



# Global Tea Art

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE  
April 2015

寺廟薄霧

"TEMPLE MIST" GREEN TEA  
WU DE 'S TRAVELS SOUTH  
BACK TO THE BASICS OF TEA





## TEMPLE MIST

Sometimes it is important to return to the basics of Tea, strengthening the foundation. This month we're sharing a simple green tea while we read through a montage of important fundamentals to Tea. As an added bonus, we've asked some of the people involved to tell us all about Wu De's recent trip to New Zealand & Australia!



3

## FEATURES

- 09 LOOKING INTO THE DRAGON'S WELL
- 17 LIVING TEA
- 23 TERMS OF APPRECIATION
- 25 TEA TURNS SOUTHBOUND
- 33 THE SEVEN GENRES OF TEA



9

## REGULARS

- 03 TEA OF THE MONTH  
*Autumn 2014 Green Tea*  
*Wu Liang, Yunnan*
- 15 GONGFU TEA TIPS
- 39 VOICES FROM THE HUT
- 41 TEA WAYFARER  
*Justin Polgar, USA*



25



## LOVE IS CHANGING THE WORLD BOWL BY BOWL

© 2014 by Global Tea Hut

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from the copyright owner.

寺廟薄霧

# Letter from the Editor

In April, the weather really starts to warm up in Taiwan and we head outdoors to enjoy the sun. The first teas of the year start being harvested at this time as well. It is a time of waiting for the rains to come and this year's puerh and *Yancha* to come in May. We will have three or four amazing Light Meets Life teas coming this year, which makes this one of the most exciting years at the center!

Many of you are already serving tea in your communities and meeting up with each other regularly, and in the last year we have even had some members traveling to visit distant members and share tea together. That is inspiring! We hope to find ways to encourage and facilitate such fellowship. Let us know if you are interested in hosting monthly Global Tea Hut gatherings to share each month's tea with others in your area, whether they are members or not. We'd be happy to publish your tea sessions in the magazine and on our site. We are also looking into developing an online map or another form of community page that allows Global Tea Hut members to connect to each other and maybe post information, like what they think of this month's tea, for example. If you have any other ideas for connection through Tea please share them with us!

We would also like to announce a photography contest. Send us your best pictures of you making tea—alone or with friends, in Nature or at home—and we will choose some winners to receive a free month of Global Tea Hut for a friend. We'll also use the pictures in the magazine, of course, highlighting your contribution. Also, feel free to write an article. Over the years, we've published dozens of articles written by this community, and many of them are amongst the best to have blessed these pages. If you are aspiring to write about Tea, write an essay, article or even a poem and we'll share it somewhere!

We have three or four really amazing teas this year: an amazing ancient tree sheng puerh, two old-growth red teas from Yunnan (*Dian Hong*) and a great shou brick. This is the third year that we have sold puerh cakes transparently to raise money to fund the building of Light Meets Life. The previous two years have been huge successes, thanks to all of you! We opened up donations at a minimum, and so many generous souls gave more, allowing us to feel confident enough to produce even better quality teas this year and in larger quantities as well. In this way, we will have a large savings towards your future center by the end of the year!

This issue has some amazing articles about some of the fundamentals regarding tea, tea production and preparation. We thought it would be nice to have a



*Wu Ji*

whole issue devoted to the important fundamentals that we often touch on in our writings. Many people are new here, and even the seasoned reader will take joy in finding all these principles printed in one place! We try to repeat some of the important information about kinds of tea, what Living Tea is and other aspects of tea brewing now and again, but here we'll explore each one in detail, so you can have a lot of the essential foundations of tea knowledge as a reference. There is always more to learn and refine. Remember, *advanced techniques are basic techniques mastered!*

In that vein, we plan to work towards a greater cataloging of past issues, so that in the future information, terms, ideas and Tea wisdom will all be searchable. As this magazine reaches several dozen issues, we feel the growing need for a searchable database so that you can find information easily. Returning to the basics every now and again helps us to remember to stay humble and cultivate the beginner's mind. In that way, we never forget how much we love Tea, and why we're all here in the first place!

There are some great travel pieces in this issue as well. I've included my trip to Hangzhou last year. And the inspiration from our trip to New Zealand and Australia still lingers. Though some of the accounts of our time there are expressions of gratitude for me coming there, the truth is that it was the Tea, always Her...

# AUTUMN 2014 GREEN TEA

Wu Liang, Yunnan

*Green tea is the simplest of all teas, and sometimes it is such brews that remind us why we fell in love with Tea in the first place. We are excited that we can herald in the spring the same way the emperors once did, sipping green tea!*

**G**reen tea is one of the purest kinds of tea, and the least processed. It is often a Chajin's first love—the Tea whose aroma carries us to the places where names like “Temple Mist” and “Dragonwell” make perfect sense. Green teas often taste of such vistas as well, recalling clear stream water singing over stones, forest pines, or sometimes the lightest fragrance of a flower caught on the breeze, though not for long enough to identify... There is a magic in these light aromas, and in the uplifting Qi that often sweeps us up off our cushions. Sometimes it is nice to return to our roots, remembering Nature through perfect fragrance. The freshness of green tea also reminds us of the weather, though it is often great when it is aged, too. Let us all celebrate the poetry of tea fragrances this month, as we stray into old dreams of bright leaves floating around a cracked bowl...

The official beginning of spring in ancient China was the day the emperor sipped the first cup of the first flush of green tea, heralding the arrival of the Lunar New Year as well. Preserving the freshness is the key to all green tea processing. This is done by intruding but minimally.

The two most important aspects of green tea production are reducing the withering/oxidation as much as possible and shaping the leaves in a way that suits their nature, color and fragrance.

Green tea is lighter than other teas because the processing is minimal. Plant cells have thick walls, and so without cellular breakdown, the tea does not release as much of its essence. It is impossible for tea to be processed without some oxidation; it begins oxidizing the moment it is picked. Also, the water content of fresh leaves is too high to process. If you fired or shaped such tea it would break, being brittle from the water in the leaves. During the trip from the field (or forest if it's Living Tea) to the processing area, the tea naturally withers, losing moisture and becoming soft enough for processing. Ideally, green tea should be processed quickly, on the same day as plucking.

Traditionally, the best green teas were made from buds only. It takes tens of thousands of buds to make one *jin* (600 grams) of such tea. The buds can also be processed with less oxidation, retaining more of the essence of the fresh leaf. They are also young and Yang in energy,

which contributes to the magic of green tea. Over time, a greater demand for green tea has led to many kinds of green teas that are combinations of buds and leaves, or even just leaves. In many instances, such blends or leafy green teas are inferior quality. But as green tea has gained popularity, more regions are producing it and using many different varieties that weren't traditionally used in green tea production. Sometimes, depending on the varietal and terroir, a leaf/bud blend can actually be better than just buds, adding depth and Qi to a particular green tea. Our tea of the month is a good example of this, as we will soon see...

Though we love green tea, we don't often get the chance to share it here in Global Tea Hut, because it is a genre of tea that has less Living and/or organic representatives. As you know, we only share Living Tea or organic plantation tea (or the middle ground we discussed in the November, 2014 issue, which we call “ecological garden tea”). In China, green tea accounts for more than 70% of all tea produced. It is the drink of the masses—often tossed in glasses at restaurants to be slurped with noodles, in tea bags or

bottled teas, etc. Just about every Chinese person drinks tea daily, and since almost three-fourths of it is green tea, this has created a very, very large demand. As a result, most green tea in China is mass-produced on large plantations, and in a way that is destructive to the environment. Though rows of “pretty” green tea bushes rolling over the hills may look nice in a photo (we don’t think so), it is actually the result of mass deforestation and a loss of ecology to millions of species. Monoculture just doesn’t work, and it isn’t a sustainable way to support agriculture for the population we have on the Earth now, let alone into the future. When you add to that the agro-chemicals that harm the land, eventually ruining it fallow, and the

run-off which harms environs in the valleys around the tea mountains—all of that puts green tea production/producers up amongst the worst agriculture for the environment.

While there are plenty of inspiring Living Teas and/or organic plantations in all the seven genres of tea, we find that there are much less great examples of such teas in the genre of green tea. But we promise to find them and share them in the spring and summer, when such tea is the most pleasing to drink (for most climates, anyway). As we do so, and as this global community grows, we can use our voice to support the growing trends of sustainable, healthy teas of all genres!

There are many ways of processing green tea, based on local varieties of leaf and terroir—especially if we include the mastery of tea production handed down generation to generation within the umbrella of what “terroir” is. Remember, “terroir” is a French word that is generally used in discussions of wine, but it is so applicable to tea as well that most tea lovers have adopted it into their discussions of the Leaf. *Terroir denotes the special characteristics of a place, found in its geology, geography, climate and even cultural heritage which interact with a cultivated plant species to create unique expressions.* Terroir is the soil and weather of a particular region; the geography and culture of the people and their relationship to the plant,

### Pre-Qing Ming Tea

In the Chinese lunar calendar, Qing Ming (清明) is an important holiday. It usually falls on April 5<sup>th</sup> each year, though it wavers like the moon. The highest quality spring green teas are often Pre-Qing Ming (明前茶). The leaves that sprout just before this time are more tender and sweet, often with less bitterness and astringency. For that reason, they are valued in the market as the highest grade of green tea. The next highest grade is that which is produced a couple weeks after Qing Ming, which is called “Pre-rains tea (雨前茶)”. The buds from this flush are also often tender, but not as much so as Pre-Qing Ming teas.

With climate change, agrochemicals and other human influences, much of the meaning and premium of “Qing Ming” is lost nowadays. Even leaving aside the many fakes, different regions have very different terroirs, which means different qualities of tea. Also, what is valued by the mainstream is often based on different standards than the tea lover has. Sometimes we value the energy (Qi) of the tea more than the flavors, especially when viewing tea as medicine. And all of this does not take into account the changes that have started due to climactic fluctuations and agro-chemicals, especially chemical fertilizers, which change the time and manner that tea bushes flush with buds.





and even the microorganisms and their interaction with the plants. Every place has a unique soil composition, pH, minerals and climate—all of which create a distinctive tea. When we talk about a tea's terroir, we are speaking to the unique environment that created it, one which couldn't be reproduced elsewhere. Even if you took a grafting of a tree and cloned it elsewhere, it wouldn't be the same since the sun would be weaker or stronger, the soil composition different, etc.

Whether or not the green tea is all buds, bud-leaf sets or just leaves will also determine how it is pro-

cessed. The basic kinds of traditional hand-processed green tea are: pan-firing, basket firing, oven baking and steaming. With the introduction of modern machinery, however, many of these steps have changed. Pan-firing to arrest oxidation and de-enzyme the tea, for example, is often done in large, heated tumblers nowadays. Our tea of the month was pan-fired. Steaming tea is only done in Japan, which is how they arrest oxidation/de-enzyme their tea. The result is the dark green color of Japanese teas, as well as the bright green liquor and distinct flavors such teas offer.

(Some of you have been around this Hut long enough to remember the gorgeous Japanese Sencha Steve Kokker donated some years ago!)

Most Chinese green tea will spend some time in a tumbler nowadays, as farmers are dealing with a volume that exceeds what they can handle. This arrests the oxidation and helps kill bacteria/mold on the fresh tea, often before a partial pan-firing, basket firing or oven baking. After this step, the tea is shaped/rolled, especially if it contains leaf-bud sets or just leaves. Sometimes, the firing/baking and rolling/shaping will be repeated



until the tea is dried, and the desired shape created.

There is great skill in processing green tea, since it is so simple. Sometimes we assume that mastery is in the more refined of the arts, but it is often the simplest things that take the greatest effort and skill. Great chefs don't need to cook with tons of spices all the time; they can also bring out the natural flavors of ordinary ingredients in unexpected ways. We once had a vegetarian chef stay at the center and he cooked up the carrots we eat regularly, only they tasted somehow more "carroty" than usual! They were delicious.

