Global Tea Hut

國際茶亭

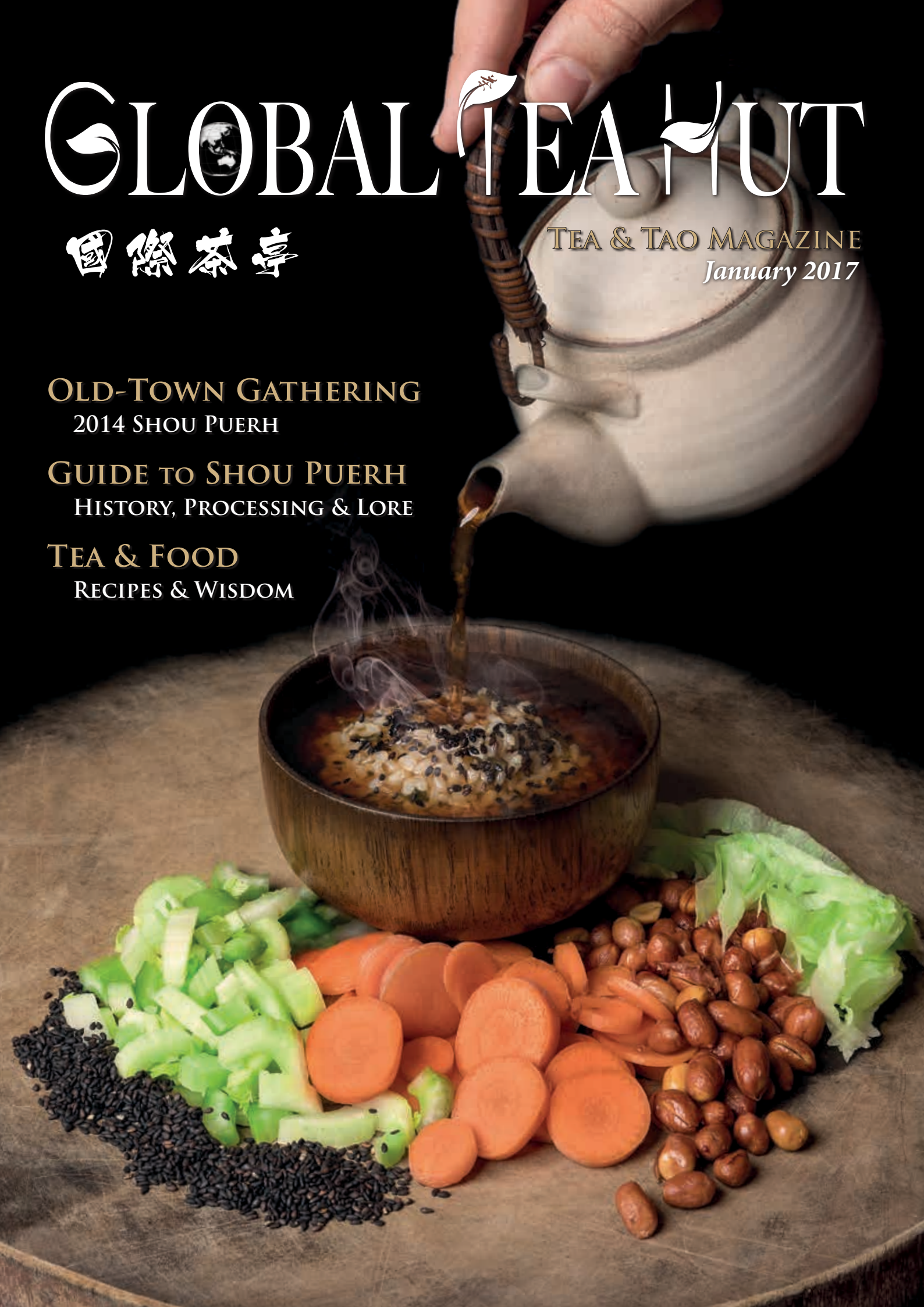
Tea & Tao Magazine

January 2017

Old-Town Gathering
2014 Shou Puerh

Guide to Shou Puerh
History, Processing & Lore

Tea & Food
Recipes & Wisdom



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GLOBAL TEA HUT
Tea & Tao Magazine

Old-Town Gathering

We have been sitting in this hut drinking amazing teas for five years! What an accomplishment! And, of course, let's celebrate with a feast: an issue packed with tea and food, recipes, dietary wisdom wih regards to a tea practice and an in-depth guide to shou puerh, with a dark brew to raise in toast.

Love is changing the world bowl by bowl

Features

Traditions

From the Editor

In January, things start to cool down in Taiwan. We really only have two cold months, and they aren't so cold compared to many places in the world. Even so, we don't have any heating and the high humidity also makes it feel colder than it is. Of course, Tea comes to the rescue. In some ways, the winter months are the best time to be anywhere if you are a tea person—who doesn't love sitting inside with a warm bowl of tea on a cold day? This time of year means aged and shou puerh mostly, and lots of new experimentation with Five Element teas as well. It's wonderful to feel warmed from the inside, which is why we also head to the hot springs once a week—with a thermos of shou in tow!

Can you believe that we've been sitting in this Hut, sharing tea and fellowship for five years! There are still some of you who can remember the days before the "magazine," when this was a black and white newsletter with as much small-town community news as actual articles about tea. There was a time when we all sat much closer together, and the Hut was a more intimate, though far less rewarding, gathering of tea family. Now we look out on nearly a thousand brothers and sisters from dozens of countries around the world and marvel at what we have somehow achieved, seemingly carried by a spirit not our own—by Tea Herself. Though this journey has been inspired by Tea, a tremendous amount of hard work and sacrifice have also gone into the improvements that we've seen over the years. Of course, there is a night sky worth of gratitude lanterns floating on the Global Tea Hut pond. Thank you so much to all who have come to live here and sacrificed your time and heart to improve this magazine. We are also grateful to all the authors, photographers, designers and editors who have contributed from afar. And, of course, we must also celebrate this beautiful community for all your support and love, making Global Tea Hut so much more than just a magazine or tea. Reaching this important marker of sixty issues is an honor for us all. May there be sixty more!

It feels like the energy in the Hut is crackling and moving us towards our goal of finding land and building Light Meets Life this year. We ask all of you to continue holding the vision of the world's first free tea center filled with a year's worth of courses on tea and meditation, gongfu tea, hosting tea ceremonies as well as linear courses on oolong, puerh and other tea education. We are also in for a real treat in terms of the improvements in the magazine itself, with new and exciting trips and articles by more authors, ongoing translations of Chinese tea wisdom, another round of our Classics of Tea series (this time from the Ming Dynasty) and, of course, some exciting new teas to try together!

There is one more change we'd like to discuss for this year. We are going to take out the QR codes linking to our movies from the magazine, as they are less used in the West than here in Taiwan. We plan to continue making videos every month, but we don't want to feel forced to make a certain number of videos or have them be on such specific topics like the Tea of the Month, brewing, etc., though we will continue to make videos that are in step with the topics of each issue so that they continue to expand and enhance this experience. With all the travel I am planning this year, we wanted to make sure that making the videos is still a joyous process for us and for you, rather than an obligation we don't look forward to doing. It was a wonderful experiment, to make these specific videos every month throughout 2016, but we are looking for more creative freedom in the coming year—inspired to make more and different kinds of videos to bring life to these pages!

We can't tell you how many times guests have asked us for Center recipes! We have been planning an issue on tea and food for years, with articles on cooking as part of a tea life and practice, Center recipes, dishes that include food and even a bit about the relationship between diet and tea drinking. This issue is jam-packed with recipes, with and without tea, as well as some wisdom for how a tea practice connects with tea. There is nothing quite like hosting some guests for some tea and a fine meal. This month we also have the perfect shou to warm up you and your guests and get them ready for a nice meal.

Five Years & Sixty Issues of Global Tea Hut

Further Reading

This month, we're going to publish some extras on puerh storage, gathering articles from many past issues. We will also post the article on the "Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea." We'd also like to invite you to email us your Global Tea Hut experience over the years, which we will post.

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

TEA OF THE MONTH

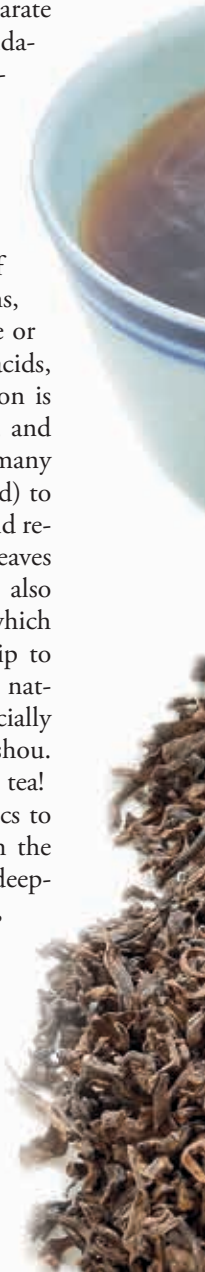
Over the course of this issue, we're going to spend a lot of time talking about tea and food, so we thought an extra-long, super in-depth Tea of the Month article was in order! This month we have a classic shou tea that checks all the boxes most tea lovers list when evaluating a shou puerh. This dark, rich tea is perfect for taking a nice, bowl-in-hand, warm and cozy look out the window at the cold weather surrounding most of us. And as we steep up this dark, earthy brew, we have the perfect opportunity to explore the genre of shou puerh together. We have written extensively on puerh in the past, but never really poured a deep brew of shou by itself. So let's add an extra scoop of shou to our old Global Tea Hut pot and pour a thoroughly steeped liquor that satiates our thirst for understanding this genre, from its history to production and from leaf to the characteristics that make a fine shou tea.

After a few cups have calmed us down, let's start with the basics of puerh before we steep some darker shou brews. To begin, we have to start our puerh map with a basic sketch that divides the genre into sheng and shou. Sheng means "raw" puerh; it's the greener, more astringent kind of puerh, which can be enjoyed when it is young and fresh or aged to ferment naturally over time. On the other hand, shou, which means "ripe," is artificially fermented by humans, so it is darker to begin with. The words "sheng (生)" and "shou (熟)" are used in Chinese to discuss food as well, referring to "raw" or "uncooked" versus "cooked" meals. The terms describe the ripening of fruit as well. Understanding this distinction is important for exploring puerh, and more specifically shou puerh, more deeply.

Over the years, we have talked extensively about our unique categorization of tea, which is important because it helps you explore and understand tea better. Traditionally, there were six genres of tea: white, yellow, green, black, red and oolong. Categories are ultimately arbitrary, and only useful in communication and education. And when our understanding of the world changes, the world itself changes or perhaps both, then our categories also need to shift. And that is what has happened in the tea world—*change*. Puerh used to reside comfortably in the black tea category (not red, which is often called "black" in the West), but that was back when all the puerh consumed was either naturally fermented (aged) sheng or artificially fermented shou tea. All the tea was dark, in other words. Nowadays, however, millions of tea lovers are drinking younger sheng, which doesn't really fit in any category—it's a bit like a green tea, but it is more withered/oxidized than most green tea. Due to the unique terroir of Yunnan, the very special trees used to produce puerh, and its unique history, processing, aging and appreciation, we have found that students of tea understand the genres of tea more quickly and clearly when we separate puerh as a seventh genre. And the fact that students understand tea better and more expediently when providing puerh as a genre of its own is all the argument we need for presenting the genres in this way!

In order to better understand tea processing, we also have to separate oxidation from fermentation. Oxidation is an enzymatic process: basically, cellular breakdown due, of course, to exposure to oxygen, like when a banana or apple turns brown on the counter. Fermentation is similar, but is metabolic and involves the presence of bacteria and other microorganisms, like the changes in yogurt, cheese or alcohol. Sugar is converted into acids, gases, and alcohol. This distinction is important for understanding tea, and especially shou puerh, because many kinds of tea are withered (oxidized) to change the chemistry of the tea and remove moisture from the brittle leaves before processing. But puerh is also fermented post-production, which means it has a strong relationship to microorganisms—whether it is naturally fermented (aged) or artificially fermented in the factory, as with shou. Micro-terroir is essential to puerh tea!

Having a few cups of the basics to warm our bellies is always worth the effort, so before we turn to some deeper topics like the history of shou, the changes in its processing over time and the aging and appreciation of this tea, let's review the basics of puerh production so that we're all arriving to this shou gathering with the same understanding.



Old-Town Gathering

Menghai, Yunnan, China

2014 Shou Puerh Tea

Dai Aboriginals

~1500 Meters

熟普洱

Basic Puerh Processing

Like many genres of tea, puerh starts with "maocha (抹茶)," which means "rough" or "unfinished" tea. You'll hear this term discussed most often with regard to the genres of oolong and puerh, as they traditionally have "finishing" steps that occur later and/or at a different location from where the tea was initially processed. In puerh processing, the tea is processed fully (dried) and then sent to a factory to be blended, compressed or made into shou. And even back in the day when the final steps were done at farm, they were still done at a later date (sometimes months later), so the term "maocha" was still relevant. In oolong processing, it is the roasting which is done later, or traditionally at the shop rather than the farm. The reason the finishing steps in these teas are completed later is that the farmers have to focus on the harvested tea on the day it is plucked or the quality will suffer. And since there is freshly picked tea coming in every morning during the harvest season, farmers have little time to sleep, let alone finish the tea. These days, almost all maocha is sent to be finished at factories that want control over the finishing steps like blending, choosing sheng or shou, and also deciding what size or shape to compress the tea into. But before we get to the factory, let's understand what maocha is.

Puerh maocha is harvested; withered out and indoors depending on the place/tradition and the weather; fired (*sha qing*, 殺菁) to arrest the oxidation of the withering and de-enzyme the tea; rolled (*rou nian*, 揉捻) to shape the tea and further break down the cells; and then sun-dried. The two defining steps that make puerh unique are the firing and drying. The de-enzyming of tea is done to stop the withering and also to remove green enzymes that make the tea bitter and astringent. Like most teas, puerh is fired in a wok (often wood-fired), but it is done at a lower temperature and for a shorter duration than most kinds of tea. This, along with the varietal of puerh, is why young sheng is so bitter and astringent. Puerh is fired in this way to allow the heat-resistant spores to survive the processing, since they will be paramount in the post-production fermentation process. Sun-drying is also what separates puerh from most other kinds of tea, and it is done for the same reason, since sunlight and heat are just what the spores need to start colonizing the tea again.

After the maocha is dried, it leaves the farm for the factory. However, it is ideal to finish the tea at source, since the water and microecology will be unique for each place, but that rarely happens anymore. The tea is then blended or left single-region and compressed into various shapes of cakes as sheng puerh, which can then be enjoyed young or aged for later. The tea is steamed, compressed and dried on racks (often with fans, but traditionally in the sun) before being wrapped individually in natural paper and then often in a stack made of bamboo skin called a "*tong* (筒)." But if the tea is to be shou, it has a whole other journey to travel.

