

Global Tea Hut

HAPPY NEW YEAR, JAN. 2014





HAPPY 2014!

WELCOME TO A NEW YEAR OF GLOBAL TEA HUT

The tides of this year have washed so much incredible inspiration ashore, we wonder if this small island can contain it! Our center has brimmed over with the loving visits from so many of you, and we're sure the rest of you are on the way! For the first time ever, we've come to feel that this new center, Light Meets Life, isn't just our vision, but yours as well!

As some of you have surely read in November's issue, we have been discussing the ways to move forward with building the world's best tea center. As more and more people arrive from around the world, we want to build a suitable space to create community through tea, activating and awakening harmony around the globe through this amazing medicine. The world's best tea center isn't cheap, though. And we never liked the idea of sitting around waiting for donors to show up and make it happen for us. We want to build it ourselves!

And we can. With your help...

We have decided to lift the cap on this Global Tea Hut, and build our center ourselves, with the contributions of people like you around the world. Energetically, it feels good to move forward in this way. We are full of an intense verve to make this a reality, and soon! A brand new center that can host hundreds of tea lovers around the world every year for free is actually not as distant a goal as we had thought. It is reachable, and we don't need to wait for wealthy donors to make it happen. We can do it together in the coming years. Here is how you can help:

After crunching numbers, the guides and stewards of this project have told us that if Global Tea Hut were to go from 200 to 2000 members, our monthly

income would be enough that we could put some tens of thousands of dollars aside every month. Within six months to a year that savings and income would open up all kinds of discussions with donors, banks and even begin a gradual building schedule. In other words, if we have 2000 members, we can start building almost right away!

It is our New Year's resolution that we will get to at least 2000 members by January 1st, 2015!

We can't do that without you, though. We need your help. Help us build this free center—the best the world's ever known—and as much for your sake as for ours. If every one of you gets one friend to sign up for Global Tea Hut every month in 2014, we will reach our goal and then some. Could you do that? Could you find just one new member each month?

For a long time, we discussed putting a limit on Global Tea Hut in order to keep the process more personal. We consider ourselves very responsible stewards of your donations: everyone involved in this project is a volunteer and we never spend money unconscientiously. We also often say prayers of gratitude for you all, and your support. Having to sit around and wait for someone to give us millions of dollars isn't a great plan, especially when we have this amazing tool to earn it ourselves. And isn't Global Tea Hut awesome enough to achieve that?

This means there will be a slight loss in the personal touches of Global Tea Hut—the envelopes may not be hand-written anymore and the articles may shift. But is that so bad? Isn't it a fair trade, considering the



THIS IS OUR YEAR!!!

fact this Hut can build our new center? We asked a lot of members and they all resoundingly and enthusiastically agreed that a little less personal touch in the envelopes and articles is more than worth a brand new tea center we can all enjoy! When you think about it, the losses seem negligible compared to the benefits!

As we talked more and more, we also realized that the added money in Global Tea Hut could improve it, rather than just being a loss of personal touch. We hope to take the magazine full color and we have already improved the tea packaging; we hope to include more journalism and translations, as well as trips to find more tea donors that are sourced directly from farmers in Japan, Korea and Mainland China, aside from Taiwan. That way, the change in articles can be a great one!

Simply put, help us get from 200 to 2000 members this year and Global Tea Hut will have a better, more informative magazine in full color and we will begin building Light Meets Life the following year!

A better Global Tea Hut, with more varied and better teas, means a new tea center for us all!

Help us by sharing Global Tea Hut to your community with an effort to find at least one new member a month.

If we all pitch in, we can raise the first walls of the best tea center the world has ever known in 2015! Thousands of tea lovers will benefit from this free tea center over the years, and perhaps even centuries...

Here are some of the ways we are going to make this happen—we are going to go from 200 to 2000 members in 2014:

- 1) Starting in February, everyone who signs up for Global Tea Hut will automatically get a free month for a friend
- 2) Current subscribers will also get a free month for a friend on the anniversary of your subscription in the coming year.

Here are the ways you can make it happen:

- 1) Use social media to help promote our video, links and membership to Global Tea Hut. Help us by making more of an effort to share it online
- 2) Share each month's tea with friends. Show them the newsletter and tell them that the magazine and the teas are going to improve as the membership increases. Tell them we need 2000 members this year to begin construction on our tea center.
- 3) Discuss Global Tea Hut with people you know.

Take the pledge to help find one new member a month for all of 2014 and we will reach our goal. We plan to keep you updated every month as to how our campaign is going, and how close we are to our goal.

Together we can create and share a beautiful new tea center, free to all!!!



YOUR TEA OF THE MONTH, JANUARY 2014

Spring 2013, "Tippy" Red Tea, Wu Liang, Yunnan

It's no wonder that Yunnan is the birthplace of all tea. It is a magical land, vibrant in flora, animal wonder and distinctive culture. In the tea world, people often speak about the role of "terroir" in tea. Ordinarily this word is used for wine, though it could be effectively applied to any agricultural product, especially tea. It is difficult to translate, as it is a rich word, which further justifies learning it and utilizing it in your vocabulary if you want to explore the tea world. Terroir means soil and climate—all the weather, sun, rain and moonshine, as well as the biodiversity around the tea. It also refers to the kind of soil, and the organisms that live with/in that environment. Beyond that, terroir also accounts for the human relationship to tea, the cultural context in which the tea is grown as well as the perspective of any particular farmer. As you can see, "terroir" paints bold strokes. You could think of it as the environment and/or context in which a tea is produced. And no tea-growing region on earth has a longer history or richer terroir than Yunnan.

There is more biodiversity in Yunnan than anywhere else in China, and more than most places on earth. In fact, 25% of all species in China live in Southern Yunnan, which is tiny compared to the vastness of China itself. The soil there is rich and loamy, and even plants found elsewhere are bigger here. The British ethnobotanists that first came here thought it was the fabled "Shangri-La", amazed at the lush verdure. The waters here cascade down from the top of the world, as Yunnan is a series of stepped plateaus that march up to the great Tibetan Plateau in the west. Ancient, mineral-rich glacial waters encourage the vibrancy of this magical place. In Daoist geomancy, called "wind water (*feng shui*)", there are "dragon veins" that connect Heaven to Earth, and Yunnan is said to have more than anywhere on earth. Rich mountain soil, constantly shifting biodiversity and the moist climate of mists and rains that roll through the valleys make this the perfect place to farm tea.

The terroir of Yunnan also includes the rich cultural heritage here. Where there is such tremendous vibrancy—and has been since the last ice age carved these valleys—people were of course attracted by the easy life and abundance here. Yunnan has always been a meeting place of many people: Sino-Tibetans who migrated here from the Himalayas, Han Chinese as well as the hundreds of aboriginal tribes who migrated here from Southeast Asia. These are some of the oldest cultures on earth, with shamanistic traditions dating back to the dawn of man. It

is likely that these tribal peoples are related to the same who crossed the Bering Strait and began Native America. They are deep and earthy people, with a strong connection to the mountain spirits and Nature. It was their ancestors who first gathered tea from the forest, using it to commune with Spirit, themselves and each other. We should follow in their footsteps.

Every variety of tea on earth is found in Yunnan, even the ones that evolved elsewhere. They have been brought by modern farmers to grow there, and most all of them are happy. Still, it is the indigenous, wild, old trees that make the best Yunnanese teas. Remember, there are two general kinds of tea trees (every tea tree is a unique being, so categorizing them is like categorizing people: useful but also dangerous). Big leaf tea trees have a single trunk, and roots that grow down, while small leaf tea trees have many trunks, are bush-like and their roots grow slightly outward. The big leaf variety is older, while small leaf tea evolved later as tea traveled to colder climates, both naturally and carried by man. Traditional Yunnan tea is big leaf, and made from old trees grown in gardens that we call "Living Tea". These old trees have deep and complex root systems, connecting them to that Himalayan water, vibrant mountain spirit and Heavenly dragon veins. The ancient tribal cultures, which still subsist primarily from the land, add human strength and power to the terroir of a fine Yunnanese tea.

Our Tea of the Month

For the New Year, we wanted to send you a festive tea. This Red Tea is colorful, bright and spicy-sweet—everything the holiday season should be. It is also warming and energizing, since most of us are retreating from colder and colder weather each month. Picked during the autumn harvest of the year, this Wu Liang Mountain tippy Red Tea is mostly hairy, golden buds—a characteristic of Yunnanese Red Tea.

Wu Liang is the highest peak in Yunnan, and the old trees there have a unique quality amongst tea trees in Yunnan. Most trees there are grown in deep, old forests and have a greater affinity with the loamy earth than they do with the rocky, craggy mountains and the sky, such as high-mountain Oolong in Taiwan. Wu Liang reaches a peak well over 3000 meters, so many of the teas from there bring together the age and power of old-growth Puerh with the sky and rocks (like our Light Meets Life Wu Liang cake). This month's tea is some-



where in the middle, growing at around 1800 meters, which is still considered high-altitude for Yunnanese tea. It comes from old, semi-wild trees, which were propagated by humans but live in natural, biodiverse environs. Most of the trees are around 200 to 300 years old, bringing a deep vibrancy to this month's tea.

