

Tea Wayfarer

*Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these magazines in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. 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 share glimpses of such beautiful people and their tea. This month we would like to introduce our dear sister **Anastasia Kotliarova**:*

My first deep experience with tea was during my second year of university in my hometown of Rostov-on-Don, Russia. I was attending a college open house, trying to determine what my field of study would be. As it turned out, one of the lectures involved a tea ceremony. I thought, "This should be interesting!" The lecturer was a psychotherapist, who also happened to run his own tea house. Interestingly, he combined his profession with his practice of making Chinese tea, often seeing his clients over tea.

Maybe I learned more about tea than psychology on that day! During this first encounter, I was already learning about how the way we prepare tea affects the Qi of our water, which eventually goes into the tea we are preparing.

I listened and watched with a completely open mind, instantly falling in love. The first tea seed was planted in me. By the end of the lecture, I wanted nothing more than to work at his tea house and learn more from him! Sure enough, while still in school, I would begin to work there. In the beginning, this meant being the dishwasher—but that did not affect my happiness and joy from being there.

Even though the tea house was amazing, I eventually felt I had to move on. After all, being around tea naturally causes you to daydream about far away places—majestic, enchanted places in the world where tea comes from. I could almost touch the misty mountain air that covers the hills of tea trees high above. In my heart, I was already in this place!

Eventually, Denis, a friend from Moscow and GTH member, told me about the Tea Sage Hut. Hearing how special he made it sound, I knew I would have to visit someday.

That day came earlier than I expected! From the moment I stepped out of the railway station, I would experience the hospitality of the Hut. After a few days there, I knew I wanted to go deeper into this way of tea, and share it back at home.

Eventually, I studied to become a massage therapist, and, just as the psychotherapist, I am working to connect this profession with sharing tea. In April of this year, I opened *Studio 108* with two other people. It is a center for massage, yoga, Taichi, Qigong and ... *Tea*.

As a massage therapist, I have yet one more way to help people relax, opening their hearts to their own

natural beauty and wisdom within. Often, after a massage session, I will share tea with my clients. It works perfectly, as they are often reluctant to rush back into the real world! With tea, I feel I am caring for someone in the deepest way possible, especially my clients. The power of touch, and the power of tea both communicate unconditional love.

I felt like I had found a form of hospitality that anyone could warm up to. Actually, children in Russia often drink out of big bowls, holding them with two hands, as they're easier to drink from. I remember drinking tea with my family as a child, holding my bowl. I like to think that people here feel the same way I felt in Taiwan; a homecoming and a return, not just to childhood, but to a beginner's mind.

When sharing tea, we become connected with our spirits, and with the entire cosmos! To me, it's important to invite people to enter this sacred space inside. Nowadays in daily life, we rarely make space for ourselves. Maybe, like me, a single experience could inspire someone to begin meditating, or make some deep change in their life. My hope is that in making space for tea, I am helping people to make space for themselves. I am still sharing tea publicly, once a week, but I would love to do it more often! If you are in St. Petersburg, please connect with me:

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