Shou puerh is artificially fermented by piling in a process called "*wo dui* (渥堆)," which is essentially composting: the tea is piled to about a meter, sprayed with water and usually covered with a thermal blanket. The heat inside is why shou is sometimes called "cooked" puerh. Most skilled factories will add microbes from previous batches. They can do this by adding the slurry run-off water from the previous piling or add what are called "*cha tou* (茶頭)," which are microbe-dense balls of shou that are often found at the bottom of the piles. The pile is then stirred regularly until the desired degree of artificial fermentation is reached. To fully ferment the tea takes between forty-five and sixty days. Most shou nowadays is fully fermented.

Pronunciation

Since many Westerners have troubles pronouncing some puerh terminology, we thought we'd help you so you can say things correctly next time. First of all, and we don't know how or why this started, but many Westerners like to say, "Poo air" when pronouncing puerh, which is completely incorrect. The second character in "pu erh (普洱)" is pronounced like the "er" in the English word "her." Say, "her hair is lovely." Now, pronounce the "erh" like the end of "her" or "stir," as in "stir the soup." You could even say "poo her" once and then drop the "h," so it becomes "poo er."

Also, some Westerners pronounce "shou" like the word "shoe," which is also incorrect, though it has more of a basis. Actually, some people in Yunnan, especially around Kunming, pronounce it that way, so Westerners who visit there and hear that accent often mimic that pronunciation. Actually, "shou" is pronounced just like the English word "show," as in "to go see a show." If you say it like that, you will be much closer to the proper pronunciation!

In this magazine, we spell "puerh" this way and often do not include tonal marks because we hope to Anglicize certain tea terminology, incorporating it into the English language—with proper pronunciation, of course.

The Processing of Maocha

Shou piling actually happens in two phases, wet and dry. The first, wet piling is fermentation of bacteria breaking down the cells of the puerh. This piling is much deeper, usually a meter. During the second, drier piling, the thermal blanket is removed (if one was used) and the piles are thinned out (usually to around 20cm). This is where the yeasts and molds become more active in the tea. If the tea is destined to be loose-leaf shou, like our Tea of the Month, Old-Town Gathering, then it will be stirred and dried like this thoroughly. If the shou is to be compressed, the second stage of piling will be cut short while the tea is still slightly damp.

Shou tea has to be compressed before it dries—right after the piling. Some factories do compress aged loose-leaf shou later, but doing so always damages the quality of the tea. Once shou tea dries, the leaves are tight and twisted from the heavy fermentation, so getting them to stick in a cake at a later date requires a much heavier, hotter and deeper steaming than with other puerh, which effects the quality of the tea, lending it boiled-tea flavors. It is, therefore, always better to compress shou right after piling. If one wanted to use aged tea, it would be better to age the maocha as sheng and then pile/compress it later.

The Processing of Shou

- Sorting
- Piling
  Artificial Fermentation
- Drying
- Steaming
- Compression
- Packaging

茶 The first piling happens under thermal blankets. The tea is essentially composted. This piling utilizes bacteria, ideally introduced from previous batches.

茶 Sometimes the second, thinner piling is swept up into high heaps and then stirred back down to thin piles. This process involves molds and yeasts more than bacteria, and dries the tea out.

茶 Shou is then immediately compressed. The tea is weighed using old-fashioned scales and plates. Workers learn to gauge amount by sight and are often correct to the gram! The tea is then steamed and compressed using machines.

History

With an understanding of puerh processing, let's steep another pot and turn to the history of shou puerh, exploring how this subcategory of puerh began and the changes it has gone through over time. There's a lot in the history of shou puerh that will help you to better appreciate our Tea of the Month, Old-Town Gathering, which is a great example of a classic shou.

Deciding when to begin the history of shou puerh depends on how we define shou. If shou is any artificially fermented puerh, then it is actually quite old, since aboriginals have been artificially fermenting puerh tea in many different ways for centuries by roasting it, burying it, stuffing it in bamboo, etc. Different tribes had different ways of consuming puerh, but it was rare to drink it young and green, as young sheng puerh is astringent and considered "cold" in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and therefore not so healthy for most Chinese people who have "cold" or "cool" constitutions. Consequently, most tribes developed their own way of artificially fermenting, roasting or boiling puerh to make it more palatable and healthy. For the sake of this discussion, however, we are going to restrict the term "shou" to its modern sense of piled puerh that has gone through *wo dui*.

Piled shou puerh is a modern subgenre, beginning in the 1960s. In most books and articles you will find either the dates 1972, 1973 or 1974 listed as the beginning of shou puerh. There was some confusion, but recent research into historical records has verified that 1973 is the correct date. 1973 is the date the government licensed the first commercial production of shou puerh tea for sale, starting with the Kunming Factory. However, research and under-the-table batches were being produced as early as 1965 (perhaps even earlier). It took the factories a number of years to demonstrate a consistency, safety and quality that the government would license (all factories were state-run during the communist era, of course). More of the batches from that time were done for research, though it is likely that the factories tried to mitigate costs by selling some of this tea illegally as well. (We actually have a '60s shou brick here at the Center.)

Sheng puerh takes seventy years to reach full maturity. This number is not arbitrary. As sheng puerh ages further and further, the aging process itself begins to slow down. The cells crumble onto one another and the fermentation therefore relaxes. Even a beginner can tell the difference between a one- and three-year-old puerh, just as the difference between five and ten years is obvious. But the differences between ten, fifteen and twenty years becomes harder to distinguish, requiring more experience with aged and aging puerh. After that, even the experts have to start gauging the tea in terms of decades. At seventy years the physical appearance of the liquor will not change anymore: black in the center, moving out into browns, then auburn and maroon with a golden ring at the edge. The tea will change beyond that, adding depth in Qi and flavor, but those changes will be for the next generation. Of course, puerh can be enjoyed long before full maturity—even thirty-year-old puerh is marvelous. Nonetheless, it is easy to understand why producers, distributors and consumers would look for ways to speed up a process that is measured in decades or even generations.

The process of speeding up fermentation began long ago with wet storage. Puerh lovers, especially in Hong Kong, would carefully store their tea for a few years in warehouses near the sea or in basements with very high humidity, rotating it to higher, drier warehouses occasionally. This "traditional storage" would greatly speed up the fermentation process, decreasing the quality of the tea but allowing people to enjoy it much sooner. In the past, the raw material used to make puerh was extremely inexpensive (especially compared to its cost these days), so they didn't mind such compromises. Factories wanted to speed this process up even more, inspired by the artificial fermentation that was already very established in

Cha Tou

"Cha tou" literally translates to "tea head," though "tea nugget" is a better choice. Cha tou are tea balls that form during the piling of shou puerh. They can happen in one of two ways. Smaller, harder and denser cha tou can form in the first, wet piling of shou puerh when it is sprayed with water and often covered with a thermal blanket. Even though the tea is stirred regularly, it is much hotter at the bottom of the pile, where these little balls form. It is much more humid, wet and there is little oxygen at the bottom, and depending on how and where the tea is piled, the very bottom can be hard to access, whether the tea is stirred by hand or with pitchfork-like tools. Cha tou can also form in the second stage of piling, when the molds and yeasts become active and the moisture is drying. This kind is larger and looser, as it is formed by the clumping of the tea as it dries out. The best cha tou are usually smaller and were mixed around, so that they never over-fermented: spending some time exposed to oxygen near the top of the pile after their formation in the hot, wet depths.

Traditionally, cha tou were used to introduce bacteria into future batches of shou puerh or even discarded as unwanted byproducts of shou production. Sometimes, factory workers were allowed to take them home or certain producers would ask for some, so you can occasionally find old ones, but they are very rare (we have some 1970s cha tou here at the Center; remind us and we'll brew you some when you're here next time). In recent years, however, producers have found that the cha tou can be quite sweet and delicious, especially when blended together with regular shou tea. Chinese people say that they taste like prunes. They are fruity, indeed, with hints of nuttiness and sometimes even taste like chocolate, especially when blended well with normal shou tea. If you don't blend them with regular shou, you really have to boil the cha tou to get the most out of them, and, even after hours of boiling, they rarely open up—which is kind of amazing when you think about it.

These days it is pretty easy to find some cha tou on the market, and if you can find an organic version, they are fun to mix with shou, boil or even use as the wood or earth in a Five Element blend. Like most shou on the market, cha tou and other teas are usually cursory blends of whatever is leftover these days—rarely made from nice raw material, rarely intentionally produced and rarely piled with skill. But when you do find some good cha tou, they can be amazing, sweet and very fun to play with!

the black tea industry of next-door Guangxi, producing Liu Bao like last month's tea. Liu Bao and Yunnan had already been exchanging raw material and ideas for decades, so it came as no surprise that researchers from factories in Yunnan would one day show up in Liu Bao to study the artificial fermentation there. Of course, they had to adapt the process because the varietals, trees and leaves of Yunnan are different from those of Liu Bao and other black teas, and also, perhaps more importantly, the microbial ecology is very different. The "microbial terroir" is why various kinds of beer in Germany, wines in France or even Maotai alcohol in China are not reproducible elsewhere, despite many attempts to imitate famous examples. The same is true of cheeses, which will be very different when fermented in different places, even if the milk and cultures are the same. Once again, we're reminded how important microbes are to puerh.

The main difference between the piling of shou and other black teas is that the piles are deeper, wetter and hotter. The thicker, larger leaves of big-leaf Yunnanese puerh require a deeper pile and the wetness perhaps was inspired by the "traditional" wet storage—shou puerh is, in fact, made with the wettest of the wet storage. Wetter piles also work faster. Finally, the factories in Yunnan added the thermal blanket to increase the speed and degree of fermentation.

It may go without saying that the puerh factories were not successful in reproducing in a month what Nature makes in seventy years. Like "traditional" wet storage, the shou process of artificially fermenting (piling/composting) the tea reduces its quality in terms of flavor, and even more so in Qi, sacrificing much of the energy of the mountain and tree. What they were successful in achieving was adding complexity to puerh by creating a subgenre that needs to be understood and evaluated on its own terms. You really cannot compare shou to sheng in any meaningful way, whether the sheng is young or aged.

Changes in Shou Production Over Time

A lot has changed in the puerh industry since its boom in the early 2000s, including shou production. Most of the shou tea that was produced in the 1970s and '80s used much better raw material and was intentionally blended and produced and then piled with much greater skill than is typical today. For all these reasons, one could argue, the quality of shou has significantly dropped in the modern era. Each of these three quality losses—in *material*, *intention* and *piling*—is worth discussing in detail.

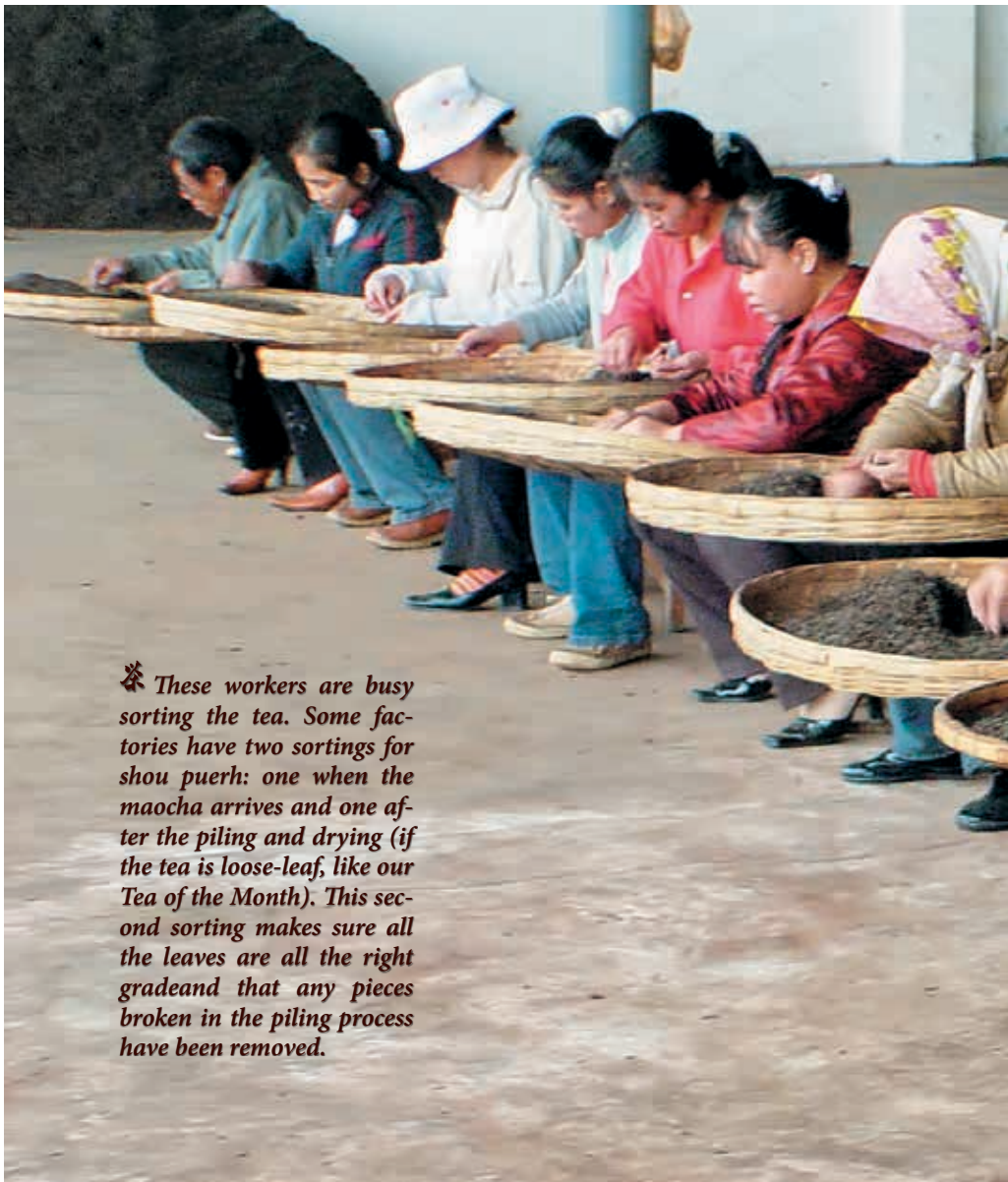
In that way, we'll understand the modern history of shou and further appreciate Old-Town Gathering, since it is a rare example of a recent, classic shou puerh.

Different genres of tea mark quality based on a ratio between the terroir/trees and the processing skills of the producer. A tea's quality, in other words, is one part raw material and one part the gongfu of the tea maker. In oolong, quality is at least 50/50. Puerh is unique, however, in that much more of the quality of any given puerh tea derives from the terroir and the tree(s). Which part of Yunnan a tea comes from, how old the trees are and what part of the mountain/forest they come from and whether they are wild, semi-wild ("eco-arboreal," as we call it) or plantation trees (*tai di cha*, 台地茶) will determine a puerh's quality. And these are indeed the questions any tea lover is asking in the puerh shop. When you couple the fact that the quality of a puerh is up to ninety percent in the terroir and trees with the knowledge that the piling process of shou decreases quality, you can begin to understand the main reason the overall quality of shou puerh has dropped in recent years.

Back in the 1970s and '80s almost all puerh was wild, old-growth trees or eco-arboreal trees (older and nearer the village, but still biodiverse and "living" as we often say). What plantations existed were much smaller, completely organic and therefore very healthy. Remember, also that the cost of this tea was *extremely* low—often a fraction of a dollar for a kilogram! As a result, the factories had access to large quantities of high-quality maocha to use in puerh production, both sheng and shou. What's changed? Well, as you no doubt have already realized (or will very soon as your puerh journey continues), raw material from nice regions and/or old trees in Yunnan has grown incredibly expensive. As an example, many of you may feel like the 250g Ai Lao cakes (Mountain Gate) we made last year are quite expensive at $108. A few wiser readers emailed us, though, surprised at the very low price. Since our fundraiser is transparent, percentage-based and relies on donations, the prices always reflect our cost; the fact is that Auntie Ai donated sixty percent of last year's tea, which means that the wholesale cost at farm is actually higher than our final price by quite a lot! Furthermore, Ai Lao is actually amongst the cheapest mountains for old-growth raw material in Yunnan, as it is much less famous and more remote. The tea is also very unique in its flavor profile. Suffice it to say, nice maocha is very costly!

As puerh raw material has become more costly, it has also caused environmental destruction, which means it has also become rarer. The high costs and rarity of fine maocha mean that there is almost no way that any producer would ever use such tea to make shou puerh. The first reason why they wouldn't consider this is, of course, the cost. If they use nice maocha from old trees to make shou, then they would have to sell their shou cakes for at least the same price as the sheng (maybe more, since shou has the added work of piling). No one would be willing to pay the same price for a shou as for a sheng, since the shou is of lower quality. Second, of course, is that it is actually a shame to decrease the quality of rare, old-growth tea by piling/artificially fermenting it. For these reasons, it is rare to find a shou that uses nice material in its production, which was so common in the '70s, '80s and even '90s.

The second change is in intention. Very few shou puerh teas are intentionally produced these days. Back in the day, factories would take the time to develop nice shou blends, especially given their access to a plethora of different, affordable high-quality maocha. Nowadays, most shou is made from whatever is left over after the sheng tea is blended/sold. It is rare for a producer or factory to set out to make a fine shou puerh, though they all claim that they do. This is not to say that this doesn't happen; it does—you can still find nice shou puerh, like our Tea of the Month. But intentionally blending a nice shou puerh doesn't happen very often these days. Usually,



茶 These workers are busy sorting the tea. Some factories have two sortings for shou puerh: one when the maocha arrives and one after the piling and drying (if the tea is loose-leaf, like our Tea of the Month). This second sorting makes sure all the leaves are all the right gradeand that any pieces broken in the piling process have been removed.

it is a matter of choosing from leftovers, which is very understandable considering how valuable sheng puerh is, and also considering that it really is a bit sad to artificially ferment/pile (*wo dui*) rare, old-growth tea, and not let it age naturally, or at least enjoy it young, fresh and sheng. This means it is also hard to find organic shou puerh, as it is often so cursorily blended. Our Tea of the Month, however, is certified organic and intentionally made!

Finally, we come to the piling phase. Since cost was lower and factories were much more devoted to their craft, piling skills back in the day were much better than nowadays, when shou has been dwarfed by the booming sheng market. Of course, any skill (any gongfu) is beyond generalization or brief summary. Those who have mastered a craft know that the subtleties of their art go way beyond what a few sentences can ever hope to capture. With that in mind, we can discuss two ways that the piling skills of former times were superior: first, there was a better use of previous batches by incorporating the microbes of other pilings to great effect; and second, the artificial fermentation was almost always stopped at a specific point. It is the second of these skills that most people who have explored shou through time, drinking various vintages, will testify to. Back in the day, factories not only put time, skill and intention into the blends they used to make shou, but they also piled the tea accordingly—stopping the artificial fermentation at a very specific point that suited the blend. Since the teas were only partially artificially fermented, they would actually age and change over time. In fact, you could brew a '70s or '80s shou for most beginners and fool them into thinking it is an aged sheng! Stopping the artificial fermentation at a specific point that is conducive to the quality of specific leaves/blends, however, requires a lot of skill. Most factories nowadays just let the fermentation process go the full forty-five to sixty days, essentially fully fermenting their shou puerh. This decreases the quality and also affects the way the tea changes over time. Our Tea of the Month is not like this, as we will discuss later on. For now, let's take a break, drink a few more cups and then turn to the important topic of ageability in shou puerh.

Aged & Aging Shou Puerh

The fermentation of puerh over time is a mysterious thing, and there is more about it that we don't understand than that we do, partly because there hasn't yet been enough research into this process (so we may eventually know more), and also partly because fermentation is a mystic phenomenon that we may never completely understand. Traditionally, tea warehouses (mostly in Hong Kong) didn't study the process of fermentation, or really participate in it in any way,

because the tea was very cheap. They really just installed shelves and left the tea alone. Nowadays, the value of puerh has meant that puerh merchants and consumers alike are much more interested in storing their tea carefully, intentionally and with more informed care, since the initial investment is so much higher. We will put some more articles on aging puerh in the Further Readings section for this month (on our blog), but for now we will discuss the part of puerh aging that we know the most about: humidity.

Puerh tea needs humidity to age, and the closer to the place where the microbial colonies come from the better, which is to say Yunnan. It is best if the humidity never drops below sixty percent (seventy is a good number to hover near). The issue is complicated, though, by seasonal variation. Usually, the springs in Southeast Asia are wet, so the tea absorbs a lot of moisture; then the hot summers induce fermentation, the autumns are then a buffer and the winters let the tea dry out. Different places have very different storage profiles, though, and tea lovers will often prefer one or the other. Malaysia, for example, has less variation and therefore makes for smoother, more consistent storage that a lover of Taiwanese storage may argue is more uniform and shallow, lacking character. But a lover of Malaysian storage would argue the very opposite, of course—that stability equals quality.

There is no doubt that sheng puerh ages better and more dramatically than shou, and is therefore always more worthwhile to age if space is limited and you have to choose which one to age, but shou is also worth aging, though with different criteria in mind. As our previous section clearly highlighted, the first and most important factor in determining whether and how to age a shou puerh is the degree of artificial fermentation, which means you have to taste various shou teas and learn to distinguish the degree of piling in the production process, which will then help you determine whether or not and how you will age that shou.

Our Tea of the Month, Old-Town Gathering, will be helpful in that journey, as it is partially fermented. When shou is new, you can tell the degree of fermentation by looking at the leaves, which will show the fermentation in shape, color and smell. You can also taste the tea, of course, starting your education by focusing on the thickness of the shou liquor and then measuring the degree of a certain "piling flavor (*dui wei*, 堆味)," which is caused by ammonia and other gases that are released under the thermal blankets. Most people describe this flavor as "pondy," referring to the fact that it kind of tastes like pond water, which is to say stagnant, musty and murky. Shou with a lighter or medium degree of artificial fermentation will still have a bite that lasts in the mouth, hinting at the astringency and bitterness of sheng puerh. Fully fermented teas will be thicker and have a piling flavor. When the fermentation is heavy like this, it is also much more difficult to control the fermentation and unwanted flavors are usually present in the tea. And, as we said, knowing the degree of artificial fermentation is the first and most important aspect of aging shou tea.

Of course, the old shou puerh teas that were all partially fermented are always worth further aging, as they change much like sheng, though to a lesser degree. (They are limited in the same ways that a "traditional" Hong Kong wet-storage tea would be.) Lightly fermented shou is often not nice, so we are usually looking for teas of medium fermentation, like our Tea of the Month, for this category. These are candidates for long-term shou storage. They will grow richer, darker and deeper than other shou teas, and you don't have to store them as long as a sheng. They will reach a very nice maturity in fifteen to thirty years (hitting nice plateaus at ten, fifteen, twenty and thirty, which are all worth drinking), combining the aged Chinese medicine, plum and sandalwood flavors of vintage sheng with the billowy, creamy earthiness of a nice shou.

These partially fermented shou teas are the ideal candidates for aging. They require the same storage parameters as sheng, which means a humidity of at least sixty percent. It is, however, important that you keep your shou and sheng teas separate for aging. Actually, we recommend keeping shou tea away from *all* other kinds of tea, as it is notorious for influencing the aroma of any nearby tea, especially your young sheng cakes.

The more common, fully fermented shou that we see nowadays is not really a candidate for long-term storage. This doesn't mean that it isn't worth aging these teas if you have the space. But space is *always* an issue when it comes to aging teas. We all have limited room for long-term storage, and therefore have to choose wisely, as each and every tea we age for decades is a large investment in time, energy and space. Fully-fermented shou teas don't really age—they just mellow out. The ammonia taste/pondy-ness decreases as the tea becomes mellower, softer and slightly thinner. This doesn't usually take very long; it can be achieved in five to ten years. The best method for this is to store the tea in a dry place, as it was essentially created in a very, very wet environment. (Not completely dry, but dry for puerh, like 40-50% humidity.) Letting such tea dry and mellow out will decrease the thickness, resulting in a pleasant, well-rounded brew without any piling flavors.

茶 ***Shou cakes are typically dried in warm warehouses like this. Factories use fans and heaters nowadays. Traditionally, sheng cakes would have been sun-dried and shou cakes dried like this in naturally warm rooms on shelves. This is a large production, but this old photo was taken in the early 2000s on one of Wu De's trips to Yunnan, so the tea was clean and delicious.***

魅力無限熟普洱

Appreciating Shou Puerh

Our tea is starting to thin out, getting lighter by the cup, but before we go let's finish this last kettle and use a few steepings to talk about the terms of appreciation used for shou puerh. This is a list of the categories that is sent to us along with one of the shou reviews we do for a Chinese magazine. We rank the teas from one to hundred in each of these characteristics. But we aren't describing them here because they represent some kind of authoritative consensus on what makes a fine shou tea, or because they are published by a well-known Chinese tea magazine, but because we honestly believe that these qualities are a very good place to start your shou education. If you use these terms to evaluate our Tea of the Month, as well as any other shou you encounter in your tea journey, you'll start to develop a helpful vocabulary for understanding quality in this genre of tea. When it comes to evaluating tea in general, the Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea are also helpful (we'll add them to the Further Readings for this month).

After you learn to distinguish and articulate these qualities while drinking different shou teas, you will then have to ask yourself the more difficult question of whether or not you actually enjoy all of them. Why did other tea lovers choose these criteria to evaluate shou tea? And, do I also think that these characteristics define quality when it comes to my own appreciation of shou puerh? Would I add to or replace any of these criteria and why? (As an example, the last criterion, Qi, is our own, and not on the form the magazine gives us. Maybe you could also try to add some categories of your own.) Let us know what you think in the discussions on our website or through social media!

-茶道-

Flavor/Aroma (*wei dao*, 味道/*xiang qi*, 香氣): Shou puerh should be earthy, loamy and yet clean. It often tastes of mushrooms, wild forests, leather or tobacco, Chinese herbs or sandalwood if it is aged. The liquor should be clean, without any murkiness. The flavors should be pleasantly complex, full-bodied and long-lasting. Shou should be dark, rich and remind you of long hikes through an autumn forest, the leaves fermenting along the paths you tread. This is the most subjective of the criteria we use to evaluate shou, as flavor is often based on our memories and personal preferences.

Thickness (*hou du*, 厚度): Fine shou is thick. The best shou teas are creamy, milky and oily—coating the mouth and throat. In the first few steepings, you should be able to see the thickness by appearance alone. If you pass the liquor between two porcelain cups, you can see the thickness, as the tea clings to the sides of the cup and spreads like milk. "Viscosity" would be another way of translating this quality.

Smoothness (*hua du*, 滑度): Smoothness is the most important characteristic for evaluating any tea. Fine tea should be smooth in your mouth, comfortable and clean. It should roll back smoothly and go down smoothly, without any pinch in the throat. The tea shouldn't bite anywhere, or leave an impression of roughness on the palate, tongue or throat. Try rolling the tea around your mouth to see if it stays together or comes apart in your mouth.

Mellowness (*chun du*, 醇度): This criterion has everything to do with the "piling flavor (*dui wei*, 堆味)" we discussed earlier. "Mellowness" is the opposite of this pondy, ammonia kind of flavor. Mellowness also means the shou is free of any off-putting flavors or sensations due to improper piling—musty, funky or fermentation flavors. A mellow shou is clean and billowy, like clouds in the mouth. It should be soft and subtle without any unnecessary flavors.

***Hui Gan* (回甘):** This tea term is often misunderstood—even by Chinese. It is a very specific kind of jargon, so it should come as no surprise that people without experience in tea are often confused about it, the way a layman may use scientific jargon inappropriately. Some people think this term has to do with sweetness, but that is actually another term (*hui tian*, 回甜). "*Gan*" refers to a minty, cool sensation in the mouth, like after sucking a peppermint, brushing your teeth or breathing outdoors on a cold winter day. The Chinese traditionally found this sensation quite pleasant. "*Hui*" literally means, "to remember." It refers to when the sensation of *gan* lingers on the breath after swallowing the tea. If you haven't yet sensitized yourself to *gan*, try blowing out an O-shaped mouth after swallowing the tea to see if a nice wintery, mintiness is lingering on your breath and then ask yourself if you find this sensation to be pleasant. You may notice that this sensation makes you feel like you've cleansed the palate, which is why characters in old Chinese novels always drink tea after meals.

Qi (氣): Qi can also be tricky, as talking about the Qi of a tea gives you the impression that you are in some kind of solid state and the tea is traveling through you. Actually, once you swallow the tea, it is *you* that moves—your body is moving. Also, some people mistake gross sensations such as heat or a caffeine rush to be Qi. When we speak about Qi, we are talking about where and how the tea enters the subtle body, the movement of that energy. In general, a shou tea should enter the subtle body through the chest and cause gross sensations like warmth and an overall sense of ease, relaxation and comfort, like slipping into a nice bath. Try breathing deeply and focusing on the palms of your hands, which are the most sensitive parts of your body. Notice any subtle sensations there. Close your eyes and try to feel the subtle movement of energy through your body. A meditation practice will help tremendously in cultivating this sensitivity over time. Look for real, physical sensations akin to tingling or prickles and then focus on other areas of the body.

Old-Town Gathering

The classic shou cakes that became the paragon of the genre throughout the 1970s and 1980s were medium-fermented by Menghai factory, using raw material from the Menghai area—so much so that you will still hear some old timers refer to fine shou as having "that classic Menghai taste." Old-Town Gathering wasn't made by Menghai factory, but it is a tribute to that era, using organic Menghai leaves in a medium-fermentation piling that was controlled with skill and stopped at the appropriate time to suit this grade of leaves.