Red Tea from Yunnan is often called “Dian Hong”. “Dian” is an aboriginal word for Yunnan, so this just means, “Yunnan Red”. As we have often discussed, “Red Tea” is what is often mistakenly called “Black Tea” in the West. Ordinarily, a name doesn't matter so much and we wouldn't even take the time to correct this age-old mistake, and most vendors don't. But in this case there is an important issue that a Chajin (tea person) will face if this mistake isn't corrected: there is another genre of tea in China called “Black Tea”. So if you call Red Tea “Black”, then what do you call Black Tea? The problem

began because early trade between Chinese and Europeans was limited to the ports, and most merchants sailors didn't see the tea trees, farms or processing and learned what they knew through broken Pidgin English on the docks, often from Chinese merchants who didn't care to correct them. Actually, Europeans used to call Oolong tea “Black Tea” as well, probably because it has the word “black” in the name (“Oolong” means “Black Dragon”). Our tea is very much a Red Tea.

Red Tea is fully oxidized. It is picked and withered for a long time, sometimes with machines that blow hot air into large piles of tea. Our tea this month isn't withered with such machines, but rather naturally withered spread out on bamboo mats for 24 hours. The tea is then rolled for up to 90 minutes, further oxidizing it and breaking down the cells to release more fragrance and essence. It is rolled, in fact, until it turns paste-like.

Tea of the Month

After that, the tea is roasted dry. Making Red Tea is a simple process, and even though Yunnan is more famous nowadays for Puerh Tea, it has always been a region of Red Tea as well, producing as much or more Red Tea as other regions for some decades. In fact, Puerh's rise to fame is rather recent, and in Yunnan there was more Red Tea by volume fifteen years ago. But our Red Tea isn't a plantation tea, instead grown high up dirt roads in the heart of the mountains.

When old-growth Yunnanese tea buds are completely oxidized they turn a beautiful golden color that is characteristic of Dian Hong tea. The more buds in a tea, the sweeter it will be, and in market it will be considered higher quality—fetching a higher price for the farmer. When a Red Tea has more buds, it is said to be “tippy”. Our tea this month is the most tippy available from this farmer—his best tea! While it is possible to find Dian Hong that is all golden tips, like the one we sent out in February of this year, we find that a blend of some of the more mature leaves adds more Qi to a tea.

This tea brews up a lovely, sweet liquor with a floral and honey aroma. The taste is sweet and thick. It's hard to over-brew, and won't go sour, astringent or bitter easily. It has a spicy, entrancing flavor that lends itself to the holidays surrounding the New Year. Also, the Qi is vibrant, pulsing Yin with a graceful note that leaves one awake and giddy, making this the perfect tea to share with some friends, along with some laughs.

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. Now you can do that with your brand new tin!!!







A VISION OF LIGHT MEETS LIFE

Shane Marrs

In an ongoing effort to define and materialize our new center, Light Meets Light, I would like to share a vision of what certain aspects of life around the center might be like. It may be self evident, but the more real our center becomes, the more real our center becomes! It is my hope that the potential of this vision will excite all our readers. That excitement, combined with the way in which each individual comprehends this story, is all part of the culmination of energy that will eventually get this center built. Just as the existing Tea Sage Hut is a product of great, swelling energy, let my visions and dreams be a spark that helps ignite the fire of connection between us all, blazing the trail towards the greatest tea center the world has ever seen! I also hope that you find yourself in the "I" in this first person story as much as I did when writing...

I love life at this tea center. It's brisk at this time of the morning, when the only sound is that of the clouds retreating into the mountains. A time when most of the animal kingdom still languor and the silence of the rising sun gradually dominates the valley. That early morning scene when all stands still for a moment in time and feels everlasting, but agonizingly gives way to the dawn of the day.

Stepping out onto the center grounds at Light Meets Life, what awaits but to meander through the surrounding tea garden. It's a privilege to walk among Living Tea. Though the well-manicured and wave-like undulations of plantation tea gardens that splash across mountainsides appeal to the senses, this garden appeals to the heart of Nature. Her beauty stems from a harmony with the natural surroundings. Where the tea garden begins and where it ends is defined only by the wind, water, gravity and any other seed-carrier. Tea knows not the arbitrary lines we so often use to bind Her. And who is to say where you begin and the tea ends?

I observe the new growth on each living tea plant, having not yet reached treehood, but many moons beyond their initial seed stage. I feel a sense of stewardship knowing these tea plants were seed-propagated, sown years ago with ample room for root and crown. Accompanied by a blanket of verdant ground cover, things feel natural and perennial. There is an air of connection between the plants, the people, and this Earth. The ground beneath my feet is damp. Twigs, leaves and dewy moss snap, crunch and compress with each wandering step. Yet,

each depression sponges back to life and no path leads to where I am.

Traversing the irregular, boundless garden, I take note of the unique characteristics that each tea plant exhibits, acquired from the biological diversity found within the heart of each seed. Some leaves grow larger, others more serrated at the edge; some crowns grow denser, while others bolt towards the Heavens. Green moss and orange or white lichens take up residence on the main trunks of these tea plants. Some have gone to flower, attracting pollinators and tiny ants. Others have gone to seed and many others are flushing with rich green, pointed buds. The patchwork of life cycles found within this garden is testament to the freedom of plant expression also found in Nature. Though some plants appear genetically stronger, possibly more resistant to certain natural elements, even some with far greater flush output, we make space for them all. Each has a place in the grand scheme of things. Because these plants were seed-propagated and given ample room to flourish, because they maintain strong human relations and exist in a biodiverse environment, and because they are sustainably harvested, most will likely bear strong roots and grow into royal trees. They, like this center itself and the tradition it represents, will long outlive us all.

While the harvest today might be accomplished on foot, perhaps students and guests in the distant future will bestride ladders and harvest tea from the canopies of this to-be old-growth tea forest!

One of the students leads our guests into the Living Tea garden for the day's harvest. They are all mentally, physically and spiritually prepared after group meditation, a simple breakfast and morning tea. We suggest spontaneous periods of laughter, dance, song and silence in celebration of this sacred harvest as it happens only once or twice a year. Small in quantity but strong in Qi, the plucked leaves and buds will be loosely piled indoors for a withering period dependent on the weather. In any event, they will be hand rolled and processed into a simple Red Tea the following morning, guided by a local Taiwanese tea farmer. In the tea processing space at our center, the farmer will graciously share his method of hand rolling tea, which has been so reverently passed down through his family for generations. After the tea has been withered, rolled, dried and let to rest, guests are of course excited to share all they learned with family and friends back home by brewing the very tea they made by hand.

Harvesting and processing tea at Light Meets Life, while a rare experience, is but one of many tea-spe-



cific opportunities made available throughout the year. The entire tea spectrum is covered here, from organic growing, propagating, harvesting, processing, grinding, blending, drinking, preparing, and serving tea, to lessons in gongfu, Cha Dao, tea virtue, *chaxi* layout, scouring teaware, history and medicine, even courses in crafting, designing, or sewing your own tea accoutrements. All of this, aided by meditation, communal living, prayer and vegetarian meals.

Tea is not the only crop to be harvested on this day. Lunch is always celebrated with an abundant assortment of garden greens. Gardeners and eager guests sprightly move from raised bed to bed, filling baskets with leafy greens, brassicas and seasonal root crops that supplement our daily meals. In this way we strive towards sustainability and self-sufficiency. Nearby landscapers busy themselves repairing bamboo boundaries or installing lattices for climbing vegetable vines. Other workers gracefully scurry about gathering river water and har-

vested rainwater. The kitchen hums with life and help is always needed to prepare the vegetarian feast that fuels us along the Perennial Path.

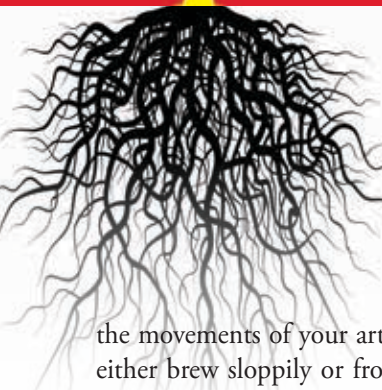
Afternoon tea sessions, discourses and meditation will often conclude a day such as this at Light Meets Life. Every day inspires. Though a lot of activity is always apparent at the center, it stems from a stillness found in daily meditation and tea. In this way, the tradition is kept alive, grounded, authentic and always growing. As the tea withers in the night and fills the room with an aromatic perfume, life at the center slows to a slumber. All teaware from the day is cleaned and cared for; the lights are out. The last remaining traces of incense barely linger and only the altars keep watch in the night. I love life at this tea center.





GONGFU TEA TIPS

January 2014



In the last few issues, we've discussed the relevance of experimentation in gongfu tea. Without a deep and experiential understanding of your brewing methodology, your teaware and the movements of your art—internal and external—you will either brew sloppily or from the head rather than the heart. In order for our tea brewing to reach mastery, to strive for gongfu, we must be constantly improving our relationship to Tea. This is so that we are as natural to the brewing as the tea or teaware.

