



Global Tea Art

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE
March 2015

茶合夥

JING SHUAN OOLONG
TEA FELLOWSHIP
GLOBAL TEA COMMUNITY





TEA FELLOWSHIP

With the beginning of a new lunar year, and the tremendous growth we are seeing in this beautiful community, we thought we would devote a whole issue to tea community! This global fellowship has changed all our lives to some degree, and for those of us at the center, it has changed everything. Let's celebrate this tea family all month!



LOVE IS CHANGING THE WORLD BOWL BY BOWL

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Letter from the Editor

In March we enter the spring. It is time to start shifting to oolongs and sheng puerh. As the weather shifts in Taiwan, we start to feel called outdoors. We feel like moving after a long winter turned inwards. The rains come, and with them a burgeoning of life all throughout this lush island. This means that tea buds are sprouting, and this year's tea is on its way! Along with the weather, we always get a huge influx of guests.

This year, we have already seen the rising tide of a huge tidal wave of support. Unfortunately, it has led to some serious scheduling issues here at the center. Max has done an amazing job of creating a system to facilitate a larger influx of guests. And this is just one example of the many ways that we are building the infrastructure to contain larger and larger amounts of energy—both in terms of these Global Tea Hut envelopes and the center itself..

Last year, we wanted to reach our goal of 2,000 members, and said as much in a video at the beginning of the year. Every week at the Hut, we have Gratitude Tuesdays, where we share what we are grateful for that week during lunch. At the New Year, we did a gratitude year for the Year of the Horse, and the very first thing I was most thankful for, from deep down in my heart, was that none of that happened! The fact is that we weren't prepared for it. We would have been overwhelmed. As we reached around five hundred envelopes, we quickly realized that we were going to have to start building a different structure to contain this growing global community. We've spent the past few months doing that and we can say that we are now very confident that we are ready for this family of tea brothers and sisters to grow into and beyond our goals in the coming Year of the Sheep!

First of all, we have rented a new building for Global Tea Hut! This is very exciting. Many of you have been here during the packing of Global Tea Hut and participated in serving that process. For those of you who haven't, it is a lot of work! Besides the dozens of hours that goes into writing, editing, taking photos and designing the magazine, there is time spent choosing gifts and keeping inventory. Then, the packing itself can take anywhere from one to three days, depending on how many guests are here to help us and how hard they work! And that can be challenging when we are all living in the workshop! It means that we have to move boxes out of the way to eat meals, and wake up to a feeling of work, as opposed to the normal ease and peace that reigns over the center. But not anymore! Now we have a new building to work on Global



Tea Hut, leaving the center free to be a tea center! The new space also has the capacity to produce many more envelopes to share with beautiful Tea brothers and sisters around the world, as it is empty of furniture. We are designing it to be the perfect workshop of Tea elves, comfortable and full of Tea spirit!

We also have to order the envelopes and cans in large quantities. Together with other Global Tea Hut materials, they take up the entire third floor of the center, leaving little room for teaware, etc. The good news is that the new building is three floors, so we will have an entire floor devoted to storing materials for these envelopes, as well as a bright, new tea storage facility with an altar and proper space to respect the tea we are storing for the center and members of this community!

In honor of the new facility and all the abundance it represents, we thought we'd devote a whole issue to community through Tea. You are all the heart of this amazing center we live in, not to mention the future big, bold and beautiful center we will one day create, Light Meets Life. The writing, editing, designing and packing of these envelopes are the very breath of this center. You are all in our hearts.

This issue is a tribute to all that the practice of Cha Dao can inspire in people, and the soul family that results. There are no words for the gratitude we have for this community. That, more than the need for structure and the fact that our goals weren't reached last year, is what I am truly, deeply and wholeheartedly thankful for. I bow to you all with my head to the floor...

WINTER 2014

JING SHUAN OOLONG

Ming Jian, Taiwan

Back in August of 2014, we promised that we would one day send the last of Taiwan's Three Daughters, the varieties native to the island. This month, we've kept our word and sent the last of the trilogy of bright, organic oolongs from Mr. Xie!

茶葉

One of the most important roles this Global Tea Hut community plays is the friendship we make between incredible tea producers and all the people gathered here each month. It is a huge part of the celebration of community that this special issue is devoted to. And if you didn't know, all the teas we share with you each month are graciously donated (fully or partially). The farmers and vendors who give us tea to share know that we are a non-profit tea school devoted to sharing Cha Dao with the world, but that isn't the primary reason they share their tea with us. All of our classes and publications are free and all the guests who stay here do so completely free, and these gifts help us maintain a free tea center. The farmers know that their tea supports us in this way, and of course they think it is nice, but that isn't the real motivation for their gifts: *you are!*


All of the amazing farmers who support us with their hard labor—tea is one of the most labor-intensive crops on earth—do so to share their tea with thirty nations. I have seen two tap their chests with a tear-jerking pride and tell a friend how, “Our tea, yes, *our* tea is being

drunk by someone in Spain!” They want to connect their heritage, culture, art and work with the world. Any artist could relate. I certainly wouldn't turn down the chance to have my book read by people worldwide, even if it was for free! And with so many environmental problems in the tea industry, and all agriculture for that matter, it is very important that these organic farmers who are creating sustainable teas have such an amplified voice. So you might say that we at the Hut are the microphone, and you the audience.

Some people in their urban offices or at bars declare that “global warming is a myth” or debate whether the changes in the environment are “real” or “true”. But no farmer living and working in concordance with the climate, denies the changes of late. Tea just isn't as good as it was even ten years ago. And when you ask the farmers, they all tell the same story: It doesn't rain enough; it's cold when it should be warm or warm when it should be cold; the mists aren't coming the way they once did in early spring, etc., etc... When you add to that smog, water pollution and overuse of chemicals, you have a dreary

painting indeed. But wait, look there! Where? Just there, in the back of the painting—behind all those grays. There is still some green. Some hope. There are the seeds of change, already growing—thriving in a renewed soil based on community, sharing and a view toward the future...

As many of you who have been to our center know, one of our modes of service is to set up our tea service at parks, trails or gatherings and serve free bowls to passersby. We do so without any agenda or teaching—simple tea in a quiet space of presence and loving-kindness. Tea is the Great Connector, connecting us to Nature, our self and to each other. We blaze right past each other all the time, with more modes of communication than ever before, and yet we have the least human connection since Creation. We offer people a bit of humanity, a smile, a chat or even some silence to get in touch with themselves before they move on. We do so at a variety of venues, including our



monthly service at Hope Market in Taichung.

Hope is a group of organic producers who work together as a model for a sustainable future. It is mostly farmers, though there are producers of recycled clothes, jam, *miso*, etc. They hold activities every week, including courses conducted by various farmers in which the public can come and learn to make tofu, honey, organic fertilizer, etc. There is no currency exchange allowed within the Hope organization, rather trade and barter. If a soybean farmer wants some honey, he trades tofu for it. There is also a wonderful exchange of work as well,

which means if that same soybean farmer needs some help harvesting he asks his brothers and sisters in Hope and they all come to help, knowing that he will also help them if and when they need him to. It goes without saying that when the time comes they will also help us build our permanent center, Light Meets Life. Every month, Hope also holds a market in a beautiful garden, with rivers, koi fish and lotus ponds. As members, we have been given a permanent space in the market. We set up on the ground and serve tea to the guests that come to buy vegetables and other organic products. Next to sending out this Global Tea

Hut, Hope Market is the highlight of our month here.

It was at Hope that we met the amazing Mr. Xie Yuan Zhai, whom we of course gravitated to immediately because of his organic tea. He came to the center a few times and we started visiting his farm. It was so easy for a friendship to develop (organically of course)! He is kind and joyous, with smiles that fill a room, not to mention incredibly knowledgeable about Tea. He's made every kind of tea you could imagine at some point, and has decades of experience.