In our discussion so far we haven't mentioned grades, which refer to the average leaf size used to make a puerh tea. Grades were traditionally much more relevant in shou production, especially for loose-leaf shou teas like Old-Town Gathering. Grades were measured one to nine, with one consisting of smaller buds being and grade eight or nine being mostly large, so-called "summer leaves," which have been on the tree much longer. Our Tea of the Month is all "*te ji* (特級)" or "special quality" leaves, which are grade two (averaged to that size, which means some are larger as well)—slightly larger than the smallest, sweetest buds, which are sometimes referred to as "*gong ting* (宮廷)." Having lots of buds is sometimes called "tippy" in the tea world. In shou puerh, tippy tea helps sweeten and thicken the brew, resulting in a deep, dark and rich cup.

Old-Town Gathering was harvested in the spring of 2014 and piled a few months later. It represents an exception to the three trends we discussed, which have caused a drop in the quality of recent shou production: it comes from nice, organic raw material, was intentionally produced as loose-leaf shou puerh and was piled to a very specific degree that suits the nature of the leaves/blend used. Having exceptions to the rule is what Global Tea Hut education is all about, after all! Such intentionally produced, organic shou puerh teas are growing rarer and rarer these days.

Since Old-Town Gathering was only partially fermented to a degree that suits this tea, it is also a great candidate for aging. We also like the sheng notes, especially in the aftertaste. They help solidify the energy of the tea, making Old-Town Gathering an even more grounding shou puerh than what you are used to. The thick and sweet buds and partial artificial fermentation/piling of Old-Town Gathering mean that the tea still has a sheng bite, preserving some of the Qi from the trees. As Master Lu often tells us, "Processing the bitterness out of tea is trying to remove its wisdom and nature, like trying to process the suffering out of life. Better to learn to appreciate it and let its wisdom fill you up."

It brews up a thick and creamy-dreamy liquor that is heavy and rich, filling you with warm and flowing Qi that changes a winter day to summer friendliness. Despite the kick, the two years of aging have smoothed and mellowed this tea out, though it would also respond to ten more years of aging very well indeed. This is amongst our favorite kind of shou, and in fifteen years may very well be not just amongst our favorite kind, but our favorite! Have an amazing shou-filled session this month and be sure to raise a cup or a bowl to celebrate the five-year anniversary of this Global Tea Hut!

Gongfu brewing

Sidehandle brewing

Water: *spring water, gathered or bottled*
Fire: *coals or infrared*
Heat: *hot; fish-eye; just before a full boil*
Brewing Methods: *gongfu or sidehandle*
Steeping: *1 long, 2 flashes, then growing.*
Patience: *30-40 steepings*

茶 Focus on heat this month. With a shou like this, temperature will help you get the most out of your tea.

Brewing Tips

As with our December tea, heat is going to be very important for the depth and patience that can take this tea to its full potential. Do you remember the principles we discussed in our second gongfu video last month? Wu De explained that if the temperature remains the same from kettle to cup, and if our movements are slow, gentle and graceful, then we steal the essence of the tea.

To get the most out of a tea like this one, we need deep heat from boiling water. This will make for more creamy, oily and rich shou puerh. It's also okay to use a bit more leaf than you're used to for the same reason (just a bit more, don't overdo it). Shou puerh is nice when it is extra-dark and thick, especially at this time of year. (We've added a few extra grams to your tins this month for this reason.)

Keeping the temperature consistent from kettle to cup is really impossible, but it helps to aspire to impossible ideals, as that keeps us improving all throughout our lives. Try to ask yourself if you can think of some ways to preserve temperature throughout the brewing process.

Gentle and graceful movements that disturb the tea as little as possible are something we can work on for decades. Practice keeping circular movements towards the center, and making sure that your arms are both loose, comfortable and open. We want the Qi to flow smoothly from shoulder to wrist, without any kinks anywhere. See if you can sense any disturbances in the tea liquor when your movements aren't graceful, and what effect that has on the brew in the cups. Then, practice a smoother flow…

Food & Tea

Breathing Life into our Lives

食茶

Cooking is not a mystery. The more heart we put out, the more heart we put in. To bring cooking alive, we give our life. Giving our life willingly, we don't get put out. Washing, cutting, cooking, cleaning, exploring ways to give life to our life. Not knowing already how and what to do, practice feeling it out of what is not known through the warmth and anxiety, not sticking to a particular way, insisting it is the only way, even though it is quite good; open to feeling the various possibilities, the tentative ways of giving life to our life. To feel out our left hand, our back, our toes, to feel out our breathing, our movements, our stance, this is our freedom, this is our wisdom. The mystery is that it is possible to do what we don't know how to do.

–Edward Brown

茶人: ***Sam Gibb***

Honorary & Provisional Tenzo of the Tea Sage Hut

活在當下

You may be surprised to see us devoting an entire issue to tea and food, but there is a precedent for it. In our tradition, we serve every guest with tea and a meal. We also practice Wu De's teaching that "in every breath, every step, from the moment I wake, 'til the moment I sleep, I am preparing tea." Each and every part of the day is an opportunity to practice mindfulness, an aspect of preparing tea. Nowhere is this more poignant than in the kitchen, which provides the sustenance for all the activities that happen in the Center, including tea. In this introductory article, Sam helps shed light on cooking as part of a practice of self-cultivation, highlighting some important overlaps between the art of cooking and the tea ceremony.

Before I say anything else, I want to say this: *Everyone can be a cook.* In the words of Edward Brown "Cooking is not a mystery… To be a cook, all you need to do is cook." That is it. The only thing stopping you from cooking is the fact that you are not in the kitchen. Of course, there is an element in cooking that is about getting things right. We want to offer food that is "nutritious and delicious," as Wu De often says, but this is not what it means to truly cook. Cooking is about giving ourselves, and those around us, life. Even in the most basic way, life could not continue without food. If we look deeper, we see that cooking invites us to awaken to what it really means to live: to serve with love, to transcend the seemingly mundane into the sacred, and, most importantly, to deeply touch this life and allow the world to touch us back. Food is precious; we are precious, too. If we allow our hearts to delight in this, we *are* cooks, no matter how any dish turns out!

The life on this Earth is energy moving forward from lost eons. When we cook, we hold this existence itself in our hands. These very vegetables are expressions of the whole world—a carrot, a cabbage and a bowl of rice all have the Universe singing through them. They are gifts, full of the same life-force that courses through us. To quote Rumi, "What was said to the rose that made it open, was said to me here in my chest." When we start to feel this connection, and start to cultivate reverence for ourselves, our food and our guests, we can begin to give life through our cooking. We are then no longer working only with the food but with others and ourselves as well. Through sharing food, we begin to grow kinder, more generous and open-hearted. We let go, piece by piece, of the desire to gain approval through our cooking. Cooking is a gift, an expression of love, and should be given without expectation. Cooking gives us the opportunity to bring our love into the world, giving it form, smell, aroma and taste. When we cook, love is no longer abstract. It flows from our hearts into our hands, and then is absorbed and becomes those we serve it to.

Perhaps here, if we pause, we see the parallels to serving tea. In truth, they are very much the same in approach. Both tea and cooking allow us to reach inside ourselves and find ways to express and share our love. Cooking also invokes the Four Virtues of Tea: harmony, reverence, purity and tranquility. They are also both a medicine for our modern lives. More importantly, tea and a meal both provide us an opportunity to sit down and be with each other, connecting and honoring the time we share. Cooking is also a road to the transcendental through the mundane, turning our chores into joy.

If you are a true Chajin, you will know that tea is not merely the pouring of tea. Wu De's Zen master always said that "Cha Dao is 80% cleaning." And the Zen master Dogen also discussed how important cleaning is to the art of cooking. Both cooking and tea are in many ways just good old-fashioned work. From cutting an onion to cleaning the dust under the tea table, we work with our hands—breathing life back into our poor hands, which so many of us neglect these days.

Tea and cooking give us the opportunity to see all the small chores in our lives as not just something to get out of the way so we can get to the eating or drinking that follows, but as an important part of our eating and drinking. We all need to learn the important lesson that if the preparation isn't done well and with heart, the enjoyment will never be appreciated in that way—and that goes for all things!

Cooking is a way to connect with the intimacies of living—to be connected with our life and the moments it embodies. Our senses are already awake and alive. Are you with them, or are you waiting for some future moment when they will align in a way you think you will enjoy them more? That moment is not coming, and if it does, it will pass like this one. Tea and cooking teach us to enter the process for its own sake. They ask us to find our joy and fulfillment in our daily chores, allowing these simple moments to awaken bliss within us.

I think much of this is what we miss in our approach to food. It seems many of us are struggling for sensual pleasure, filling emotional holes through eating—holes that cannot be filled in that way. The healthier of us are often lost in searching for the golden mean—the perfect diet. Yet all that really happens is that we bounce from one extreme to another. We act as though nothing is palatable until we make it so, be that by drowning it in ketchup or becoming militant around gluten. In both cases, our attention to making food how we want it actually draws away from the beauty of the process itself. *We get lost in the plate and lose the kitchen.* We stop smelling the aromas, hearing the sizzles and clanks, enjoying the company we sit with, and instead focus on how we wish the meal was other than it is. This is not to say that certain dietary needs aren't real or important, but just that they can get in the way of the art of cooking and the connection with Nature and others we can experience through food.

Edward Brown talks about dealing with these same issues in the sixties, when he was the head cook at the Zen center Tassajara. Around a third of the community followed a macrobiotic diet and only wanted to eat brown rice, chewing it hundreds of times before swallowing! While this had little to do with Zen, he was obliged to cater to them as they made a big deal about it. "They used to say that if one followed the proper diet, then one would feel peaceful and happy. Apparently this was true, because when they didn't have their proper food, they were outraged." He lightheartedly refers to this time in the Zen center as living under the tyranny of a diet plan! Even fifty years ago people had rigid ideas around food that perhaps got in the way of experiencing the intimacy of the moment.

I have heard Edward say that, for a long time, he tried to cook in a way that everyone would like and would make everyone happy, and all that did was make him depressed! He reflects on this experience through the nadir of the Buddha's First Noble Truth: *life is suffering*. We can never make everyone happy; we can never cater to every ego. True cooking is not about making people happy. Moving the focus of cooking away from things like attaining love or admiration from others to a process of self-transformation, we begin to see cooking in its most sincere form is about putting our whole heart into the fundamentals of being alive, which in turn breathes life back into the world around us. Cooking can be an offering on the altar of Creation. As we develop in our practice, we start to respond to the circumstances, becoming inspired and directed by the ingredients themselves, the season and our guests, much like with a tea practice. At this point, we no longer see cooking as "work" to get out of the way, but as *the* Way. Then we serve life to life with our life. These are the dishes we strive to serve everyday on the poignantly round dining table of the Center. And, there's always a seat and a dish at our table waiting for you!

道元禪師的典座志

Dogen's Tenzo Kyokun

茶人: *Wu De*

Dogen's "Tenzo Kyokun," or "Instructions for the Cook," is amongst his most well-known and influential works—and for good reason. Dogen-Zenji was a thirteenth century Zen master, philosopher, poet and author, as well as the founder of the Soto Zen tradition. Like most great writers, he was far ahead of his time, brushing old characters in an abiding ink that resonates as much today as it did so many centuries ago. His seminal advice for the monastery cook is worth reading, contemplating and ultimately putting into practice in our daily lives. It offers a wisdom that applies not just to food, but also to everything we do.

The word "Buddhism" is a Western one, first used in the early nineteenth century by British authors interpreting ancient teachings in a religious way. And though rights and rituals, myths and legends, as well as other elements of religiousness orbit all the traditions of Buddhism, the core teachings of the Buddha and the masters who followed his way have always been focused on an approach to life, the art of living skillfully in harmony with truth. This focus on living well and true is heavily emphasized in Zen. The "Homeless Monk," Kodo Sawaki, said, "A practice or Way that has nothing to do with our fundamental attitude toward our lives is nonsense. Buddhadharma is a practice of returning to a true way of life. Converting 'non-Buddhists' has nothing to do with changing religions or trading one belief system for another; it means helping people transform their lives from a makeshift, incomplete way to a genuine and true life." In Japanese, the teachings of a Zen master like Dogen are often called "*shukyo*," which is literally "truth teachings" ("*shu*" is truth and "*kyo*" is teaching).

In the *Tenzo Kyokun*, Dogen suggests that you "put your awakened mind to work." He is reminding us that without presence and heart, a lifetime will evaporate so quickly, pouring through our hands like water. Where is the time between your first awkward steps—a toddler-you stumbles by in the old photograph—and now, reading these very words? Vanished like a handful of dust brushed off the palms, even the last billowy puff carried by the wind into nothingness. Where will the time between now and your dying self, frail and doe-eyed, live and be? More snapshots of lost memories? How will the time feel as it passes? Do you not feel it racing away from you, faster and faster with every winter? Elsewhere in Dogen's collected works, called the *Shobogenzo*, or *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, Dogen argues that, for a human, our psychological impressions of time are actually more real *to us* than any system we use to measure time. In other words, our experience of time slows and speeds up, and that is a more important and relevant insight than measuring time from the outside by hours, weeks, months or years.

When Dogen says, "Put your awakened mind to work," he is saying that we mustn't live in the "makeshift" way that Master Sawaki discussed, but be "genuine" in all that we do. If we do that, we are then present unto our lives, living each moment as fully as it can be lived. In that way, we also honor our experience and lives. To be present, awake and listening, and to honor are two of the many lessons in the *Tenzo Kyokun* that I carry with me into tea and life, and they're each worth discussing and exploring together, you and I.

Awake & Listening

When Dogen was young, he traveled to China to study Zen. While there, he was deeply impacted by a meeting with a monastery cook (*tenzo*) aboard a ship, which he relates in the *Instructions for the Cook*. Dogen invites the old cook to share a meal with him and help him understand the teachings of Zen. The old man declines the invitation, saying that he needs to get back to the monastery to make the next day's morning meal, hinting at the honor that drives him to want to cook not out of obligation, but out of joy. Dogen then asks the old cook, "Venerable one, why take on the difficult task of cooking at your age? Why not practice Zazen (meditation) and contemplate the teachings of the masters until you are enlightened?"


日本國初祖道元禪師坐相

The old cook laughs and says that it is Dogen who needs to further contemplate the teachings of the masters, as he has yet to grasp the essence of Zen. When Dogen humbly asks him to explain, the master said to keep practicing and maybe he will penetrate the truth. He got up to leave, inviting Dogen to discuss this later at his monastery if he ever found himself in the neighborhood. The exchange affected the young Dogen very deeply.

In July of that same year, Dogen found himself at the old cook's monastery. The old man heard that the young foreigner was there and came to his room for tea. He said that he was retiring as *tenzo* that year. Dogen reminded him that he had said he would expound upon how cooking *was* the teachings of the masters if they met again. "At that time, you told me that if I want to understand words, I must look into what words are, and if I want to understand practice, I must understand what practice is. What are words?"

