

Global Tea Art

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE
July 2015

山之風

"MOUNTAIN WIND" SHENG PUERH
WATER, THE "MOTHER OF TEA"



MOUNTAIN WIND

Continuing our journey into better quality tea this year, July's tea is one of the best we've ever sent you! And nothing improves a bowl or cup of tea more than the water it is steeped in. We've had many requests this last year to amalgamate some of the articles we've written over the years. Here you'll find a well of information on water, and all in one place!

*Love is
Changing the world
Bowl by bowl*

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Letter from the Editor

In July, we pass into the second half of the year and into the heart of summer. It's a great time for outdoor tea, including sun tea. We love putting some leaves in a jar for two hours when the sun is brightest and then chilling the liquor in the fridge. We've worked out a way to serve iced sun tea roadside by putting it into a *kama* and ladling it into bowls like we usually do with boiled tea. We even put blue paper flames under the *kama*, which furthers the cooling sensation of the tea.

July is a great time for hot tea, as well. In traditional medicine, it is thought to be better to have hot beverages when the weather is hot, as opposed to shocking the system with iced drinks. And there are plenty of teas that are cooling in nature, like most greens, whites, yellow teas and our personal favorite, which we are sending you this month, fresh and green sheng puerh. One of the highlights of our year here at the Hut is tasting the fresh *maocha* (rough tea) to choose our annual Light Meets Life cakes. Sometimes we find some gems, like this month's gorgeous tea. There is nothing like a few leaves of fresh sheng puerh in a bowl on a sunny afternoon!

Harmony through alchemy has always been central to the aesthetics and philosophy of tea culture, whether clearly expressed by ancient Daoist mendicants, or left unstated, yet recognized by the modern tea drinker who intuitively knows when a tea set functions well, when a tea is brewed properly, or when something in the process is off. The mixing and blending of figurative and material elements in tea truly is alchemical—both externally in the way the leaf, water, fire and teaware combine to form the liquor; and internally in the way we use the tea session to create peace, quiet and a stillness that inspires dialogue with Nature and the Dao. And harmony has always been the guiding principle of these processes, for it is the harmony of a tea set that makes it beautiful and functional, the harmony of a tearoom which inspires relaxation, and even the harmony of the leaf, water and teaware which combines to make the best liquor. In the exploration of tea and our own development towards mastery, harmony is the ideal that we must seek out, just as masters past and present have always done. The best teas are those which are brewed in a place where all the elements are in harmony with one another.

Since ancient times Chinese sages and seers have separated the material world into five elements called "*wu shing*" (五行): wood, earth, water, fire, and metal. These principal elements are extremely complicated, influencing all aspects of Chinese culture, philoso-



phy and spirituality—from Daoism to Buddhism, *feng shui*, medicine and even tea. Lu Yu himself inscribed symbols representing the *wu shing* on all of his teaware, and spoke of the way they all combined fluently in the brewing of tea.

Of the five elements, the most fundamental is water. Water is the essence of tea. More of what is in the bowl or cup is water. This issue, we've gathered together years of water articles to explore the vast waters that flow through our pots. The water we prepare for tea was in a cloud just weeks ago, connecting us to the Great Nature that surrounds us all. Water for tea can be understood in terms of source, storage and preparation. The last of these is really about the fire element, which we will cover in our next issue this August. Both of these elemental issues are amongst the most asked questions you have sent us this last year. We hope that you enjoy studying the beginning of tea preparation, with water and heat, and more importantly that these articles influence your ability to make finer tea!

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink, likely belonging to the editor, Lu Yu.

Tea of the Month



SPRING 2015 "MOUNTAIN WIND" SHENG PUERH, MAOCHA

One of the greatest joys of a tea lover is drinking fresh *maocha* in the warmth of summer. It is like a return of spring, a breeze that rises from under your arms and sweeps you off your feet, carrying you past the flowing glacial rivers South of the Clouds to the feet of the great Himalayas. The vibrant energy of the ancient trees there are like Zen retreats in caves, each with a lifetime's worth of unfolding sun, moon and star shine, river and mountain, wind and weather. For such a journey, you'll need a guide. A few leaves of bright *maocha* in a bowl always lead our way into the warmer Taiwan weather. In drinking through our samples of puerh for the year, there is the added joy of selecting the tea we want to press for this year's Light Meets Life cakes, which is an exciting process for guests and residents at the Hut.

Sheng puerh made from old trees is typically only harvested in the spring, with the occasional buds in autumn as well. Old trees need to be left to their own devices to produce living tea. Using fertilizers or hormones to increase production will upset the natural equilibrium of the

tree's ecological relationship to the soil, mountain and weather, and the trees will eventually die from such farming.