Tea brewing starts with the seed of the tea tree. There should be only one movement in tea. The growth of the young tree and the care of the farmer are continuous. The tea is then processed with a grace that fulfills it, and the various methods of drying the tea should be in harmony with the tea leaves themselves, as if they dove headfirst into that form. Then, when the water is added and they awaken from their slumber, there is no discontinuity either. The one brewing the tea is as natural to its journey as any other stage. For that, our tea brewing must be in us. It should be in the hands. That's gongfu—that's mastery!

In gongfu tea, everything begins and ends with your experience. There is nothing beyond those limits. And it isn't wise to think that just because you have done a certain experiment that you understand it completely. Repetition should be a part of your growth. Even after decades, you might find that the most basic experiment reveals new insights to you. At the center, we try to avoid the word "repeat", as it is dismissive of growth and learning. "Renew" is a much better word, offering us a chance to explore deeper each time.

Last month, we were talking about pitchers and reminded you of the most basic of all gongfu tea experiments. As it is the New Year, and a time for renewal, we thought that this month might be the perfect time to return to the beginning and see what happens. Remember, advanced techniques are just basic techniques mastered!

For this experiment, you will need three identical cups. You can actually do this experiment with as many cups as you wish (we have gone as far as the eighth cup). Decant the tea into the first cup and pour half of that into the second cup, and half of the second into the third, and so on... Drink the cups side-by-side and pay close attention to the differences.

In previous issues, we have given you the results of this most basic experiment. In this issue, we are going to leave the results to you. If this is the first time you have ever done this experiment then you might ask how the teas are different, if you do experience a difference. Which cup is the best? Why?

What qualities make it better? Be as specific and articulate as you can. You may want to start a gongfu notebook to record the results of your experiments. That is a good way to review your experience and delve deeper when you repeat the experiments.

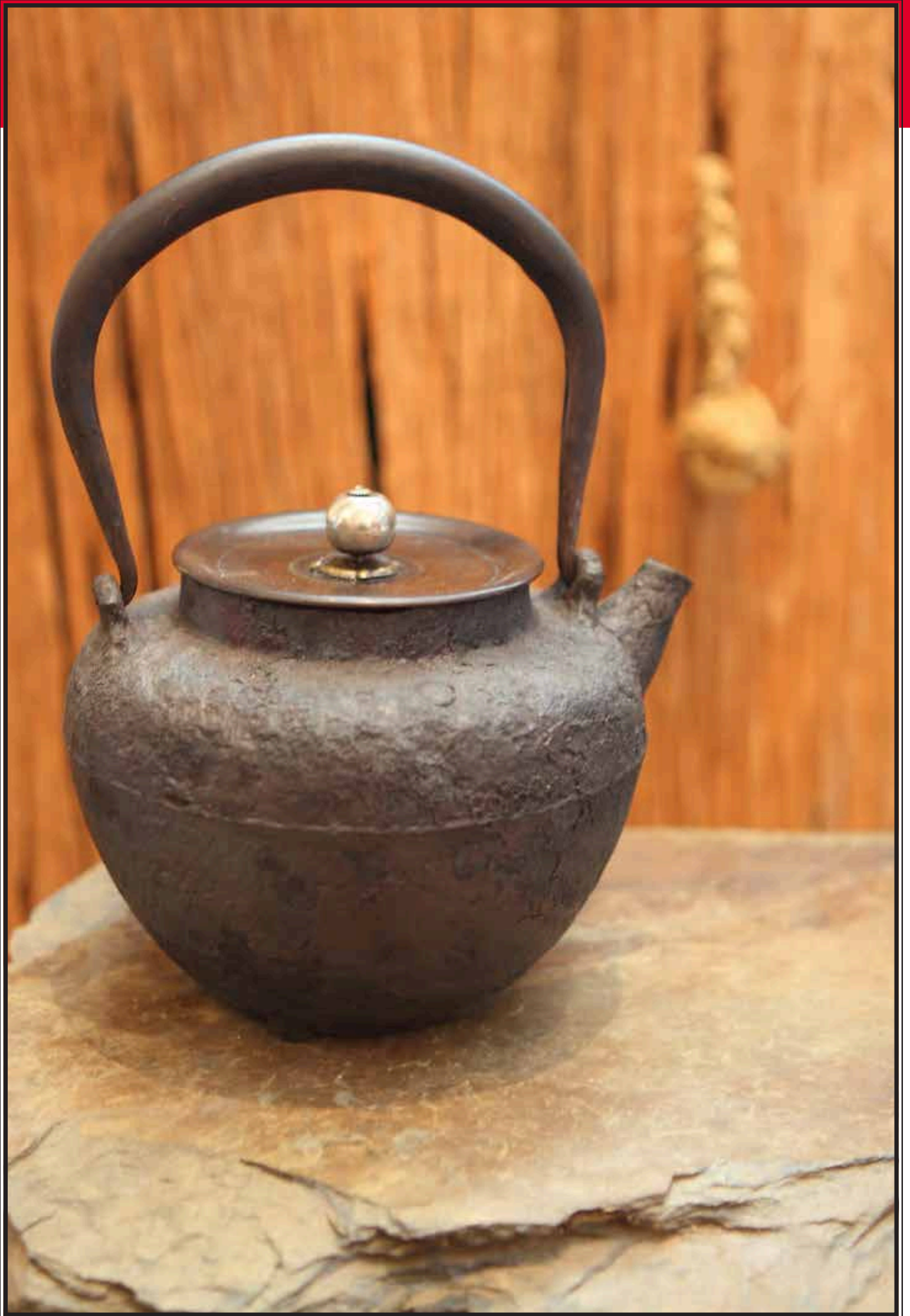
If you have already done this experiment before, you should focus on uncovering new aspects of the differences between the cups, or at least a greater depth in the same distinctions you experienced last time, signifying a greater sensitivity since the last time you visited this experience.

This experiment is the most basic because it opens all kinds of doors unto the mouthfeel and energetics of gongfu tea, as well as an experiential understanding of the tremendous role that temperature plays in fine tea. There is never too much learning, and we can always increase our sensitivity, even if we have *renewed* this experiment many, many times. Gongfu is about having the understanding be second nature, within our hands. If we are to achieve that level, our skills and our tools have to be honed with lots of practice. Whether this is your first time doing this most basic experiment, or if you have done it many times, ask yourself what implications your conclusions have on gongfu brewing. What do your conclusions say about temperature? What do your results have to say about the gongfu teaware you use and how you use it? Record some of your findings, and next month we will give you an example of one student's notebook to compare to yours...

Teaism is a cult founded on the adoration of the beautiful among the sordid facts of everyday existence. It inculcates purity and harmony, the mystery of mutual charity, the romanticism of the social order. It is essentially a worship of the Imperfect, as it is a tender attempt to accomplish something possible in this impossible thing we know as life.

—Kakuzō Okakura, *The Book of Tea*







A RESOLVE TO INVOLVE

Steve Kokker

One of the most intensely satisfying aspects of being a tea brother is not only in the sharing of tea with others, but seeing how the desire to share spreads so quickly. We hear so often now how our friends and friends of friends have been very naturally inspired to go out in their lives and serve tea to *their* friends and families. They feel touched and moved by having a conscious tea session, and have a desire to provide for a loved one the same warm feeling. Every time someone tells me they served tea to their so-and-so, a bit shyly, as maybe they didn't quite know all the ins and outs of "proper" tea service, I feel like jumping up and yelping, "Wow! Way to go!" Do something kind to someone, and they then feel inspired to pass on that positive feeling.

Most of the time when people tell me about serving tea to others, they tend to reflect both excitement and nervousness. They want to serve tea, to share a meaningful experience, but find it a bit daunting also. "What of the mistakes I may make, what of the silent pauses when two pairs of eyes lock awkwardly, meaningfully—will I start laughing? What if I don't make my tea exactly as Wu De does? What if I cross the sacred left/right plane or swivel counterclockwise when a clockwise motion was called for? Will that lead to tea tainted with bad Qi which could butterfly-effect into terrible consequences for my guests' future generations? Worse, will guests look at me with criticism and judgement: 'Hmml! He doesn't pour tea into my cup from two meters away like that Russian guru does on YouTube!' It seems too much!"

So many people in recent months have told me about starting their own tea serving sessions. Let me just share a few. There have been some teashop clients who told me about sitting their moms down for the first time in years to share tea. One of our workers, Silke, has a five-year-old child who loves to invite his friends over for tea parties after she served them once. A couple of guys have smartly found that inviting a girl they fancy over for tea is non-threatening and a good way to know if shared space and/or silence is possible with them; a litmus test of some sort. The challenge here is balancing partly sublimated intentions with serving skills.