And it was carrots, oil and salt—nothing else! Similarly, green tea at its finest is an expression of simple tea leaves as they are in Nature: bitter, astringent with a transforming sweetness that lingers on the palate. And the simplicity shines when a green tea is good, like ours this month!

### *Tea of the Month*

Temple Mist is a beautiful and very special green tea from the highest peak of Yunnan, Wu Liang Mountain. Some of you may

remember that one of our 2013 Light Meets Life sheng puerh cakes was from there. Wu Liang Mountain is really a chain of mountains and hills in Puerh Prefecture. Since tea from there is not as popular as other regions of Yunnan, much of the area still remains pristine and pure. There is a lot of great puerh, red (*Dian Hong*) and green tea produced there every year.

Our gorgeous Temple Mist is certified organic (JN Organic Certification). It is unique because it is produced from large-leaf varietal trees (*Camelia sinensis var. Assamica*). We find that the big-leaf trees,



which may have some age, lend the tea a bit of Qi and depth that is often missing from most commercial green teas these days. It is also much more ‘patient’, which means you can steep it many, many times. Temple Mist is also processed beautifully. Big-leaf tea leaves are more bitter and astringent than the small-leaf varieties usually used in green tea production. That, along with processing, is why most young sheng puerh is bitter and astringent. But Temple Mist transforms beautifully, starting out with bitterness and then immediately cascading through the five flavors of tea (bitter, astringent, *gan*, sour and sweet) to leave a long lasting and coating sweetness in the mouth. This means it was processed well. Tea lovers should grow to love the bitterness in Tea. After all, Tea is a bitter herb!

This batch of tea is known as “*Mao Feng*, 毛峰”. It is a high grade of green tea picked when it’s just a few days old. *Mao Feng* is picked as one-leaf-one-bud sets, which are all covered with downy hairs. This makes the flavors milder with floral and fruity notes. The lasting sweetness reminds you of spring water from the mountains, bringing lasting satisfaction. Though it is an autumn tea, Temple Mist is still fresh and strong. Because of Yunnan’s tropical climate, green tea has more than one season and they aren’t as different in green tea terms as they are in puerh, though they do vary. The autumn version tends to be milder and calmer, with a bit more balance of Yin in the small Yang bud sets. Spring tea, on the other hand is very Yang. We like the balance. Anyway, we received this

tea before the spring harvest, and are very grateful to have it and share it with all of you!

We named this tea Temple Mist because of its transporting and uplifting nature. And the Qi wavers and pulses, as a temple would seem from the mountain path below—as you hike up the old stairs, you catch glimpses of it through the morning mists. You truly need poetry to describe the sensations of drinking a fine green tea! We know that you will enjoy this herald of spring, which hopefully accompanies a dramatic shift in the weather where you are. For most of us, it is a change towards warmer, longer days—days that are more inspired with some gloriously green leaves unfurling in their warm waters...





*A day left behind,  
Forgotten on the mountains  
And the inner temples there.  
Winding stone stairs  
Appear and disappear with the mists  
Like all dharmas,  
And Shariputra too...*

*Remembered ages later,  
In these bowls of jade leaves.  
There's no need to go looking.  
He isn't at home...  
The master's gone tea-picking—  
Cloud-hidden  
Whereabouts unknown.*

— Wu De

寺  
廟  
薄  
霧

### *Brewing Tips for This Month's Tea*

Since this is a large-leaf varietal green tea, you will not find more gorgeous tea leaves on this planet! And that means that leaves in a bowl is the penultimate brewing technique for this tea. Even if you save some of this delicious tea to be brewed in a pot later, please be sure to put a few leaves in a bowl and add some steaming water; we implore you. You will be rewarded by one of the greatest joys a tea lover can know: watching gloriously jade green leaves open before your eyes, sipping radiant and true Nature. The dancing green leaves will bring you endless enjoyment! Of course, all tea is beautiful, opening up before our eyes in a bowl, but this is as good as it gets visually. The fresh, floral aromas are very nice, too, especially wafting up from a bowl held at heart level!

You may want to try using slightly cooled water for this brew. Fine green tea like this can withstand very hot water, as we have discussed often in these pages, but this tea is nice with cooler water. You can bring the water up to Fish Eye and let it cool off the fire for a minute or so before spinning the leaves around the bowl. You can use this cooler water for the first three or four bowls and then slowly increase the temperature over the next few steepings, noticing how the heat gets deeper into the leaves. At that time, the bitterness will transform into mineral flavors with the lingering sweet aftertaste of good spring water. Such bowls are beyond words!

# LOOKING INTO THE DRAGON'S WELL

Wu De

*Hangzhou has been a mecca for tea lovers for a long time. Wu De went back there for a day last November, after many years. He made a determination to travel with Tea spirit in his heart, allowing us a kind of double vision of beautiful West Lake: one eye open to the outer world of modern China, and the other turned inward towards the spiritual lay of the land, as seen from a heart of Tea.*

While we are sharing a beautiful organic green tea this month, I thought I would share about my trip to Hangzhou last autumn. Tea lovers have journeyed to West Lake for hundreds of years to enjoy Dragonwell (*Long Jing*, 龍井) tea under all the willows that dance to the breezes of the scenic lake. It is a treasured vista indeed, and immediately inspires poetry and nostalgia for lost ages of Tea: times when long-robed sages played chess and discussed the Dao, as small boats lazed on the lake, floating as if with nothing to do... One of the sages shakes his long sleeve back from his wrist, moves a piece and smiles triumphantly at his comrade. With two gentle hands, he sips from a bowl with bright, jade-green leaves floating on it. Through

the steam that surrounds his face, he says to no one in particular: “the Dragon flies light and low this year.” His friend casually agrees, dismissing the distraction to concentrate on his chess stratagems, perhaps sipping his own tea, though never taking his eyes from the board and pieces...

It is almost impossible to take a trip to West Lake and not feel nostalgic for times lost, feeling the vibrant thrum of Chinese culture which has left calligraphy on top of paintings—lost palimpsests for the explorer to riddle out. There are hints of other times all around. Without that, a trip here would be lost on me. I have no interest in the superficial tourism that covers everything, and only find a trip here rewarding because I see with my naked eyes the many lives that have

lived here and loved Tea in these surrounds. I feel keenly their passion, art and the lore they have left over everything like teaware rings on an old teahouse table. As I go around and visit all the tourist traps, like the Dreaming of Tiger Pawing Spring and the eighteen original Dragonwell bushes, I find myself quite naturally lapsing into reverie. I feel old here. My mind drifts in and out of legend, and I smile at the end of the day. Exhausted and riding a way-over-packed bus to the way-overcrowded train station, I feel it is a day well spent. And also, at the same time, grateful it is but *one* day...

There are many legends that surround the tea from here. The tea's name, Dragonwell, comes from an old tale of drought that was destroy-



ing the land ages and ages ago. The villagers traveled to a magic well at the top of the hill, beneath Lion Peak Mountain (*shi feng shan*, 獅峰山). Farmers had seen magic swirls in the depth of the well, and believed it to be connected to the great underground sea where the kingdom of dragons was to be found. They offered the dragon king their prayers, and promised to return every season if he would grant them rain. The dragon king heard their prayers and sent forth a great blue dragon to shake the sky with thunder, bringing much-needed rain to the area. And the tea was called “Dragonwell” from that day forward...

Dragonwell is said to have become an Imperial Tea in the Qing Dynasty when the great emperor

Kangxi’s grandson Qian Long, China’s most famous emperor, visited West Lake and drank the tea. Qian Long loved Tea almost as much as he loved leaving the Forbidden City in disguise, having many legendary adventures during his outings. And being a Tea lover, many of them have to do with tea. They say that the tapping on the table to say thanks for a cup of tea, for example, comes from bowing to the disguised emperor when he was sharing tea with ordinary people. On one trip, he went to see the monks at Hu Gong temple in West Lake because he had heard of their marvelous tea. He fell in love with the green tea from the original eighteen bushes and conferred them imperial status. They say that those eighteen bushes still live today, though locals ques-

tion their authenticity. Still, the tea from those old trees does glimmer with energy, and is auctioned off for quite a price whenever they are cultivated.

### ***Eighteen Grandfathers***

I visited the eighteen trees and sat and drank some unclean Dragonwell in the café there, feeling nostalgic after a long day strolling by the willows that surround West Lake and later admiring the tea fields in the hills. I asked several locals about organics and was met with quizzical looks. One café owner said that “Yes” her tea is organic, “We only spray pesticides in the spring and now it’s autumn!” The eighteen old bushes themselves were definitely clean, though, and worth admiring.

Many of the locals I passed said that they weren't the original trees, and had been transplanted there more recently to invite tourists. It was hard to tell if there was any truth in this, as most of them wanted me to sit in their café and buy their tea rather than traveling to the old bushes further down the road.

### **Modern Contemplations**

I contemplated how a lot of Chinese historical sites are rebuilding and repackaging themselves to attract a new kind of tourism based on nostalgia. It often seems as if the aim of rebuilding has nothing to do with recreating the original sites, most of which were destroyed in the Cultural Revolution. Rather,

the focus of construction these days seems to be about how to inspire nostalgia and cultural identity in modern Chinese tourists so that they buy tickets. Obviously, a man living here in Hangzhou during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) wouldn't have to stop on a given Tuesday and admire his queue hairstyle, long robes or traditional furniture, with a hand on his hip proudly thinking, "Yep, I'm Chinese alright!" He didn't need to *feel* Chinese; he *was* Chinese! Nowadays, globalization and the years during the Cultural Revolution have resulted in a modernized China. Like most places in the world, Chinese mainly wear Western clothes, use cell phones and eat a variety of foods. They decorate their homes in many styles, and with more and more variety as

they join the global economy and the quality and standards of life improve. When you add to that the fact that a whole generation of Chinese was raised without their own history or culture, it's no wonder there is a market for things that make one nostalgic—for a feeling of connection to heritage and history.

Despite the often plastic and shallow aspect of repackaged culture, much of the nostalgia for ancient/traditional Chinese culture isn't lost on a sinophile like myself. I sat above the gorgeous eighteen trees, surrounded by a beautiful garden and drinking my mediocre tea, and strayed into another time... I imagined hiking up trails where there are now roads with a gourd-full of spring water and heating it over a small fire. I could see myself



meditating in the temple here with the monks, and saw in my mind a montage of leaves dancing into bowls, covered in steamy water and jade swirls as the flat green leaves floated around and under the swirling water. I stroked my beard in a kongfu movie way, and smiled at the old trees—they seemed to be in on my secret.

Legend has it that the flat shape of pan-fired Dragonwell also comes from Qian Long. He wanted to try his hand at tea processing, but during the harvest, a messenger ran up with word from the palace: his mother had fallen ill. He quickly stuffed the magical leaves into his coat pocket and raced to Beijing. Back in the capital, he brewed the green-jade for his ill mother. She was quickly healed, as people always

are by Tea in such stories. They say that the flattened shape of Dragonwell is in honor of that handful of leaves that were crushed in his pocket on the journey.

I have written often of old Qian Long. I imagine him sneaking out, drinking tea he shouldn't be preparing himself in some nook of the palace, and sometimes even have visions of him hanging around laughing and drinking with the cooks and dishwashers in the palace kitchens. Such imaginations seem very Zen to me, and make me feel warm inside. In honor of my old tea brother, who still inspires so many artists, poets and Chajin worldwide, I picked a few buds from the old trees while nobody was looking and put them in some paper in my pocket. Sure enough, they were flat

a few days later when I tossed them in a bowl and reminisced about my trip to West Lake...