Aside from providing this month's tea, which you are sure to

This month's tea: Jing Shuan Oolong

The Other Daughters: Tsui Yu

Kingfisher Jade (*Tsui Yu*) oolong is a hybrid which came to life in the 1970's, after decades of research. In the Taiwanese index it is TW #13, though farmers often refer to it as "2029" or just "29". Like *Jing Shuan*, the leaves of *Tsui Yu* have veins at 80 to 90-degree angles, though they are long and arrow-head-shaped. When you stand back from a field of *Tsui Yu*, the leaves have a bluish-green (kingfisher) tint to them and they are more vibrant, with lush foliage than all the other varieties. *Tsui Yu* dislikes cold weather, so it can't be grown at very high altitudes. It is predominantly grown on Mt. Zhu and in the lowlands around Ming Jian, where our tea of the month comes from. *Tsui Yu* has a flavor of seaweed, lima beans and often fruit. It is more famous for an aroma of wildflowers and an aftertaste of fresh fruit. Some say it tastes of lotus or lilac, others say cassia or peach. Much of this depends on the terroir, the season and the skill of the producer. The Qi is Yin, which centers you in the heart.

love, Mr. Xie is a very important part of the scenery at our center, and will be very important for many of you as well, because so many of our visitors come here with a curiosity about how tea is processed. It is very important to experience with your own hands just how difficult it is to make tea, so that in your own soreness you will develop a tremendous respect for the Leaf. This respect isn't just in the billions of years of evolution, or in the Nature we always wax poetic about: the wind and rain, sun and moonshine, minerals, mountain and water that flow from roots to crown. It is also in the blood, sweat and tears of generation after generation of farmers. And there is a deep reverence in seeing just how much mastery, skill and, dare we say, art that go into the crafting of the Leaf. And so, with great joy we take as many of our guests as possible to a few different farms to try their hands at tea processing. It is amazing to make your own tea, and take it home with you. If you didn't have enough reasons to come stay with us, here's another: Mr. Xie has formally invited each and every one of you to come to his farm and make tea, eat a nice lunch and take the tea you picked and crafted home with you!

Mr. Xie is a third generation farmer in Ming Jian, Nantou, Central Taiwan. Ming Jian is lower altitude, in the foothills of the central mountain range. In the last few decades, such lower altitude tea has been adumbrated by the popularity of the teas grown higher up. Though areas like Hsinchu and Miao Li counties, where Eastern Beauty is grown, have struggled since high mountain oolongs have come to dominate the market, Ming Jian has prospered by providing lower-priced teas for export, or large-scale production for the bottled tea market (often called "Ready to Drink" RTD). Mr. Xie's family has grown small-scale productions of oolong tea through three lifetimes, since

Our tea of the month, Jing Shuan Oolong, growing organically in Ming Jian.



before the higher-altitude teas even existed.

When we discuss organic farming and the need to make changes in tea farming—as well as other kinds of agriculture—it's important to remember that the farmers are always the first victims. It is they who handle the agro-chemicals in large amounts, and most directly. Furthermore, it is only by humanizing and befriending them that we can bring about change. We must include rather than exclude—educate rather than ostracize.

Like so many other farmers, Mr. Xie started to get the nagging (coughing, wheezing) feeling that these chemicals were harmful to his family, his community and his

land. When his wife almost miscarried their second child in 1997, he had had enough. Despite opposition from friends and family, Mr. Xie made a commitment to become an organic tea farmer, no matter the cost. He first attended some organic farming classes held by the MOA organization.

MOA stands for "Mokichi Okada Cultural Services Association International." It was created by Mokichi Okada (1882-1955), who started three great projects in his lifetime: a "Mokichi Style Detoxification Treatment" for land, "Natural Agriculture, Drinks and Food" and "Fine Arts and Culture". These three projects created affiliated groups of people with common



The Other Daughters: *Si Ji Chun* (Four Seasons Spring)

Though you could perhaps call *Si Ji Chun* a hybrid, it is a natural, wild varietal that arose in Mu Zha. Since it is a natural varietal, it is heartier than the others. This is a testament to one of the principles we always promote in these pages when discussing what we call “Living Tea”, which is that the leaves produced by man will never compare to Nature’s. It’s possible to further distinguish manmade teas by calling them “cultivars”. *Si Ji Chun* trees yield buds at least four times a year, which is where its name comes from. “*Si Ji Chun*” might also be translated as “Four Seasons like spring”, referring to the fact that this bush can produce as much in other seasons as in spring. It is also thought to be the youngest of the Three Daughters, coming into commercial production in the 1980’s. *Si Ji*

Chun does not have a Taiwan classification number, since it evolved naturally. *Si Ji Chun* is more closely related to *Ching Shin* than it is to *Jing Shuan* or *Tsui Yu*. The leaves of *Si Ji Chun* are round in shape, with veins that shoot off at 30-to 60-degree angles. The leaves have a light green hue. The buds of *Si Ji Chun* are often a gorgeous reddish hue when they emerge.

As many of you will remember from June of 2013, when we sent out this fabulous tea, *Si Ji Chun* has an exuberant, golden liquor that blossoms in a fresh, musky floweriness. It is tangy, with a slightly sour aftertaste, like the Tie Guan Yin varietal it evolved from. Many Taiwanese compare the aroma to gardenias. The Qi is cleansing, pushing outward from the center. It rises up in gusts, and leaves you feeling refreshed.

goals to help each other. His overall aim was “to allow humanity to expand and flourish, helping create healthier people, families, regions, countries and culture”. His Japanese NPO natural agriculture culture movement created the *Da Ren* farm in 1982, and then in 1991 developed standards for healthy, organic agriculture. They began to set up branches and create a social system for theory and practical cooperation amongst farmers in Japan.

In April of 1990, a group of people who cared about Nature and were concerned about environmental pollution wanted to change the situation in Taiwan. They joined the Japanese MOA International Association and created a sister organiza-

tion to educate farmers and legally certify organic foods and drinks island wide. This Taiwanese foundation was formed to explore and promote health and happiness for mankind and to guarantee environmentally sustainable MOA natural agriculture, expecting this ideology and the sustainable agriculture techniques behind it to spread all over the world.

MOA certification is rather rigorous and they do a great job of ensuring sustainable, organic agriculture without much of the bureaucracy or financial interests that trouble a lot of organic certification worldwide. Watching for the MOA certification on teas is a good way to

enter the world of organic Taiwanese teas.

From 1997 to 2000, Mr. Xie and his family struggled to maintain their principles. His tea was sub-par and he lost most all his customers. His father, who had been worried when he suggested upsetting the status quo in the first place, was very critical of his decisions. Organic farming is difficult, and it requires a radical change in farming and processing methodology—changes that would take time to learn. Rather than give up, as many would have done, Mr. Xie got a part time job as a painter and carpenter, working day and night—either painting or farming—to keep his family afloat. Finally, in the early 2000’s, his

acumen for organic farming improved to the point that he was able to take his teas to market again. Since then he has gone on to win awards, been featured on TV and has even heard his father, now a sprightly eighty years old, bragging to others about how his tea is organic and good for the environment!

Mr. Xie's work hasn't stopped with his own farm. He knew that he would have to keep improving his skills, creating new and better teas, and help show his neighbors the value of organic farming, especially since their land and his are close enough to influence each other. He formed a co-op with other farmers and began teaching locals to shift to organic methods, offering them equal shares in their combined enterprise. As more people have joined this local group, the incentive to do so has also increased. To date, more than twenty-five farmers in the Ming Jian region are organic,

including Mr. Xie's immediate neighbors.


Mr. Xie's kind heart shows in his teas. He cares deeply about Tea and the Earth. He produces green tea, large and small-leaf red tea, as well as several kinds of oolong, and all with great skill. To us, he is an inspiration and a kind of hero—the kind not talked about enough these days. It's easy to follow the crowd, maintain the status quo; or to say, "I am just one person. What can I do?" It is difficult to face criticism from family and friends and stand up for what you believe to be right! The problem is that it is too easy for farmers to make more money with agro-chemicals, and to do it with less work. And that's also why so many of them are over-using the fertilizers and pesticides, reducing the average life of a tea bush to fifteen years, all in the name of personal gain. Many of them get cancer from improper exposure to such chemicals, themselves victims as we

mentioned above. Mr. Xie is a man who has seen a different way, and more inspiringly, lived that way and taught others to do so. And that is the true spirit of Tea.

Tea of the Month

We have sent you the other of the "Three Daughters of Taiwan" in the past: *Tsui Yu* (Kingfisher Jade) and *Si Ji Chun* (Four Seasons Spring). Last August, we devoted a whole issue to the four main varieties of Taiwanese tea, and covered these Three Daughters in detail. That month, we sent you *Tsui Yu*, and promised that one day soon we would send out the last of the daughters, *Jing Shuan*.

Jing Shuan oolong is a hybrid that was established in the 1970's. Its Taiwanese number is TW #12, though farmers often refer to it as "2027" or just "27". These numbers refer to the process the *Taiwan*



*The first breath of Spring
exhales the Golden Lilies
of Winter's meditation.
The sweet liquor
of nascent flowers
reminds us to savor
the snow-swept fields.
Dark and light,
the Tea brews change—
pots of the Timeless
poured into cups of Time.
In the darkest of Winter Shou
And the light Spring Oolong,
We, too, are drunk
by this life of Tea.*

—Wu De

Oolong Tea Research and Development used to classify the teas as they were developing and testing them. The leaves of *Jing Shuan* are more round while the branching veins come off the central vein at an almost right angle (80 to 90 degrees). From a distance, the bushes have a yellowish-green hue, which may also help distinguish this cultivar. *Jing Shuan* tea is primarily grown on Mt. Zhu in central Taiwan. It doesn't thrive in the extreme cold of very high altitude gardens or plantations like *Ching Shin*, but isn't as susceptible to cold as *Tsui Yu*. When it is healthy, *Jing Shuan* has more vibrant foliage than other varieties.

