



TEA FOR TWO

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There's a certain magic in Tea that connects us with our higher selves, with Nature, with the present moment, with other people and with the divinity in all things. Above all else, this is what I love about tea, and that is a sentiment shared by many others in this community. Looking through the back issues of this magazine, you'll find many an article devoted to the topic of tea and connection—tea as a meditative practice, tea as a means for remembering your connection to Nature, tea as a tool for presence, etc. And lately, a lot of community members have been bringing to light one specific way in which tea connects, one which we have yet to cover.

I'm talking about the beautiful and unique connections that arise from sharing tea with a partner. In order to include a few of the many different ways of approaching tea with a partner, I've interviewed my own 'significant other' and two other couples in the Global Tea Hut community. We'll share our perspectives on drinking tea with a partner in a sort of 'conversation outside of time and space'—the interviews were conducted separately and pieced together around different topics. First, I'll briefly introduce everyone:

Chris and Mikki live in Los Angeles. They have been drinking tea together since 2010, and started working with tea as a practice for deepening their relationship in 2012. They drink tea together every morning.

Vera and Frederic's relationship sparked around tea in 2013. They spent several weeks at Tea Sage Hut earlier this year and are currently traveling the world together, sharing tea along the way. They drink tea together pretty much every day, though it's not around any certain schedule.

Merlin lives in Germany and I live in Taiwan. We spend several months a year together in either place, and serve tea to each other often during those times.

Making Space

Chris: Wu De came [to Los Angeles] to serve tea [in 2012]. He gave us two bowls and some Sun Moon Lake red tea. He left asking us to sit with each other and have tea in the morning one time a day for seven days. Just leaves in a bowl and hot water—that's it. It was a great start and a great experience because it was an opportunity for us to make time for each other.

Lindsey: Yeah, creating space for just being together in a peaceful state of mind can be so vital and healing in a relationship. It can be the ultimate "quality time". Sharing tea in this way can be like a date night, but without all the expectations and go-getter experiences and detailed plans. It's just hot water, tea and connection.

Merlin: Exactly. There is no agenda. Nothing has to be done, nothing is in a hurry, we can just be... spending time like this is the most valuable gift we can give to our relationship.

Chris: The collaboration holds the meaning. You and your connection to the tea make it meaningful. It's less about the tea than it is about having time that's unencumbered and with no purpose but to be with the other person. It's always that way for people when they dedicate time to it.

Mikki: It's a sacred space to share.

Lindsey: That's so true. There's a lot of ancient symbolism in Cha Dao. One very old way to see each session is as a temporary ordination in which the participants are all monks and nuns. This particular element of the sacred adds another level to the way in which you can share tea with a partner. It's sharing tea with your partner, but not *as* your partner. Rather, it's more like your higher self sharing tea with your partner's higher self, and seeing that they are one and the same. It's not about fixing relationship problems. It's seeing that there aren't any problems; that everything is exactly as it should be for your paths to unfold together (and perhaps also apart). That sense of no obstacles and nothing needing to be done creates such a freedom, such spaciousness, in the entire relationship. It infuses the relationship (and life in general) with this sense of light and play. It helps both partners release all those crazy fears and desires that skulk around in their minds trying to sabotage their lives, and to embrace the joy of the present moment and the divinity in everything (not just your partner). Perceiving the other person clearly and seeing that you are one and the same also gives the space for both people to grow into their higher selves so much more naturally and comfortably than they could otherwise. There is no more "I'm afraid you'll do X" or "I want you to do Y." There is only a brightly glowing "YES" to loving, living and growing!



Chris & Mikki sharing tea in Joshua Tree

Tea as a Foundation

Frederic: Tea, like the breath, can be a constant reminder for being present, aware. So drinking tea now has that “sacred” aspect glued to it. Drinking tea is like sitting.

Merlin: For me, tea is a form of meditation that Lindsey and I can do together.

Lindsey: Yeah, like an interactive meditation.

Vera: Tea is one of the most (if not the most) important foundations of my relationship with Frederic. I was completely new to tea prior to visiting the Hut, and prior to meeting Frederic. We came to know each other through drinking tea together. When two people are awakened to Tea in the same time, place and manner, it is truly a special connection that can never be broken (regardless of how long we journey together). Tea is a game changer, a whole-life changer. There were four significant changes that happened at the same time when I came to the Hut: I started drinking tea daily, I started meditating daily, I stopped drinking alcohol and I began a relationship with Frederic. I don't know if it was a combination of these things or all of them together, but something significant shifted at my core and my life will never be the same. It is in this time and with the support of these changes that I

am allowing myself to become all that I am. I am returning to my True Nature.

