

Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these magazines. We hope that this helps us all get to know each other better. 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 the tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to show you some glimpses of such beautiful people and their tea. This month we would like to introduce the tea-struck **Ivan Karushev**:

I first got into tea through listening to Russian rap. Some rappers in Russia write songs about Chinese tea: puerh, tiguanyin, Da Hong Pao, those kinds of tea.

One day, when I was 16, I was walking around and saw a tea shop selling puerh, so I checked it out. The woman there told me about this "20-year-old" shou puerh and I bought some. But I didn't know how to brew it. I made it British-style, adding some sugar and drinking it from a mug. That was exotic for me, but I wanted to learn more and I started from that point.

Later I returned to the shop and bought some other kinds of tea (oolong, white tea) and started to explore those worlds. For me, the real tea journey started one evening, when I sat in my room drinking Dian Hong. I used awful teaware to brew it, but I took a sip and something transcendent happened inside. It took me to the deepest level of tea.

In Russia, we have a lot of information about tea as art, and we have some tea culture too. I learned about tea from Russian books and websites. Then I moved to Moscow to work as a tea server at a tea club. I was trying to learn all I could about tea. So in Moscow, I contacted tea people I knew through the Internet and met many fellow tea lovers that way. One of them was Denis. He invited me to his home to drink tea.

Denis is a student of Wu De. We drank bowl tea in silence, and he showed me Global Tea Hut. We drank a Global Tea Hut oolong gong fu style. He explained equanimity and sensitivity in these brewing styles, and I was really excited about that. One week later, I drank 1980s puerh with Nastya (another Global Tea Hut member), and that session was exactly what Denis had told me about drinking tea with my heart. So, this tradition just found me. I didn't choose it. It just came and I accepted it because it was already a part of me.

I wanted to deepen my knowledge of the brewing methods in this tradition and I was in luck: that summer, Wu De came to Moscow. Wu De helped me go to the deepest level of tea. I went to his workshops and really changed my viewpoint, to see tea not only as a beverage, but as a living plant spirit. We drank Five Elements tea, and it was like when I drank Dian Hong, but more intense. I really felt the leaves fill my body. It completely changed me. It started my way of life, because I started to feel myself more alive. I feel more subtle sensations around, not only in my body, but in other people and in objects, too. I started to feel more compassion for all I see as well.



Since then, I've started to practice all five brewing methods from this tradition step by step, and to do all I can for this tradition. So right now we are working on our tea center in Moscow. We create tea gatherings and so many people come to these gatherings. Every time we have different experiences, like *ichigo ichie*. You always want to make something special for your guests, to help them feel the Leaf, to be of service and to connect. It's not about imposing my vision of tea on them, but rather helping them hear Her voice by themselves. I help them create their own relationships with tea.

Wu De and I met again last autumn, in Estonia, when he came to do other workshops there. Then we had workshops in Kiev. I realized that the next time we would meet, would be in Taiwan, so I started to plan my visit there. It ended up being spontaneous, and now I'm here at the center writing this! Here in Taiwan, I started to realize how fresh my love for tea is and how much I need to do for the future of the center in Moscow, but it's good because I'm not stuck in ideas of how to do things. I can come back to beginner's mind. Being here has completely refreshed me and prepared me to return to Moscow and share what I've learned. Please come help us in Moscow, or if you're visiting, share some tea: