more and more beautiful buds of information continue to unfold. Because this is a living tea tradition based on service, there is a lot of study and contemplation that must go into welcoming guests into our tea space. Like we say so often around here, the first thing to do when welcoming guests into your home is to clean and then decorate. At our Center, part of the decoration is expressed through designing a *chaxi*, or "tea stage," which is where we brew tea. It is one of the first things guests see as they enter our school of tea. If done well, a *chaxi* should instill a sense of harmony and peace that says, "you are important to me and I am honored to welcome you into my home." The *chaxi* design should take into account many practical factors, such as how many guests there are, what the weather is like, what season it is and what type of brewing method you will use. Because different brewing methods, like bowl tea

and gongfu tea, serve such different purposes, it is important that your *chaxi* design facilitate the brewing method. In order to do that successfully and to refine your *chaxi* practice into an art, we must take a close look at the differences between *chaxi* for bowl tea and gongfu tea.

The last two articles on *chaxi* covered the elements and many important tools for decorating a tea stage. Remember, the tea stage is the space upon which you will brew tea for your guests. It is designed using certain elements in harmony with one another that facilitate the tea ceremony, like table runners, pillows for your teapot, wastewater basins, scoops and sticks, and bonsai, just to name a few. First and foremost, the intention while creating your tea stage should focus on the guests and the occasion. This is most important! Don't design a *chaxi* based on what you want, but rather, on what your guests and the occasion call for. This requires being in tune with your environment and surroundings. Of course, we must remember the guest of honor in

our design, Tea Herself, as this is what we all gather here for. In other words, all the elements of your tea stage should highlight Tea as the focus. It is very easy to get lost in aesthetics by adding too many elements, so we must remember function in our design and keep things simple. Less is more! Finally, a well-thought-out *chaxi* should be themed, and all the elements should be in harmony with that theme. Designing a beautiful, creative, and functional *chaxi* is no easy task; it requires great attention to detail, an understanding of the elements and how to harmonize them in a simple way that suits the occasion.

Bowl tea and gongfu tea are the two main brewing methods in this tradition. Bowl tea ceremonies celebrate simplicity, balance and connection, and invite us to accept things just as they are, leaving the discriminating mind behind at the door of the thatched tea hut. The "aim" of gongfu tea, on the other hand, is to increase our sensitivity as we try to brew the finest cup of tea possible,



# 傳統功夫







paying great attention to detail in every slow and graceful movement. There are different tea stages more suitable in their design to facilitate the function of each brewing method. Each method, therefore, requires a slightly different set of elements, arranged in a slightly different way.

## Teaware

Some of the most obvious differences in *chaxi* design for different brewing methods can be seen in the teaware. Once you have chosen a brewing method, designing your *chaxi* with the necessary teaware in mind will be essential. Designing a tea stage to accommodate teaware specific to a particular brewing method will help you refine your *chaxi* practice. A tea stage that functions well for one brewing method might not for another, so we must know our teaware intimately, like a close friend, in order to design a *chaxi* appropriate for such teaware.

In bowl tea, your design must account for the use of bowls, a side-handle tea pot, or the combination of both, depending on what style of bowl tea you choose. For original bowl tea, you will just need to account for the use of bowls. For side-handle pot tea, you will need to account for both pieces of teaware. There needs to be sufficient room for all of the teaware, which depends on the number of guests and chosen brewing method. This also means that other elements within your design should not be in the way when you hand out the bowls and take them back in. That's part of the reason why a *chaxi* for larger bowl tea gatherings should be simpler to account for the additional challenges that arise when serving more people.

In gongfu tea, the teaware is very different and is chosen to bring out the most the tea has to offer. A properly designed gongfu *chaxi* should create space for a gongfu tea



pot, tea boat, tray for cups, the cups themselves, coasters and a wastewater basin (*jin shui*). In this tradition, it is quite crucial that the pot be made of *zisha* (purple-sand clay) and that the cups be made of porcelain. By doing gongfu tea experiments, you can see for yourself that the relationship tea has with these specific materials is not arbitrary and in fact goes a long way towards brewing a finer cup of tea. This is not to say you can't design a *chaxi* or brew gongfu tea without these elements, but they are ideal, and gongfu tea is about striving towards the ideal.

