

# Global Tea Hut



NEWSLETTER #8, SEPTEMBER 2012

There have been so many beautiful moments in this year, shared with all of you. In the last month, we reached one hundred members, from countries all around the world! And as the energy has increased, and our tea begun to change the world, we've begun to think more about just how the kettle is warmed in this metaphorical Hut, how the leaves are scattered in each bowl and how the water pours. Through the steam of one hundred bowls, we have learned how amazing this experience is, and the effect it is having on the community assembled here.

More of you are writing to us about the newsletter, the tea and the gifts. We've heard astounding stories of this tea shared with loved ones out in Nature, inspiration and understanding through this newsletter, and even the occasional email announcing the unexpected, yet very welcome visit you're planning to Taiwan. We've also received word of your laughter and joy in our sense of humor, poems expressing tea wisdom and light, and thoughtful stories and articles written by members, new and old.

This month we looked back at these newsletters and saw how they have expanded from a few articles to more than ten, and seen how the format has also improved—primarily due to the help of one of our members (a bowl and a “Cheers!” to Matthew). And actually, the heavier newsletters aren't a result of more work on our part, but rather more and more submissions from all of you—a trend we hope to see increase with every issue.

All of this points to a growing community of likeminded tea lovers. Last issue we talked about the planetary shift happening in human consciousness, and how the new groups forming are helping catalyze this change. And there is no need for the members to find their identity in the group, or for membership to be exclusive. We see tea as an essential plant medicine in the healing of our Earth, through establishing a greater harmony between Nature and Human. More and more people are realizing that there can be no personal health in an unhealthy environment. We are the spirit of this world, and its sicknesses are also our own. Medicine and healing must, therefore, be redefined in terms of

what brings harmony with this Earth and life on it. A healthy mind, body and spirit are not just a part of such health, but also result from it.

We encourage you to participate in the community we are creating together, and celebrate all that you have already done, even if it be just in giving financial energy to our cause, thereby supporting all our publications, workshops, meditation sessions, as well as our free center/school here in Taiwan. All the visitors' smiles of satisfaction, having just drunk fine tea and been well fed, are also yours to enjoy.

Last month, we gave you the opportunity to share the GTH experience with someone you care about. We would love to hear about it! We did that so you would know just how awesome it is to do this each month, and how great it feels to look at each of your names and imagine your smile when this package arrives. We wonder who you share each month's tea with and what they think of it. We imagine lots of circles growing within this Hut, each an instrument playing a bit more Earth music in the true spirit of tea: leaves and water shared freely between souls.

The oh-so-welcome growth of this gathering has also inspired us to take a look at what the future holds for Global Tea Hut, forcing us to make some difficult decisions. We had been putting off the decision about just how large we would allow this to get until later, but it has become increasingly apparent that it cannot be postponed any longer. We have, therefore, decided that we will be putting a cap of roughly two hundred-ish people in Global Tea Hut.

The reasons for this are very important, and we hope you understand them as we do, though we are open to discussion concerning this issue since it affects us all. The most important motivation for limiting membership is to preserve the quality of the experience, which we all appreciate so much—you in the receiving and us in the giving. Putting GTH together by hand each month is as much the highlight of our lunar cycle as receiving the package and drinking the tea is for you. We take great joy in hand-writing the tea envelopes, packaging all the tea with loving-kindness and even saying a small prayer of love at the post office as

## September Intro Continued

2 we send them off. We don't ever want this to become mechanized or impersonal in any way whatsoever. Furthermore, we have a very real concern about the quality of the teas we would be able to share with you if our numbers became too great. Remember that all these teas are donated by farmers and vendors who want to support us and share their hard work with the world. We don't ever want to have to choose between quantity and quality. We hope to continue to offer you the teas that we ourselves find inspiring, and are drinking along with you.

For these reasons, we will be stopping membership at around two hundred. Perhaps we'll have a waiting list beyond that, or figure out some other solution should we find ourselves with more beautiful souls than this Hut can contain. We hope you, our dear brothers and sisters, understand these issues. If you have any suggestions or ideas, please feel free to let us know. In the meantime, have another bowl. This is a special month, with one of our all-time favorite teas. May you find endless joy in yours, at least as much as we have found in serving it to you...





*Our new hundred-year-old Baisao Statue*

We are very proud of all the teas we have chosen for these sessions each month, covering a broad spectrum of some of our favorite teas at the center—teas we ourselves drink regularly, and with great relish. In fact, this has been the most joyous part of this Global Tea Hut, and as we mentioned in the introduction to this issue, the reason we have decided to cap this assembly here in the Hut: We don't want to have to choose teas based on the amount our supporters (farmers/vendors) can afford to give, but rather choose the teas we find most inspiring from among those we regularly drink and offer them to you. We hope to continue this trend, sharing some of the rarer and more precious teas we drink as well as the ones we love because they are a part of our everyday tea drinking. And this month, we'll all get the chance to celebrate one such rare tea.

This month we have the fortunate chance to share a very special red tea together. As we discussed last month, red tea is picked and piled for twelve to twenty-four hours to oxidize the leaves. They are then rolled for a long time, breaking down the cells and further oxidizing the tea. Finally, it is dried, though sometimes it is piled again before drying, making it the most oxidized of all teas.

Last issue, we also discussed how complicated it is to say that all tea is one species, *Camellia sinensis*, and that the differences in teas are all in the processing. This is because the various kinds of processing evolved in response to varieties of tea. Remember that we said a tea processed from bushes elsewhere will never be as good as say an Oolong tea made from genuine Wuyi old-growth bushes. A tea usually has a way that it “wants” to be processed, and the masters are those that can “hear” its music. Is it not thus with all art and mastery? Michelangelo said that his gorgeous sculptures were already within the stone, and he but removed the superfluous material from around them. Likewise, brewing tea properly is all about asking how the tea wants to be brewed, rather than how we want to brew it. It is a listening and understanding of the medium, as with all great art.

This month's tea is another perfect example of listening to the leaves, even against so-called tradition. Last month, in our article on the kinds of teas, we also mentioned that despite all the modern experimentation with processing leaves from one region like those from another, it is rare for anything good to result from such trials. This tea is the exception to that rule.

Our tea from this month comes from the Mangshi Township, De Hong prefecture of Yunnan, a province in Southwest China, and as we have discussed, the birthplace of all tea. It's of the “野生” varietal (*Camellia sinensis* (L.) Kuntze var. *assamica* (J. Masters) Kitam.) This is a primeval varietal that pre-dates *Camellia sinensis* var. *Assamica* and is a naturally occurring non-hybridized varietal. Its potency and incredible Cha Qi arise from its unadulterated nature. It is naturally bug-repellent, and grows wild in the forests of Yunnan at an altitude of 1600-2200 meters. The trees are old-growth, ranging in the hundreds of years old. They are all completely wild and natural.

This varietal of tea also has a very unique mutation: Its buds are purple. The purple buds slowly turn green as they open into mature leaves, changing from inside to out. This lends the tree a beautiful glow, as the buds are all purple and many of the smaller leaves around them are ringed with purple. This unique coloration is found elsewhere in the tea world as well, notably the varietal of Wuyi Cliff Tea called “Iron Arhant (*Tie Lou Han*)”.

Normally, teas such as this one are processed like Puerh tea. This purple-bud varietal of Puerh is found throughout Yunnan and was even mentioned in





Lu Yu's *Classics of Tea*, the oldest book on tea. It took a gifted tongue to realize that the tea from this garden would rather be Red Tea. And we have drunk its Pu-erh version, so we know from firsthand experience. You won't need to trust us, however, for as soon as you open your sample bag and smell this remarkable tea, you'll wonder how it ever could be processed any other way.

This unique purple bud, old-growth, wild Red Tea is out-of-this-world flavorful. It erupts in a bouquet of fruity, flowery notes that expand seemingly endlessly. You haven't ever had anything quite like it. The Qi is fanciful and uplifting, which is rare for a Red Tea. But this tea breaks all the molds.

You can brew it most any way, and you'll find it responds well. We drink it in bowls, steep it in a side-handle pot and sometimes even brew it Gongfu style. It is very patient, especially for Red Teas, which usually don't last so many steepings. Therefore, be sure to give yourself a whole morning to enjoy it. Like most great teas, the glorious fragrance of this tea is so much better shared with a friend or loved one.

We don't usually ask anything of you in the way you brew your tea each month, but due to the rarity of this special tea we thought it would be okay if we made a request of you: Please share this tea, rather than drinking it alone. Rare teas should only be steeped in the spirit of sharing, which is the true spirit of tea. You'll find the fruit in this tea all that much fruitier, and the flowers will blossom to the horizon if you pour it in the spirit of giving. In that way, we'll make this Hut that much bigger this month, and our influence will be more pronounced as well...

*\* As we mentioned in previous months, we recommend letting the tea get over its jet lag. Let it sit a week or two and become acclimatized.*



hose familiar melancholy notes which always accompany the close of a Northern Hemisphere summer are now in full symphony: shorter days, suddenly; soft, warm air with chilly, foreboding undercurrents; bright sunshine above but the first yellowing, fallen leaves below. This minor chord season is always a good time to reflect on the period which just ended. What did Summer bring us? What did we learn, how did we grow during it? Hopefully there was mega fun, direct doses of Vitamin D, skinny dips and hot kisses. And hopefully we shifted somewhat in a forward motion.