"One, two, three, four, five," says the old cook.

"What is practice?" asks Dogen.

"Everywhere, nothing is hidden."

Dogen digests the incident thus: "We talked about many other things but I won't go into that now. Suffice it to say that without the kindness and help of the old *tenzo*, I would not have had any understanding of words or of practice. When I told my late teacher Myozen about this he was very pleased." He realized then that practice has to be real; it has to be this very life, not words or ideas about how to live. He also understood the importance of cooking, which he later stressed in his writing and in the organization of the monastery he founded.

When you are cooking, the kitchen becomes your world. This is the same kind of training we are cultivating in tea ceremony. How you do anything is how you do everything. Each moment is an essential part of everything you leave behind in the world. At the end of your life, much more of what you experience will be in the category you've labeled "ordinary," which, if you're like me, is all too often foolishly dismissive in tone, suggesting that "ordinary" experience lacks value. First and foremost, I will never learn to live present, awake and listening to the world—learning and growing, showing up for my life—I will never cultivate such presence, so long as I separate experience into categories like "important" and "unimportant." And then again, life and time will tumble away without me really being there, a part of it all. Either all of it matters or none of it does! Besides, what could matter more than the way I make food for myself and others—the energy that fuels all and everything I experience, from glorious to mundane?

This means that cooking is done not as the kind of work where you punch in, daydream of being elsewhere, and then punch out and go do what you really want to be doing. "If a person entrusted with this work lacks such a spirit, then that person will endure unnecessary hardships and suffering that will have no value in their pursuit of the Way." Living and working in a Center like ours can be challenging—there is constant service of others and egoic conflict. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the focused, concentrated and cluttered world of the kitchen. The tumbling of life and living in proximity with other unenlightened beings (especially within the heightened sensitivity that daily meditation brings) will wear you down if your orientation is not towards growth.

In the end, it is also we who are cooked with the food. We learn to be present, and to live and work without losing our composure. This is the art of tea and of life, as well. We learn not to be pulled off-center by our own or others' emotions—not reacting to someone's anger or our own feelings or ideas, which pull us away from the center of the moment. This is why Dogen suggests that the role of chief chef in the monastery, called "*tenzo*," is one for a mature practitioner who can use experience outside of the meditation hall—in the stream of daily work—as his practice since he doesn't get to meditate as often as the other monks. It doesn't matter how mature we are, we can practice cooking the way we want to live our lives. Shunryu Suzuki often spoke about finding your composure and settling there. He wasn't suggesting some kind of false, overly-formal way of holding yourself up, but rather not letting anything knock you off center. He meant staying oriented towards the moment, which means doing your work with care for every detail as if it were the most important thing in the universe. This requires a balance that will demand practice, though. We can really achieve such a composure by meditating and focusing on our daily activities, like tea and cooking, with sincerity.

In this and other works, Dogen clarifies the specifics of caring for our food, including balance amongst the flavors, which ultimately means that the food should nourish us in body and in soul. It should be delicious and nutritious. He also said cooking should be done in a light and adaptable way, which we could interpret to mean that cooking should come from the spirit, be creative and in harmony with the very vegetables before us, as opposed to following some generic recipe, which is an idea or conceptual interpretation of generic vegetables. Hard things break, struggling with a changing reality. We must remain light on our feet and bend a bit, like a good knife, using recipes only as a starting point. That keeps us connected to our cooking as it's happening, and to the moment as well.

As a Zen master, Dogen also emphasizes the need for cleanliness in the kitchen, of course, which is also very much a principle of tea. My master always used to say that Cha Dao is eighty percent cleaning. Keeping the space clean helps maintain presence, spaciousness and lightness in cooking. It also means that our work leaves no trace, which is especially poignant in cooking, since the art is, ultimately, gobbled up.

Finally, Dogen advises that we be thorough and conscientious. Once again, this aligns with tea (which should come as no surprise, considering tea and Zen are "one flavor," after all). Being thorough and conscientious means that when we cut onions we do so without wasting energy or thought—just chopping onions. There are no unnecessary motions. There is a traditional belief in China that it is rude to talk while steeping tea, as the words will get in the liquor. Our words and thoughts influence the food, at least in distracting us from the reality of what is happening around us. Being awake and listening means being thorough, and being thorough requires that we be fully within what we are

doing, investing our body and spirit into chopping, stirring or even washing dishes. This is a big part of how we put our heart into our tea, or into the food we cook, and this is how the art of cooking transforms and fuels the practice of those that eat it, as it is now full of dharma, as well as supporting our own practice in the mindful preparation. The flow should be smooth and coordinated, without wasted energy. This makes cooking a practice, and like Dogen suggests, we'll find that we're chopped with the onions, baked with the bread and stir-fried with the vegetables. Once we are really and truly awake in the kitchen, we start listening to the vegetables and pots. The pans awaken with us. They start clinging and clanging like the bells in the Zendo. The soup starts simmering sutras. We are now really hearing the true teachings of this world. This is where cooking, Zen practice and life meet.

Honoring

Dogen spends a lot of time discussing the typical day in the life of a *tenzo*, describing the details intimately. The *tenzo* starts work in the afternoon, meeting with other senior monks to plan the next day's meal. Then there is the gathering of foodstuffs, prep work, cooking and coordinating with assistant cooks. Throughout the *Tenzo Kyokun* Dogen stresses not wasting food and honoring the preciousness of our life and the food we eat, which is the second important lesson I'd like to discuss. He says, "This life we live is a life of rejoicing, this body a body of joy, which can be used to present offerings to the Three Jewels. It arises through the merits of eons, and using it thus, its merit extends endlessly. I hope that you will work and cook in this way, using this body, which is the fruition of thousands of lifetimes and births to create limitless benefit for numberless beings." For me, this is, in part, a reminder to honor this life and to honor the sacrifice and effort in all the food we eat.

The Buddha said that a human life is as rare as a golden ring floating on an ocean where a tortoise that only comes up for air once every hundred years puts his head through that ring. At first this may seem silly, since there are billions of us. But we are surrounded by endless, empty space. Many of us often take these lives, these eyes and dreams, for granted, forgetting how much our ancestors suffered to give us these bodies. Many of our ancestors passed through wars and droughts and countless other trials, tribulations and turmoil to give us this experience we're having now. In fact, some of them knew no other joy save that of their children and grandchildren, literally living for our betterment. And how often we take this wonderful human experience for granted. Even in suffering, Zen teaches us to celebrate the pain as growth, to love the stone that sharpens us.

There is no greater treasure on this Earth than a human life. The richest zillionaire would give every penny he owns to live six months more. In fact, he'd give every cent for his daughter to live six months more! And though we hold the greatest treasure known, we still toy with baubles and trifles in the most unsatisfying way. Dogen reminds the cook that making food for such life is an honor, especially for those cultivating themselves, since the food then becomes an offering.

Making food that fuels cultivation is one of the highest honors known, as it honors both life and practice.

Once you learn to be awake and listen, you must naturally cultivate the ability to honor this life. Gratitude for food is a very powerful way of doing this—in a very real, down-to-earth way. Honoring the food we cook is learning to honor the energy that supports the life I cultivate. In the Center, we light incense and pray to a kitchen altar before starting the preparation of any meal. Then, of course, we reflect on gratitude before eating as well.

Dogen spends more time discussing the need to honor the sacrifice and effort in each meal. Whether you are vegetarian or not, living beings must give their life so that ours may continue. It is foolish to think that Mother Nature values her animal children more than her plant children. There is always sacrifice, and a true heart honors it. "A parent raises a child with deep love, regardless of poverty or difficulties. Their hearts cannot be understood by another; only a parent can understand it. A parent protects their child from heat or cold before worrying about whether they themselves are hot or cold. This kind of care can only be understood by those who have given rise to it, and realized only by those who practice it. This, brought to its fullest, is how you must care for water and rice, as though they were your own children."

The best way to honor the sacrifice of life given to your life is to live fully and cultivate yourself for the good of all beings. In that way, the sacrifice was not in vain, as it supported the evolution and liberation of consciousness. By holding the burden of sacrifice in our food, we are motivated to practice seriously, and to live our life to the fullest so that the energy sacrificed to us is honored; absorbed into a growing, light-giving journey. In that way, our food is truly fuel for the path to truth. All and everything honors such a sacrifice. "When we train in any of the offices of the monastery we should do so with a joyful heart, a motherly heart, a vast heart. A 'joyful heart' rejoices and recognizes meaning. You should consider that were you to be born in the realm of the shining beings, you would be absorbed in indulgence with the qualities of that realm so that you would not rouse the recognition of uncovering the Way and so have no opportunity to practice. And so how could you use cooking as an offering to the Three Jewels? Nothing is more excellent than the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Truth and the Community of those who practice and realize the Way. Neither being the king of gods nor a world ruler can even compare with the Three Jewels."

In our Lives

Though most of us don't live in a monastery, or even an intentional community like the Tea Sage Hut, we can still be inspired by Dogen's words. There are actually countless other lessons in the *Tenzo Kyokun*. It's definitely worth taking the time to read. There are also great commentaries that shed light in other directions. For me, Dogen's motivation reminds me to invest more in this life as I live it, to be more present and awake. He encourages me to listen more, learning from everything around me, especially the small, seemingly unimportant parts of my day, like tea and cooking. And he pokes me, like any good Zen master, chiding the way I take my life for granted. I want to honor my life and my ancestors, both genetic and my lineage of teachers (including Dogen-Zenji himself). I am grateful for the abundance of life-giving nourishment in my day, and I choose to honor that by preparing my food with devotion, thoroughly and conscientiously, by receiving food with prayers of gratitude and by not wasting the food given to me.

Cooking and eating is so central to all life, and supports all aspects of life, so there really is no way to have a meaningful practice without including the way we prepare and receive our food. Without this meal, there is no sunrise, no meditation and also no tea session. And the insight Dogen shares with me is that by turning my cooking into a practice, I affect all areas of my life, as every part of my day is fueled by whatever energy is in my food. I choose for it to be awakened and honored food!

飲食茶文化

Diet & Tea Cultivation

茶人: *Qing Yu*

Our Hut-resident Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor offers some perspective on diet as a means towards harmony between a person and Nature, which forms the basis for health, longevity and spiritual prosperity in Chinese philosophy. Most of the sensitive tea drinkers we know incorporate a vegetarian diet to make for a lighter body. If we cultivate sensitivity, we can taste and experience more in our tea. We advocate experimentation with a lighter, plant-based diet and tea. A tea lover knows his or her body and can make choices based on the way our tea responds. And recognizing the relationship between diet and one's tea is already a step towards greater sensitivity.

The Way of Tea is a winding path through life that embraces principles derived from Nature. As we seek to embody these principles, we find guidance in navigating the endless, spontaneous vicissitudes that underpin our lives. We observe in Nature certain fundamental realities and, by aligning our lives with these realities, we find harmony between Nature and culture. A life of tea observes qualities of humility, simplicity, patience, honesty, purity, vitality and flexibility. We see in Nature that trees gain their strength through their flexibility and deep roots, that water carves the great canyons by taking any form and tending towards the lowly, that old-growth forests take centuries to develop through successive, patient stages of growth. In a cyclical, symbiotic dance, the qualities that define each passing season create fertile conditions for the following season. Even the stars and planets follow hallowed orbits and lifecycles through the cosmos, reflecting the same spiral arrangement of leaves and other plant parts, as well as the double helix of human DNA. Human beings are an expression, a breath of Nature, and to the extent that we live in alignment with our true heritage, we flourish as a species. Man can live in harmony with Nature by many means, but one particularly potent way is to observe the seasons and the foods that one eats in alignment with the seasons. Diet, which includes Tea, is an important way we can align ourselves with Nature and maintain true health in our lives.

Every spiritual tradition since time immemorial has dedicated an aspect of its teaching to the nourishment, sustenance, purity and cleanliness of the human body. The journey up the mountain to partake of God's divine sustenance is one that begins with the relationship of nutrition to the light of communion with God. Through vegetarian and vegan diets, fasting, and cleansing the human vessel, we increase our capacity to experience energy, clear perception, humility, oneness and stewardship of the natural world. Expanding one's consciousness and awareness are fundamental tenets of spiritual practice, whether observed as mindfulness of others, attentiveness to the moment or acknowledgment of the interconnectivity of life. A pragmatic understanding of "awareness" simply acknowledges that the interconnection between all particles of existence is intelligent, alive, communicative and part of a designing force we all exist within. These insights also emerge within contemporary quantum physics, a realm where the dividing line between spirituality and science becomes increasingly blurred. A spiritual recognition of the interconnectedness of life admonishes anyone walking a spiritual path to walk softly upon the Earth and cause as little harm as humanly possible to themselves and others (we've done plenty as is), including animals. Veganism and vegetarianism are lifestyle choices that transcend cultural, religious, racial, nationalistic, political and societal boundaries. In different traditions, this lifestyle choice is encouraged for various reasons, and by exploring the areas of commonality between these traditions, we arrive at some understanding of the deeper inner truth of why these traditions support vegetarianism.

All spiritual traditions that advocate vegetarianism insist on compassion for all living sentient beings, nonviolence, surrendering attachments, ego-identifications, illusions of the personality, and, ultimately, surrender into the divine Self that is the true essence of who we all are deep down inside.

A human being is part of a whole, called by us the "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of Nature in its beauty.

–Albert Einstein

This process of surrender and "widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures," to borrow from notable vegetarian Albert Einstein, is one that requires profound inner work and sublimation of our lower impulses and desires. By overcoming our animalistic impulse to consume meat and flesh, we undergo a process of sacrifice, and in surrendering our lower Nature, loosening the grip of our ego, and more fully embracing the sacred interconnectedness of life.

Generally, a vegetarian diet is ideal for a tea person because it promotes sensitivity of palate, greater awareness of energy or Qi, cleanliness, purity and stillness of mind. The hormones released in animals during the modern process of slaughter disrupt the equipoise of the person who consumes the meat. Furthermore, the act of slaughter is an ugly act. The Way of Tea is a way of beauty and refinement; thus a tea lover must choose to live in a way which values beauty for its own sake. Besides, 68% of all diseases in the U.S. are diet-related. We spend over $135 billion dollars annually in the U.S. to treat cardiovascular disease and heart disease is the most common cause of death in the U.S. There is zero cholesterol in grains, legumes, fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds. Also, 40% of all cancers in the U.S. are diet-related.

Throughout the ages, spiritual teachers of many faiths have encouraged vegetarianism for an even more compelling reason. They stress vegetarianism as one of the cornerstones of a successful meditative and spiritual life. It is scientifically proven that all meat products, especially red meat due to its highly acidic composition, affect the body in ways detrimental to meditation and spiritual practice. This insight operates in many ways. The consumption of meat is not conducive to deep meditation or spiritual practice because it affects us on a physiological level, raising blood pressure, increasing degenerative disease, and requiring more energy for digestion, as well as affecting us on a mental and emotional level.

