

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

October 2017

SUN MOON LAKE
ELEVATION RED TEA

側把 SIDEHANDLE TEAPOTS
茶壺 HISTORY, LORE & CEREMONY





ELEVATION

Elevation is the only tea we send every year. It is the perfect introduction to a tea practice for those of us starting our journey and a reminder to return to our roots for those of us who have traveled some distance. As we meet our old friend again, we will explore sidehandle pots and sidehandle bowl tea ceremony.

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

FEATURES

15 SIDEHANDLE TEAPOTS: HISTORY, LORE & OUR TRADITION

By Wu De

29 A GUIDE TO SIDEHANDLE BOWL TEA CEREMONY

Editorial



03



15



45

TRADITIONS

03 TEA OF THE MONTH

*"Elevation," 2017 Old-Growth Red Tea
Sun Moon Lake, Taiwan*

43 TEAWARE ARTISANS

Sidehandle Pot Artisans:

45 "Peter Kuo" by Connor Goss

51 "The Making of a Sidehandle"
by Petr Novak

57 "Luo Shi" by Wu De

61 TEAWAYFARER

Samson Swanick, USA



平靜儀式

29



活力舒醒

© 2017 by Global Tea Hut

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from the copyright owner.

From the Editor

In October, the weather is perfect for outdoor tea. There is a magic in drinking in the mountains, surrounded by birdsong. At this time of year, we start breaking into aged sheng puerh and a tiny bit of shou now and again, but most of our sessions are focused on Wuyi Cliff Tea, traditionally processed Taiwanese oolong and aged oolong tea, especially one of my all-time favorite teas: aged *tieguanyin*. When the weather is cooling down and drying out, these teas really shine, helping the body, mind and soul make the shift towards winter. This year's Cliff Tea will start arriving around this time—a perfect excuse to take our new gongfu stove out for a gongfu session!

Alas, this year will be slightly different for me, as I will be traveling throughout the entire month of October. As you read this, we will be holding our second annual Zen and Tea retreat in the Spanish Pyrenees. We decided to make this an annual tradition for these reasons: The center where it is held, Casa Caudrau, is gorgeous, and the people who run it are full of heart and very much aligned with our work. The tea and meditation run through each other and expand the heart, as do the stunning and limitless Pyrenees Mountains, home to contemplative hermits for centuries. After Spain, I will be in the United States and Mexico. There will be tea gatherings in Boulder, Colorado and Los Angeles. I hope to see you at some of these to share a bowl and a big hug! I am then going to Mexico to celebrate my parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary. They have been Global Tea Hut members since the beginning and are huge supporters of this community. Raise a bowl to them in congratulations!

Our Light Meets Life fundraiser is in full swing, with some amazing tea and teaware for this year. This is our fifth such fundraiser, and we have so far raised more than seventy thousand dollars to support our future, permanent Center, Light Meets Life! We wish to bow down in gratitude for all your support over the years. We also wish to raise a bowl and ask permission of the trees, whose harvest has made this possible, and of the Earth, from whom we have taken such gorgeous ore to make our pots, kettles and stoves. We hope all this tea and teaware enriches your lives and tea practice, and helps you to make better tea for yourself, your loved ones and your guests. In that way, Tea can change the world, one cup or bowl at a time!

This month marks the anniversary of another tradition that has gone on throughout all the years of Global Tea Hut since we started: the only tea we repeat every year, Elevation! Elevation is produced by Mr. Su, who is one of our favorite farmers, as it is impossible to find a greater example of someone who values working in harmony with the land, stewardship principles and integrity, environmental sustainability and love than Mr. Su. (There are other great farmers, of course, but none better.) We continue our commitment to him, keeping the promise we made to him two years ago, which you will read about again in the Tea of the Month

article. Coming back around to this tea each year is like a homecoming for us, as we hope it is for all of you.

As we have covered this tea each of the five years that we've been sitting in this Hut, including our photographic illustration of Elevation processing in the October 2016 issue, we decided to steer you towards previous issues to learn about this tea and how it is made (all past issues are free on our website). We will have a brief introduction of the tea, its processing and brewing tips, but this year, we took a trip to Sun Moon Lake and documented some of our favorite spots, which we hope you will enjoy.


In this issue, we will also brew up a long steeping in a big sidehandle pot. Sidehandle pots are one of the most important innovations of our generation of this lineage and form the basis of our practice. They have changed the way almost all of us share and receive tea. Of course, these pots have been around for millennia, but not the way we use them. This is our unique gift to this generation of Chajin. In this issue, we are going to explore all the history and lore of sidehandle pots, meet some of our favorite sidehandle pot makers and take a glance into what goes into their craft. In addition, we are including a detailed guide to conducting a sidehandle ceremony, much like the leaves in a bowl guide we published in February of this year. Usually, we drink Elevation leaves in a bowl, but we think this month may be an exception: Let's put some in our sidehandle pots as we journey through history, craft, firing and brewing of tea with a handle on the side!



—Further Readings—

This month, we recommend taking the time to read through the past two years of Elevation issues: October 2016 and August 2015. Rereading about the leaves in a bowl ceremony, which we covered in February of this year, will also add context to this issue. All are available in the "Past Issues" section of the website.

TEA OF THE MONTH

 ver the course of this month, we return once again to the only tea we send every year: Elevation. This magical tea is so important to us all. So many of you sitting around this circle, sharing tea in this growing global hut started your journey with this very tea—the perfect bowl tea to begin a tea journey. And for those of you trying it for the first time, we hope the simple roots this glorious tea taps into help you to deepen your connection to Tea. Elevation is the quintessential bowl tea because it is so simple and unadorned. It is a raw and natural tea, vibrant with the life and energy of a beautiful environment, a pure-hearted steward and a long love affair with our beloved Hut.

Elevation represents what is pure in tea to us because of the reclamation of human industry by Nature. This farm was amongst those planted by the Japanese when they controlled Taiwan, to produce red tea for export, fueling their growing empire and its industry. The tea was planted over the hills in nice plantation rows—the kind that efficiency, productivity and consumerism prefer. After the Japanese were expelled, however, most of these gardens were abandoned for several decades, and the tea trees thrived, organizing themselves as Nature intends: sporadically filling forests and seed-propagated wild children all around. Though this return to pure and pristine farms was accidental, it is still a road map for tea producers and tea lovers alike to

return to reciprocity and honor with Nature, producing great tea without harming the ecology of the mountain.

The second reason that Elevation is pure is Mr. Su, the steward of this farm. While other farmers around him have grown rich by turning their mountains back into plantations with high yields, Mr. Su has stayed committed to organic, healthy farming. He enjoys the dialogue with Living Tea. He has told us on several occasions that he “talks” with his trees. We once asked him if we laid out a few thousand photographs of natural, seed-propagated tea trees (which are all unique, as tea is a sexual plant) from the Sun Moon Lake area, how many of his own could he identify. He said, “Around eighty percent.” At first, we were astounded, but then, spending time with Mr. Su over the years, we have come to understand what he means. He literally lives with these trees, visiting them every day, watching their needs and tending to them gently and with love. Of course he knows them. If we showed you pictures of a few thousand people in your city, you could also pick out at least eighty percent of the ones you’ve met! And these are his friends, he has said as much.

While others around him have built mansions with the profits of tea, Mr. Su has resisted temptation and maintained a simple life in the same small house he has always lived in. He seems joyous and honored to steward these trees, caring for them as a true

Chajin. He often astounds us with the simple, down-to-earth, yet incredibly deep wisdom this life has afforded him. One year, there was a drought and he told us that he didn’t mind: “If I don’t accept the times when Heaven gives me less, how can I rightly celebrate times of abundance? Besides, my father taught me to put some aside during times of abundance, as times of decline will surely befall us all.” Seeing such a bright and glowing example of a human being and a sustainable lifestyle at the end of a street of large, rich and adorned houses, is incredibly inspirational. And Elevation glows with the love of a man who has devoted his life to its care, and done so with a smile.

If there are to be tea masters in this world, it is the farmers—not those skilled in brewing tea! It is one thing to live simply and completely sustainably when everyone is, or when conditions are thus. It is another to choose this and stand up as an example of what tea farming can look like: letting Nature take her course, being grateful for whatever She provides, viewing yourself as a steward of the land rather than an owner and talking as well as listening to the trees as living beings with spirits and dignity. We all know the effect love between people and recognize the detrimental effects that result when children aren’t shown affection, for example, or the way a hug makes us feel, but why don’t we realize that the same applies to our relationship to non-human beings and the land itself?





Elevation



Sun Moon Lake, Taiwan



2017 Old-Growth Red Tea



Taiwanese



~800 Meters



We've all tasted a so-called "conventionally grown" tomato and one grown in a relative's garden who loves gardening. Aren't they different in every way? In flavor and aroma? The way they feel in our bodies? The relationship a farmer has to his or her land will determine so many factors, many of which are even quantifiable and can be rationally studied, and others that are more spiritual. The fact is that Mr. Su is as natural a part of the ecology of the tea mountain as the insects or rabbits: just another organism that lives there and gives and takes in equal measure. This is how tea should be.

Finally, Elevation is special to us because it has been with this community since the beginning. Mr. Su is not a businessman and has never marked his tea up, earning just enough to maintain a humble life. Since this tea has always been so pure, full of radiant Qi and very affordable, it has provided us with a way to expose so many people around the world to an accessible tea practice. But that's not the reason we send out Elevation every year. That has to do with our promise.

Some of you who have been here a while know that a few years back we made a promise to Mr. Su that every year at the end of the season we would buy whatever tea he had left unsold. He cried, saying that if we did this, he could focus on just being a farmer,

which he loves, and let go of the selling side of tea, which he is not great at and doesn't enjoy. We have been true to our word, continuing this promise right into the very tins you are opening this month! We made this promise on your behalf. We have always intended for this community to have a positive impact on the environmental sustainability of tea production. It is great to have big ideals, but real promotion on a personal level that affects the life of a local farmer who is doing things right is also a great way to help change the world. Mr. Su told us to tell you all how grateful he is that your contributions are helping him in this way once a year. Drink this month's tea proudly!

Tea is Its Environment

Tea leaves do not arise from the ether—they are a product of their environment. In past issues, we have thoroughly covered the processing of Elevation. Last year, in the October 2016 issue, we published a photographic journey of Elevation through all its stages of processing. If you are interested, you should take that issue down from the shelf or head over to the "Past Issues" section of the website. We thought that this year, we would take a trip to Sun Moon Lake and share with you all our favorite sites to

see there. No trip to Taiwan would be complete without a foray to this glorious natural wonder, and the tea is a product of all the beauty there. Travel with us in spirit as you sip this month's Elevation. One of the great joys of visiting a tea-growing region is that whenever you drink that tea, you are automatically transported back to the mountains that created it. We hope that you get to share some tea in Sun Moon Lake with us one day, and travel to all the beautiful sites we will show you on the coming pages, but in the meantime, let these pages carry you there. And may you find the beauty of Sun Moon Lake in each sip of this month's tea!



Taiwan Tea Research & Extension Station (台灣茶業改良場)

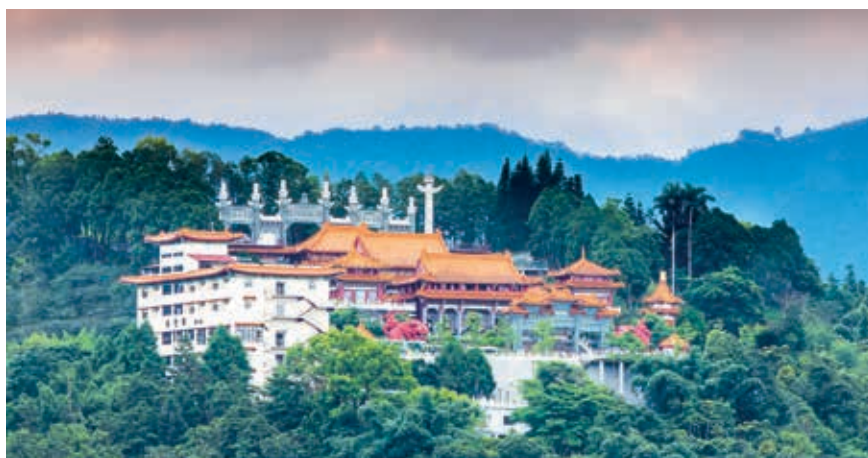
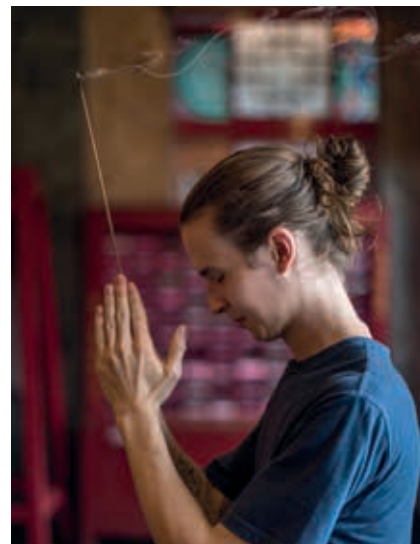
Aside from visiting Mr. Su, drinking some Elevation and seeing his beautiful trees, we always stop at the Taiwan Tea Research and Extension Station. This station has been here for decades and is responsible for the creation of several of Taiwan's most famous cultivars. The farms are beautiful, and many are natural and organic as well. On the way up the mountain, which passes one thousand meters, you can see lots of old-growth trees. There are many trees that are more than a hundred years old, and some have been allowed to grow up over the last couple of decades, reaching heights above ten meters. These old trees are wonderful to sit under and have a nice, quiet session of Elevation bowl tea, with the hum of the forest just above you, which hints at a deeper Nature that should not be intruded upon. There is nothing like drinking some Elevation under some of the oldest mother trees in the area. If you are respectful, they seem to look on with blessings and fill each bowl with their presence. (If you sit in the right spot, you can even see the mother trees reflected in your bowl.) These hills are one of the best spots to feel connected to the source of Tea in all of Taiwan.

From the top of the station, you can see a tea processing facility and a nice view of the lake below. There are several experimental gardens growing here, including some for research into the long-term effects of inorganic farming as well as the time and effort needed to restore ecologies. They have shown that agrochemicals destroy the soil over long periods of time, making the land fallow. You can see Taiwan 18, "Ruby Red (紅玉)," which was our Tea of the Month in March 2016, as well as other varieties of Taiwanese tea. A session below the mother trees and some prayers of gratitude are a must for the Chajin traveling to Sun Moon Lake.