The end of Summer for me has always been a bit like New Year's Eve is supposed to be—a period of reflection, assessing lessons learned or recalling loves lived and lost. The approaching Autumn has a dreamy, otherworldly feel that allows one to wallow a tad in memories. This year I have especially much to ponder and recall. Summer offered up a blend of emotional highs and lows I had not experienced in many years (I listened too closely to the Sirens' song and jumped overboard) along with the concomitant opportunities for inner exploration and growth. During such delectable feasts one tends to gorge—and purge.

It was a summer of digging deep, not always liking what was found or felt but ultimately feeling lighter for having several unneeded layers lifted and chiseled away. My only true and constant companion throughout was tea. And my deepest tea sessions, indeed among the most fantastic of my life, all took place **outdoors**.

I'm not sure why it took me so long to get it all together and enjoy preparing tea outside, other than lack of imagination and fear of grass stains, but now that I have, there's no turning back. I want to encourage all our readers to get out there and enjoy whatever last warm days there are in the company of a faithful friend who loves unconditionally and brings a depth of comfort and clarity which few two-legged pals can muster.

Here in Estonia one is never far from a forested patch to sit down in, plant one's *muladhara* squarely down onto living, pulsating earth and plunge into an experience which finds oneself in a dance among the five elements. Preparing and drinking tea in such an environment reconnects with an ancient tradition in which people – tea masters and simple folk alike—collected water, made a fire and brewed one of Nature's gifts in the same environment in which it had grown.

Tea helped make the connection between Earth and Heaven through the physical self immediate and transcendent.

For many centuries, human interaction with the tea plant, whether in tending to its leaves or drinking its nectar, likely happened in the company of a gentle breeze, shaded from the sun by treetops, and among snapping twigs and buzzing bugs. If not forced to take shelter from inclement weather, people naturally gravitated towards drinking tea in the environment in which it had been born.

### *The How & Why*

What do you need for a proper tea picnic? A gas burner (the butane-powered, inexpensive kind available at almost any hardware or camping shop); a kettle (glass which can handle direct flame, clay or stainless steel); a teapot; as many cups as friends with you, and into which you can fully pour out the pot's contents; a few tea towels; tea; fresh water (ideally spring); and sharpened senses.

Almost any spot will do, even a public park, if that's all that's available. Better still a forest, wooded area, beachfront, cliff, bog, tundra... the more Nature—the more open space the better. When wandering around looking for an appropriate space, try to let the spot pick you; try to sense which space wishes to host your tea session. Let your inner voice guide you to a place which feels right.

Tea has a way of relaxing inner tensions such that one's true voice speaks out in security and comfort. Most of us have experienced such beautiful unfoldings of the soul during tea sessions, where suddenly the veils of mind noise seem to part, masks fall off, the heart opens up and things are said (or comfortably left unspoken) which would otherwise not be expressed. Often, a connection between the people present becomes palpable, firm, comfortable. The most beautiful gift we can offer others is a space in which they can truly be themselves, and drinking tea is one of the most powerful ways to offer such a space.

When tea is shared outdoors, its soul-opening aspects appear to be magnified; that which tea naturally encourages in people seems to be enhanced and deepened just by being in natural, unthreatening surroundings. If tea generally relaxes the spirit to allow thoughts and feelings to surface, then this effect is magnified by the natural elements.

This is true even when by oneself, and especially true when sharing tea with another. Sometimes, what transpires during tea sessions is unexpected, pure magic, like gaining a privileged view into the deeper aspects of others, and certainly also of yourself. There are times when it seems as if pure emotions, kept under lock and key in remote, distant areas, suddenly come bubbling up to the surface.

Amazing too, when making tea on a forest floor, the tea and teaware seamlessly blend into their surroundings. Tea leaves placed into a bowl or pot look as if they could have been picked up from the ground: the Japanese tea scoop I used once got lost among the pieces of darkened birch bark lying near it. It's easy to believe that you are drinking up the very surroundings.

### *Sketches of Tea*

This summer, I was privy to partake in more such beautiful tea moments than at any time previous, and most of these occurred outside.

I confess I'm a bit of a romantic when it comes to sharing moments of intimate connection with others. My memory isn't great for things I don't place much importance on (that means lots!), but moments of interpersonal connection stay etched in my mind very,

very clearly. A feeling of connection is what I appreciate perhaps most deeply in life, be it with oneself, other people or Nature. If not attached too much, dependent on or longing for such moments, they are indeed the times I feel most alive.

A few scattered memories of pine needles, friends and The Leaf...

On the last day of a road trip with a friend, both of us were tired and cranky when we found ourselves in one of southern Estonia's most beautiful landscapes, the over 350 million years old sandstone escarpments at Taevaskoda. The primeval thick forest and slowly flowing river lent the air sweetness and sharpness; it was a beautiful, warm day and yet, being tired and cranky, mind noise filtered out much of this beauty. We found a preternaturally pure spring source there which the Estonians revere enough to term "Mother Spring" and were elated by this and the crystal waters which bubbled from it.

Fighting a temptation to drive on, we sat on an elevated patch of pine forest, just twenty meters away from this spring, shielded from passersby by a wall of trees. I prepared a spectacular Bulang *gushu sheng* Pu-erh, at first a little too intensely. However, bitter tastes, it is said, have a way of dissolving the walls which shield closed hearts, and we instinctively let the tea do this



## *Have Tea Will Travel*

8 work. The words spoken there are now forgotten, offered up to the forest spirits. But the subtle feeling of inner shift which occurred is still very real to me. We spoke, then we didn't; we listened to the birds, to the ducks in the distant river, and to other people's expressions of glee upon discovering the spring, or we just looked up at the immense trees towering above us and our petty concerns. Drinking this sublime tea with water we had ourselves fetched just meters away, sitting directly on the ground which had nourished the water with its primeval energy, and feeling ourselves relax into the tea's balancing energies was pure bliss. We both left the space at peace, mind noise gone, back on track, hearts opened.

Another memorable session happened in the middle of a bog on the border between two of the least populated countries in Europe, Estonia and Latvia. It was a hot, sunny summer day (even by Northern European standards) and we were the only people in this vast space of wetlands, of short, tentative trees, mossy carpets of venus flytraps and blueberries. It seemed like there were no artificial or human noises in a vast radius of space around us, and we reveled in the sounds of the breeze and of mammoth dragonflies buzzing around us. This time, sipping bowl tea, shirtless by the side of a pitch-black bog lake made us feel as if we were melting into our surreal surroundings.

Another time I brought my tea paraphernalia to a boisterous Russian beach party: little kids, teens and a few overly dramatic adults included. A Buddhist temple green tea, plucked just a few months prior, was greeted unenthusiastically at first, served on the sand... and then worked its magic. I soon was circled by curious faces, and one teenage girl who didn't want even a sip at first ("I don't like tea at all!") ended up drinking the most, at least 15 little cups-full, smiling, "I had no idea tea could taste like this! I feel great!"

There were many other sessions: with coworkers in a park, forming a long-lasting bond when we 'should' have been working; with a normally boisterous fifteen-year-old boy who sat still, calm, focused and smiling throughout; by myself, pondering inner questions in a forest or smiling contentedly up at the clouds, huddled snugly between trees and caterpillars in a thick park.

to the ambient sounds. For example, squint your eyes a tad and ask, out of curiosity, 'Cool! How many different kinds of birds can you hear?' Or, 'Hey, can you hear the sound of the wind in the treetops?' Or, help turn their focus on the feeling of sitting on the ground, the temperature of the breeze, the witch-on-a-broom-shaped cloud passing by overhead, the smells which waft to and fro, etc. Guiding someone gently to focus on their physical sensations has a way of calming the noisy mind.

Or, make tea the focus. If someone keeps asking questions all the time or feels the need to tell you things, allow them some release, nod gently and then close your eyes after taking a sip and say, 'Hmm, after you take a sip, see if you can follow the tea down inside and just see where it goes—deep down, back up to the head, into the chest...?' That usually helps them be still and focus, at least for a while.

If even that doesn't work, then that's OK too. Maybe it's meant to be a more chatty session. Just mind yourself and keep yourself centered and peaceful, and that will transform the others more than any technique will.

I can't wait for some winter tea picnics in the snow!

## *When the Brew Doesn't Work Its Magic Quickly*

Although the simple act of sitting and drinking tea in novel surroundings will tend to relax people, if you find yourself with someone unable to be calm or who is chattering a bit too much, one way to instill a peaceful shared space is to get them to focus on the sounds around you. Gently nudge them to listen



# THE SCATTERED SEEDS OF CHA DAO

*Germinating our Inner Trees*

*Article by Colin Hudon*

**T**he Way of Tea begins with a seed. This small seed contains more than we can imagine or understand. In truth, it contains the All and Everything, the Alpha and Omega, the Entirety of what is available in the human experience. One might ask, “Well, how can you make such an audacious claim unless you’ve experienced this entirety?” My response is that “I don’t know, but day after day, month after month, the spirit of the Leaf demonstrates it. During the tea ceremony, we have access to a rare space of connection to the entirety of life by way of Nature. It is one of the gifts offered by the Leaf.”