Fat from flesh foods is a major storage site for pesticides, herbicides and other environmental toxins that enter the food chain and that affect the proper functioning of our body and mind. The energy of a flesh-food diet adds to the impurities of the mind and the nervous system. Flesh consumption also disrupts the energetic channels or meridians of the body.

Lao-tzu's *Tao Te Ching*, or Book of the Way and the Power of the Way, is the classic manual on the art of living. It states: "Man follows the Earth, the Earth follows the Universe, the Universe follows the Dao, and the Dao follows only itself." The cultures that birthed the Way of Tea, believed in complying with, harmonizing and coexisting peacefully with the Earth. Mankind integrates with Heaven and the Earth, and exists in mutual dependence with them. The Dao of the universe does not change, and thus the universe runs according to the Dao in an orderly manner. The Earth follows the changes of Heaven; therefore it has yin and yang, four distinct seasons, five elements, six atmospheres and eight principles that direct change. By respecting Heaven and the Earth, mankind enjoys a harmonious life of gratitude, blessings and growth. This is reflected in the expression "Heaven's favorable timing, Earth's advantageous terrain, and harmony among the people." According to Chinese thought, astronomy, geography, the calendar system, Chinese medicine, literature, and even social structures all follow this understanding. As a microcosm of Nature, humankind also observes the principles of Nature within us. By following the Earth in the way we eat, we live in harmony with the cycles of Earth, which further allows us to live in alignment with the Tao.

Aside from observing a vegetarian diet, this also means familiarizing ourselves with foods local to the area we live and emphasizing them in our diet. Also, by eating foods that grow during that season, we harmonize our bodies and minds to the changes of the Earth. For example, during the dry autumn months, we can incorporate foods that nourish the bodily fluids and lungs such as pears, pumpkin, squash, apples, seaweed, grapefruit, lemon, coconut oil, and olive oil. Additionally, as autumn marks a transition to cooler weather, warming pungent herbs help the body to generate heat that nourishes the lungs such as moderate amounts of pungent foods like garlic, onions, ginger, horseradish, and mustard. Consulting a practitioner of Chinese medicine allows one to determine a customized, seasonal diet most beneficial to one's constitution.

Finally, choosing teas that are seasonally appropriate is a profound way to harmonize with the seasons. For example, aged puerh tends to be more heating and moving, thus having a drying effect on the body. While the meditative states induced by puerh are appropriate for the introverted winter months, one may choose a less drying tea for the autumn. Choosing teas like mid-aged sheng puerh, younger shou puerh and roasted oolongs are more suitable for the autumn. As one becomes more familiar with the effects of different teas on the mind and body, one can make more seasonally appropriate choices.

As a human activity, the Way of Tea marks the noblest of artistic endeavors: the alchemical process. This way acknowledges that life, as well as the man or woman through which life breathes, is an impermanent, constantly fluctuating process. We are unable to define a person with words because words will only tell us *about* someone, never capturing their essence, their full truth. A human is a process of perception, interacting with a world of forms in an endless display of action and reaction. This process, involving all the mental, emotional, physical, physiological, sexual and energetic functions, happens without volition or consent. Life happens, and we are swept along the river of shifting, swirling eddies. We have little control of our lives because we do not understand this process we call a "self." We rarely objectively observe our emotions, our discursive thinking, our physical sensations, our cravings and aversions, or the real energies at play in a given moment.

Consequently, we live, become conditioned by, and transition out of life according to the whimsical eddies of whatever appears before us. Yet within the human spirit exists an exquisitely clear, sublime and beautiful voice calling us to a higher order of reality, one wherein we participate more fully in the Being and creative blossoming of life. The Way of Tea echoes this voice, calling for our Presence, beckoning us to experience the unfolding of life within us. This Way serves as a bridge between the numinous and the prosaic, as a refined yet supremely natural art of self-realization. The extent to which we follow Nature, knowing that we too *are* Nature, is the extent to which we create space for this realization to actualize.

One of the most powerful ways that we can harmonize with life on Earth is to adopt a vegetarian diet that emphasizes seasonal, local, organic foods. A profound way to share our cultivation, to bring peace to other's lives, to celebrate beauty and ritual, is to share seasonally appropriate teas in a ceremonial way. These two transformative practices alone create fertile conditions for peace within society and the emergence of enlightened culture.

Winter herbs such as ginger, rosemary, cinammon, cloves, hazelnut, pepper and star anise are great for heating the body from the inside.

Gratitude Lunch

Wu De often says that gratitude is one of the essential ingredients in a happy, healthy life. Every Tuesday is "Gratitude Lunch" here at the Center. As we eat, we go around the table and talk about whatever it is we are grateful for this week. This practice has become an important part of the schedule here, and we all notice the difference in the rare week when we miss out on sharing our gratitude.

It is helpful to start by understanding gratitude in the way it is applied in self-cultivation. Gratitude is so much more than just being thankful; it is a readiness to show appreciation and return kindness to others. The appreciation of life and specific events, as well as a willingness to return kindness to the people in our lives, are both worth discussing in more detail before beginning a gratitude lunch practice like we have here at the Center.

When we are grateful to a situation, or life in general, we are, in fact, saying "yes" to what is. This runs contrary to our normal, egoic patterns where we are always busy arguing with Reality. So many of the great sages of humanity, including the Buddha, offered us the insight that we often suffer unnecessarily by wanting what *is* to be *is not* or wanting what *isn't* to be *is*—arguing with Reality, in other words. He often urged his students to contemplate the truth with the words "as it is!" A more modern sage, Byron Katie, often says, "The problem I see in arguing with Reality is that Reality wins 100% of the time!" Learning to say "yes" to the way things are is acceptance when things are not going the way we'd like, and gratitude when things are. Saying "yes" to this moment, this now, is actually a "yes" to all that has ever been, since all moments are connected in infinite causal chains. When you affirm any moment in your life, any configuration of experience, you are also avowing the world as it is. This is an essential aspect of being happy and healthy.

When we learn to affirm the world as it is, we stop taking our blessings for granted. Many times we get so used to water coming out of faucets and shower heads, we forget that many people don't have clean water, let alone plumbing. We live our whole lives with electrical outlets and lights, oblivious to our ancestors who went without these comforts. (When you travel through developing countries and the power goes out regularly, you start to cultivate gratitude for electricity.) Food is the perfect place to start such a practice. All too often we need to remember how blessed we are to be so abundantly provided for by Mother Earth. There are people who are right now suffering through tremendous pain. Near to your home, or wherever you sit reading this article, there is a children's cancer ward full of bald little angels, many in great pain and dying. There is little you or I can do for them, sitting here before our meal. But in their heart of hearts—in their highest self—they are okay with it so long as we honor what we have. If we honor our healthy bodies and don't take our lives or our food for granted, all is well under the sun. Not taking the basics for granted is an important part of being worthy of our food, and all the energy and sacrifice that went into it.

The more we cultivate gratitude, the more we learn to love and appreciate this world. We have spent too much of our life struggling with ourselves, others and our environment. Peace happens when we call a cease-fire—when we affirm that things are okay in this moment. Acknowledging blessings in our life out loud is marvelous training, because it teaches us to recognize them more and more as they arise. As we set time aside to speak out the things we are grateful for, we become more conscious of them, learning to look out for them in the future. This means we honor life more, which is a huge part of really, thoroughly enjoying our precious time on this Earth!

In relation to others, a gratitude practice helps us develop one of the Six Perfections in Buddhism, called "loving-kindness." You can be kind for many reasons: maybe you want something or just respect the person you're being kind to. But when you love kindness itself, you start to cultivate kindness for its own sake. Gratitude helps us to cultivate a readiness to return kindness to others who offer it to us, opening our heart and helping us to love kindness itself more and more as we experience the benefits of doing so.

The more we say "yes" to the world, the more grateful we become and then we say "yes" more, and so on… Don't underestimate the act of sharing what you are grateful for consciously. You can do this by listing your blessings in a journal or saying them out loud like we do at Gratitude Lunch every week. We try to practice being as specific as possible in our expression of what we are grateful for, focusing on just the past week alone. This is important, as beginners have a tendency to resort to the bigger picture when expressing gratitude ("my mom," "this food," "the Earth," etc.), which is okay if you have a genuine reason to be grateful for those things over the course of the last week. However, when we are too general it is often a cop-out and doesn't really affect the feeling of gratitude in the heart, which is more relevant than the words we say out loud. Also, by focusing on specific instances, we are training ourselves to catch future instances and celebrate them as they happen. And that is very powerful! When you learn to acknowledge and celebrate even small blessings throughout the week, you will have many more reasons to honor your precious life by living happily day to day. For that reason, it is very helpful to be as granular and specific in your gratitude exercises as you possibly can. You can do this by limiting the time to a day, or a week as we do, or you could find another way to make your gratitude work more specific; for instance, unpacking each thing you are grateful for and describing each of the details within that person or situation that make you thankful. Gratitude Lunch is the perfect opportunity to practice becoming more sensitive to all the myriad mystical, magical moments that are happening around you *all the time!*

This practice works to change things in the present and future. It forces you to acknowledge all your blessings, which is inspiring and uplifting. It also helps you to develop a real love for the kindness of others and a desire to return it. You stop taking all your abundance for granted. You learn to celebrate your life more, which makes life happier and improves your overall well-being. As you practice expressing your gratitude, you inspire yourself to feel more thankful. This definitely affects your attitude and happiness, and it also inspires others who live and work with you to be more positive!

The love of kindness, hospitality and gratitude are central to a life of tea. They are very much a part of the spirit of tea. And being grateful for your food and tea will make you a better guest and host, improving all your ceremonies to come!

Five Reflections

五 迴向

As a hush settles around the kitchen table, bursts of colors and inviting aromas fill the senses. Our hands come together and Wu De recites our version of the "Five Reflections" that have been said over food in Zen monasteries for hundreds of years:

We reflect on the effort and sacrifice that went into this food.

We reflect on virtue and our own worthiness to receive this food.

We reflect that attachment to food is a hindrance to freedom of the mind.

We reflect that this food is amongst the most important medicines we will take on this day.

As fuel on the path to Truth, and for the good of all beings, we accept this food.

We reflect on the effort and sacrifice that went into this food.

More than anything, the first reflection is an expression of gratitude. I remember when I first woke up to the fact that our life requires death. (Not only of animals, but plants as well.) Why is my life more valuable? What am I really contributing to this world that justifies the sacrifice of life to continue my existence? How do I reconcile the fact that my life is made up of death? The food in front of us is not merely the sacrifice of the plants we are eating, but the whole evolutionary process from the beginning of the Universe (and possibly before it). The food we consume is not the death of this one life form, but the process of life and death up until now. And it continues beyond us as well. Here, we take pause in this infinite continuum stretching in both directions, looking at the food offered to us with open eyes, reflecting on the Sacrifice within this meal. This meal contains the Universe, and nothing is missing from the meal: It contains the stars, the moon, the sun, the weather, the Earth and the seas, animals, insects and people. It is all there, and it is all offered to us. Lots of effort went into this meal!

We reflect on virtue and our own worthiness to receive this food.

So we are offered the Universe… Why? Surely I am not worthy of this. Surely I will merely squander this away like so many other gifts given to me. This is where I trip myself up. Often, if Wu De cooks something really special, he will turn to me and say in a playfully serious way: "Gibb, you better reflect really hard on your virtue and worthiness to receive this meal." But here is the thing: this reflection is a statement, not a question. It does not ask if we are worthy or not, it says we reflect on our worthiness. It is there. This is merely an invitation, like all teachings, to reflect on our worthiness. We can also reflect on our virtue—the parts that shine bright already and the ones we need to polish more. Taking moral inventory isn't about guilt; *it's positive.* The mind that reflects on mistakes has already within it what is needed to transcend that misbehavior. Recognizing that I want to change my thoughts, speech or action means that I am already bigger than those patterns. We reflect on our misbehavior because we are virtuous, and that makes us worthy of this meal. That makes us good people.

We reflect that attachment to food is a hindrance to freedom of the mind.

As the oldest child growing up in a large family, I was in a position of power, relatively speaking. Like many before me, I used this power for my own gain. One of my privileges was serving the ice cream to my brothers and sister after a meal. In New Zealand, we have an ice cream called "Goody Goody Gumdrops," which is a sickening green color and filled with gumdrop candies (or "lollies" as we call them "Down Under"). Every time I found one of these sweet little treasures, I was sure to place it in my bowl. I can laugh about it now, but there is sadness in the fact that I cheated my siblings, and for what? A few measly balls of sugar. Greed constricts us and closes our world down. It makes it hard for us to see the big picture. Ultimately, greed blocks our compassion. How can we be free if we cannot let go of this primal attachment to food? By letting it go of our attachment, we realize that we receive something much greater. This reflection also reminds me to look deeper into all the reasons why we eat, many of which are not about sustenance. We also have emotional hungers, and they aren't always healthy.

As fuel on the path to Truth, and for the good of all beings, we accept this food.

The last part is less of a reflection and more of a knot that ties the other four together. The answer to the question of how best to honor this medicine made of sacrifice before us is to use this food in our journey of self-cultivation. This food helps us grow, so that we in turn can help others. Without this food, we would not be alive. It sustains us another day. Without it, we could not seek truth or follow our Dao, and we would have no opportunity to liberate ourselves from the suffering of experience. We should not view this food as mere "stuff." The way to move beyond the mindset of seeing food as fuel packets to get you through the day is to view the process of growing and preparing food, then consuming and becoming it in its totality. Seeing that this process is not about me or my individual needs, but part of the impersonal expansion of consciousness into infinity, helps me to cultivate wisdom. By accepting and eating this food with reverence towards the whole process that brought it to us, which is the process of the whole Universe itself, we realize that the only valid reason to consume it is "*for the good of all beings*." We honor what we take by giving back more. Giving back more is the secret to life.

We reflect that this food is amongst the most important medicines we will take on this day.

This reflection is to me an invitation to see beyond food as sensory indulgence. Our bodies are systems. The basics of any system are that the inputs determine outputs. "What you put in is what you get out," so to speak. The type of food and the way we approach food is of the utmost importance to our general wellbeing. Chinese medicine also views food as a paramount medicine. Is food for our healing or is it for our pleasure? For those inclined towards the latter, I would encourage you to look again at the first reflection. This is not to say we cannot enjoy food, or it cannot taste great; it's to say that is not primary. The ideal is always "nutritious and delicious," as Wu De often says, but nutritious should come first. Once we see our food as medicine for others, our environment and ourselves then we can look at the other elements that we love about food. Then, you find the magic that when food is healthy and tastes nice, it actually tastes better, is guilt-free and you can savor it more deeply, knowing that it will result it a happier, healthier, longer and more energetic life.

I invite you to stop before your next meal, bring your hands together and deeply contemplate. Try to penetrate the truth behind these Five Reflections. There is so much more in them than I have discussed here. See if there is any change in how you approach your meal after this. Then you can see if you can extend this mind into other aspects of your life, like making tea!