Jing Shuan is one of the easiest of the four main tea varieties to distinguish. The dry leaves have a golden, yellowish-green hue, as does the liquor. *Jing Shuan* is famous for its milky texture and fragrance—often referred to as “milk oolong”. There is misinformation in the tea world

that this name is due to using milk as fertilizer, but the name actually comes from the tea liquor itself: *Jing Shuan* is thick and creamy, and if the terroir is right, with more sun, and the processing done well, it has a definite milky aroma which is very pleasing. Its fame has resulted in fake “Milk oolongs” produced in Mainland China that are sprayed with artificial milk flavors post-production, giving them a strong and unnatural fragrance of milk. (Yuck!) Real *Jing Shuan* has only a subtle hint of a milky fragrance in the aftertaste. The thick, oily liquor coats the throat. It has a deep and lasting Qi that resonates inwards.

This milk oolong has beautiful, uplifting spring energy that enlivens you with a fresh, bright Yin Qi. It is a great tea to drink in the afternoon with some friends, as the new spring light comes in through the windows, starting a movement towards a new season of year. We know you will love this amazing oolong!



金萱烏龍

Brewing Tips for This Month's Tea

Like all oolong teas, *Jing Shuan* is best brewed Gongfu. For those of you who have yet to foray into gongfu brewing, you can brew this tea in a bowl, by adding just a few balls of the tea and some water that is allowed to cool a bit after boiling. Oolong and gongfu tea brewing grew up together. Gongfu was born out of the same principles that inform martial arts, by Southern Chinese who primarily drank oolong tea. In brewing an oolong gongfu, we highlight its essence. This doesn't mean you have to feel obligated to do so, however.

It may be better to explore brewing this month's tea with a little lower temperature water—bringing the water only to Crab Eye sized bubbles, instead of the Fish Eye that we use for most teas. (You can also bring the water to Fish Eye and then let it cool a bit.) This amazing oolong can definitely withstand higher tempera-

tures like Fish Eye, but it will produce a very different, light and fragrant liquor when brewed with slightly cooler water. It may be very interesting to separate your tea into two brews and try each one with different temperatures, exploring the difference a cooler and hotter brew has. Which one brings out the milky fragrance more and why?

If you are brewing gongfu style, you can also explore the relationship that pouring has on tea. Try pouring from a bit higher for green oolongs like this. Pouring from higher helps oxidize the water and cool it down a bit. Make sure to move in a circle, so you do not scald any one leaf. Another good practice is to work towards *placing* the water in the pot, as opposed to *pouring* it. The connection should not end at the kettle's handle or spout—you can flow into the teapot with the water and continue the connection, from heart to hand, kettle to pot to cup...

COMMUNITEA GLOBAL FELLOWSHIP

Andrew Taylor

A tradition only lives and breathes in the flesh and blood of those who are living it. We embody these teachings or they wither and die, becoming a tomb. Making family through Tea isn't just a part of what we do, it is everything! As this communithea grows, spreading to more than thirty countries, we need to celebrate how Tea has brought us all together around this table!

Our tea community here at Tea Sage Hut is the most important aspect of our tradition. We are a group of people working towards a greener and happier world while cultivating a greater connection to Nature, self and others through the use of the Leaf. No matter what separates us in our preferences toward a certain kind of tea or teaware, brewing vessel, or method of preparation, we are all interconnected through Her and the way in which we approach Her binds us together. But what does that mean exactly, a “tea community”? A community can be described as a social construct where the interactions and behavior of the members are oriented through their shared values, beliefs and interests. Therefore, we all share a common thread in our reverence

and respect to Tea and Nature while relating to Her in our individual ways. The community is backed by a deeply rooted tradition linked back to ancient sages and tea masters. Most importantly, we are all inclusive and stay outside the concept of “us” versus “them”, so please come sit for a bowl as no applications nor prerequisites are needed!

Since we’ve had quite a large increase in our membership since last year, I’d like to explain a bit more about Global Tea Hut and the importance of our worldwide community. First and foremost, as a not-for-profit organization, GTH operates because of the good graces of numerous people donating time, money, resources and expertise to bring you this magazine, tea and gift every month. Here at GTH head-

quarters in Miaoli, Taiwan, we are only a core of five people, so without these folks, and you, our members, we would not be able to sustain the ongoing operation of this organization! Our community is a group of Tea lovers from all walks of life and cultures, promoting and cultivating the awakening of self and others through the spirit of Tea. We are part of a Tea tradition that connects us to tea masters and teachers of years long past. And we work within the vision that it will be carried on for generations to come. One of the three guiding principles is that our tradition is a community of people; unique individuals who desire to create a Tea family that bonds us closer together with love and support along our own personal journeys through life.



Our community spans the whole globe and grows larger by the day. Los Angeles, Moscow and Tallinn are a few of our biggest hub communities, with established tea families that host gatherings every week. Many of our guests that come to the center were introduced to Tea through these events held by our worldwide brothers and sisters.

This tradition and community has resonated with so many people because our approach to Tea is one of respect for Nature and recognition of Tea as plant medicine and a vehicle for self-cultivation. No matter what community you want to connect with, Tea will always have a place. We do not see community as a matter of “inner” and “outer”, and in this way we can facilitate a connection to everyone, regardless

of how different our ideas or views of the world may be. In this way, we can relate to all circles and break down the walls that separate us.

A Circle of Energy

What makes Global Tea Hut a special community is right here in these pages and within these walls where I sit. To have this magazine communicate via the center, where we share Tea wisdom and knowledge—a beautiful tea center that anyone can visit for free—be completely supported through the donations of everybody who participates is a truly unique circle of energy. We write about the tea wisdom cultivated in the space you help sustain

and visit, inspiring you to send more support...

I've gotten to know the names of many members over time by preparing GTH each month, and it's always a special occasion when one of those household names comes to life in the flesh with a visit to the Tea Sage Hut. A real treasure of living here at the center is getting to know the guests and being able to serve them during their stay. We share our stories of how we came to meet Tea and how we found the Hut. We share about our lives, the paths we have traveled on and what we are celebrating and struggling with in the present. Some guests arrive without much of an intimate relationship to Tea, but have been called to Her for reasons unclear at the time. Many of them fall in love

immediately and continue to make Tea a sacred part of their day. This connection and transformation represents not only an individual's willingness to receive, but also the potency of a Living Tea and the effect of steeping it in intention, reverence and stillness.

Some guests have been longtime members, dating back to the inception of Global Tea Hut, and have just recently visited the center for the first time. I had a realization when one of the original GTH members visited last year: that her support over these past years was partially responsible for the creation of this center, thereby allowing myself and hundreds of others the opportunity to live and learn in this space. And now all of you follow in that chain, supporting the future guests and residents to come! Another longtime member of our community, a dear brother and important figure behind the scenes of GTH, visited the center for the first time ever during this past Christmas. After a few days of allowing the center experience to settle in, he exclaimed out in a dumbfounded and celebratory manner to no one in particular, "This is a real tea center!" Yes, indeed, but one whose existence would not be actualized without the support and love from him and every one of you reading this right now!

Service-oriented

With our attention focused on serving the guests visiting here at the Tea Sage Hut and preparing for the monthly GTH, we must take time to reflect on the people who came before us, before Wu De, those in our elder generation who have been such an integral part of helping us function and thrive. Some of the more special days are when we get the opportunity to visit with our older Taiwanese tea family of farmers, tea makers, artists and shop owners. These great people support

the community in so many ways: from donating tea and teaware, hosting us at their farm, to helping organize trips to China. They see us not as cute foreigners who have an interest in Tea, but as the younger generation to carry on the knowledge and spirit of Tea that they have cultivated over so many years. They see in us the same passion for Tea as they themselves have towards farming, roasting, pottery or research and education. This elder generation may not be able to connect with us on the level of our daily lifestyle at the center, but they certainly want to support us in contributing to the awareness of Living Tea and the true Taiwanese culture of Tea.

"There is a special connection within the members of this community. Strangers meet here in Miaoli as if in reunion from lives past, to later reconvene for bowls of tea on Skype. We are volunteer agents of the Leaf, facilitating Her destined meeting with the uninitiated."