The 13th Century Zen monk Dogen Zenji describes this experience in saying, “To study the way is to study the self, to study the self is to forget the self, to forget the self is to be enlightened by all things of the universe. To be enlightened by all things of the universe is to cast off the body and mind of the self as well as those of others. Even the traces of enlightenment are wiped out, and life with traceless enlightenment goes on forever and ever.” The practice of Cha Dao and enlightenment are one and the same, just as there is no gap between Zazen and daily life. Cha Dao is the great bridge between the numinous and prosaic. In this way, it contains the Entirety.

For those of us willing to listen with our whole being, this plant tells the story of how everything is interconnected, interdependent and continually transforming. When tea enters our body, where does it end and we begin? It is the great bridge between the plant and human kingdom, between Heaven and Earth, and between one another. It is the roadside nectar that revives us during our long walk home, reminding us to enjoy the views along the way.

From the first fateful bowl to this present moment, tea has travelled side-by-side with humans through the most harrowing, heroic and sublime experiences. In many ways, it is man’s greatest ally in the plant world; and it all begins with a small, mossy seed.

Some people arrive at the tea ceremony and see only the shell of the seed, the subtle veneer of ordinary beauty and aesthetic simplicity. It is easy to miss the elements contained within the seed. The extraordinary depth of the tea ceremony is missed unless we can quiet our busy minds enough to hear the language of the trees, to allow the infinite expansiveness of the moment to take us. In this space, our presence becomes water and light to the seed, stirring it to germination—inviting it skyward to the heavens. We have to give tea space to tell its story and to share itself, just as we must give






one another this space. Through the practice of the tea ceremony, especially in the company of others, these elements of the seed become more accessible in our humdrum lives. This celebration of the ordinary unites the duality of sacred and profane. Through the experience of this simple, ancient ritual, we remember that life is nothing but a celebration and that everything is sacred: the wistful falling of a leaf, the afternoon light cascading across the wooden floor, our lover's raised eyebrow, the steam rising from our favorite bowl...

When we drink tea, we drink of Nature and we remember where we came from. It is our roots that give us strength and stability. We access our gratitude by remembering our roots, by feeling grounded in an awareness of the gift of life. We too started as a seed of awareness in the field of Consciousness. Connecting to our deepest roots is connecting to the offering of life given to us. Human beings emerged out of Nature and it is to Her we owe infinite gratitude for all that is bestowed to us. When we treat the drinking of tea as a prayer to Gaia for these gifts, She opens her mystery to us more fully. There is a sacred dialogue that occurs in the form of a prayer. She teaches us that to contemplate her mystery is to contemplate our own mystery. There are fewer expressions of the human spirit better suited to such contemplation and prayer than the tea ceremony. In the words of Osho, "It is called a tea cer-

emony, not tea drinking. It is not a teashop or a tea stall, it is a temple: here, ceremonies happen. This is only symbolic. In the whole of life, around the clock, you have to remember that wherever you are it is a holy land and whatever you are doing it is divine."

With constant care, attention, practice, service and love, this seed grows into a deep-rooted tree that gives unconditionally. In this way, tea teaches us how to love. When we give without wanting anything in return, we are expressing pure love. In fact, we never know how far our giving extends. Every person we touch with a moment of peace, stillness, love, compassion and openness will carry this gift with them and offer it to the people in their lives, and so on... This is the ultimate source of individual and planetary transformation, the way by which the Leaf teaches us the art of unconditional and selfless giving. The more we give, the more we burn up the ego. This is the true wisdom of Cha Dao, the lesson of giving. Life is an offering given to us freely at birth, and thus it's a blessed opportunity to make an offering of our lives. Just as the goddess, Mother of all Herbs, gives so freely of Her leaves, Her shade and Her wisdom, so might we learn to give freely of the honey and nectar we gather in ourselves through our practice of Cha Dao, which is as much in the drinking as it is in the sharing...

 Despite its blue-tinged name, this month's tea is actually a Red Tea. So, since we're sending you a Purple Red Tea, we figured it would also be a good time to share more about Red Tea. In this article, I'll be delving deeper into Red Tea's name, processing and history. In a separate article, Kaiya will be talking about Red Tea from a more personal perspective.

### *The Name Game*

You may be surprised to know that Red Tea is the most popular type of tea in the West. How is it that most Westerners drink Red Tea without ever having heard of Red Tea? Simple. It just isn't usually known by that name in the West.

In China, where Red Tea originated, it was (and is) known as '*Hong Cha*' (literally, 'Red Tea'), after the reddish color of its infusions. However, early in the tea trade to the West, very little information was exchanged when the tea was handed over for silver. (Come to think of it, things aren't usually much different today!) Even things like teas' names could be (and often were) terribly misunderstood or mangled in those days. And so it came to be that the name Red Tea was dropped in favor of 'Black Tea', which referred to the dark, withered leaves of the tea. (After all, these already dark leaves were likely made even darker by the long and salty boat journey from China to Europe and to America.) The name 'Black Tea' stuck in the West, but in recent years there has been a shift toward more tea awareness and the spread of the term 'Red Tea'.

### *What Makes Red Tea Red?*

Unlike other tea types, Red Tea typically has leaves that dwell in the red-to-black range of the color spectrum. This includes the muted orange of Dian Hong, the deep rust of Assam Second Flush, the greenish-black of Darjeeling First Flush and the blue-blacks of many Keemun and Ceylon teas. Regardless of the color of the leaves, though, the infusion is typically dark and warm in color, i.e. deep tan, rust red or espresso brown. The colors of Red Teas' infusions and leaves (which resulted in the names 'Red Tea' and 'Black Tea,' respectively) are both primarily the results of tea processing.

As we explained in last month's newsletter, different tea types are processed differently. While processing is not the sole differentiating factor (Indeed, varie-

tals, terroir, harvest seasons and many other factors can make substantial differences!), processing often makes the most profound difference in how a given leaf's liquor will look, taste and feel by the time it reaches your teapot or bowl.

### *Red Tea processing generally follows these steps:*

1. **Harvesting**, either by hand or by machine.
2. Heavy **withering** (or 'piling'). This step involves piling the tea in woven trays or in large troughs with fans to circulate air and remove moisture as it evaporates. The withering process reduces moisture content and initiates oxidation.
3. **Rolling** by machine or by hand for up to 90 minutes. \* This breaks the cell walls and releases their essential oils, allowing the air to interact with otherwise trapped chemical components.
4. **Further oxidation**. This optional step entails additional exposure of the leaves' essential oils to oxygen. It involves letting the tea sit for up to a few hours before the oxidation is halted with heat. This additional oxidation results in further changes in the tea's flavor, aroma, color and impact on Qi when drunk.
5. **Baking or firing**. These quick, high-heat processes halt oxidation and dry the tea for storage.
6. **Sorting** by hand or machine. In this process, waste material (such as large stems and tiny, broken leaf fragments) is removed. In India, Sri Lanka and other countries geared toward mass production of Red Tea, different sizes (or 'grades') of leaves are divided into separate batches.
7. **Flavoring and blending**. These optional steps are usually reserved for commodity grade teas and some specialty teas rather than handmade or single-batch teas. For example, teas like English Breakfast Tea and Afternoon Tea are typically blends of many different batches of tea, while teas like Earl Grey are typically made of blended teas that are flavored with essential oils and / or other ingredients. However, there are some handmade teas that are flavored or blended, such as



true Lapsang Souchong from Wuyi Shan, which is aromatized with pine needle / pine bough smoke.

8. **Packing.** Tea leaves are stored in bags or boxes for shipping and the containers are labeled with the lot number, if applicable.

You may have noticed that three of the eight steps above involve oxidation. Heavy oxidation is the main differentiating factor between Red Tea processing and other types of tea processing. It is what brings out the deep colors and the aromas and flavors of fruit, malt and tobacco leaf in Red Tea. It's also a factor in Red Tea's relatively long shelf life.

There is some overlap between tea types with regard to oxidation. For example, a dark oxidation Oolong such as Wuyi Cliff Tea may be considered to be an Oolong in China and a Red Tea ('Black Tea') in the West, while a lighter oxidation Red Tea from Darjeeling or Nepal's first flush (spring harvest) may be thought of as akin to an Oolong. However, Oolong tea entails several steps that are not utilized in Red Tea production, differentiating it from Red Tea despite the occasional similarity in oxidation levels. Therefore, while oxidation is a key difference between Red Tea and other tea types, it is not the sole difference.

\* In the case of CTC (Cut, Tear, Curl) Tea, rolling is combined with additional steps which chop the tea leaves into tiny pieces, causing them to quickly oxidize, and then rolled into pellets as it is further oxidized and dried. CTC processing is an efficient and cheap means of tea production, so CTC Tea is commonly used in tea-bags and in less wealthy tea-drinking countries, such as India and Sri Lanka. CTC Tea is intended to release all its flavor very quickly; it usually lasts only one infusion or two to three boilings. Just having spent five months in India, I can tell you from personal experience that it is harder to appreciate the culinary and spiritual aspects of tea when it is processed in this way.

*Red Tea's History*

The Ming Dynasty saw many developments in tea processing, including Oolong Tea, Flower-Scented Tea and Red Tea. Later, in the Qing Dynasty, many of the teas developed during this age of innovation were evolved further.