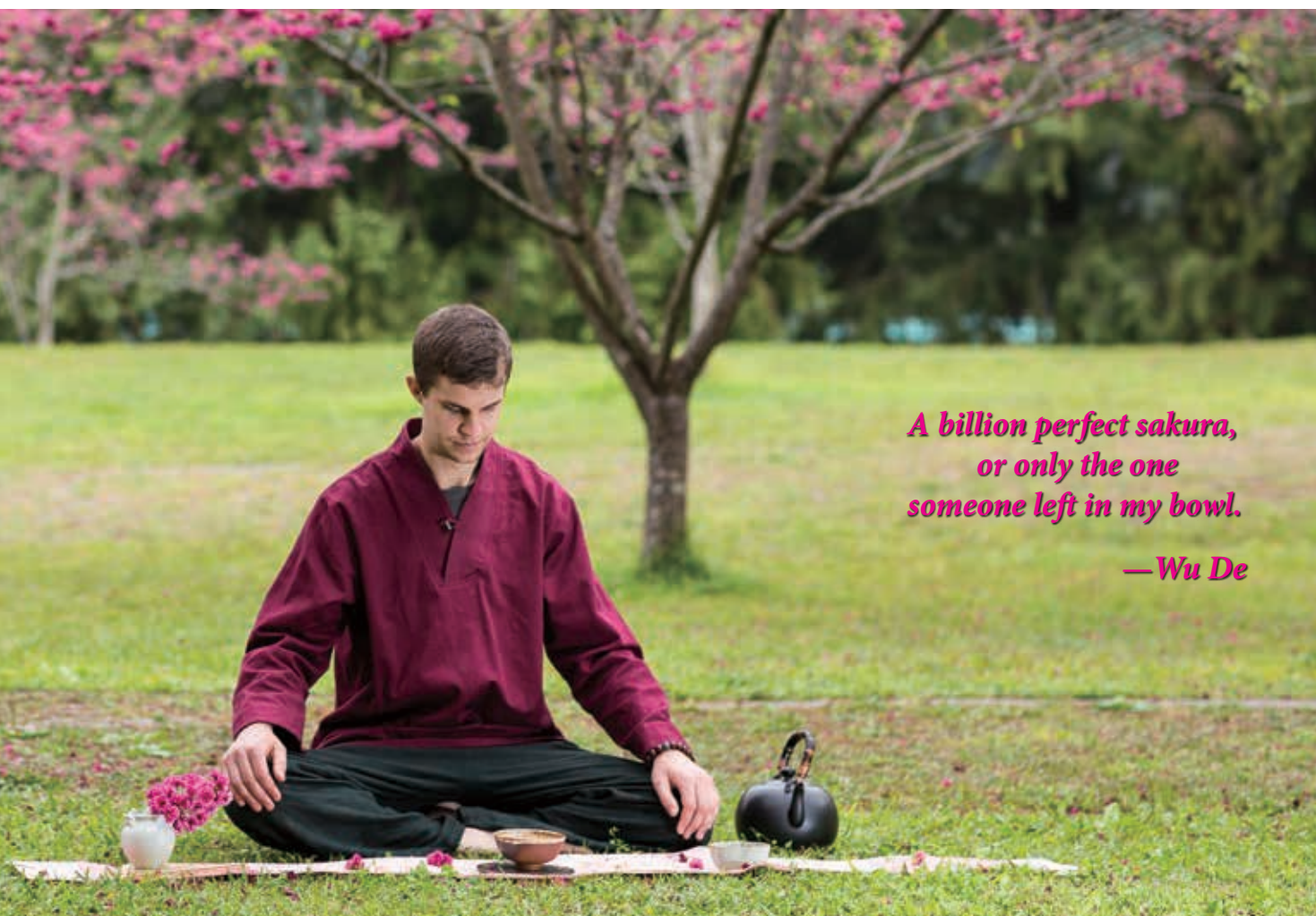
## Elements & Layout

What mainly differs between gongfu tea and bowl tea *chaxi* is the shape, size, and arrangement of the elements. In bowl tea, the teaware,

