



# Global Tea Art

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

October 2016

## ELEVATION

SUN MOON LAKE RED TEA

## TEA AROUND THE WORLD

DRINKING ELEVATION







## ELEVATION

*Elevation is the only tea we send out every single year—it's that important to us! Last year, we began a new tradition of having "Tea Around the World," sharing all of your stories. This year, we thought we'd combine both traditions and share Elevation stories from the community around the world.*

*Love is  
changing the world  
bowl by bowl*

## FEATURES

### 11 THE MAKING OF ELEVATION

By Wu De

### 23 RED MEDICINE

By Qing Yu

### 27 ELEVATION STORIES PART I

### 39 SUN MOON POTS

By Petr Novak

### 43 ELEVATION STORIES PART II



## TRADITIONS

### 03 TEA OF THE MONTH

"Elevation," 2016 Old-Growth Red Tea  
Sun Moon Lake, Taiwan

### 35 COOKING WITH TEA

Vegan Tea Ice Cream

### 49 CHAXI ARRANGEMENTS

An Elevation Arrangement

### 53 TEAWAYFARER

Raneta Kulakova, Russia



活力舒醒

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# From the Editor

**I**n October, we start moving outdoors to drink tea in the mountains, often on the way to fetch spring water each Thursday. Gathering water is one of the highlights for guests who visit the Tea Sage Hut. We go in lieu of morning meditation, maintaining silence throughout the entire trip, which is a thirty-minute drive into the nearby mountains, followed by a pleasant hike up the temple stairs to the most stunning tea water in Taiwan (not to mention some incredible views as well). On the way back down, we'll pull over at one of the many tea huts that one sees throughout the mountains of Taiwan. These huts are often built by donors who wish to make space for tea in Nature. That's the spirit of tea, awakening harmony without asking anything in return—leaves and water shared with heart.

Long ago, though not too long, farmers in China and Taiwan would leave large teapots on well-worn trails with a few bowls stacked on the spout to keep bugs out. Passersby could then stop and have some refreshing tea on their journey. Master Lin always says, “take a rest for a longer journey,” meaning that if we are to live long and well, we all need to take pauses now and again—hopefully every day! I've always been amazed that some farmer or tea lover would hike out down the road every few days to change the tea and water in those large pots, called “*gong hu*,” without asking anything in return, not even a thank you, since they wouldn't ever meet the travelers with whom they shared the tea. That's a true love of kindness. Nowadays, people wouldn't even think it safe to drink from them, no matter how delicious the tea was. We need such unseen goodness now more than ever! Though most of us can't leave big pots of tea around town for travelers, we can still pass on the gesture of pausing quietly for rest, relaxation, meditation and contemplation—the kind of pause that only tea can provide. And that is why, for this month, we decided to give you the opportunity to give, which is often the greatest gift there is. We've included an extra tea in every envelope. Sure, you could take this as a chance to have more Elevation this year. But wouldn't it be better to start a friend, neighbor or even a stranger on their tea journey? And how better to do so than with the tea that so many of us started our own journeys with?

Elevation is the only tea we send out every year. Each year, the Elevation month is a chance for us all to return to our beginnings, to practice brewing leaves in a bowl. Since so many of us literally started with this

tea, it is the perfect opportunity to remember what this Global Tea Hut was founded on: community, spirit and a connection to Nature, self and others through tea. As we always say in these pages, *advanced techniques are basic techniques mastered*. There is always more we can add to our foundation. All of the techniques we use to properly prepare tea in its simplest form, leaves in a bowl, are also used in the other brewing techniques we practice, and taking the time to focus on the basics is always worthwhile, no matter how far we've traveled. Take the time to practice tea in its simplest form, to have a ceremony around the ordinary. When we find the sacred in a simple bowl of leaves and water, we can have gratitude for the abundance and glory in every precious moment we walk this Earth, even in our grief.

Last October, we did a “Tea Around the World” issue, which was essentially a whole issue of the section of Global Tea Hut we call “Voices from the Hut,” in which we shared the experience of members around the world. At the time, we said we would like to make an annual tradition of publishing an issue of your own words, so we thought we would combine our two annual traditions of Elevation and “Tea Around the World.” Since this is the fifth year of Elevation, we feel we've thoroughly covered the farmer and tea in past issues (though we will return to that in the Tea of the Month article), so we asked the community for Elevation stories, experiences, trips to Sun Moon Lake, etc. We hope this magical tea further solidifies this community, bringing us all closer together!



## Further Reading

- 1) *Tea of the Month*, Issue 33, Oct. 2014, pp. 3-8
- 3) *A Bowl of Tea*, Issue 4, May 2012, pp. 3-6
- 4) *Sun Moon Lake*, Issue 19, August 2013, pp. 21-23
- 5) *An Introduction to Red Tea*, Issue 50, March 2016, pp. 11-14
- 6) We also have more *Elevation Stories* up, too!

\*Further Readings are all posted on our blog each month.



# TEA OF THE MONTH

It's that time of the year again: the return of the classic Sun Moon Lake red tea we've come to call "Elevation," the only tea we repeat every year. The tea for this month is our all-time favorite tea, and the one we send home with travelers who stop at our Center! You could say it's our signature tea: the one we use to introduce new teawayfarers to the path—the first wayside sign of the road. It's also one of the teas we like to serve when we set up our roadside huts, serving tea to passersby. This month is always a good opportunity to review some of the core teachings we have around tea, like understanding living tea and the difference between red and black tea. Also, by retelling Mr. Shu's story we learn the importance that the dialogue between the farmer and trees has on the quality of a tea.

This amazing red tea is worthy of being called a "living tea," in all the ways we have discussed in previous issues: It is seed-propagated, the trees have space to grow, there is a living relationship with the local ecology—undergrowth, plants, insects, animals, molds and bacteria. There are, of course, no chemicals used in its production and no irrigation either. There's also a positive dialogue/

relationship with the farmer. It shines with a bright and uplifting energy that makes it the perfect morning tea, radiating your day and filling it with "elevation." It is simple and true, and you feel like you know it after your first bowl, as if a beloved friend from another lifetime has come back into your life.

Though the trees are allowed room to grow between trees, they are pruned. This is usually a disqualifier for what we call "living tea," but we always give Elevation a pass. The reason the trees are pruned is that the whole farm is tended by just one farmer and his wife. If Mr. Shu and his wife let the trees grow up, which they would like to, they would be unable to harvest all the leaves in the time window Nature and the weather allow for picking. And they cannot afford to hire help for the harvest. Most farmers prune their trees in the autumn to increase yield, but Mr. Shu does so out of practical need. We think that this exception is very minor compared to most tea in the world, and therefore Mr. Shu's tea still qualifies as a "living tea."

As you may remember, there are two main varieties of tea: small leaf and large leaf. Originally, all tea comes

from the forests in and around southwest China: Yunnan, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and eastern India. The descendants of those original trees are single-trunked, with large, wide crowns that can grow several meters in height. The roots are also deep, extending far down into the earth before branching. Then, as tea traveled north and east—naturally or by human hands—it adapted to colder, sometimes higher, climates and terroir. These trees, called "small leaf," developed into several trunks, like a bush, with roots that extend outwards rather than down. The leaves got smaller and smaller as tea progressed north into colder climes, until they became so small in places like Japan that when they are rolled, they look like little needles (like *sencha* or *gyokuro*). Our Tea of the Month is a large-leaf varietal, like puerh.

Since Elevation is from large leaf trees grown at a lower altitude, it is more bitter and astringent since the leaves grow faster and don't store as much glucose to make them sweet. However, this rapid growth channels more from the mountain, lending the tea a stronger Qi. Much like puerh, Elevation is also a great candidate for aging long-term.





Elevation



Sun Moon Lake, Taiwan



2016 Old-Growth Red Tea



Taiwanese



~800 Meters

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



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





## Living Tea

"Living tea" is a translation of the Chinese "zhen cha (真茶)," which literally translates to "real tea." But translating it that way doesn't capture the essence or poetry of the words, as the English "real" also often refers to something that isn't a fake, as in "authentic," but the Chinese is pointing to tea that is natural. In the first ever English description of puerh, which was printed on a large trademark ticket, called a "da piao (大票)," which would have been printed and set either one per tong (筒, seven cakes wrapped in bamboo), or one ticket per jian (斤, 12 tongs, or 84 cakes), we find the following advertising about the their tea leaves: "Those made by human labor cannot compare to them." Though this is really just part of a 1930s advertisement for a puerh company (Tong Qing Hao, 同庆号), it still captures what we mean when we say "living tea." We mean that it is beyond comparison to that made by the hands of man. "Living" means thrumming with Qi; it means full of Nature, created by the mountain, wind and rain.

### 1) Seed-propagation

This is essential, as tea is a sexual plant and the life force of a tree is dependent upon its natural propagation. Natural trees live for centuries, or even millennia, while cuttings, which make up most tea plantations on Earth, only live for decades.

### 2) Room to grow

All beings need healthy space to grow. Plants growing in harmony with their environment will organize themselves, and never in rows. Also, letting the trees grow up means they also grow deeper roots.

### 3) Biodiversity

A tree is its environment. The terroir defines the tea. Plants are open and porous, absorbing minerals and rain, sunshine and moonshine. The soil and climate become the leaf. Nothing is more important to a tea's quality than the myriad natural relationships that create a tea.

### 4) No agrochemicals

Pesticides, weed-killers and chemical fertilizers are all unsustainable, making the tea trees dependent on products pro-

duced outside their natural ecology. They are also unhealthy for the water table, the farmers and their families, and for us, the consumers.

### 5) No irrigation

A farmer can increase yield by irrigating, and this is often necessary even for organic plantation tea. But in a natural, "living" setting, irrigation weakens the trees. Without irrigation, fewer trees will survive but those that do will have deeper roots and be stronger and healthier, drinking deep, underground, mineral-rich mountain water.

### 6) Dialogue with the farmer

The character for tea is a combination of the radicals for "herb," "wood" and "human." The quality of tea is in a very real way a conversation between the farmer and Nature. The motivations of the farmer, and whether the relationship is one of respect and honor or not, will determine the resulting leaves. And that is before we even account for the processing skills required to make fine tea! Fine tea is a balance of Human, Earth and Heaven.







## From Past to Present

When the Japanese conquered Taiwan, they wanted to develop several long-term agricultural projects to help their economy. They brought many large-leaf trees and saplings, as well as seeds, from eastern India to make red tea plantations, choosing Sun Moon Lake for its accessibility and because its terroir is similar to that of the original homes of these trees. Soon after, the Japanese were expelled and their gardens were abandoned. In the coming decades, these semi-wild gardens would grow up and produce completely wild offspring, as well as adapting and relating to the local terroir in all the amazing ways a tea tree can—through the soil, the insects, rain and minerals, sun and rock. Our tea comes from one such small organic

and ecological garden consisting primarily of semi-wild trees with some wild ones scattered about.

The farmer, Mr. Shu, is an amazing man. Many of his nearby neighbors have utilized their gardens to create more industrial plantations and get rich. He says he only wants enough to provide for his family, and therefore keeps it simple and organic. He has even bought up some nearby property so that he can control the proximity his trees have to anything harmful others may be using. For that reason, the tea is incredibly clean and bright, speaking of its long heritage here in these mountains and beyond, to the older forests its ancestors once lived in at the foot of the great Himalayas.

Mr. Shu is a second-generation farmer with an incredible attitude.