As with any timeline detailing groundbreaking developments, there is some controversy over when the 'first' Red Tea appears. Accordingly, there are several origin stories about Red Tea. Some claim that the appearance of Wuyi Cliff Tea (also known as "Congou Black Tea" in the West, and as we discussed above not really a Red Tea at all) in the 15th or 16th century heralded the age of Red Tea, while others credit it to the appearance of *Xiao Zhong* ('Souchong Black Tea') in Fujian around 1730 or to various Red Teas that were developed in Qimen in the 1700s. Later, around 1875, the technique for making Gong Fu Hong Cha was introduced to the Anhui region, a major producer of Qimen (Keemun) Red Tea to this day.

Ultimately, which tea was the 'first' Red Tea didn't matter much to the local tea drinkers of the time—in general, Red Tea wasn't very popular with them. However, starting in the early 1800s the export markets in Europe, the American colonies and the

Middle East couldn't get enough of the stuff. Some attribute the international popularity of Red Tea in particular to Red Tea's shelf stability (a necessity in long ocean journeys), while others say that it has more to do with the compatibility of the bold flavor profiles of Red Teas with the cuisines of Germany, England, France and other nations where Red Tea has become the default tea type.

It was this popularity that led to large scale production of Red Tea in China, and to the eventual theft of tea seeds, tea plants and tea production techniques, which were taken by Scottish and English adventurer-entrepreneurs and transplanted to India and other colonial territories (such as modern day Sri Lanka and Kenya). These entrepreneurs took their limited knowledge of tea production and used it to fashion machines that replace the handmade aspects of tea processing. The availability of cheap Red Tea fueled its popularity as a tea type further, making it the most popular category of tea in the West to this day.

Today, Red Tea is produced using this machine-driven approach in many countries, including Brazil, India, Indonesia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. More recently, machine-made Red Teas



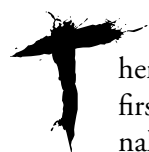


have appeared in Japan (where they are called *Wakocha* or 'Japanese Red Tea'), and machine-made Red Tea has even made its way back to China.

Meanwhile, Green Tea and Oolong remain the most popular types of tea amongst tea drinkers in China. However, in recent years the interest in handmade and more traditionally made Red Tea has seen a resurgence in China, Taiwan and elsewhere, resulting in a wider availability of handmade Red Teas from China and Taiwan (including the Sun Moon Lake Red Tea we mailed in May). For this and other reasons, the characteristics that Red Tea drinkers in China and Taiwan prefer tend to be different from the typical tea drinker in the West. Instead of looking for a dark color in the infusion or boiled liquor and a bold flavor that can handle milk and sugar, these tea lovers seek out beauti-

fully shaped leaves and infusions that are best savored without any additives. Also, while most Red Tea drinkers steep their leaves only once, those opting for more traditionally made Red Teas prefer to let the leaves open up gradually with many short infusions, savoring their tea patience and their inner spirit rather than gulping them from a to-go cup while eating a pastry on the way to the office.

Fortunately, this newfound appreciation for more traditional Red Teas is spreading beyond China and Taiwan. It is our hope that you will be able to further your own growing appreciation of Red Tea with the Purple Red Tea this month, and to perhaps even spread the love for Red Tea in general. But I won't go on about this further just now... that's best left to Kaiya's article this month!



here are four ancient principles in Gongfu tea, which we may discuss in another article at some time, and the first is the only one that deals directly with external aspects of tea preparation. The rest are much more internal. The first principle of Gongfu tea is to maintain temperature from kettle to drinker. This is easier said than done. It is useful to understand this principal on all levels, and therefore do as many experiments with temperature as you can.

You can first try and see what happens when you pre-warm your teapot and what the tea is like when you don't. Next, experiment with showering the pot during steepings. There are four different kinds of showers: Don't shower at all, shower only before steeping, shower only after steeping and shower both before *and* after steeping. What is the difference in the tea? Is the flavor different? How about the mouthfeel? Does the Qi move through your body differently? Work with these differences in temperature and how they affect your tea.

After working with your pot, you can then turn to the cups. The best way to do this experiment is to have two identical cups. Try preheating one and leaving the other alone. When you compare them hold both cups in your hands and sip back and forth, testing the difference between the preheated cup and the normal one. The difference should be radical indeed. But which one is better and why?

Try and see if you can come up with any other experiments that deal with temperature in Gongfu tea. The obvious one is to experiment with different heat sources themselves, seeing what (if any) difference there is when we use charcoal as opposed to an electric or gas stove. There are many other experiments as well. As you delve deeper into the relationship fire has in the alchemy of tea, you will uncover many general axioms, and develop an appreciation for the first principal of Gongfu tea beyond tradition and honor.

Remember, Gongfu tea is about experiential mastery. It has to be in your hands. You can't read about it or pick it up at the local tea shop. You have to practice, and the more the better. Also, don't be afraid to repeat experiments you have already done, as the outcome may change or you may pick up on things you weren't able to before, as your sensitivity grows.





*Weng Ming Chuan's handcarved bamboo tea utensils*



**T**his month's tea is one that has a very special place in all our hearts here at the Tea Sage Hut, and I've actually been excited at the prospect of sharing it with all of you for several months now. Literally every month I've gone to WuDe and said, "Why don't we send everyone the Purple Red Tea this month?" So it's exciting to finally be sharing it and drinking it together now. It's a tea we drink here so often that I don't think any of you has visited us without having had the chance to drink it several times, and with good reason. There's something about this tea that really sets it apart, something particularly deep that stirs me at a more primal level than the other Red Teas I know; there's just something about this tea.

From my experience of Red Teas, there is unusually great power in this one; I find the Qi to be robust, uplifting, and evenly spread rather than hitting a particular part of me. I am more likely to listen to music that is a bit slower and deeper than I would with other Red Teas, perhaps some chants or something more rhythmic, rather than something more melodic. Similarly, I feel this tea is especially at home when drunk from a bowl, but if you have a Gongfu pot give both ways a try. It's wonderful in a side-handle pot too, and I drink it that way as well from time to time, but it seems to almost always ask me to sit with it the way its friends of old used to in the jungles, long before teapots were made.

If it's a rainy spring or summer morning, or a crisp fall afternoon, I'm much more likely to reach for a Red Tea to warm me up. I also have found that all the Red Teas I have are quite agreeable after a meal because their flavors are strong enough to get through whatever I've eaten without much influence, and their energies are good for digestion. With the exception of this month's tea, I have found that my Red Teas are more conducive to giving me a boost of energy at the start of my day or during work; they get my heart pumping and my blood flowing. I took the Purple Tea to work one day however, and while the kids definitely liked having a teacher who magically wasn't nearly as concerned with scolding them as usual, I decided to stick to taking my Sun Moon Lake tea with me because I am both calmer and more alert at the same time when I drink it.

Actually, although it is more pronounced in some of the Red Teas I drink than others (we have a Red Tea cake that we call 'Joy' for example), all the Red Teas I have besides the Purple Tea seem to trend in this direction energetically. It's as though the rhythmic energy that beats slowly everywhere with the Purple Tea is centered on my heart. With my other Red Teas, however, there's

a gentle uplifting and melodic Qi that radiates outwards into the rest of my body with great liveliness. I find that my finer Red Teas, the ones that always ask me to brew them Gongfu, have a higher percentage of this melodic Qi, whereas the simpler ones such as Joy, the Sun Moon Lake tea and Purple Tea, which are happiest in bowls, have more of the rhythm and heart energy. I should make one caveat regarding this however; the simpler Red Teas I just mentioned are all old-growth trees (Joy for example comes from thousand-year-old trees in Yunnan, and the Sun Moon Lake tea comes from old-growth bushes in Taiwan), so they are naturally disposed to deeper Qi; but it's also not a coincidence that they go so naturally into the bowl for the same reason. I don't have any fine old-growth Gongfu Red Teas to compare, however, but I shall most joyfully provide an update whenever that opportunity presents itself!

If you have the option, the clearest comparison of these energies would be Joy and the Red Tea from Wuyi, with Joy having the most heart and rhythm and the Wuyi tea having the more uplifting melody. But most of you have some Sun Moon Lake tea (which was May's Tea of the Month), which I would describe as almost right in the middle; both elements have a lot of presence in that tea. If you were with us in May, try listening to the 7th and 12th tracks of the CD we sent you in particular, as these are pretty much the musical epitome of the dynamic I'm trying to describe; these songs are both masterfully balanced, just like that tea. I'm sure we'll be writing an article pretty soon on pairing music and tea, which can be difficult, but perhaps you'll find it useful to begin experimenting from here. The basic object is to choose a music with the same energetic frequency as your tea, so to use the example of drinking Joy, I choose a music that is anything celebratory yet centering, something a bit loose and free; but if I drink the Wuyi Red Tea Gongfu, I choose music that is more refined and elegant.

