

A Ritual of Ceremony

Like many of you, I really enjoy sharing a cup of tea with friends. There is something very special about seeing all the hands cupping the warm bowls, sharing the bounty that Tea is sharing with us in that moment. There is a profound kind of magic that unfolds in the space around the tea table—strangers, friends, lovers even adversaries... Tea is unconcerned and I doubt it gives much care about the boundaries that separate. Its purpose is simply to exist, flowing from kettle to pot to bowl—connecting them all seamlessly into a singular experience.

For many of us, in cities all over the world, sharing tea each month has become a subtle and invisible ritual in our lives. We take a moment to make space for each other, to connect, across the globe, to share a moment of bliss. Many of us invite friends over to share in the experience, deepening our affection for loved ones and those close to us through the kindness and intention inherent in the act of serving.

One of my favorite things is sharing tea with strangers. Mikki and I host fairly regular tea gatherings at our home. We have a fair amount of cherished “regulars” who we are always happy to see, but in truth it’s always a blessing when we have strangers stop by.

You see, our first experience with tea was in a bustling tea tent at a music festival. It was quite random really: we walked by on a chilly morning and we decided to have some tea to warm up. The whole experience was out of the norm for us: people gathered around small tables, huddled around small cups of a dark red liquor, strange statues and crystals strewn about. Where were the tea bags and mugs?

Had we wandered into the wrong place? Needless to say, since I am writing this, it’s safe to assume we had a moment of fearlessness and decided to stay a while. We squeezed our way in amongst a group of strangers and were handed our first cups of a strange brew that seemed to taste like old dirt... Soon enough, all that strangeness gave way to a building sense of familiarity; even though we didn’t know each other, we talked to each other like friends. All the concepts of separation, that I am this and you are that, began to fall away and for a moment we were all brothers under the spring sun.

This is why I cherish the stranger at the table. No matter where they are from, how they got there, how they earn their living or what their politics may be, they found their way to this space at this time to share in this ritual of humanity. Sure, the first few moments are always a little nervous, there are always questions to be answered about this strange and unusual rite. In the end, however, in a moment of silence, you can hear it: The walls crumble away and we are free to simply exist. The whisper of the Leaf tells us that we are together. We are infinite and we are all brothers under the spring sun.

—Chris