As Wu De has written about, farmers' eyes light up upon hearing that their tea will be sent to people in over thirty countries. And their incredible generosity and willingness to give are a personal reminder that Tea (and everything for that matter!) is not about gathering and collecting, but giving and sharing. Often, when Wu De speaks about the tradition and our future center, Light Meets Life, he does so with a deep passion for creating something that will outlive us and be passed on to future generations. As the tradition continues to evolve and transform in minute ways, the wisdom, spirit and teachings imbued from Wu De's teachers, mentors and Tea family will be forever ingrained.

There is a special connection within the members of this community. Strangers meet here in Miaoli as if in reunion from lives past, to later reconvene for bowls of tea on Skype. We are volunteer agents of the Leaf, facilitating Her destined meeting with the uninitiated. You and I have brothers and sisters all over the globe, waiting for our visit with a kettle on the fire and an open heart! And whether separated by a tea table or by time zones and vast oceans, we are all sharing the same bowl, steeped from the purist heart and Spirit...



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茶
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友



SEPARATE THE TABLE AND CENTER YOURSELF

Wu De

Now and then, it is important to return to the basics. Therefore, we plan to cover the Five Basics of Tea Brewing over the course of the next five issues. While these principles also apply to bowl tea, they are primary in gongfu brewing as well.

工夫

We've received some requests to return to the basics, exploring the foundations of all tea brewing from a practical level. Returning to the practical foundation of tea brewing is important for us all. Every now and again we have to renew our contract with the most essential principles in order to make sure that the ground on which we build our mastery is strong. Though these principles apply to bowl tea as well, they are primary in gongfu brewing. Over the next five issues, we plan to explore the Five Basics of Tea Brewing one by one, adding depth for the more experienced brewers and covering the foundations for those of you who are new to Tea.

At the center, we often teach that "repeat" is a dirty word. It is much better to say, "renew". The Sanskrit word for wisdom is "*prajna*". "*Pra*" means "before" and "*jna*" is "knowledge", so *prajna* is that which is before knowledge—the "beginner's mind" as it is often translated. When we think we know something, we shoot ourselves in the feet, crippling our ability to learn from the lessons all around us. The enlightened mind is humble, open

and receptive. There is an old Chinese saying that "everything which is not me is my master". When we dismiss things as "basic" we interrupt our learning, our humility and heart growth. We get in our own way. Our heads prevent our hearts from being fully present, from realizing that this lesson that is returning in our lives is a chance to renew our understanding. We miss the chance to deepen and refine our relationship to the foundation of our art and practice. This applies to Tea as much as to life.

We also often have the bad habit of assuming that mastery is an extravagant, difficult skill. Real mastery is in the simple. *Advanced techniques are basic techniques mastered.* In life, it matters little that we achieve exalted spiritual states if we cannot be happy in the simplest ways; if we cannot connect to this moment fully, it doesn't matter what *satori* we had in the past. And if we cannot connect heart-to-heart with the people, places and things around us, all the wisdom cultivated in meditation or at seminars is lost on us. We must brew tea with heart to master this art!

There is a great Tea story that expresses this: A man once walked across Japan because he heard that the great Zen master Rikyu was accepting students. After some time, he was allowed to study Tea with the old master. He worked hard and progressed. After about a year of study, he asked Rikyu: "Master, now that I have been here a year, would you initiate me into the essence of Cha Dao?" The master smiled, "Of course, I would have done that on the day you arrived... The essence of Cha Dao is this: draw the water, lay the coals, boil the water and steep the tea!" The man scoffed, "That's it?! I could have realized that at home!" Rikyu looked at him in askance, shaking his finger. "The day you can do that, I will walk across Japan and lay my head at your feet and call *you* master!"

With the right spirit of heart—knowing that the path from the mind to the hand travels through the heart—and a beginners mind, let us then return to the Five Basics of Tea Brewing, starting with the first: *Separate the tea space in half and do everything on the left side with the left hand, and everything on the right with that hand.*

A lot of the basics of tea brewing arise out of the need for fluency and remaining centered while brewing tea. Lefties are usually more centered, having grown up in a right-handed world. The rest of us, however, are often off balance in our daily lives. Our right hand is usually much stronger than the left, and we go about our day as though the left hand is some kind of evolutionary vestige, like the tailbone. Through Tea, we return to balance. We should be able to do every movement proficiently with both hands. This brings our whole body to the center, and the movements will then flow from our heart. We will be more present, more engaged and brew from the core of our being—the “*dan tian*”, as it is called in Chinese. This is the navel-point we breathe from when we are relaxed and focused. Using both hands will bring tea brewing to that space.

Being energetically and physically front and center to your tea and your guests promotes mindfulness. This simple aspect of tea brewing cannot be overestimated. There is a profound change in brewing with both hands, without swiveling from the center of your space. It changes the way you handle each implement, promotes dexterity and an availability to your guests.

In Asia, it is rude to turn your back on your guests when brewing tea. When you reach over the center with either hand, you will invariably lose your center to your

tea implements and turn your back on some of your guests. This is a minor reason for this principle, but it is important. By staying upright and facing the center, you will find concentration easier. You will also find it easier to connect to your guests, whether energetically if it is a silent tea session or in heartfelt conversation if you choose to have a discourse over your tea. Staying oriented towards the center honors your guests, showing that you are fully present to the moment.

The simple, most practical and maybe most important reason for dividing the table and doing all movements with the corresponding hand relates to protecting your teaware. In decades of tea brewing, the number one reason I have seen teapots, cups or other implements knocked over or broken (by beginners and advanced brewers alike) is reaching across the table with the opposite hand. If you reach over your pot and cups with the left hand to get something from the right side of the table, as you return to a centered position, the pot and all your teaware are now in a blind spot. Tea brewers are encouraged to wear loose-fitting and comfortable clothes, and if your sleeves are long, it will be easy for you to catch them on your tea cloth, tea tray or even the pot and knock something over. It happens a lot! If you try reaching across in this manner, you will see just how blind you are to the placement of things on your tea table.

You will have to practice using both hands in tea brewing if you are to achieve gongfu, which you know by now means “mastery”. This will require that you pass things from one hand to the other. Make a habit of this. It is always amazing to see this unfold in Japanese or Chinese tea ceremonies, as it inspires clarity, purity of movement and mindfulness/presence in host and guest alike. In Japanese tea rooms, for example, there is often a sliding door that the host goes in and out of to bring supplies from the back room. If you have the chance to attend a ceremony, or watch a video of one, you will notice that the host opens the door halfway with the left hand and then finishes opening it with the right. She then goes out and closes the door in the same way.

This month, try putting your hands together in a good Namaste over your heart. Then extend your hands together to the center of the table and commit to doing everything left of that line with the left hand and everything on the right with the right hand. There are, of course, many deeper levels to this practice that we haven’t covered here (like the movement of Qi in the body). We encourage you to renew this practice even if you are a seasoned brewer! As always, we are excited to hear your insights. Contact us with any ideas, comments, wisdom or questions: globalteahut@gmail.com



A BOWL FOR THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Wu De

In this article, Wu De shares some very important information about the future of this organization, so that we can all hold the vision of it to our hearts. In that way, we realize our dreams. We also promote a more responsible stewardship of the energy entrusted to us.

I couldn't think of a better way for us to celebrate the spring than a whole issue devoted to Tea community! Over the last few years, this global, mail-based Tea gathering has changed all our lives in some way. And for those of us living at the center of it all it has changed *everything*. From the heart, community isn't even the right word. Family is more like it—*soul family*. We've shared a lot of tea over the years, around the world and back to Taiwan, filling a burgeoning center with laughter, light, hugs and, of course, Tea spirit. What was at first an ember has grown into a bonfire. This is a big Tea family and it's growing all the time!

This year, we've already felt a big shift in energy, support and abundance. Things are going to change. More and more light continues to pour into this pot, steeping our dreams in possibility. It really feels like we're crossing the threshold where vision starts to have enough momentum in the physical world that you can look on and say with

confidence that it's really going to happen. There's always a stage where you can't be sure if the world will truly support your dreams. Deep down, I've always felt like it doesn't really matter. I am following my bliss, and if I spend the rest of my life traveling around and sharing Tea with beautiful people like you, it will be a marvelous life, even if I never get to see Light Meets Life built. But bowl after bowl, hug after hug, more and more I feel optimistic that I will.

We often talk in the center about how all our challenges are based on issues related to either structure or energy—Yin or Yang. I began this issue discussing how the last year has been about building structures that can support a larger Global Tea Hut. We often have to renew our contract with insights again and again. We learn through repetition. As many of you can attest to, I'm always teaching that you show the Universe that you are ready to receive something by creating the space in your life for it. It is how we show that

we are ready and responsible, receptive and open to an experience that will expand our capacity. Often, this means clearing unhealthy habits or energy to make room for new growth. And we've done that. It honestly feels like now, for the first time, we are truly ready to take the next step. The magazine has reached a new, bright design and layout, and we're almost ready to take it to a new level of professionalism through increased journalism, translations of Chinese texts and new and exciting teas to share. We've added a lot of cushions to this huge, twisting and curvy monkey-wood table, and we have the space for a lot more Tea brothers and sisters to sit down and share some bowls with us. It's time to invite them...