I've heard it said that Red Teas aren't patient. However, I have come to disagree. My experience has been that they are much more patient than I could ever be. I remember the first time I realized this when I was brewing the Wuyi Red Tea for just the second or third time. After only five or six steepings, I had the thought that the tea was spent, since it had gone from a deep red and the accompanying burst of flavors to a pale yellow and just a simple sweetness already. However, my kettle still had plenty of water and I didn't want to waste it, so I drank another steeping, and was shocked to realize that it was the best yet! Amusingly, the same exact thing happened towards the end of the second kettle, then the

## *My Red Tea Cabinet*

third, and the fourth. “Surely it’s done now”, I would think, followed by a “Wow! Where did that come from!?” Finally, I ran out of time. Having drunk upwards of thirty steepings I had to clean up and go to work, reluctantly emptying my pot of the leaves which seemed still nowhere near finished offering me cups of increasingly simple, subtle sweetness. Yes, those steepings had almost none of the flavors the first few had, but then again if there are six steepings of the one and twenty-four+ of the other, which is really the heart of the tea? It’s hard to say. (I’m also admittedly spoiled on fine Red Teas.)

In the end, every bit of this is relative and personal, so I hope that you find this article useful without letting it get in the way of your own interpretations. I know that I would love to hear yours, so perhaps some of you will write about it on our forums this month! Similar experiences, dissimilar experiences, musical discoveries, anything that comes up is always welcome...



For thousands of years mystics have drunk tea for its Qi, understanding this aspect of the Leaf as essential to a tea journey. A greater appreciation for Cha Qi enhances a life of tea. Without a sensitivity to the energy in our tea, we miss out on many of its subtler qualities, beyond the flavor and mouthfeel that are more readily available to us when we drink tea. Qi cultivation is an essential aspect of all the Daoist arts, in fact, and an important part of the fabric of Chinese cosmology, Nature, health and lifeway. However, there are so many aspects of Qi that are only available in the drinking, and there's no substitute for such experience. Still, an exploration of Cha Qi might help us look deeper within our bowls; and more importantly inspire us to set the kettle on the coals once more...

Qi literally means “energy” and can therefore be understood as the subtle vibration of all matter in the universe, as well as the more macro movements of water and air, mountains and animals. A much greater understanding of Qi, however, will come through feeling it rather than comprehending the broad philosophical strokes. Many meditations and physical exercises like Taichi or Qi Gong allow one to experience the “flow” of Qi directly, as do healing arts like acupuncture and tea drinking. After having an experience of the energy flowing through you, you can expand your sensitivity and begin to understand the energy within so-called “objects”—unlocking a deep understanding of why the objective view is objectionable—and begin to relate to the world differently.

When drinking tea, it is difficult to even discuss “Cha Qi” because an experience of it is only possible *after* we've drunk the tea. This is problematic because the tea is now in me, and cannot therefore be separated from my “self.” Is it the tea's Qi I am experiencing or is it mine? Perhaps the tea just caused my own Qi to move, making it more apparent or maybe the tea itself was more than a mere catalyst—itsself a burst of new and inspiring energy in me?

The answer to these and other important questions are in the drinking. What we can explore together in this article, though, is a clarification of what the experience of “Cha Qi” is and some of the different kinds of Qi that different teas offer.

We have found in our courses that is often helpful to move beyond the gross experiences that many people confuse for Qi in order to search for and experience the Qi itself. When some people, even seasoned tea drinkers, exclaim that a tea has a lot of Qi, they are sometimes misunderstanding the word. For example, you might

here someone say, “This tea has a lot of Qi! I was hyper and felt like running. I couldn't sleep!” This sounds more like the experience of caffeine than Qi. You might experience an energy boost, some heat in your chest, or any other gross effect. This might be better understood as the effects of Qi moving, rather than the movement of the Qi itself. Of course, even these gross sensations are ultimately composed of energy, and therefore Qi, but distinguishing between the gross and subtle sensations tea inspires can help you further explore your teas.

If you've ever practiced a form of insight meditation, like Vipassana, you have experience dissecting sensations in your body from the gross to the subtle. For example, when we experience a pain, it only seems on the surface to be exclusively pain. If we calm down and observe the affected area with some equanimity, we find there is also heat, throbbing, itching and other sensations within the “painful” area. Deeper still, there is a flow of Qi. At first, this subtle flow of energy may feel like a tingling or numbness, but it is only akin to such sensations. When we drink fine tea, there is also such a flow within us, whether it is the tea or our energy moved by the tea's impetus.





You might try to feel the Qi in your hands after drinking a fine tea. They are usually the most sensitive part of the body and easiest to feel. You might feel a subtle flow of tingling, prickly sensations or a rush of heat at first. If the latter, try focusing within it and finding any other sensations within the heat, as we discussed above.

There are many ways of categorizing the Qi of different teas. Since ancient times, teawayfarers have separated Cha Qi into Yin and Yang to start with. Yin Qi is gentle. The older the tea tree the more Yin the tea will be. Similarly, the longer the leaves are on the plant the more Yin the Qi will be. Younger trees, and/or teas composed of more (or exclusively) buds are more Yang. Yin Qi is softer and more billowy. You might say that the wavelength of the vibration is so tight as to make it a continuous hum. Yang tea thrums more, often even pulsing. It is stronger on the surface, but weaker at a depth. The Yin teas are the opposite, weaker on the surface but grow stronger in depth each steeping, like most aged Puerhs.

Another way to think about the different kinds of Cha Qi is as energetic, uplifting or grounding. There are teas that center you, heighten awareness and bring Earth to the forefront. Such grounding teas are good for meditation, helping us to find our stillness. Puerh, Black and Red teas are often like this. Other teas, however, are uplifting, and we leave these mortal coils to go roam above the clouds for a while. A fine Oolong tea can be

like soaring on the “black dragon” it’s named after. Finally, there are teas that fill you with energy, ready to face the day and all its vicissitudes. There are obvious exceptions within any genre of tea, though. As you drink more tea, you’ll get to know which kinds of energy they have, which will help you decide which tea to drink and when.

As you move forward, you will explore the different ways Cha Qi moves through our bodies—in spirals or from front to back, for example. The Qi can spread from our core to the extremities, and if it is strong enough it can even break through any blockages we have. This may be slightly uncomfortable, but will ultimately be very healing for you. Try paying more attention to the way your energy moves when you drink these various Global Tea Hut teas each month. Many of them have been chosen in part based on their energetic qualities. This will also open up doorways into a deeper, richer and more connected life through tea...

It is no mystery that the world of tea is vast. In the short amount of time that I have been on this path of tea it has become clear to me that there is an insurmountable amount of information to be learned about tea. So many types of tea. So many types of teaware. So many ways of processing and preparing tea. The rabbit hole is very deep. I could easily spend the rest of my life learning as much as possible about tea, and there would be still be so much left to learn. Another thing that I have noticed about this world of tea is that despite only having been on this path for a short time, I have gained so much, and what I have gained has very little to do with anything there is to know.

Being alive during this age of tremendous amounts of information and outrageous stimulation at every corner, it is easy to forget that this tea we drink comes from simple trees that have been alive for hundreds, if not thousands, of years and that they come from earth, rain, and sunlight, which are also primordial, and for all this to exist the entire universe first had to form. To know information about tea is good and I certainly have no intention of taking anything away from that, but for a moment, set down the intellect and understand that all we could possibly know about tea is a tiny drop in a vast

ocean compared to the direct relationship we create with Nature by drinking tea with a pure and clear heart.

According to Daoism and Traditional Chinese Medicine, the heart and the mind are one and the same. One of the primary functions of the heart is to house the *Shen* (Spirit). One of tea's many properties is to clear the heart and calm the *Shen*. Tea is wonderful in that it will clear your mind and heart if they are cluttered and unbalanced, and it will also take a clear and uncluttered heart and mind deeper into peace and tranquility. There is no end to the depth that tea will go, as it is like water which travels to the lowest point of its vessel to fill it up from the bottom.

The first time I drank tea in this tradition, I got the distinct sense that tea wants to experience being human. Not for the drama and stories, but to peer through our clean senses and rest in our pure hearts. The contentment I felt in simply sitting on a tree-stump stool in front of a monkey-wood table, gazing at the world around me, and hearing the simple sounds of tea being prepared was unlike anything I had experienced. (The only thing that came close was long hours of meditation while at a retreat.)



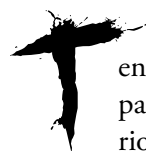


The mind, in its exalted state, purely perceives with no need to label, interpret, judge, or compartmentalize. No looking, just seeing. No listening, just hearing. No doing, just being. Pure awareness, free of the desire for this or that, free of clinging to a preferable moment. To dwell in such a state may sound simple, but it requires continual, daily cleansing of the mind. It is easy to say that we are all enlightened, and that all we have to do is realize that we are enlightened, but that is like saying that your car is perfectly clean underneath all of the dirt and all you have to do is realize that it is clean. One must put in the work of cleaning their car if they want it to actually be clean, and only then will it be so. It is no different with the mind and heart. Daily work must be performed to keep the mind and heart clean, clear, and unfettered. Despite all of the initial resistances one might encounter in daily meditation, this is the greatest gift we can give ourselves, and very soon the work becomes joy. This is also the greatest gift we can give to tea. As a tea drinker knowing that tea wants to be human, why not aim to become the best human you can be?

As the Daoists say, it is not the bowl itself, but the emptiness that allows it to function as a vessel for its contents. Similarly, it is the emptiness within us that allows for the greatest of experiences with tea. If the mind and heart are cluttered and full, tea will help to clear them, and that is a wonderful thing, but for this month I invite you to meditate and clear your mind however suits

you best *before* you drink tea and see how that transforms your experience. The more depth we bring to tea, the more depth tea will bring to us. If we can shift our stance from, “What can tea give to me?”, to “What can I give to tea?”, the transformation will be great and the ripples will reach far and wide. What better gift to give to tea than a clear and empty heart within which to rest for a time and a clean, clear mind to perceive the world?