like side-handle pots and bowls, are larger than the teaware used in gongfu tea, and so they often require more space on the tea table. *Chaxi* for bowl tea, then, often ends up using longer and narrower tea cloth (*chabu*), but not always. This creates space for all the most common elements, like scoops and sticks, lid rests, a boat or pillow, the wastewater container and the more decorative elements, such as bonsai, simple flower arrangements, leaves, flower petals, rocks, etc. *Chaxi* for bowl tea is convenient in that it is easy to adapt to larger or smaller tea spaces, for larger or smaller tea gatherings. While the stage for bowl tea may appear more form-oriented, function should be skillfully integrated into the design.

Gongfu tea is generally reserved for smaller gatherings of one to five guests. Such a *chaxi*, therefore,





*A billion perfect sakura,  
or only the one  
someone left in my bowl.*

*—Wu De*





tends to be more function-oriented and the elements are usually laid out in a smaller space. We often use shorter and wider *chabu* to help contain the elements and teaware around the brewer. This keeps everything necessary close at hand to better preserve temperature and facilitate slow, gentle, graceful movements. The scoop and stick used in gongfu *chaxi* are often smaller than in bowl tea. The scoop is smaller because smaller amounts of tea are used when brewing gongfu. The stick is smaller because it needs a pointed or sharp end to clean the spout should it become clogged. The elements are limited to the bare essentials necessary to brew the finest cup of tea, but not without the occasional addition of a small *cha chong*, or “tea critter,” which invites

certain qualities to a tea ceremony: for instance, a tortoise invites abundance and longevity, while a water buffalo symbolizes good fortune and a sacred connection to the Earth.

The space for the *jin shui* is a small but major difference in the layout for bowl tea versus gongfu tea. In bowl tea, the *jin shui* is usually only brought out in the beginning to cleanse the teaware and then placed away out of sight when not in use. Whereas with gongfu tea, the design of a *chaxi* must hold space for a *jin shui* throughout the entire tea ceremony, as it is used in between each infusion to collect discarded water from the cups, tray and boat. That’s why in gongfu tea, a very elegant *jin shui* can also second as a decorative element within the design because it is always on

the table. It is important to place the *jin shui* on the off-hand side of your *chaxi* design. Can you guess why? It’s a matter of function: when you need to empty the water from the tea boat (*cha chuan*) that your pot rests in, your off-hand gently and carefully lifts it and empties the water into the *jin shui*, conveniently placed on the off-hand portion of the tea stage. For most people, this means the *jin shui* will be placed in the left portion of your *chaxi*. This is so important for the flow of your ceremony because it allows you to use both hands at the same time without needing to reach across anywhere. (Watch April’s Bonus Video to learn more!)

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## Not Getting Stuck

In general, a *chaxi* should be designed with the function of the brewing method in mind, along with all the other practical factors of the day. We must, therefore, understand the function of each brewing method and all the necessary elements required to serve the tea we have chosen.

Possibly most important is that we don't take these differences in *chaxi* design and turn them into a formula for arranging our tea stage. There are definitely exceptions where a *chaxi* design works perfectly well for either brewing method. But highlighting the differences in the beginning will help us refine our *chaxi* practice until it becomes more natural. In order to work from gross

to subtle, from general to refined, we should arrange more and more *chaxi*, which means we should serve more and more tea!