Chris: Sharing tea has been crucial for my relationship with Mikki. It has brought a lot of heart into it. I can be an analytical person, all about skill and craft. Drinking tea with Mikki has brought me back to heart and to the rare opportunity to share with others. It's not just perfecting the technique, but also energetically connecting with the person across the table. Not “How do I make really delicious tea?” but “How do I make tea that connects me with love to those around me?”

Mikki: Yeah, it really opens up heart space and connection.

Lindsey: Exactly. For me, it's like clearing a channel and allowing the love of Nature, the love of the Universe, Divine Love, whatever you want to call it, flow through. There's something really magical that happens when you serve tea with presence and love, and regularly serving tea to someone who you love deeply can open your heart so much. On the surface level, practicing tea by serving tea to your partner improves your tea brewing skills, but there's something much deeper going on too, and it is what makes your tea serving really special. It's learning to serve from the heart. And ultimately, that expands far

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beyond how you serve tea to your partner or to anyone else. It's a practice that brings you into a more compassionate way of being with everyone you meet.

Slowing Down & Seeing

Vera: I've noticed many benefits of drinking tea together. Perhaps the most important is that it has enabled us to slow... way... down. We both tend to move too fast, rush the process, project our relationship into the future too much... We both come to the table with a lot of "fire". The "water" and "earth" energies and the alchemy of their coming together in the tea brewing and drinking process can help to cool the flames a bit, assisting us in being present for ourselves, for each other and the moment.

Lindsey: Yes. Again, it's that space of nothing needing to be done, and the alchemy that occurs when you are simply present and accepting.

Chris: Tea has an incredible ability to open you up into a place of complete acceptance. It's really just, "Hello. How are you? I see you. I'm happy to be with you. I remember why I'm with you."

Lindsey: Yeah, tea really brings you into a heart space where you can so clearly see others without any kind of projections or judgments. And that can be such a powerful thing in a long-term relationship, where there's a high risk of accumulating toxic emotional baggage unless you have some good methods of clearing it away, like tea and meditation.

Advice for Newbies

Chris: If you're looking to deepen your connection, start with tea. When we talk with other couples, they often feel like they don't have any quality time. I tell them you can't have it unless you make it. Instead of getting up, making tea, etc. as an individual practice, make it a shared activity in the simplest, fastest way—tea in a bowl.

Merlin: Yeah, normally I would go for side handle or leaves in a bowl. In most tea sessions, it's about the connection between us, and tea gives the space and amplifies it. As a couple, we trust and know each other very well, so when the focus is on the tea, it's easy for us to pick up on the energy of the other person and amplify it.

Lindsey: That can be especially obvious with bowl tea, when brewing technique isn't much of a factor. Sometimes, we use the same teaware, the same kind of tea and the same water source... yet your tea and my tea are

totally different! Sharing tea with a partner is a wonderful way to learn to recognize the energy in different people's tea, and to pick up on the subtle energy shifts in each other. So, yeah, I usually prefer bowl tea, too.

Merlin: But there are definitely times when gongfu tea is great.

Lindsey: And whisked tea, too! Anyone else have some advice to share?

Frederic: Yes, get yourself a ticket to Taiwan and stay at the Hut for some time.

Lindsey: Yeah! Contact us through our website. When you visit, you can learn firsthand about those tea brewing methods we talked about and (more importantly) learn to brew from the heart.

Vera: Wu De's words ring in my ears: "Always drink tea with a clear heart." This is the most important. Frederic and I made an agreement to follow this advice and I pass it along to others. Where, when and how we drink tea don't seem to really make that big of a difference. Life goes on as it always has, with all the noise and the clutter and so on. As best as we can, we try to 'clean it up' and prepare for a 'perfect space' in which to drink tea... But you can be sure that the perfect, pure space is inside of you.

Lindsey: Beautiful... Here's hoping that you can find that space in your next tea session!



*If you are cold, tea will warm you;
if you are too heated, it will cool you;
If you are depressed, it will cheer you;
If you are excited, it will calm you.*

—William Gladstone