One friend is 17 years old but often speaks as if he is pushing 1000. I feel we have met before in some other life, on some other plane. He calls me a teacher of his and yet I learn so much from him each time we meet. He sent me this email recently: "I wanted to share a very deep and interesting feeling with you. Just right now, sitting in the kitchen, enjoying my chaxi alone, I have discovered that it is not comfortable any more to drink tea just by myself. Something

from inside utterly needs to share this eighth wonder of the world with other people. As soon as I accumulate enough peace and positive energy, it wants to spread, making people happier. Maybe this truly is the Path of Tea. What do you think?"

I think it is indeed! He now regularly serves tea (on the floor, with a make-shift chaxi) for his new girlfriend and mother. The mother, needless to say, is duly impressed with this charming young man's interests in activities atypical for those his age.

Although, perhaps not so atypical. All people need is to be shown the magic of tea, the value of a tea session and they can, regardless of age, tap instantly into at least some aspect of the very human experience of sharing space. Another teen acquaintance, a bit of the rough-around-the-edges boxer-with-a-heart-of-gold type, recently upgraded his tea equipment so he can get all of his gang to sit down on the floor with him and enjoy some peace and relaxation while making tea for them: "I see they're all hooked on energy drinks and sitting behind the computer, I wanna give them a chance to just... be. Know what I mean?"

Indeed!

The next time I saw him, together with another young friend he wanted me to meet, he couldn't wait to tell me that he'd prepared tea for his grandfather and had gotten him to drink the first three cups in silence. As I was pouring the tea, he asked excitedly, "We'll be drinking the first ones in silence, right—meditating?" He was hoping to give his friend an experience. We did. After which, there was some discussion, and the friend frowned and said, "Hmm, what you said about getting to know the tea's character reminded me of a book about shamanism I've been reading, and there too it speaks about understanding the different spirits of plants and the meditative mind that requires. Is that what you were getting at?"

Yes!

How fast and enthusiastically the desire to serve others spreads! As my oft-reincarnated brother wrote in his email, once a certain degree of tranquility has been cultivated in solo tea sessions, the desire to share such bliss or help others cultivate it grows very naturally. No one needs to enforce this in others; it is a beautiful human force that arises quite on its own. We Chajin know we are lucky to witness the small miracles which unfold while offering others a tea space.

And these moments can happen in all sorts of ways. One friend holds meditative group tea sessions which I'm sure are transformative for those who attend. Yet another client, who makes a staggeringly strong brew of cheap Da Hong Pao in a thermos and sits his friends down to share it



with so that they won't be tempted to down beers or other alcohol, is also doing his bit to instill harmony. Another client, who found that tea has dimmed all desire for alcohol in him, recently bought a whole tea preparation set to help a friend who needs some similar guidance and invites him over as often as possible for no-booze drinking sessions.

As the adage goes, 'Tell me something and I will forget it. Show me something and I might remember. But get me to do something and I will never forget.' I owe so much gratitude to the Tea Sage Hut in Taiwan for being able to share this with others. I am certain that for hundreds of other people it has been the same story: while we might have been avid tea lovers before a true introduction to the tradition as taught by Wu De and others there, it was only through direct experience in that particular environment that we could gain a visceral knowledge about what sharing tea with others could mean. What's particularly beautiful about the center is, as with any vortex, the spirals extending from the Tea Sage Hut are limitless in their scope. Through the sessions at the Hut to me, through me to others, through them to others still, and on it goes. When I think of all the spirals now swirling around in over 30 countries from the Hut's vortex; it's dizzying. The reach of joy is long indeed.

There are challenges, however, in bringing this gift to others. Finding time and space and a tranquil state of

mind are significant among them. So is the usual overcoming of laziness. Other questions involving the details of service (teaware, proper gong fu movements, etc.) are on the list too, but not as high up as traditional fears of intimacy. When we invite others for tea, be it just one or several, we are exposing ourselves in a vulnerable way to a certain intimacy which is sure to follow. Often, we don't trust in ourselves enough to handle it, or feel shy or awkward about sharing a heart to heart space. We forget how much others crave this opportunity and how judgement, cynicism and the critical mind just disappear in such a space.

We forget that the best way to learn something is just to do it—not always to practice in secrecy, endlessly until we tell ourselves, "Ok, *now* I am fully ready!" We even forget sometimes how blissful is the gift we give to ourselves in the process, how good it feels. That alone would push us to do more serving.

So in this time of the year when we make lists of promises we intend to keep for the next year, all those things we have kept putting off in the past and will likely keep putting off in the future, I propose yet another. It's much simpler than the ones already on your list, and I can almost guarantee even without having read them, that by doing this one thing, many of the things you wish for will be taken care of in the process: *serve more tea to others!*

A Resolve to Involve

I'll throw out a few ideas for you all, some practical suggestions of how to incorporate this into your lives quite easily and creatively. Don't worry so much about your teaaware or gong fu skills. Those will improve in time.

At your space: Some people live in cramped surroundings with other people. Is it possible to wait until there is no one home to have a guest over? If not, why not invite your housemate(s) to join? If you can, re-arrange your living space such that one corner can be designated as a tea serving space—it can have multiple functions of course, but once you start arranging your space to fulfill a function, it will soon take on a life of its own. Even in the most cramped of spaces this is possible to do with a little outside-the-box imagination.

If your home space is not the best option, perhaps your work space? There are usually way more possibilities than one would imagine at first. A friend has recently re-arranged a back room at her office which was used mainly as a storage-dumping ground to accommodate a comfy corner where people can sit in a circle and enjoy tea. She serves tea to co-workers when she gets the chance and has used it off-hours to invite a few friends over too.

If there are no home or work options, hey, why not use a makeshift tea space in your educational institution? A corner in a cafeteria may not be ideal, but some respite may be given to friends even there—bring your teapot over and create a little oasis. Otherwise, a friendly teacher or librarian might let you use a corner of a floor in an unused room for a hour or so to just sit with someone and enjoy tea—you never know until you ask!

Go elsewhere: Serving tea is really exciting to do in different kinds of spaces. I've seen house parties transformed by the presence of a tea space/room, where people can come and go as they like. I once served tea at an opening party for a new company. Most of the space was loud and full of motion but our tea corner was a quiet space where people came to hear themselves think, to close their eyes, to snuggle with someone, to focus on something other than action, to just be. If you hear that a friend is celebrating a birthday, or having an office party, or having a moving in/moving out gathering, tell them you'd be happy to sit and serve tea to whomever comes up and sits on the four or six cushions you lay out in front of you. If you have friends working at a gallery, museum, shop or other kind of institution which holds regular gatherings, openings, fund-raisers, lectures, meetings, etc., why not suggest to them that you show up for two hours, sit in a corner and offer a tea space. Imagine how thoroughly surprised and appreciative people will be!

If you take a yoga or a crystal sound healing class, or next time you go for a biofield diagnosis, why not suggest to your teacher/healer that you can prepare tea for small groups of people during break time, or during/after a course, perhaps in exchange for a free aura sweeping sometime when you really need it? Or at your office's next seminar or group meeting, offer to create a tea pause? At office birthday

parties, same thing, hold an alternate space in a cozy corner somewhere!

If there are some people or groups you are curious to get closer to but are perhaps not ready to get too committed, test the waters by making them a small tea event at one of their pre-scheduled events which you then get to passively participate in? A seminar coming up that's too expensive for you to take? Ask for a partial discount and in exchange serve some tea after lunch. Someone may be hosting a musical event by a musician you like—if it's a small event, offer your services there.

Know a teacher? Ask if you can go into their school sometime and give a chat/taste testing about tea to their students. Pretty much anywhere you know where there are humans working, you can be pretty certain that the attitude is likely to be open and welcoming if you make such a proposal.

Preparing tea for strangers like this might even be less intimidating than preparing for people you know well. It will certainly give you the practice needed. The best stimulus for getting more engaged is to tie in your existing interests to tea service—as I've mentioned, if you're interested in hanging out with children, or old folks, or tattoo artists, call up your local after-school program, elderly care facility or body art salon and propose something innovative and unexpected. If you want to get to know that cutie better, tell them you need practice getting your gong fu and that maybe they can help out.

Any way you slice it, there's never been a better time to step up to the tea plate than now, so choose your method and get involved. Start slow or aim high from the start. Start spreading the kind of joy you know should already be spreading.

Finally, remember to serve some GTH tea at your gatherings and speak about that project—gathering more interest about it will help to create the larger tea center in Taiwan, from which mega-spirals will emanate. Now that we know how good it feels to connect with oneself and others in such a simple, meaningful way, and now that we see how quickly and effortlessly this spreads to others, we can realize all the more powerfully how important such a tea center is. Let's do what we can to find more subscribers to GTH, and to keep spreading good feelings throughout the year.







HELP US SHARE THIS GLOBAL TEA HUT
AND BUILD OUR NEW CENTER!





GATHERING MOMENTUM

Timo Einpaul



As mentioned in a previous newsletter, this October we had once again the tremendous pleasure and honor of having Wu De over in Estonia to share tea and Her wisdom with us. These tightly packed two weeks were filled with (obviously) stunning teas, wonderful communal meals, profound discussions as well as silly jokes and hearty laughs that went along. It was breathtaking to see (and take part in) the touching of so many hearts here in Estonia, a country that until very recent years has rather homogeneously seen tea as something belonging in a comfy bag in a mug next to a big plate with two ham-and-cheese sandwiches.