While his neighbors constructed new-and-improved houses with satellite dishes, he stayed humble, simple and in love with his work and trees. Three years ago, there was a drought and a plague of bugs decimated the area—insects that come only every decade or so. When we talked to him about it, he responded with great wisdom, proving that—like the ancient Daoist texts—even the simplest people can achieve harmony with the Dao, mastery of life and a great wisdom that we all can learn from. He said that at that time, he received less. If he were to stress about that, or worse yet, compromise his values and turn to pesticides for help, it would be like rejecting his destiny, arguing with Heaven. Furthermore, he said that it would show how ungrateful he was for what Nature *had* given him. “We should

茶 *Mr. Shu and Wu at the farm we love.*



金  
茶  
無  
名



be grateful for what Nature provides and accept the times that Heaven takes from us—learning from times of having less, or even losing what we have, as much as in times of abundance. We all will face lack and loss sooner or later. If you resist and argue with Heaven that your destiny is unfair, you don't learn and there will be greater misfortune later. Better to accept whatever Nature gives us and be grateful for it. I have less this year, but it is okay because I saved when I had more last year; and maybe next year I will have more again." There couldn't be deeper life lessons than these!

Some of you know from last year's video that we have made a commitment to buy any tea that Mr. Shu does not sell each year at Chinese New Year for the rest of our lives.

When we told him this, he actually cried and said that in doing so, we were freeing him to focus on tea farming and production, rather than on marketing, which he admitted he is not very good at doing. We cannot ask farmers to protect the environment without caring for them and their families. When farmers are honored and respected, socially and economically, then we can begin dialogue about how we would like them to steward the land in their care. As long as they face economic hardship and are ignored/disrespected, they will make compromises. There are many ways to get involved in the ongoing shift to sustainable tea production, but working with the farmers in ways like this is paramount.

We wanted you to know that this month's tea is one of the ways that

Global Tea Hut is working hard to make a difference, even if it is small. We hope that Mr. Shu will become a shining example to his neighbors and peers, who will see that he sells out all of his tea, every year—year after year—and maybe ask him why. When he says that a global community of tea lovers around the world is buying him out precisely because he loves Nature and is farming organically, they may reconsider how they care for their land. Buying all of Mr. Shu's leftover tea this year is what has afforded us the surplus to send out an extra tin to each of you, so that you too can know what it feels like to share this most-beloved tea with someone and start his or her tea journey. We told Mr. Shu we'd be doing this and he said he hopes everyone who drinks it shares it and is happy!

## Red vs. Black Tea

Once again, we are committed to correcting the red tea/black tea mistake. It is important to understand that what most Westerners call "black tea" is actually "red tea." Ordinarily, it doesn't matter what something is called, but in this case there is another kind of Chinese tea that is called "black tea." So if you call red tea "black tea," then what do you call black tea?

The reasons for this mistake are manifold, having to do with the long distances the tea traveled in chests to Europe, and even more importantly with the general lack of information there for the first few hundred years tea was traded. Another layer to the confusion comes from the fact that the Chinese have always categorized tea based on the liquor, while Westerners named tea for the color the leaf itself. The difference between black and red tea is much more obvious in the liquor than in the leaf, though the leaf is also slightly red to our eyes. Europeans weren't allowed inland in those days, and never saw the tea trees or the processing either (except some roasting). Buying through middlemen in broken pidgin English, you could see how easy it would be

to spread misinformation. We repeat this every time we send a red tea, because it is an important mistake that we tea lovers have to correct in the world, so that the real black tea can have its name back!

The basic difference between red and black tea is that red tea is heavily oxidized through prolonged withering and rolling during production and black tea is artificially fermented post-production. This usually happens through piling, which is akin to composting. Local bacteria are important in the post-production artificial fermentation of black tea, which means that it is a very regional kind of tea—its terroir includes the micro-environment, along with the trees, soil, weather, etc. Red tea, on the other hand, is the only genre of tea that is truly a production methodology, which can therefore be applied to *any* varietal/cultivar.

Nowadays the term "dark tea" is used by some tea vendors and authors to describe black tea, rather than correcting the mistake. However, we still feel that when a culture misappropriates or mistakenly terms a concept, category or idea from another culture then it is the foreign culture's respon-

sibility to correct the mistake, which demonstrates a respect and honor for the "host." Honoring the proper Chinese terminology is honoring the farmers and tea masters that have handed the genetic lineage of trees, the brewing methodologies and the spiritual practices down to us. We are not trying to correct the mainstream habit of saying "black tea." What we are doing is correcting this mistake amongst those who care—amongst our community of more conscious, heart-centered Chajin, allowing all of you to better communicate with those who produce and sell tea at its source.

The issue is, ultimately, a minor one, but here's an example of the effect honoring tradition and correcting this mistake can have: Last month, we met with two farmers from Liu Bao, in Guangxi, and they were so happy with our efforts to honor and respect true "black tea," returning it to its proper place in the West, that they broke out a celebratory fifty-year-old Liu Bao tea and congratulated us again and again, cup after cup! And their gratitude was definitely sincere, as was our respect for black tea producers.

## *Elevation*

*This month, instead of sharing what our guests felt about this special tea, we asked some of the community to drink it and write some poems to share with us all.*

茶 *The brightest lake  
Full of the sun and moon  
Lifted skyward  
And drunk down in one gulp.  
-Wu De*

茶 *Pinkish red to amber golden  
Dawn of sunrise lifting  
Mimicking reflection in my bowl  
Colors and wavelengths shifting  
Golden ring along the outside border  
Reddish-orange centers this medicinal water  
Each brew a furthering shade of the rising sun  
You call this Elevation?  
As I sit... I understand where you're coming from.  
-Antonio Moreno*

茶 *High, high above the lake,  
Through the lush, lush forest,  
Past the bamboo grove,  
Past endless vines,  
Over moss-covered rocks,  
I reach the peak of the hill.  
Came here to enjoy the view of Sun Moon Lake,  
But the trees seemed to have gathered here as well.  
Only green, and beyond that mist.  
The lake remains hidden by the clouds.  
Elevated from the World of Dust,  
I sit down amongst the trees,  
And decide to enjoy the view of the world within.  
Not a single ripple can be seen on the surface of my mind.  
The reality of mind and matter unfold naturally.  
-Jasper Hermans*



*Check out the video  
on brewing tips now!*

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





A woman with her hair in a braid is shown in profile, drinking from a dark, textured bowl. Steam rises from the bowl. The background is a soft-focus landscape featuring a body of water, distant hills, and a small building on a hill.

## Brewing Tips

**W**e recommend putting these leaves in a bowl and watching them unfold in the oldest brewing method around—older than the pyramids in fact! Elevation is the ultimate bowl tea! It often defines this brewing style, as so many of us started our tea journeys drinking this very tea in this very way. It is a great morning tea, leaving you awake, bright and calm. Try waking up a bit earlier one morning, alone or with some loved ones. Put more or less leaves in your bowl, to your taste, and fill it with hot water. As it steeps, have a moment or two of meditation. Then pass the bowl between you, sharing a single bowl as you share a single encounter, a single chance...

This is an amazing tea to have in the morning. Try sitting cross-legged and putting a few leaves in a bowl. Sit and soak up the warmth and feel how it invigorates you. It has an amazing energy that calms and uplifts simultaneously. Try this for a few days and you will find that your outlook each morning is getting brighter and your life is starting to change—and all from a few leaves scattered in a bowl...

# THE MAKING OF ELEVATION

活力舒醒作法

著人: Wu De





**A**s we've explained in previous issues, different tea types are processed differently. While processing is not the sole differentiating factor (indeed, varietal, terroir, harvest season and many other factors are all just as relevant), processing often makes the most profound difference in how a given leaf's liquor will look, taste and feel by the time it reaches your teapot or bowl. Oftentimes, Western authors mislead us by saying that all tea is the same plant and only differs in processing. Actually, of the seven genres of tea, this is really only true of red tea, which happens to be the most consumed tea in the West—and that helps explain some of the confusion. The other six genres of tea are distinguished as much by varietal as they are by processing methodology. But you can process any tea as a red tea, and usually with nice results.

Red tea is often described as “fully oxidized,” but this is actually impossible. It is, however, the most heavily oxidized tea there is. Most red tea is processed in 3-4 phases: First it is picked and then it

is withered, traditionally on bamboo trays stacked on shelves built to hold them. The withering of red tea is very long, usually from twelve to twenty-four hours. It is then rolled for an exceptionally long time, to continue the oxidation and break down the cells, turning into a pasty mass in the process. After that, red tea goes through another piling/oxidation phase. Then it is dried, usually in an oven (dian hong, red tea from Yunnan, is ideally sun-dried like puerh).

Our Tea of the Month is processed a bit differently from most red teas. The farmers think we are crazy, but we ask Mr. Shu to decrease the withering and the rolling periods, leaving some green in the leaves, which you will see when you brew them. (Essentially, we've asked that the tea be less oxidized than what is produced commercially). The reason for the heavy oxidation in normal red tea processing is to make the tea sweet and delicious. Nevertheless, we have found that such extreme processing removes some of the tea's Qi and distances it from the mountain and deep essence it touches.

This is especially relevant when the tea leaves were plucked from old-growth, large-leaf tea trees. The leaves of such trees are often bitter and astringent, but we can accept a bit of that along with the sweetness, can't we? And isn't that a significant life lesson as well? In the end, we'd rather have a slightly less delicious tea with incredible and relaxing Qi than the other way around.

The old farmer smiles and says he likes our quirkiness. We hope you will understand why we make our red tea like this. We don't produce it for sale, only for free. We only wish we could give it to you for less.

The tea this year, like last year's, was a bit more oxidized than usual, due to a lack of rainfall. Mr. Shu still decreased the withering and rolling for us, but not as much as in previous years. The raw tea leaves themselves were also more astringent, so a bit more oxidation was necessary. Let's take a detailed photographic journey through the making of Elevation to understand the origin of one of our favorite teas.





## ***Terroir & Trees***

*In tea production, each step is more important than the next to the overall quality of the tea, as it determines what follows. And that means that Nature will always be the most important element in crafting fine tea. The terroir of a place: its soil, climate, rainfall, minerals, microbial activity, and so much more. This will determine what varietal of tree will thrive there. And the weather will determine the harvest time and amount.*

*The terroir of the hills around Sun Moon Lake is perfect for large-leaf red tea, with lush, humid hills that aren't too high in elevation, stay consistent in temperature most of the year and have rich red soil like the jungles of Yunnan where this tea comes from. The large-leaf trees were planted here about a hundred years ago and then left abandoned until the red tea industry was rekindled in the '80s and '90s.*

*Mr. Shu's farm is one our favorite gardens in the world. The trees are loved, and cared for daily. There is a vibrancy and poetry walking amongst them. Tea lovers take pause here and breathe more deeply, perhaps nibbling a small bud with their eyes closed or running their hands softly across the tops of the trees to feel the new life thrumming up. These expressions happen naturally here, and that isn't the case with every tea garden. Mr. Shu bought the land on one side to take out the betel nut, which is harmful to tea, and to prevent his neighbors from affecting his trees. He is currently trying to work out an agreement with the farmer on the other side as well.*









## Harvest

Most of the plucking of Elevation happens in the late summer, July and August. However, with changes in the climate, picking can come any time these days. Usually, Mr. Shu gets two or three harvests a year. Elevation is picked entirely by hand, and Mr. Shu can rarely afford help the way that larger commercial farms can, which means he and his wife stay very busy during harvest time. The tea is picked in traditional bud-and-two-leaf sets. If you've ever tried your hand at picking tea, you will know that it is one of the reasons that tea can be among the most labor-intensive agriculture.