Some of you have been sharing Tea with us from the beginning. Your support has made all this possible. There isn't a day I don't feel overwhelmed with gratitude for your kindness. There is a very real sense in which I love so many of you—and I do mean personally—



more than I love myself. Sitting around this large virtual table of Tea, around the world, are some of the best friends I've known—people I'd sacrifice anything for. I have but to pick a direction and find my eyes moist with a real and true love. I often gaze to the North and imagine my Russian family sharing tea. I think of our laughter, giggling at the warmth and jokes we've shared. A bit further on, and I see an Estonian twilight. I see my old friends there sharing tea as the light diminishes in the cold and gloriously emptiness outdoors, though they're oh-so-warm inside. I can see Spanish and French Tea, and I feel the family there, too. I look South, down under the bottom of the world to smile at all my new Kiwi and Aussie brothers and sisters who are sharing Tea spirit. And of course, I often look to the East, across the Pacific, to my second home in L.A., where more memories and tea gatherings have been held than anywhere else outside of Taiwan... And that's just a summary, one that skips over so

many of the places I've been and the friends I've made through this amazing plant medicine...

With so many Tea brothers and sisters, I can't help but wonder what I did to deserve this grace. I don't know what to say about it, nor to all of you... It's hard to find a way of talking about how much I've learned in the last few years that isn't overly sentimental. I feel mushy and gooey. You've opened my heart, and done so to such a degree that a cheezy thank you card doesn't feel so cheezy anymore... Having expended my poetry, and because I just went to the Shire in New Zealand, I feel like quoting old Bilbo who also didn't know what to say at his 111st birthday, and so said that it had been a good life amongst such admirable hobbits: "I don't know half of you half as well as I should like, and I like less than half of you half as well as you deserve."

While so much will change in the coming years, we are very committed to keeping all these bonds alive; and to building Light Meets

Life on the same values that made us friends in the first place. Though our family is getting bigger, we won't ever let go of the need for real and lasting friendship. Our aim is to build a big center to have room for a bigger family, the way you move to a bigger house when you have the fourth child, so that they can all have their own rooms when they get older. If we lose touch with the community spirit behind building a new center, we will have spilled the very reason for building it in the first place! It's important to commit to keeping the personal warmth alive, and not just to affirm our principles to you, but also to remind ourselves as the work grows more intense. It's too easy for things to get impersonal when they grow beyond a certain point. But that is not what Tea is about. Tea is about heart space; it's about true and lasting fellowship. And that means that as we grow, we're going to have to find new ways of keeping a feeling of meaningful and personal community alive amongst those of us gath-

ered here, as well as the new friends we've yet to make.

As this vision starts to become real, we all need to hold it to our hearts in whatever way we can. I think it is important to articulate some of the changes that are coming, so that we're all on the same page. Before I sat down to write this article about Tea community, I knew that I would want to achieve these two goals: to celebrate this community as it is now, and with all the love I can muster bow in gratitude; and, secondly, to discuss our future. In order to stay focused and strong, and to keep a down-to-earth feeling based on real bonds, we will have to hold council at every step

of growth—most especially now, as we turn this corner towards a large center in Taiwan, and a much bigger international community as well.

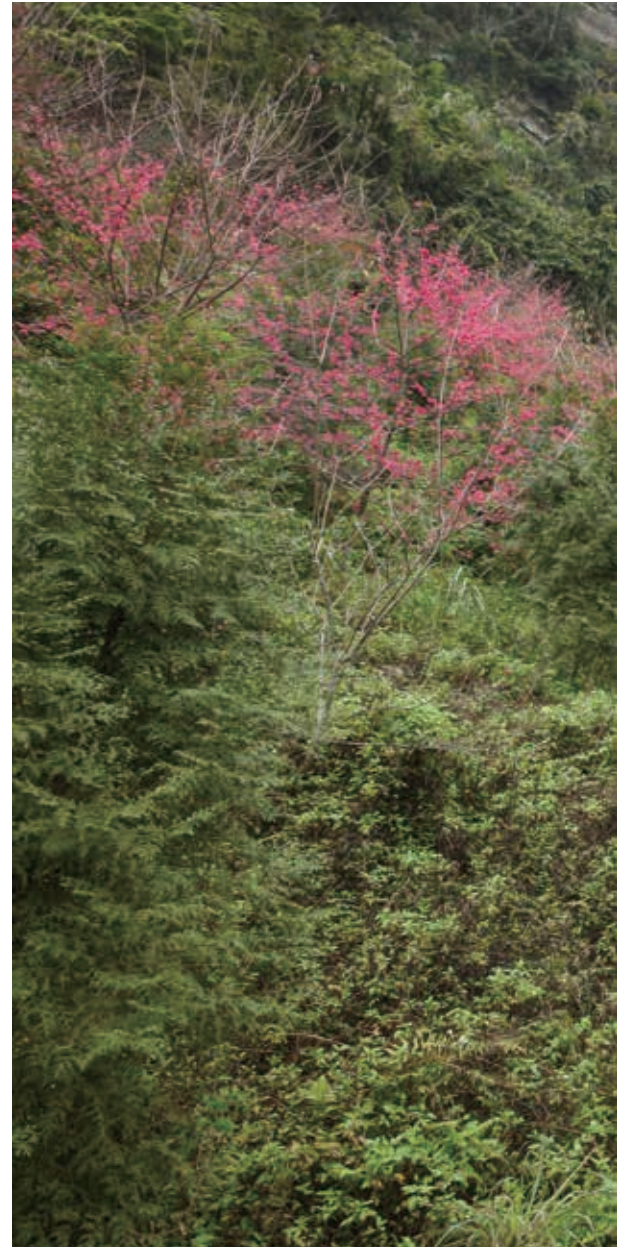
The New Center

It's important to discuss and share our visions of Light Meets Life, so that even at these early stages it can be more real and true for all of us. The more it takes form, the more energy and strength will build around it. Like a snowball rolling downhill, this vision will gather dimension and velocity, and the process of actually creating it will get easier and easier. More

important, such discussions are meant to include all of us—as each of has our own gifts and insights, and the more ideas and creativity involved, the better the new center will be.

It is important that we build a lasting center that is home to all of us, and to future generations interested in approaching Tea as we do: primarily as plant medicine and self-cultivation. Though the fundamental principles that govern our current center, Tea Sage Hut, will be as strong in the new center, there are still a lot of areas that we can improve and extend our creativity to explore ways to improve guests' experience while visiting us in Tai-

The land that was donated to us a few years ago. During the rains, the rocks below become a roaring waterfall. In the winter, the sakura bloom (right).



wan. We like to think big, envisioning a day when other centers are built in other places around the world, modeled after the Global Tea Hut headquarters here in Miaoli. Our new center will also be run on a donation basis, and never with pressure to donate a certain amount, or anything at all. Room and board, teaching and tea will all be poured freely, as they are now. We hope to continue much of the same schedule, rules and structure that we have now as well.

The physical layout of Light Meets Life still has a lot of room to grow. Basically, we hope to have two locations: a remote retreat center and a larger main center. The

retreat center will hopefully be more off the grid, and will offer very simple, rustic accommodations that are conducive to silence and meditation. We also plan to have a tea farm of Living Tea on site, with a small tea processing facility. None of this tea will be produced commercially, but rather serve as education for those wishing to get hands-on experience. We will let the trees grow up strong and tall, and seed-propagate large-leaf varietals (mostly for red tea production).

The main center of Light Meets Life will have three main buildings, surrounded by gorgeous landscaping of koi ponds, bonsai gardens, Zen rock gardens, etc. One building will

be a large meditation hall so that we can not only continue our daily meditation practice every morning and evening, as we do in the center now, but also hold monthly short retreats and annual week-long retreats. The second building will house the tea classrooms, storage and other kinds of tea rooms for classes, ceremonies, etc. The communal dining hall will also be in this building. The final building will be residences for guests. We imagine two floors, each with five guest rooms and private rooms for residents at each end. (There may also be other small residences on the property for long-term stay as well.) Each guest room will have



tatami mats with cushions so that 4-5 guests can sleep comfortably, each with their own closet to place their belongings. They will also have a private bathroom/shower and a small tearoom with all the teaware guests will need to have tea sessions in the free afternoons (much like the current schedule) or in the evenings/night after meditation. We imagine tons of tea sessions happening in different residences all the time. In this way, the new center will be able to house around ten permanent residents and up to forty guests on any given day.