Wen Wu Temple (文武廟)

There were two Wen Wu temples long ago, but the Japanese built a dam that raised the lake's water levels and the temple was moved to its current location in 1938. In 1969, the temple was completely rebuilt by the Taiwanese government as part of a project intended to increase tourism to the lake. There are three shrine halls, rising one after the other in this elaborate temple. The first is devoted to Shennong (神農大帝) and the God of Literature (Wen Chang, 文昌帝君); the second has a shrine to Guang Gong (關聖帝君) and Yue Fei (岳飛), who are guardians that protect the virtuous; and the final hall is for Confucius (孔子). This temple is famous in Taiwan amongst students, who come here to pray to the God of Literature and Confucius for successful exams. The temple is beautiful, with sculpted dragons and prayer bells hanging everywhere. Across from the temple is one of the best views of the lake. As students of the Leaf, we always stop here to give thanks for all that we have learned and to pray for successful study. This keeps us in a beginner's mind: humble and empty like a tea bowl.





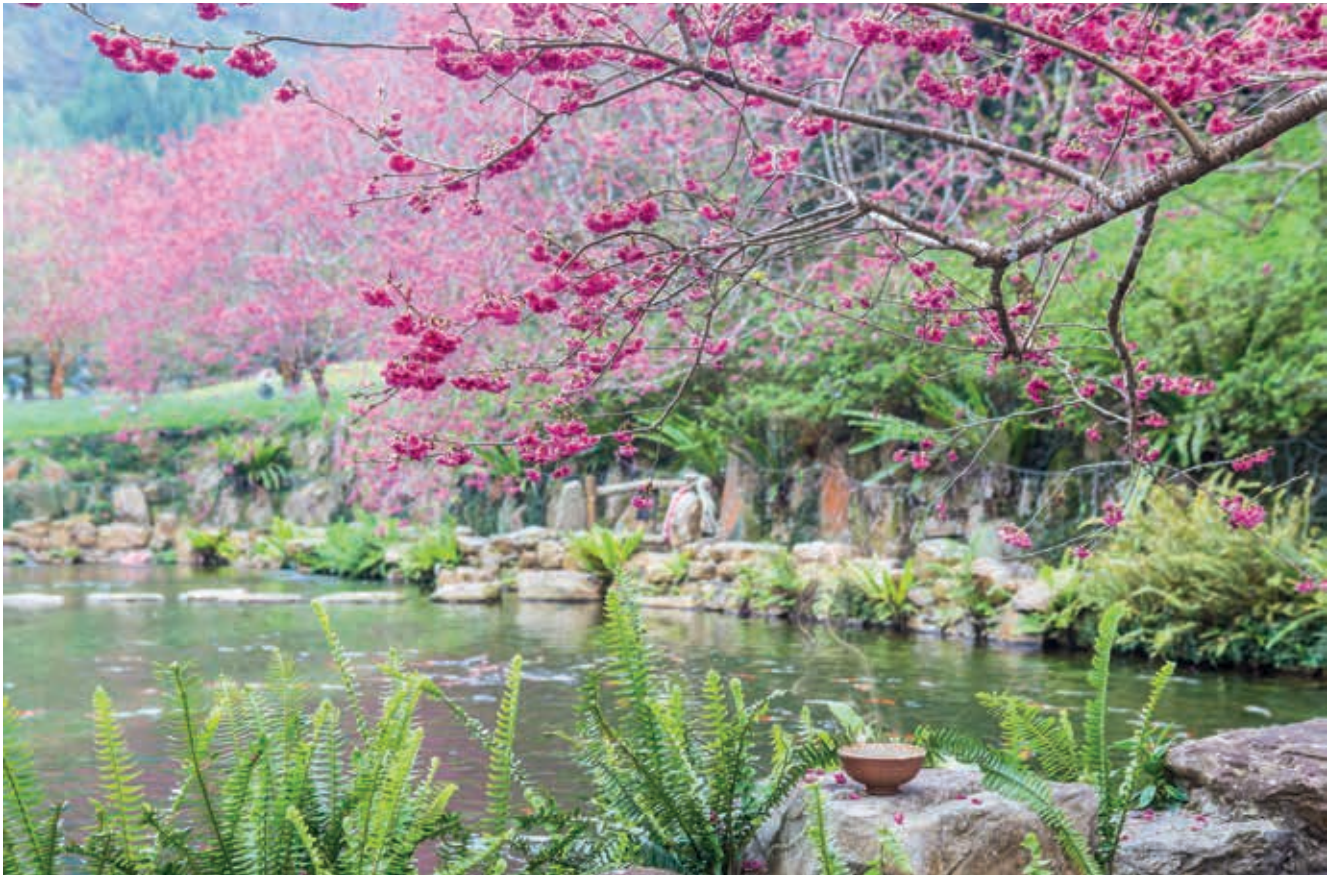
Xuanzang Temple (玄奘寺)

Xuanzang (玄奘) is a hero of ours, and this temple is our favorite spot in all of Sun Moon Lake. Xuanzang was a Tang Dynasty (618–907) Buddhist monk who lived one of the most inspiring and amazing lives ever lived on this earth. He lived from 602 to 664, accomplishing more in those sixty-two years than most could do with a hundred. At a time when it was illegal to leave the empire, Xuanzang walked overland on a seventeen-year journey to India, traveling through many kingdoms on the way, facing bandits and other hardships. In 627, he left China, following a dream he had, in which a bodhisattva told him to make the journey. He convinced some Buddhist guards at the border of Qinghai to let him cross in 629. He then arduously crossed the Gobi Desert, escaping robbers in modern-day Uzbekistan, and crossed through Persian Samarkand and other kingdoms until he eventually reached Kashmir in 631. He spent several years traveling in India, staying at many monasteries, practicing with the masters there and gathering sutras. Kings and abbots alike were all impressed by his cultivation and bright mind, each inviting him to stay with them permanently. He went on pilgrimage to the important Buddhist sites and gathered sutras, commentaries and Buddhist icons to bring back to China. In 645, he returned to China with a library of texts, and instead of being punished for leaving, he was celebrated by the emperor and offered an appointment in the capital. Instead, Xuanzang retired to a monastery and spent the rest of his life translating scriptures in what would become one of the largest translation projects ever conducted. He is responsible for bringing to China and translating the Heart Sutra, which we chant every day at the Center.

The Xuanzang temple in Sun Moon Lake has a huge copper map of all the places Xuanzang walked, and you are left stunned at how one person could walk so far. Inside, there is a shrine on the first floor, and then on the third, they have a relic, which they claim to be a piece of Xuanzang's skull. (Whatever it is, it seems to have a powerful effect on the room, creating a deep and lucid stillness.) The upper shrine room with the relic is silent and it is one of our favorite places to meditate in Taiwan. We always stop here and meditate for an hour in the upper shrine room, as the silence is deep and powerful, and our meditation is always worthwhile. Outside, the temple has a nice café where you can drink some red tea and look out at some of the best views of the lake. The quiet, meditative space of the third floor, the views of the lake and the kind nuns who look after the temple make this our favorite place in Sun Moon Lake. No matter how long we are staying, we always make sure to stop by the temple at least once.

Chung Tai Monastery (中台禪寺)

Just outside the lake, in Puli, is one of the world's biggest and most beautiful monasteries. It was built in 2001 by the Chung Tai order, which was founded by the Buddhist master Wei Chueh (惟覺安公老和尚). It is the second-largest monastery in Taiwan, and the grounds are gorgeous. The gardens are filled with trees from all over the world, including a huge Bodhi tree, which is a descendant of the one in Bodhgaya that the Buddha sat under to achieve enlightenment. If you call ahead, you can arrange a tour of the shrine halls of Chung Tai. Otherwise, you can only visit the main hall on the first floor. The themed floors are stunning. There is a pure white floor and a teak pagoda on the top floor, which was hand-built and is surrounded by thousands of copper Buddhas. The monastery also has an adjacent museum, which has a gorgeous collection of Buddhist art spanning millennia and from India to China. There are many must-see pieces inside, including old stone Buddhas from before the Common Era. They also have a wonderful gift shop, where we have found a few of your gifts of the month, and a great vegetarian restaurant with the best veggie sandwiches in Taiwan.



Aboriginal Cultural Villages (原住民文化村落)

You can take a cable car up to this amusement park, which has roller coasters and other fanfare. We aren't very interested in all that hoopla, though. However, if you are in Taiwan at the end of January to early February, the sakura flowers will be in blossom, and this amusement park has tremendous and gorgeous gardens out back. There is the noise of the rides to deal with, but the gardens themselves are worth it. They are among the most beautifully designed and gorgeously abundant sakura forests we have ever seen. And aside from the noise of the distant rides, there are several pockets in the gardens where you can find a nice, quiet place to drink some tea and enjoy the flowers that fill the world with a dreamlike mist of pink.

There are two small aboriginal villages on either side of the lake, which is where most of the guest houses and hotels are, so you will most likely be staying in one of the two. There are a lot of shops selling aboriginal trinkets and lots of nice vegetarian street food options, including tofu sandwiches (tofu stuffed with veggies, so the tofu is the bread) and mushroom rice steamed in bamboo.

Both villages are lakeside and have nice docks to stroll on. If you want, you can also buy an all-day boat pass. The boats travel back and forth between three destinations: the two aboriginal villages and a dock below another Xuanzang temple that isn't as nice as the main one we spoke about earlier. With a pass, you can catch any of the boats, which leave every half an hour or so, staying at each location as long as you like. The boat rides are kind of touristy, and we think that the boat traffic can't be great for the lake itself, so we rarely do this.



Ci En Pagoda (慈恩塔)

This gorgeous pagoda was built by Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) to honor his mother in 1971. It is built atop the peak of the Shabalan Mountain. The hike up is lovely, passing through calm forests. The pagoda itself is nine stories, rising over forty-six meters to well above 1,000 meters above sea level. In the courtyard, there is a house that was designed by Chiang Kai-shek as well, but we have found it is never open. It is cool to have a peek inside through the windows, though, as all the decor and furniture appears to be the original 1970s decorations, when the building was originally built, and it still looks like a home for greeting dignitaries and guests. You can imagine the president hosting here—maybe even serving some tea, as he was indeed a tea lover. There is a lot of history here.

You can climb up the winding staircase to the top of the pagoda and have a wonderful view of the entire lake, especially at sunset. Wu De proposed to Joyce at the top of this pagoda at sunset. We always come here to honor their love, and often drink tea under the trees on the lawn out back, which is quiet and beautiful. None of the tourists ever head off to the side or the back of the pagoda, and there is a lovely lawn with some shady trees that are perfect for a picnic or a nice tea session with some friends. From the top of the pagoda, you can see in all directions: If you face away from the lake, you get a stunning view of Jade Mountain, usually enshrouded in mists. To the lake side, you can circle three directions of the pagoda and have very different vantages of the entire lake. Sunrise or sunset are both worth the hike up the mountain and then around the nine stories of the pagoda to the top.





茶 Elevation

活力舒醒

Elevation is a gorgeous red tea. When Japan controlled Taiwan, they brought large-leaf tea seeds from Yunnan and Assam to Taiwan to stimulate a tea industry for export. The large-leaf trees thrived best in Sun Moon Lake, where they built several plantations. At the end of the war, when the Japanese left, these gardens were abandoned. Decades later, farmers started tending them again, though they had become a blend of planted and wild trees by that time. Mr. Su's garden has been preserved organic since then, maintaining a healthy ecology with thriving trees, many of which are eighty to a hundred years old. Mr. Su even bought the land adjacent to his so that his neighbor's inorganic farming would not affect his own. He then chopped down the betel nut trees his neighbor had been growing, which are detrimental to the environment, and is leaving that tea for ten years to restore a natural, healthy ecology.

Elevation is harvested in the summer, when the leaves are budding. Usually, a bud and three leaves are plucked each time. The tea is then withered outdoors briefly, and oxidized in long troughs with fans that maintain a warm airflow. The withering can go on from six to twelve hours. Then, the tea is rolled for around ninety minutes, before being piled on bamboo trays and oxidized again for an hour or two. Finally, the tea is oven-dried. This simple processing suits the wild, verdant trees that made these leaves. (You can learn more about the processing of Elevation and look at several photographs if you go to the "Past Issues" section of our website and look up the October 2016 issue of Global Tea Hut, which also includes several accounts of drinking Elevation from around the world.)

Elevation is one of our all-time favorite bowl teas. It is brimming with Qi and with love. It is best prepared in the morning. We always ask Mr. Su to oxidize our tea a bit less than what he is used to. He thinks we're funny, but always complies. Though this means the tea won't be as sweet, we find that the heavy oxidation reduces the connection the leaf has to the land, resulting in less movement of Qi and connection to Nature. When the tea is left slightly green, it is more vibrant and full of life. We have experimented over the years and found the perfect amount of oxidation: We want to keep it a red tea, but let the green vibrancy of the summer and full body of this amazing environment shine through more pristinely. After you steep this month's tea, you will see that the leaves are still vibrant, slightly green and strong.

We always offer this tea at workshops and events around the world, using it to expose new Chajin to a tea practice. If you are just starting out on your tea journey, this is the perfect month to begin a tea practice every morning. You can start by just putting some leaves in a bowl and sitting quietly for three bowls every morning. If you already have a tea practice, this month is a chance for us all to return to our roots and remember to stay humble. We might also use this occasion to invite over some new friends and introduce them to tea, helping to spread the word and grow this Global Tea Hut.



Leaves in a bowl

Sidehandle

Water: spring water or best bottled
Fire: coals, infrared or gas
Heat: hotter, fish-eye, roughly 90–95 °C
Brewing Methods: leaves in a bowl or sidehandle (leaves in a bowl is better)
Steeping: longer, no flash, then growing (Elevation responds to fewer leaves)
Patience: twenty steepings

茶 Try using a sidehandle with some of this month's tea, which is a rare treat for Elevation. If you do this, use fewer leaves than you are used to and it will be smoother and brighter.



Brewing Tips

Ordinarily, Elevation is the ultimate leaves in a bowl tea. And we would still suggest brewing it that way, but given that this month's issue is all about sidehandle pot brewing, it may be fun to try some of this month's tea in a sidehandle pot, which some of you may not have tried before. Elevation is bolder and brisker in a sidehandle pot, and slightly more patient as well. We find it is better to add a bit fewer leaves than one would usually do with other red teas, resulting in a golden liquor that is still simple and strong, but with a deep and lasting Qi that wakes the whole morning up.

If you are using a large sidehandle and fewer leaves, you should take the lid off between steepings, as the breaks between steepings in bowl tea are long and large-size pots will steam the tea, giving it a boiled tea flavor. This will help preserve the sweetness of the early steepings and the mineral-rich vibrancy of later ones as well.

For this month's tea, it will be important to use as pure of water as possible, ideally gathered yourself from a spring. We find that expending more time and energy on creating a beautiful chaxi, finding great water and using charcoal—all to prepare a simple, everyday tea like Elevation—is a good practice. Sometimes we get in the habit of only making efforts like this when drinking fine teas and forget to honor the simple, ordinary teas that are also so important to our lives.

Elevation responds best to a strong, martial heat, so make sure the water is very hot for this Tea of the Month, using charcoal if possible. When the water is hot enough, you can experiment with different steeping times, as Elevation becomes a very different tea when flash-steeped or left for a long time. Both are nice to drink, but very different in flavor and energy. It is an interesting experiment to brew the tea in a couple of different ways and see how different the energy becomes in a sidehandle pot. It is brighter and often sweeter in a pot, but bolder in the bowl.