## Withering

*The withering of red tea is done for a long time. Withering reduces the moisture content of the tea and begins oxidation. It is like when an apple or a banana turns brown from sitting on the counter—cells are breaking down due to exposure to oxygen. When tea leaves are first plucked, they are brittle and stiff, because they are full of water. As they wither, they become soft, limp and pliable for processing. In red tea, we want to oxidize the tea as much as possible, so the withering is much deeper than for other genres of tea.*

*Traditionally, red tea was withered like other teas on round bamboo trays stacked on shelves. These days, Elevation and other red teas in Sun Moon Lake (and some parts of China) are withered in long troughs with ventilation beneath. Warm air is blown from under the trough, which allows the farmers to control the temperature, humidity and airflow during the withering stage. Elevation was withered in this way for around twelve hours, which is shorter than usual, as we want the tea to keep its green Qi.*

*The room where the withering is happening smells amazing! It is a rich and broad smell, hinting of camphor, mint and sweet fruit. Once you've smelled withering tea, you won't ever forget this smell.*













## Rolling & Oxidizing

Red tea is often called “fully oxidized,” but that isn’t really possible. It is, however, the most oxidized of all tea. This means that most stages of its processing last much longer than for other kinds of tea. The rolling is no exception—red tea is rolled from half an hour to ninety minutes. The rolling breaks down the cells of the tea, furthers oxidation and also shapes the leaves.

Traditionally, all tea was, of course, rolled by hand. In the case of striped, large-leaf red tea like Elevation, this meant rolling the tea across a bamboo tray so that the ridges would knead the tea. It would be hard for Mr. Shu to hand-process all his tea, and would most likely mean he could not harvest all his tea on time. Like most farmers, he uses a large rolling machine to roll the leaves. The machine takes longer than hand-rolling, as the batches are bigger. Most batches go through two hours of rolling. We stop our Elevation between an hour and ninety minutes because we want to reduce the oxidation slightly.

After rolling, the tea is piled on round bamboo trays and piled for two or three hours to let it oxidize more. This is the final oxidation in which the tea’s aroma will be sealed into the leaves. The leaves are all pasty from the rolling, and the juices glisten on them.





## Drying

Long ago, red tea had to be dried in ovens or sun-dried like dian hong (red tea from Yunnan). These days, ovens are used. The tea is fed into the oven, which separates the leaves with a rotating rake, flattening them out as they travel down a conveyor belt through the warm air that dries them at around 70 degrees Celsius. They then come out another, smaller conveyor where they are sorted, inspected and then caught on a bamboo tray. The tea will go through the oven two or three times until it is sufficiently dry. More passes at lower temperatures preserves the essence of the tea. You can roast red tea dry with heavier heat, but in the case of our greener Elevation, this would damage the tea and leave an unwanted roasty flavor.









# RED MEDICINE

## A TCM VIEW OF ELEVATION

茶人: Qing Yu

*We asked our newly-graduated Traditional Chinese doctor Qing Yu, to talk about the medicinal qualities of Elevation. He touches upon some important insights regarding terroir, the energy of red tea and why Elevation is important for our tradition. It is amazing how Elevation can rise like steam from the simplest of bowls to touch universal teachings and truths that resonate so profoundly.*

**T**ea people often ponder the infinite, intimate web of relationships woven between terroir and tea. The immeasurable cadence and complex dance of so many biological, atmospheric, climactic, energetic and seasonal forces imbue distinction to a tea garden. From a Daoist perspective, man goes about his diminutive existence in a realm between Heaven and Earth. We serve as a conduit or gyre of the many forces swirling around us, a microcosm of the great macrocosm of Nature. Thus, we are influenced by forces such as terroir, as much perhaps as a tea tree. Before the “viral” spread of endless distractions in the form of Instagram, Snapchat, daily Buzzfeeds and the infinite complexities of modernity, we might have looked out into the vaulted pavilion of the macrocosm and experienced a more tacit connection to Great Nature. And though cajoled by the gravitational pull of modern materialism, this connection to our source continues to move us along, whispering in the wind to “remember,” or tweeting non-virtually like the “reminder birds” of Aldous Huxley’s *The Island* to “pay attention!”

The speed of the world and the nature of our technology make it difficult to make best use of this precious resource (attention), which is a core component of mindfulness. What, you might be wondering, does all of this have to do with this month’s tea? Elevation, an old-bush *Assamica* red tea from Sun Moon Lake, Nantou, Taiwan, serves perfectly to explore ideas of terroir (as well as social context or social terroir), humanity’s relationship to the macrocosm and the virtues of red tea.

While the concept of terroir is quite easy to understand, the reality is complex, beyond any attempts to reduce or quantify. In short, the idea is that many tea is imbued with unique qualities from factors beyond genetics and processing. We must also consider, for example, qualities such as soil composition, water source and mineral content, weather, elevation, local ecosystems and influential plants around the tea trees. All these factors lend their subtle signature to the overall Qi of a tea, as well as the less abstract qualities of flavor and aroma. Imagine, for a moment, the influence of altitude on a tea. At higher eleva-

tions, the air is thinner, cooler, prone to greater precipitation and mist, supporting smaller shrubs in the local ecosystem. The animals, insects and microbial life are uniquely suited to these conditions. Growing closer to “Heaven (*tian*, 天)” at a higher elevation with cooler weather often means sweeter teas. By contrast, teas grown in bright, sunny areas are often more bitter due to the rapid growth of new leaves rather than storing energy in the form of sweet glucose, as with small-bud teas at cooler, higher elevations.

Sun Moon Lake is the largest in Taiwan with tranquil waters and mountainous surroundings. As one looks out over the idyllic scenery, lake water laps with low sounds by the shore. A quiet hum of cicadas fills the air, and the villages around the lake remind us of an older time, though they are more threatened these days by the encroaching development of resorts and tourist attractions. Tea gardens line the surrounding mountains with Buddhist monasteries dotting the landscape (including Wu De’s favorite Xuan Zhang Temple





where we always stop to meditate). At a moderate elevation of 748m (2,454ft.) above sea level, the red teas of this region maintain the sweetness found at higher altitudes with the bitterness of sunny, fully oxidized, tannin-rich teas. Elevation, like most red tea, consists of one bud and two leaves, processed into a dark-colored leaf, yielding a deep crimson liquor. Elevation is withered, rolled, oxidized and dried. Through oxidation, the tannins develop and the tea becomes richer, more robust and invigorating, with flavors of malty dried fruit, spices, bittersweet cinnamon and cacao. The aroma is very comforting, as is the tea, despite its full flavor and enlivening Qi. Terroir, along with the genetic composition of the cultivar and the processing methodology, all combine to create Elevation. And while they may appear separate, the processing requires the masterful vision and understanding of the tea farmer. In order to understand this complex process, it is helpful to review some basic Daoist ideas that underlie all Daoist arts including Cha Dao.

When observing Nature, as well as our place within the macrocosm, ancient Daoist sages astutely attributed certain qualities to the movements and mechanics of life. They observed the salient, constantly shifting interplay between yin and yang, sun and moon, Heaven and Earth, day and night, birth and death, solstice and equinox, etc. The vicissitudes of yin and yang take more distinct form as the five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. And the interactions between the five elements produce the six atmospheres of cold, heat, wind, moisture, dryness and fire. Every aspect of the biosphere, every movement of life, takes place within the magnificent tapestry woven by the interactions of the elements and atmosphere. The health of a species and its habitat depends upon the harmonious relationship between these elements. Human health depends upon our ability to live in harmony with Nature, understanding that we cannot separate a person or group of people from the context of their lives. Further, Nature “cooperates” to help humans live a balanced life. Take, for

example, the growth of seasonal vegetables and their influence on health. The spring is the time of the wood element, during which an upward and outward movement, like a growing tea tree, spurs the sudden proliferation of life. This time of blooming birth and verdant vernal life is characterized by sudden movement, longer days, growing heat, leafless trees bursting into life, overflowing seas and rivers, tornadoes and hurricanes, thunder and lightning. According to Daoist medicine, spring belongs to the wood element and dominates functions of the liver. If we don’t adapt to the changing climate in spring, we may be susceptible to seasonal health problems, such as flu, pneumonia, or a relapse of chronic diseases. It is advisable to reduce the intake of sour flavors and increase sweet and pungent flavors as this enables the liver to regulate the vital energy throughout the body. As I mentioned, Nature “cooperates,” helping produce foods that support our health during the appropriate season. This is not to anthropomorphize Nature, but to say that our existence grew out of our environment.



Examples of recommended foods for the spring include onions, leeks, leaf mustard, yam, wheat, dates, cilantro, mushrooms, spinach and bamboo shoots. Fresh green and leafy vegetables should also be included in meals; sprouts from seeds are also valuable. As cold winter keeps us indoors and tends to make us eat too much, people may develop a heat imbalance in the spring, which leads to dry throats, bad breath, constipation, thick tongue coating and dry skin. Foods like bananas, pears, water chestnuts, sugar cane, celery and cucumber help to clear the excessive heat.

This exploration of humanity's relationship to Nature, the elements, the atmosphere, the seasons and seasonal foods illustrates the connection we have to Nature. The most obvious way that we interact with Nature is through the food that we grow, harvest, share and consume. All plants have their own reality—their own duties and powers. Each is not only unique, but is given the gift of life and must be respected if its full potential is to be realized.

Now, let's return to the inherent power of Sun Moon Lake red tea. Just as we discussed the Daoist qualities of seasonal foods, so too can we discuss the qualities of Elevation red tea. Elevation is a "spring and summer" tea in the sense that it contains the wood element's upward and outwardly moving Qi. The leaves are abundant, full, large and pulsating with spring yang energy, providing warmth and moving to the surface of the body. This movement increases blood circulation, which is a drying, heating process. However, the slight bitterness of the leaf is associated with summer fire energy, and the bitter flavor clears heat from the body. Thus, the bitterness balances the heating and drying functions of the strong Qi. All this talk of flavors, elements, temperature and Qi is important in understanding one simple thing: different teas, like different foods, are ideal for specific seasons. We can thus enjoy teas that are appropriate to the season so as to maintain balance and harmony in our lives. Further, we can pick more appropriate teas for a given tea

ceremony based on the intention of the tea ceremony.

Elevation is satisfying and approachable for everyone, like a person with an affable, kind, big-hearted personality; a personality like the first day of spring. The large, healthy leaves are ideal for a bowl, especially during the morning when we are seeking simplicity and an uplifting Cha Qi to start the day. Also, you might notice when you drink this tea with others that the mood lightens and people become more talkative. Part of the reason for this shift lies in the flavors of the tea. Sweet corresponds to the earth element and has a harmonizing effect, bringing a sense of comfort and home to the tea. On the contrary, the bitter flavor goes to the heart, allowing the spirit to be at ease, and stokes the fire element, which leads to a desire to socialize and share. For these reasons, Elevation has been an ideal tea for many people just starting out on their tea journeys. It only requires a simple bowl and boiling water, thus making it ideal for sharing with loved ones. In fact, red tea was the first tea to spread throughout Europe and the rest of the world due to the qualities previously discussed. It is the perfect tea for "social terroir" in the sense that the yang, bittersweet, talkative nature of the tea made it a likely candidate for geographic and social movement.

