

OPENING UP TO TOGETHERNESS

Steve Kokker

We asked our favorite Estonian author to once again bless these pages with his insights on Tea and community. Steve and our other Tea family in Estonia have some beautiful strength and hope to share...



On the day that I finish up this article, three of us in our tea community are serving Tea at separate events. Together, by day's end we'll have served countless liters to over seventy people (which, considering Tallinn's small size is a considerable percentage!). We had to turn down two other offers for Tea on the same day as we were already engaged, and who knows how many others in our extended Tea family will today also be preparing and sharing Tea with loved ones. I shake my head at this, with a smile, with wonder... How did this all come to be? How is it that the love of Tea, and more specifically of sharing and serving Tea, spreads so quickly?

In searching for reasons why Tea seems to have the power to unite people in such profound ways, what returns most often of all is this idea: *that Tea speaks the language of silence*. Born and bred on this planet for millennia upon millennia in a vast spaciousness of Nature sounds, deep silence and lots of meditative space, the language it speaks is rooted in silence. Its syntax is full of pauses and spaces and patience and timelessness, its grammar a leisurely-paced stretch from Earth to Heaven. I like to think that this is what resonates in those who drink and share Her. This need we all feel at a deep, often untouched level, for such spaciousness stirs us profoundly, reminds us at some level of our own true nature and draws us intuitively towards Tea.

It's a nice thought, certainly, that some deep impulse towards inner peace is attracted, magnet-like to the frequency of silence which Tea naturally emanates. Those even somewhat in touch with their inner self almost can't help but heed Tea's call to speak in its quiet language. They might call it something else ("delicious!", "healthier than coffee!", "antioxidants!"), but I like to think that the real attraction is something harder to express, because it operates on a level before spoken words.

Yet this silence does not create or encourage disconnection from others—far from it! Tea, despite the contemplative state it often breeds, is a powerful social glue. Truly, the kinds of interpersonal bonds I have seen form thanks to Tea have appeared, from my terrestrial plane, to be nothing less than magic! It's as if some ancient part of being human, long dormant, gets awakened even by talking about Tea, by evoking the mystery, the ages, the tradition, the connection to the great forces of Nature. There is an unseen power in the sound of the water boiling, the hypnotic dance of steam, a flash of flame, unfamiliar but seductive aromas, the ritual handing out and returning of cups or bowls...

The way I see it, once this deep, mysterious, quiet place is touched, gently, by the Tea drinking process, a person then feels naturally less threatened to reveal aspects of their inner self. This space which is opened gently, patiently, with love

and care, is a place where there are no masks, no need for self-defense either. It is indeed the place where we all meet as equals, and on that level there is no need to judge or fear judgment, no need to block connections with others. And thus, the magic continues...

In our Tea community, we continue to be amazed at how quickly, how passionately and deeply the love of sharing and serving Tea spreads. Our outstretched hands holding bowls of hot tea reach directly to the hearts of the grateful recipients, and they, having experienced some of this simple sharing are often moved to gift this to others. Tea has also brought us co-workers closer together in such a way that we are an uncategorized community of people who really like each other and who have to some degree adopted each other's life habits and values (dietary, philosophical and the like). We go to each other's birthday parties and meet up regularly not because we don't have anyone else to invite, but because it feels good to share space with others who 'get it' without need for explanation. Our deep love for Tea is one of the greatest things which bond us. And that's the magic of Tea!

Highlighting this growing Tea family in Tallinn, I thought I'd ask a few of my brothers and sisters to share a few words with their greater, global Tea family. Here's what they had to say about Tea community:

I have found that drinking and serving Tea has brought me closer to more people in my community and many beautiful events are born because we can share Tea together. For example, I started making monthly Tea circles for women and it is a great opportunity to connect and to share from the heart and empower each other. Tea has a very subtle way to bring more humbleness, beauty and peace into our circles.

—Sophie

A community is a lesson to study the art of relationships with a human heart. A Tea community is doing it through Tea.

—Herikko

I have found that wherever and with whomever I drink Tea, I feel like I am arriving at home. Behind closed eyelids, it feels in fact that I have never left—it would seem impossible to do so—I have only become clouded by unawareness, gotten lost in some delusion. Tea is a returning, bowl after bowl in solitude or shared between two strangers. I do not know much about you, but as the hot liquor warms our hearts, we become friends. Resting in our true nature, everything is expressed in one glance.

—Timo

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Tea community is that it does not exclude anything or anybody. Behind a bowl of Tea we are all the same. The rest of the world is forgotten. We are here, only us... And then true connection is found.

—Siim

We all need time alone, but it's also essential to belong somewhere! The sense of community can be a very strong aspect of that. Community through Tea unites Tea people. By drinking Tea together its possible to discover and learn big lessons in Tea as well as human relations, get recommendations, bond, feel united, but most of all, it's fun and very inspirational! It cleanses our body and thoughts and eventually we get closer to what is important in life.

—Triin

Tea in Estonia, 2013