More important than reading articles on *chaxi* is actually creating them yourself and starting a dialogue with your teaware and *chaxi* elements. You can ask them and get a feel for whether they work together to meet the needs of your guests and the occasion. The secret to any element in any *chaxi* design, be it for bowl tea or gongfu tea, is that they are alive with an energy. You will find more guidance in talking to your *chaxi* than reading about them.

For the purposes of this article, I will describe four scenarios,

considering all of the themes, as well as practical factors of four unique *chaxi*. With the examples on the following four pages, two for gongfu and two for bowl tea, we can explore what goes into designing a tea stage and why, and also highlight some of the differences between the *chaxi* used in gongfu versus bowl tea brewing.



Watch the video  
on *chaxi* now!



[www.globalteahut.org/videos](http://www.globalteahut.org/videos)

# 紅塵



## Bowl Tea Theme: “Red Dust of the World”

### Theme

If you haven't already, look over this *chaxi* carefully and see what theme comes to mind before reading on. Though I had a particular theme in mind when creating this layout, there is by no means a wrong interpretation. It means what it means to you! The theme that came to mind, which suited my fictional scenario, was a layperson leaving the worldly life behind to become a mountain person, or monk. Therefore, I chose the red cloth to represent the dust of the world. In ancient China, roads weren't paved, but rather bare and dusty and red from the clay. Leaving the “red dust of the world (紅塵俗世)” to become ordained reminds us that when we sit down at the tea table, we also take a temporary ordination. The tea space is one of equality, where we leave behind our ego, social status and name, none of which matters in a heart space!

The cloud and Buddha represent ascension towards our highest self. It would have been common when leaving the world to make towards the mountains in order to begin spiritual practice, become a monastic, or lead a hermit's life of solitude and self-cultivation.

### Design

This design is suitable for larger bowl tea gatherings; the elements are few, yet it utilizes a larger space nicely, focusing our attention on the center of the stage and leaving plenty of room to take in and pass out the bowls. It uses an elegant, rich-colored cloth, so I would reserve this particular *chaxi* for lighter teas that won't stain (or be extremely mindful if choosing to brew a darker tea). Because the colors are suggestive of red clay, earth and dust, and the theme suggests ascension, this design is warming and thus best suited to cooler weather.

I would use a *chaxi* of this style for five or more guests at any time of the day during cooler times of the year. Because of the nature of the theme, I would use this *chaxi* for deeper, more ceremonial tea gatherings with enthusiastic Chajin. Remember, tea is inclusive. There are many approaches to tea and no one is better than another. In saying that I would use this *chaxi* for particular guests, I do not mean to exclude other guests and their approaches to tea, but to try and best harmonize a *chaxi* to a particular scenario. For example, if I were making tea for a large group of my family members who approach tea as an everyday beverage, I would use a different design that would better suit the nature of that situation, but I would make it with the same intention that all bowl tea is conducive to: connection and heart space!



## Bowl Tea Theme: “The Dewy Path”

### Theme

The path to the teahouse should be as a portal from one world to another. It should shift our focus of attention from worldly matters to transcendence, connection to Nature and simplicity. Though it may be a short path, it should express powerfully a flash of harmony and purity. The path itself, composed of rocks, moss, shrubs or many other combinations of natural elements, should be just as clean as the inside of the teahouse. In walking this way, we enter the teahouse transformed, cleansed and humbled. Stepping upwards, we take our place within the tea space, seated upright and ready to receive, as if we ourselves were a cleansed and empty bowl ready to receive the wisdom found in the leaves and hot water.

### Design

This design is suitable for smaller gatherings (one to three guests) where bowl tea is still ideal. A *chaxi* with a raised element of design such as this one can make serving more challenging. But when restricted to smaller tea gatherings, as I designed this one for, such challenges are often mitigated. And because the raised element of this *chaxi* is suited to the theme of raising something ordinary up to something extraordinary, it satisfies both function and form. That being said, any time we raise up our teaware in a *chaxi* design, though it may offer a sense of elevation, it also poses a slight danger to our teaware, and so should be practiced sparingly, safely and under the right circumstances, such as I have hoped to demonstrate with this example.