There exists an intertwining relationship between meditation, tea and enlightenment. Tea also cannot be described in words, but only tasted directly right here and right now. Elevation is ideal as a bowl tea, and in our tradition, bowl tea is about casting off qualitative considerations. We return to appreciation of meditation, simplicity, openness, receptivity and connection to those with whom we share the moment. For these reasons, Elevation holds a very important role in our tradition because it keeps two essential functions of tea intact: humility and connection. Those of us in the Los Angeles community who have been drinking tea for many years, and who appreciate the refinement of gongfu tea, often return to bowl tea with Elevation when sharing tea with a person new to Cha Dao,

when sharing with a large group, or when we wish to return to our roots, which we must do, and regularly. This remembrance of and return to one's roots is as essential to sharing tea with an open heart as it is to remaining a student. The Way of Tea is a long, winding path into the misty mountains—a path that one could walk for many, many years before reaching the peak. In fact, one would reach the peak only to realize that he or she is surrounded by summits, each with its own tea path. Thus, the imperative to remain always a student in this life of tea is fundamental, and Elevation red tea can certainly accompany us like an old, wise friend who reminds us to stay humble and keep learning along the way.



萬法一如

茶 Qing praying to a mother tree.







第一部  
活力  
舒醒  
故事

# ELEVATION STORIES PART I

茶人: Jasper Hermans, Herkko Labi,  
Mike Baas & Mattias Terpstra

*This year, for our Tea Around the World, we asked the community to share their Elevation stories. We were worried that there wouldn't be enough content other than that the tea is simple and beautiful. We are amazed, however, at the response. This is one of the best and deepest issues of Global Tea Hut. In this first installment of Elevation Around the World, Mike and Jasper explore the depths of using Elevation as a part of your self-cultivation, while Herkko and Mattias share the beginnings of their tea journeys, which, like so many of ours, started with Elevation.*

## ELEVATION FROM OUR MISERIES, BY JASPER HERMANS

Drinking some leaves of Elevation in a simple bowl, for me, is like returning home. The mingling of my and the tea's energies often gives me a feeling of familiarity, comfort and ease—the same ease I experienced after I traveled all the way from Amsterdam to Miaoli, Taiwan. A bowl of Elevation takes me there: the door of the Tea Sage Hut slides open to reveal the smiles of the dedicated and illuminated human beings who reside there, and I, of course, give them all a big hug! Elevation also often offers me visions of my stay at Sun Moon Lake last summer, cruising around the gorgeous lake, noticing all the wonderful aromas of the lush, moist and green subtropical forest, or sauntering through a field of old arbor tea trees.

Having spent lots of time at the Tea Sage Hut, loving our Brothers and Sisters there till death and after, as well as having spent time in the gorgeous, friendly and incredibly safe country of Taiwan, probably helps to bring about this feeling of ease.

And after visiting the surroundings of Sun Moon Lake, it is no surprise to me that these leaves can take me back. It is amazing that once you visit a tea's home, even once, you can forever drink it and be right back there, smelling and feeling it all so distinctly. The terroir is in the bowl and once you've been, you can always return for the price of a few leaves.

The word "Elevation" might give you the idea that this tea can bring you to super-, ultra-spiritual heights, but my experience with this tea has been quite the opposite: Not in the sense that Elevation brings me down, but more in the sense that She has often helped me to elevate myself from the desire to reach spiritual heights altogether, to leave the world of dust. She doesn't just offer a temporary escape to bliss or some higher state, only to crash down as agitated as we were before; rather, She offers us the possibility of true elevation from our miseries by helping us to practice acceptance of what is.

Elevation is a simple tea, but within that simplicity there is a whole world to discover, if we just set down our expectations and desires for something special to happen. Once we've stopped longing for something special and supernatural to arise, the special and supernatural will come and show themselves in the magic of this very moment, alive and well on this oh-so-magical Earth. We then start to recognize the supernatural in the natural, the sacred in the ordinary. When we are ready to just be with what is, a simple bowl of Sun Moon Lake red tea turns into something extraordinary indeed!

In that sense, Elevation has been such a wonderful companion to my practice of bowl tea. She is very pleasant, comforting and tasty to drink, but She is not so overpowering, complex and seductive to the senses. There isn't a danger that She will distract me from looking inwards—She doesn't trigger tea geekiness in me, or invoke in me the kind of feeling that says:





“Where can I get more of this tea?” I know that She’ll come back to me at least once a year in one of our beloved brown envelopes.

She has helped me to keep my two feet firmly on the Earth, both in my life as a whole, as well as in my life of tea, by helping me to not get distracted by all the wanting, craving and searching for tea, teaware or tea experiences. She has helped me to look inside more often and realize that what I think is the issue I’m facing, isn’t really the issue: the way I relate to it is. The way I relate to a bowl of Elevation changes all my tea—changes everything!

Wu De sometimes explains that the practices of bowl tea and gongfu tea are like two wings of a bird, flying on the winds of enlightenment. Bowl tea helps us to strengthen our wing of equanimity, and gongfu tea helps us to strengthen our wing of sensitivity or awareness. These two qualities are essential for someone who aspires to walk on the path of liberation. With-

out balance and cooperation between them, we would fly in circles.

Without the wing of sensitivity, we would not grow in our ability to notice the subtler and subtler realities in our cups and bodies/minds. We wouldn’t learn to appreciate finer and finer teas and would stay “stuck” at whatever level we are. If we were at the level of enjoying Lipton tea bags, we would continue to use Lipton tea bags and wouldn’t ever get to the point where we realize that these tea bags create an inferior cup of tea. And without the wing of equanimity we could easily get lost in all the pleasures that tea has to offer. We would be seeking higher and higher quality teas without coming back to appreciating the more “simple” ones. We would then start to notice subtler realities—the pleasant sensations that some fine teas have to offer, for example—but we would forget that these subtle realities are but one side of tea and the connection with Nature, ourselves and others is the other side of

our practice. We enjoy the pleasant space that tea helps to bring about within our beings, and perhaps then experience a more lasting peace and tranquility. As soon as we get up and go on with our day, we will face challenges and difficulties that come up in exactly the same way as we have been used to. But now we respond to the more gross, apparent, painful or annoying realities with a sense of acceptance. The truth is that life cannot only be pleasant, peaceful or easy. We are bound to face difficulties, pain and hardship. Life consists of suffering, too. Try to find an 80+-year-old (or ask our tea brother Steve Kokker, who is already quite old, too) who hasn’t gone through pain or hardship, whose life was easy. Do you think you could find such a one?

When we practice strengthening both our wings, we will be able to notice subtler and subtler realities too, but we won’t get stuck in the idea that these realities are the only ones worth living for.



We will be able to enjoy finer and finer teas, but we will continue to be able to enjoy the simple ones as well. And if you really practice awareness of the whole spectrum of tea, perhaps at some point you will start to notice that the way you react to things happening both outside and in will not only be limited to what is happening within the tea space. You will start to notice that the way you react to things happening outside of the tea space, in your “ordinary life,” will be different, too. Only when these two qualities are combined will our tea practice lead us to experience more freedom. We will have the chance to experience peace in the quiet as well as the noisy, the easy as well as the difficult, the pleasant as well as the unpleasant.

I am very grateful that the practice of bowl tea has come into my life. Otherwise, I would probably still be endlessly craving that next cup of “fine” tea. Because, after all, how much would our practice of tea really help us if it only taught us to distinguish and recognize subtler and subtler realities within our cup (or our lives) and didn’t teach us how to deal with them or the fact that all pleasure, no matter how great, is impermanent and will eventually pass away? How much would our tea practice help us if it only brought us to spiritual heights, sensual pleasure or gave us a temporary relief from misery? Eventually, that relief would also pass away and we’d return to “normal” again. Elevation can help us to practice tea in a way that conveys the sacred and the ordinary.

May these leaves help you to elevate yourself from all your miseries, to free yourself from all desires, even the desire for a fine cup of tea! How much more enjoyable such a cup is if we no longer desire it!

**茶** *This is the organic section at the Tea Research Center in Sun Moon Lake. It is meant to scientifically prove that organic practices are better for the land.*





## FRIENDS FROM THE FIRST BOWL BY HERKKO LABI

I feel really elevated to say that for me, the journey with tea as a medicine for the soul started with the magical leaves of Sun Moon Lake red tea in a simple bowl. It was 2012: A freezing autumn in Tallinn and Wu De came here to Estonia for the first time (walking around in pair of summer sandals). I think he didn't understand the climate of Estonia. I did not know anything about Cha Dao, or that it would change my life forever. Back then, most of Estonia was living on low-quality tea bags in huge mugs, warming us up in this freezing weather. Tea was just another hot drink—mostly seen a bad substitute for coffee. I can't blame Estonians, though. Our beloved tea shop, Chado, had just been open for a year and there wasn't much fine tea around. You don't have to be an expert to understand that there is something strange in the taste and effect of a tea bag drowned in a mug for too long. And who could have known that in just four years this tea community in Estonia would change so drastically? From a small gathering organized by Chado/Steve we've grown into a thriving tea community. I am still amazed that our local tea hero Steve had a hard time filling Wu De's first workshops in Estonia. Last year, it was hard to find space for everyone! I am more than certain that Elevation played an important role in all this.

When Wu De's first workshops in Estonia ended, Steve and Triin had prepared a gift for every participant: a simple bowl and a cute bag of Sun Moon Lake red tea with some instructions inside. I remember Wu De talking a lot about how to start your tea journey: "Take a small bowl, put some leaves inside it and drink it every day in silence. Do that for one week and see what happens!" A bowl! Not a yellow mug with some boring logo? Leaves? Isn't tea mostly black powder? And drinking in silence? Why? And did he really promise that this practice would change our entire lives—not just our attitude towards tea, but also our understanding of ourselves as living beings? Despite such thoughts, I considered that I had just drunk really good tea for the first time in my life and that it was served

by a tea master, so I felt that it was worth trying. Every morning, I tried this new ritual of silence and bowl tea. And, surprise-surprise, this strange, funny and funny-bearded American from Taiwan was right: it worked as he'd promised! I suddenly felt a whole new state of being opening up for me during these silent sessions. And that state was accompanied with the sentiment of meeting a friend I'd lost long ago. Her plan this time was to stay with me a little longer. I was happy! Transformed! My dear friend from Sun Moon Lake! At that time, I did not have any clue (or even the slightest notion) that I would end up in Sun Moon Lake soon after, seeing it with my own eyes: the place where my friend gathers Her magic.

People still share legends about that very first batch of Elevation in Estonia. Steve and Triin mistakenly called the first batch "Ruby Red," when it was actually not Ruby Red at all; it was Elevation. They found this out a year later when we tried the real Ruby Red for the first time. There are also stories about hidden bags filled with a few grams of this very first batch of Sun Moon Lake tea deep in some old Estonian herb cupboard. If you just mention that tea here, some of us in Estonia will smile instantly and our eyes will brighten up. Of course, it was our first experience with Sun Moon Lake red tea and its elevated essence. I'm sure many of you have similar memories.

Elevation has had a meaningful impact in opening up our own Estonian tea culture (our hometown Cha Dao). Those kits of bowls and some Sun Moon Lake red tea ended up in many homes here. And who knows if it was Wu De's open heart or Elevation tea magic, but those little kits can were the first seeds of our tea community. And I'm proud to say that those seeds have sprouted and grown. The Estonian tea community was properly seed-propagated (like living tea)!