Elevation

Arise! Awaken!
O' hundred-year moment,
Hark, the wind and rain;
Herald the mountain sun;
Call the moonlit orchestra:
Ready your voices,
Tune up the drone
Of a symphony on the verge.
Instruments of Spirit,
Forged by Nature,
Humming a loud unison,
Each finding pitch and tone.
And then,
Still, and wait for it...

An elevated kettle,
A breath and a pause,
Silence strong and tacit,
Growing to a crescendo,
The stream billows, holds,
Then breaks
With the water dance:
Leaves twirling
In dervish ecstasy,
As steam curls and rolls,
An infused flight
Up beyond the red clouds
That cascade off the lake
And carry it all away...

SIDEHANDLE TEAPOTS

HISTORY, LORE & OUR TRADITION



Sidehandle pots are central to our generation of the Hut and have changed tea in our tradition forever. Our sidehandle bowl ceremony has also influenced thousands of Chajin around the world. The best tea practice is always in honor of that which has come before, resting in a deep understanding and reverence for the roots that feed one's practice, even as it evolves into new ways and insights.



茶人: Wu De

The Journey Begins

Long ago, in the days before the art of tea, before people shared it as hospitality in homes throughout the kingdom, it was a medicine to aboriginal shamans and healers, who used its leaves to foster meditation and to connect with Nature's guidance and wisdom. In those lost days, when the sky was clear and Nature wasn't a place people went to if they had an interest in the "outdoors," but rather was life itself, tea was all simple, wild and pure. Undomesticated trees deep in the forest were sought and harvested according to the life cycle of the tree, and with a reverence expressed in prayers and offerings of thanks to the wise old trees for their gifts. There was no processing to speak of: the tea was plucked and dried, carried in bundles amongst other healing herbs.

The preparation of tea was also very simple in those ancient times before we measured time—when Nature measured it for us in the moons and seasons that followed her. Leaves were simply withered and dried, and then steeped in bowls or boiled in cauldrons and ladled into bowls of warmth. The tribes used tea to welcome guests, though the rest of the kingdom was millennia away from knowing the joys of the Leaf. But they did so sparingly, as the old trees were precious, hard to find, deep in the mountains and didn't produce but a handful of leaves when She saw fit—when a worthy shaman made offerings. All of the origin stories of tea in aboriginal cultures pay tribute to this distant time in the past, as do the altars beneath old trees, which even today hold similar prayers.

The Ku Chong tell a story of lost hunters who elected one of their number to climb a foreign tree and see if he could find his bearings. They were worried about an approaching storm and being stranded in the jungle. When the brave climbed the old tree, he saw a sea of green stretching to the ominous, stormy sky. He still had no idea where he was. Then he noticed the strange, fairy-like tree once more and casually plucked a leaf to chew on. As soon as the powerful juices that had flowed down from the sky and mountains through the Earth and roots came into his veins, he saw clearly the road home.

Imagine, if you can, sitting in the chorus of a pristine jungle, sharing bowls of the brightest tea you have ever tasted, boiled in clear and clean spring water, and shared among people who love you, who would die for you—people who were you, and you them. Imagine the old shaman's hands as he scoops ladles full of the rich liquor with a pierced gourd attached to bamboo, the thin end of the spout now caked brown with years of boiled tea. The liquor is earthy, astringent and bitter, but it is also sweet, very sweet—a sweetness that lasts long on the breath and reminds you of the love of the one sitting next to you. As you sip, bowl by bowl, the silence becomes noisier: the birdsong clearer and the cicadas a rhythm that resonates in your chest. You begin to understand the trees and birds, wind and sky. It talks to you of your road home. It shows you visions that answer the tribe's worries. And the old shaman grins, his weathered face

now as jungly as the trees, for he knows that look on your face all too well. He knows the road home.

I recently watched an old interview in which Jerry Garcia said, "Music is holy, and the business and industry we have built up around it can prevent music from doing what it was intended to do." That approach to music is why I am a fan of his, and I think that what he said is just as true of tea, if you restate it using the word "tea" instead of "music." Sometimes, I feel compelled to defend a more spiritual approach to tea, as if the thousands of years that people have used tea to cultivate themselves never happened. Alas, I am not opposed to some simple kitchen tea drinking, welcoming guests and enjoying the hobbyist aspects of tea. But tea is much more than that, and you cannot approach Her depths with the intellect alone.

There is a story about a botanist who travels to the jungles of South America. He hires a local guide to show him through the forest. As they walk, the young man points out all the local plants, naming them to the botanist. After an hour of this, the botanist exclaims, "Wow! You know a lot about plants. You've named every one we have passed!" The young boy looks down at his feet, ashamed. "No, actually I have so much more to learn. I mean, I do know their names, but I haven't yet learned their songs." This story can teach us a lot about tea and teaware. There are a lot of people who know the names of teas, but I, personally, will always be more interested in their songs...



Sidehandle Herb Stoves

Traditional Chinese Medicine is among the oldest and most refined healing modalities on earth. The ancients developed comprehensive systems of understanding human health and longevity that are unrivaled. They accumulated a vast library of herbal remedies and learned to use needles to move the body's energy for healing. Their concept of health transcended mere physical well-being to include the mind and spirit in harmony with an equally deep cosmology. They were more shamans than doctors.

The early Daoist sages, who form the now-legendary beginning of Chinese medicine, saw health in terms of physical well-being and longevity, mental serenity and spiritual cultivation towards a harmony with Nature and the cosmos. They were mystics. Their great body of herbal lore was accumulated over centuries, handed down from the tribal peoples who preceded them. They refined this nature wisdom, finding more herbs and learning how to prepare them better. They did this through trial and error, innovation and exploration, as well as

honing their spirit to Nature, and using insight to guide them towards the herbs that aid in human fulfillment—holistic success, in terms of one system of body, mind and spirit.

Shennong, the father of Chinese medicine, is said to have exclaimed that tea was “the king of all medicinal herbs (藥中之王),” for tea was certainly amongst the herbal tonics of these ancient “Cloudwalkers,” called thus because they wandered the mountains and mists above the valley cities below. My favorite poem highlights the lifestyle of these early sages:

*I asked the boy beneath the pines.
He said, “The master’s gone alone,
Herb-picking
somewhere on the mount,
Cloud-hidden,
whereabouts unknown.”*

—Chia Tao (777–841 C.E.)

Translated by Lin Yutang

Until the modern age, Chinese doctors were supposed to be much more than just healers: They often were martial arts masters, artists and

calligraphers, well read in the classics and sages in their own right, who had meditated and self-cultivated to a high degree. The best doctors could diagnose just by seeing a patient. And it is a well-known fact, even now, that the Qi of the one placing a needle is as important as finding the right location to place it. This is, of course, akin to tea, as the brewer is the most important element in a session. Even modern master TCM doctors, like Zheng Man Qing (鄭曼青), were well known to be talented in all these fields. He was a renowned calligrapher and painter, one of the best tai chi teachers of the modern era, an excellent Chajin and one of the founders of the modern Traditional Medicine Association in Taiwan and China, influencing all these fields around the globe. His commentary on the Dao De Jing and other classics also proves that he was not only incredibly learned as a scholar, but had a deep and penetrating eye, which only comes from years of self-cultivation.

It is in this lost lore of myth and legend, where sages bigger than life cloudwalk, that we must start our



journey towards understanding the sidehandle pot. Though lost in legend, beyond what history's lens can resolve, we must use some poetry and mythic imagery, as we have done here, since most of the journey of sidehandle pots, historical or otherwise, is surrounded by spiritual aspirants and religious lore. After the "*ding* (鼎)," which was essentially a cauldron, it became popular to boil herbs on smaller stoves with a sidehandle pot. The beginnings of this humble vessel are shrouded beyond our reach, but one might assume that this began as a way for solitary hermits to make smaller batches of herbs for their own experimentation and consumption. The sages knew that fire is the teacher of herbs, as it is of tea. It is heat that draws the essence from the plant, and heat that moves that same medicine through the channels of our bodies. Powders and raw herbs did exist back in ancient times, but were rarely used. If you have ever taken boiled Chinese herbs, you will know how much more efficacious such a brew is than capsules, powders or tinctures—much like whole food is better for us.

Sages used herbs on a daily basis. Not all herbs were remedies for ailments. Many, like tea, were spiritual herbs, meant to harmonize the energy they call "*shen* (神)," which is the cosmic, Heavenly energy that connects us to Nature, and ultimately, to the stars. Tea is one such *shen* tonic that can be used every day to promote meditation, relaxation and overall well-being, and unlock insights necessary in spiritual growth. One of the first Chinese *materia medica* to mention tea said that it was "to brighten the eyes (明目)." In Chinese wisdom, it is said that when the cosmic energy, the *shen*, descends to the heart, the eyes light up—which is why Buddhist and Daoist sages were typically depicted with glowing eyes. Meditation and Qigong could also help one achieve this, but so can herbs like tea. Many of us, no doubt, have experienced the illumination of the heart and eyes through a powerful tea session.

Small clay stoves and sidehandle pots conserve wood and/or charcoal and could be made easily in small sizes that were suitable to a hermitic life,

allowing the monk to boil just the amount of herbs he needed. At some point, these vessels became more popular than cauldrons, especially in areas where clay was readily available and such vessels easily made. These small stoves and sidehandle pots were made with handles that jut up at an angle, to prevent the handle from getting too hot. Decanting the boiled herbs in this way is also easier to use than a cauldron, as it is much easier to get the last of the boiled tonic out, as opposed to using a ladle with a cauldron. Maybe they also liked the way the clay would absorb the herbs over time, becoming seasoned and glowing with its own power. Though we don't know all the reasons why sidehandle stove and pot sets came into vogue amongst sages, we can trace the roots of the sidehandle pot back to these ancient sages and their herbal brews. And we can be certain that some sessions, especially near Yunnan and Sichuan, involved the boiling of tea leaves as one of the prominent herbs they used towards longevity and self-cultivation. I often portray such sessions in my artwork.

Senchado & Baisao

Baisao is a hero to our tradition, and a shining constellation in the sky of tea sages who inform all Chajin throughout the ages. “Baisao (老賣茶翁)” literally means the “old tea-seller.” Baisao lived from 1675 to 1763, in the Edo era of Japan. He was ordained at the early age of nine, practicing earnestly in meditation. He was recognized for his devotion and wisdom by his teacher, Kerin Doryo, early on. Baisao traveled extensively starting in 1696, studying under several teachers and exploring many scriptures. His teacher asked him to be abbot of the Ryushinji, an Obaku temple. He declined the offer, instead stewarding the temple until Daicho Genko became abbot in 1724. Baisao felt that the Buddhist temples of the time had lost their way, cultivating relations with wealthy patrons to build and maintain temples, rather than creating monasteries that were genuine refuges for those seeking spaces of self-cultivation.

The English word “Zen” is derived from Japanese, which was a transliteration of the Chinese word “*Chan* (禪),” which is pronounced “*Tsan*” in the South, where many of the ear-

ly Japanese monks who traveled to China went to study and bring Buddhism back to Japan. To introduce the essence of Zen and why Baisao left his order, however, we have to trace the etymology back one more step, for “*Chan*” is also a transliteration of the Sanskrit word “*dhyana*.” “*Dhyana*” is a profound word, with many and vast meanings, but in its simplest form, it means the “meditative mind,” the mind cultivated in a meditation practice, in other words. Consequently, Zen is meditation. It is a mind, a way of seeing. And since its birth, Zen has sought to transmit this mind from teacher to student, understanding that the method is not as important as the seeing. This is in concordance with the Buddha’s teachings as well, since he often compared his method of practice to a raft, suggesting that once one had reached the other shore, the raft would no longer be needed. “Buddhism,” we must remember, is a Western word, and very modern compared to the thousands of years Buddhist practices have survived. Zen is a mind, a way of seeing, and one that must be transmitted and cultivated.

Baisao “saw,” penetrating the Zen mind to “see things as they are,” which is called “*kensho*” in Japanese. He saw that the current temple life was not conducive to the transmission of a pure Zen, as he saw it, and decided to disrobe—but not to become a layperson, but rather to live a life that he felt was in greater harmony with the teachings of Zen. Out of time and place, with deep insight into ancient Chinese Daoist hermits that he could not have plumbed through literature, he donned the black-and-white robes of an ancient Cloudwalker. He moved to Kyoto and set up a small stall by the side of the road, offering bowls of tea for donations. At that time, selling such bowl tea was amongst the simplest, low-class jobs available, which suited the humble monk well.

Baisao had spent most of his life in Nagasaki, which was at that time the only port open to Chinese trade and even had a small Chinese community. Probably through the temple, Baisao had made some Chinese connections, granting him access to Chinese teas, including some Wuyi Cliff Tea. This made his tea very special. Prepared with a cultivated mind, and like all great tea, poured from a heart of stillness, Baisao offered his teas to passers-by. Unlike the other vendors, he didn’t charge a penny for a bowl, but offered it freely, leaving out a donation box for grateful patrons. This meant he often went hungry, writing of how he was saved from starvation one winter by an old friend who visited with food. But he suffered for his art, for his tea.

Where he learned of the ancient Daoist ways, we don’t know. Perhaps he did catch glimpses of them in the classics or in poems, but no matter where his introduction came from, he penetrated the depths through tea—a practice we try to continue today. He commissioned local friends to make him teaware that captured the essence of the tea he prepared, echoing the great Daoist sages who brewed herbs in the mountains. Of course, this means he used a sidehandle pot and stove to boil his tea. It is likely that he also steeped tea as well, as some of the teas he served, especially the rarer Chinese ones, would have been much better prepared in this way.

茶 Sculpture of Baisao
by our very own talented
Global Tea Hut member,
Xander Rijkee.



Over decades, Baisao started attracting students who, with keen eyes that also “saw,” realized that this simple, scraggly-haired old man was actually quite wise. They started assembling as much for the teachings as for the powerful brews he served. In one of his poems, he cheekily suggests that the great tea sage Lu Tong needed “Seven Bowls,” referencing Lu Tong’s famous poem, while Baisao himself only needed the one to stir enlightenment in the drinker. By the time he passed away at the ripe old age of eighty-eight, Baisao had quite the following. He had seen the way practitioners of the whisked tea ceremony, called “*Chanoyu*,” copied and revered their tea saint, Rikyu, and in typical Zen-rascallyness decided that this would betray the humble spirit of tea and Zen, so he burned his teaware before dying so others would find their own way. But Zen and history have a sense of humor, and his students had already copied most of his poems, which thankfully still exist, as well as drawings of all his teaware.