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## Gongfu Tea Theme: “Tradition and Cultivation”

### Theme

Traditionally, the four treasures of gongfu tea were the mulberry creek brazier and kettle for heating water, a purple-sand tea pot, a tea boat (often of antique porcelain, such as a reclaimed plate) and small porcelain cups. In this design, Wu De also paired those elements on a bamboo runner with the *Dao De Ching* engraved in it, celebrating the tradition of gongfu tea and its relationship to Daoism and self-cultivation.

### Design

We shared tea using this *chaxi* at a tea event we were invited to. The occasion called for gongfu tea to be served in a large open space, at designated tables, to as many as seven guests per table. We brought a traditional gongfu design to a modern tea event in a chatty environment. Without sacrificing our approach to tea, we designed this *chaxi* to suit the guests and the occasion, to keep the focus on the tea, to demonstrate functionality and to create a little balance by using a traditional theme in a modern environment.



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## Gongfu Tea Theme: “Happy Farewell”

### Theme

In this gongfu arrangement, I hoped to wish some Tea Sage Hut guests a joyful farewell as they continued their travels.

### Design

Though the design could accommodate more guests, it served four just fine. There is plenty of room for all the elements, though I chose to bring out the stick and scoop after the guests sat down, along with the cups, keeping it as open and simple as possible, perhaps suggesting an unobstructed journey. Normally, I wouldn’t bring out the tray for the cups either until after the guests sat down; however, I knew they were traveling to Japan, and so, with the shape of the tray resembling a Japanese fan, I thought it suitable to add the tray into the design right from the beginning. Though it may be a small detail that the guests themselves might not have picked up on, the point is that it’s not there arbitrarily. There was a conscious decision to bring it out, as there should be with all elements. We speak our hearts through tea; we communicate through our *chaxi* and then through the tea that is performed on that stage. The pattern on the tea cloth resembled a number of different roads, and of course, the Happy Buddha is merrily traveling down one of them on the back of a turtle. Notice also how the Buddha and the wastewater container are aligned to bring about a sense of overall balance and symmetry in the *chaxi*.

快樂告別

# Teawayfarer

*Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these magazines in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and Tea are becoming as the Tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of 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 Ourania Karydis.*

**I**t was instant. After the first bowl, I felt a connection to my true nature beyond anything I have ever experienced before. Was it the ceremony? The smell? The taste? The touch? I really can't be sure, but what I do know is that when I opened myself up to that first bowl in complete emptiness, I was transported to the place where it all started. The same energy that created me, created Her. I felt at home and held within Her presence.

I'm definitely of the belief that when the student is ready, the teacher will appear, and that is what Tea has been for me in the most subtle and profound ways. It all happened in perfect synchronicity.

I reached out for more guidance to other tea brothers and sisters in the community through Global Tea Hut, which I was ever so grateful to find. I regularly attended tea ceremonies held by Matty and Lesley in Brisbane who shared their home, knowledge and tea with me. It was from there that I would sit every morning, breathe and be with Her in silence and complete reverence. Even today, I still sit every morning with Tea as part of my self-cultivation. I know in my heart this is a lifelong path for me, but my mornings with Tea are the time where I completely let go of the past and future. There are no expectations and no attachments.

Nine months after starting my tea journey, She led me to Taiwan, to the Tea Sage Hut. I felt called very early on to travel to the Center, surrender to the teachings and absorb and learn all that I could, and I did just that—learning more than I ever thought I would. I didn't realize how much I had really learned until I got back home and served at a tea ceremony again. The wisdom, practice and knowledge I had gained flowed through me and into each and every bowl. It is a feeling that cannot be put into words. It can only be felt by one's self.