The center will of course also have outdoor tea/gathering areas. We have plans for a bamboo grove for full moon sessions, a simple tea hut for whisked tea ceremonies and maybe a small amphitheater for social gatherings, bonfires or music on Saturday nights.

While all of this is just a vision at this stage, the feel of it is already very much alive at our current center. We have already sewn the seeds of this beautiful global community, and as they sprout and grow we get more and more of an idea what this amazing plant will look like when it is grown up. We encourage you to contribute to this vision in any way you can: donating money, telling others about GTH or brainstorming ideas for how the new center may look or run logistically. Also, don't underestimate how supportive it is to simply hold this vision in your heart, praying for the love, light and energy we'll need to build it! And pray that we all will be responsible stewards, guiding and building for the good of everyone involved now, as well as future generations of tea lovers!

My Role in All This

A discussion about roles we need to fill in the creation of this beautiful new center would exceed the length of this article, and much of what needs to be considered with

regards to all the roles various people will play in this organization is still ongoing. There is still a lot to figure out, in other words. What types of skills we will need to realize this dream isn't yet entirely clear. That said, I am certain about what my role is now and what it will look like as this all develops further, and that is definitely worth discussing as it can clarify the role I play now and will play in the future. There is nothing more important for a spiritual movement than to have the role of the teacher clearly defined and discussed actively amongst the community (*sangha*).

I have two roles at the present time, one as a teacher in this tradition and the other as the manager/leader of this organization. The

“There is nothing more important for a spiritual movement than to have the role of the teacher clearly defined and discussed actively amongst the community...”

future of the second of these roles is the easier of the two to articulate: *as soon as possible, the leadership of the Global Tea Hut, as a magazine, centers, communities around the world, etc. will be handed over to a council of people.* This has already happened to some extent, as all the residential volunteers here at the Tea Sage Hut contribute creative and organizational input and/or criticism (especially our beloved Shen Su). First of all, I lack many of the skills that are needed to grow this non-profit to full size, and definitely to lead it once it is much bigger. While I may sit on the council that decides its fate, I certainly have no intention to lead it myself. I am confident that we will have all the help we need, and that all the skill sets we'll need are to be found in this community of beautiful people. By having a

council control the decision making, we can not only bring many skills and ideas to the table, but also serve as check and balance to a more responsible stewardship of our resources—towards light now and light in the future.

My role as a leader of this organization will, therefore, be over as soon as possible, leaving me to play a role as a teacher. Over the next few years, I hope to appoint other teachers from amongst the students of this tradition. Some of them will work here at the center, helping to teach the increasing number of guests coming here all the time, which will expand once the new, bigger center is built. I have no desire to be the single teacher above others in this tradition—not any more than I have a desire to be the leader of this organization. Rather, I would like to be one teacher amongst many, working side by side.

There is an old Buddhist saying that if the students don't go further than the teacher, then that is not a very good teacher. I find great truth in reading that. I honestly believe that several of my students are not only better than I am, but that they are further along in their tea practice and self-cultivation than I was at their point on the journey. It's easy to see how they will soon surpass me. We often compliment Shen around here by saying that the center can obviously do without a Wu De (I travel often), but that it would never function without a Shen Su! And he is just one example of a student with a brighter future!

The primary thing my master taught me after transmission was that when any student came to learn, the first thing that I was to do was to show them my humanity. “If they want a golden Buddha, they should go buy one!” he would often say. One of the beautiful aspects of Zen is this acknowledgment that the relationship between teacher and student is temporary and provisional—temporary because the student must one day graduate,



and provisional because it has architected within it the deeper truth that the student doesn't really need the teacher, as the truth is inside him/her already. Like our relationship to Tea, we make a provisional relationship with one another based on respect, humility and discipline so that we can learn how to grow that energy towards a place where it is the force behind all our relationships.

The world often has a confused idea about what a spiritual teacher should be, arguing that the human/faulted teacher is "inauthentic"; that the "true" teacher should be absolutely pure and holy. But calling the pure, "enlightened" saint the "true teacher" means that many who are forced into that role are also forced

to hide their real selves in a back room—a room where such darkness festers and breeds. And then, over the years, the stories come out: stories about sexual misconduct, misappropriation of funds, or even stashes of guns. And the scandals that have resulted from such behavior have made many modern seekers leery of all teachers—skeptical and doubtful about the need for such a relationship at all. But I don't think that the real, authentic teacher is the "enlightened" one without blemish. I think that the true and authentic teacher is just the opposite of this. He or she is not above the rules of the community, even if he/she is the founder. Also, it is important for the teacher to never, ever be beyond reproach. On the

contrary, the teacher's dirty laundry should be aired in the community, so that the students and teacher can work towards a better relationship together. If you are expecting to come to Taiwan to meet the "holy Wu De" let me save you the trip: I am just a man, and much like you I have work to do. My backyard is nowhere near clean, and I am not above the rules of this center. I am also cultivating myself. I sit on the same cushion my students do every day, working it out together. Furthermore, *I cannot do anything for you*. You must work out your own salvation. I am just a guide who has some tools to help you do your work.

Personally, I celebrate that my teachers were all ordinary men,

trying to navigate the suffering of human existence with some grace and wisdom, compassion and light. I wouldn't want a pure and holy, "enlightened" being to be my teacher, because one such as that wouldn't know about all the trials and tribulations of working it all out. They wouldn't be skilled at turning dust into gold, let alone in teaching me how. I want a teacher who has been through it, and has some experience transcending it as well. Every good teacher is a good teacher because he/she is a good student as well! And I make mistakes all the time. If you don't permit your teacher to make mistakes, then how will he/she ever get bet-

ter at teaching? In forgiving me my mistakes and helping me to learn from them, my students are making a better teacher out of me, both for their future benefit and for the betterment of new students who will come here.



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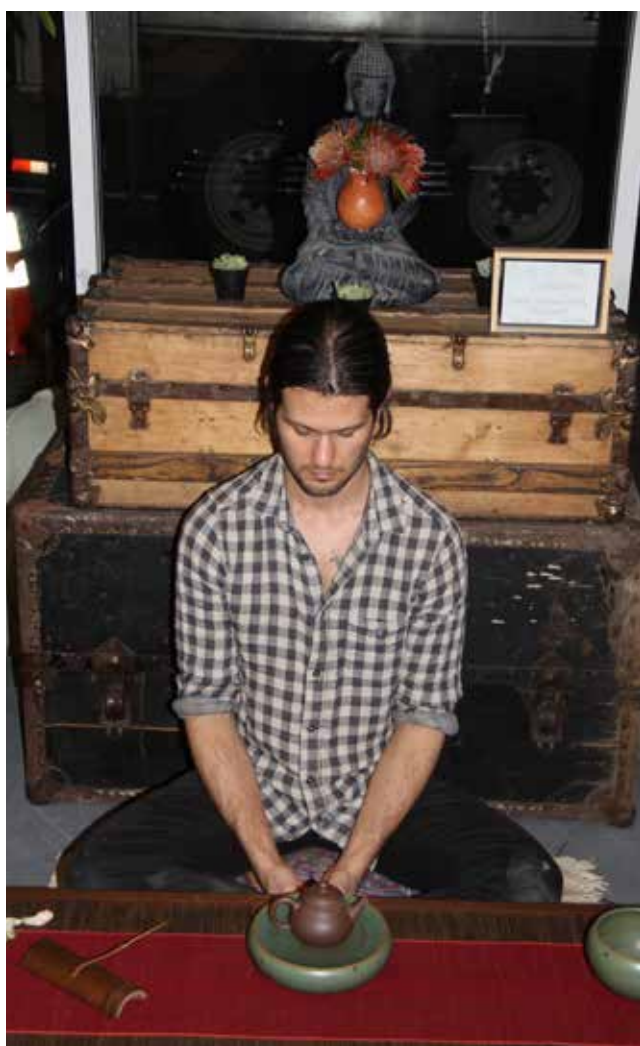
The Three Violations of a Teacher

T*o further clarify my role as a spiritual teacher, I thought I would share with you the three violations of a teacher that I avoid. They guide all my practice as a teacher.*

1. First, I think it is a violation for a teacher to set themselves up as an intermediary between Sacred and the student. In doing so, the student is then ill-equipped to experience the teachings themselves, or to evaluate their veracity. If the teacher is the go-between—the middle man—between the Sacred truth and the student, the student develops a relationship of reliance on the teacher. This is like a doctor who continues treating a patient despite the fact that she has shown no signs of actual healing. A good doctor should try to end visits as soon as possible, as that would mean that the patient's health was restored. Similarly, a spiritual teacher should aim for the independence of his students as soon as possible. I provide tools for communication with Sacred, and will consequently never have that communication on my students' behalf.
2. The second violation is wanting something from students. A teacher is a servant. He/she shouldn't want something from his/her students. The Dharma is priceless and has no charge. Wanting money, sex, respect or fame will only interfere with a teacher's ability to help his/her students.
3. The final violation I try to avoid is promoting any kind of mold that students should then try to fit, whether that mold is based on a copy of the teacher him/herself or on some idea from a *sutra* or scripture of what proper "spiritual" people should look like. I don't want to create a formula based on copying Wu De, nor based on any scriptural idea of what a student should be. Rather, I try to listen to each of my student's highest self. I promise to try my best to acknowledge the unique journey each of us is on, and to encourage each of my students towards their own personal fulfillment. Every being has a right to their own Buddha-nature, their own enlightenment. I truly believe that.