Some time after Baisao joined the tea steeping in the sky, many Japanese Chajin started to become resistant to all the formality of the whisked tea ceremony. They felt that practitioners of *Chanoyu* were too strict and tight in their tea preparation, and too fussy over expensive teaware, which they felt betrayed the essence and spirit of tea. Without a doubt, these stereotypes were partly unfounded, as there were most certainly great Chajin amongst those practicing whisked tea. These new Chajin used Baisao as their saint and started practicing a new form of tea ceremony called “*Senchado*.” They retreated to the mountains, building simple hermitages and living lives with nostalgia for the ancient Daoist Cloudwalkers they admired. They wrote poems, painted, practiced calligraphy, meditation, and sometimes, martial arts. They meditated and sought to commune with Nature, as all Chajin try. This wistfulness for lost times in a mythical and ancient Dao of the mountains of China was encouraged by tea. Tea has always inspired the heart to turn towards myth: to the timeless place where “clouds and mist” and “temple bell mind” are adumbrated by the passing of a dragon through



茶 Late nineteenth century painting of Baisao by an unknown artist.

the overhead clouds. These sentiments continue today—tea still inspires us to look beyond the mundane.

The practitioners of *Senchado* all designed teaware based on drawings of Baisao’s teaware. The word “sencha” actually literally means “simmered tea.” Though we steep sencha nowadays, it was more often boiled at that time. (This is something worth trying. You may be surprised by how great it is, when simmered at low temperatures with a bit of care and attention.) These tea sages saw tea as a kind of alchemy, through which the practitioner harmonized the elements within and without. And so, once again, the sidehandle kettles and stoves thrived,

inspiring ceramicists in Japan to make all new styles, mostly designed to be simple, rustic and “*wabi*.” The sidehandle crossed the sea, and continued its journey through many mountain sessions and roadside enlightenments.

*Set up the tea hut
On the bank of the Kamo River.
Passersby idly sit down,
Forgetting host and guest,
And drink a bowl of tea,
Ending their long slumber.
Awakened, they now realize
They’re the same as before.*

—Baisao

Gongfu Tea

The sidehandle pot was traversing a different evolution in China. Sometime after it had crossed the sea to Japan, gongfu tea was born in southern China. “Gongfu (功夫)” literally means “mastery through self-discipline,” and refers to any art or craft that can be mastered with focus and practice as a way of life, including martial arts, which is what the word is more often associated with in the West. Though “gongfu tea (功夫茶)” has become a generic term in the last few decades, coming to mean any style of brewing anywhere in Asia (so long as Chinese people are making tea, they call it “gongfu tea”), this brewing style began as a local method in Chaozhou.

Gongfu tea was created in the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) by martial artists. They sought to embody their practice—living and breathing the teachings they aspired to become. They made tea the way they lived: in harmony with the grace and flow of the “Watercourse Way (水道方式).” This means preparing the tea in the way it wants to be prepared. They saw tea as a vehicle to self-cultivation, practicing graceful movements and careful attention to the tea, so as to bring out the best in each cup.

Gongfu tea, like all human action, was also, in part, economically motivated. At that time, most people in China brewed tea in large pots, with large cups, steeped for long periods, while they meditated or chatted. This is when the West started a tea trade with China, which is why Western people also started preparing tea in this way, which continues in the West even today. But larger teaware and more leaves is also more expensive, and to the Southern martial artists, wasteful. Martial arts are often formed on a philosophy of frugality—conservation of energy. The ideal is to dodge, and not be where the opponent strikes. Second best is to deflect, using the opponent’s own force and momentum against them. A distant last is to block, harming oneself in the process. (These are deep life lessons for dealing with challenges as well!) In his epic *Tea Sutra*, which we translated for the September 2015 issue, Lu Yu also said “the essence of tea is frugality.” The creators of gongfu tea wished to use fewer leaves in small pots and cups to conserve money, time and energy.

Gongfu tea was also born because oolong tea was born at the same time, also in the South. Gongfu tea

traditions and oolong tea grew up together, fitting hand in glove. This powerful, semi-oxidized tea was perfect for drinking in small cups, which encourage smaller sips. Oolong enters the subtle body through and over the head, unlike darker teas like puerh or black tea, which enter the Qi through the stomach and chest. Smaller sips encourage a greater dispersion of the wonderful fragrance of such teas, as well as more movement in the Qi. (Try experimenting with as small of sips as you can possibly take, seeing how this affects your oolong tea. Smaller cups demand small sips and are, therefore, ideal for this.)

These early gongfu tea creators used sidehandle pots and stoves to bowl their water. These sets are one of the “Four Treasures” of gongfu tea, along with porcelain cups, Yixing pots and a “tea boat (茶船).” The sidehandle pots were in keeping with their own Daoist sentiments, hearkening back to the Cloudwalkers and their herbs, whom they, like the Japanese who practiced *Senchado*, also greatly admired. But all aspects of gongfu tea are spiritual and practical, as improving the tea is always paramount. These Chajin also used small sidehandle pots and stoves because they made better tea. The early gongfu tea men realized that over-boiled water discourages the fragrance and Qi of the tea from rising. As the water boils, it breaks up and loses its structure. This is especially important if one has hiked kilometers into the mountains to gather precious spring water from famed locals, as tea lovers then and nowadays are wont to do. Small sidehandle kettles allowed them to boil one or two steepings at a time, so that the water was always fresh and always at the perfect temperature—and heat is principle in gongfu tea.

In this way, sidehandle pots had found their way from the boiled herbs of Daoist sages to the new nostalgic traditions of Japan based on Baisao, and then down a separate road to the gongfu tea of martial artists in the south of China, finding a home in all these teas for unique reasons, but always based on its simple, rustic roots amongst the literal roots these pots had boiled in the mountains, literal and mythic, of ancient China.

煉丹術
古代魔法





茶 This Tokoname pot was made by Master Craftsman Hokuji Shimizu (born in 1945). He uses local clay and lines the *kyusu* with seaweed before firing, to create the striations that adorn his pots.

The Kyusu

For most of the few centuries that the Japanese practiced *Senchado*, they actually boiled tea. At some point in that journey, however, the influence of Chinese steeped tea started to change them (starting with the seeds Baisao had planted, as he also steeped some Chinese tea), and they more and more started steeping their tea. Influenced by gongfu tea, many practitioners in Japan started using Yixing teaware, which was extremely precious in Japan due to high customs tariffs on imported goods. They started using cooler temperatures to steep their greener and greener teas, often using two Yixing pots: one as the teapot and one as the “*yuzamashi*,” which was used to cool water before steeping and then (sometimes) acted as a pitcher to decant the tea liquor.

As these new brewing methods became popular, the sidehandle pot did not vanish. After all, not everyone could afford to use imported Yixingware. At some unknown time, sidehandle pots started to move from stoves to boil water or tea to actual vessels for brewing, and the “*kyusu*” was

born in Japan. Up until the Second Great War, Japanese *kyusu* were mostly designed in the same fashion as all sidehandle pots had been for centuries: with an upward-flared handle, not abutting the spout, but not at a right angle either—somewhere in between. They were often small and dainty, and a shortened handle was favored so that it could be held against the palm or deftly between two fingers. However, as the art of steeping green tea evolved, so did the *kyusu*. Over time, craftsmen and Chajin working together innovated the pots to be flat and open so that they would not preserve heat and steam/cook the tea in between steepings. They also began moving the handle more towards a right angle to the spout and pointing directly and straight out, as opposed to up at an angle that hearkens to the days when these pots sat on stoves and the angle helped prevent the handle from getting hot. Then, slowly, sieves in the spout were invented—with more and finer holes than any other teapot in the world—to block the needle-like leaves of *sencha*. (As you may remember, tea

leaves got smaller and smaller as the trees moved north, naturally or carried by people, resulting in the very small leaves in Japan, which are a response to the cold weather.)

Thus, through the innovations in tea production and preparation that were happening in Japan in the later half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sidehandle pots took the third of the four roads we will discuss in this introduction, becoming the world of *kyusu*—a flourishing art that continues today. There are still powerful traditions of preparing *sencha* in *kyusu*, as well as ceramicists in Japan who are creating beautiful examples of this teaware. The Tokoname region of Japan is the most famed for its tradition of making *kyusu*, dating back centuries when they were still used for boiling tea and water for tea. A study of those traditions would be very worthwhile, and though too far afield from this introduction, which is, of course, winding its way to my own tradition, *kyusu* and *Senchado* are both topics we hope to cover in future issues of Global Tea Hut.

The Modern Era

The road to our own bowl tea ceremony invariably leads through Taiwan. As we have discussed before, Japan controlled Taiwan from 1895 to 1945, and though the Taiwanese don't always like to admit it, Japanese culture has impacted Taiwanese culture and aesthetic, and continues to do so even now. It is evident in the art, architecture, flower arranging, teaware and tea brewing of Taiwan. But the synthesis of Taiwanese art and aesthetic with Japanese is by no means a mere copy—the Taiwanese are incredibly creative people and have, over time, innovated their own cultural blend of traditional Chinese, Japanese and even Western culture (probably listed in that order of influence).

In the 1970s, Taiwan passed through a great economic boom. I can remember longing to visit Taiwan as a child (even finding it on maps) because all my *Star Wars* figurines and ships said “Made in Taiwan” on the bottom (the way everything is “Made in China” nowadays). In April of 2016, we translated the Emperor Song Huizhong's *Treatise on Tea*. In the introduction, he highlights that the flourishing of arts, like tea, was in large part due to the peace and prosperity of the Song government (a peace which sadly didn't last, as the dynasty ended during his reign). There is truth in this, since people focused on the basics of life, like food and shelter, don't have the time or energy to focus on art and culture. Once Taiwan began to grow and develop in every way, the arts and culture there also flourished. Of course, tea and tea arts surfed the crest of this wave, making Taiwan, for a time, the tea culture capital of the world. Teahouses grew like new buds on a spring field after the rains, new books and magazines were published and the modern scholarship of tea, including topics like puerh and Yixingware, was born (directly influencing the creation of this magazine in your hands).

For some time, Yixingware dominated the Taiwanese tea world. Modern teapot makers in Yixing remember the times when literally all of their pots were sent to Taiwan. There were even many Taiwanese potters who imported ore and clay from Yixing, to learn the

craft, like Luo Shi (羅石), whom we shall discuss later in this issue. Some of this craft still continues, though most of these potters have since discovered local Taiwanese clays that they can blend with various powders to create Yixing-like colors. As we discussed in the September Extended Edition, this same trend has affected Yixing itself, since the mines were closed in the late nineties and the ore/clay has become scarcer and more expensive.

At some point in the growth of tea culture in Taiwan, local potters began to turn their attention more and more to the growing market for teaware. A new age of uniquely Taiwanese teaware was born. Many of these potters came from other backgrounds, attracted by the flourishing demand for unique teaware that had a Taiwanese flare, as opposed to the Yixing market, which had bubbled to beyond what many could afford and then popped in the late eighties, costing many shop owners who couldn't adapt to other tea and teaware their livelihoods. In the vacuum left behind by the hundreds of Yixingware shops that closed after the market collapsed stepped local Taiwanese potters with new designs and ideas.

Looking to set themselves apart from the many potters creating teaware, many ceramicists started redeveloping classical pottery and glazing techniques like celadon and “*tian mu* (天目),” and, of course, the Japanese influence shone throughout this development. These new kinds of teaware started to have an impact on Taiwanese tea brewing styles as well, as Chajin and ceramicists worked together to create many new and innovative ways to prepare tea, as well as to create new teaware that facilitated the evolving Taiwanese aesthetic.

At some point in the late nineties or early part of this millennium, some Taiwanese potters started making sidehandle pots that were modeled after the *kyusu*, but also distinctly Taiwanese. A return to natural, simple and rustic teaware was becoming popular in Taiwan, as was a growing influence from traditional Japanese tea culture, including *tetsubin* (cast iron) and *ginbin* (silver) kettles and the art of making *chaxi* for tea, which have roots in

ancient China, but were, at that time, being imported into Taiwan via Japan—and with Japanese flavor, not ancient Chinese. The new sidehandle pots being made were assimilated into Taiwanese “gongfu tea,” a term that, as we said earlier, has become a generic reference for any Chinese tea. They used sidehandle pots as they would Yixing, pouring from them into a pitcher and then decanting into small cups.

The first great influencer we know of, who may be responsible for bringing sidehandle pots to shine again in Taiwan, would be Chen Qi Nan (陳啟南), whom you can read all about in the March 2014 issue of *Global Tea Hut*. He was the first we came across, though there may be other influenc-



ers as well. He was also the first to popularize using wooden handles attached to kettles and sidehandle pots, a trend that has influenced the work of many potters we admire, like Peter Kuo (郭詩謙) and Luo Shi, who are discussed at length in this issue.

Though the resurgence of sidehandle pots in Taiwan is a great addition to our tradition, we have found that much of the innovation in teaware over the last few decades has been based on a growing market of tea drinkers, coupled with a desire to create unique looks and styles that set a potter apart and make him/her successful as a potter. All too often, teaware makers don't drink enough tea. They aren't grounded in tea-brewing traditions and rarely understand the history and makeup

of the wares they create. Without the spirit of a love for tea and tea drinking, a potter will never capture the essence and spirit of tea in a way that really, truly inspires Chajin and brings the greater joys that teaware can provide to a tea session, and, ultimately, to a life of tea. There are wonderful exceptions to this, of course, like the three potters featured in this issue (including the amazing and talented Petr Novak, who has a deep connection to tea and stands out as a great Chajin, and, as a result, one of the most esteemed teaware makers of this generation). As a result, the sidehandle pots being made in Taiwan come in a variety of styles, often with more of a focus on how they look, rather than how they will be used and in what way.

There are, therefore, a huge array of sidehandle pots, including flat *kyu-su*-like ones, pots created to be held in the modern method of using the thumb on the button/pearl (which we will discuss in the sidehandle ceremony manual later in this issue) and many other styles. Many of the Chajin who favor using sidehandles strive for simplicity in tea, so wood-firing and simple, unadorned styles and glazes, like wooden handles, appeal to this kind of tea lover. Though they are often beautiful, if we wish to practice sidehandle tea in the tradition of the Hut, we must also pay attention to the function of the pot as well, as not all the modern varieties are suitable for our purposes.

茶 This is the Center's first-ever sidehandle pot, and the first used in a bowl tea ceremony. It was made for us by Chen Qi Nan. We commissioned it at a time when very few potters in Taiwan were making sidehandle pots. It has since served rivers of beautiful tea.



OUR TRADITION & SIDEHANDLE BOWL TEA CEREMONY

Later in this issue, we will offer you a manual for sidehandle bowl tea ceremonies, much like we did for leaves in a bowl ceremonies in the February 2017 issue. We consider the creation of the sidehandle bowl tea ceremony to be the greatest innovation of our generation of this lineage. We are very proud of this development. Every tradition must evolve to suit the times. If it does not, it will live in old buildings and books rather than in the hearts of those who practice it. But we must also be careful with adaptation, as it can corrupt the power and intention of a tradition. In order to adapt and grow teachings and ways, one must first understand them. I would actually take this a step further and say that one must *become* them. It was seventeen years before I made any adaptations in this practice. Once you practice

to a depth at which you become the method, then your adaptations are not imposed from the outside—such change is an evolution from the inside out. This kind of development is the tradition changing and growing itself, in other words.

