

Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It also pays homage to the wonderful idea of Tea becoming human and influencing lives. 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 Connor Lind:

We all know the story: First, you're looking for an alternative to coffee. You go to the grocery store and find some tea bags that strike your fancy, or make a trip to your local tea shop and try their strawberry "black" tea (which I now know is actually red tea). It all seems very interesting, but there are just too many categories of tea and it soon becomes overwhelming. You read a few books or blogs and discover how "real" tea drinkers prepare their tea with *gaiwans* and thermometers. Perhaps you order a few oolongs or white teas on the Internet and start inviting your friends over. They commend your mastery and tell everyone they know about their friend who's "really into tea," and now you're the definitive subject matter expert for your inner circle. Soon you discover puerh, buy a few cakes, and want to start a blog of your own. Tea. What a beverage! This was my story, and the story of those who had taught me about tea in the States. Before my first journey to Taiwan, I was locked into this paradigm. I hardly allotted any time for Tea Sage Hut, maybe one or two nights maximum during my epic two-week pilgrimage to the Island of Tea. Why would I? The tea was "out there." It was on the slopes of alpine peaks, waiting to be conquered and consumed...

The forecast for my trip to Taiwan was rain. Lots of it. Somehow, in my meticulous preparation for a tea-soaked escapade, I missed the fact that it rains in Taiwan. With a change of plans, I decided to nonetheless begin my trip at Tea Sage Hut, and inquire how I could still wander about and buy some tea once I got there. When I finally arrived at Tea Sage Hut, I was informed we would begin with an early-morning sitting meditation. We followed with a silent breakfast while the team prepared the main room for a tea ceremony. OK, I'm in Taiwan and tea is being served. *Let's see what they've got.*

The moment Shen Su began serving bowl tea, I was spellbound. Simultaneously captivated by the spirit of the ceremony, and horrified by the previous errors of my ways, I sat still and drank bowl after bowl. *This is the first time I'm drinking tea,* I thought to myself. One moment, one sip changed everything!

I spent years treating tea as a commodity: Something I just had to figure out; something to buy and taste and



compartmentalize. At Tea Sage Hut, I realized that I was not there to study tea. Tea was there to teach me about myself! Tea Sage Hut shared practical knowledge about tea, teaware, and preparation, but with a critical reverence for tea and the natural world. This subtle yet powerful cultivation of humility was later expounded by Wu De's description of Rikyu's Four Virtues of Tea, which have since remained the guiding principles for all aspects of my life. Without a shred of doubt, I spent the remainder of my two-week trip at Tea Sage Hut!

The folks at Tea Sage Hut put their whole being into every cup. The tea feels and tastes different because it *is* different. Call it mastery or not, but with Global Tea Hut, you're in the presence of love for life itself. Undoubtedly, I loved tea before I visited the Hut. I wouldn't have traveled halfway around the world if I didn't. What the Hut taught in such beautiful simplicity, however, was how easy it was to obscure love with self-centeredness.

I'm forever grateful for my time there, and am looking forward to meeting the rest of the Teawayfarers in this wonderful community...