## *The Tiger Spring*

After the eighteen trees, I headed down to the Dreaming of Tiger Pawing Spring, which is often mistranslated as the Tiger *Leaping* Spring, because 'leaping' and 'pawing' are homophones in Chinese (*pao*, 躍 and *pao*, 爬). There are two springs nowadays, and a controversy over which is the authentic one. The more public one is full of tourists, while the other is quieter. I drank some tea with both and found the water to be about equal. The more famous spring comes up out of an underground source, pass-



---

*Left: The original eighteen bushes of Dragonwell, said to be centuries old.*

*Right: The waters outside the Dreaming of Tiger Pawing Spring, which matchmakers married to Dragonwell tea long ago*



ing over minerals and quartz crystals to lend it power and breadth that is good for Tea. This water has been paired with this tea for centuries. I imagined myself coming here when it was just a spring in the forest, having just picked and processed some fresh spring Dragonwell with my own hands. What must it have been like to drink that tea? *Uplifting* and *clearing* are the sentiments that come to mind, as I sit drinking my own watered-down version, ignoring the kids camping and tourists clacking photos.

The spring gets its name from the monk Huan Zhong. He was traveling and looking for water when he finally passed out, lost and parched. In his dream, an immortal told him that two tigers would soon come and rescue him. He awoke to find two tigers peacefully resting at his feet. Due to the immortal's words, he was not alarmed and stood up, brushing off the dust. The tigers began playfully prancing down the trail, leading the old monk onwards. Eventually they took him off the trail and up a slope to a small clearing. They began pawing at the ground until crystal spring water rushed out of their hole. The monk bowed to the tigers, which roared and lept off into the woods...

Many people wait in line for hours at the spring's bottom to fill plastic jugs and bottles, once again projecting a modern drear over an otherwise scenic hike. But I'm impressionable. I sit with a glass of Dragonwell floating in some spring water I fetched and heated myself (for a small fee to the café) and find a nice rock in a corner of the park that is uninteresting to others. I can feel all the tea lovers who have loved this water. And underneath all the pollution—of modern industry and tourism—Mother Earth's song is still audible to me. It takes a real Tea lover to turn a trip to these spots into something meaningful and rewarding. But if you do love Tea as much as I do, it isn't that hard.

There's a lot of Tea energy around to inspire and reward you.

The temple here is also the burial spot for one of my favorite Zen monks, Li Xiu Yuan, better known as "Ji Gong". He lived in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279). According to legend, he was a champion of farmers and simple peasantry, who still have shrines honoring his image. He has taken on the airs of a Daoist immortal to them, with stories of supernatural powers and the same eccentric manners as most Daoist sages: he's one of the well-known Zen rascals, whose misbehavior simultaneously causes one to cringe, giggle and also realize profound truths about the limitations of any one approach to Sacred. I said some prayers for him—one rascal to another—and left to stroll by the lake one last time in the dying light...

If you ask me if it is worth braving the noise, crowded buses and over-full tourist traps brimming with kitschy, post-modern nostalgia to pay homage to the Dreaming of Tiger Pawing Spring and the eighteen original Dragonwell bushes and then brew them together, I'd say yes. But that is only because I am a dreamer. The West Lake itself has a natural charm that transcends the modern, so it is easy to recommend Hangzhou itself to those traveling in China. It's not that I don't see the inorganic, unsustainable tea and the tourism that surrounds it as a call to change. I do. But while there, I made a heart-commitment to breathe, transcend and travel mythically—to travel with both the open eye and the half-closed one. It's a combination mystics are famous for...

*For double the vision my Eyes do see  
And a double vision is always with me  
With my inward Eye 'tis an old Man grey  
With my outward a Thistle across my way...*

—William Blake

# 探 進 龍 之 井



## CIRCLE TOWARDS THE CENTER

Wu De

*Now and then, it is important to return to the basics. 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.*



Last month we began a new series of articles on the Five Basics of Tea Brewing, remembering that the simple and the advanced are just spirals on the same circle. *Advanced techniques are basic techniques mastered.* There is never a time when we graduate from the basics or leave them behind. They are always the foundation of our practice, and it is therefore important to return to them every now and again to renew and refine our understanding. Only in continually checking that the foundation is secure can we safely add another story to the building. In fact, it is smart to thoroughly check the groundwork every time one considers adding another floor—to make sure the structure is sound and can hold the added weight! More often than not, the best tea sessions are held on the ground floor anyway.

Though these five pillars of tea brewing are applicable to all tea practices and brewing methods, they are paramount to gongfu tea. The only difference is that other brewing styles, like leaves in a bowl, end at the Five Basics of Tea Brewing, while gongfu tea, on the other hand, builds on them—exploring more refined techniques and sensitivity as

well. Still, they are as important for a gongfu practice as for any tea practice.

Last month we explored the need to separate the tea space down the middle and do everything on the right side with the right hand, and everything on the left with that hand. This keeps us centered to our guests and to the tea space. It also promotes a more balanced tea brewing, involving both hands and arms, and stemming from the core. Breathing in and out from the center of our being and bringing the tea movements from that space adds a lot of dimension to all tea, most especially gongfu tea, where the movements are more involved and refined. There is a kind of Qi Gong to tea brewing, and bringing the energy up the legs and out through the arms via our center is important to the alchemy of tea brewing, especially as spiritual cultivation. We also talked about not turning our backs to our guests, as well as the practicality of protecting our teaware by not reaching across the table with the opposite hand, thereby putting our teapot in our blind spot when we come back to front and center. That is the most

common way I have seen teapots get knocked over these many years!

Now we can begin to explore the second basic, which is very much based on the first. A lot of movements in tea brewing are circular—not all, but definitely the majority, especially in gongfu tea. The second Basic of Tea Brewing is: *in circular movements, all movements of the left hand are clockwise and all movements of the right hand are counter-clockwise.*

This aspect of tea brewing is almost completely to do with the ergonomics of our bodies. Another, perhaps simpler way of remembering how to do circular movements with each hand is *towards the center.* We move our hands in circles towards the center because it is smoother, cleaner and much more comfortable. When we move either of the arms in outward circles our elbows clack against our bodies and the circular motions become awkward and forced. It is very difficult to move in this way, uncomfortable and far less fluent than spinning towards the center.

The second, deeper reason for moving towards the center when making circular motions pertains to

energy (Qi). When we move in this way, the Qi in our bodies flows differently—from the center (*dan tian*) towards the kettle or pot. If you are more sensitive, you will feel this just by sitting in a chair and spinning your hands in circles towards the center. The difference in energy flow is obvious. Try placing your elbows out and holding something as heavy as a kettle and/or pot in each hand (it's not a good idea to practice fast with teaware, especially at first). Next, spin your hands in outward circles and then switch to circles that come in towards the center—clockwise for the left hand and counter-clockwise for the right. Do you notice the difference in smoothness on a gross level? And can you feel the energetic difference? Does the energy from your breath, from your core, move out your arms in a different way? Is it any wonder that movements in Qi Gong and Tai Chi also often follow this pattern?

The next experiment is, of course, to see what effects this has on your gongfu brewing. We suggest an experiment with just two cups and a kettle. Bring the water to a boil and lay out two identical gongfu cups. For this experiment, some wider, more open cups may be better. They will make pouring

easier, and the water will also cool down quicker. Since it is coming right from the kettle, the water may be hotter than you are used to. Like with most gongfu tea experiments, it is best to use simple porcelain cups—plain white if possible... Hold the kettle in your off-hand. Hold it with your index finger running down the handle, which offers more control and guidance. Using the index finger as a guide—gently pointing down towards the spout-facing curve of the handle—will allow for more support and precision in pouring. Remember what we have discussed in previous issues about *placing* the water as opposed to *pouring* it into the cups. That will be especially important in this experiment. *Place* the water into the first cup in gentle circles that spin outwards, away from the center. Then, *place* the water in the second cup in circular motions that move in the correct direction according to the Five Basics of Tea Brewing—*towards the center*. Try to only pour on the walls of the cup, so that the water flows gently down into each cup.

Even if your cups are wider, and therefore cool down faster, you still may need to wait a bit for them to cool down if you are sensitive to hot

water. Otherwise, you might burn your mouth. It is actually never a good idea to blow on tea, as it distorts the energy, flavor and aroma. For the purpose of this experiment, that is especially important. When the water is cool enough, hold each cup in one hand and try drinking from each one in turn. Do you notice a difference in the smoothness and consistency of the water? Is one more or less structured?

No matter what your results with the water experiment, you can try practicing gongfu tea by pouring water from the kettle or tea from the teapot in outward and inward-facing circles. See which direction feels more natural and fluent, and what, if any, effect it has on your tea. In fact, you can repeat the above experiment with tea, pouring from the teapot into two cups—one for each direction of circular motion. If you do so, be sure to use your elbow more, allowing the circular movement, and thus the pouring, to come from there. As usual, we are excited to hear about your insights: [globalteahut@gmail.com](mailto:globalteahut@gmail.com)



# LIVING TEA

Wu De

*In these magazines, there is no single term you will see more often than 'Living Tea'. It is a central teaching to all we know, practice and promote about Tea. In this excerpt, adapted from Wu De's new book, we learn about the six characteristics of Living Tea. In that way, our tea journey takes off on the right foot, and we can resource this important teaching anytime.*

We call it “Living Tea” for obvious reasons: it lights you up, and your every cell feels alive, moving to the sway of the Tea dance. What we mean by Living Tea, though, is *real Tea*—Tea that is grown in the old ways. The first ever puerh advertisement to be translated into English had a bit of language in it that is actually quite deep, and we keep an antique copy in the center for that reason. It says: “This Tea is far more powerful than anything made by the hands of man...” In our tradition, there is Living Tea and... well, *not* Living Tea. And that is the most important criteria for choosing tea, though the issue is a bit more complicated than that, as we will see later on...

## *Seed-propagated*

There are **six** main characteristics of Living Tea, each as important as the other. The first is that it is *seed-propagated*. Tea is a sexual plant, which means that it is

cross-pollinated. A tremendous amount of natural energy goes into the creation of a Tea seed, including bugs and forest, sun and sky. Each one carries great energy within it. And no two Tea seeds are alike. They will each produce a completely unique Tea tree, which is why Tea has done so well traveling to different climates. If you plant a thousand seeds, the chances that one of them will survive are high. Unfortunately, very little Tea in the world is seed-propagated. The reason, of course, is industry and the commoditization of Tea. Sadly, Tea faces many of the problems that all agricultural products are haunted by. Most Tea plantations use cuttings from a tree, planted to produce another. They are in essence clones. Producers do this to achieve a uniformity of flavor. Also, with a few hundred, or even thousands of different trees, all with different needs, the farmer would potentially have a lot more work to do.

It took millennia for trees like Tea to develop sexual cross-fertil-

ization. It is also tremendously difficult for such trees to fertilize one another, since the mates cannot move towards embrace the way that animals and people can. As a result, plants have developed magnificent ways of fertilizing each other, enticing insects to pollinate them, using the wind, etc. There is a reason for all this. Carl Sagan said that the evolution from asexual to sexual reproduction on this planet was as significant as the beginning of life itself, as it allows for all the creative power in Nature to assert itself in such myriad forms. There is something deep and powerful missing when a plant is not allowed to cross-fertilize. The variety in Nature is magic, just as in humans. Every tree is then different. Sure, they share some similarities due to common genetic heritage and similar terroir (climate, soil, etc.), but like people they each have their own medicine, their own perspective, experience and wisdom.