It is important to remember that one can have the form and shape of a practice, but not its spirit. You can take the form home, but it will be hollow without the soul that informs it. Only humility, respect and transmission can fill the bowl with more than tea; only in honoring the source of our practice can it grow and flourish into the future. Looking around the world, the myopia of the modern age, forgetting our common indigenous heritage (we *all* come from indigenous peoples) and losing touch with all the old-growth cultures of the world has polluted the

earth and the human heart. This is not to say that I feel it would be intelligent to go back to older, more primitive lifeways, or that doing so would even honor our ancestors. But if we do not understand where we have come from and learn to build upon the foundations of our ancestors and their culture, spirituality and relationship to the Earth, we flounder in a cultureless, spiritually vacant dystopia of consumerism and concrete. In other words, we have to know and honor where we have come from in order to build the world we all deserve, not to mention a world in which our descendants can once again walk the Earth with dignity and pride, as opposed to the shame the modern landscape inspires.

Without reverence and deep understanding of where a method comes from, it will not really thrive and



我們的傳統個把茶碗儀式

flourish in one's life. My Zen master always used to say that there are students and there are thieves. Students come to humble themselves, creating vessels in their hearts to receive, consume, digest and ultimately become the teachings and tradition. These students then go on to become teachers, adapting and growing the tradition to new forms that better suit the new times, places and people it is serving, but they do so with a reverence for their teachers and the teachings, and with a permission granted by years of training and deep understanding of the methods, as much as that granted by their teachers themselves. Thieves want to take from the lineage and use the teachings in whatever way they see fit, often to adorn themselves, like badges or medals. Without training though, they change the teachings in ways that they

themselves don't even see as detrimental, let alone out of a deep understanding. When we would ask my teacher about what to do with thieves, he always said, "Let them come. You cannot steal from a stall where everything is free! And maybe what they take will open their hearts, and then they will return as students, ready to learn and become the teachings."

As we have discussed in past issues, the bowl tea tradition we practice was designed to be simple and unadorned. We practice bowl tea to make tea accessible to more people around the world, and to reduce tea to its simplest form: leaves, water and heat. This facilitates a more direct communication with Nature and Tea, which then goes on to inform all the tea one learns and practices as one develops in tea. Learning to receive Tea, Her messages and

spirit is the foundation of a good tea practice. All of the human culture and brewing methods are second to that. Music played on great instruments to catchy melodies is poppy, but vacuous. Music with soul, on the other hand, is powerful. One of my heroes, Jerry Garcia, said: "The purpose of music has always been sacred. The music industry can prevent music from doing what it was intended to." The same can be said of tea, or any other art.

Bowl tea steps into this to remind us of ceremony, of our love for the Nature that makes tea. Bowl tea is, in its simplest form, about creating meditative and ceremonial space. Ceremonies teach us to remember to remember. Tea ceremonies cleanse the participants in compassion, to heal the body and spirit. Ceremonies turn attention into intention, which is powerful.



A ceremony focuses our attention towards a Way of life, a Dao, and the unseen is then seen: the road to follow.

Bowl tea is not about making the finest cup of tea possible, which is what gongfu tea facilitates. Bowl tea is to let go of the evaluative mind of “better” and “worse,” which have no absolute truth. Ten grams of the most expensive tea on earth and ten grams of the lowest quality when placed in a forest become twenty grams of dirt. And the bugs, frogs, sun, rain and trees don’t care which we think is “better.” Bowl tea helps wash away the pretensions of cultivating a tea practice. It brings balance to our tea, allowing us to just sit with tea however it is, and there is no “too hot,” “too bitter,” “too this” or “too that.” There are just leaves, heat and water. There is just Nature and us, without aim or method. There is method in the conducting of the ceremony, but none in the reception of the bowl—the drinking of a bowl in a bowl tea ceremony is without teaching or method, just pure Nature unadorned. There are the clouds the water was in the last fortnight, the sun and rain, mountain and wind that made the tea, and a human to feel and celebrate it all with gratitude and love. That is a bowl tea ceremony in so many words, but all the poets on earth, writing for centuries, couldn’t capture the essence of a single bowl drunk in this way!

Long ago, all tea was processed very simply: It was picked, often withered and then sun-dried. This tea was all boiled or steeped leaves in a bowl, which is suitable to simple, rustic tea. In the last few centuries, however, there has been an explosion of processing techniques, creating a vast array of tea spanning Asia. And many of the kinds of tea available today are no longer suitable to be prepared leaves in a bowl or boiled. Compressed teas, for example, would come apart, leaving bits that would be in the way of drinking. Some teas would brew up too astringently if you just put the leaves in a bowl. In the beginning, when we only had gongfu tea and leaves in a bowl, we asked new students to stick to simple, striped teas, like Elevation or *maocha* from Yunnan. This is nice, but we wanted a way to carry the simplicity and ceremonial meditativeness of bowl tea to more kinds of tea,

allowing us to use this style of brewing in more settings and with a greater variety of tea. For that, we’d need a vessel.

When searching for a vessel to create bowl tea ceremonies with the same spirit of leaves in a bowl, it was only natural to choose the vessel so many Chajin throughout the ages used, from the Cloudwalkers to Baisao: the sidehandle pot. We chose to start commissioning sidehandle pots in the most traditional style, with upward-angled handles, commemorative of the days when these vessels were used to boil herbs, including tea. This brought connection and depth to the ceremony, and provided a much-needed element in bowl tea ceremonies, allowing us to use many kinds of tea that were previously only brewable gongfu. It used to be that we used simple, striped teas for leaves in a bowl ceremonies and brewed everything else gongfu. Nowadays, we still save the best teas for gongfu brewing, which brings out their greatest potential, but we can prepare bowl tea ceremonies with compressed puerh, all-bud teas and much more.

Developing a sidehandle pot ceremony was not an attempt to complicate bowl tea. It shouldn’t be regarded as a movement upwards towards “higher” or more skillful brewing. The sidehandle pot is, instead, a tool to expand the places, times and types of tea we can brew in the same spirit of leaves, heat and water that informs a leaves in a bowl ceremony. Our ceremony connects us to all the Chajin throughout time who have used these simple vessels to share tea spirit, commune with Nature and find the stillness inside. The sidehandle pot has been on an amazing journey, serving rivers of tea filled with heart, hospitality, kindness, ceremony, meditation and bliss. In our tradition, a new bowl tea ceremony has been created and slowly refined and honed into something that we hope will last long into the future, providing the next generations of Chajin a way to connect to ancient tea wisdom and share this spirit with others.



大
自
然
漫
過
茶

夕陽洒滿我們的碗我們的靈魂



茶道



A Guide to

Sidehandle



Bowl Tea Ceremony

側把茶碗儀式

Introduction to Sidehandle Ceremony

側把壺儀式介紹

The sidehandle pot ceremony is the quintessence of our generation of the Hut. It is our contribution to future generations of Chajin. As we discussed earlier, this ceremony is an extension of leaves in a bowl, providing the opportunity to prepare more kinds of tea with the ceremonial, meditative ambience of leaves in a bowl. Long ago, all tea was processed simply, and therefore suitable to leaves in a bowl or boiling. But the last few centuries have seen a wonderful explosion in tea varieties, cultivars and processing methods. And not all of these teas are suitable for leaves in a bowl or boiling: some are compressed and would expand too much in the bowl, some are made of small leaves that would be difficult to drink without getting small buds and/or bits in your mouth, and others are too astringent or fresh, requiring flash steepings (quick decantation, in other words). The sidehandle ceremony is an addition to leaves in a bowl that allows us to prepare all the varieties of tea in a bowl with ceremonial force. With these two brewing methods alone, a Chajin can host ceremonies that suit all occasions.

It is important to remember, however, that the sidehandle is not meant to complicate leaves in a bowl. It is neither “higher” nor “better.” One should not think of this ceremony as more advanced than leaves in a bowl. Sidehandle tea should be prepared with the same simple philosophy of focusing on meditative space, ceremonial celebration of

Nature and tea drinking, and not on the quality of the tea—that’s what gongfu tea is for. We chose the sidehandle as a vessel because it is the oldest and most rustic vessel, and is therefore conducive to the spirit of bowl tea: leaves, water and heat in its purest form. We prepare sidehandle tea without an evaluative mind. Each bowl is complete in and of itself. Consequently, we learn to set down the discriminating mind and rest in a harmony with this moment, this very bowl exactly as it is. We try to let go of “too hot” or “too bitter” and just be in the present moment fully, feeling the tea as it is. Sidehandles don’t add anything at all to a bowl tea ceremony, other than the practical and down-to-earth ability to prepare more kinds of tea in this spirit.

Ceremonies teach us to remember to remember. All too often we forget what is most important to us: to spend time with our friends and loved ones, to connect on a deeper level, to discuss what’s important and to honor this beautiful day. We must learn again to honor life and our bodies. Our respect-muscles have grown weak, so we must hone them to strength. Ceremonies turn attention into intention, creating energy that connects us to Nature, to our own hearts and to each other. In such a heart space, we remember that deep down, in the most spacious part of our hearts, we are all one Heart: one with all of Nature, with spirit and with each other, “*tong yi xin* (同一心)” in Chinese.



老師傅
沏茶師



Five Basics of All Tea Brewing

Don't forget the five basics of all tea brewing, which inform every kind of tea ceremony, including this sidehandle pot brewing. (You can review them in more detail in many past issues of Global Tea Hut—use the search bar on the “Past Issues” section of the website.)

1) Separate the space in half, and do everything on the right side with the right hand and everything on the left with the left hand. This protects one's teaware from accident and centers the body in a much more graceful and fluent way.

2) All circular movements are towards the center. This means the right hand moves counter-clockwise and the left moves clockwise. This is in harmony with the makeup of our bodies.

3) The kettle always rests on the side of the off-hand, and is used by the off-hand. Doing everything with one hand reduces fluency and grace, creating a stop-and-start motion to your brewing. It also leans the whole ceremony towards the strong hand. This practice will center everything, and make steeping and pouring much more graceful and smooth.

4) Never, ever (times 10, remember) pick up the kettle until your heart is still. The lifting of the kettle starts the brewing process. Nothing good will come from an unsettled heart preparing tea. Remember, the heart of the brewer is more important than anything else. Take a few breaths before each steeping and calm yourself.

5) Stay with the tea. This means that after you calm yourself and pick up the kettle, do every movement with all the concentration you can muster, cultivating mindfulness (Samadhi) in every aspect of tea brewing. Invest all of your heart, in other words. Do not let go of the process at all, keeping the entirety of your being—all that you are in this moment—honed like a laser beam on the teaware you are using. In that way, you become the ceremony, and it also becomes you. Only when you have handed the bowls to your guests should you then disengage from the process of tea brewing.






Chaxi

茶席創作

All tea ceremonies start with the “stage” or “*chaxi*” (茶席). The truth is that the output of any system is determined by its input. Tea grown in a healthy environment without agrochemicals and with lots of biodiversity makes beautiful, healthy leaves. Similarly, the more you put into a tea ceremony, the more you get out of it. The more we prepare, the more we honor the occasion and our guests. This includes cleaning, decorating and also the practical elements of a session, like which teaware to choose, gathering spring water when possible, charcoal and heat, music if you wish to play some, incense and every other detail of the environment the tea will be prepared within.

Chaxi practice always begins with cleaning. Cleaning is, in fact, eighty percent of Cha Dao! We clean inside our hearts to be pure channels of tea spirit, and we clean our tea space to celebrate the occasion and our guests. We all know how to host guests: we clean and decorate. And we all know what it feels like to enter a space that has been cleaned and decorated in our honor. This helps remind us of the spirit of tea, which is based on “one encounter, one chance (一期一會).” This means that if we gather here every day and prepare the same kind of tea with the same teaware, it will never, ever be *this tea* again. In fact, each bowl is a whole and complete moment in and of itself. And this moment will never be again. This is our now. This is our chance to be present and with tea. Making a *chaxi* for each ceremony teaches us to celebrate the occasion. It is precious to have a human body, to be relatively free of discomfort—not to mention to find the time in this busy world to pursue something so aimless as a bowl of tea!

Chaxi is focused mostly on honoring the occasion, one’s guests and the tea of choice. There can be a theme that facilitates this, like a full moon or congratulations for one of your guests. Most often, on a day-to-day basis, we practice honoring the occasion by connecting Nature to our tea session. This is easy outdoors, since Nature surrounds us and is, therefore, our *chaxi*, but indoor sessions often strive to bring Nature inside, reminding us that this session is a part of a bigger world. This means autumn leaves in the fall, spring flowers in the spring, and so on. A *chaxi* is a mandala: a temporary work of art that connects a moment to Eternity. We create them to honor this precious time and space and to welcome our guests. We also prepare a *chaxi* to honor the tea we are preparing, and the hard work of the only true tea masters in the world: *farmers*.



茶 This *chaxi* was meant to celebrate autumn as it unfolds in Taiwan, with clear, blue skies, russet plants and still some bits of green. When making a *chaxi*, you can strive to honor your guests and the occasion with every single detail, including the host’s shirt, which you may have noticed on the previous page, matches this theme.

Purification

All ceremonies start with purification. If you wish, you may light some incense to purify the space, yourself and your guests. We like to keep the bowls to our side and bring them out after everyone is seated for sidehandle tea. This is different from bowl tea, in which the leaves and bowl are often out already as part of the *chaxi*. (You can make an exception for sidehandle and put the bowls out, or for leaves in a bowl, and have them to the side for certain occasions, but most sessions will follow this general pattern.)

Bring each bowl to your heart, and then place them one by one in front of your pot. Be as mindful as possible. Remember, a ceremony is to turn attention into intention. We should use every fiber of our being to prepare tea, filling our hearts with this moment,

this time and place, this gathering and this tea. The most important element in any tea ceremony is the heart of the brewer—same tea and teaware, but change the brewer and the tea will be completely different, like giving a guitar and sheet music to different musicians, which results in a very different song. If your heart is still and very present, your tea will be steeped in this presence, and your guests will drink of it, guiding them to that same presence and stillness in their own hearts.

After all the bowls are set out, you can take a breath, lift the kettle and *place* some water in each bowl. Then, pour some hot water into the sidehandle pot itself to purify it. At this point, we gently bring out the wastewater container (*jian shui*, 建水). We keep this to our side or behind us to

honor the space and our guests. As you go to wash the bowl, bring each bowl to the heart and then to the *jian shui*. This is done for a few reasons: First of all, bringing the bowls to and from the center means that you carry them around the sidehandle pot, preventing any chance of knocking the pot with your hand or arm. Second, bringing the bowls to the center makes it easy to switch hands so that you can rinse the bowls properly.

