

# SEPTEMBER 2013

In September, the weather begins to cool and our teas start to turn darker, our water flowing into roasted Oolongs like Cliff Tea, Taiwan Red Water (*Hong Shui*) Oolong or aged Oolong. The Year starts turning towards winter, and the autumn is time for gathering energies for the coming darkness. As the days grow shorter and cooler, many of us will be taking out warmer clothes. This month is a time of rest for tea makers around the world, and for the tea trees gathering Earth and Heaven for a winter or spring harvest.

This month, we enter the Osthmanthus Moon. The Moon Festival, or Mid-Autumn Festival (*Zhongqiu Jie*), is one of the most important Chinese holidays of the year. The full moon of this month is considered to be the largest of the year, and family members gather to have picnics or meals and stay up to see the full moon, which is a symbol of abundance, harmony and luck. It is also a romantic time, and you'll see lovers out on benches holding hands celebrating the fullest moon of the year. Chinese people eat pomelo as a symbol of fortune and abundance. They are huge and delicious. We also eat moon cakes, which are traditional sweets with an egg yolk in the center, combining sweet and salty—like life. (We prefer the ones without the eggs, however, some of which are made with amazing pineapple filling!)

Every year, children hear a retelling of the story of Hou Yi and Chang'e, who lived during the reign of the emperor Yao, around 2200 BCE. Hou Yi was Heaven's archer and Chang'e was an attendant to the Mother of the West. They fell in love and were eventually married. Some of the gods were jealous of Hou Yi, however, and slandered him to the Jade Emperor who then banished the two lovers to live a mortal life on earth. Hou Yi hunted for the couple and they were abundant on earth. At that time there were ten suns in the sky. Each one was a three-legged bird that roosted in mulberry trees around the world. Each day, one of them would ride across the sky in Mother of the Suns' chariot. One day, however, they all rushed out together and dried up all the lakes and caused a huge drought, killing many people. Emperor Yao asked Hou Yi to shoot down nine of the bird-suns, which he did. The emperor gave him a pill of immortality as a reward, advising him to meditate and fast for a year to prepare himself. While he was away,

Chang'e noticed the light coming from the pill he had hidden and ate it. She floated up into the sky. Hou Yi tried to follow but couldn't. She floated up to the moon. Once there, she coughed up half the pill and asked the rabbit who ruled the moon to make some more elixir of life for her lover. If you look closely at this month's full moon, you can still see the Jade Rabbit pounding herbs to make the elixir for Chang'e. In the meantime, Hou Yi meditated enough to rise up and live immortally in the sun, longingly watching his beloved. The two are only united at the full moon of the Osthmanthus month, which is why this month's moon is the fullest and brightest of the year—testament to their love...

As a result of this story, Chinese people consider this to be a romantic month, and auspicious for weddings. According to legend, if you tie juniper branches together with a red thread and put them under your bed during the full moon, you and your beloved will stay together for all eternity.

You might also try the ancient moon meditation that Hou Yi practiced on the night of the full moon this month, perhaps also finding immortality. Begin by sitting facing the moon and stare at it for some time before closing your eyes. As you calm, imagine the moon growing larger and closer until it is hovering right over your head. Slowly imagine the moonlight entering through the crown chakra at the top of the head. Let its light fill your entire body, radiating calm and bliss and removing all blockages. Hold the image for as long as possible before opening your eyes and bowing to the moon...

*Bright moon, when was your birth?  
[teacup] in hand, I ask the deep blue sky;  
Not knowing what year it is tonight  
In those celestial palaces on high.  
I long to fly back one the wind,  
Yet dread those crystal towers, those courts of jade,  
Freezing to death among those icy heights!  
Instead I rise to dance with my pale shadow;  
Better off, after all, in the world of men...*