Wu De and Gangha: Teachers helping teachers mirror one another...



Left: Wu De giving a discourse at Tadasana Yoga Festival, 2012

Bottom Left: Alec meditating as an installation at Wu De's art show in Ethos, 2013

Bottom Center: A gathering in Ojai, CA, 2013

Bottom Right: Wu, Timo and Steve after great tea in Tallinn, 2012

Right: Hugs abound at the Hut, February, 2015



OPENING UP TO TOGETHERNESS

Steve Kokker

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—Sophie

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

—Herkko

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

—Timo

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

—Siim

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

—Triin

Tea in Estonia, 2013





THERE IS ALWAYS A BOWL WAITING HERE

Max Raphael

We offer Tea to the altars at just about every session. In part, this is to celebrate aspects of our tradition and honor wisdom, compassion or other Divinity. But there is another reason we do this as well...

Tea is connection. This bowl of tea, held in my two hands, connects me internally and externally. My senses awakened, my attention drawn inward, I gain permission to slow down and find my center. All the same, I can simply glance up from this stillness and see a brother or sister across the tea table, to whom I am also connected. After we finish this bowl and before the next one is poured, all our bowls come back together to receive the tea as one bowl. As a resident student at this tea center, it is a true gift to meet so many of you who travel to our center, and share so simply and deeply through this tea tradition. However, if you have not made it to our center, you may like to know that you are still a part of our life of Tea. Our hearts open to you again and again in a very real way. When we say we raise our bowls or cups to you wherever you are, we truly mean it!

Every day or two at our tea center, we take a pause during our tea session to brew some tea not for ourselves, but as symbolic offerings to both within and beyond our-

selves; to our own Divinity we wish to make space for, and to each of you, our community of Tea brothers and sisters across the world. It is a beautiful ritual that arises from our daily tea sessions. After a few bowls are shared in silence, the brewer places a special tea cloth on the table, used specifically for this ceremony. At this moment, the students rise from the tea table to gather the cups that sit at each altar. After they are carefully rinsed and cleaned, the cups are placed upon the tea cloth in a circle, and a fresh steaming pot of tea is poured into them. With dedication, intention and care, each cup is taken, one by one, and placed back on its altar as an offering.

These altars are dedicated to various deities or aspects of Divinity, relevant to our practice of Tea and Zen. These figures include the Buddha in our meditation room and Kuanyin, who watches over our tea sessions in the main tea hall; *Milafa* (Laughing Buddha) brightening our Gongfu tea room, and Tea legend Shen Nong in our main hallway, inviting us to feel rooted in Great Nature. Upon each of these

altars rests a unique teacup, along with the traditional offerings of fresh flowers and fruit, incense, and light. The presence of these altars is not a sign of any religious affiliation here at our center—after all, there are deities from many different spiritual traditions watching over each space. Instead, their role in our daily life here is more universal and accessible. They are vehicles through which we continually cultivate humility, presence and gratitude. Bowing before the Buddha, I bow to the stillness and awakening in me. In offering this cup of tea not to myself, or even another person in the room, its potential becomes infinite. Its expression can reach far beyond this tea space, as far as my mind will allow. And while maintaining the beauty, purity and cleanliness of these altars has its own significance with respect to our internal practice of Cha Dao, the ceremony of offering tea to them also carries another intention—an act that welcomes each and every one of you into our hearts on a continual basis.



You may have read these words in previous issues: “at our center there is always a cup of tea waiting for you”. This is not simply a symbolic gesture or saying, but a living expression. In the true spirit of Tea, we commit to continually opening ourselves; opening our doors, our home, and our hearts to let others in. The life and breath of this center is not found in any abundance of tea on the shelves, or teaware in the cabinets; it is lived through our sharing of each moment together, and in giving of ourselves to others. This tea, this bowl, are mere material things without someone to share them with.

I place this cup on the altar before Buddha or Kuanyin, but I also set it out for you. These cups, which are not yet drunk, signify that a cup of tea is always waiting for everyone still on their way to visit us here. Whether we are joined by just one beautiful being at the tea table or several wonderful guests, we remind ourselves that, beyond these walls, our family is ever more vast than we can see in any given moment. This is easy to remember once a month, when addressing hundreds of envelopes to carry this magazine across the world. But we remember our connection with you throughout the month as well, seeing you reflected in the cup of tea that warms our hands and our hearts. Each week, we receive the gift of meeting more and more of you as you make it here to our center and share in this community. It is a unique joy to live our days together in the spirit of Tea, and I hope you are able to welcome this experience more and more, wherever you are. This cup of tea I place on the altar is dedicated to awakening my higher self, my own Buddha nature... But it is also to prepare for your coming here, whenever that day might come.

Whether you are planning to come here in the near future, or haven't thought the least of it; whether you reside in the Americas,

Europe, Australia, or Asia—you are every bit as connected here at our tea table as you can imagine. The presence of this magazine and its continual growth are evidence of this connection—and surely, if you have visited us here, you might not have imagined two years earlier that you would find yourself at a tea center in Taiwan!

This cup that won't be drunk transcends the physical, and becomes an offering made purely of intention. From there, it is only our imagination that will define its reach

in time and space! Just as we pause and place our hands on the Global Tea Hut envelopes of those we know, sending love and *metta* before they are sent out, we close our eyes and invite each of you into our minds and hearts, as we put forth this cup of tea. Of course, we don't want you to arrive and drink *this* cup from the altar! But this practice is very real inside us, connecting us each time to the true essence behind a life of tea, which is ultimately of sharing ourselves, our own awaken-



ing and wisdom, and holding space for others.

Without believing in some sort of 'magic' behind this ceremony, there is an obvious energy you can feel when seeing a gathering of steaming cups on the table that no one in the room will drink. For me, it is a physical reminder that the tea we brew is not *our* tea. This center, which indeed we call home, is not only *our* home. It is always open to you, as are our hearts. Joined together by the Leaf, we are ever warmed with gratitude for each and

every opportunity to share our lives together. Until we do so in person, know that I raise this cup of tea to you...



茶碗永在



THE SIXTH BOWL COMMUNITY & SERVICE

Shen Su

Continuing his discussion of the Eight Bowls of our tradition, Shen aptly discusses community and service. We always say that we are here not to learn how to make tea, but rather to serve it. This bowl arrives at the perfect time, indeed.

Joyously, we receive now the sixth bowl of warming tea. This next bowl invites us to reflect on the tea sessions of long ago... Glancing into its depths we see spiritual communities sitting in circles and passing weathered bowls from hand to hand—*sangha* that lived and worked together and supported each other as an organic unit. Looking up, we take notice of just how intently and carefully this very bowl was placed on the table. We remember the importance of effort and sacrifice, without which this bowl would not lie steaming before us. Though it is true each bowl is the first and last, the next sip reveals a continuation of all those tea sessions long ago, until the present one...

Our tradition is based on service. We don't learn how to *make* tea, but how to *serve* tea. Everyone has a different capacity to serve. In order to be of service, we must also take care of ourselves. To the degree that one is healthy is the degree that one can serve. To strive for personal health, which is an ongoing journey rather than a fixed point, is to strive for an increasing capacity to serve others. That is the only reason to seek mastery of Tea in this tradition. The aim

is to recognize the inherent harmony between guest and host. And where would we be, as the host, without a guest? That's where community comes into play, which is why it is one of the Eight Bowls of Tea *and* one of the three main principles of this tradition. Keep in mind that as a guest at the tea table, you play an important role, for without the guest, whom is the tea to be served? How can students learn to serve tea without guests? In that way, the guest is also of great service!