*Aim to be like a bowl—simple, close to the earth, and empty.*



en thousand smiles, tears, loves and lies all flash past in a streak of silver. For a moment the warrior held him there balanced on the cusp of two worlds. Then the silver sword slowly withdrew, its luster now dulled crimson. The warrior didn't clean his blade. Not this time. He sheathed it as it was, sullied with a man's poignancy, his everything. And it would never rise again. The martial arts had culminated in this warrior—in the length of his jet hair that swayed in the breeze; in his keen black eyes that looked at the aftermath spread out across the small valley below; and in the crow's feet next to them that seemed to be written in ancient hieroglyphs of war. It had been long since the sight or smell of death had disturbed him. His life had been like a journey across a road of corpses. Even victories had grown hazy with time. Three emperors had come and gone and so had their banners from his field, and colors from his mount. His soldiers weren't surprised when he came back down the hill on which the final charge had been made with a grim and distant expression. Nor did they think anything of the fact that he ignored their salutes of "General" as he passed by. But legends would be written about why he wasn't in camp the next day, and children would study of his ascension into Heaven in their mythology lessons even hundreds of years later. However, the truth is always beyond simplicity, plain enough to be profound...

It was a cool spring dawn the day after the battle and his aide-de-camps were gathered together in his tent discussing the last battle in the southern campaign. After the meeting, the general said that he needed to be left alone to prepare for the coming battle. No one thought anything of it at the time. He was a spiritual man, after all—raised in a monastery. He always meditated at least through the night before a battle. He once again ignored the soldiers' salutes as he steered his mount out of the camp late that morning and rode off. Many of his men would die a few days later still carrying with them the inspiration of his perfect poise, subtle and stern, as he rode slowly up the eastern hill from graceful white to silhouette that morning.

He rode on all night through the mountain trails. The beautiful sunrise didn't slow him a bit. He was focused on the image in his mind—an old man seated alone on a small cushion. The serenity in his posture had haunted the warrior's dreams since he was a boy in the monastery. When he had heard that such a wise man lived in the mountains in the south, he had begun using all the strategies in his great library of politics to get his army near enough for him to go and see the man. For weeks now he had been surreptitiously asking villagers his whereabouts. Even his highest lieutenants didn't

know about his quest to find the enlightened man. It had been so long since he had abandoned the notion of any real spirituality. His meditations were to focus and poise the mind and make a weapon of the body.

What seemed like a thousand eons ago, the statuesque general himself had been a scruffy little novice in a small village of the western provinces. He had studied martial arts like the other monks, and was told it was in defense, living in such a wild country with bandits that wouldn't hesitate to kill even a monk if they thought it would benefit them. In reality, though, the monastery was quiet and his martial studies were more a routine, or perhaps at best a small part of his spirituality. But the empire was never stable. There might be peace for a man's lifetime or childhood, but an empire lives longer than a man, and chaos is but a blink away in its eyes. The general's childhood had been between one of those blinks. His youth was scarred by a deep and drawn glance to the furrowed eyes of chaos. The memory stopped haunting his dreams long ago, washed away in a river of blood that flowed over and through his sword. But there on the mountain it swirled once again through his thoughts, but only in still paintings—each one capturing another piece of the horror that had come to rule his life. He had made a religion of death, and that night had been its creation:

He saw the bandits in their camp planning. He saw the monks sitting in morning chant. He saw the master sending him and one other novice to a neighboring village to find a man the master needed to speak with. Then he saw a glimpse of those two boys playing in the creek, the afternoon sun on their cheeks as they made their way to the village. They were happy to have a holiday from the routine of the monastery. But the strongest images were the ones that remained from the return trip with the villager. The smoke rising from the distant hillock. The dead and mangled monks. The burnt, blackened ones. The tears in the eyes of his two companions and the fire in his own. All of these images flew past his mind without commentary, without the need. It had been years since they had even entered his thoughts...

Letting go of his beginnings he returned to the present and marveled at the clouds that swirled around him as he made his way higher and higher through the mountains, slowly revolving around a thin trail that climbed endlessly towards the peak. And then the clouds were below him, all tinted outwards with yellows and oranges that swept away his thoughts and left him to dream of the Heavens just above our lives.

He turned a corner and came upon the hut. He knew it was the place. He had dreamt of it for the last few years. He could see the serenity misting around it, gathered there by the old man within. He left his horse and approached the house on foot. It was empty, but he felt welcome beyond courtesy. He gently set his sandals aside and entered. He sat at the great table hewn from a giant tree and studied the grains of the wood that swirled across its surface. Their truth eluded him. And there was nothing else in the hut to divert his attention, so he just sat contentedly awaiting the hermit's return. It could have been a moment or even a lifetime later when the old monk finally rounded the bend and smiled at the horse and then later again at its rider. He sat down across from the general and began to boil some mountain water. From beneath the table he produced a simple earthen pot and a jar. He brought forth some brown leaves from the jar and placed them so gently within the teapot. The leaves looked older and wiser than even the old man himself. He steeped the tea and brought forth two porcelain cups. He reverently used both hands to place one before the general in a gesture that had haunted his dreams and meditations for months now. He somehow knew that all of his answers were in this cup, as if it was the master.

The master poured the amber liquid into his cup and leaned forward, looking into its depth and smelling the rich aromas that lingered in the steam that rose from its brim. He saw within the cup many tiny particles of leaf swirling around towards the bottom. He followed the movements of one. With each turn of the leaf, his mind gathered momentum, allowing deeper thoughts than he had ever had to wash over his mind in great waves.

He understood then that there was a greater peace than the one his soul had yearned for. He had believed that through the swift justice of the sword the enemies of peace could be eradicated, that harmony reign supreme. He now understood that all matter was never at rest. And living things are the most complex of all matter, especially humans. Within each atom there is tremendous movement and change constantly rising and falling in elliptical revolutions—each one a slightly different gyration than the previous. The swirling spec in the cup was like all the other bits of matter in the world. So too was our history permeated with the triumphs of both peace and horror. Even if all the battles were won and harmony prevailed throughout the land, there would still arise another evil sorcerer, another re-



26bellion, another greedy tyrant to eventually restart the whole cycle again. The legacy of his great family, who had fought such evil for many generations, was a testament to this tenacity. He had achieved peace, reflected in the wavy Hamon of his beautiful katana. Perhaps that peace was enough for many. It had been what drove him these many years. And yet now he realized, looking into the amber liquid drifting around towards stillness, that it was but a taste of a more powerful understanding of what it meant to be truly at peace.

As each particle of leaf swirled in the cup, the greater stillness around it could still contain that movement and yet retain its serenity. He looked up and realized how the analogy applied to all that surrounded him. For every particle of matter there are trillions of acres of stillness. And all the vibrations of each and every atom of matter that exists is not enough to even cause the slightest percolation in the great black ocean within which they are engulfed. All of the movements of mankind throughout our past, present and future are forever enshrouded in a great expanse of quiet that extends outward to galactic eternity. Our greatest triumphs and our most depraved horrors are all just slight trembles in such an Existence. The universe is capable of containing within it great violence while still remaining, for the most part quiet calm and still. Even the cataclysmic explosions of great stars are not enough to ruffle the peace of it all. He looked at the master and understood that if he were to be in a deep meditative peace, the peace of a monk who had spent years alone in the mountains, then the rebellion of one cell in the master's little toe would never be enough to stain the deeper peace of his being. All the movement of all the matter that is—all the planets, stars, and beings that roam them—all of it could never make a loud enough noise to upset the quiet of space. All of the passion for good, for justice and harmony of men that he had fought for; all the peace he had cultivated in his own meditations on and off the battlefield; all of it was still movement within that great ocean of complete stillness. The rise and fall of empires, the death and consumption of billions of lives, the great battles in the name of justice and truth, all the intellectual libraries of knowledge preserved by just and good kings—all of it seemed such a complex dance when viewed through human eyes. And yet a slightly larger perspective in which it all was drowned was but a breath away. How could the swirling of one bit of leaf dust matter to the cup? The cup was content to contain it. How could the movements of all men, let alone one man, matter to the ocean of space? At perfect ease, the cup and space both just sat and meditated on eternity, seemingly ignorant of the tiny fluctuations occurring within them.

When he drank the loamy tea, his mind quieted. He let go of the great revelation his intellect had just been wrapped up in. However strong the inspiration, the

tea would still wash clean the mind and let experience reign. But just as he was drifting into that silence, one last thought echoed through his mind softer and quieter, fading away... He felt in his very being a sense of space and understood that he had been wrong. He had imagined all the matter in the universe floating in the ocean of deep, black stillness. He had imagined the movements of life and mankind somehow contained in a great god-like ocean of peace. He now knew that the space even permeated the matter. The stillness was right there, inside each particle of his being; that even the small movements of his life were themselves swimming around in what was mostly still. This is what he had sought. This was a peace not dependent upon the existence of harmony between men. This was a peace that no sword need defend. He had found the true emperor of Existence and seen through his eyes the perfection of all that is, from the vibration of the smallest material particle to the great swirling eddies of human lives as they dance through times of great joy and pain. It was all perfect and still. He smiled and left all words and thoughts behind. The feeling was enough.