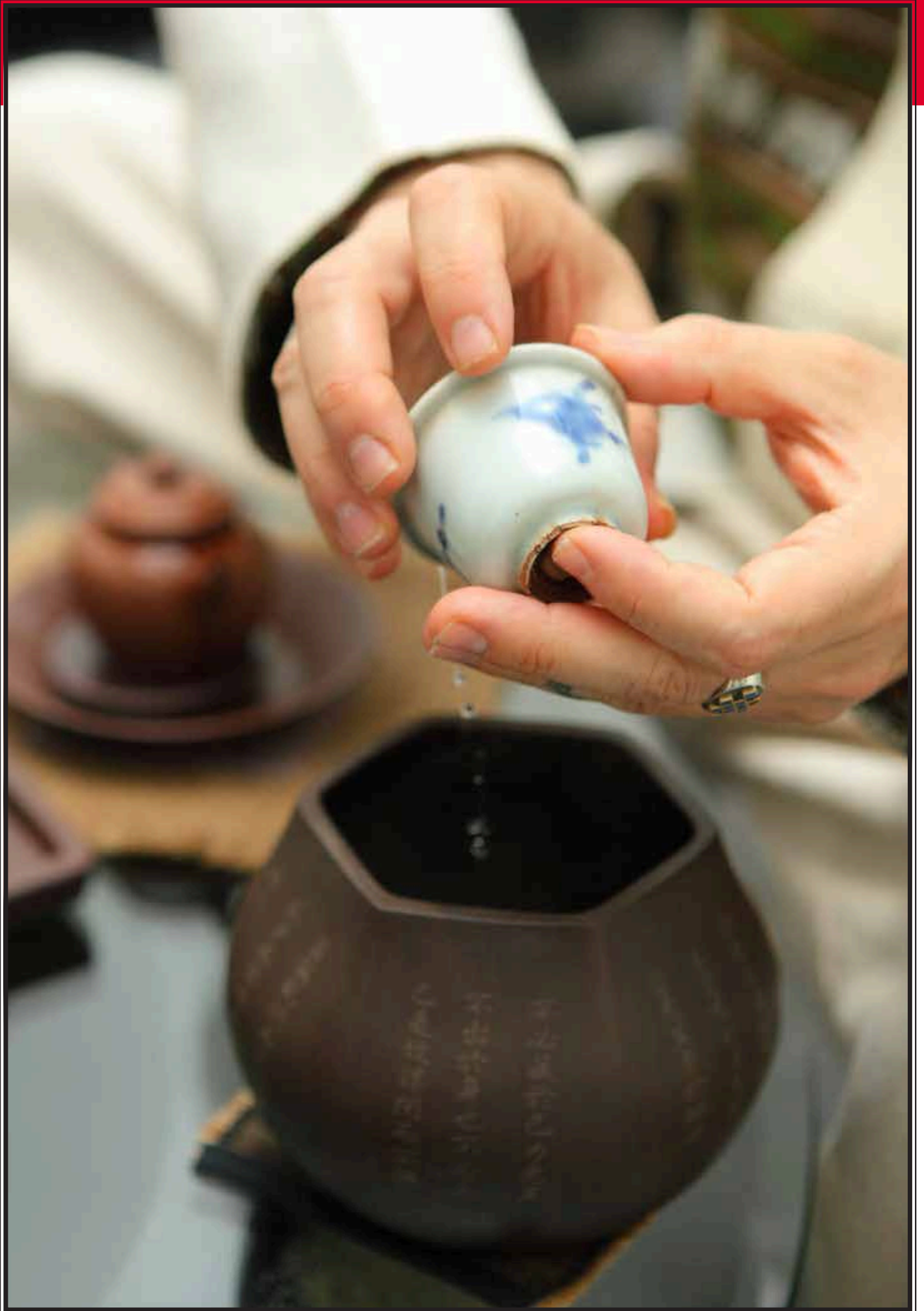
This year we managed to spread the roots a bit wider, further away from the capital to the southern center of the country—my hometown of one hundred thousand people, Tartu. Being a quiet little university town where everything is pretty much within walking distance, filled with a lot of parks and green areas, one would think it to be the perfect spot for tea to work its magic. During two days we held a half-day seminar and a couple of tea drinking sessions. I felt extremely excited, privileged and grateful for the opportunity to bring this tradition, which has had such a great impact on me, back home and share it with my friends and family—something I hadn't imagined in my wildest dreams—and I truly feel that the experience has brought us

closer together. Since the beginning of September I have been organizing weekly tea gatherings at my home, simple offerings of quiet tea and space. After initial insecurity when confronted with restless people, I'm happy to say that after Wu De's visit the sessions have obtained a more relaxed and natural glow. There is usually a small core group of people who come most weeks, having taken part in the seminar they help to hold up the atmosphere beautifully. Just the other day some people wanted to join me gathering the water, so we drove outside town and spent a serene, crip-sy morning together. More and more friends of mine are serving tea to each other. Tea is reaching out to people and people are picking up the bowl.

Day by day, I'm feeling tea in more things I do and the way I am, dripping deeper and stretching to the more challenging aspects of my life, pointing out truth and healing along the way. I feel the visit has made us stronger as a community and helped us realize the need to support each other in all the ways we can, starting by putting the kettle back on and placing some leaves in a bowl...



This year, we are going to start building the world's best and only free tea center (other than Tea Sage Hut, of course). Amazing things are in store. It is our long term goal to build smaller tea centers in Los Angeles and Estonia in the near future as well. Like our center here, they will be places where tea lovers can come share tea together freely, and not to promote any way of tea brewing, any ideology or world-view. We have only these goals: To awaken a greater love for Mother Earth, to share a love of tea and to help people connect to each other in heart space.





INTO THE HEART OF LIGHT

Kaiya

We recently urged readers to help make Light Meets Life a reality by envisioning it, going there in your minds and sharing that vision with others. After all, dreams are the bedrock on which every human creation is founded. I thought I'd kick things off in this special edition of Global Tea Hut by sharing my dream with you, and encourage you to envision your own dreams and share them with others this month as well. The time has come to start finding ways of forming these dreams into reality! Let these dreams be the first groundbreaking!

It's been a long trip. No direct-flight venture—I spent nearly thirty hours on planes just to land in Taipei and catch a two-hour train to my destination. I feel tired and worn out. I am finally here. I pass between two powerful bronze guardians and under an antique wooden gateway carved with old, unknown, yet somehow welcoming characters. I walk through and my thoughts are all silenced as though by thunder. Suddenly, I feel that the journey here was too easy, too fast. A tinge of... what? (Nostalgia? Regret?) flows over me. Surely such a place should require more work to arrive!

Green space welcomes me. The center's outspread arms gently undulating in paths around koi ponds and bird-baths, bonsai and statues, flowers and bridges. A small stone table sits nestled in a cocoon of bamboo, surrounded with little stone chairs. A somewhat rickety, open structure topped with rushes relaxes on the end of a thin protuberance into the waters of a lotus pond. Somehow, the richness of it all both fills and opens my heart in such an exquisite way that I am left speechless. It is the epitome of simplicity, without a bit of elegance lost. Walking into the main hall for the first time, I feel at once that I have arrived comfortably at home, and also somewhere otherworldly—a glimpse of Heaven. So entrancing is my first impression that I hardly notice the bright smile of a local student happily waiting for me to come back to earth, hugging me and offering to show me around. My quarters are simple but warming and welcoming, full of bright smiles and more hugs. Best of all, I've been expected, and a hot bowl of tea is already waiting to soothe my aching muscles and relieve the stresses of my mind...

Just a week later, I've already forgotten half the things I vowed I would never forget. Every moment has been unforgettable. The meditation hall where I learned my first

meditation technique is the essence of stillness. It reaches out and beckons to me gently each morning and evening, drawing me ever deeper towards new insights. Talismans and tea sages sat watch as I went on journeys to places never imagined without even leaving my chair in the Daoist shaman's tea room. Everything is here, from laughter and celebration, fun outings, new experiences, new friends, to the depths of inner experiences I never even knew existed.

My sensitivity and appreciation of tea are growing, thanks to the exquisiteness that is the gongfu tea room and all the amazing experiments I've participated in there. I've laughed 'til I cried at the jokes and joy that are such a necessary ingredient in the food that's prepared daily in the kitchen. I've been dumbfounded at the sharing and generosity evidenced as extraordinarily rare and precious teas have been drunk from the vast library of Puerh teas. The gardens and ponds moved me deeply and I found reconnection through tea sessions punctuated only by birdsong and gentle plops in still waters. And just as I started to feel homesick, movie night came to the rescue! My homesick stirrings were reassured by the familiar and natural merging through once a week movies and popcorn in an eye-popping home theater room.