The difference in power and healing between seed-propagated and cloned Tea is obvious. There



are essentially two main varieties of Tea trees: what are called “big leaf trees”, which are the original, oldest Tea trees (which we’re drinking this month). They have a single trunk, grow very tall and have roots that grow downwards. As Tea moved north it evolved into “small leaf trees”, which are more bush-like. They have many trunks and roots that grow outwards. In fact, the leaves got smaller and smaller as Tea moved north, whether naturally or carried by man, until you get to Japan where the leaves are so small they look like needles after they’re rolled. Now, big leaf tea trees can live thousands of years. The oldest one we’ve dated is 3,500 years old! It is about seven people around (I kissed it, and once for you). There are probably older ones out there, or at least were in the past. Small leaf tea trees can live hundreds of years, and some are many centuries old. Here’s the punch line: The clones on plantations typically live thirty to fifty years only. And more than a few farmers have told me

that they aren’t living as long anymore, sometimes as few as fifteen to twenty years, mostly because they are ripped out when their yield decreases.

There are several species of birds that love to eat Tea seeds. They are rich and oily and full of nutrients. Farmers make cooking oil out of them. It’s delicious. Recently, farmers have told me that after the second generation of cloning, the birds will no longer eat the tea seeds anymore.

### ***Room to Grow***

The second key factor in Living Tea is ***room to grow***. All living things need ample room to grow. How could you be healthy in a small box, or worse yet, trapped in a crowd of people for the rest of your life? Tea trees are no different. They need space between trees to extend their roots. In Taiwan, there are seed-propagated gardens that were abandoned for seventy

or eighty years in Sun Moon Lake (Do you remember we drank that tea together months ago?). When people started tending them again, the tea trees had organized themselves—and not in nice neat rows, convenient for maximizing output. They knew that certain parts of the land were more nutrient-dense and could support more trees in a cluster, while other places didn’t have as rich of soil and the trees needed more space, more roots and room between each other. Nature knows how to organize Herself, and was doing so long before we arrived. It’s not broken or fallen, and our meddling doesn’t fix anything.

Tea doesn’t just need lateral room to grow, but also room to grow up towards the sun and extend its crown. This is essential, for a plant biologist once told me that every plant has an unknown ratio between its roots and crown. We can’t measure that ratio, but it’s there (actually we could, but it would be different for every tree). And when you cut the crown, the roots will shrink

accordingly. We've often discussed in this magazine that Tea is such a special plant because it has a very complex, deep root system that absorbs energy (Qi) from the mountains where it grows, bestowing many unique trace elements onto us.

On commercial plantations, the trees are all crammed together so close they are competing with each other for the limited resources of the mountain. And then they are pruned, never allowed to grow up strong and healthy. The reason is, of course, to increase yield by making picking easier. As with other agriculture products, it's usually a quantity over quality methodology. This sharp contrast is felt not only in the fields, but in the bowl as well.

## Biodiversity

The third aspect of Living Tea is *biodiversity*. There is an infinite amount of connections and correlations between all the living things in any environment, and as we are learning to our detriment, meddling with certain elements of the web affects every living creature on the web, including ourselves. And this is precisely what Tea is supposed to be helping us to heal, as we awaken our harmony to Nature.

There is a famous man in Japan named Masanobu Fukuoka who should be canonized, in my opinion. He did a tremendous amount for Asia, and the world, teaching people sustainable agricultural techniques, creating organic certification and many other important projects. He studied biology in college, and went to spend his life serving Mother Nature. He has a quote about biodiversity that I like. He said, and I am paraphrasing, "When I was in college, I had a professor who always used to say that philosophy and religion have no place in the world of science. One day, years later, I was walking in a field of barley and I realized that *science has no place in the world of barley!*" There are just

too many connections, from the weather to the insects and from the insects to the microbes—too many factors for us to know how they all relate to each other, except to say, "This Tea is far more powerful than anything made by the hands of man..."

I heard a story that somewhere in the Great Plains the Indians used to say that 'When the prairie dog barks, it rains'. When the white people came, they thought that was superstitious nonsense and started killing what they considered to be pests: they dig up your lawn, and potentially can cause damage to the foundation of a house;

---

*"When I was in college, I had a professor who always used to say that philosophy and religion have no place in the world of science. One day, years later, I was walking in a field of barley and I realized that science has no place in the world of barley!"*

—Masanobu Fukuoka

---

and they have no apparent role in the local ecology! When the Natives warned them that if they killed the prairie dogs, it wouldn't rain, they laughed. Sure enough, after they'd killed all the prairie dogs, the land grew more and more desert like. As it turns out, the soil in that region needs heavy aeration, without which the grass and trees can't grow. No grass or trees and no precipitation! The prairie dogs were aerating the soil, and their role *was* key. In fact, if you are wise, you'll see that the *prairie dogs are the rain!*

The relationships between the insects and the snakes, the soil and the bug poop, the microbes and the fungi are just as complex as the make-up of our bodies—maybe

even more so. And there's no super computer(s) on earth that can come close to the complexity of a zygote, organizing millions of cells as the animal forms more and more complex systems in the womb. Furthermore, even if we could figure out how to control all the facets of an environment for agriculture, why would we want to? Nature has been doing it way longer, and always provides better for us. This mysterious web of interconnection creates an ineffable difference between Living Tea and plantation Tea.

## Chemical-free

The fourth characteristic of Living Tea is the most obvious of the six, and the easiest to discuss: Living Tea is, of course, grown *without the use of any agrochemicals*. The triad of pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers are bad for the environment and the health of the farmers and consumers. The tea trees that survive from chemical fertilizers do not receive nutrients from the mountain. They are like patients in a hospital surviving on intravenous lines—take away the fertilizers and they die. Since tea is grown at the top of mountains, these chemicals also run down and harm other ecologies besides the farm. And included in their poisonous effects are the lives of the farmers and their families, who are exposed to these chemicals in heavier doses. Many of the greatest proponents for organic farming are the loudest advocates of organic farming because they or their families were harmed by agrochemicals. Such tea is not sustainable and not good for the future prosperity of this planet, not to mention that it defeats the point of Tea as plant medicine.

## No Irrigation

The fifth characteristic of Living Tea is that it *not be irrigated*.

When you irrigate tea trees, you can have more of them on a plot of land, but they never reach down deep with their roots. Instead, the roots stay near the surface. By not irrigating, and letting them find water naturally, they will dig down deeper—as far as they can, depending on the mountain and the rock bed beneath them. Some trees will die, but this will help with the ‘room to grow’ factor mentioned above. The ones that survive will have deeper and stronger root systems, which means more minerals and energy from the mountains. Some tea trees can dig roots very

deep, down to the geothermal heat of the mountain, drawing rich minerals, water and heat up into their systems, which of course produces much more medicinal tea leaves...

### ***Relationship***

The sixth and final characteristic of Living Tea has to do with the ***conversation between people and Tea***. After all, as we’ve discussed so often, Tea was made to be human. It responds to us. In Chinese, the character for Tea has the radical ‘man’ in it, suggesting that Tea as we drink it

is a dialogue between Man and the Plant Kingdom, represented by the radicals for ‘grass’ or ‘plant’ above and ‘wood’ below. The nature of that conversation is therefore incredibly important to the quality and life of a tea. Is it about money and greed? Is it about love and healing? Does the farmer even talk to the trees at all? Is there respect in their conversations? These are the vital questions when creating a so-called “living” or “dead” tea. If you asked a real lover of Tea when he picks his tea, he would say: “When it is ready to be picked.” The amount is also up to Nature.

### ***Living Tea is about:***

- I. Seed-propagation***
- II. Room to Grow***
- III. Biodiversity***
- IV. Chemical Free***
- V. No Irrigation***
- VI. Relationship***



In Yunnan, there are 3,500-year-old cave paintings of people making offerings to Tea trees. The people wait with grateful and open arms beneath the Tea trees, bowing and with reverence taking what Nature gives willingly. Nowadays, however, we busy ourselves telling Nature what we want. The plantation owner demands that the land give him 500 kilograms a year, and he won't settle for less. If the trees don't produce, he simply tears them out and replaces them with other clones. And of course, Mother Earth gives and gives to her selfish sons and daughters, giving in love Her last drops of life—even if it means Her own death!

The agriculture problems we face in the world are easiest understood in an analogy that will take us back to our English grammar lessons in high school. I know it's funny, but bear with me... If you remember, there are countable and uncountable nouns in English. Countable nouns have a singular and a plural—one duck, two ducks, one bowl, five bowls, etc. And uncountable nouns have no singular or plural, like “water” or “flour”. Traditional farming was always countable. In the small, aboriginal villages of Yunnan, for example, the people keep pigs (plural, countable). During the day, the pigs wander about the village and at night they come home. And no one ever argues over whose pigs are whose, because they know their pigs (plural, countable). They know them by appearance: “The one with the white spot on the shoulder is mine”; and they know them by personality as well: “The one that always sits up on his rump is mine.” (All real examples, by the way.) But nowadays, pig farming is uncountable: It is just a huge room of uncountable *pork*! Nobody knows or cares where one pig begins and the next one ends. There is no respect for the individual beings (plural, countable), just a mass of uncountable *flesh*. Of course, Tea also suffers in this way.

Traditionally, Tea trees were allowed to grow up and grow old. They provided medicine for generations of people. Imagine how you would feel about a cluster of apple trees in your family's backyard if they had provided all the food, shelter and clothing for your family over the last fifteen generations! If your last name was Wu, you'd better believe those trees would be more Wu than you are! They fed your great-great-great-great—grandfather, after all. Many of the ancient trees were given names, and often worshipped. For the first few thousand years of Tea drinking, Tea wasn't even domesticated, so finding it was always about seeking out wild Tea made by Nature.

---

***“Tea was made to be human. It responds to us. In Chinese, the character for Tea has the radical ‘man’ in it, suggesting that Tea as we drink it is a dialogue between man and the plant kingdom, represented by the radicals for ‘grass’ or ‘plant’ above and ‘wood’ below.”***

---

Respect for the Earth and Nature, and a desire to treat the trees as givers rather than commodities is an important part of what makes up Living Tea. Raping Nature for profit can't create medicine to align us with Nature.

Living Tea is seed-propagated, has room to grow, biodiversity, no irrigation and a proper relationship with those who tend the trees. It all sounds incredible. Unfortunately, Living Tea also has one serious problem. Do you see it?

The problem is that there simply isn't enough of it. If all the Tea in the world were Living Tea, there wouldn't be enough. Millions of people would go without tea. I don't

want that. I hope you don't, either. And that means compromise. This is, in the end, the age of compromise. (If you didn't want to compromise, you wouldn't have incarnated in 2015!)

Compromise means we also have to have some plantation tea alongside Living Tea. It means less room to grow, some pruning, irrigation, less biodiversity (though hopefully still some); it also sometimes means cloning. But that's where we must draw the line! We can't compromise any more than that. The plantation has to be organic. Full stop! When the trees are put too close together and in competition with one another, they can't afford to have other plants around, so most industrial plantations kill all the undergrowth (and rather than picking it, they use chemical weed-killers, of course). Most insects don't prefer to eat Tea, but will if you kill all the other plants in the area. And then in come the pesticides. Tea likes loose, gravel-y soil, but the pesticides compact the soil, which means chemical fertilizers.

A more important issue related to inorganic tea is this: how can you sit in a nice Tea room and connect to Nature when the thing you're using to connect was made in a way that has harmed Nature? Even if you do connect, the only message you'll get is, “Help!” All of the medicinal value of Tea is gone when it is grown out of harmony with Nature, Spirit and life on this earth. Tea helps flush out the toxins from our bodies, and more importantly our hearts, and always has done that for people. But how do you flush toxins with toxins?

What was the reason we said we wanted to compromise and have some plantation tea anyway? That's right, so that everyone can have tea. Inorganic tea doesn't fulfill that, however, and so isn't a compromise worth making. Inorganic tea produces a larger quantity of tea in space, but not in time. It provides us with a huge yield now, but it isn't sustainable. Eventually, such planta-



tions will go fallow. When I said I was willing to compromise so that everyone could have tea, I meant *everyone*, and that includes future generations of tea drinkers. I want my children's children to have Tea as well!