For many hours they sat there, occasionally drinking another cup without any apparent notice. Only the first one had mattered. After some time his thoughts returned. He bowed to the master three times. And before he rose and walked away he looked deeply into the master's eyes and laid his sword on the table before him. It was the price for that cup of tea. He had known it even before he had arrived. The Way to truth wasn't in the perfection of the body. Nor was it in the perfection of morality on earth. For the first time in his life he walked without the sword of his ancestors. It had been his soul. Now it rested where it truly belonged. He felt lighter than the clouds that swirled below him. He had achieved what he desired, for the rest of his life was silent. And though legends were spread throughout the land, naught was ever heard of him again. Perhaps he really did ascend to Heaven...

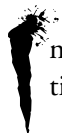
道

事

心



*I breathe in. I breathe out. I keep my mind on the flow.*



In August, I arrived at the Tea Sage Hut for the third time. This time, it was to stay for a long while.

The daily rhythm of life at the center quickly provided a framework for spiritual development. Each morning, I water the plants. Each evening, I tap into the spiritual wellspring of meditation. Each day, I learn more about the flow of tea.

*I breathe in. I breathe out. I feel the sensation of my breath.*

I experience the flow of tea either as the served or the server, either with my tea brothers, Wu De and Kai Ya, or 'alone' with the tea, the teaware, the fire and the water.

In being served tea by Wu De and Kai Ya, I begin to experience the current of spiritual wisdom that flows through tea. This flow is particularly apparent in the movement of water through the course of the tea ceremony—from water jar to kettle to pot to bowls to bodies and beyond.

Water was heavily emphasized by the tea sages of yore, and for good reason. Without access to deep tea wisdom, many of today's tea drinkers wonder what these ancients were jabbering on about, but those initiated in the Way of Tea understand.

In observing the tea ceremony, the role of water as a teacher becomes clear. It transmits deep wisdom as it gradually shifts from room temperature liquid to vaporous steam, as it gathers and then transfers the energy of heat, and as it merges with and separates from the tea leaves, leaving both itself and the leaves changed as a result. Finally, transformed into tea, it becomes one with those who drink it, metamorphosing twofold yet again—transforming into a part of the drinker while transforming the drinker him/herself.

At each stage, the water reveals different truths. And once it has infused the tea leaves (and, for that matter, become infused with the tea leaves), it reveals deeper truths. This continues even in the moments in which flow appears to stop. For example, in the moments between the pouring of tea and the serving of tea. Although the steeped tea is contained in different bowls, it knows that it came from the same pot. As the steam rises, it doesn't care whose bowl it rose from. When a tea drinker recognizes this deeply, the ego dies a tiny, inconsequential death and the spirit is awakened to the power of life's flow.

*I breathe in. I breathe out. I feel the energy of my breath. I feel the flow which feeds my soul.*

Each day that I prepare bowl tea for myself (experiencing the role of server when I prepare it, and then, a few minutes later, experiencing the role of served), I come into contact with the flow of water in a more direct, instinctual way.

Before I remove it from its clay storage jar, I transmit a feeling to the water. Sometimes, I send it a question. Sometimes, I transmit gratitude for an answer. Sometimes, I reflect back to it a sense of what is. In return, water teaches me something new as it becomes a more integrated part of how I serve tea, a more appreciated part of my physical form and a more recognized part of my spiritual path.

Through feeling, I learn that water is the essence of the flow of energy. Like breath, water is a physical representation of the divine flow of the universe. Like a true master, water flows through all circumstances with ease and grace. Like an alchemist's gold, water is both the transformed and an agent for transformation.

But I also feel (on a spiritual and a physical level) that these words do not contain the wisdom of which I speak. In the realm of words, we often fumble with metaphors and similes to try to shine some light on deeper truths. In the silence and stillness of tea, words are not only inadequate, but entirely unnecessary—everything is understood through the realm of feeling and beyond it, in the realm of being.

*I breathe in. I breathe out. In between, there is but an instant. With each inhalation, I am born. With each exhalation, I die. In between, there is but an instant.*

The tea leaves my tea brothers and sisters here and elsewhere use to prepare tea were once nourished by the fire of the sun, the elements of the earth and the flow of rain and streams. Then, the energy of the fire, earth and water was preserved within the leaves, locked in place by simple drying, by the 'killing of the green,' by oxidation or even by fermentation.

When we serve tea, we reintroduce the energies that once nourished the tea leaves, but in new forms—the fire of the charcoal, the earth elements of teaware and the flow of spring water.



With the wisdom and flow behind well-served tea, the incredible energy captured within these leaves is liberated into the flow of life. The server and the served are elevated both in body and in spirit by the experience of partaking of the flow of energy that occurs when water and tea leaves are united yet again.

*This body breathes in. This body breathes out. I recognize that I am not the breather, but the energy, the flow, of the breath itself.*

When I serve tea, I feel the flow of the water from earthen water vessel to gourd ladle to iron kettle to clay teapot. I feel the water suffuse itself into the tealeaves to form something new—something that is both of it and of the leaves. When I am attuned to it, I can feel when the transformation is complete. It is something beyond words. This mind recognizes that fact. This body breathes in.

This body breathes out. Energy flows through it to pour the tea in unison with this exhale, and the tea flows into two bowls. When I am at one with it, I can feel that the tea is not something that I made. It is something that is me.

With this awareness, I begin to understand that my path is not one of learning (gathering wisdom for self-betterment), but one of transmitting (sharing wisdom for universal elevation). Gradually, with lessons from Wu De, fellow students, the tea spirit, water's flow and innumerable other sources, a transformation occurs. Slowly, with great patience and perseverance (from me and from my teachers), I become less like tea leaves (storage vessels for the spirit of tea) and more like liquid tea (a conduit for tea's wisdom and activated energy).

*The flow of my breath, myself, continues. That which I am is not limited to the confines of this body, but is an ever-flowing, ever-changing energy. To deny this flow is to deny life itself. To try to stop it is to try to extinguish the life of this body, this iteration of life's ongoing evolution.*

After hearing Wu De say it so many times, I finally understood his meaning. "As one on a spiritual path, true freedom is not doing what I want. It is doing what I must." The role of duty is becoming clearer. It is not, as the Western worldview might have us believe, a restriction of life. It is a weathering away of all that is superfluous and a channeling of life energy into one's true path. It is an abiding acceptance of one's duty.

I find that this shift in awareness and its implications in my life situation do not generate a sudden change within me, but one with immense power in its persistence. It is like gently flowing water that carves into rock over many years, forming a canyon that then serves as its riverbed. Duty is not an absence of choice because of any external force (which is, itself, an illusion), but because *your path has already been already illuminated for you through your own efforts.*

And although many things are not yet clear to me, they are becoming clearer as I carve my own way under the competent guidance of water, tea and my tea brothers here in Miaoli. Each day, I learn from water's flow and tea's spirit. Each day, I understand more deeply that these lessons are not mine to hold onto.

These are lessons not of the mind, but of the spirit. They have an alchemy of their own—one which transforms not only *me* but, eventually, *through me*. With this transformation, I change from one person with a singular identity to an interconnected source of tea wisdom in a long line of tea teachers, allowing the spirit of tea to flow through me in physical and mental action, and to shift the life of this physical form into a manifestation of the flow of tea. Like breath, this flow becomes not only a part of me, but it becomes the essence of my very existence.

*In this moment, I gain wisdom. In the next, I share wisdom. In between, there is but an instant.*





When you begin down an Eastern path, and Cha Dao mostly heads East, you quickly realize the important role language can play in our thinking, and consequently our insights. For the most part, we come to love the ancient spiritual words in languages like Sanskrit and Chinese—for their subtlety and breadth. There is one English word we’ve come to like better than its Eastern equivalents, however: “Enlightenment”. When most people think of “Enlightenment” they see in the word the “light” and are reminded of the light in us, which we all travel towards. But “light” in English has another meaning: not heavy! Being enlightened means, literally, lightening up! Don’t take yourself serious, or anything else for that matter. There is an old Indian saying: “beware the spiritual/religious man that takes himself seriously!” And many of you know how we here do so love laughter and humor. We thought that these newsletters might be getting a bit heavy and that we would enlighten them up.