茶食甜點之美

Tea Confectionery

茶人: *Shen Su*

For centuries, people have shared sweets with tea. And no culture refined the art of tea confectionery more than the Japanese. In this article, Shen elucidates the history and kinds of Japanese sweets for tea, discusses the way we use sweets at the Center and leaves us with some advice for how to offer a snack or a sweet to our guests after hosting a tea ceremony. Japanese sweets for tea also invite us to explore the way that a Chajin learns to focus on details and make their tea preparation into self-cultivation through mindfulness and presence.

When you start pursuing an art like tea, it is difficult to imagine the breadth and scope at the outset. For me, this has been the case with many aspects of a life of tea. For example, I had no idea just how important it was going to be to learn how to cook and clean in order to properly learn how to serve tea, in the larger sense of serving. But ours is a tradition of service, and while we *do* learn how to brew tea, of course, our priority as Chajin (tea people) is to learn how to *serve*. And that becomes all-encompassing, down to the last detail. In fact, as I progress, I realize that it is the minuscule details that are the most important details to pay attention to. Too often, the things that we write off as negligible, one later finds, can change everything! The larger, more obvious aspects of serving guests and cultivating a tea practice take care of themselves, naturally falling into place. It's the little things that we then have to focus on refining. And I believe this applies to any discipline. I never could have imagined just how important the meals at our Center are, how much time and energy goes into them, and how many opportunities for practice they offer us! After all, food is amongst the most important medicines we will take on any given day, fueling our paths! Beyond that, tea and food represent hospitality everywhere.

In a tradition founded upon hospitality and service, it should therefore come as no surprise that food and tea were eventually paired together in ceremony; one medicine complementing the other, delighting the senses and awakening us to presence and loving-kindness. And what better type of food to complement tea in ceremony, especially when it is bitter tea, than a delicate, subtly sweet confection? As with so many aspects of culture, the Japanese took this tradition and focused tremendous soul and concentration on it, sparing no detail with regards to sweets for tea. What I am only just learning, the Japanese have long understood, and that is *the importance of details.* But before we dive into the details of sweets and snacks served with tea, we can briefly look back at some of the earlier forms of tea snacks and their development into the highly refined confections of our modern day.

Food Service & Tea

Long ago, the foods served with tea would have been nuts and fruits and other small, simple snacks. The key word here is *simple*. "*Kaiseki*," a Japanese word meaning "meals for tea," was originally a very simple service of food. It was typically a light meal served at the beginning of or during a formal tea gathering. "*Kai*" means "stomach/chest" and "*seki*" means "stone" which comes from a time when samurai or Buddhist practitioners would press a warm stone against their stomach to stimulate energy in the digestive area in order to alleviate hunger and coldness. It therefore represented a meal simple enough to barely alleviate hunger. It usually consisted of small portions of rice, pickles, soup, fish, and even rice wine. Over time, however, *kaiseki* developed into something so complex and refined that it can even be studied as an entirely separate discipline, completely distinct from the tea ceremony, and only carried out successfully by professionals who have studied the art of *kaiseki* for a long time.

One important trend during the development of *kaiseki* was an attention to detail and the artistic layout of the food when served. Not only was each ingredient carefully chosen, but the food, and the temperature of the food, were suited to the season. Even the temperature of the utensils used to eat the food was carefully thought out, among many other details that went into the creation and layout of *kaiseki* cuisine.

Wagashi: Japanese Confections

As the Japanese tea ceremony became highly refined and ritualized, so too the sweets served in those ceremonies had to meet the same standards of refinement. This is where the attention to detail developed in *kaiseki* neatly found its way into the service of sweets for tea, including Japanese confections, often called "*wagashi*," which just means Japanese traditional sweets and isn't necessarily specific to tea. You could say that all Japanese sweets for tea are a type of *wagashi*, but not all *wagashi* are a type of sweet for tea. The extensive world of *wagashi* has changed a lot over time and has been influenced by China and Europe, which has resulted in many different ingredients and production methods. Traditionally, however, they were made from three main plant-based, local ingredients, such as grains, sugar, and beans, especially red beans. And before sugar was introduced from China and Europe, Japanese confections were prepared with other natural plant-based sweeteners. In general, these types of confections often fall into two categories based on their moisture content and production method, *namagashi* (fresh or moist confections) and *higashi* (dry confections), with less than 10% moisture content. Nowadays, they are often made using ingredients such as rice, flour, sugar, miso, beans, yams, roots, herbs, flowers, gelatin, jelly, nuts, seeds and sprouts. Many of the fresh sweets with a higher moisture content that we are most familiar with are made using *mochi*, steamed and pounded glutinous rice, often encasing a sweet red bean paste and designed elegantly to suit the season.

In the same way that a *chaxi* (tea stage) is designed to honor the guests and occasion by considering the season and weather, so too, tea confections are delicately sculpted to represent a seasonal motif. And similar to *chabana* (flowers for tea), *wagashi* should suit the theme of the tea ceremony but not distract from the tea itself. This also includes the dishware and utensils used to display the confections. Some motif examples are plum blossom confections in the spring, maple leaves in the autumn and bush clovers in the winter.

An important part of *wagashi* is how we perceive them. A good *wagashi* engages all five senses. While it might be obvious how they delight our sense of taste, sight, touch and smell, a well-designed confection should invoke a sound associated with the motif. In other words, it requires a little participation on the guests' part to hear the rustling of autumn leaves or the wind whistling through cherry blossom trees, or to recall a poem attributed to that particular season.

General kinds of Wagashi

Namagashi **(生菓子)**
These are "wet" confectioneries, with a moisture content of 30% or more.

Han namagashi **(半生菓子)**
These are "half wet" confectioneries, with a moisture content of 10-30%.

Higashi **(干菓子)**
These are "dry" confectioneries, with a moisture content of less than 10%.

****Each of the three types of confection can be made into the following sweets. (There are also several other kinds not mentioned here):***

Jō namagashi **(上生菓子)** *are the most common sweets for tea. These are soft and delicate, often made of mochi (pounded rice) and filled with a sweet bean paste. They change to reflect the season and/or occasion. They come in the shapes of flowers, leaves and other artistic homage to Nature.*

Yaki mono **(焼き物)** *are baked confections, probably introduced through Western influence.*

Hiranabe mono **(平なべ物)** *are cooked in a dry pan.*

Mushi mono **(蒸し物)** *are steamed confections.*

Age mono **(揚げ物)** *are fried confections; again influenced by the West.*

Ōbun mono **(オーブン物)** *are baked in conventional ovens.*

Ame mono **(あめ物)** *are candy-like confections.*

上生菓子

※ *Jō namagashi are the perfect tea sweets. They are full-favored and yet the aromas and flavors pass quickly, and none of the soft bean paste clings to the palate or teeth.*

名味當季

Wagashi used for tea should also be complementary to the tea session. Part of this means they shouldn't be overly sweet, too sticky or chewy, or have a strong, lingering aftertaste. Besides suiting the season, they should be abundant and enjoyable when eaten, and then quickly pass on without leaving a trace that will hinder the guests' ability to enjoy the flavors and aromas of the tea that follows. Like any element in a well-designed *chaxi*, the way confections for tea stimulate our senses should never overshadow the main focus of the gathering: *the tea.* This is not so easy to achieve. And like all things tea, simpler is better and less is more. Simplicity is an art in and of itself. Whether one is cooking or baking or crafting confections, using simple, natural, and minimal ingredients to highlight certain characteristics and bring out rich and enjoyable flavors, aromas and mouth sensations is more challenging than using lots of spices or full, rich flavors. This is a challenge worth facing for any person of tea who decides to incorporate sweets into their sessions. The details matter! Many of these principles apply to all aspects of a tea practice.

While it may be common and enjoyable to partake in sweets within the tea space itself, before, during, or after a tea ceremony, we have chosen to separate snacks from the tea ceremonies we offer here at the Center. There are many different approaches to tea, but our primary approach to tea is ceremonial and sacred. Notice that I said "primary" and not "only." At the Tea Sage Hut, we receive guests throughout the year from all over the world, and they bring with them many different approaches and levels of experience with tea, and we want to welcome them all into our home with open arms. After all, if we separate ourselves from others based on our approach to tea, we have forgotten one of the deepest aspects of tea: *connection*. Tea is the "Great Connector," and no approach or level of brewing skills should ever prevent us from connecting with anyone over tea! That said, our approach to tea is ceremonial, so we have decided to separate snacks from our ceremonies, and enjoy them during more casual sessions, for we do also approach tea casually from time to time. And when we do include sweets for formal occasions, like our weekly whisked tea ceremonies in the Zendo, we serve them outside the tea space, after the ceremony is concluded. But we still do our best to suit the sweets to the occasion and season, and to choose the most appropriate, refreshing confection we can find, or make!

Chinese Tea & Food

Though this article focused more on Japanese confections, Chinese tea culture has included food with tea for centuries, and has in fact played a huge role in influencing the creation and development of Japanese confections. Chinese teahouses were often social settings where tea was served with light refreshments. Drinking tea and eating food in Chinese teahouse culture served important political, economic, and cultural functions in society. In my experience today, snacks offered at Chinese tea gatherings are much more casual and varied than their Japanese counterpart. You might be served anything from packaged crackers, candies, and sweets to savory buns and baked goods at any time of the session. I would recommend serving food with tea only in a casual setting, not in ceremonies. I would also suggest avoiding certain foods, such as spicy foods, food with garlic, onions, or other overpowering flavors that harm one's ability to appreciate tea, even in a casual session. It is also a good idea to avoid the kinds of snacks that may stick to the teeth or palate, as they will also then interact with the tea you serve. If you aren't sure what sweet to serve, we always suggest going with a bit of chopped fruit. You can't go wrong with Nature's sweets! Beyond that, it can be nice to socially drink tea from time to time and serve a simple snack. I hope you'll be inspired by this magazine to include food service in more of your tea gatherings this month! Serving a snack or meal after a nice, long session of shou puerh is a marvelous afternoon, indeed.

接納大自然豐滿感官

Left: peanut, black sesame and meng bean higashi that melt in your mouth.

Right: Hanabiramochi folded over red bean past with fresh strawberries in the middle.

Specific kinds of Wagashi

Mochi: *glutinous pounded rice.*

Dango: *a small, sticky, sweet mochi, commonly skewered on a stick.*

Hanabiramochi: *a flat, red or white mochi, wrapped around bean paste and a cut piece of candied burdock.*

Kusa mochi: *"grass" mochi is a mochi infused with mugwort, surrounding a center of bean paste.*

Yatsuhashi: ***a*** *thin sheet of flattened mochi, mixed with spices like cinnamon, and often folded into a triangle around bean paste.*

Manjū: ***a*** *steamed cake surrounded by flour. These are available in many shapes from nature, like leaves, fruit or animals.*

Ikinari dango: *a steamed bun with a chunk of sweet potato and bean paste in the center.*

Uirō: *a steamed cake made of rice flour and sugar; these are similar to mochi.*

Botamochi: *a sweetened rice ball wrapped with thick azuki bean paste.*

Sakuramochi: *a rice cake filled with bean paste and wrapped in a pickled cherry leaf.*

Anmitsu: *chilled gelatinous cubes with fruit inside.*

Kompeito: *crystal sugar candy.*

Yōkan: *a solid, hard block of bean paste, cooked with black sugar to make it hard.*

Amanattō: *are beans cooked/boiled with sugar. They are then dried and served.*

Oshiruko: *also a Chinese dessert, it is sweet bean soup, served hot, and often with mochi balls inside. (Great with ginger, as well.)*

Kuri kinton: *boiled and mashed chestnuts.*

Imagawayaki: *a circle of fried dough covering bean paste.*

Monaka: *puffed or toasted rice cakes with bean paste sandwiched between.*

Dorayaki: *a round, flat sweet, consisting of sponge cake wrapped around bean paste.*

Hakka Lei Cha

客家擂茶

茶人: *Wu De*

Lei cha is served at homes all around Miaoli, where our Center is located. It is an important aspect of hospitality here, and every home has a unique recipe. We couldn't offer this issue on food and tea without sharing some lei cha with you. And, even better, this month's gift is some green tea powder that you can use to make your own lei cha, connecting our home with yours to start our sixth year of Global Tea Hut with a celebratory meal that includes tea. Together, let's slurp some yummy lei cha and toast another year of this amazing fellowship and tea community around the world!

As many of you know, our Center, Tea Sage Hut, is located in Miaoli, a small town in northern Taiwan, which is home to one of the largest concentrations of Hakka people in the world. Hakka (客家) are actually Han Chinese, mostly from Guangdong and Fujian. Their legends say that they come from the Yellow River Valley originally, but Hakka people have been rather nomadic for many centuries, migrating throughout China and abroad. They are actually the largest diaspora of Chinese people in the world, settling in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore and the West. Traveling the world, they came to call themselves "Hakka," which literally translates to "guest families," even after they've stayed in one place a long time, like Miaoli and Hsinchu.

The Hakka language and culture is rich in history. They were one of the first groups of Chinese to migrate to Taiwan, coming in waves at the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and then throughout the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), as well. Today, they make up almost twenty percent of Taiwanese people, the second-largest ethnicity. They were the first agriculturalists in Taiwan, as the aboriginals were hunters and gatherers. They settled in Miaoli and Hsinchu at that time because land was wild and free for settlers.

Hakka people are one of the reasons that Wu De chose Miaoli as home, and why the Center was built here. They are very hospitable, kind and simple people, with a history of farming, a love of the Earth and each other. They truly treat guests with sacred hospitality, which is the spirit of tea and our Center.

Amazingly, one of the most common dishes that Hakka people serve to guests includes tea; it's called "*lei cha* (擂茶)." *Lei cha*, which translates to "ground tea," or "pounded tea," is probably our favorite tea-inspired dish, because it allows for so much room to adapt and make it in the way that suits the occasion. There are as many recipes for *lei cha* as there are Hakka households. Each home and restaurant has their own blend for the powder that forms the basis of the dish. Most Hakka restaurants and homes will serve you a bowl of warm *lei cha* when you arrive, especially in the winter. Additionally, you can also make *lei cha* into a meal by pouring it over a variegated collection of veggies and rice. Amongst all the recipes that include tea, *lei cha* tastes and feels the most like tea. As you will see, you consume the whole leaf, so the flavor is strong. And since it was created by one of the most hospitable cultures in the world, people who understand how to be "guest families," as well as how to treat their guests, it is very much in the spirit of tea. If you are going to make any tea-related dish, this one is the most fun and brings warmth to a nice day of hosting guests for tea!

Aside from Hakka people, Hunanese also prepare *lei cha* to welcome their guests. The recipes in Hunan are much the same as in Taiwan.

You might recognize Master Gu with his sister. He is an Eastern Beauty farmer whom we have covered in previous issues.