Shortly after Wu De's first visit, I left for several months in Asia. Throughout the entire journey, I had a small bag of Elevation with me. I did not drink it a lot, as there was not much and it was meant for very

special occasions only. Roaming around on the sandy roads of India or in lush Bali, I drank Elevation. The trip concluded with me standing in the middle of tea trees, surrounded by the most beautiful Nature in Sun Moon Lake, with the greatest tea lovers I know: Wu De and Steve. From the very first bowl tea I'd ever had to drinking Elevation every morning at home in Estonia to the front yard of a humble tea farmer in Taiwan offering to me the simplest yet most profound tea leaves on Earth! What an unexpected journey!

So I filled my stocks with many packages of Sun Moon Lake tea, bought my first side-handle pot and a kettle from Lin's and headed back to my home. "This is all you need to start serving," Wu De told me. I of course had just bits and pieces of experience or understanding of what goes in to serving tea for that matter. I had prepared tea for myself and sometimes also for others, but *serving*—that seemed something far bigger than I could handle. I must say that it was a kind of naïve beginner's mind that helped me overcome these fears and just start serving tea as best I could. I remember the first time I felt I was *serving* tea. I was offering tea to some friends late one evening and one of them, at some point deep in the session, said: "I know what you are doing!" And nothing else. Just that phrase and a subtle smile. It seemed awkward at first. "So what is it that I am doing besides making some tea?" I thought. But she saw more deeply and realized the service in the tea, that as a server you put something into the tea. You give! I did not comment on her insight, as there was really nothing to say.

And here we are: After four years on this journey, I am surrounded in every direction by Tea. I am part of the Estonian tea-serving group *Teeline*. My small tea space is filled with living teas and humble teapots. Every day, I share my path with my beloved tea angel Triin. Our dear baby-child Hiie-Mai is considered to be genetically the most puerhy in Estonia. And yes, it all started with a simple bowl of Elevation!





茶 Tian Wu with the oldest mother tree we've found in Sun Moon Lake.



大地之母愛的化身

The day Wu De gifted a week's worth of Sun Moon Lake and a weathered bowl to me and my wife was indeed a fateful day. That very day, after our first ceremony, I balked at the idea that I would need tea in my already-packed life schedule. He said that someday down the road, I might find a use for this tool. Almost four years later, mired in endless tiresome child-rearing, house cleaning, soccer coaching ("American Dream" type stuff), you'd better believe I use this sharp, efficient, trustworthy Taiwanese tool on a regularly basis! Yet if the story ended at "I work really hard doing everyday stuff and I couldn't get by without the caffeine, man!" I would be remiss. Sun Moon Lake Elevation is much more than that. A Chajin needs his everyday teas—the old faithful standbys—and in all the genres, too. Sun Moon Lake is the best everyday red tea, and Elevation is quite possibly the best everyday tea period. That's because it always soberly delivers on the promise a living tea must keep: clean and smooth Qi that uplifts and inspires, every time.

First thing in the morning, it quickly jerks you back into the Matrix after a night's sleep and downloads the day's critical kung fu lesson, even on days where you'd rather take the blue pill and eat synthetic steak. Sun Moon Lake never grows tired of saving the day. Every time I have a late start to my day, procrastinating in making space for Her for one reason or another, if Sun Moon Lake is the choice that day, the first sip invariably makes me slap my head and exclaim "Doh! Why did I not heat the water and just get it done first thing? Why would I procrastinate on *this*?" She wants to help me. She wants to help my family. She wants to help others around me, too. I have given away nearly a trash bag of the stuff since I came across Her. If only there was enough for the whole world to share! Until then, those of us who are lucky enough to have Sun Moon Lake's energy in our system are bound to share Her bowl by bowl.

Sun Moon Lake is the only tea I drink that I don't make a fuss over. In that way, I take Her for granted more than a little bit. Because She is so forgiving, I sometimes lash out at Her with my abuses: overly boiled instant hot water in a chipped, sketchy ceramic mug from Bed Bath & Beyond; Her leaves chucked in, then letting Her sit too long on the countertop while I respond to the latest child crisis. When I finally get back to Her, I only have time for one more steeping, so I have to make it count. A modicum of attention is all that is required—a quick check in (one sip) for me to know that She's got my back, again. She doesn't mind giving, as long as I make the smallest effort to pay attention as the water hits my lips that first time. Of course, when October rolls around and Sun Moon Lake arrives by mail in the rice paper-lined tin, you better believe I give Her my all!

Elevation, clearly beloved by the Global Tea Hut ecosystem, doubled up with prayers, good vibrations and love, is a potent formula for sublimity. And when a dear friend like Elevation, whose vibration I am so familiar with at this point, is given the royal treatment of the Hut's preparation, I am bound to be let in on yet another one of Nature's deepest secrets, the kind that are oh-so-hard to put into words, the kind that must be *lived*. Now that I "know kung fu," maybe I'll put Her in the old Yixing this time, just to see if She's hiding something extra-special from me way down in there.



## STARTING A JOURNEY BY MATTIAS TERPSTRA

**S**un Lake Moon is a very special tea for me, as it was the first tea I ever received from Global Tea Hut. The month of August, 2015, would become a very inspiring one, filled with tea wisdom from Wu De himself. I never dared to imagine how great this tea community could be, and I look back on the past year as a very transformative one.

I have been walking the Way of Tea for just a few years now, and have been mostly by myself. Preparing tea was something I did for myself to calm down and taste some great teas. I was always excited when new teas came in the mail and got straight to tasting them. However, at some point I felt that doing this tea thing on my own was not the whole experience to be had. This is when I started searching for more people in my area with whom I could share the love of tea. They were hard to find at first. My friends were not so interested in making tea with all these different tools and gadgets, or enjoying it in silence, for that matter. At some point over the course my search (which mostly consisted of searching the web), I was led to the Global Tea Hut website. And when I saw that there was someone in my area in this Hut serving tea, I was exhilarated! Almost immediately I became a member, after reading some of the magazines online. What was to follow changed my view of tea profoundly.

I emailed my newfound tea brother about joining his tea session. He then got back to me saying that he just returned from the Tea Sage Hut and that Wu De would fly into the country in about a week to serve tea and give lectures. Naturally, I told him I would be joining. I was excited and nervous at the same time, heading over to the Zen center where Wu De would be serving tea. Luckily, we meditated first before starting the tea session, so there was time to calm my nerves and to flow into

a more observing and open state of mind. The meditation session itself was the most intense, but also the most difficult session I've ever been through. Although I sit to drink tea every morning, I don't meditate very often and never for more than twenty minutes. This one-hour meditation challenged me both mentally and physically. The tea session afterwards was the most wonderful experience I've ever been through. Everything about it settled me into a state of calm bliss and heightened awareness. It also showed me aspects of tea that I didn't know about. Without talking, Wu De showed me what tea really was.

After returning from the session and having a perfect night of sleep, I returned to my tea table as if it was my first time sitting at it. I felt different about Tea. She was more alive now. I went on to make Elevation and meditate on the experiences of the day before, but also fully enjoyed the wonderful flavors and aromas coming from this amazing tea. It tasted unlike anything I'd had before: Sweet and delicate, but powerful nonetheless. I'd had limited experience with sensing Tea's energy, but the session with Wu De opened my mind and heart fully to the effect that Tea has on one's being. That morning, drinking Elevation, I felt it. I felt the tea entering my body and flowing through it. But most importantly, sitting there at my table, it was settling into me. I knew the tea path I was walking on had taken a turn, and for the best.

In the months after this experience, I started practicing my tea skills to make them ready for serving tea for the first time in a way that I had not done before. The magazines were paramount in helping me have the courage to serve tea. That first session was with some dear friends and we drank in silence. I have never felt so close to them. We didn't talk, yet we communicated in a far deeper way. Now I really knew that this would be a path

I would want to walk. Tea allows me to connect far more deeply with myself, others and Nature, and the Global Tea Hut made all of this possible. I am grateful beyond words for the opportunity to share tea in this way. The tea session with Wu De and my morning tea with Elevation afterwards, were the definitive start of this new journey I would be going on—a journey of leaves and water. *(Just as I started typing this article on Elevation, the doorbell rang and the September Extended Edition of the magazine arrived! What a wonderful coincidence!)*

# 一段旅程的开始







# *Cooking with Elevation*

## VEGAN TEA ICE CREAM

茶人: Sam Gibb

*We love cooking with tea here at the Center. We'd love to share more recipes here in the future. This month, we thought we would share a wonderful treat, taking a pause from our regularly scheduled gongfu tea experiments to make some delicious Elevation ice cream. It doesn't take much tea to make, so if you don't have any Elevation already, you could quite honorably use a bit from your tin to make a treat! Let us know how it goes. And contact us with your own tea recipes, or with any recipes you'd like to see us cover, including any favorite dishes you might have been served for lunch here at the Center.*







**E**levation often feels like the beginning and the end for me. I'm sure I have drunk this tea more than any other tea on the planet. Some of my deepest tea experiences have come through drinking this tea, and during some of the simplest moments She was there as well. During my year-long practice of sitting for three bowls every morning, Elevation was with me every step of the way. After returning from the annual Global Tea Hut trip to Wuyi I thought that I had drunk the best tea I would ever try, but during my first session back it was Elevation that offered more insight than any we had drunk on that trip! Elevation is the tea I put in a mug to help me write these articles. She is the tea I watch people brew for their first time every week at the Center. Whenever I travel, I always carry a bag of Her to give to those along the road. I have touched the soil She grows in and sat beneath Her canopy with the moss and spiders. This tea is more a part of me than any other—or is it that I am more a part of Her? I am never quite sure. We share this life.

This month, in lieu of a gongfu experiment we thought we would share a dessert idea using this month's tea. Elevation is a great tea to cook with. She has depth and flavor, is organic and sustainable yet readily available and economical. We often use her for kombucha, and every so often will try to find a way to use her in a meal! Tea is edible, and was a medicinal herb for such a large part of Chinese history and prehistory that using Her in meals just makes sense!

As with all recipes, this one is merely an invitation to make it on your own. It seems that too often people are looking for a step-by-step guide for everything. We seem to believe that if you do as you are told, things will turn out the way they should. In my experience, nothing ever turns out as I think it should. (Perhaps that *is* exactly how it should turn out!) I rarely follow recipes. You need to learn to taste and smell—only then will you truly learn to cook.

The same for tea. There are no recipes to making the perfect cup. That's why we offer these experiments every

month, so that you try, discover, learn and grow in your understanding of tea. If we learn to give our attention to the process and ingredients, in both cooking and tea, day by day, plate by plate, cup by cup, we improve. Instead of scales, we learn to use our eyes and hands. Instead of clocks or timers, we learn to see when the food is ready. As Zen Master Tenkei said, "Touch with your hands, see with your eyes, smell with your nose, taste with your tongue..." This is all there is. This is the only true recipe you need.

While we will give you a recipe for this month, remember to pay attention while you cook. Don't be afraid to experiment! Trust your observations and perceptions—no doubt you will still end up with a delicious dish. We all need to cultivate a trust of our inherent good-heartedness and our capacity to sense and know for ourselves what life requires of us, or at least I know I do! So, let's have fun with this recipe (it is ice cream, after all); and then share our ideas with the community.



## Vegan Elevation Ice Cream

*6 large frozen bananas, peeled and roughly chopped*  
*Handful of this month's tea, Elevation*  
*Can of coconut cream*  
*1 large pinch Himalayan crystal salt*  
*Almonds*  
*Honey/maple syrup*  
*Raisins/goji berries*

### *The night before:*

The main issue with this dish is getting the correct texture. You need to steep the tea in something, but if you do it in water, the ice cream will have too much liquid in it. I overcame this by separating the fats and liquids of coconut cream. To do this, you will need to place a can of coconut cream in the fridge overnight.