It is important for us to remember that complaining isn't a solution. The farmers are the first victims of these chemicals. One of Taiwan's greatest proponents of organic Tea does what he does because his father died of pesticide poisoning and his brother has cancer. He was spared because he was too young to

work on the farm at the time. Now he grows Living Tea. Similar stories can be found elsewhere, too. We move forward through inclusion, not exclusion, through education and positivity, rather than negativity. Help promote what's positive and learn from what's negative, in other words. Obviously, the word "organic" and organic certification have some problems. Not all organic farmers can afford certification, for example. But such a system and ideology is the best solution we have so far. As more people become healthier and awoken to a harmony with

Nature, Self and each other, we'll be able to create new and better agricultural systems that recognize our connection to the land.



# TERMS OF APPRECIATION

## Tea Basics

**T**here are some very useful tea terms that tea lovers use to communicate aspects of mouthfeel. In looking for these sensations, you will improve your sensitivity. Of course, such terms can also be misleading if you focus on their meaning rather than trying to feel the actual sensation in the mouth. It is enough that you feel something, in other words. You don't need to be able to articulate it, just understand the basics of what you are feeling for now. These terms will help you explore mouthfeel:

- 1) Kou Gan (口感):** This translates as “mouthfeel”. It refers to any of the sensations we experience when drinking tea. It points more to sensation than flavor, and most all the following terms are parts of “kou gan”.
- 2) Gan (甘) / Hui Gan (回甘):** “Gan” is a coolness or minty-ness that fills up the mouth, a bit like breathing outside on a very cold winter day. (This is a different “gan, 甘” than the “gan, 感” in “kou gan”, discussed above. The same word with different tones occurs in tonal languages, to the confusion of us foreigners.) It also sometimes refers to sweetness with a fragrance that travels on the breath—cooling the mouth in this way. We say a tea has “gan” when it stimulates the mouth with such a freshness. With “hui” there is a “remembrance”, borrowing from the literary term “to reflect”. This means the sweetness rises up from the throat after the tea is swallowed. It lingers, in other words.
- 3) Hui Tian (回甜):** This term is a clarification or distinction made to separate the cool, freshness of “hui gan” from a sweet fragrance arising from the throat. When the sensation is accompanied with a predominate sweetness, we call it “hui tian”.
- 4) Nai Pao (耐泡):** This literally translates as “patience”. It refers to how long a tea can be steeped; how many infusions can be had from the leaves, in other words.
- 5) Sheng Jin (生津):** This refers to a pleasant moistness caused by a tea. It means the tea causes salivation from under the tongue, and sometimes the sides of the mouth by the cheeks. It also coats the mouth, like oil or milk.
- 6) Ruan (軟):** This is the ‘smoothness’ of the tea. A good tea has the texture of silk. It seems as if all the atoms in the liquor are in the right place, coordinated and rounded. The tea liquor all stays together and is almost oily or gelatinous. It all slides down the throat together, smoothly. Improperly prepared teas are rough, as if the atoms are jagged, misplaced and scratchy.
- 7) Feng Fu (豐富):** In tea tasting, this means “full-bodied”. It means the tea is rich and complex, deep and subtle. The best teas have sensations, aromas and flavors that lead you onward—drinking them for years, you still discover new and amazing sensations. The best works of art are always like this.
- 8) Cha Yun (茶韻):** This is a very elusive term. “Yun” literally means “to rhyme”; and “cha” is of course “tea”. When a tea has ‘rhyme’, it means it is well-rounded. A tea with “cha yun” transforms in the way the best teas do. A tea with “yun” splashes up to the upper palate, rolls down the throat naturally and smoothly, coats the mouth and throat, causes salivation and “gan”. All the aspects of such a tea are comfortable and fit together the way lines of poetry do. Such a tea is, itself, a poem.



# TEA TURNS SOUTHBOUND

Sam Gibb & Friends

*This winter/summer, Wu De packed up his tea things and set off down to New Zealand and Australia. There were events in several cities and their surrounds, with lots of support in every place. Many new tea brothers and sisters joined this community as a result, and are now with us in these global sessions every month. Sam recounts the trip, and also has asked several of the participants to share their experiences!*

I think when anything affects you deeply you want to share it. That's how I've felt ever since the first time I drunk Tea with Wu De... *I want to share this.* When Wu De told me he was planning on coming to New Zealand and Australia, I was excited and offered to help in any way I could. When I found out that the way he wanted me to help was to organize the whole trip, the excitement turned into something less pleasant. I've never been one to take control. I prefer to just come along for the ride. The less I invest, the less I have to lose. But that outlook wasn't working. At 29, I feel like I have always jumped from one thing to the next. It is easy to walk away if your not invested, but then you never really get anywhere. As soon as something is difficult or uncomfortable I just walk away, never facing these things. Here was a chance

to break this pattern, and I was ready to take it!

After months of planning, three and a half weeks of traveling, two countries and several cities later, it was all over! I was sitting back in Taiwan wondering what happened; Auckland, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sydney and Melbourne all had Tea seeds planted... Not physical ones, but ones in the hearts of those that came to the events and shared Tea with us.

## ***A Forest Amongst Farms***

Vimutti is a Thai Forest monastery on 144 acres that has been stewarded for the last decade by Ajahn Chandako. It is right in the middle of a heavily farmed part of New Zealand and happened to be the first stop on Wu De's Australian tour. Driving to the monas-

tery the view was all too familiar: The grass paddocks, the fences and the livestock... We started to wonder what this place would be like. Their website claims that they are a refuge of peace, tranquility and wisdom. When we arrived, they appeared to not only embody these principles in spirit but also to be a physical manifestation of them. It seemed a lighthouse of wisdom amongst the surrounding farmlands. Ajahn Chandako has spent a decade replanting the valley with care and it stands in stark contrast to its surroundings. Perhaps this place offers us an insight into a solution to our environmental degradation: *change our consciousness and we change our environment!*

Here in this rustically simple yet deeply inspiring place we spent our first weekend in New Zealand. Sleeping in caravans without



connection to the outside world, we set up camp. The spot for our workshops could not have been more idyllic or iconically Kiwi! A steep tree-covered path opened up into a huge valley. In the middle of it all stood a yurt surrounded by native New Zealand bush. Inside was a room that you could feel had been used many times over the last decade for serious spiritual work, adorned with an altar to the Buddha in the center and pictures of illuminated members of the tradition, like the Venerable Ajahn Chah, surrounding it. Our days started with the three silent bowls of tea so many of you are familiar with, followed by a discourse. At lunch, we sat in the middle of the valley and enjoyed a shared lunch brought by all those that came. Afterwards we continued the workshop, starting with tea

shared in silence followed by more insights into the Leaf.

Here I had to adjust to the role of *cha tong* or 'tea boy'. Wu De often says that behind every great Tea Master is a great *cha tong*. This statement can be reflected upon from different angles. On the one hand, it is hard for a Tea Master to play his role without the support of a *cha tong*, but if we explore the saying more we also come to the realization that every Master started out as one as well. Even the biggest trees begin as the smallest seed. My first lesson of the day came after a kettle boiled over. Wu De explained the teaching to me using his most common instruction tool: a Grateful Dead analogy! Being a *cha tong* is very similar (apparently) to being a sound technician at a Grateful Dead concert. Even though you love the band, you cannot get too lost in the

music. You may love the Dead, but you are there to serve those who've come to the concert. If you drift too deeply into one of Jerry Garcia's guitar solos you might make a mistake that pulls everyone from their trance. The same principle applies to Tea. As a *cha tong* you are there to serve those sitting for Tea. If you follow the Tea too far, you may forget your primary role, which is to serve.

Perhaps the highlight of the weekend happened after the workshops had finished. Ajahn Chandako took a handful of us around the monastery on Sunday night. Scattered around the property were small huts where monks and lay people stay for extended periods of isolated meditation. He pointed off into the forest and told us that one young man was living on a small deck out there, and had been doing so for the past month!

As we got further down the valley, the forest thickened until we arrived at a small hut. Inside were the Ajahn's bed and his tea set! He invited us in, sitting down in front of a huge glass window looking deep into the forest. He explained to us that he is just a humble monk and we need to forgive him for any brewing mistakes. There, in this monk's hut, with mismatching teaware that some tea snobs may turn their nose up at, I had a deeply profound Tea experience. To me this showed one of the key elements of Cha Dao: that the most important influence on tea is not the tea or the teaware but the mind and heart of the one brewing! Here in the middle of miles of farmland was a small piece of land lovingly stewarded over the years by this beautifully open and loving human that has dedicated his life to liberation. As he poured us tea, he was not just pouring us hot water and leaves, but also his mind and heart. One of the things that makes Tea truly transformative is when the person brewing it has transformed him or herself. So to Ajahn Chandako, I bow deeply—for the space, the inspiration and for the tea.

## ***The Magic of Brisbane***

The words I write will always fall short of the experience of the tour. As the Buddha said while holding a handful of leaves, “the words I have spoken to you are these leaves in my hand and the Truth is the forest behind us”. There are so many moments of magic and beauty to convey. From Auckland to Melbourne, time and time again we were met with openness, generosity and a love of the Leaf. But to me the highlight of the tour shined through in Brisbane. It wasn't because the events were any better, the people any nicer, nor the Tea any tastier, but because here Tea did what it does best: *create community*.

Brisbane was never on the list of places to visit in Australia when we started planning the tour. Many people in other cities were surprised we spent so long there. One person in Melbourne exclaimed “Brisbane! There is no Tea culture in Brisbane!” Perhaps this is one element of why these events were so amazing. The people in Brisbane didn't have countless teahouses to visit. They were often isolated and unaware of their brothers and sisters surrounding them. So when we came, these Chajin appeared and family was instantly formed. Maybe this also highlights another misconception: that Tea culture and Tea spirit are the same thing.

---

***You could sense people turning on to Tea. You could see it in their faces and feel them soften and open through the ceremonies. Afterwards, there was nowhere to be. And there were deep feelings of connection.***

---

In my experience, the transformative element of Tea can happen without the culture but not without the Spirit. Not understanding how a Tea was made does not limit your experience of the Tea. You can still have an amazing session. But without the spirit, the culture of Tea serves only ego. Obviously, the ideal is to have both. In Brisbane we found a Tea seed just waiting to sprout.

Central to the beauty of Brisbane were our hosts, Matty and Lesley. We had never met in person, but a few years ago Matty had sold me my first teapot through his website. I remember being overwhelmed by the limitlessness of the Tea world. He answered my endless stream of questions with lightness, humor and compassion. I remember thinking “I would love to hang out with this guy. He has a beautiful heart.” My partner at the time could attest to this fact because I was always talking

about him, which I assume isn't normal for an online purchase. When I found out we might be doing an event in Byron Bay, two hours from Brisbane, I thought I would reach out to him. As fate would have it he had just listened to Wu De's interview with Rich Roll—for the 10<sup>th</sup> time! An overnight visit to Brisbane turned into five days over the course of organizing the tour. Matty's passion and love of the Leaf made me certain from the get go that the events there would be special. He served tea at a local market, much like us at the Tea Sage Hut, and was well connected to the isolated pockets of Chajin in the area. This trip gave a focal point to bring them together.

This was the first time Wu De had ever conducted events at the same place he was staying, and it worked beautifully. We would wake up early to the sound of tropical birdlife, then meditate and drink tea on the deck with Koalas watching from the surrounding trees. We would then eat a gorgeous breakfast prepared by Matty or Lesley. We even had Russia pancakes (you are not meant to call them that but I can't remember their name... and that's what they were) made by the skilled hands of Ilyas, one of Wu's oldest students who made the trip from Russia to help with the tour. We could then slowly move into preparing for the day's events, without the need to pack or travel.