The harvested leaves are withered, indoors and out, fried to kill green enzymes and arrest oxidation, rolled and then sun-dried. The two identifying features of puerh production are the frying and the sun-drying. The frying of sheng puerh is done at a lower temperature and for a shorter time than other kinds of tea. This leaves some of the bitter, astringent enzymes alive and active, which aids in the fermentation of the tea over time. The sun-drying also helps activate the fermentation, exposing it to the bacteria that will help in that process. In fact, the relationship that puerh has to microbial life is one of the main characteristics that define this genre of tea. At this point, the tea is called "rough tea (*maocha*, 毛茶)", which means that it is essentially unfinished. All puerh tea begins with *maocha*. These processed leaves leave the mountain farm to be sold directly to factories small and large, or independently at market. Such tea is then pressed into cakes,

sometimes blended with teas from other regions. In modern times, this is done at factories rather than at the mountain where the tea is harvested/produced, but traditionally the compression and finishing was also done on the mountain, using the same water to steam the tea into cake form as the leaves drank when they were a part of the old trees, which is obviously ideal. This also means that as it is being compressed it will be exposed to its native bacteria.

Most varieties of tea include all the same stages of processing as puerh, though unlike puerh, the final processing often ends there and the loose-leaf tea is then packaged right at the farm. (Some oolongs were traditionally finished at shops, as well. The shop owners would do the final roasting to suit their tastes.) Puerh, on the other hand, almost always travels to a factory for final processing: compression into cakes if it is raw, sheng puerh or piling and then compression if it is ripe, shou puerh.

Some varieties of puerh are also destined to become loose leaf. At the start, that means that they remain



"Mountain Wind"