Put all the bananas in an airtight bag or container and put them into the freezer overnight.

**Step 1:** Gently grind the tea in a mortar and pestle. You can decide how thick or powdered you would like it.

**Step 2:** Take out the coconut cream, being careful not to shake it. Open the can. On top, there will be a thick layer of coconut fat, which you need to scoop out. Don't mix it with the water left at the bottom. (You can use the remainder in a smoothie or when cooking your oats! *On a side note: if you add a little maple syrup to this coconut fat and beat it, you can use it as a cream replacement on cakes.*) This thick layer is normally about a third to a half of the total contents of the can.

**Step 3:** Heat the coconut fat on the stove. You will need to keep the temperature low and stir constantly so it does not burn. Once it starts to bubble, add the powdered tea, turn the heat off and continue to stir for a few minutes as it cools. Then, place it in a bowl off to the side. Once it's cool enough, you can put it in the fridge.

**Step 4:** Turn the oven to broil. In a bowl, mix the almonds, a drizzle of honey and a dash of coconut oil (you can use maple syrup if you don't like honey). Mix it all thoroughly. Then, place it in the oven close to the top. Leave the oven door open and do not go anywhere! The nuts will burn easily. Make sure to shake the tray every minute or so. You will know by smell when they are ready. Take them out and put aside to cool.

**Step 5:** Take your bananas from the freezer. Place them in a blender with some salt and your Elevation coconut cream. This part takes time: You really need to blend it until it is thick and smooth and has the consistency of creamy, delicious ice cream! Be patient and cooperate with the blender.

**Step 6:** This dish is best served right out of the blender, although you can put it in the freezer for thirty minutes or so. To plate it, scoop the ice cream into bowls. Cover with nuts and goji berries.

**Step 7:** Enjoy!

**Step 8:** Take a photo of your Elevation ice cream and share it with us!

好吃







日月壺

# SUN MOON POTS

## A CERAMICIST'S ELEVATION

茶人: Petr Novak

*On his first trip to Taiwan, Petr visited many tea places, including the Center. He has always been an invaluable part of this community. We adore his smile, and his pots shine at the center of so many of our chaxi. Of course, his trip here resulted in some cool pottery adventures—one of which involved Sun Moon Lake, Elevation and some wood-fired kiln magic that you might not believe!*

Let me share a tea and clay story with you, my fellow Hut members and tea lovers. It all started in April of 2014, on my first visit to Taiwan. That trip was an amazing time, and to say it was rich and joyful would be an understatement. It was inspirational on so many levels, including my first visit to the Tea Sage Hut, adding important pieces to the puzzle of my life. This Sun Moon Lake anecdote is one of many magical things that happened during that spring trip in Taiwan.

Sun Moon Lake has been synonymous with red tea for many years. I love red tea; its unique flavor and energy have long been a part of my tea practice. I especially love Elevation. When I started drinking Sun Moon Lake red tea, I didn't know much about its terroir or what to imagine about the place, other than that the name is beautiful. But when I bought my flight to Formosa, Sun Moon Lake was on my "must-see list." If you've never been there, just do a quick search online for some photographs and you'll get an idea of how wonderful and gorgeous the lake is,

surrounded by lush green mountains, with some scattered hotels and tourist attractions. What you won't find are pictures of tea fields. But there really is a lot for tea lovers to see (and taste) there. We drove up from Nantou and visited some amazing tea places, trying some great red tea along the way. However, tea was not the most precious thing I'd carry home with me, nor teaware from local artists. What was the treasure I found in Sun Moon Lake? Just a ball of wet, yellow, greasy (and a bit smelly) clay.

Put three open-minded and open-hearted friends on a trip together for days, combine that with a lot of tea and magical experiences around Sun Moon Lake, and you can bet that one of them is going to suggest swimming in the lake (even though it is technically illegal). It took us a while to find the right spot where the lush jungle wasn't impenetrable to get down to the lake, and where there were fewer tourists to see us, let alone authorities. We finally found the spot, and with lots of laughter baptized and refreshed our selves in the sacred lake of the sun and moon.

As we were swimming, one of my companions casually reached down into the bed of the lake near the bank and said, "Petr, this looks like something you'd be interested in!" He then handed me a glob of Formosa clay. At first touch, I knew I would take it home with me and fire it somehow, maybe as slip glaze, some small cups. "We will see..." I said out loud, smiling.

Flash forward a few weeks and the clay finally landed with a plop on the worktable in our studio. You can turn that flash-forward into a funny montage if you want: Imagine me carrying 900g of clay around Taiwan, and then in my jacket through the airport and onto my flight. The seven-hour layover in Dubai might also present a humorous anecdote, especially since the block of yellow clay looked a lot like Semtex in my pocket! Anyway, the clay and I arrived home safely, and I was excited to get my fingers dirty.

People often ask me how to identify the right clay for ceramics. First, there is experience, which helps you to feel the potential of a clay. Once you have worked with enough,





you'll know if a natural clay is right. You can check the plasticity and structure. You can see color and smell how clean the material is. But there is always some guesswork and experimentation, too. In the end, you have to test and try clays. You will also have to see if your technique is suitable for the material you've found. Finally, a clay has to go through the fire so you can determine what temperature it can handle—what firing is ideal for that particular clay.

As many of you probably know, clays vary in many ways. Even laypeople can tell the difference in color, texture and plasticity of clay bodies. The basic question that every potter wants to answer to is what temperature and what firing schedule fits the clay. There are clays that are fired to 1000°C, and with some you cannot go higher at all. And then there are stoneware and porcelain bodies that are fired to more than 1400°C to get the best results. If the clay I brought from Sun Moon Lake were for low fire, then I could use it as a slip-glaze. But if it could stand at least 1250°C, I could make some actual teaware out

of it, rather than just glazing some other pieces with it.

So first things first, I had to make a few test cones and put them into the wood-fired kiln to see what would happen. Such cones, laid out around the kiln, can tell us a lot about any new clay. These samples show the color variations, texture and, as I mentioned before, the clay's response to reduction firing at different temperatures (our wood-fired kiln varies between 1230-1380°C, depending on the position in the kiln and the wood used to fire). After this first firing, I was pretty sure. The Sun Moon Lake clay was right on the edge, but there was a good chance that it could survive the coolest edges of our kiln. Exciting!

I thought about it for some time, as the clay was precious to me, and finally decided to take the leap and forgo using it as a slip-glaze, making teaware instead. I had thought to make some nice cups, but changed my mind. Why not take a chance and make some teapots from my Sun Moon Lake mud? Since there were three of us swimming that day, and

it was thanks to the help of a fourth friend that we were able to make the whole trip to Sun Moon Lake with such ease in the first place, I decided to divide the clay into four teapots from bottom of Sun Moon Lake, creating souvenirs you'd never find in any of the hundreds of gift shops there.

I decided to work with this clay as I am accustomed to with all of our clays, but with a small and very important difference: Usually, when we try our hands at such "wild" clays, we clean them first, straining out all the rough, larger materials from the clay. The best way to do this is to mix the clay with water, kneading it into a thin paste, and then sieving the slip, separating the rougher bits. Then, we wait till the sieved slip dries and wedge it well, letting it rest for some time (the longer the better). However, this time, I chose not to sieve the clay, leaving it as natural and rough as the day my friend lifted it out of the lake smiling. Despite the grainy roughness, the clay was very nice to work with, which was actually quite surprising. I'd thought it was going to be much more difficult to throw.



Still, the bigger stones in the clay made throwing the pots on the wheel and finishing them a bit of a challenge, but the clay was plastic and strong, and that allowed me to pinch quite thin walls, spouts and handles without feeling like the pots were too fragile. To make the pots safer for the final wood-firing, I bisque-fired them first to 1000°C. As with all pots, after the bisque fire, there was more cleaning, final corrections and polishing to do. We have literally fired hundreds of kilns, and yet there is not a single firing that is without surprise. We love experimentation and always add at least a small test of new glazes into every firing, be it new clay or glaze combinations. There is always a revelation waiting for us when we open a kiln.

Our wood kiln is considered a “fast fire kiln.” We fire from between sixteen to twenty hours, which means the kiln cools down enough that it is safe to unload after three days. The days of waiting, resting and cleaning

our studio are always slightly tense and exciting, filled with anticipation for what’s inside. The summer firing of 2014 held one such surprise, and one that we looked on with big smiles: four sound, whole and glorious Sun Moon Lake teapots for four friends!

The resulting Sun Moon Lake teapots are very interesting. The color and texture of their bodies and the feel of the clay is incredible. Because I did not clean the clay, the pots are scattered with small stones, which give texture and character to these small pots. The small stones were obstacles during the throwing and finishing, but I knew they would become essential. The pots wouldn’t be the same without them—they’d lose their rustic touch. They really are unique teapots. And, of course, you know which pot I am going to use to brew this month’s Elevation!







“ I thought about it for some time, as the clay was precious to me, and finally decided to take the leap and to forgo using it as a slip-glaze, making teaware instead. I decided to work with this clay as I am accustomed to with all of our clays. However, this time, I choose not to sieve the clay, leaving it as natural and rough as the day my friend lifted it out of the lake smiling.

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活力  
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# ELEVATION STORIES PART II

茶人: Antonio Moreno, Nick Dilks,  
Ira and Dima & Max Ulasevich

*In this second installment of Elevation Around the World, Antonio shares about his trip to Sun Moon Lake years ago, Nick talks about how Elevation traveled back home to the United Kingdom with him after he had lived in Taiwan for some time; and three of our Russian brothers and sisters have some amazing Elevation anecdotes, including a wedding and the most unlikely Global Tea Hut member ever!*





## DREAMING OF MOON LAKE, BY ANTONIO MORENO

*Sun Moon Lake. I don't care where it is or what it looks like—I want to go! The name alone evokes a place you have to see. There's intention there. This place has to be worthy of its name. It must be exceptional! I'd go to a place called "Sun Moon Lake" in any country! What? You say they grow tea there? All the more reason to go. I really can't believe it. Tea from a place called "Sun Moon Lake." I want to go there. I want to drink it. It must be unbelievable! How could such a tea not be beyond belief!*

This was my initial stream of consciousness upon hearing about Sun Moon Lake. It was long ago, on my first trip to Taiwan. However, I didn't get to visit the lake on that trip, which was just another great reason to return to Taiwan! For some time, Sun moon Lake would remain a dream...

It wasn't until seven years later that I did have the opportunity, leaving Tea Sage Hut one early morning. I remember getting there took some time but we were wonderfully received by a friend of Wu De's, Mr. Liang, who took us in. He drove us straight to the Sun Moon Lake Tea Research Center. There we walked amidst the wild seed-propagated Assam tea trees that the Japanese had planted. Taiwan was under Japanese control in the decades prior to WWII and Mr. Liang explained that they had found in Sun Moon Lake a soil they thought would be ideal for producing fine red tea—an important discovery since they had been previously unsuccessful finding an appropriate location for red tea production in Japan. Fortunately for us tea lovers, these fields were abandoned after the war and still stand today in all their glory. Seeing those trees was dream come true!

After visiting the fields, we were taken to make Ruby Red tea (Taiwan 18 and last March's Tea of the Month) with our own hands! It was the first time I had ever rolled fresh tea leaves. Surprisingly, the type of circular movement required was familiar to me from the days when I kneaded dough at my father's bakery. And just like when you're making fresh dough for bread, your hands get really sticky and your nose never forgets that aroma. You've immersed yourself so fully in its essence that you're steeped in it for life! You can evoke it at will, and it always takes you back to that moment of indescribable pleasure when you were transforming something pure and beautiful and giving it a new incarnation.

