

Teawayfarer

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 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 Caitlin Mercado.

She came to me (in her ceremonial form) almost three years ago in a warm desert tipi amongst women who had gathered from all over the world to connect in subtle, ancestral and spiritual ways. Inside this desert tipi sat our beloved tea sister Tian Wu, in service. The space was dressed with much aestheticism, a tangible representation of the reverence held for what was to occur. Why would something so simple be dressed so beautifully? We silently settled into our cushions gathered around the *chaxi* listening to the hum of the kettles. Tian served the liquor with so much transparency and ease, as if she too had evaporated with the steam from our bowls. We were completely mesmerized by the leaf and its company of beautiful accoutrements; all elements together as one to become the gift of plant medicine lovingly gazing back at you from a bowl. As we sipped bowl after bowl, you could feel a presence of serenity fill the tent. Some sat with smiles on their faces and eyes softly closed, others poised and stoic, and then some, like myself, with dewy tears on their cheeks. To witness Her becoming in that ceremony triggered something deep within the center of my being. A remembrance as if I had been in that seat before... I left that tipi with a heart reaching for more.

After that first experience with Tea in this new and profound way, I joined Global Tea Hut eager to learn more about all Her shapes and forms and how she's touched others the way She touched me that early desert morning. My first visit to the Tea Sage Hut came in the months following. And I have been fortunate to have just spent a month at the Center with the tea brothers who so lovingly surrender to serve and care for the Hut and its guests and generously share in the Tea Way. Hugging them was easy.

Tea, as I'm sure it did for many of you, arrived at a fortuitous time for me. After an imperceptible slowing in my yoga practice and experiencing realizations about my intentions behind "practice," I think I had been consciously/subconsciously seeking a new path. And what was this? Tea as the most beautiful conduit for meditation. Of the earth and for the earth. Tea began to fill all spaces in which I would normally be mindless... I wanted to know Her more, connect more deeply with her and by doing so connect more deeply with the earth beneath my feet. What I love most about tea is how



every person served, no matter their practice, is receptive to Her meditative properties. We all experience this longing of connection to the Earth, to each other and to ourselves. And She stimulates this so well within us. As time passed and I developed a more intimate practice with Tea, I found Her as a deeply healing sister/mother/friend in whom I was able to take refuge in during life's worldly challenges. A space to be held in Her warm embrace.

When I was asked to be wayfarer, I was more than a bit nervous... How could I possibly put to words the gifts She has given me? And to do so with an eloquence so worthy of Her beauty? Many have already done so long before me. But I suppose the only true way to know is to sit and let the leaves show you. Just as Her leaves open to unfurl within the earthenware, let that happen within yourself. Let Her sweep you off your feet.

I am currently in San Diego but will travel for tea! If you ever find yourself in Southern California, I would love to meet any fellow tea brothers and sisters. May all cups be filled with the leaves of loving kindness!