Lei Cha Powder

The powder is the part where you have the most freedom. Traditionally, the *lei cha* powder is a combination of tea, roasted peanuts and sesame. Many restaurants, vendors and Hakka making *lei cha* at home will add other kinds of beans and nuts as well. Some of the people selling bags of *lei cha* in the traditional Hakka town of Beipu boast up to thirty different ingredients in their powder, including meng, black and red beans, lotus seeds, etc. The best *lei cha* is ground by hand in a large mortar and pestle, but you could use a mechanized grinder as well. You can also use all different kinds of tea leaves. We have found that nice shou, dian hong or roasted oolongs, like Yancha, do very nicely. The traditional *lei cha* is powdered green tea, which we have included as your gift this month, so all you will have to do is grind some nuts and beans to add to the tea to make your very own special bowl of *lei cha* at home!

Start with almonds or peanuts, maybe some sesame and add any other dry nuts or beans you want. Try to keep the tea to at least one-third of the mixture so that the tea flavor will stay pronounced. If you have some fine-quality, organic matcha, you could add a tablespoon of that as well. At this point, you can also decide whether or not you want to make your *lei cha* sweet or savory, and as a drink alone or as a meal with veggies and/or rice. Sweet *lei cha* can also be poured over plain rice, but you'll miss out on all the veggie goodness if you make that choice. You can sweeten the powder with any sweetener that is dry, including non-refined sugar or dried fruit.

擂注的款待

As a Drink Alone

Making *lei cha* as a drink is the easiest way to prepare this traditional hospitality recipe. Just add the toasted nuts, beans and seeds to your tea power and grind it into a paste. In Hakka households, they will boil some red beans or, more often, meng beans in water with some dark brown sugar. (You can use any sweetener for this, including fruit.) When the beans are soft, they scoop them out into bowls. The soft beans have absorbed the sweetener. Then, you pour the *lei cha* over the beans into the bowls. Most often, Hakka people will then add a spoonful or two of puffed rice to the *lei cha*, to give it a nice crunch. You drink from the bowl and use a wooden spoon to eat the beans and puffed rice. This is the simplest kind of *lei cha*, served whenever you arrive at a Hakka home.

As a Meal

Veggies

As with the powder for *lei cha,* you have a lot of creative freedom with veggies when preparing *lei cha* as a dish. In restaurants, the veggies are usually served in little individual dishes with a bigger dish of rice in the middle, but Hakka people usually just organize the different veggies around the rice in one bowl at home, which is simpler. The reason restaurants serve them separately is so the crisp, raw veggies don't get soggy in the *lei cha*, allowing your guests to add them as they go. The rice is cooked, of course, but the veggies are all raw and chopped. The traditional veggies served in most restaurants and households are carrots, celery, peanuts, some tempeh or tofu (cooked), sprouts, long beans and some shredded lettuce. Feel free to use any combination of these vegetables, or add any others that you currently have fresh to your *lei cha*. Usually, people will sprinkle some black and/or white sesame seeds over the center of the rice.

Directions

Cook the rice in a pot until it is soft and fluffy. Serve in a low, flat bowl. Sprinkle some sesame seeds on top. Either place the raw veggies and nuts around the rice in the same bowl or serve them in little dishes, perhaps on a tray. Boil some water and mix in your tea powder. Alternatively, you can add the powder to a bowl and then pour water over it, whisking it like matcha. You want the *lei cha* to be very hot and thick. It should have the consistency of a thick, green smoothie (unless you are using another tea besides the green tea we have provided you with). Serve the tea in a bowl along side the dish, or dishes, of rice and veggies. It is preferable to use a bowl with a spout, but it is not necessary.

The dish will become like a green gruel as the tea, ground nuts, beans and the fresh, raw veggies all mix in a wonderful way. The *lei cha* soaks into the rice and cooks the veggies. This easy dish is always a hit for tea people, and carries with it the hospitality of the Center and the Hakka!

食用心靈藥

Tea Sage Hut

Recipes

BREAKFAST

早餐

Toasted Oats with Raspberry Chia Sauce

This is a healthy, hearty way to start a winter day, and we often prepare this dish at the Center. It helps prepare your stomach for a deep shou tea session! It is simple to make, perfect for helping you to quickly start the day when you are busy planning for tea guests the following morning. However, to make this you will need to put a can of coconut milk in the fridge overnight, so it does take some preparation.

Ingredients

Raspberry Chia Sauce
3 cups of frozen raspberries
(Works equally well with strawberries or blueberries.)
3 tablespoons of maple syrup
2 cups of water
3–4 tablespoon of chia seeds

Toasted Oatmeal
2 tablespoons of coconut oil or butter
2 cups of rolled oats
1 cup of water
1 cup of coconut milk
Pinch of sea salt
Pinch of ground cinnamon

Coconut Whipped Cream
1 can of full-fat coconut milk, chilled overnight
1 tablespoon of maple syrup
½ teaspoon of vanilla extract

Directions

Start with the sauce. In a small pot, add the berries, sweetener and water. Simmer over medium heat, stirring often. Mash the berries, if needed. Reduce the heat and stir in the chia seeds. You can add more or less to make the sauce the thickness you desire. Allow the sauce to cook for 15-20 minutes, then take off the heat.

To make the oats, begin by melting the coconut oil in a skillet. Then add the oats, toasting them while stirring occasionally. The oats will turn to a light brown, but don't let them burn!

In a separate pot, add coconut milk, water, salt and cinnamon. Bring the mixture to a slow boil, and add the toasted oats, gently stirring them in. Cover the pot and turn off the heat. Leave the mixture like this for at least 8-10 minutes. Remember, you will be adding a sauce to this mixture, so leave the oatmeal thicker than usually preferred.

To make the coconut whipped cream, take the chilled coconut milk from the fridge. The coconut cream should have separated from the liquid by now. Open the can carefully and scoop the cream off the top, with a spoon, into a mixing bowl. (It helps if the bowl is chilled too!) Use an electric mixer (or hand mix, for truly great cream and sore arms) to beat the cream until fluffy, then add the sweetener and vanilla extract, and gently blend again to combine.

Put the oatmeal into a bowl, and make a divot for the gorgeous berry sauce. Finally, add a dollop of coconut cream to the top, and serve.

Lunch

午餐

Buddha's Delight

We cannot tell you how many guests have asked us to publish the recipe for our signature dish, which we call "Buddha's Delight." This is one of the only dishes that we make on a monthly basis here at the Center, and everyone always loves it. Wu De invented Buddha's Delight. He changes the way he cooks it every time, as the recipe is much more about the sauce than the vegetables, which vary each time. Try playing with this recipe. It's nice with some rice or quinoa on the side. We have never had a lunch at the Center where the guests did not love this dish!

Ingredients

Sauce

1 large piece of fresh turmeric
Healthy squirt of Bragg's or aged soy sauce
1 chili pepper
1 small piece of fresh ginger
1–2 cloves of garlic
3–4 tablespoons of virgin coconut oil
1 teaspoon of roasted and ground cumin
2 large carrots
2 cups of roasted peanuts

Stir Fry

2 cups of fresh celery
2 cups of shredded carrots
1 head of fresh broccoli
1 small head of cauliflower
2 cups of soaked or canned chickpeas
1–2 cups of roasted peanuts
½ cup of chopped coriander

Directions

Start with the sauce. Blend all of the ingredients for the sauce thoroughly. You may need to add a bit of water. You will want the consistency of a smoothie, made on the thin side; thick, but definitely in liquid form. Add more of any ingredient to taste, as you blend.

Then the stir fry: You can substitute any veggies you want for this, also adding tempeh if you like. Put the oil in a large wok and turn the heat on high. Stir-fry the carrots, broccoli, cauliflower and chickpeas. Add the peanuts and celery later, so that they stay crunchy. When the veggies are ready, pour the Buddha's Delight sauce over the veggies. Immediately turn off the heat so the sauce doesn't burn, and cook with the sauce for another minute, turning off the heat so the sauce doesn't burn. Serve the Buddha's Delight, using the coriander to garnish if you want. (Wu De often mixes the coriander in at the end.)

Dinner

晚餐

Chinese Herbal Shou Puerh Soup

During the winter, we serve Chinese herbal soup every week to warm up the body from the inside and raise the immune system to prevent colds from spreading through the Center. Our recipe is based on a traditional Cantonese soup called "ba ku tei," which literally translates as "bone broth tea," though ours is much better since it is vegetarian. Many guests who visit the Tea Sage Hut in the winter go home with fond memories of the all-day warmth this soup provides. We cook our Chinese herbal soup on charcoal and recommend you do the same if possible, as the added depth of heat will bring the best flavors and medicine out of all the herbs and tea.

Ingredients

Some nice shou puerh
(About a cup, more if you want to use spent leaves.)
Chinese herbs
(You can choose any herbs you want. We recommend astragalus, reishi, jujube, goji berries, eucommia bark and Chinese licorice.)
3 large cloves of garlic, finely chopped
A healthy pile of ginger, finely chopped
2 cups of dried shittake mushrooms
Dash of sesame oil
Dash of tea seed oil (if available, but not necessary)
Dash of soy sauce
1 teaspoons of salt
3 shallots, chopped
1 onion chopped
Various mushrooms
(As many different kinds of fresh mushrooms or tree fungus as you can get. You can really add as much as you want.)

Directions

Boil the tea until it is as dark as it will get. You can start with less and add more tea as you go. You may choose to use spent leaves, fresh shou or a combination of shou and spent leaves from previous sessions. It doesn't take much for the soup to become dark. Strain the liquor from the leaves and put the tea liquor back into the pot. Then add the Chinese herbs and bring to a boil again. (Do not add the jujube or goji berries at this time or they will get too soft.) Once it comes to a boil, reduce to a simmer and put a lid on it. Add the garlic, ginger and chopped onions. Then add the salt and soy sauce. Crush the dried mushrooms into bite-sized chunks and soak them in a bowl of hot water. It helps to use a plate to hold the mushrooms down in the hot water.

Let the soup simmer for around twenty minutes. Then add the soaked mushrooms and the broth they were soaking in to the soup. Chop up all the mushrooms to the desired size. You can leave them whole or chop them up. We usually leave the small ones whole and chop the larger ones, like the shittakes. Add them to the soup.

Let the soup simmer for another ten to fifteen minutes, and then add the jujube, goji berries and sesame/tea oil. Then let it simmer for another twenty to thirty minutes before serving steaming bowls to your guests.

Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It'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 Mara Gedrovica.

I grew up in the countryside of Latvia, waking up with the sun, playing in Nature all day long and eating vegetables and fruits picked straight from the garden. My everyday life was natural and carefree. My mother and grandmother would collect herbs over the summer, in a loving and very respectful way, dry them and store them for the winter. They knew that living in harmony with Nature would help them keep their family healthy.

We moved to the city when I was a teenager. I found it difficult to adapt, but I soon learned to survive, enjoying all the comforts the colorful commercials on television offered. Then, in my twenties, I often felt there was something missing from my life. I experienced the days passing too fast, and every night before falling asleep I would ask myself, "Is this it? Is this how my life will pass by?" I often felt scared and anxious at this prospect. In my twenties, I also knew that this feeling of something missing, and of time passing too quickly, was related to my busy lifestyle and being away from the Nature that had surrounded me when I was a child. I now know I was searching for spirituality.

This went on, and my life continued to fly by too fast for my liking. I became a chef and opened a small café in Ireland, where I'd moved. We serve raw and baked cakes, coffee, tea and offer a nice place for gathering and socializing. Though life was fine on the outside, I was still searching, but I didn't even know what I was looking for.

Then, one day, I came across a photo online: A beautiful picture of a tea ceremony. It shocked me. It felt right; it felt peaceful and serene. This was what I had been looking for! This was the feeling I had taken for granted as a little girl, and then lost once I moved to the city. Somehow, the photo was like looking through the ceremony into my own soul. In fact, I felt like I was standing outside myself looking in. I instantly started to look for more information about tea ceremonies and the people in the picture. And that's how I discovered this Global Tea Hut! I immediately contacted the Center, and, believe it or not, the very next day I booked a ticket to Taiwan!

Visiting Tea Sage Hut changed my life. This is where I really met Tea. I felt at home right away. (I've heard this from tons of other guests as well.) Every moment spent at the Center was a blessing. There were so many lessons to learn, so much love to share, and, of course, so much tea! There is so much about staying at the Center that is beyond description. All I can say is to make the leap and go. The journey is amazing, Taiwan is wonderful and the spirit and hospitality at the Center re-aligned me with my spirit, my heart and practice and with the Nature I'd been unknowingly looking for since I was young.

茶人: ***Mara Gedrovica***

Returning home, I sat with tea every morning and just listened. Soon after, I started to share tea with my family and friends and noticed how quickly people fell in love with Her and the ceremonial space. Every ceremony is always very special and heartwarming. Tea is teaching me to share, accept, be still and be myself. More importantly, She is teaching me to listen. Discipline is another quality I was always looking to improve in myself, and I am happy to tell you that I feel Her gently helping me to cultivate focus and discipline in my daily life.

I'm so thankful for every moment spent with Tea, for getting to know this beautiful community and for the opportunity to learn and share. If you are ever in Galway, Ireland, know that I will be more than happy to share some Tea with you.

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON

茶主題: Tea & Meditation

茶主題: Classics of Tea: Ming Dynasty

茶主題: Chajin Stories

茶主題: Liu An Black Tea

As you can see, we have a new printer. We are very excited about this. Through some good fortune, we have found a printer that visits the Center, believes in our mission and in improving the magazine!

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/wudeteachings.

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! Also let us know if there are any topics you want to see in future issues.

Don't forget that we have a tremendous amount of supplementary material online: articles in Further Readings, blog posts from the community, and past issues of this magazine as well as a ton of videos on many subjects that we have covered over the years of sharing tea wisdom.

Wu De will be in Bali in late January, with a stop in New Zealand to serve tea at the Wanderlust Festival. Then Wu De and Sam will be traveling in New Zealand and Australia, some time in March.

This is our year to start work on Light Meets Life. Please help us spread the word. When the new Center is open, we will move to a course schedule, sending you all a catalogue every December with the coming year's courses.

January Affirmation

I am changing.

Am I willing to face the risks of changing this year? If I won't risk the loss of all that I am not, I will never find the true person I really am. I let go into transformation and let the world carry me to higher states of consciousness.

Center News

Before you visit, check out the Center's website (www.teasagehut.org) to read about the schedule, food, what you should bring, etc. Wu will be traveling a lot in 2017, so check his schedule on the site if you are interested in seeing him while you are here at the Center.

Jasper will be taking precepts in our tradition this month. Raise a bowl for him and send some congratulations his way. What a bright Chajin! We'll let you know how it went next month.

It is now winter time, which means Fridays are hot spring days at the Center. Every Friday morning, we steep some shou tea and head to the nearby hot springs for a winter tradition of a few hours of soaking. (If you were looking for an excuse to visit in the winter, you've got it!)

We are going to host a ten-day tea courses at the Center in 2017 on tea and Qi Gong, probably in September. Contact us if you are interested.

www.globalteahut.org

The funnest 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