To rinse the bowls, you follow the same method as in a leaves in a bowl ceremony, which you can read about in the February 2017 issue. The off-hand is like the fork of a bicycle wheel. It is extended straight and *does not move* (this is important as your washing will be fumbling and awkward if you try to coordinate the movement of both



淨化儀式

hands). Extend the off-hand, with the fingers straight and unbent, to allow free, circular rotation of the bowl. Hold the bowl over the *jian shui* at a forty-five-degree angle and rotate it towards yourself with the strong hand (we also expel waste water towards ourselves to honor our guests). The aim of this circular movement is to rinse off/purify the inside and outer rim of the bowl, where your guests' mouths will touch. You will have to practice the angle and speed of the rotation—if you move too fast, the water will spill out without rolling over the lip of the bowl and purifying the outer rim; and if you go too slow, the water will roll down the side of the bowl and burn your hand. You will know when you have rinsed the bowl all around completely, as you will feel a wetness on the inside

of your thumb. At this point, put the palm of the off-hand into the curve of the bowl and use the strong hand to shake the bowl three times, removing any excess water.

At this point, it is a good idea to reach down and wipe your hands off with a tea cloth (*chabu*, 茶布) before grabbing the handle of the pot. Then, decant the rinse water from the pot into the *jian shui* and set the pot back down gently.

Next, we add the tea to the pot using a scoop or “*cha he* (茶合).” Take a moment to place your hand over the tea and “whisper” your good intentions from your heart through your hand to the tea. Silently ask that this tea remind us of Nature, of the preciousness of this occasion and of our love for one another. Then place the tea gently in

the pot. At this time, shower the leaves with some water, filling the pot only just above the leaves. This is to purify the Tea Herself. She also has journeyed by plane and truck to get to us, and we all know that a shower is good after a journey—washing off the dust of commoditization and other negativities She has passed through to reach us. This also wakes the tea up, readying her for the session. At this point, replace the *jian shui* to your side, as you won't need it anymore. Then, start to absorb the peace...

茶 Purification serves to remove our worldly dust, as it also does for tea. She, too, has traveled far, and through the world, to reach us.



Steeping & Offering

浸泡和恭奉

...Take a breath and calm yourself. Lift the lid and pour into the pot. Pour in circular motions at least until the water is above the leaves, so as to not scald any one leaf too much. When the pot is full, replace the lid and steep the tea. Take another breath before lifting the pot to decant the tea for your guests. Move in circular movements around the edges of the bowl. Bubbles make tea astringent and rough. We should pour smoothly in figure-eights around the row of bowls, back and forth until all the tea is decanted. Then, gently replace the pot. Sometimes, with some sidehandle pots, you may have to rotate the handle around to make sure it isn't in your way.

The first bowl is an important one. For this first bowl, we bring each bowl to our heart, cover it with one hand and make eye contact with the guest it is for, offering them a warm smile of welcome. Do this for each guest, one at a time as you hand them their bowls. For a lot of people, a silent tea ceremony can be intense and heavy. They resist the silence and connection with presence as it goes against the grain of their busy lives and active minds. They grow bored and feel that the situation is overbearing. By connecting to each guest at the beginning with a heartfelt smile, we have found that the silence of a tea session is magically alchemized into *joyful silence*. We aren't sure of all the mysteries of why this happens, but it certainly works. The rest of the session will flow much smoother and happier for you and your guests due to this one simple gesture of love!

When you hand out each bowl, rotate the wrist outward—offering the part of the bowl your hand is not touching to each of your guests. We do this for every steeping. It is another of the many ways we honor our guests, opening the Universe that they can touch in each and every bowl!

After each bowl, return the bowls to the center. It helps to keep your bowl on the far side of your strong hand and place each consecutive bowl in order so you don't lose track of whose bowls are whose. The bowls then come and go, steeping after steeping. This is the breath of a tea ceremony, and the essence of its spirit: we are one (one gathering, one heart and one moment) and we are also apart (individuals with unique journeys).



永遠歡迎

給您一碗茶



Feeling the Steep

Those of you who have attended our ceremonies before may have seen some of us putting our thumb on the spout, index finger on the button/pearl of the pot and our other three fingers flat against the side. This is not a ceremonial gesture and should not be done for this reason. We do this to listen to the tea to know when it is steeped to the proper degree. Learning to communicate with the tea leaves, water and liquor and feel the proper time to decant is a necessary skill in tea brewing. Practice listening in this way. Can you “hear” the frequency of the tea changing as the water becomes more and more infused with tea? Feel through your hand. All great art is performed with such sensitivity and feeling for the medium, and from painting to photography, artists will describe the intuitive sensations that went into their works. Tea is no different. Try to avoid using the mind, and instead, listen with the heart. This gesture can help you to become more sensitive to the changes in the liquor in the pot and decant at the proper time without the need for an external device like a timer. Like any art, the best tea is made not with the hand or mind, but with the soul. Therefore, feeling is always better than any kind of external data when serving tea ceremonially.



Completion

完整儀式

A proper ceremony must have a completion. Without it, your guests will still feel like they are in ceremonial space even after they leave, which will make it hard for them to go about their day and concentrate on whatever comes next. The oldest and simplest way to end a tea ceremony of any kind is with a bowl or cup of clear water, which represents a washing away of the ceremony—celebrating the precious impermanence of the occasion. At this point, we feel comfortable breaking silence and engaging in some conversation with our guests, usually about important matters or tea. (They often have questions.)

After your guests leave, take a few minutes to sit in the space. Tea ceremonies are very intimate, and getting up immediately does not honor the grace that has just happened. Cultivate gratitude for the occasion and love for the warmth of the space. We also like to think of each of our guests one by one, wishing them well on their journeys and hoping that the ceremony we just shared in brightens their day.

Finally, *always* leave time to clean up. Just as we clean before a session, failing to do so afterwards dishonors the occasion and our teaware—the instruments of our Dao and of our Tea-Joy. If you have somewhere to be,

make sure you always leave adequate time to clean up your tea session, leaving no trace of what just happened. Cleaning is most of our practice of Cha Dao: cleaning outside and inside. We purify our hearts to be better servants of Tea, and of the Nature she speaks for; and we purify our space and our ceremonial instruments so that they reflect the purity we hope to inspire in our guests.

This is a part of learning to honor the occasion and rest in a graceful and loving relationship with impermanence. This is the moment at which the ceremony circles in on itself, returning to empty stillness.





How to Hold the Sidehandle Pot

Over the centuries, there have been many designs of sidehandle pots, and a lot of ways to use them. Using teaware is always about harmonizing with its spirit—using it the way it is made to be used, and in a way that maximizes the connection our body, spirit and mind have to the brewing process. Which method facilitates grace and flow? Which method allows for a flow of Qi from the ground, through the heart to the hand? Which is limitless and free? When you hold the pot, does it feel like an extension of you? Are all the ways that you need to use the pot not only simple and easy to perform, but even encouraged? These are the questions to ask as you test out the different ways of making bowl tea with a sidehandle pot.

Nowadays, you really only see people using sidehandle pots in one of two ways, and most sidehandles are created to facilitate one of these. One is tradi-

tional and the other is more modern, and, we feel, far more constricting in brewing. The modern method is to wrap the fist around the handle and put the thumb on the pearl/button, pouring inwards towards yourself. Pots designed for this kind of control will usually have a shorter handle and the distance between the handle and spout will be much smaller. If the handle is wood, you may even notice that the potter has angled/attached the wood in a way that forces you to hold the pot in this way due to bumps, ridges, twists or knots. This modern method is unfounded, and has no historical precedent. Every antique sidehandle we have seen is based on using the index finger, which we will discuss in a bit.

There are several issues with pouring from a sidehandle with your fist down and thumb on the button: First, you are always pouring towards yourself, facing the bottom of the pot to-

wards your guests. In tea, we always incorporate every possible opportunity to pay respect to our guests, so that “guest and host may be one.” All our heart is poured into our service. A more serious issue, however, is that you have much less control over the speed and distance of pour, and your circular movements are greatly restricted, especially as the pot travels back and further down a row of bowls. (The back-pour is more restricted as you cannot circle out.) We try to pour on the sides of the bowl, as bubbles make a tea rough. This becomes hard to do pouring in this way, as the wrist pinches in outward angles. And you also have far less control over the speed of the decantation, as this method really swivels on an “on/off” pivot.

The traditional way to hold a sidehandle is to use the bottom three fingers to wrap around the handle, the thumb for support underneath and



如何手持側把壺

the index finger on the button/pearl. The index finger is a natural extension of the hand/wrist/arm, which is why people everywhere use it to point. We have more Qi in our index finger than any other, which means more control over it. It is the most powerful of our fingers. We once asked a friend of ours who makes handcrafted rings which was the most powerful finger to wear a ring on, and he responded that “the index finger is the strongest” without a pause to reflect. If you extend your arm straight out in front of you, with your wrist slightly bent up, and then extend your index finger, you will feel the control and power you have down from the elbow, through the arm and wrist to the hand and finger. Pots made for this traditional style of brewing will have more space between the spout and handle, and usually have straighter handles. An angled handle works better with our ceremony.

Holding the pot in the traditional way creates more balance, grace and fluidity. In both forward and backward movements down a row of bowls, you can rotate the pot inwards or outwards around the rims of the bowls, as you need. This method allows a far greater circular control and much more choice over the speed and distance of the pour as well. This is important, as different kinds of tea are ideally decanted at different speeds. With this method, you can control how far you pour and whether the pour is a trickle or a gushing torrent—and everything between.

Don't take our word for it. Try holding your sidehandle pot in both of these ways. Have a loved one put their thumb on the button and pour towards themselves while you sit across from them and watch from the perspective of a guest. Then, switch to the traditional method. Which was more graceful? Didn't you enjoy seeing the

pour? Next, try the two methods yourself. Notice which one is more limber, free and is conducive to all the muscles, joints and natural movements of your arm, wrist, hand and fingers. Which feels more natural? Then try pouring some water. Notice the control, fluency and grace as you go back and forth down a row of bowls. Stop and try changing distance and speed into one of the bowls. Which method facilitates this? Do you have more control with one of these two methods? Does the water flow more smoothly? Then brew some tea and see how each session feels, physically and energetically. Which did the tea prefer?

Look at the pictures below: Which method feels looser, more fluent and graceful? Which feels tight and constricted?



SIDEHANDLE

側 把 壺 TEAPOT



Petr Novak



郭詩謙

ARTISANS

壹藝家

羅石



PETER KUO DA CHIAN

ELEMENTAL HARMONY & GRACE



Peter Kuo has been a friend, guide, teacher and tea brother of ours for years now. He is one of our favorite ceramicists in the world. He has a huge heart full of Tea spirit, and many of you have stayed in Peter and CiCi's guest house on your visits to Taiwan, so you know about their legendary hospitality and love for kindness. His sidehandle pots work perfectly in our traditional bowl tea ceremony. Let's learn why!



茶人: Connor Goss

An Island of Clay

Taiwan is renowned for preserving many old traditions and ways of life. Oftentimes traditions and practices have a way of ending up in Taiwan, where the seeds lay dormant for a while before sprouting into something truly unique and beautiful. And Peter Kuo is a product of this beautiful island, in these ways and more.

Finding the right sidehandle teapot can be a difficult journey to navigate, and particularly as fewer and fewer potters are making teaware with tea preparation in mind—focusing on design instead. Artists nowadays devote their energy towards creating teaware that favors beauty over function. Peter Kuo works hard to be an exception to this. He has learned to listen to the dialogue between Tea and Earth—between two intertwined elements—and has found the delicate balance of embodying beauty and function in teaware. He brings to life sidehandle teapots that each maintain an elegant presence in the tea space, carrying with them the stories of their journey through the elemental fire that has transformed their once soft clay bodies into crystalline forms and textures reminding one of mystical landscapes, wood shaped by Nature and fit to the pot as a handle, rustic charm that suits a bowl tea ceremony and also function in the pour, handle angle, nice clay for tea and other elements that make the pot function well.

Though function is not primary in a bowl tea ceremony, it is nice to meet a potter who cares about how

his works are used and where. You can certainly feel the Tea spirit in Peter Kuo's pots, and they are the favorites of many Chajin around the world for that very reason.

Meeting Clay

Peter is remarkably young, and despite his young age, he has already forged a name for himself, learning the dialogue of Earth and Fire. He is in his early thirties, visibly burning with passion for creating ceramics and exploring the endless possibilities that arise from the conversation humans have with the elemental forces of this world. He also loves tea, and unlike most potters in the world, is willing to listen and learn about tea brewing from Wu De and other teachers, adapting his ceramics to suit tea brewing and Tea spirit.

Peter was born and raised in Yingge, and even from a young age felt an affinity with clay. Being brought up in an environment steeped in ceramics and the arts nurtured the seeds that would eventually lead to his inspiration to take up sculpture. After finishing his schooling at one of Taiwan's most distinguished arts high schools, where he majored in sculpture, he began his life with clay, learning to work with this medium after meeting with a local ceramics teacher who inspired him. This auspicious connection with a new teacher merged the mediums of sculpture and ceramics.

Peter spent the next few years studying ceramics, learning the many skills that are interwoven within this single discipline. His dedication to his practice grew constantly, and by the age of twenty-three, he began to work full-time with ceramics, an achievement in and of itself. Slowly, as his experience and skills deepened, and he gathered resources, he rented an old teaware factory, which would one day become the space where he now displays his pieces and serves tea and food to guests. At the time, however, it was his studio.

In between these two points in time, Peter had a rather transformative experience: he began drinking Tea! He began to feel Tea and be influenced by approaching Tea as a Way. Drinking tea shifted his approach to ceramics greatly. It allowed him the space to create teaware with tea brewing in mind, rather than purely an aesthetic endeavor; it brought function to his background in sculpture (form). Around the same time that he began drinking tea, Peter also began studying under a famous wood-firing ceramics teacher, learning to use elemental Fire to create beautiful, unique teapots. He fell in love with this process immediately, and in 2011, he built his own wood-fire kiln. It is the same kiln he uses to this day, though now he has developed an intimate relationship with the kiln, understanding its unique personality, and more intuitively working with the wood-firing process. Peter says that the shift to wood-firing was as important as his move from sculpture to teaware.



Wood-Firing

Peter finds great joy in the challenges of wood-firing. It is within the inferno of the kiln that his greatest challenges and greatest rewards are revealed. He does not choose to journey the well-traveled path, favoring the challenges that come with changing clay blends for each firing. He has found a mix of different clays from America and Taiwan to produce the desired quality in his teaware, resulting in some consistency, though there is never any certainty when wood-firing.

When the time comes to light the kiln, he and his partner, CiCi, will spend four days without sleep while the fire burns. As they labor tirelessly to maintain the kiln, temperatures inside will reach 1250 °C. It is during this climactic moment that more than two months of work is condensed into a single moment: If the kiln becomes too hot or there are inconsistencies in the firing, all of Peter's work for the last two months will result in failure. He openly admits that during the first

months after building his kiln, there were many failures. In the beginning of any practice, failure underpins the endeavor, but if this becomes a lesson learned, these failures are transformed into success, becoming the wisdom that leads to mastery. Peter did not resign himself to failure, allowing those early days to become the foundations of what he has accumulated today. Slowly, he has grown to understand the wood firing process more intuitively, developing a relationship with the kiln and learning its personality.