The events were all full, often with extra people showing up, drawn in by the Leaf. There was a deep meditative quietude while we drank in silence, and as Wu De talked the group leaned in, listening to every word that was said. You could sense people turning on to Tea. You could see it in their faces and feel them soften and open through the ceremonies. Afterwards, there was nowhere to be. And there were deep feelings of connection. To stand back and watch, one could almost see the electricity in the air. You knew something was starting.



With twenty guests attending the last evening, Matty announced they would be hosting monthly Tea ceremonies. The seeds were planted! Wu De left them with this: “When I first travel somewhere, I visit a number of places and plant seeds. It is then up to you to grow your seed into something more. If I come again I will come to the places where the seeds have been tended and grown”. Last week, Matty emailed me saying that he had been sharing tea almost every day. They held their first tea ceremony a few weeks ago, and had to limit the numbers as so many people were interested! And so this seed has already started to sprout! What happens now is in the hands of those beautiful people we met there, but I have a feeling we will be in Brisbane again sometime very soon...

### ***Sydney & Melbourne***

Sydney was one part of the journey that seemed the most uncer-

tain. Even a week before, we had no idea where we would be staying or how we would get around. Our first event in Queensland was at the Harmony in Life Centre on the Gold Coast. Here we had the great fortune of meeting Michael and Penny, two beautiful souls from Sydney who were deeply touched by the event. They instantly opened their home to us! More than that, Michael kindly acted as our driver for the two days, showing us the sights of Sydney, and most importantly letting Wu De pat a Koala.

Spending so much time with Wu De over the tour was an experience that I am truly thankful for. However, one thing that can get irritating is when he starts talking about music. It often reminds me of a grandparent telling his grandchildren what was ‘hip’ in his day. Statements like ‘everyone listens to Led Zeppelin in High School’ no longer seem relevant to anyone under 40. When we met Kent at his Tian He Tea House where the Sydney events

were being held, Wu De’s eyes lit up. Kent not only had the most amazing vinyl stereo system I have ever seen, but he also had a serious collection of blues and jazz records. Wu De has been telling all the students back at the Tea Sage Hut that he would be at Tian He every day if he lived in Sydney, drinking Tea and listening to Kent’s awesome records.

In Melbourne we were blessed enough to have a beautiful venue: Impala and Peacock is a teahouse and yoga space owned by two Global Tea Hut members, Sarah and Ruan. We shared a weekend of Tea workshops on everything from Cha Dao to the magic of puerh, with support from artists like Petr Novak and Stephen Carroll. We discussed the relationship between Tea and art. Here the tour ended as quickly as it began. Lindsey, who generously hosted us during our stay there, dropped Wu De at the airport to undertake a long and well deserved journey home...



## EXPERIENCES FROM THE TOUR

*Tea teaches us, like all good teachers do, as individuals. Every session offers new insights and lessons to each person at the table. Whether we serve or receive, it changes us all. If I were to talk solely of my experiences, this piece would be incomplete. With so many people deeply affected by this tour, I had to ask a few Global Tea Hut members to share their experiences:*

### **Jade Robinson, Brisbane**

Sharing tea with Wu De during his Australian tour were some of the most beautiful days I have had. Wu holds space in a way that I have never seen and felt before. He filled my bowl and filled my heart. Whilst I have always had access to the Leaf and to Wu's teachings, there was one thing that felt out of reach. What Wu brought with him on his trip to Australia was one of Tea's most precious aspects of all—*community!* Before Wu's trip, there was a whole group of us here who all loved the Leaf in solitude, unaware of our tea brothers and sisters situated so close by! With the announcement of Wu's trip we were all instantly connected. It was then only a few short weeks later that we were all in a room together, connecting, laughing and hugging as the family we already were. Wu's ability to join communities, both locally and globally, is one of his most valuable gifts, and for this I will always be in deep gratitude to him. The more he travels and shares his teachings of the Leaf over warm bowls of tea, the bigger our community grows. And it is through community that the world will come back into alignment, reconnecting us to each other, to the Earth, and to ourselves. Wu De plays a vital role in this healing, and we are all very blessed to have him!

### **Lindsey Diacogiannis, Melbourne**

Cha Dao is "not the science of hedonism, but the art of shamanism." These words still ring in my being. As I gaze into a bowl of steaming Tea, the dark liquor speaks to me of Earth and Sky, of rain that came from the clouds, seeped into the Earth and brought life to these leaves...

For several months last year, I had been hosting local Tea ceremonies for other Tea enthusiasts and friends curious in other forms of meditation, but it had been several months since my last group session. After returning from a trip to America at the beginning of 2015, I had yet to start up another regular time to gather for Tea and meditation, though I'd definitely experienced a deeper commitment and fervor for my own daily spiritual practice centered on Tea.

Wu De's time in Melbourne rekindled a deep appreciation for the magic and wonder of the Leaf, similar to what I experienced on my first visit to the Tea Sage Hut in Taiwan in late 2013. The sessions he held were filled with a wisdom and love for Tea that was palpable. In being given the opportunity to assist him in serving Tea, I experienced the joy of serving—one aspect of this tradition that has always appealed to me. It's often said that our aim in preparing tea for others is not to simply demonstrate an ability to make tea, but to *serve*. By kneeling before the guests who came to hear Wu De speak and to experience the richness of Cha Dao, I felt a sincere honor in being able to share Tea as wisdom and medicine—healing for the body, mind and spirit.

Wu De's time here also fuelled a launch into the start of more regular sessions, to be held on a weekly basis in the same space he spoke—a beautiful and intimate room in the upstairs of Impala and Peacock Teahouse in Brunswick. I felt like I was riding the wave of the energy and enthusiasm he brought, as I hosted a tea ceremony just one week after he was here. Three Tea brothers and sisters joined me in silence as we drank, both literally and figuratively, of Tea wisdom...

### **Rebecca Le Harle, Auckland**

I caught wind of Wu De's AUS/NZ tour immediately after a sudden resignation from my job. The Auckland dates landed on the weekend of my last week at work. This softened the strange transition I was going through. Instead of dreading change, I settled into a sense of excitement and anticipation for a weekend of tea healing and discovery. I could not have anticipated the depth, nourishment, profound spirit and sense of brother (sister) hood that came from sitting with Wu De. He graciously and silently poured tea for us many times—making me feel like an old friend, like an honored guest. At a time when I was deciding to dedicate myself to Tea, this weekend helped to cleanse me of residual career stress, realigned my spirit and fortified my sense of purpose. I am now drinking bowl tea daily with a morning (and sometimes afternoon!) tea meditation, and enjoying a deeper, more respectful relationship with Tea and with myself.



### ***Photo & Experience by Michael Keene Chin, Sydney***

*Written the night we drank amazing moon-bathed Tea*

Last night we had the great fortune to sit with a Tea Master who prepared tea for us in silence for over an hour and a half. As we watched him go through this beautiful ritual of boiling the water, grabbing generous fistfuls of tea and letting them fall through his palm into a small pot, gently laying out each bowl lip-to-lip in a pattern he remembered for each person in the room, pouring the boiling water into another pot set above a flame to maintain a certain temperature, then pouring a portion of that water to clean and likely warm each cup, and the pot containing the tea and discarding that water and the very first steep into a little pot by his side...

Then refilling the pot containing the tea, the Master would pour the tea in fluid, brushstroke movements mimicking a river flowing in on itself in a pattern representing the infinite from right-to-left then left-to-right, passing over each bowl several times until all the tea had been more or less evenly distributed—one vessel imparting to all others.

Setting the pot down, he picked up each bowl and placed it with a caress in front of each guest. With a palm turned upwards, he gestured us to drink.

No instructions, verbal or otherwise, were given as to how we should handle this small vessel, let alone drink the deep brown liquid that had been steeped in an ancient Tea tradition; that had been bathed only by the light of each full moon, a tea so treasured it could not be bought.

So I reached out and brought the bowl to me, feeling the almost unbearable heat beneath sensitive skin that explored the coarse clay texture of the hand-fashioned vessel: the cracks, the little “blemishes” or birth marks that dotted its surface. I observed the luster of the liquid and the thin semi-circumference of light that resembled a palm-sized eclipse. I stared into its depths, both lost and found in silent contemplation...

I closed my eyes as I brought the lip to my lips and inhaled the wafting aroma of the tea as it gently ebbed and flowed, breathing in deeply, filling my chest with the subtle wafting fragrance of tea, but mostly the air of the environment infused around me with particles that carry the scent of my body—that of fellow travelers, the incense that had once filled the room, the ocean breeze carrying traces of traffic and tree, all intermingled with the sounds of these... I opened my eyes once again as I drew the bowl away from my lips and looked at the mostly empty vessel, a residual remnant danced around tiny traces of tea. I placed the bowl in front of the Master and let my breath go...

Then, I waited for the process to again begin...

## **Jaanus Leplaan, New Zealand**

### *Tea in Aotearoa*

I find myself sitting in a yurt with a steaming bowl of tea in my hands, listening to the hypnotic sound of rain-drops dancing on the roof. There are other people here, too. We are all sitting comfortably on our cushions in a semi-circle, sharing tea and listening to Wu De. The yurt is located in a beautiful valley next to a small pond. The winding path that leads up to the Buddhist monastery dining hall is lined with exotic trees all planted by the only resident monk here. There is a birch and a Japanese cedar next to a magnolia. This is not a dream. The monastery itself is situated on a picturesque piece of land with rolling hills and some ancient trees near Mangatawhiri on the North Island of New Zealand.

To a traveling tea person it is always a great joy to meet others walking the same path. I had the pleasure of attending and helping out with Wu De's seminars in New Zealand last month. When the Maori first arrived in their (ocean-going canoes) they called this land *AoTEAroa* (meaning the land of the long white cloud) so Tea, one could say with tongue in cheek, has always been a part of this country! Sadly, when I arrived in November last year I was not greeted by a developed tea culture, but rather by a nation of coffee drinkers. In spite of that, the seminars were filled with people passionate about Tea and curious about Cha Dao.

Among the attendees were people from many different walks of life—from doctors to artists—and from places as diverse as Italy, China, Germany, the USA, Estonia and of course New Zealand. Many of them found it amusing that they had travelled half way around the world without ever knowing of Global Tea Hut or about our tradition only to find themselves sitting in a yurt steeped in Tea wisdom. How had they all ended up here? By pure coincidence? Everyone has his or her own story. There were people from different religions too—from Christians to a Tibetan Buddhist nun—all sharing Tea and heart space together.

During the course of the events, I witnessed solemn silence, quiet contemplation, unfurling of some eyebrows and laughter and was touched by kindness and hospitality. With Wu De as our guide, we set off on the path of Cha Dao... There were moments of sudden realization, eyes gleaming with inspiration and a feeling of belonging. Veils were lifted, minds were cleared and hearts were opened. Tea had brought us closer—to Nature, to each other and to ourselves.

Each event came with its own insights and lessons that will be working their magic on the participants for some time to come. For me, the biggest insights were about service, kindness and focus. Not only were the seminars inspirational and enlightening, but so were all the little moments before, after and in between. Helping Wu De and my dear Tea brother Sam, with organizing the events and lending a hand in solving the small practical issues, all taught me something: By serving others we are also serving our higher selves, and service is perhaps the fastest way of realizing and learning the deepest, most meaningful lessons. Here are some of my favorite grains of wisdom from Wu De:

*"We are this planet. Where did that breath come from that you just took? It came from Nature; it was made for you by trees. This water that you're drinking was in a cloud less than two weeks ago..."*

*"After the ecstasy—the laundry! Celebrate the ordinary. The most exalted of spiritual experiences mean nothing if you cannot be happy in the most basic ways."*

*"There is nothing better you can put in your body than Joy!"*

*"There is no other Now!"*

## **Sarah De Witt, Melbourne**

One line from Wu De really stuck with me: "The shallow fears the depths, but the depths don't fear the shallow". It encouraged me to look deeper into the reasons, motivations, and meaning behind the things I do in my life. Sometimes you get caught up in the what's-your work, your family, your friends, your activities and it's easy to lose sight of *why* you do what you do. It taught me to explore my decisions and actions with a curiosity and mindfulness. He brought this point out beautifully in the world of Tea. Tea can be a meditative, medicinal, and mindful practice that can be such a wonderful part of present life. And it extends beyond drinking it—to what the tea represents—to the people and environment involved in its journey from seedling to sip.