As I write this article, I do so in the company of my Tea family. As a band of brothers and sisters, we can accomplish more than any one of us alone. And as someone with a great deal of responsibilities on my plate, I bow deeply to these beings before me, without whom I could not accomplish the important tasks required to maintain this tea center and help it thrive. More and more, I marvel at our growing global family and at the things we can accomplish with just a few more sets of hands to help out. Output isn't simply doubled when another person offers their help. Working together is more enjoyable and family-oriented. Accomplishing more in a shorter

period of time is only a byproduct of having more help within a community, not the reason to seek more help. The quality of the work is far more important. This global family can only live and thrive as a unit. No one student or teacher could have accomplished this alone. There is a huge amount of accumulated energy behind this movement...

I'm sometimes asked what it's like to serve so much all the time as a student here at the center. The answer I give is easily understood in discussion, though very challenging to experientially assimilate, especially from a Western perspective where complete dedication to others is not a common practice. I am by no means suggesting that I have the capacity at this point to fully offer myself over to service. I, and everyone else here, still have lots of personal work to do. The ironic thing is that serving others is often the highest form of self-cultivation. Putting others before me resolves all my personal issues, at least for a time. In stepping outside of mind-made obstacles, I then have the space to reflect on the wonders of life. And how nourishing it feels to be a force of service for others. Isn't



that what families are for? However, when trapped in the muck of my own drama, it can seem impossibly challenging at times to lay that muck down for the sake of another. For how can I, in this moment of my “crisis”, help another? But when that day comes, and I find the courage to set down the egoic drama I’ve entrapped myself in, and instead set down a bowl of tea for a sister in need, the real internal work begins. It’s an act of letting go of that which separates me from others. What stopped me from helping another was dropped and replaced by something that brings us closer together.

In those moments of letting go and going out of your way to help someone in need, you have invited this bowl into your life. In extending your hand and offering a bowl of tea in the true spirit of sharing, you have established a connection known all too well to Tea. Never underestimate the power in sharing a simple bowl of tea! It might not be easy at first, and in fact probably requires a little teeth-clenching to do it (putting others first, not making tea!), but as the Buddha inside you awakens, more of these challenges will be overcome and met

with joy. Overcoming a challenge doesn’t necessarily mean getting rid of it either. Sometimes it’s about welcoming it into your life, working with it, and shifting your perspective on the matter to bring about constructive change.

Another important tool for inviting this bowl into your life and thus increasing your capacity to serve is through *dhana*. This means giving away or donating. For me as a student here, that means donating time, energy, money and any resources at my disposal for the sake of this place and the community. Participation and volunteerism are some of the most important forms of *dhana* in this community, especially during these exciting times of change and growth! Even just supporting us through word of mouth and sharing simple bowl tea goes a long way toward an amazing cause! Obviously, being a GTH member is already a great form of *dhana*. It is often recommended to students that we choose the amount of *dhana* we are comfortable offering and then offer a little more on top of that, so that it stings—just a little. In this way, we push ourselves outside of our comfort zones for the sake

of community. The beautiful thing about *dhana* is that it both supports all members of the community now as well as into the future. We give not out of obligation, but out of a desire to share the same experience we had with future generations as well.

One final thing to remember, with respect to communal living and healing is that all those around you act as your mirrors, giving you the most important feedback to gauge your spiritual progress. They will mirror your strong and weak points if you pay careful attention. Bow deeply to them, for they are reflections of aspects of yourself. Should you find in your life abundance, health, laughter, compassion, strength, mental clarity or smiles on the faces of those you meet, then take it for granted that you’re progressing along the way!

In community, we find strength and support, example and leadership. Together, we can achieve much more than any of us alone. GTH is one such shining example of what a strong and supportive group of individuals can accomplish together, nurturing the seeds of awakening, one bowl at a time!



Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It'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 share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month we would like to introduce Sabine Schalk:

In June 1962, my German parents named me Sabine Schalk. When I was very young I felt attracted to Asian philosophy and yoga. Since then, I studied several arts like Shiatsu, Reiki, Qi Gong, different kinds of massage, life-coaching, sound therapy and Asian art itself. I lived in a yoga community for ten years where I served as a yoga teacher and therapist.

Since 1994, I have lived in Spain, near Malaga. Every morning when I wake up, I thank the beautiful landscape around me, including my beloved 2068m-high mountain and the lake before it. My husband Gleb and I share our house and garden with our students, where we run a "Tao Center", which is our yoga teacher school.

Several times in my life I got in touch with Cha Do, the Japanese Way of Tea, and since 2011, I have developed a profound daily practice. My teacher of Cha Do lives 600km away from my home, so you can understand why I don't have as many classes as I would like. I always ask Master Rikyu's spirit to guide and teach me when I do my practice at home. And he often asks me to do a movement again and again, until it is done well and gets into my cells.

Being on the Way of Tea, the question often arises, "How did your love story with Tea begin?" I remember when I was sixteen years young, many tea shops in Germany opened and my mother, a friend and I were invited weekly to try another tea. Later, around twenty-three years young, I went to India, and the deepest experience I had in seven weeks of traveling around was in a very simple tea hut. I was sitting on the earth. There was a fire burning and a humble Indian man made a wonderful chai for us... "What is in this Tea?" I asked, wondering: "Is it the same that can be found in a kiss? Is it Love?"

Last year I discovered *Caj Chai* tea shop in Barcelona. Do you remember Antonio Moreno? He was a tea wayfarer one month as well. He's created an atmosphere of Tea that I really love!! Some months later, I met Wu De in the same tea shop in Barcelona... And now I am sitting here in Miaoli sharing my story with you...

Let me tell you about the tea we had with Wu De this morning! He used a side-handle teapot and served puerh tea. Being in silence we were guided, cup by cup, into a deeper connection with the spirit of Tea. I love



so much when the steam of the tea comes up, creating a mystical atmosphere. Suddenly I was aware that the steam was not only water transformed, but also transformed Tea! So Tea was in the air—or was it Love? The steam went higher and higher, blending in with the clouds, coming back to us and Nature...

Here at the center, everybody is putting his or her heart into living as a *Chajin* (philosophy and spirituality expressed in daily life). The meditation in the morning and in the evening is a great gift that brings us nearer to our true nature and oneness. I love the time we spend in silence and deeper conversation as well.

So now we have shared this time together and you have listened to my story. I'd like to serve you a "cup of tea". Would you like some? Please relax, breath deeply and calmly and enjoy this present moment with me....

Namaste

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Inside the Hut



In Los Angeles, there are Global Tea Hut events every Thursday at 6 PM and Sunday at 9:30 AM. To reserve a spot, email Colin at livingteas@gmail.com. The community in LA also has a new meet up page: (<http://www.meetup.com/Los-Angeles-Tea-Ceremony-Meetup/>).



In Barcelona, Spain, Global Tea Hut member Antonio holds tea events each month at Caj Chai Teahouse. Contact him at info@cajchai.com for more info.



In Moscow, Russia, there are frequent tea events. Contact Tea Hut member Ivan at teeabai@gmail.com or Denis at chikchik25@gmail.com for details.



In Nice, France, GTH member Sabine holds regular tea events at the Museum of Asiatic Arts. You can email her at sabine@letempsdunthe.com.



In Melbourne, Australia, Lindsey hosts Friday night tea sessions at 7/7:30pm. Contact her at lindseylou31@gmail.com



In Tallinn, Estonia, *Chado* tea shop holds events most Friday evenings at 7 PM. Contact events@firstflush.ee for more details. Also, Timo Einpaul and Herkko Labi both hold small weekly tea events in their homes in Tartu, Estonia and Tallinn, Estonia (respectively), on Wednesdays at 6 PM. You can email Timo at timo@sygis.net and Herkko at herkots@gmail.com.



In England, Prabhasvara (Nick Dilks) holds regular Tea events all around the UK including a weekly Tea Club in Birmingham. For more information, please contact him at livingteauk@gmail.com.



In Almere, The Netherlands, GTH member Jasper holds tea events every 4th Tuesday of the month at 7:45 PM. Email him at hermansjasper@gmail.com.



Center News



Before you visit, check out the center's *new* website (www.teasagehut.org) to read about the schedule, food, what you should bring, etc. We've had a big increase in our number of guests lately, so if possible please contact us well in advance to arrange a visit.



Our gongfu sets will be available this month. Check the website and stay tuned if you are interested in getting one of these limited treasures! They are a box of rare Yixing teaware along with some Qing Dynasty cups!



Wu De will be in San Diego and LA for the first three weeks of April. Check the La Meetup site above for some details on events.



The center will be closed from April 18 to May 18 for our annual GTH trip and all the work that goes into and follows it!



Have you read Wu De's latest book, *Tea Medicine*? Please leave a review on Amazon if you have!

MARCH AFFIRMATION

I am a part of a loving community

*Do I share love with my local community?
Is my home/town a place others want to
visit, knowing they will be received in love?*

*I loved you before we met,
Before the bowl told me,
"Through Tea make friends!"*

