

I grew up in Florida, and iced sun tea was still a tradition in our family, the first tea I ever experienced in fact. There was always a big jar brewing on the back porch when we would go to my grandmother's house. So it was a nostalgic return to the past for me when Wu De announced that we were going to be brewing sun tea regularly this summer. All you need is a glass jar, some tea, and a spot that gets strong direct sunlight for several hours. If you have a particular event coming up and you really want to make cold tea quickly, there is an alternative. You can lightly boil a pot of concentrated tea, then add cold water to dilute it, and leave it overnight. But tea made this way just isn't the same. It's boiled tea, served cold. Tea brewed in the actual heat of the sun over hours and hours is completely different.

So now that you have acquired a day with good hot sun, you can prepare your jar, and perhaps the space it is going to steep in as well. You might want to put some stones or crystals with particular properties into the jar. If you have any kind of sacred space already outside then of course put your jar there, or if not, you can prepare one by drawing a medicine wheel or sacred symbols onto that spot. You might consider putting a sacred object under or on top of the jar, or writing positive words on it.

You might need to experiment a bit to figure out how much leaf to put into the jar. You can start out by lightly covering the bottom. Then treat it as bowl tea: If it's too strong, use less leaf, if it's too weak, use more. This will also depend on the tea; lightly processed teas like green tea or young sheng puerh will need more leaf than heavily processed teas like red tea or shou puerh, but they are also less forgiving if over-steeped. Put it out at about 11am and then bring it back in around 4 or 5pm, so that it receives the strongest sun of the day, and put it in the refrigerator after that.

This isn't my grandmother's iced tea, incidentally. We use living tea. Recently, we used the same tea we just went to Yunnan to find for you and press into cakes this year. Far from complaining about our untraditional brewing method, Tea spoke to us also of how comfortable She was and how happy She was that we had brought Her such nice cool water to bathe in under the sun-filled sky—returning all Her natural elements and revivifying Her. Her Qi was utterly different than when we used hot water a few days before. It was subtler, gentler, but amazingly powerful. Nobody expected the Qi to be so strong in cold tea; it was really surprising. There was a one-pointedness

to it, something less diffuse, but it still filled the whole body.

Usually when drinking tea the heat of it causes a lot of physical changes in the body that can easily be confused for the Qi of the tea, so I think this was the first time I had ever had the chance to drink a living tea without those distractions. It's really something special. I find it very hard to describe other than to say that She was obviously quite happy, and there was nothing about the experience that qualitatively suggested these bowls of cold tea were in the "beverage" category. There was just as much back and forth available between drinker and Tea in those bowls as in any other I've ever drunk before. It really is entirely up to the drinker! We could bring in just as much sacred intention and ceremony to this kind of tea as any other. If you wanted, you could even meditate for all those hours, just as we meditate the handful of minutes waiting for the

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water to boil. In fact, I had a sense that in some way, the tea was happier like this. After all, when we use charcoal to boil the water for tea, we are only offering an imitation of the sun's heat to revivify the leaves. In the case of sun-brewed tea, we are actually resuming the very same energy that brought those leaves to life in the first place.

But on the other hand, something great about approaching tea as a Dao is that we are not limited to one approach to tea. We practice being comfortable dropping all our pretensions and just enjoying a refreshing glass of iced tea after lunch in the summertime. And often it is skillful to let go of our approach for other reasons, such as those moments when we just want to share space with someone that normally has no relationship to tea. In that spirit, it seemed only natural to even further drop any pretensions and start serving iced tea on our outings in



Sun tea brewing by the center's Buddha in the garden

these blazing summer months. Like our beloved story of Rikyu, which you can hear in last month's Global Tea Hut video, we aren't serving tea because we want to demonstrate how to make tea, or to compare teas or tea brewing methodology. We are simply sharing. Last year, we sat sweating bullets in the heat each month, sharing very little of our steaming hot tea with passersby, who turned quite naturally instead to the ice cream booth! We did choose so-called "cooling" teas, such as green teas and young puerhs, but there's not much of a chance to explain that to people who aren't sitting down because it is clearly so hot! If we are truly Chajin then we will see that if preparing iced tea is the best way to connect to someone, then that is the best kind of tea to make for that occasion.

It is amazing to notice the resurrection of Tea. Deprived of air, water and sun. We reopen these leaves and find them living again. Heated by the sun, they resonate in a way they can't otherwise. In the summer, a bowl of fresh, cool sun tea can awaken a deeper love for the healing medicine of tea.