It was truly a monumental day. And I still hadn't had time to take in the beauty of the Lake itself. That would come later by way of a

highly memorable tea session beside the lake. In fact, it was one of my very first outdoor sessions, and I had the special pleasure to be able to enjoy it as a guest!

Of course, Sun Moon Lake tea isn't just any ordinary tea from any beautiful lake with a beautiful name! It's the tea that has been chosen to welcome countless guests at Tea Sage Hut and given to them freely as they part on their journey. It's the tea that Wu De always recommends for people to initiate themselves into the morning ritual of a life of tea, inviting them to begin by spending a week starting each morning with three bowls of Sun Moon Lake red tea in silence before asking yourself if this Way of Tea is good for you.

I've seen people take his advice at one of the Barcelona workshops and come back glowing, saying that they were going to keep beginning their days thusly, as they've created a sacred space and ritual to begin their day.

This tea is the only tea that has truly been a Global Tea Hut staple. Year after year, at the same time of year, you know it's coming and we all eagerly anticipate the year's fresh Sun Moon Lake tea, which quickly earned the title "Elevation." This month, I'll sip mine full of memories.

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## ELEVATED BY NICK DILKS

**S**un Moon Lake red is a tea that is very dear to my heart. It was the first tea that I drank on a regular basis when I moved to Taiwan for a year to stay with Wu De and the gang at the Tea Sage Hut. I owned no tea when I first arrived. Now, whenever I move house, I need a van to get it all in. A problem for a renunciant at heart, but if you don't have tea, you can't share it, so it's a dilemma I'm happy to work with!

After a mystical ceremony in which Wu De introduced me to bowl tea and encouraged me to only brew tea in this way for six months, or "until She spoke to me," I was very generously offered daily access to a large stash of Sun Moon Lake red, or "Elevation," as I came to know it.

I remember being amazed. It was stored in a beautiful, semi-porous Yixing clay jar with a loose-fitting lid. Like many other Western tea consumers, I had been led to believe by tea companies that you have to store

breakfast tea in a complete vacuum or it will go off, and even if you manage this perfectly, it will still taste bad within six months. (Tea and the coin, hey? It does make people do bizarre things!) And yet, here was a two-year-old harvest of Elevation giving off a vibrant, perfumed smell despite its exposure to a slow, clay-tinged diffusion of air. The effect of the aroma was mouth-watering: for me, there is nothing more intoxicating than the smell of tea. And visually, too, there is magic in these curled and twisted leaves, all puckered and leathery looking like bold ink strokes of otherworldly Chinese script—and otherworldly they are! Back then, I had the beginner's mind that can be difficult—but necessary—to recapture later, particularly when tea becomes your work. But then, it really did feel like I'd stumbled upon an old wizard's jeweled chest full of mythical herbs, or some wizened shamanic pouch containing a rare panacea for the

spirit: an herbal adaptogen to rebalance what had become unbalanced and out of kilter within.

And so, every day for a few weeks I sat with this daughter of the stars and soil of Sun Moon "Buddha" Lake, with the soft yellow glow and hiss of the butane burner, the soughing of the sandy-colored Lin's kettle, and a bowl Wu De gifted to me. The water had been collected from the filtered water depot around the corner on a clapped-out moped, twenty or sometimes forty liters at a time. Or, if we were lucky, the water was sacred mountain spring water from the weekly excursion up those steps to collect from the amazing local water goddess. And here I would sit, often alone before the others had gotten up, on a tatami mat opposite one of Wu De's calligraphy scrolls. I would sprinkle a few leaves of Elevation into my bowl, marveling as I poured the water from a slight side angle until the dry leaves caught the water and





began their swirling dance. I used to love watching as the liquor turned by alchemy to a potent, chocolatey amber.

Since those days, I have returned to the UK and regularly share tea with people up and down the country. Elevation has been a real favorite with the regulars from the start, perhaps because it offers the familiarity of the breakfast tea we Brits consume in such massive amounts—and then offers so much more, too! It has been a real gift for me to sit as the host and watch so many guests experience Elevation for the first time.

It has also been an interesting lesson in equanimity to experience the vicissitudes of the harvests and production and how these affect the experience of drinking a tea when I eagerly unwrap the latest package from Taiwan, put the kettle on, and try out the new leaf. One harvest I got from another source definitely was not the special Wu-De-Elevation I used to get when I was in Taiwan! And then

one year's batch seemed considerably weaker in Qi due to a lack of rain, I later learned. It was interesting to note the ego's initial disappointment and then have this recede as I let go into appreciating what was *here now* in my bowl, not stored somewhere as a peak experience in memory. One of the characteristics of living tea is that the land is irrigated naturally, so in a year of little rain, of course the leaf will be affected. And one of the ideals behind drinking bowl tea is that we try to appreciate every bowl with equanimity. As I sipped the new harvest, slipping into the smaller mind that compares and contrasts, I would eventually be brought back by the leaf to remember the broader picture: the farm workers struggling in their toil, loving their land and not taking the shortcut of tampering with Nature in ways that destroy its natural harmony. As this crosses the mind, how can there be anything but gratitude for what is before us? That said, it is hard

to turn off the sensitivity that one cultivates through gongfu tea at times!

Only yesterday, I sat with ten people and we started the day by sprinkling some Sun Moon Lake leaves into bowls and watching them swirl around with the same ecstasy I'd witnessed on my own in Taiwan. I noticed a great happiness as I saw the Elevation leaves speak to some of them in the same way they speak to me. I was reminded of the words of the tea poet, Baisao, serving tea on the banks of the river Kamo many years ago:

*They drink a cup of tea.  
Their long sleep is over:  
Awake, they realize  
They're the same as before.*

Thank you, Mr. Shu, for this amazing tea, and thank you, Wu De, for finding it and introducing it to me and to so many of us around the world!



## MARRIED TO SUN MOON LAKE RED BY IRA & DIMA

**S**un Moon Lake is not just tea for us! We tried Elevation for the first time a few years ago, before we were familiar with red tea from Taiwan. Our friend shared this wonderful tea in an extraordinary and meditative tea session, but he did not emphasize its qualities when we spoke after the session had finished. He did give us some to take home, though, so we tried it at home later. We weren't nearly as impressed as when we'd had the tea at our friend's home, however, which taught us the importance of intention, setting and brewing skills have to the final quality of a tea. It would be

another year before we got our hands on more Elevation to practice.

We were reunited with Elevation by our friend Ming (Denis Mikhailov) from Global Tea Hut. Through him, we once again dove into the energies of Sun Moon Lake tea. We have since shared intimate sessions with this tea that no words could capture. We are now confident that with the proper approach to tea, the right living teas and some space in one's life, one can not only cultivate one's spirit, but also achieve a cheerful outlook with a balanced heart. In that way, a tea practice truly changes lives!

We have made countless friends over Elevation sessions, so when it came time for us to get married, we used this tea for our marriage tea ceremony. You could say that we're as married to this tea as we are to each other!

## AN ELEVATION FRIEND BY MAX ULASEVICH

**E**levation is a significant tea for me. If Tea were a world, and it often seems like it is, Elevation would be home. Ming Hui first served this tea to me when I came to the Moscow Tea Hut. The session was unforgettable. I distinctly recall how I felt that day, and the first inkling that this tea was helping me find my Dao. Elevation has changed the way I see tea and the world, teaching me to let go of my ideas of quality and accept tea as it is—to realize that the true spirit of tea is indeed leaves and water shared between friends.

Elevation has accompanied me along my tea journey. I started every morning with three bowls of it for a long time. It was the foundation of my tea practice. Here's an interesting Elevation anecdote:

I am a teacher, so I have a long summer vacation. Since Russia is cold in the winter, I am lucky to have the warm weather off work. I try to spend as much of my vacation in Nature as possible. This year, I went out to drink tea in the woods every morning. I took Elevation with me most days—just a bowl, kettle, tea and a mouth harp to play if I felt inspired. One morning, after three quiet bowls, I began to play my harp. A woodpecker came and sat on a nearby tree, seeming to enjoy the concert, albeit cautiously. Other birds soon joined him, and I had a small audience in no time. I thought this was too amazing a photographic opportunity to pass up, so I got up to get my camera. As I was standing up, I spilled my Elevation onto the leaves I was using as a *chaxi*.

When I returned with the camera, a small lizard was drinking the Elevation that I had spilled! Though we all know that Wu De and his students have been using Elevation to spread a tea practice around the world, that was the first time, I suspect, that Elevation was used to turn a lizard on to a life of tea!





茶 Ira & Dima's tea wedding.





提升  
你的  
茶席ELEVATING A CHAXI  
AN ELEVATION ARRANGEMENT

茶人: Shen Su

*Continuing our series on setting the stage for tea, we thought that this month it would be nice to explore a very specific chaxi for one event. Now that we have covered several of the general principles that go into arranging a stage for tea and some of the elements you will need, the next step in learning chaxi is to watch as experienced Chajin arrange for specific events. Here we see what goes on in the mind of a Chajin preparing to host a tea gathering.*

If you've ever visited the Tea Sage Hut before, even for one day, you have a good idea just how abundant the Center schedule can be. From early morning meditation sessions, followed by healthy vegetarian meals, tea ceremonies and lectures, service periods, afternoon tea with guests, to our final evening meditation, our days are rich in opportunities to participate, learn and serve. People become really inspired by this way of life and often want to incorporate many aspects of it into their own daily lives. They want to maintain a meditation practice, create a tea space, serve tea to themselves, family, and friends, start practicing making *chaxi* and arranging flowers, eat a lighter, healthier diet conducive to a life of tea, and on and on it goes. In a tradition of service, we want to help facilitate that shift towards healthier living in whatever way we can, and, of course, for us, that often means through tea.

One way to show people just how easy it can be to invite Tea into their lives is to start them off with the simple brewing method of bowl tea paired with some Sun Moon Lake red tea, which we have so lovingly come

to know as "Elevation." It's an excellent tea for all tea lovers, but especially beginners learning bowl tea. The twisted shape and large size of the loose leaves makes them perfect for simply placing in a bowl and adding hot water. The aroma and flavor are rich and patient from steeping to steeping. Red teas like this are excellent to drink throughout the year, particularly in the morning to wake us up in a calm and balanced way. It's a wonderful example of a large-leaf tea varietal and what we call a "living tea." There's also the rich history and beauty of Sun Moon Lake. And for many more reasons, it is simply an amazing tea to start people off with and to continue drinking into our old age!

In light of this month's issue and the more general *chaxi* concepts we've covered in previous issues, I thought it would be nice to design a very specific *chaxi* geared towards serving Elevation in a bowl and turning people on to tea! As it turns out, we have two new guests visiting the Tea Sage Hut this Monday. After we've cleaned the entire Center for their arrival, they will experience their first tea ceremony

and Cha Dao tea class on Tuesday morning after meditation and breakfast. In preparation for the day's tea session, I have completely cleared and cleaned the main tea table. Remember, one of the essential aspects of designing our *chaxi* is to honor the guests and the occasion itself. I have two guests from very different parts of the world, both new to the Way of Tea, and in order to inspire them through tea, I have found it suitable to the occasion to design a *chaxi* specifically for serving Elevation in a bowl. For so many of the reasons mentioned above, I feel Elevation will be a perfect tea to help welcome and inspire our new guests into our tea Center. Of course, this specific *chaxi* will only suit this occasion. It is one creative impulse from one tea lover. Still, I think that since we have covered some of the basics of *chaxi* arrangement in previous issues, it is now helpful to take a peek into actual application, as this will help you to find your own process. I learned much of what I know about arranging *chaxi* from watching my teacher go through his process for various sessions at the Center and tea events elsewhere.