### *The Adventures of Kaiya on his Journey through Tea*

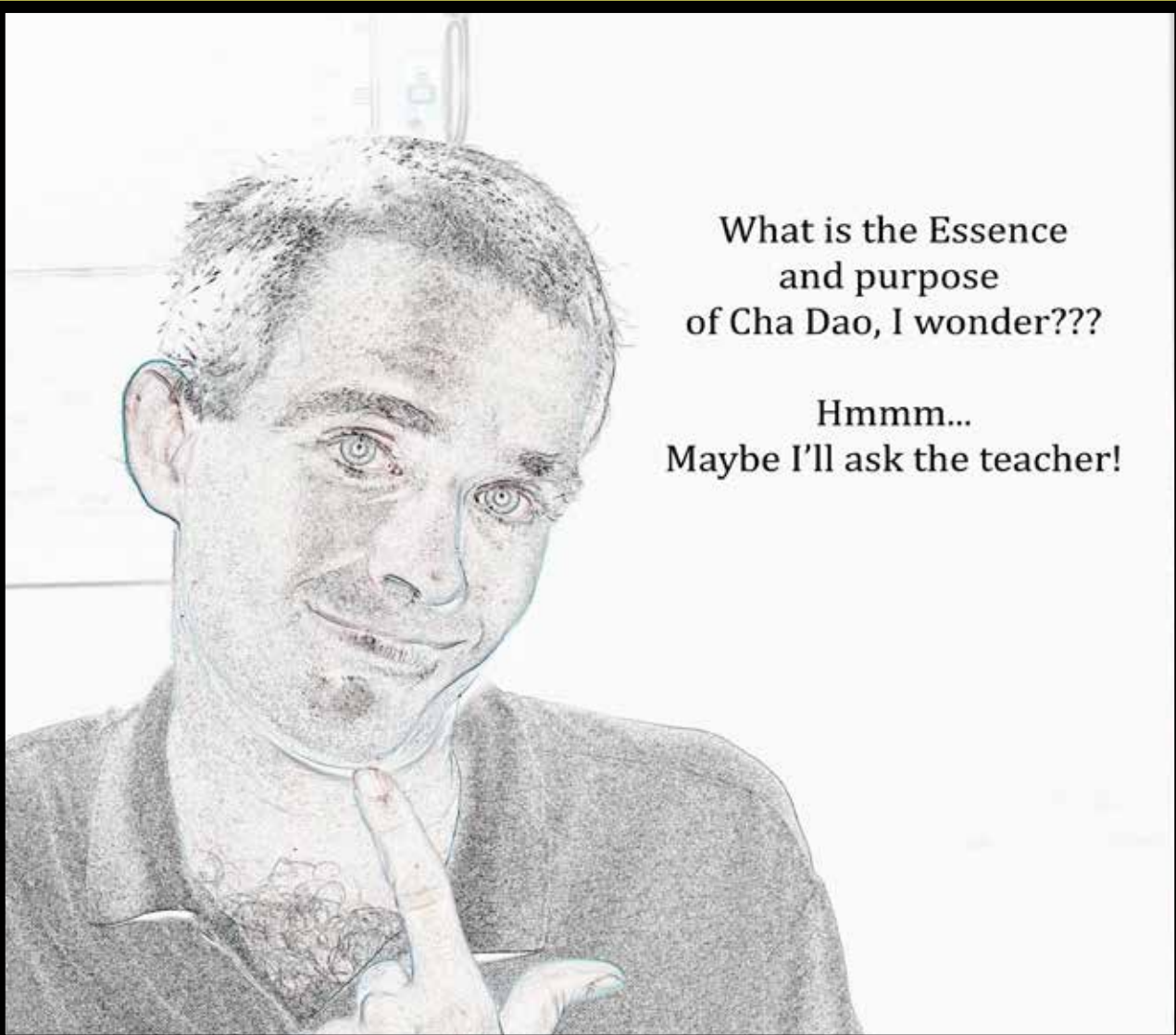
Here we begin the first of a series of comics elucidating the lost, heraldic days of the great tea sages of yore, foremost among them the Lord Kaiya. His adventures form the backbone of our own tea practice, of course. We find such inspiration in reading of how he defeated all the other tea practitioners in the “Great Tea Off” of 1472, and don’t forget how he single-handedly changed tea forever by being the first to hold a completely nude tea gathering in 1485!

Lord Kaiya “The Merciful” is a hero to all tea lovers worldwide. We hope these modern renditions of his adventures, in the form of comics, will help to fuel the passion in a new generation of tea lovers...

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*From now on, we plan to introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you each month in these newsletters. We hope that this helps us all get to know each other better. 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 show you some glimpses of such beautiful people and their tea. We thought we'd introduce you to the musical genius of Alec Bridges.*

I grew up in Laguna Beach, CA. When I was 10 years old, I picked up a guitar and didn't set it down until I was 20. Even then, the rest was brief. I had a major awakening and set music to the side for a short time to get my health and spiritual life together. I discovered yoga and Vipassana meditation and dove head first into both, which eventually lead me to start teaching yoga and going to school for Ayurvedic medicine. Halfway through my schooling, I met the frontman of a South African band called "Just Jinjer", who happened to be looking for a new guitarist. He invited me to join his band and tour all over South Africa, so I packed my bags and off I went. It was a bit of a shock to go from my simple life of yoga, meditation, school, and the occasional small show in my hometown to flying to the other side of the world and playing in front of thousands of people, literally over night. That went on for about two years, but in my heart, I did not feel like I was on the right path. I had a lot of my own music left to make, and I wanted to live a more grounded lifestyle, so I amicably parted ways with the band, moved back to Laguna Beach, started recording my own music and went back to school.

Currently, I live in Los Angeles and go to school for Traditional Chinese Medicine at Yo San University. It is there that I met Colin Hudon, who introduced Tea and Wu De into my life. For that, I am forever grateful. My first experience of tea was at a workshop with Wu De at Temple Tea in Venice, CA. I never could have imagined how deeply it would touch me. It slowly and gently brought me into the wonderfully clear and meditative space that we are now all so familiar with. Prior to this, I had only ever felt that way after long hours of meditation. From the morning, until the late evening, we drank tea, starting with an unprocessed Oolong and ending with a very special tea that was stored underneath a Taoist Temple and chanted on under the light of every Full Moon. By the end of the day, I felt so clear and centered. I knew I had stumbled upon something invaluable that would be a major aspect of my path.

My aim now is to bring all of these facets of my life together in a harmonious way that touches, inspires, and brings healing to many people—be it through acupuncture, serving tea, or music. Musically, I am just beginning to scratch the surface of incorporating tea into the creative process. I will be releasing a new album - *In A Stream*, in the early Fall of 2012. It is full of meditative energy. I am also starting a project called *Dhamma Records*, which will contain music made from old students of Vipassana meditation. All of the money received by *Dhamma Records* will be donated to Vipassana centers across the globe.

Please feel free to stop by either of my music sites: [alecbridges.com](http://alecbridges.com) or [dhammarecords.com](http://dhammarecords.com) May we continue to grow together on this wonderful path of Tea and share many bowls together.



The Global Tea Hut website now has a forum up, where we can all discuss this month's tea and ask or answer questions, as well as share our experiences. It is a great way to meet some of your brothers and sisters in the hut. Come and join us:

[www.globalteahut.org/forum](http://www.globalteahut.org/forum)

*(We are also on Facebook and Twitter now!)*



We have launched the new video series! The first video is an introduction to this Global Tea Hut. You can visit our Youtube channel via the GTH website or watch the video on the new page at our site. We will be launching regular videos starting in August, with tutorials, interviews, introductions and much more about this love of the Leaf!



There are currently more than 100 people in Global Tea Hut from all around the world: countries like Spain, Russia, Estonia, Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada, USA, the U.K. and Taiwan. Our accountant, Kaiya the Magnificent (and Merciful) says that once we get to around 120 people all our financial worries will vanish and we'll live happily everafter, forever and ever...



If any of you are interested in seeing these newsletters in color, you can read them on the Internet at the GTH website, under the link for 'newsletters'. Some of the photography is worth taking a peak at.



You are all welcome to visit our center in Taiwan. All classes, as well as room and board are completely free of charge. We have tons going on. You can read more at:

[www.teasagehut.org](http://www.teasagehut.org)

We have decided to stop making you sign for the GTH packages, which means they will sit in your mailbox rather than being returned to us after some time. If you don't receive your package you will have to contact us, as we won't have any way of keeping track of the packages after this month. Still, we think this is a better way.



We have given out 5 scholarships for a free year of GTH to people who want in but cannot afford the cost. If you know anyone else interested, please let us know. It is a great joy to expand this community!



Wu De will be in Estonia this October/November! We are doing some amazing tastings and workshops there. Come and join us if you are nearby.

*Contact Steve for more information!*



Let us know about what you think of Global Tea Hut so far, either by contacting us or expressing your thoughts on the new forum. We would love to hear your comments or criticism. We are here to serve and make this experience better for everyone, bringing us all closer together.

[www.globalteahut.org](http://www.globalteahut.org)

[www.teasagehut.org](http://www.teasagehut.org)

[www.the-leaf.org](http://www.the-leaf.org)

*Be happy!*



## TEA SAGE HUT PROJECTS

### Our center

- Expenses (essentially covered by local donations and Global Tea Hut)
- Food and entertainment, trips and gas for visitors who wish to see Taiwan
- Bowls and tea for every guest to take home
- A Puerh Cave on the third floor
- A library of vintage teas for future students to study from
- A Large collection of various teawares to learn from

### Future Center

- Mountain land (probably around 200,000-300,000 USD for the size we need)
- Building (expenses unknown at this point)
- Gardening (both landscaping and vegetables for eating)

### Publications

- *The Leaf, Tea & Tao Magazine* (Online and free at: [www.the-leaf.org](http://www.the-leaf.org))
- Translations of some Chinese texts for free distribution
- Printing of pamphlets and introductions for free distribution
- The purchase of copies of Wu De's books: *Faces of the Master*, *Tea Wisdom*, *Way of Tea* and *Zen & Tea*, *One Flavor* for free distribution at our center

### Videos

- We still need around 500 USD worth of equipment
- We are also looking for a way to better host/share the videos