I realized then that this place is just that; a bridge between worlds. It merges the modern with the ancient, the busy with the calm, the World with the Spirit in a way that is transcendent and natural, simple yet powerful. It leads from the one into the other yet stands outside of them both at the same time. But still, I begin to yearn for something even deeper...

I awake to a gentle nudging. It's dark outside, and I can't tell what time it is. Someone is asking me if I'd like to drink tea. I sleepily concede and clamber out of bed, reaching for some warmer clothes. Surprised but not averse, I find myself led out to the parking area and getting into a comfy van. An hour later, we are climbing up through mists along a bumpy mountain road.

The light of the full moon shines brightly, guiding us along a thread of forest trail, the sounds of a waterfall splashing and bubbling somewhere not far away. It's been hard getting here, but this time the awed stillness strikes me deeply: the warm orange light of charcoal embers dances with the moonlight, mingling together across a round, polished white stone struck with silver veins—cups, saucers and teapot waiting quietly. The Chajin gathered here stand and hug us each in turn, big smiles the only words, then silently gesture for us to take the last seats around the small table so we can begin to drink this magic, accompanied by the ethereal whisperings of the bamboo that surrounds on all sides, aglow in the moonlight...



Again a week has passed, and again I am overcome by the depth and richness of this place. I've drunk tea accompanied by the silvery cascades of a waterfall, chased the chills away with a dip in hot spring mineral pools, danced to the drums of an Autumn bonfire and hugged brothers and sisters for the first time in what I know will be a lifetime of brotherhood and sisterhood. I have drunk tea steeped under the bright Sun atop the mountain, and tea steeped in fire and shadows, my nose filled with the scents of the Earth. I know it now deeper than words: I am not the same as I was. My room is one of five, housing up to five people each. It's both more luxurious and simpler than my room at home.

Here, I am free of the pull of all my devices and so-called "connections". In return for this sacrifice, our rooms each have their very own tea tables complete with kettles, burners, cups, bowls, teapots and an appropriate selection of organic tea. What a great trade! Each evening (and some mornings) I wander into one of the other "huts" to join the sounds of laughter and tea. I notice the conversations are deeper and the connections are more meaningful here than they were in my "ordinary life" back home, and I am grateful for the change of pace and change of space.

The main meditation hall is a true inspiration, and I know that I will think of it often after I leave, taking its

Into the Light

energy with me as fuel to continue my practice. Surrounded on all sides with glass walls and sitting in such beautiful verdure. I can clearly feel the energies of Sky and Earth meeting here. Like never before, I feel the love and compassion I am sending out to the world are being broadcast and received, far and wide.

I even learn about cooking and preparing healthier, simpler meals each day I am here. I find great healing in the way we all come together to prepare our day's most important medicine for one another, participating in everyone's health, and I won't forget the most important ingredient: dance! I'll keep that practice when I cook for the ones I love back home. It's an inspiration to see how this community is completely self-sustained, growing its own fruits and vegetables, and to feel the incredible power and energy difference in the food here!

But of course I can't leave out the best part: the tea spaces! How to choose from amongst them? Like all the buildings here, they are magical in the way they seem to grow out of Nature Herself, none intruding, each a natural extension of Her grace. Outside there is the bamboo grove we drank full moon tea in. Then there is the waterfall portal, and the Eagle's rock. But perhaps my favorites are the so-called 'found' tea spots: the ones nobody built. These spots call out often enough that they are now a part of the constant flow of tea sessions that trickle all across this mountainside, in and out of the buildings, all day long. "Hidden Gate" and "Tranquil Plain" are some of the names that have grown around them. Then there are the main tea rooms. There's a room suited to every purpose, exquisitely designed by Tea Herself: nothing more and nothing less than what is needed. From celebrations to insights, dizzying heights to subdued depths, calm joy and everything in between, these rooms embody the whole spectrum of human emotion and experience, just as Tea does...

My reverie is interrupted as one of the long-term students from the permanent residences stops in. We are going to go view the tea-gardens and make some tea for ourselves today! I realize then that of course the tea spaces are not the best part after all. Most of all, I am touched by the people, the ones who are the living embodiment of everything here, and by Tea Herself. I feel honored at this opportunity to play a part in the creation and continuation of all of this, at the chance to support this, my new home, and these, my new family. Such rich rewards should be more difficult to attain. And yet, here I am. Brushing aside the tears that well in my eyes, I set out for the gardens, each step steeped in gratitude and joy..

Light Meets Life already mystifies and amazes; it inspires gratitude and awareness. It's transcendent and it brings us to transcendence. It is a place that startles and stills. A place of power and beauty that inspires an awakened consciousness in the world, and leaves you feeling that if this can be so accessible, so free, and so freely given, then surely anything else can be as well...

This is but one dream of many, and that is always the beginning of every creation. There must first be dreamers. I invite you to join me now, be it in dream or in the formation of that dream. Believe me, the dream is reaching fullness; it is ready to be formed. Although we are going to do our best to build a place so incredible that it transcends all barriers, there still will be a difference in the center you helped create and the one you visit through a plane ticket alone. All of you are already a big part of that process through your support and donations to Global Tea Hut each month. We've come a long way together and made some impressive strides, and the opportunities to work and create are bursting upon us as a result.

Imagine what it will be like the first day when you walk through that gate and drink tea with all your gathered tea brothers and tea sisters for the first time in a center you helped to build!

This is the opportunity of a lifetime. There's no need to focus on the results or the outcome. The day is coming when Light Meets Life will be a simple plane ride away! There is something extraordinary and powerful in that. But for now, don't let this unique opportunity pass you by. Help us make this dream your dream as well! Then help us make it come true!







IMPROVEMENTS TO GLOBAL TEA HUT IN 2014

Lindsey Goodwin

At the Tea Sage Hut, we like to shake things up. We get it from Wu De. Like any good Zen teacher, he teaches us to expect the unexpected, and then he surprises us anyway. There are many advantages to having a teacher like this, but one of the main benefits is that the center and all it produces get better and better over time. This goes for everything from the tea we serve to how we host visitors.

Luckily for you, it also means that Global Tea Hut is continuously improving. In 2014, there are a number of GTH improvements unfolding. As a way to welcome in the New Year, we'd like to share a few of them with you:

From here on out, teas reach you intact.

The post can be hard on your tea! Many of the teas we've sent out were comprised of gorgeous, wiry leaves or fat, downy buds or hand-rolled leaf-and-stem sets or dense chunks of compressed Shou... yet when they arrived in your home, they may have been damaged or even crushed.

Not only was this less than ideal for you, it was also disrespectful to the tea. And after lots of hard work, and the growing abundance here, we've found a solution: metal tins lined with rice paper.

As you can probably already tell from this month's envelope, these tins are a huge improvement! They are safe for mailing, they protect the tea from damage and (thanks to the paper lining) they don't impart any flavor or energetic changes on the tea. Now that's something to raise a tea bowl to!

You may be wondering about the environmental impact of these tins. We have three solutions for you: First, you can reuse them to store other teas. They are great for outings, especially when you are serving gongfu tea, as you can take several teas with you conveniently. Secondly, you could recycle them. They are made from recycled metal, and are fully recyclable again. Finally, we would like to offer you the opportunity to mail them back to us once or twice a year so we can resend them!

In 2014, Global Tea Hut will be more beautiful than ever.

Those of you who have been subscribed for a while have seen significant changes in the look of GTH. Early issues held lots of experimentation as we found our style and began incorporating color printing.

We've heard feedback from many of you about the ongoing redesigns and the shift toward color, and we are thrilled that these changes have helped spread excitement about the contents of each issue. Once we reach 500 GTH members, we'll be ready to make the newsletters even more visually appealing with a switch to full-color, glossy, magazine-style newsletters for every issue.

One thing that's really awesome to note about this is that once we have enough members, it's a win-win situation for everyone involved. With a higher number of issues printed each month, the cost of printing each copy in full color is the same as it was for printing each issue in black and white last year. In other words, the same amount of money per person flows into the center, yet what we send out to you is better than ever! GTH reaches more people. More money goes into making the world's best tea center. And you get shiny newsletters that make you even more excited about connecting with Tea. Sweet!

Starting this month, Global Tea Hut will arrive at the beginning of each month.

From here on out, each mailing will go out with ample time to reach you at the beginning of each month, just as most magazines and other publications would. Rad!

There will be a Global Tea Hut video each month.

Starting now, we are posting videos to our YouTube page every month. We are discussing some of the topics in each issue, answering questions you have, and of course explaining the Tea of the Month to you. Some of you have asked for more brewing instructions each month, so we will incorporate some helpful tea wisdom for you as well.

In these videos, we hope to not only help spread abundance and awareness about this project, but to help



inform you, sharing some of the wisdom of this tradition with you in a different medium. This is just another way to learn and connect! Isn't that incredible?

In 2014, Global Tea Hut newsletters will become even more like magazines.

OK, we've got full color, issues arriving at the beginning of the month... what else is making our newsletters more like a magazine? More journalistic articles.