Conversation of Elements

Peter continually seeks to explore the conversation between the elements, trying to create sidehandle teapots that are born from the Earth, tempered in the Fire and carry the primordial energies of these elements with them into each Tea (Wood) that is served in them. Each teapot is an expression of

Nature. It can be felt profoundly when you hold or even momentarily touch one of his teapots: They speak to you of their journey to be here-now, in this moment.

A larger, constant theme influencing the way Peter approaches the making of sidehandle teapots is the concept of karma, of cause and effect. He strongly views each teapot as a seed planted into fertile soil, to grow and become a tree rooted deeply in time and space. In a sense, Peter hopes that his teapots will offer tea to many people around the world, and in doing so, positively influence them. Through such a sidehandle teapot, you can share in the joys of Tea with more and more people, creating a space for connection and celebration.

With seemingly inexhaustible vigor, Peter is always exploring new ways of expressing the ancient dialogue between humans and Nature, evolving the way he makes ceramics, chasing perfection and harmony.



Like any talented artist, he is never entirely satisfied with the end result, always making mental notes on how he can improve the next time he sits at the wheel. His creative expression and approach to ceramics has been influenced by his insatiable desire for continual improvement. It is the accumulation of more than twelve years of practice and discipline. It is through his continual experimentation that he has been able to cultivate the skills necessary to create teaware that is both beautiful to gaze upon and is also functional. Each change he makes comes from integrating past failures and mistakes to improve function. It was, in fact, this attitude, along with his Tea spirit, that drew Wu De into his shop some fifteen years ago, and why the two are great friends even now.

Peter and CiCi often visit the Center, or we go to Yingge to see them. Even now, Peter is always asking about his pots and their function, as well as about tea brewing. I don't understand

the conversations he has with Wu De, as they talk in Chinese, but it is obvious to see that all the creative juices start flowing in Peter. I can always see the wheels turning as he listens intently, making notes inside to improve his craft. A "beginner's mind," with humility and a desire to improve and grow are the hallmarks of a true artist, and the steps on the road to mastery. That Peter cares about how his pots are used, and how to improve them in the future, already sets him apart from most teaware makers in the world. That he also understands that he must improve his own tea brewing skills to achieve this is a powerful recipe for great pots to come!

Tree and Mountain

One of the most unique elements within his sidehandle teapots is the use of wood or bamboo for the handles of each teapot. Peter will often spend

countless hours searching in places of Nature for pieces of wood that seek a new home. It is a part of the process that brings him into physical conversation with Nature, often gifting inspiration for future projects and ways of bringing Nature into each form created. "The wood already knows the teapot that it will become a part of," Peter says. Though it takes a long time and Mother Earth's patience to hear those unspoken words, eventually Wood, Earth and Fire meet in his pots.

Peter never forces the connection between the body of the teapot and its handle. He will sometimes wait weeks or months to find the perfect marriage of the elements—of Tree and Mountain. He says that sometimes he finds two pieces that immediately "want" to be together. In such moments, a tangible magic can be felt. This is yet another example of his devotion to creating something that embodies harmony with Nature, which is why we love to use his pots in our ceremonies.

Peter carries this forward even into the pursuit of suitable glue for the wooden handles. He has spent countless hours experimenting with different glues, finding one that is suitable for creating a seamless marriage between the body of the teapot and its handle: strong and durable, but invisible and without any toxicity that will impact the tea liquor.

Peter hikes all throughout Taiwan, finding wood on the beach, in the mountains and forests, and sometimes bamboo, from throughout Taiwan and even Japan. He showed us a huge box of wood he has collected over the years, saying that most of the pieces won't work on a pot. "It is hard to balance a piece of wood onto a pot, since you don't have much control over the shape or angle—other than turning the wood this way or that," he says with a smile. "I try to not carve or shape the wood much, just working a bit with it. Instead, I look for pieces that will work naturally."

Peter speaks about how in the early days of searching for the wood or bamboo for his handles, he would always try to find more and more beautiful pieces, and he found, after a while, that this was detracting from the harmony of his teapots. He says, "Now I simply wait for the wood to come to me. I do not strive for pieces that are beautiful. It is often the ones that aren't beautiful that make great handles, and the ones we are attracted to that don't work functionally." He has found the beauty and joy that comes with waiting. And if there are any media in this world that require patience, ceramics is surely one of them.

Through seeking to create sidehandle teapots that are natural, Peter has found a way of speaking the ineffable wisdom of the world, much the way Tea Herself does. His work translates Nature to our lives, bringing the elements home. He has also found a way of sharing his heart that benefits many Chajin around the world, and that is the true spirit of Tea. In our tradition, one's Tea spirit is measure in service—to others, to Tea and to the Way itself. Peter is a true Chajin, and we are proud that he makes sidehandle pots for our tradition and the ceremonies we create around the world in this community.



一
見鍾情

 這輩子注定在一起
 茶道

茶 Choosing a sidehandle teapot was a slow process for me. I had the opportunity to visit Peter's studio in Yingge during a visit to Taiwan and the Tea Sage Hut almost two years ago now. I still clearly remember choosing a teapot to bring home. I tried to listen to the teapots and feel how they felt in my hands. Most of them were profoundly beautiful vessels born from Fire and Earth; however, none seemed to be quite right for me. Many of the teapots felt a little awkward to hold, being someone with long, spindly hands. The handles were all the wrong size for me. Eventually, the right teapot found me, like most things, when I stopped searching. It was a truly magical moment: My hand seemed to become one with the handle of the teapot. It was a meeting between two long lost friends. A joyous occasion indeed!

After countless bowls offered with love to wayfarers met along the mossy path, I find myself here, writing this article and reflecting on the beautiful experiences shared through the sidehandle teapot that chose to serve alongside me. Memories of earthy bowls of shou puerh shared beside waterfalls and endless landscapes of Australian forest that offer a soft place to sit a while fill my heart with gratitude for Peter, Tea and my tradition, which has taught me to bring the two together.



THE MAKING OF A SIDEHANDLE



Last time Petr wrote for us, he discussed kettles and how they are made. We loved the article, and so asked him to take his hands out of clay and put pen to paper one more time to tell us all about the production of sidehandle pots. Petr's Tea spirit, commitment to improvement and clean, pure lifestyle are all the ingredients needed to create some stunning teaware, as so many of us in this community know. Let's see how they're made!



茶人: Petr Novak

Allow me to invite you into our ceramic studio once again! The excursion will be more visual this time, as I offer a step-by-step presentation of how sidehandle teapots are made. No dry chemistry or too many technical details from a potter's handbook this time, just craft, pure and simple. But before we start, I'd like to contextualize this process, sharing my story of how I got started with sidehandle teapots and some of my thoughts on them.

As some of you might know, I started with my ceramic journey almost twenty years ago. From the beginning, tea and tea culture heavily influenced my body of work, as I was a tea lover myself. Then till now, I am inspired by tea and clay together as one, creatively and personally in my practice. My first teapots were bigger, Western-style teapots with traditional back handles. However, early on in my journey, I visited all the tea rooms nearby, and I was touched by the Japanese Tokoname *kyusu* teapots I found in some of them—not touched in a positive way, but more inspired to create. Actually, I didn't like the *kyusu* I saw in particular; however, what I saw as the "strange," "nonconformist" handles were really cool and sparked something in me. (Please remember, it was many years later that I even heard the word "Internet," and there were no tea or teaware books, or great magazines like this, around anywhere.) There was not much of the authentic tea culture in our part of the world, which is probably the main reason why I didn't like the *kyusu* I saw at teahouses here in the Czech Republic: they were cheap, factory-made, boring examples of what I later learned can be magnificent creations. At the time, I even spoke frankly with the owner

of a tearoom about the low quality of the pots, and he agreed, arguing that cheap teaware was needed for beginners, as most vendors are sadly wont to do. Of course, now I know there are very beautiful, well-crafted Tokoname teapots. The fact is, I was young, and, as is the case with too many young people, I thought I knew best. After my complaining, one teahouse owner challenged me: "Okay then, if these *kyusu* aren't up to your standards, make some for us yourself, and we shall see what's what!"

Obviously, my foot was in my mouth now—making *kyusu* was not as easy as I thought! There are so many details to pay attention to (I will try to point out a few in my step-by-step demonstration later on). Just as my Western teapots were slowly becoming more and more functional, this new venture, trying to make sidehandle pots, might as well have come from another world. The honest truth is that my skills were not up to the challenge yet. There were many attempts that didn't even make it to the kiln: dysfunctional or ugly. But I was determined—the gauntlet was down! Over the years, I always tried a few with every new batch of teaware, and slowly, over time, created one out of every ten pots I made. As my skills improved, I started to understand sidehandle pots, and learned to apply that knowledge and skill to the creation of my teapots.

And then I met Wu De and this Global Tea Hut community, which reset my understanding of sidehandle pots to the good old "beginner's mind," offering a new perspective. Wu's approach to using sidehandle pots was totally different from the Japanese tradition I knew. The core principles of "Tea as medicine" and

"Tea as service" needed to be expressed in a piece of teaware. I opened myself to be inspired, listening to the community's needs and tuning my skills accordingly.

It is not so easy to describe the main shift in my approach to sidehandle pots. While there is nothing wrong with using such pots in casual, friendly, daily tea drinking, if you designate a teapot as the centerpiece of a ceremony, things change! You realize that such a pot is going to be handled with care and respect, which gives you a sense of responsibility. Each of these teapots will participate in and facilitate very precious moments that are changing the lives of many people. Suddenly, it is not so much about my artistic/creative self-expression. Such pots are beyond me, taking on a life of their own. They are practical tools and instruments in rituals that hold secret and sacred moments of Earth and Heaven uniting. The more I participate in and appreciate such moments in my own experience, the more I understand and work towards creating pots that embody this practice. Tea and clay both show us the way quite plainly—if we are listening. Brewing tea in a sidehandle pot, pouring the liquor into our bowls: how simple, how mundane; and yet, there is nothing more profound.

When people ask how much time I need to make a teapot, I usually explain that there are so many small steps, and I work on multiple pots at once, so it is difficult to give a simple answer. I like to work on a few pots over a few days, with some other tasks between and after firings. The following pages show the procedure I use to make sidehandle pots. I hope that you understand the process more clearly after seeing the pictures!

Clay Preparation

Over the years, I've settled into using just a few clays for making sidehandle pots: Those which are not only nice to work with, but, more importantly, I am also pretty confident work well with tea. The Czech Republic is very rich in clays, so we source most of our clay from local vendors. They are ready to use; though sometimes we mix a few clays together, playing with color and texture. In the photographs, you can see fine, iron-rich stoneware. This clay is very smooth and friendly to my hands. I love the variety of colors and heavy reduction firing this clay offers. As for its relationship to tea, this clay is dense and so maintains temperature very well. Also, in my experience, iron-rich clays are generally sweeter and smoother with most kinds of tea.

陶土講述
自己的故事

Throwing

As our friend likes to say, "Throwing is a potter's reward!" When you know how, it is very simple (getting to this point is another story). When throwing something so familiar as the body of a teapot, I have only the simplest idea in mind as a sketch, letting my hands and the clay do the rest: becoming the pot that was inside all along.





Trimming

Trimming and assembling is where most of the magic happens. Every single step in teapot production has a timing. I usually start the trimming on the second day, after the clay has had a chance to harden to the proper firmness—not too wet or dry to work with. During the throwing, I go with the flow as much as possible, but trimming is less in the heart and more in the mind, focused on details. It is a bit like lathe work: You cut out all the superfluous material, changing the shape and texture with every shaving. You cannot get any trimmings back, so care is needed. Consequently, I spend twice as much time trimming as throwing.

Assembling

This is probably my favorite step in making pots. When all the pieces that I am working on are trimmed, and in the right stage of drying, then this joyous process can begin. I prepare my favorite tools, clean my workspace and let my mind and body work together, aiming for the best results with what I have. Sometimes, I assemble ten, or even more, teapots in a row! It is not unusual for me to work on one pot for a bit, then start on two or three others before returning to the first one to finish the fine details, like refining the handle or spout. When all is done, I cover all the pieces with plastic and let them dry slowly.

Finishing

Before firing, when the pots are dry, I pick them up in my hands again, spending from ten minutes to half an hour with each. I fit the lids, clean the sieves and all the edges, and check the curves and balance of each pot.



Bisque Firing

We bisque fire all our pots in an electric kiln set to 1000 °C. With some clays and pots, this step is necessary, while others could technically be fired just once to the final temperature, but this bisque firing makes the whole firing process easier for us. By the time the pots reach 1000 °C, the clay will have already changed to ceramic, and all the organic materials will have burnt up. Then, we have porous, strong pieces, which can be evaluated to determine if they should be finished, decorated, glazed or polished before the final firing.

Cleaning

This could also be thought of as the final inspection. With teapots, I clean with sandpaper, smoothing all the edges and sieve holes, and then fitting the lids again. If you allow any imperfection at this point, it will be there forever. This is the part of teapot making when I pay the most attention. Even tiny details that nobody would probably notice, I try to see, and if my skills allow, I will work on refining every detail, no matter how minute.

火和土的
煉金術





Wood-Firing

Most of our pieces are fired in one of our wood kilns. (All the details of this process would be a whole other article—perhaps in a future issue!) This is the crown of all this work; it's quite complex and always full of excitement and joy. It all starts with loading the kiln, which takes one very long work day (if all the pots are already cleaned, glazed and ready). Then, the kiln is lit, in order to preheat for some hours or overnight. The temperature slowly rises for fifteen to twenty hours. The kiln stays closed tight, cooling down as slowly as possible over at least three more days. Then, a small window into the still-warm kiln is opened: first, a peek, then the first pieces are pulled out. Unloading is a day of celebration for us!

The next day, when everything is out of the kiln and resting on tables and in boxes in our kitchen, the final cleaning and sorting can start. Sidehandle pots often have ash and dust from the firing and need to be cleaned. The lids also have to be cleaned, and possibly adjusted to fit right. If there are any rough spots or details, fine sandpaper is used to polish the pieces under a shower of water. All the clean pots are set aside to dry, ready to send to some tea lover somewhere in the world.

Gratitude

When I think about the whole process of creating sidehandle teapots, and about my role in their creation, I am extremely grateful. When you know how to do it, the process is simple, but each and every pot really took me twenty years to create! With every single pot I take out of the kiln, I accept the results and celebrate the perfection of imperfection (*wabi*). However, I also see all the things that can be improved the next time, leaving room for growth. And I feel that gratitude for all the support I receive from you is an important part of my development. All the pots I am making now would not be here if it weren't for the tea brothers and sisters using the ones I've already made. Your support furthers this journey, bowl by bowl.



