

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 Ville Sorsa:

Finland has rather little by way of tea culture. People drink mostly coffee. And tea is usually enjoyed in the form of teabags. Thus, I spent my youth under the illusion that tea is merely a bitter, thinner substitute for coffee.

At the age of eighteen, after moving to Helsinki for studies, I had my first loose-leaf tea. It was a sweet blend of green and red tea, flowers and fruits, steeped in a ball-shaped single serving tea strainer. Although the tea wasn't very high class by my current standards, it rewrote my conception of tea.

Then I started trying out different teas. After a short introductory phase with blended teas, I realized the wide diversity of aromas of the Leaf itself, and I began exploring the different categories of tea. My brewing methods evolved from single serving strainer via pressopan to gongfu tea with a gaiwan. At the beginning of 2013, I met my first true tea brother, Tertti. It was the first time I met a person of my age who brewed gongfu tea, loved puerh and even made kombucha! We drank lots of tea together. We soon found more tea lovers, and in the summer of 2013 we founded a student association called, "Tea Club Chai".

That same summer, I took another important step on my path of tea: I visited Chado, Steve Kokker's teashop in Tallinn. Steve introduced me to Global Tea Hut and sold me Wu De's book *Zen & Tea, One Flavor*. I subscribed to Global Tea Hut and enjoyed my first cup of Living Tea. The articles resonated with me deeply, and I realized the deep spiritual element of drinking tea.

On the 2nd of July, this year, I flew to Taiwan. When I arrived to Tea Sage Hut, I was in terrible shape. For way too long I had been doing things out of a sense of obligation. Nearly every action I made was based on fear instead of love. I was stressed, worried about things left undone and uncertainties about my future, and I was in an extremely negative mood. I was not present. I wasn't enjoying all the beautiful things around me, and I began to doubt if tea was my path after all.

But staying at Tea Sage Hut, bowl by bowl, I began to heal. Wu De's teachings about life and the Way of Tea changed my point of view toward many aspects of life. Daily morning and evening meditations made me more conscious about my thoughts and actions, and gave me more compassion towards my weaknesses. Organic, vegetarian food and endless bowls of clean tea cleared my mind and body. Andy, the Chinese medicine doctor, helped



to alleviate my postural problems. But most importantly, Shane and Max's relentless optimism and positive attitude, and the loving atmosphere of the center changed my perception: I began to see more light! Finally, one Friday evening, I came to realize: "I'm am here, in Taiwan!" I was my true self again, here and now.

Now I see that coming here was one of the best decisions of my life. I have had so many beautiful experiences: tea sessions, insights, movie nights, trips to tea farms and the sea, and getting to know good people. I've changed as a person, in several positive ways. When I return home, I will make sure to drink bowl tea on a daily basis, continue to follow a vegetarian diet and dedicate time for daily meditation and prayer.

As Wu De says, this tea tradition is not about *making* tea; it's about *servicing* tea. Thus, I will also start arranging regular tea sessions, working to improve our yet-rather-small tea association, and spread awareness about this Global Tea Hut. If you ever happen to visit Helsinki, come share a few bowls with us! You can contact me by email, phone or by writing a message to our association "Tea Club Chai" on Facebook.

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