Once we reach 1000 subscribers, we'll start investing a portion of GTH donations toward travel for article research. That means that we will be able to write more journalistic articles, featuring visits to tea origins (such as famous tea mountains), teaware producers in Taiwan and China, and more. This is a whole new (yet very old) world of tea we're opening up. Expect to read about tea origins, tea producers and teaware artisans in ways you've never read about them before. This is going to be awesome!!!

Starting soon, you'll get more access to Eastern tea wisdom.

There is an astounding wealth of literature and poetry about tea in the Chinese language. And although the interest in tea in the West has grown sharply in recent years, only a fraction of these texts have been translated and then shared on a large scale. We'd like to remedy that with GTH.

When we're up to 1500 members, we'll invest a portion of our GTH funds toward translations of Chinese tea texts. This means that you'll have more direct access to tea wisdom from tea scholars, tea poets, tea monks and others who share your love of tea, but not your language (and, often, not even your century). This is just another way we aim to help you connect through tea, and we hope it will deepen your journey into tea wisdom even more.

So prepare to say "*ni hao*" to some serious tea sagacity!

GTH Improvements

In 2014, you'll get better and more varied teas than ever before.

We've worked hard to source organic / Living teas to send out each month, and we're proud to share each and every one of them. But the variety and quality are about to get even better than before, thanks to the article research I mentioned earlier.

When we travel to tea origins to interview organic tea producers, we have unique opportunities to forge new connections with supporters of Living tea. This means that we can reach more tea farmers with our vision, partner with more organic tea producers and expand the selection of teas we send out.

We want to start connecting to other organic farmers out there who love tea the way we do. We want to start connecting them to each other as well. Having the funds to travel and help raise this awareness is important to us. After all, we aren't promoting any farmer or group of farmers, but rather promoting sustainable tea production itself. We are behind the movement towards more conscious connection with the Earth through tea, in whatever form it takes. And we know that there are other like-minded farmers outside of Taiwan. We'd like to start connecting them to you, and to each other—both literally and energetically!

At 2000 members, we'll also begin to "upgrade" teas we send out. So if a tea producer in Yunnan is willing to donate a lower grade of their tea at no cost to us, we'll now be able to open up a dialogue about paying a discounted amount for a higher grade. In many cases, this arrangement is more beneficial to the tea producer (who gets money in addition to bragging rights) and to you all (who get better teas). And, obviously, we're thrilled to be a channel for this energy to get from you to the wonderful people who are making these organic and Living teas!

Of course, we'll continue to send out some of our old favorites each year. (Three cheers for annual Sun Moon Lake Red Tea mailings!) And we'll also send out teas you

would otherwise never be able to access, providing you with a direct connection to the vastness and breadth of tea directly from the source.

These improvements is so mind-blowingly wonderful that I made a little equation to explain it to those of you whose jaws are dropped in stupefaction at the sheer magnificence of it:

***More and better types of tea + a better magazine + even happier tea producers
+ a new tea center for us all
= AMAZING WIN FOR EVERYONE
INVOLVED!!!***

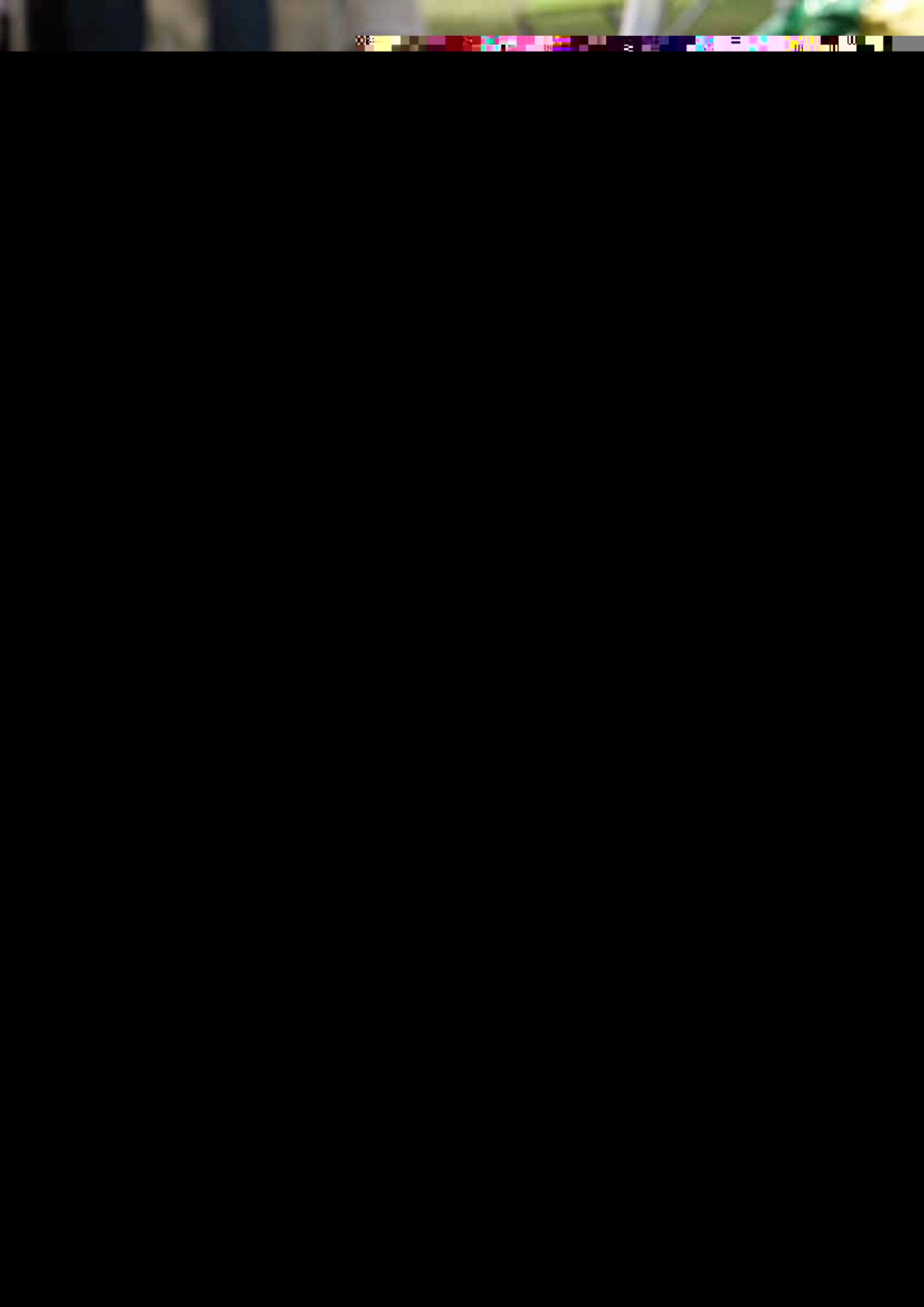
And there are even more improvements yet to come.

As I mentioned, we like to make changes for the better around here. We'll continue to improve GTH over this year and beyond when new insights come to us from Tea and from all of you lovely GTH members. Have an idea for how we can make GTH even more awesome than it already is? Email us with it right now!



We want to make Global Tea Hut an even more awesome experience. We hope that the coming improvements to the magazine, variety and quality of tea and packaging will make new tea lovers want to subscribe despite the fact that it is all for non-profit!

In that way, our growing abundance will improve this experience and build a tea center we can all enjoy!





SERVING TEA BEYOND THE HUT

Nick Dilks

Only a few people on this planet can change the course of history in ways that will be etched in the history books. One is reminded of the influence of certain individuals with the recent passing away of Nelson Mandela. Because of him, a whole country has changed for the better. The rest of us, however, may have to be content with relative anonymity. The fact is that most of us will disappear from human memory with little trace in two or three generations—a humbling truth for our egos. But this doesn't mean that we are not changing the course of history every moment through the small decisions we make and how we interact with others. I was reminded of this recently when I returned to my old haunting grounds, the Manchester Buddhist Centre (MBC) in the UK. While serving Tea, a few people thanked me for inspiring them to commit to the Buddhist path when I taught there a few years ago. One person who I formed a connection with is soon to be ordained and will be teaching another generation of newcomers this spring. You never know: the small seeds we plant today can grow into mighty trees whose canopies tower above us in the not-too-distant future.

All this talk of the expansion of Global Tea Hut has started me thinking about the next phase of my own Tea journey, and how I can make a difference with GTH from afar. After an insightful year living at the Tea community in Taiwan with Wu DE and the gang, I will return to England in April 2014. I plan to take the spirit of our Tradition back with me as an *Introducer of Tea* and *Merchant of the Leaf* in as much of a Baisao style as modernity allows. I hope this can help to give our tradition exposure to as many Brits as possible and increase our membership this way.

Some of you may have read my article in September about my 'scouting trip' back to the UK where I led a very successful introduction to Tea at the MBC. Following that, we had a couple of people sign up for GTH; two people in three hours work! My plan is to start a regular Tea morning every Saturday at the MBC. Then I will use most other weekends to travel around the country to other thriving city-based centers to do "Introduction to Tea" days. I will earn my living from donations at these events, and then also from selling Tea.