LUOSHU

THE POWER OF SIMPLICITY



Luo Shi is one of our oldest Taiwanese friends. Wu De and he have been sharing tea for fifteen years. Watching his pottery evolve from tight, ultra-realistic sculptures to loose, simple, wood-fired sidehandle pots has been a joy to behold. He has found the balance between loose and tight that all artists seek, but rarely find in a lifetime. His work is very suitable to our tradition of sidehandle bowl tea ceremony. Here's why...



茶人: Wu De

Luo Shi (羅石) is one of my oldest Taiwanese friends, dating back before we could even communicate—when all was tea and smiles, gestures and drawings. When I moved to Miaoli sixteen years ago, it was following Tea spirit to the place where She called me. I had tea friends here, and one of the most important teachers in my life, but I was always searching for new tea and teaware, as well as lessons to improve my understanding of tea and tea brewing. While driving my scooter home from teaching kindergarten one evening, I saw a small shop with a huge array of Yixing pots in the window and screeched to a halt. Back up—wait a minute... This shop was right down the street from my house! Why hadn't I seen it in the month I had been living here? With a smile, I pushed the door open, and I was greeted by a friendly smile that far outshone my own.

Drinking tea with Luo Shi, exchanging only names and smiles, I was impressed by his obvious knowledge of Yixing history, lore and craft, which was evidenced by the very decent collection of pots he had for sale in his shop. The best mines in Yixing were closed in the late 1990s, and many potters there turned to using ore from the inferior mines, like Fu Dong, which is still open today, or importing clay from other parts of Jiangsu or even further afield. But in the early 2000s, there were still a lot of great pots in Taiwan, though mostly in the hands of private collectors. The shops had all been picked clean, and a good pot was starting to become a rare sight, while truly great ones were starting to feel remote. Luo Shi's shop was, therefore, a welcome surprise, as there were quite a few affordable and very decent Yixing pots, and a few sparkling gems

I noticed right away. Looking around at this, I decided to stay for tea. I remember noticing a table in the back with some potters' tools and clay, and thought that there was a lot to explore in this shop indeed!

My Yixing teacher, Master Zhou, has often told me that all throughout the 1980s, Yixing was kept alive by the Taiwanese, saying that every teapot maker in Yixing working at the time sold exclusively to Taiwanese collectors, and therefore owe them a debt of gratitude. Luo Shi was one such Taiwanese, opening his shop in the late 1980s to sell tea and Yixing teaware, which he loves. Over the next ten years, I and my guests would pick through Luo Shi's collection and take home all his great pots, some of which are still here in the Center. (There may be a few in this community as well.) After the first time we drank tea, I knew I had met a tea brother to last my time in Miaoli, which was destined to become my home. And, the good news is: now Luo Shi and I can actually communicate! Getting to know him has only endeared him to me more, as he is kind, generous and very talented. He also knows a lot about tea, teaware and ceramics. We are lucky to have such a teacher right around the corner from the Center.

Born in Nature

Luo Shi was born in Nantou in 1959. He grew up in the mountains. His father was a fruit farmer, growing plums, peaches and pomelos. Luo Shi helped on the farm, working as hard as he played. He says he drank tea often as a boy, since all the adults would drink tea together whenever they had free time.

Luo Shi's mother is a Hakka from Miaoli, and he came to stay with family here when he was a young adult. Like many young people from the country, myself included, he sought a life in the city (though Miaoli is a very small city, perhaps a nice medium). Whatever the reason, Luo Shi's destiny was here in Miaoli. He soon met his wife and decided to settle down here for good, opening a restaurant to support himself.

In the 1980s, Luo Shi's brother took over the family farm in Nantou and switched from fruit farming to tea, as the tea boom was beginning all over Taiwan. Luo Shi started selling his brother's tea in the restaurant. He loved sharing it with customers, and so, as the tea started to sell more and more, he made the decision to open a tea store. Around the same time, the Yixing teapot craze was spreading all over the island, and Luo Shi fell in love with Yixing teaware, collecting all he could. His little shop soon became as filled with teapots as it was with tea grown on his family farm.

Then, in 1992, Luo Shi's life changed forever. He met his teacher, Tang Run Qing (湯潤清). Master Tang is one of a few rare Taiwanese teaware makers who actually works with authentic Yixing clay. In the 1980s, as all the teapots started crossing the Strait to be sold to the growing teapot market in Taiwan, some ore and clay also started making its way over. Many potters used local clays of similar colors to Yixing to make wheel-thrown replicas, a trend that continues today. However, a few talented potters, like Master Tang, studied under Yixing craftsmen and began making slab-built pots in the traditional styles. Master Tang eventually evolved his own style of making teapots.

He based his work on traditional Yixing Nature-themed pottery. He liked the pots in the shape of gourds, pumpkins, bamboo, insects and other wildlife, designing his own take on this kind of pot. Luo Shi was drawn to this pottery, as it reminded him of Nantou, where he grew up running in the mountains and playing with bamboo and insects. He followed in Master Tang's footsteps, taking classes a few times a week, collecting genuine Yixing clay and hand-building teapots.

By the time I met Luo Shi, he had already been making Yixing pots for more than ten years, and many of the gorgeous, artistic pieces on the top shelves were his own. The workshop in the back of his tea store, I later came to find out, was where he hand-built Yixing teapots. The first time I went back there, all the Yixing ore and clay amazed me, as I had never seen so much outside of Yixing itself. Luo Shi became well known for creating very realistic bamboo pots, often with insects adorning various parts of the pot. While Master Tang continues to walk down a path of Nature-themed pots

hand-built from Yixing clay, Luo Shi got permission from his teacher to take another turn in 2007.

A Move to Simplicity

The growing rarity and scarcity of genuine Yixing clay, as well as meeting other potters, inspired Luo Shi to try his hand at the wheel. Throughout the early 2000s, he started taking classes to deepen his understanding of ceramics in general, firing and glazing and using a potter's wheel. His years of experience working with Yixing clay, sculpting gorgeous works of art, meant he learned quickly. By the end of 2007, he had started developing a style all his own.

Luo Shi began using local Miaoli clay to craft teapots, sinks, jars and many other pieces on the wheel. He very quickly fell in love with wood-firing, especially the unpredictability and the harmony with Nature, which he has loved his whole life. This was yet another way for him to express Nature through ceramics: using clay from his

home and then firing with wood in the mountains nearby. He loves firing every couple of months, spending the night in the mountains, watching the kiln. He told me that the uniqueness of each and every piece makes them very special. "The fire is as much the artist as I am."

The clay in Miaoli has a very high iron content, which makes for great teaware, providing a sweetness to the tea. It also reacts with the fire and ash to make gorgeous, shining, sunset-like patterns across his pots. Luo Shi fires every two months. It takes four days (96 hours) to complete a single firing. A tremendous amount of effort, time and love is put into getting the kiln up to around 1230 °C. Wood-firing was a natural step for someone raised in the mountains, and with such a passion for the natural form.

At some point, Luo Shi joined the growing trend of making sidehandle pots using wooden handles. The style suits him, and he has done things with it that no other has. He loves hiking in the mountains around Miaoli to find pieces of wood for his pots, and



the door outside his shop is lined with baskets full of various vines, branches and other pieces of wood. More recently, he has started using chair legs, doorknobs, pieces of old metal and other odd bits. The second greatest joy of the tea lover is to give useless, dying old things a second life in tea. We love seeing these pots with handles that share in this spirit, recently buying a metal-handled pot for the Center. My favorite sidehandle pot was made by Luo Shi, using a piece of wood I found in Hopiland, in Arizona. I asked the shaman there for permission to take it, leaving tobacco as a gift to the spirits of the land. The moment I picked it up, it fit my hand perfectly: every groove of every line a perfect match to my hand. It is the yang to my yin, warping and woofing to the contours of my hand in an uncanny and mysterious way. I have never held something so perfectly suited to me. And the fact that it was made by Nature is inspiring beyond words. When I told Luo Shi the story and respectfully asked him to make me a pot—treading on his artistic freedom—he agreed, creating a very beau-

tiful piece to match my wood. The result is beyond belief. (*See p. 31.*)

Power Through Focus

In 2012, Luo Shi's son, Luo Hong Yu (羅弘煜), decided to follow in his father's footsteps and become a potter, learning from both his father and Master Tang. It has been amazing to watch him grow and step into the light as a potter. He continues to work in his father's style, but you can see that the light is being transmitted to the next generation. Though young, Luo Hong Yu has a lot of potential to reach mastery in the future. Recently, we brought a pot of his to the Center as well. It is nice when you find an art or craft you love and see that it has a future in the next generation, so that future Chajin will also be able to enjoy these amazing pots.

When you have known Luo Shi, and his work, as long as I have, it is easy to see how his natural style evolved from the precision of his early sculpted pieces. The same adoration

and observation of Nature is present in the work, though the spirit, creativity and conception have all developed to new, more refined and subtle levels. You can still feel him channeling Nature: Instead of sculpting pieces that capture moments of Nature almost photographically, he has moved to bringing the spirit of Nature—Earth, River, Wood and Fire—into his pieces in a more raw, unadulterated and pure form. His sidehandle pots are the perfect match for our sidehandle bowl tea ceremony, bringing Nature and spirit to the tea table and allowing for a simple, natural aesthetic to encourage the healing work of Tea. Beyond that, the fact that his pots are made of local Miaoli clay, fired in the mountains nearby and with handles made of wood that was gathered in the same mountains we hike and drink tea in forges an even deeper bond with his work.



TeaWayfarer

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 Samson Swanick.

I live in Bali and drink tea. But, I also do a lot of other things: I run custom educational adventures to reconnect kids to Nature; I have a past life regression/hypnotherapy practice; I do sustainability consulting, build aquaponic systems; I run a permaculture farm, brew kombucha, teach meditation, have sound healings; and as a musician, perform songs I wrote about self-empowerment/spirituality in the genres of singer/songwriter and hip-hop... But my favorite thing to do (besides making puns and laughing at my own jokes) is to serve and drink tea!

My journey towards the discovery of Tea was a long, adventurous route. However, looking back, by following the breadcrumbs, I was really collecting puzzle pieces for a masterpiece—one that would change my life forever. Being born in the southwestern desert of the USA, I always dreamt of visiting the vast emerald green hills of Ireland. It was in this most magical of places that I got my first taste of the Leaf. I was invited to attend afternoon tea.

For years after that glorious experience, in the afternoons, I would carefully arrange and enjoy the liquid healing pleasure of each cup. I had always greatly appreciated how Tea could help me become more mindful and help me to truly appreciate the moment, the surrounding Nature and my contentment to just be. This was something I really appreciated, because even before I met Tea, I had a mediation practice and had studied with many different teachers. All their various techniques seemed to foster the feelings that Tea gave me naturally.

I had been living in a hut in Bali, spending my days eating fruit and meditating. A friend of mine, a Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor, Dave Melladew, invited me over for a tea ceremony. On his balcony overlooking the rice fields, from his sidehandle pot, he poured an elixir of pure alchemy, and I awoke into a field of infinite silence, tranquility and peace. It was beautiful in every sense and in every way. I still remember that first bowl. Then, a couple of months later, fate, luck or destiny would bring me to another magical encounter, face-to-face with a bowl of tea poured by the hands and heart of Wu De. Wu De had traveled to Bali and was holding a Tea ceremony at Dave's place, and I was invited.

We started meditating and drinking Tea, and my reality started to blur and come undone. It was as if a soft, angelic embrace had floated me far away in time and space. I had met Tea, and She, with Her infinite compassion, had brought me into Her world. She showed me where the tea I was drinking had come from; She showed me the surrounding trees and shared that these were the friends that kept those tea trees company. I felt the Nature flowing through the tea and into me, reminding me of who I really am. I felt Her unconditional love and learning in each sip. My life was forever changed. Like so many of you, Tea came upon me suddenly and whisked me away.



 **Samson Swanick**

I opened my eyes and immediately asked what most people ask, "What kind of tea was that?!" Wu De responded like he normally does to that question. I said, "Okay, just tell me when and where and I'll be there." Later on, a three-week visit to the Tea Sage Hut turned into a two-month pilgrimage to Taiwan, Wuyi and Yixing with an incredible group of tea brothers and sisters, whom all hold a deep place in my heart. It was an epic trip: We saw and learned so much!

As my life journey continues to unfold, I could not feel more honored, humbled and grateful to have a goddess holding my hand along the way. And, I have the deepest privilege to serve and share this divine healing with others. It is with deep reverence that I serve tea—She is medicine, my love and my path. In my pain, She soothes; in my confusion, She illuminates; in my soul, She awakens and shows me the way—the Way of Tea.

If you're ever in Bali, stop by my hut in Ubud! I'll tell you a few dumb jokes and pour you a bowl of tea. Then, in holy gratitude, we can commune together with this most divine and healing goddess—all amongst the vibrant jungle of paradise on the Island of the Gods.

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Tea & Zen Retreats

茶道

茶主题: Shou Puerh

茶主题: Chajin Stories/Biographies

茶主题: Liu Bao Tea



If you serve tea regularly and would like some extra magazines or tea tins to give out to help spread the word about Global Tea Hut, please let us know. We are also looking to donate magazines to public places.



Please continue to use the app. Don't feel intimidated to post about your daily tea, any questions you have about tea or teaware, your reflections on the magazine or Tea of the Month!



The live broadcasts are so much fun! We are doing two every month: one in the beginning, which is a great Q & A, and another broadcast at the end of the month, where we discuss the Tea of the Month.



The photo contest has finished. But we now have a recipe contest! Submit your recipes to us at gthrecipes@gmail.com and you can win some free tea, teaware or art!



Our Light Meets Life fundraiser teas and teaware have arrived. We have some of the best cakes we have ever produced and some glorious gongfu teaware. All the proceeds help build our future Center, called "Light Meets Life."



We are considering hosting two Annual Global Tea Hut Trips in 2018: our usual spring trip to a tea-growing region of Asia and a second trip within Taiwan itself. Would this second trip interest you?



We are going to devote more time to journalism, translation and all around magazine improvement in 2018. Let us know some topics you would like to read about on the app and help spread the word!

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 De will be traveling less in 2018, as he plans to work on the magazine and focus on the Center next year.



We are offering two ten-day courses every month. We will post the 2018 schedule very soon. So far, the courses have been a huge success, with a much better structure and learning environment.



We are considering offering one longer, more meditative course for older students in 2018. This course would be twenty days, cover each brewing method more in-depth and also include more meditation each day. Would you be interested? If so, what time of year would be best for you?



The Center will be closed throughout December for rest and a thorough cleaning to prepare for the new year of ten-day courses.

October Affirmation

I am elevated

Do I wake up gloomy? Do I forget to celebrate each and every precious day? All the conditions for my happiness and unhappiness are in each day. I choose elevation. I am grateful. I am awake and enthusiastic for this precious day!

日月潭

Sun Moon Lake



www.globalteahut.org

*The most elevated 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