### ***Matty d'Argent, Brisbane***

As a devoted student of the leaf for most of two decades, I have traveled and explored the world in search of the finest teas, shared cups with tea experts, specialists, artisans, and tea masters. So when Sam mentioned that he was bringing Master Wu to Australia, I reveled in the opportunity to host such an honorable guest. As you could imagine, the surreal experience of having this liquid enchanter and two of his students stay at your house for five days and yes, making incredible tea all day long, was simply quite amazing! The week of awesomeness was spent mostly attending and hosting tea workshops, connecting with beautiful passionate tea peeps, blissing out on amazing tea, sharing delicious food, learning, laughing, koala watching, Youtube-ing, and having loads of fun...

So with that said, I'd like to offer a few sincere words of gratitude to my Tea brothers Master Wu, Sammy and Ilyias. Thank you for sharing five amazing days with us; it was truly a memorable and moving experience I will never forget. Wu's influence and inspiration was a catalyst to begin hosting monthly tea gatherings and create a space for Brisbane's growing Tea community. His visit has brought forth an assemblage of passionate Tea people eager to learn, taste and share—many of which have relayed their newfound experiences with quietude, peace, emptiness and a meditative state of mind. It is beautiful to see how Tea has touched their lives and how they embrace it as a part of their daily practice.

# THE SEVEN GENRES OF TEA

Wu De

*Learning the seven genres of tea is the first map you'll need to start exploring the Tea world. Wu De clears up some of the misinformation about these basic categories, and leaves us with a basic understanding of each kind, so that we'll know where to head from here, and which maps we'll need along with us on our Tea Journey.*

Perhaps a friend brought you to tea, or you were passing by a tea shop on some trip and your eye was drawn to a certain pot or cup. Maybe the Eastern exoticism enticed you to Tea—the rich flavors, aromas and sensations. And nothing has been the same since that first sip. The doorway cracked and you saw open before you a vast and clear world waiting to be explored...

For thousands of years we've been ensorcelled by the Leaf: it has built and destroyed empires, been the currency of nations and wars, spanning the vast human spectrum from greed and selfishness to the highest of spiritual states. And when you include the hundreds of generations devoted to the farming and processing of tea, the creation of myriad teapots, cups, whisks and scoops, you can appreciate just how immeasurable the tea world is, as if looking into this new world you first only noticed that there were beautiful flowers and trees in the vicinity of the doorway, but later looked fur-

ther and saw mountains and rivers, villages and cities beyond...

Amongst the many genres of tea, there is one called oolong. Continuing our metaphor of Tea as a land you've begun to explore, we might say oolong is a city in this foreign place. Oolong is a great and bustling city, one of the biggest in Tea. It is grown on several mountains, one of which is the famed Mt. Wuyi, in the province of Fujian, China. The oolong tea produced there is called "Cliff Tea" or "Rock Tea" and is one of the brightest and richest of all oolong teas. And there are hundreds of kinds of Cliff Tea, each with its own distinct bush, flavor, aroma, etc. The point being that one kind of tea, oolong, is grown on dozens of mountains, and that any one of those mountains produces a plethora of teas, each an adventure in and of itself... We discuss this only to demonstrate just how huge the tea world is, encouraging you to develop an appreciation for the rich history, culture and spirit in Tea, as well as a patience in your explora-

tion, since there are lifetimes of tea to be drunk.

We know that many of you are just starting this journey into Tea and thought it might be helpful if you had a rough map of the terrain to help guide you. Before we give you that, though, we thought the more poetic description of Her grandeur would inspire you to travel on. It is also important to note that the map is not the terrain, and the categories of tea we are using here, and their descriptions, are only general overviews. You'll need a more detailed map when you get to each of the Tea cities, in other words. Some teas rest near the borders of one category or another, whilst a few defy all categorization, especially with all the experimentation that goes on in modern tea production. Nevertheless, knowing the different tea processing methods and the basic categories of tea can help start you off in the right direction.

Throughout history, different tea scholars have categorized tea into different groups—some have five,



some six and some seven. It isn't important how many we use. For the purpose of this article, we'll be discussing tea in seven main groups: white, green, yellow, red, oolong, black and puerh.

Especially in the West, we find that there is sometimes a slight confusion in written tea materials about the nature of these categories. It is often said that all tea is a single species, *Camellia sinensis*, and that the differences in the categories of tea are all to do with *how* the tea is processed. There is some truth in this, which is why it is so often published throughout the tea world, but it is also potentially misleading. Let's clarify this before we map out each of the kinds of tea and their processing.

It can be confusing when tea people say that the categories of tea are strictly defined by processing methodology, because the seven kinds of tea weren't invented at once, but rather evolved over time *in response to* the variations in the plant as it changed terroir. It is a

very modern, and in many ways unhealthy practice to tell Nature what to do. Traditional farming was always about accepting the bounty of Nature with gratitude, rather than coercing Her to give certain kinds of foods in certain amounts. Consequently, ancient tea farmers were conversing with their trees and adapting their skills to suit the tea they plucked. Cliff Tea processing was developed in response to certain bushes, in other words. And while you could potentially process any tea in the world in the same way you process a Wuyi Cliff Tea—and some people are doing that very thing, even right outside Wuyi province—it will never be the same as genuine Wuyi Cliff Tea. So is Cliff Tea a kind of tree or a kind of processing? It's hard to say, which is why the issue is complicated.

In this day and age, farmers are more and more trying to set themselves apart by processing tea in unique ways: taking tea from trees that have been used to make puerh for hundreds of years and process-

ing the leaves like red tea, for example. And sometimes the results of these experiments are amazing—even beginning whole trends in the industry, like the movement towards greener *Tie Guan Yin* in Anxi province, as well as in Taiwan, over the last two decades. For the most part, however, these experimental teas rarely compete with the traditionally processed teas of a region. The fact is that the processing of each particular kind of tea evolved over hundreds of years by skilled craftsman who were conversing and listening to the local leaves and refining their skills to produce the tea in the way that best suits it. There are exceptions, however, and it is important for innovation to continue, especially when the adaptation occurs in the true spirit of Tea.

Before we begin exploring the different categories of tea, we need to clarify that Taiwan oolong tea, for example, is a kind of bush as well as a processing method (actually many kinds of bushes).

The seven kinds of tea we are discussing relate only to the processing methodology and therefore do not take into account all of the regional variations or the different kinds of trees there are in the world. We could easily have a hundred or more

categories of tea, and this would then turn into a book. We think the analogy of a map is perfect here, as you can then think of this article as the most general of aerial views, showing only major mountains and big cities. As such, it is a good

place to start if you are just getting to know the country, but eventually you will also want to get some more detailed maps that explore all the roads and lanes of all the big cities, and even the small hamlets as well.

## THE SEVEN GENRES OF TEA

### *White Tea*

White tea is a simple kind of tea. The tea is picked, withered and dried. It is most often dried in a controlled way, though traditional white tea was sun-dried in the province of Fujian, where they say white tea began. Like green tea, the highest quality white teas are often all buds, while lower grades contain a mixture of buds and leaves. The tea is called “white” because the buds of certain tea varieties have white hairs on them, which lend the small buds a whitish-silver appearance. As there is no processing to break down the thick cell walls, the only way to get at the real juice of this tea would be to boil it, which no one does these days. Instead, we steep this tea at lower temperatures. This produces a light-yellow, golden to clear liquor that is often floral and fragrant. The Qi often enters the body through the aroma and/or mouth.



### *Green Tea*

Green tea has a bit more processing than white tea. It is processed in many different ways depending on the region. Basically, though, it is picked and then goes through some form of heat to arrest oxidation. This could be steaming, baking or most commonly pan-firing. It is then dried. The best green teas are often only composed of buds. After firing, green tea is then rolled/shaped before drying. The rolling breaks down the cell walls and oxidizes the tea slightly. The rolling for a green tea will always be significantly less than for other teas. Sometimes the firing/rolling will be repeated a few times until the desired shape/color is achieved. The liquor of green tea can be clear to yellow or even vibrant green, depending on local variations. The Qi often enters the body through the aroma and/or mouth.



## *Yellow Tea*

Yellow tea is only produced in a few places and is therefore one of the rarest kinds of tea. It is almost always made of buds alone, requiring much more work than leaf and bud teas. It is processed a lot like green tea, with the added step of “sealing the fragrance”. This entails draping a wet cloth over the tea and steaming it. Tea is very sensitive to aromas around it, so the tea is in essence releasing and reabsorbing its own fragrance, or “sealing” it in if you wish. The liquor is golden and fragrant. Great yellow tea can be amazing. The Qi often enters the body through the aroma and/or mouth.



## *Oolong Tea*

Oolong tea is the pinnacle of tea processing. It is the most involved of all the methodologies, and requires the greatest skill. Oolong is partially oxidized tea. As it requires the most complicated processing, there are also greater variations—minor and major—from region to region. Basically, oolong tea is picked and then goes through indoor and outdoor withering in order to dehydrate/soften the leaves and oxidize them. The most distinguishing feature of oolong occurs during the withering, in which the leaves are shaken in bamboo trays to bruise the edges. The best oolongs have a red ring around the edges of the leaves, as a result of masterful shaking. The shaking oxidizes the tea in a particular manner. The tea is then pan-fired to arrest oxidation and kill various green enzymes that make tea bitter. The fired tea is then immediately rolled to break down the cells and further oxidize the tea. Finally, traditional oolong is charcoal roasted, though there are many greener, less-roasted oolongs around these days, and often in electric roasters.

Oolong is either striped or balled. If it is balled oolong, it is rolled into tightened balls of three or more leaves using a cloth wound up into a tight, round shape. This tradition began in Anxi, Southern Fujian and then spread from there to Central Taiwan. If it is striped, the rolling occurs across ribbed bamboo mats, which creates long, twisted stripes of tea.

There are many levels of oxidation in oolong tea. It is a vast and populated city of Tea. There are so many varieties: from greener to traditionally roasted, striped to ball oolong, and even Oriental Beauty. Oolong is the most refined and elegant of teas, and best prepared gongfu style. It can be light or dark, and the Qi almost always flows through the aroma and mouth, rising upwards.



## **Red Tea**

Red tea is what people in the West mistakenly called “black tea”. Of course, names aren’t important. Tea is called many things in different languages—“a rose by any other name...” But, in this case, calling red tea “black tea” will cause you problems as you explore the world of tea, for as you can see below there is another genre of tea called “black tea.” And so if you call red tea “black tea” then what do you call black tea itself?

Some say that the reason for this error lies in the fact that Europeans carried the red tea back to Europe by ship, which took a long time and the environment in the cargo holds further oxidized, or even fermented the tea. Actually, the primary reason for the confusion comes from the fact that European traders were only allowed within two hundred meters of the dock during early trade with China. Consequently, they never saw the tea trees, processing, etc. and all they knew about tea came from the broken pidgin of the dock merchants that sold it to them. This, of course, caused all sorts of confusion.

Red tea is picked and then goes through pre-processing piling. The tea is withered in deep piles for anywhere between twelve and twenty-four hours. This greatly oxidizes the tea. Then the tea is rolled for a long time—up to ninety minutes—which produces a thick paste on and around the leaves, further oxidizing the tea. Sometimes the tea is re-piled at this point to ‘fully’ oxidize it (it is never 100% oxidized). Red tea can be oxidized to various degrees depending on the region, but it is almost always the most oxidized of all teas. There are other variations in some regions, like smoking the tea to add flavor.

