

Moments of Inspiration

Jaanus Leplaan, Estonia

Tea has an amazing ability to connect people and strengthen friendships, but an even more remarkable ability to connect us to ourselves. Having tea as my sole companion in moments of quiet meditation has deepened my appreciation for this incredible opportunity and experiences I have been given.

Lately I've had some trouble concentrating, feeling as if my mind was constantly filled with a hundred unimportant thoughts. I work as a university café manager and the first months of the year tend to be among the busiest. Naturally, things come up and change all the time. Between work and hobbies it can get quite hectic sometimes; and finding time to rest, reload and to ground myself is not always easy. Rising early and having a tea session first (or maybe third) thing in the morning provides a rare moment in the day to do just that: quietly meditate and feel connected to Nature. One such morning was especially inspiring and made me scribble down these lines...

I woke up with the dawn to see my beloved Merilin, who works as a chef, off to work. I practiced some yoga as I always do in the mornings and after that decided to drink, for the first time, the 1990s 7572 shou Puerh that had been resting on our tea shelf, getting over his/her jet lag.

It was a calm morning with a couple of early-risers walking their dogs on half-melted, half-frozen snow and a gentle late winter breeze in the air. As I was sitting in our tea space next to the window, facing one of Wu De's paintings, drinking tea and meditating, I felt calmer and more centered with each cup. The view from our 3rd-floor apartment is very typical of a Tallinn residential area: five-story brick and concrete apartment buildings, a little parking lot and some trees and bushes scattered around next to sidewalks and pathways. Being winter time in Estonia, all the trees and bushes had shed their leaves and looked like brooms growing out

of the snowy ground, except for two pine trees right outside our window.

After my third cup I dropped a couple of snow chrysanthemum flowers (the ones we received as a gift with the GTH newsletter) into my tea bowl and steeped the tea with them. As I was sipping this lovely brew, meditating and resting my eyes on those two pine trees swaying gently in the breeze, I began to feel an even deeper sense of calmness and clarity. My body felt physically lighter, as if gravity had lost some of its power over me. I felt my mind emptying, freeing itself from the constant stream of thoughts, like letting go of some excess weight I had been carrying around for months. People often describe such feelings as being at peace or being one with everything.

Drinking my last cup of tea that morning I felt inspired and incredibly thankful for being a part of this ever broadening circle of tea brothers & sisters and being so fortunate to share these special teas and moments with all of you!

Holding a bowl with tea leaves, still warm from the liquid that a moment ago became a part of me, thoughts of Steve, Wu De, my friends at Chado tea shop and even friends I haven't yet had the pleasure to meet entered my mind. Feeling so grounded and connected, I realized once again how important it is to take some time and space for oneself. It also reminded me of an old Dalai Lama joke that goes like this: The Dalai Lama walks into a pizza restaurant and asks the chef: "Can you make me one with everything?"

