

# MAY GONG FU TEA-BREWING TIPS

In gongfu tea, it is very important that our skills become second nature—a part of who we are. We learn to make tea without thought, as you walk or talk, eat or drink. This frees us up from the tea preparation so that we can focus our energy inwards, or on connecting with our guests. Whether we are having an interesting, heartfelt conversation, a spiritual dialogue or resting in silence, we can do so and the tea will flow with us effortlessly because all the preparation skills are a part of us.

There is no separation between the pot and the hand, nor the stream of tea coming from the teapot. Most people can feel the connection they have between the teapot and the hand that grips it. They may even feel the Qi flowing down through the arm into the hand and then the pot. Many, however, find the connection ends there. But why? Why does the connection end at the mouth of the pot? The stream of Qi flowing from the shoulder through the arm and into the hand, then into the pot does not stop at the mouth of the pot; actually, it continues on in the stream of tea liquor pouring out. Try feeling as if this stream is an extension of you, connected to you, like a solid rope that you control.

The same can be said of the hot water poured from the kettle. We control the stream. If you are right-handed you will find that the tea session flows much more smoothly when the kettle is in your left hand. If you're left-handed, try the opposite. When pouring water from the kettle, allow your index finger to extend down the handle towards the spout, affording more control and precision in your pour. Like with the teapot, try to feel the connection you have to the stream of liquid. Practice aiming into very specific locations. One way to do this is to use very small cups and try filling them with a specified amount of water without spilling any. Try filling several such cups in a row, without spilling any water and with as much precision as possible. Over time, raise the kettle up and practice aiming from higher/further away. You will find the stream of water slowly becoming an extension of your arm, and your spirit. Mastery involves such practice...