I am so grateful to have connected with so many amazing people through Global Tea Hut and for the opportunity to stay at the home that is the Tea Sage Hut and to meet the people who keep this community evolving and flowing. I have never been a part of anything like this. One of the greatest highlights of my time in Taiwan was the opportunity to pack these Global Tea Hut envelopes and label each and every one of them to be sent to all of you. You can imagine the delight on my face to know how many people this



reaches all over the world and the love and energy that goes into it all. This really is something special that we are all a part of!

After my experience at the Tea Sage Hut, I constantly remind myself to be a caretaker of Her, and not to feel like an owner of Tea—forever in awe of all that She is and does. Sharing Tea in ceremony has become a big part of my life. I am now offering regular community nights with tea and meditation at our yoga and lifestyle studio in Brisbane. It's such a beautiful experience to share tea in a way that is devotional, graceful and loving, and to see people who sit for the first time, so unsure of what is about to take place and then by the end of the ceremony, like most of us, they are resting in complete stillness, healing and peace.

If you ever find yourself in Brisbane, I would love to share a bowl with you! You can contact me at: [info@ouranoyoga.com](mailto:info@ouranoyoga.com).



# Inside the Hut

Because of the large number of tea sessions happening around the world, we are going to post about them on our website from now on and use this section to discuss news happening around the world. If you have any news, like a wedding, birth or tea happening, let us know and we'll write about it here. Also, our new website coming in the next few months will connect you to tea sessions around the world in a much better way than this page ever could!



Ambrosia is here. This is the first of our Light meets Life fundraiser teas this year. It is an aged brick. We have already ordered four other teas as well. By the time you receive this magazine, some of them may be up on the website! Be sure to keep watch!



There is a very good chance Wu De will be doing some workshops in San Francisco, Los Angeles and maybe Austin this summer, probably at the end of this month. Keep an eye on our social media for details.



We also have uploaded our blog to the website ([www.globalteahut.org/blog](http://www.globalteahut.org/blog)). We will publish the "Further Reading" there, as well as extra content, like a new series on the exercises in Tea Medicine.



There are a number of paintings and scrolls available on the website. If you are interested in having a piece of Wu De's artwork in your tea space, you can now get one through the website ([www.globalteahut.org/paintings](http://www.globalteahut.org/paintings)).



In the first two weeks of this month, women from all around the globe will gather together for the 4th annual Spirit Weavers Gathering, where Tea has become a cherished offering. Picture it: many sisters sitting in Northern California redwoods sharing tea and raise a bowl, leaf to heart for our tea sisters!



Wu De will be facilitating a six-day retreat in the Spanish Pyrenees. It will be a Zen & Tea One Flavor retreat focusing on the connection between meditation and tea. Participants will gather fresh spring water, meditate a few hours a day, learn chanting and have tea as well as Zen discourses throughout. It will be a rare chance to deepen your practice and learn tea at the same time. And, if that wasn't enough, it is being held at a gorgeous venue in the mountains of rural Spain. This event will run from October 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested in attending please check out the website: ([www.casacuadrau.org](http://www.casacuadrau.org)).

Wu De will also be traveling in Germany and the Czech Republic after the retreat, sharing tea and teaching Cha Dao.

## Center News



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



We are looking for help with farming, photography, video and web design. If any of you have experience in these things and are interested in staying at the Center to learn Cha Dao, with free room and board, contact us!



If you have stayed at the Tea Sage Hut and haven't yet written about it, please go to the Center's website, shown above, and visit the "Experiences" page to write about your stay!



We have a new tearoom at the Center. Wu De moved into the old wing on the side, and his old room became a new office for making the magazine. The new hut is called the "Scraggy-haired, Ruddy-faced Hermit Hut."

## June Affirmation

*I am superior to negative thoughts  
and low actions.*

*Am I letting negative habits rule my destiny? I  
am not my behavior. I can transcend. I am more  
powerful than my negative thought patterns or the  
negative actions that result from them.*

最好的一杯茶是無茶



[www.globalteahut.org](http://www.globalteahut.org)

*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.*

GLOBAL TEA HUT

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