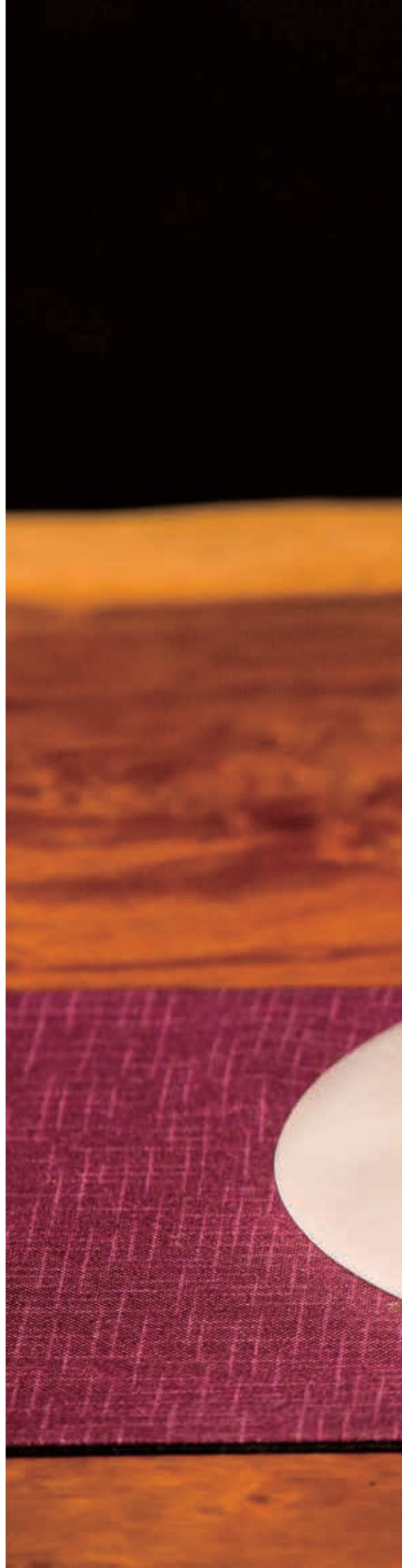


For this Elevation arrangement, I already know what type of tea is suitable for the occasion and my guests. I know what type of brewing method to use and my theme is chosen: inspiration into a life of tea! I know the elements within my design should be especially simple, in such a way that focuses all our attention on the tea! After all, Elevation will be the carrier of the theme. With a clean tea table at my disposal, I first sit quietly before taking any specific action. Since I am setting up for original bowl tea (leaves in a bowl), there won't be any tea pot at the center of the stage, and since the tea is so important for this design, I envision an abundant display of tea leaves, resting in an elegant bowl, awaiting my guests before they sit down. Having a clear vision is important. The more vivid it is, the smaller the gap becomes between what you imagine and what you actually create. I want the display of tea leaves to be further highlighted by contrasting the bowl against a runner, so I need to consider the color, shape, and texture of these elements. I feel there won't be much more necessary beyond that, except perhaps one small highlight, as I want our guests to see how such an ordinary design can lend itself to such an extraordinary experience. Hopefully, they also feel confident enough to design their own *chaxi* after seeing how simple it can be.

After careful consideration, I chose one of our beautiful ceramic tea bowls to display the leaves in, resting atop a round, glass tea pillow. I contrasted the centerpiece against an elegant, purple runner. Purple can be a very royal color, symbolizing the very loftiness and elevation that this tea excites within us, and even possibly reminding us that we are all regal! At this point, I sat in both the positions of the guest and the host to make sure things felt balanced and focused. This is always a tricky crossroads, where you either decide to add something, take something away, or start over! More often than not, my teacher will remove something or slightly adjust the placement of one element. In this case, however, I went against the trend and with my intuition and added something: a fake,

albeit beautiful, butterfly. I stood back and took a glance. I even left the room, let my eyes adjust to a different light, and came back in to see where my attention fell, and I felt this addition was just what was needed. It somehow removed the dissatisfaction I'd had before and highlighted the centerpiece even more without drawing attention away from the tea. It also added another very complementary symbol to the theme—for what is more inspiring than the transformative process of becoming a butterfly, changing form *completely* and transcending a physical limitation altogether.

As an added bonus of designing this *chaxi*, I was again reminded of tea as something both simple and extraordinary. I had to focus my attention on some small details in order to create this stage, and it really is those small details in accumulation that make a big difference. Bowl tea itself is also a very simple brewing method and asks us to accept things just they are—in all their simplicity—and when we actually do that, while still paying attention to the details, we find that there is a great sense of depth and connection over a simple bowl of tea! And so I pass this next bowl of tea out to all of you, raising it high when finished, in gratitude for this global tea session.





# 超越形而下





# Teawayfarer

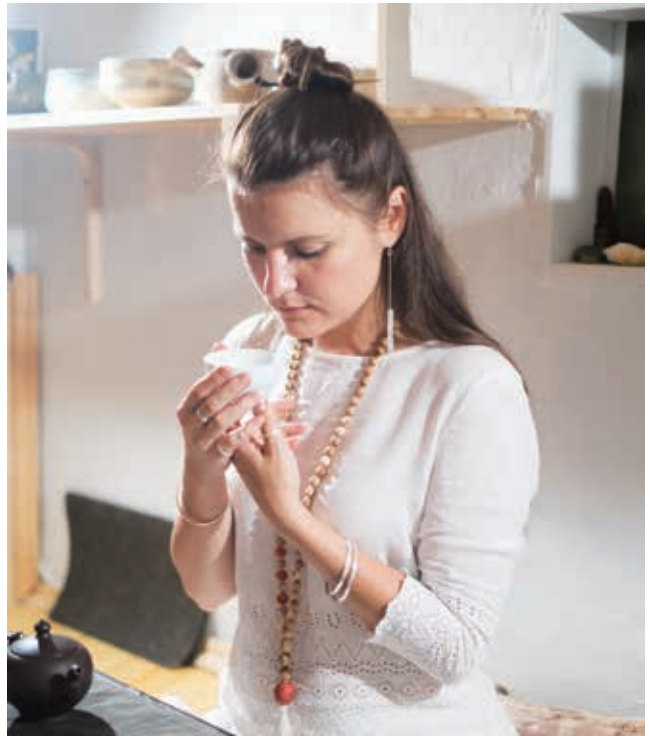
*Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these issues in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and Tea are becoming as the Tea is drunk and becomes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

**T**ea found me more than ten years ago in Siberia. There I lived in a small city located along the Great Tea Road. For those of you who do not know, this was a historic caravan route by which tea was traded from China to Europe between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The region is steeped in tea history and the seeds of her influence were all around me. In fact, I grew up participating in a tea club. I remember even in the very beginning being fascinated by the beautiful and diverse shapes of leaves, the mysterious Chinese names and silent attention that appeared when someone started brewing tea. While tea was always present at these gatherings, often She was only one actor on the stage. People talked, watched movies or enjoyed music while they drank tea. Here I met Tea in her form as the “Great Connector,” bringing together human hearts and minds and helping them to open towards each other.

After I moved cities, I began to drink tea alone for a long period of time. I was like a hermit in a cave. Here I met tea in a different form. Slowly and gently she would change my state of mind. She showed me her ability to clear my mind and heart to the deepest roots, unlocking the bottomless wellspring inside. She taught me to rest in the nature of my mind and listen to the space between drops, between breaths.

I would sometimes leave my cave and venture outside to meet other tea lovers. That was how I met Wu De. We first met in Siberia. Then, a year or two later, as he boiled tea in the attic of cute hostel in the center of Moscow, his words brought tears to my eyes. His message and relationship to tea, Nature and the Earth resonated so strongly inside of me, I knew that this was the beginning of a new period of my life. There I met my tea family. And that tea session changed everything in a gentle but complete way.

Around this time, I made a tea runner, or *chabu*, as a gift for a friend and was very surprised that all of my other tea friends started asking for similar things! That is how “Care for Teaware” started. It was a project dedicated to consciously creating the small details required for a life of tea, including protection for teaware! Teapots and bowls are our instruments; without them we could not do what we love—serve tea! We all have beautiful teaware we love, and want to take care of the things we love. We want future tea lovers to be able to use our teaware and pass these instruments on so that they can continue to play long after we have gone. I wanted to help make convenient and beautiful bags for teapots, cups, bowls, tetsubins and other tea instruments so Chajin all over the world



could share and protect their teaware. I make things from a sincere desire to protect priceless Yixing teapots, antique cups, bowls and all teaware. Care and reverence is fundamental to both Cha Dao and life. The more we honor what we have, the longer it serves us and the more we can serve with it! If we care for our teaware, we can use it for many years and drink countless cups of fine tea with friends. Later, we can pass our treasures on to the future generation of tea lovers. Our care then extends beyond our lifetime. Anyone with an old teapot knows they only have it because someone else kept it safe. We have this same honor and responsibility.

Since our first meeting, tea has become a primary part of my life. Drinking her alone and serving her to people helped me change my life. It has brought awareness, equanimity and love into each thought that passes through my mind. She is always here, patiently waiting for you to come and sit with her. She is generous and giving, teaching us to work for others and share the treasures we find on our way. She is healing. She connects us to ourselves, to others and to Nature. So if you want to change your life, take a bowl and add some leaves and hot water...

Please reach out to me: [raneta@careforteaware.com](mailto:raneta@careforteaware.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!



The 2016 Light Meets Life Fundraiser is now in full swing, with more and more cakes showing up all the time. We have two amazing old-growth sheng teas this year, a Five Element shou, an amazing dian hong from Big Snow Mt. and another surprise as well!



We have a new page for Wu De's teaching events around the world. Many of you are always asking for updates, so we thought it was about time to share them: <http://www.globalteahut.org/wude teachings>.



We have started broadcasting live videos at the beginning of every month on our Facebook page. This is a great way to connect with us, learn together and ask any and all questions. Check it out!



We are now offering free Light Meets Life cakes to authors whose submissions are accepted in Global Tea Hut. Let us know if you are interested in future topics or if you have a great idea for a tea-related article and we'd be happy to take a look at your work.



We are giving away two cakes of Ambrosia each month until the end of the year. All you have to do to be eligible is take a picture of yourself serving Global Tea Hut tea and post it on Instagram with the hashtag #servingglobalteahut. We have already given the first few away! Don't miss the chance!



Wu De will be in Bali in late January with a possible stop in New Zealand as well. Then Wu De and Sam will be traveling in New Zealand and Australia some time in March. These events should all be announced soon. Check the website for details.



We have a goal to reach a thousand members by the end of the year. You can help by hosting a bit more, sharing more tea and letting people know about all the wonderful education in these magazines, amazing organic tea and beautiful global tea community. Let us know how we can help you serve more tea!

## 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!



We have started gathering money towards offering one annual scholarship to fly someone to the Center each year. Once we have enough, we will let the community nominate candidates. Let us know if you want to contribute to help make this happen!



We are thinking of hosting some ten-day tea courses at the Center in 2017. Let us know if you are interested in attending.

## October Affirmation

*I am fulfilled.*

*There is nothing that can be added to this moment to make me more alive. There is no way to diminish this moment either. This bowl of tea is complete. Am I whole? Am I free? Let it be, with this very sip!*



# 深爱的母親

[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

Tea & Tao Magazine