However, I want my life to be about giving abundantly and receiving whatever comes back from the Universe, so my business model will be a little bit abnormal. I will be putting a label on the Tea with how much it has cost me to import and package it. I will then leave

any further donation up to the customer. In this way, I hope to live off the generosity and inspiration of others, like my hero, Baisao. As those of you who read my article last month will know, he had the following inscription carved on the offertory bamboo tube in his Tea shop:

The price for this tea is anything from a hundred in gold to half a sen. If you want to drink for free, that's all right too. I'm only sorry that I can't give it to you for less.

For me, I won't be offering it for free, though it's an interesting idea. Who knows what the future might hold? But at least this more transparent way of earning a living allows the customer to choose if they want to add anything to the cost price.

Though Baisao is my hero, I hope my life won't be quite as ascetic as his. For instance, it's not part of my dream to often end up like a "minnow gasping in a drying puddle"! But I will have to lead a very simple life to be able to afford the pricey rent, accommodation and organic food bills in the UK. This is something I am looking forward to, and I have been studying fellow Brit, Mark Boyle's excellent book, *The Moneyless Man*, to get tips on how I can keep the costs down. This guy has managed to live for over two years in Bristol without the use of money, and he is an inspirational figure for me. Growing my own food is a definite plan. And I would like to cycle from city to city in the summer months, which, though chilly by some standards, should be a manageable five months of the year. This will also reduce my costs (have you seen the prices of trains in the UK?) and keep me healthy, if a little saddle-sore. But my main reason for doing it is to make an environmental statement too. As part of this tradition, I will not just be introducing people to awesome, organic Tea, but to a conscious attitude to Tea farming and production, and caring for the whole of Nature too. If I can ride the 250 miles from Manchester to Brighton without having a negative impact on our planet, then I feel this will be a part of truly living my ideals. I hope this will send a message to others too.

Of course, swapping a train for a bicycle or getting a friend to sign up for GTH is only a small thing. But minuscule things can accumulate and make great changes in time. This is why I'm inspired to move to England. I might not be paving the way for a personal entry into the history books. But, every time I introduce someone to the power of organic, living Tea and they stop buying the planet-destroying stuff that the masses will be the ton, then the Earth can breath a tiny sigh of



relief. The more people I can introduce, the more change I help create. And it's not just the environment that benefits. The people we introduce to Tea will change too. (The introductions go both ways, after all.) All of us here have been positively affected by drinking great Tea, and who would not want to share that with others? My dear friend San Bao introduced me to GTH in 2012 and here I am setting off to do the same for others, so everyone that I affect has been affected by San Bao too.

So, off to England I will go in April. But not alone. Wu De has promised the Tradition's full support. He's promised to come and visit to help promote what we are doing. If any of you have any encouragement, advice, money-saving tips, contacts in the UK, please contact me at: nickdilks@gmail.com. I hope to be able to share tea regularly starting next summer in this magazine with my attempts to woo some of the 98% of British Tea drinkers who rather blasphemously add milk to their brews!

Finally, while we are talking about making a small difference to GTH, I'd like to encourage you all to think of someone to introduce to GTH. They'll thank you each month as they sit down and enjoy the magazine, the gift and brew the latest Tea. I like to think big, so I'll stick my neck out and say that I reckon I can easily introduce 50 new GTH members within a year of starting my new adventure. Anyone suppose they can match my efforts?



Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you 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. This month we thought you should meet the person behind Wu De's recent trip to Ukraine, and a dedicated tea spirit, Sato.

At some time, my “tea way” began, but whether I chose it at some significant moment I don't know. My grandmother told me when I was a child that her father, my great-grandfather had a teahouse in a village not far from Kostroma, in Russia, and he used to have a heavy red beard. Maybe I have inherited his love for tea love as well as his hair. Who knows? Tea was in my life since childhood as a drink, as food, as medicine: I had it with my granny's pies or my mother's sandwiches and when I used to catch a cold I was given tea with raspberry to drink. Every nation has its own tea traditions...

I remember one tea experience that happened in my youth. At the age of 16, I watched a TV program about Japanese tea tradition. I wanted to try whisking tea powder myself. As there was almost no green tea in our country at that time I took some black tea and ground it in coffee grinder. I recollect the incredibly bitter taste of the tea. But I was over the moon that I managed to make something new and had a look at a familiar drink from a different perspective...

A deeper dip into Tea began five years ago. I remember there was a meeting due to the arrival of an acquaintance who lived and worked in London at that time. He brought some Chinese Oolong tea (Tie Guan Yin) he'd bought there. It felt special then...After we parted, I was caught up in tea magic and I felt it for three days. For no reason at all the aroma of the tea came back in my mind: either I smelled it in the air or suddenly the flavor of the tea appeared in my mouth. I was fascinated...

Then there were three year's quest for excellence: of more high-quality tea, the best water and nicer teaware; a search for knowledge of growing and preparation methods. I was often a scientist: I used scales for measuring a precise quantity of tea leaves depending on the teaware, and a thermometer for the right water temperature. At times, this led to a scrupulosity that touched upon pride and snobbery. This also happened...

A love for Tea then brought me to China and I found myself in Guangzhou. This trip was one more key turning point on the way. The communication was almost always without words—I do not know Chinese and hardly speak English. But with tea and the help of tea people I had a new understanding. I saw that tea is not in degrees or grams. I found the joy in sharing it.

Before our flight back home we visited the Tea Museum in Hong Kong. I bought one of the issues of “The Art of Tea” magazine in the teashop there – the magazine that in future served as one more landmark on the Way. For the first time I read the articles of Wu De (using a dictionary) and got myself familiar with this fresh approach and attitude—with the tradition of the Hut. Then there were some books of Wu De's, an acquaintance with some Russian tea brothers, one of whom invited me to visit the workshops in Moscow this summer.

The very first sip of living tea amazed and touched me with its lightness and simplicity. And at the same time it had an inexpressible depth that purified me, dissolving all that was collected from knowledge, theories and various practical training. Then, this autumn, we had the joy of hosting Wu De here in the Ukraine and held several successful events. My deep gratitude to Wu De and all the other tea masters!

Should any of you find yourself in Ukraine, please contact me and we'll share some tea!

hipsheik@gmail.com



Our Goals for 2014

Our goals/plans for the coming year:

- Increase membership to 2,000 by January 1st, 2015
- Save enough to break ground in 2015, hire an architect, begin building, etc.
- Incorporate Global Tea Hut in Taiwan so that we can offer visas to volunteers
- Achieve non-profit status in America

Ways in which Global Tea Hut will improve once we get closer to our goal of 2,000 members:

- More funds means we can have a budget to travel and write more journalistic articles on tea regions, farmers, potters, etc.
- In those travels, we can also source more donors to give organic teas, increasing the variety of teas Global Tea Hut sends out and connecting more of those teas with the source.
- With more funds, we can add money towards tea; and rather than relying solely on donations, offer better quality tea sometimes. Also, this allows Global Tea Hut to make an impression on the tea world—promoting sustainable farmers and organic tea practices.
- A commitment to return roughly 10% of revenue to the improvement of Global Tea Hut itself
- Tea tins to protect teas we send each month
- A new shipping date so that Global Tea Hut arrives at the beginning of the month
- A full-color, glossy magazine instead of a black & white newsletter
- More funds also means we can begin some translation projects, translating Chinese articles, ancient tea poems and texts, etc. for future issues.

Ways in which you can help:

- Use social media to help promote our videos, links and membership to Global Tea Hut. Help us by making more of an effort to share it online!
- Share each month's tea with friends. Show them the newsletter and tell them that the magazine and the teas are improving as the membership increases. Tell them we need 2000 members this year to begin construction on the world's best free tea center.
- Discuss Global Tea Hut with people you know, and try your best to get one member a month to join. If everyone does that, we can achieve our goals quickly and together!



Our Projects

Tea Sage Hut

This is our current center, located in Miao Li, Taiwan. Each year, we host over two hundred visitors from all around the world. At the Tea Sage Hut, guests come and drink tea, eat vegetarian food and have a bed should they need it. We have weekly tea classes and daily meditation sessions each morning and evening. We also help coordinate travel around Taiwan and put guests in touch with tea farmers, tea and teaware shops and events. All instruction, room and board, and hugs are free. We operate on a donation basis, and guests are free to leave as much or as little as they like for future guests, knowing that their visit was supported by past guests and hoping to pay the experience forward. For more information visit: www.teasagehut.org

Future Center (Light Meets Life)

In December of 2012, we were donated three acres of gorgeous land in the mountains of Da Hu, Taiwan. The land has a waterfall, sakura trees, cliffs, views and abundant verdure. Light Meets Life will be the name of our future, expanded center. It will be a great place to learn about and drink tea as well as to meditate. We plan to have an ecological, organic tea garden for educational purposes and a communal farm to grow our own food. Our new center will be run on similar principals to that of the Tea Sage Hut, only on a larger scale.

Publications

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