Much of the red tea in India, Sri Lanka and other places outside China is processed by machine in what is called CTC (Cut Tear Curl). This low-quality tea is shredded up and oxidized in machines, primarily for use in tea bags which are meant to release all the tea has to offer in a single steeping. We wouldn’t recommend buying such tea, though. The long rolling really breaks down the cell walls, which means they can release more of their essence. This is why red tea is richer, darker and has a more full-bodied liquor. Because of this, red tea is often best drunk in the morning. The Qi is often more in the body.



## **Black Tea**

Up until recently there weren’t many kinds of black tea left in the world, and only three famous ones: Liu Bao, Liu An and Hunnan “Thousand Tael” teas. Recently, however, a few older kinds of black tea processing from other regions have been revitalized. The main characteristic of black tea is a post-production piling. Unlike the pre-production piling of red tea, this is more like composting and involves bacteria. It is therefore “fermentation,” rather than “oxidation.” The tea is usually processed by picking, withering, pan-firing and rolling. The methods of piling vary in each of these teas, but all require moisture and temperature to facilitate bacterial growth. The liquor of black tea is dark and rich, with a warming Qi that spreads out from the chest.



## Puerh

Puerh tea is sometimes put into the black tea category, but it should actually have a category all its own. Traditional puerh is made from large-leaf, old-growth trees in Yunnan province, the birthplace of all Tea. The tea is picked and then withered to soften the leaves and oxidize them a bit. This withering can be done indoors or outdoors, depending on the weather. Then, tea is pan-fired to kill the green enzymes and arrest oxidation. It is next rolled to break down the cellular structure and shape it. Finally, traditional puerh tea is sun-dried. At this stage it is called “rough tea (*mao cha*).” Puerh tea is then often compressed into cakes, but can remain loose as is. The defining characteristics of puerh production are a shorter firing (*sa qing*) and sun-drying, both of which contribute to its fermentation.

Puerh tea is unique because the trees in the jungles of Southwestern China are covered in hundreds of species of molds and bacteria before the leaves are even picked. The relationship puerh tea has with these microbes is magical, allowing it to ferment over time as it ages. All tea can age and improve over time, but none like puerh. Puerh tea transforms completely over time, changing from a bitter, astringent liquor to a deep and dark brew that is full of more Qi than any other kind of tea. Nowadays, tea drinkers mostly feel that even twenty or thirty-year-old puerh is ancient. But there was a time, and not so long ago, when tea drinkers only drank puerh teas that were above seventy!

Starting in the 60’s, and then officially in 1972, several puerh factories were working to try to speed up the fermentation of puerh artificially. Of course they weren’t successful. How could science ever create the magic of seventy or a hundred years? What they did do, however, was create a new kind of tea, called “ripe puerh (*shou*).” Ripe puerh is processed like traditional “raw puerh (*sheng*)” only with the added step of post-production piling. They moisten piles of rough tea (*mao cha*) and then cover the pile with a thermal blanket, trapping heat and moisture and speeding up the bacteria’s work. This is much like composting. This idea to artificially ferment the tea post-production came from the puerh factory owners’ and researchers’ trips to black tea factories. Because ripe puerh was developed out of black tea production, many authors put all puerh in the black tea category. The problem with this, however, is that it ignores all the raw puerh (*sheng*), which is nothing like black tea; and is furthermore the traditional, and by quantity and quality the greater kind of puerh tea as well. It is, therefore, much more logical to give this unique tea its own category altogether.



# AN OFFERING TO FREEDOM

Jasper Hermans

*All of us, at some point, will face a bit of broken teaware. It is important to see such accidents as opportunities for growth. In that way, challenges help improve our practice. Even so-called "objects" have their destinies, which means they have a death, too.*

**S**team billows up from a bowl in front of me, a bowl made by the hands of one of our many beloved and talented brothers inside this global Tea community. It was created to offer space for leaves to unfurl—leaves ready to share their magnificence and spread their essence into the water that is poured onto them, elevating our bodies and minds into higher consciousness.

As I look into this bowl, while seated alone in my little Tea room, I'm suddenly brought back to another time and space... My ears remember the sounds of the big murmuring pot above the clay stove, from which a grounding brew of wise and old trees was being extracted. Though, as you might expect, this didn't take place high up in the misty mountains or deep down in an ancient forest valley. Instead, this murmuring pot was making sounds in the midst of the big, bustling city of Amsterdam.

This session was not to be a solo one either. This deeply-rooted brew was waiting to be poured

into many bowls to be shared with young adults from all over the land. They had all gathered for an afternoon of Tea, meditation and a sharing of heart space. Here it was that for the first time I poured Tea into this bowl, lifted her up, placed her down, opened her by a gentle turn and pulled back my hand, to offer her to be shared with one of the many valued guests. A bowl so graciously providing space for the endless depths to be discovered inside of her. A bowl free of any preferences to be full or empty, and open to be held by everyone.

Right there in the reflection of the Tea, I could see this circle of beautiful young people, in the midst of their learning and growing, in the midst of their blooming and awakening. This momentary reflection highlighted that we have but one chance to meet, as the very next moment this bowl will be picked up, and the Tea will flow out into all directions to merge with our beings. How precious this opportunity to offer space for everyone to

arrive and return home to their true nature! How precious this opportunity to meet everyone and everything, in this time and space!

And this time and space is where I return, seated alone in my little Tea room, and yet sharing this bowl of Tea with all. Feeling so proud to be part of this beautiful, living tradition: where Nature is being recognized by Nature, again and again, in the countless bowls being shared all over the world; where so many gorgeous souls are so dedicated to learning, growing, sharing and serving with all their hearts. I'm fortunate to have been a witness to so many eyes being brightened by the bowls shared throughout our community—a community of heart, spirit, smiles, hugs and a great, great love and connection to the Leaf and all Nature...

I sometimes wonder, who could not bow in gratitude when surrounded by all this beauty? Whose eyes wouldn't be moistened by this abundance of Love, brother and sisterhood? Who hears these cries

from Mother Earth calling out our names, to stop and listen to the weary songs our own hearts sing? Hearts in agony because of separation from where we all come from, from where we will all return to one day, together. I sometimes wish to sing out loud, and let the names of those who wander echo through the forests valleys, shaking around those deeply asleep. And yet, who am I

to play around with the ways of the Dao? Who am I to try to sing louder than Great Nature's voice? My cries just might break the windows and crack some bowls instead... Returning to the empty space inside the kettle might be more useful to me...

And that's exactly when I was reminded, during a momentary lapse of awareness, perhaps with my mind still wandering inside those

bowls I shared in Amsterdam, and I let this oh-so-precious bowl slip out of my hands... The sound of the cracking widened my eyes, and suddenly but kindly reminded me to stay quiet and let Great Nature's voice resound freely when I offer my bowls of Tea...



*Scattered into pieces.*

*A finger cut,  
By the illusion  
Of permanence.*

*A bowl lived to serve once,  
In a one chance one encounter,  
To meet where we all are,  
Sipping tea out of a single bowl.*

*The sound of the cracking,  
Echoing through time and space,  
Reminding us where this single bowl lies hidden.  
Bringing us back,  
To the space from where She really comes.  
Opening our eyes,  
To see where She really flows.*

*So that next time,  
When the kettle is being lifted up from the coals,  
And the water is being poured into the bowls,  
We realize that it is not by our hands  
That the formless takes form.*

# Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these magazines in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and Tea are becoming, as the Tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of 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 Justin Polgar:

**G**reat greetings my tea brothers and sisters! It is with enthusiastic pleasure that I write to you from Oakland, California. May my fingers weave the ink upon this page with as much grace and levity as tea leaves dancing in hot water. This morning is like many others before it, filled with the sounds of fire wooing water, slow waking breath, and, of course, a river of cars outside rushing to work. My daily work begins with tea, thankfully.

Like you, I am a student of Tea, thirsty for the cups of wisdom that fill us and empty us. Wu De once told me that when passion and purpose are found, it is important to live in them deeply, so that the groove one digs in this life will be easier to find in the next. This rings true, deep into the stardust of my bones. I am grateful to find myself back in the role of alchemist and magician, this time healing the world through chocolate. Tea can be a warming beverage, or a medicine for consciousness, just like chocolate can be a sweet treat, or an evolutionary messenger from the plant world. Like Tea, chocolate is labor intensive, which means there are several opportunities to adore, revere, respect, and love each step of the process. When we give attention and reverence to a cup of tea, or a carrot, or a chocolate bar, the innate intelligence of the plant begins to sing to us. Every sip of tea, every bite of chocolate, is an opportunity to give thanks to the meta organismic ecosystem of the wild that is "the farmer".

This wander-guided education into chocolate has been deeply supported by my love of Tea, and this Tea community that is dedicated to learning with an open mind, a curious palate, and an encouraging heart. I must take a moment to thank Adam Yasmin for introducing me to Tea as a ritual practice. I remember following him around Los Angeles, no matter what time of day or night, just for the opportunity to enjoy tea in the casual depth of gongfu style. I would find him serving tea at 3am, tucked away in the corner of an underground party, walls vibrating with drum and bass; and there we were, peacefully smiling in grounded presence, tea cups cradled in our hands, observing the diversity of entertainment that is human behavior. Many nights and many cups later, I have cultivated a deep respect for Tea as my teacher. In 2010, Adam gave me a tea set for my birthday, which is now stained with stories, smiles,



prayers, and deep insights of my belonging here and now. Yes!

I am honored to share Yes CaCao's botanical chocolate bar, Gaba Baba, with the Global Tea Hut community this month. We use chocolate as a delivery system for botanical medicine, a vehicle for education, and a reason to praise with a big smiling "Yes!". The Gaba Baba can be enjoyed at any time of the day or night. We have stone-ground the GABA tea, kava, turmeric, and blue lotus spagyric into this smooth and flavor-layered chocolate to help you relax into your natural rhythm. The bars contain no refined sugar, no dairy, no soy, and no gluten. There is only one rule: ***Make a wish*** and then ***take a bite!***

You are invited to explore our website and support our current Kickstarter campaign, "Feeling The Yes." We appreciate the heavenly gaze of your eyes on these words, and when you find yourself in Oakland, please come by for a cup of tea and a bite of chocolate!

Like you, I love Tea. Like Tea, I love you.

**Bless you, Yes you,  
Justin Frank Polgar  
Minister of Chocolate  
YesCaCao.com**

# 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](mailto:livingteas@gmail.com). The community in LA also has a new meetup 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](mailto:info@cajchai.com) for more info.



In Moscow, Russia, there are frequent tea events. Contact Tea Hut member Ivan at [teeabai@gmail.com](mailto:teeabai@gmail.com) or Denis at [chikchik25@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:sabine@letempsdunthe.com).



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



In Brisbane, Australia, Matty and Lesley host a monthly ceremony on the first Sunday of every month. Contact them at [mattychi@gmail.com](mailto:mattychi@gmail.com)



In Tallinn, Estonia, *Chado* tea shop holds events most Friday evenings at 7 PM. Contact [events@firstflush.ee](mailto: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](mailto:timo@sygis.net) and Herkko at [herkots@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:hermansjasper@gmail.com).



## Center News



Before you visit, check out the center's *new* website ([www.teasagehut.org](http://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 are selling out quick. Check the website for details, as well as information about our 2015 Light Meets Life cakes. They should also arrive soon!



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!



Submit you feedback and help spread the word about Global Tea Hut! Find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram as well as our blog.

## APRIL AFFIRMATION

*I am living without fear.*

*Do I accept negative, limiting story lines about who I am or what I can/can't do? Am I facing my fears in this life?*