Da Hu Sai, Lincang, Yunnan



Sheng Puerh, *Maocha*

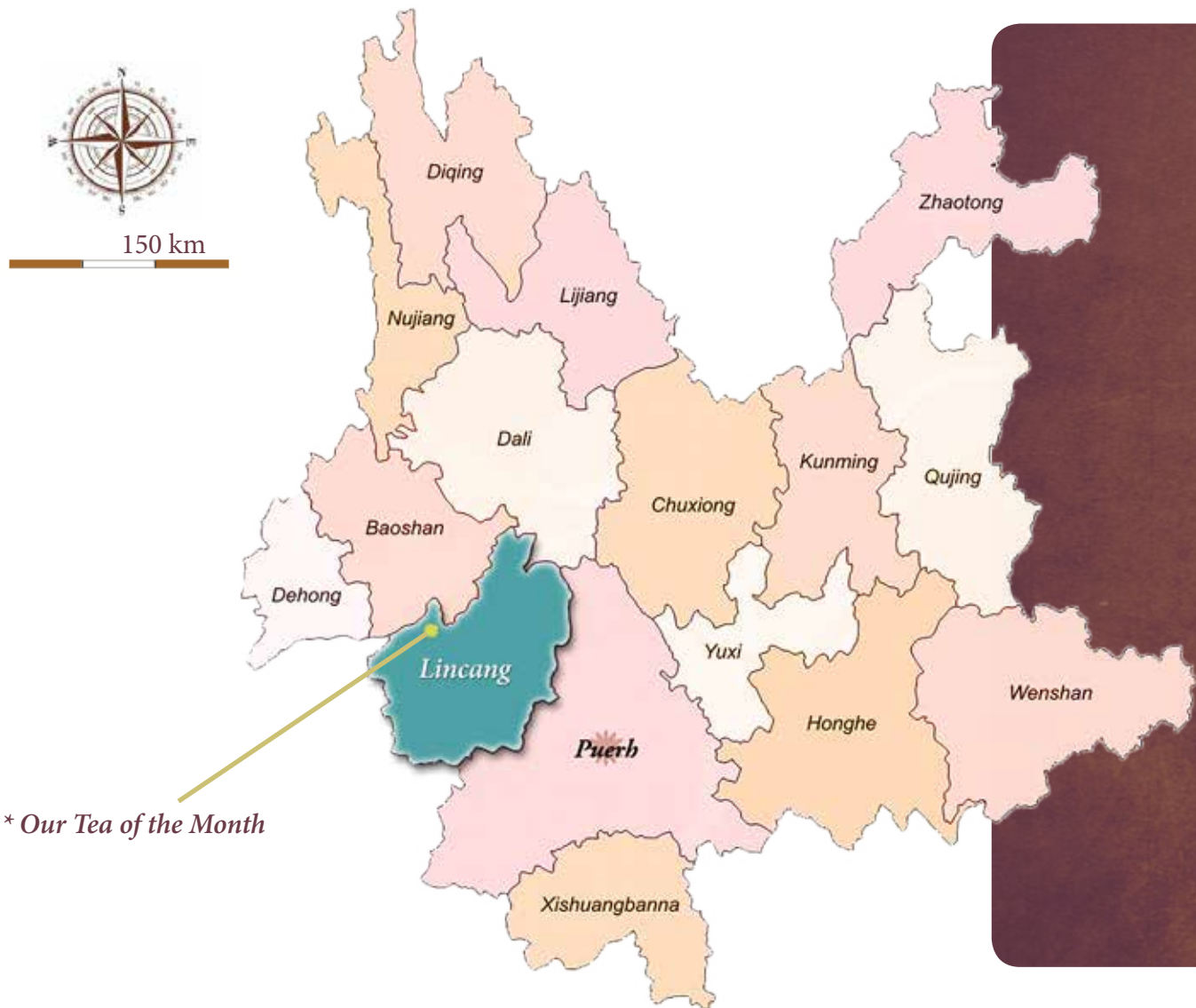


Wa Aboriginal Tribe



~2000 Meters





* Our Tea of the Month

maocha, but once they are aged, they are technically no longer “rough tea”. So an aged, loose-leaf puerh shouldn’t really be called “*maocha*”.

Traditionally, these loose teas were the ones that were grown at smaller farms that didn’t have contracts with any factory—often from so-called “Border Regions” where Yunnan meets Laos, Vietnam or Myanmar. Such teas were then sold at market, traded between farmers or bought and stored by collectors. You can’t be certain, however, that a loose-leaf puerh is a Border Tea, as the big factories also packaged and sold some of their teas loose, though not as much as compressed tea. Although some of the tea that was sold loose was fine quality, most of it was considered inferior.

Puerh processing is a very old and simple methodology. Different genres of tea have different measures of quality based on a ratio of raw material to processing skill. Cliff Tea, like the one we sent last month, for example, is measured at least as much in the processing as it is in the trees/leaves. But puerh is different. With puerh, the quality is much more in the trees/leaves, with tea from older trees having more breadth, wisdom and medicinal *juju*. The tea’s mountain, village and the age of the trees will all play a large role in the price and quality of a puerh. Because of that, there is a lot of confusion and dishonesty surrounding regions and age of trees in the puerh market, with young, plantation-tree tea (*tai di cha*, 台地茶) being mixed into old-growth raw material, or tea from

one region being brought to another and sold under false pretenses. This means that you have to have some experience tasting teas, knowing if it is organic or not, young or old-growth and from which region (at least relatively). It also helps to have trusted sources like we do at the Hut.

Nowadays, there is also a lot of confusion about blended versus single-region tea, as well as what defines “old-growth” puerh. It is good to have some clarity on these issues, at least in terms of what we are writing about in the pages of Global Tea Hut. As for the first issue, there are great blended teas from the Masterpiece (1949-1972), Chi Tze (1972-1998) and Newborn (1998-present) eras of puerh. Sometimes, teas from different regions, or even the same region, enhance

Characteristics of Living Tea

Since we talk so much about living tea in these pages, it is always worth referencing for the newcomers. And those of you that have been in the Hut, reading with us for a short time or long, this can serve as a refresher:

1. Living tea is *seed-propagated*, as opposed to cuttings.
2. The tea trees have *room to grow*—upwards to produce large crowns, and between trees, allowing the plants to organize themselves.
3. Living tea is grown in full *biodiversity*, surrounded by natural ecology.
4. Living tea is, of course, grown *without the use of any agrochemicals* (the Terrible Trio: pesticides, herbicides or chemical fertilizers).

5. The *relationship* between the farmer and trees is one of respect and reverence. Within the character for tea is the radical ‘Man’, as Tea is a relationship between Nature and Man.

6. *No irrigation or fertilizer* of any kind (even organic fertilizer). This allows the trees to be independent, developing strong and deep roots and connecting to the energy of the mountain.

Key to Living Tea: *seed-propagated, room to grow, biodiversity, no agrochemicals, relationship, no irrigation or fertilizer*

each other beautifully. All teas are technically blends, since different sides of the same tree will produce different leaves, let alone different parts of the same forest. Still, there is something to be said for single-region puerh, since that was the way that all puerh tea was traditionally produced. All the teas from the Antique Era (pre-1949) were single region. The terroir of a place, including the culture of how to process the tea will then be homogeneous. This includes the genetic heritage of the trees, the climate and soil, the microbial environment so important to the tea’s fermentation, and ideally also the spiritual/cultural rituals that surround harvest and production. As for what we mean when we call a puerh “old-growth”, for us it means that the tea leaves were harvested from trees that are

at least one hundred years old. We think that when you start talking in centuries, it’s definitely “old-growth”.

When drinking fresh-from-the-farm *maocha*, there are many criteria for finding the right tea to make into cakes: you can drink with an eye towards aging the tea (in which case you will have to have a lot of experience drinking aged and aging teas at various stages), learning about regions, or creating cakes that can be enjoyed young. The best of teas will be great when young, middle-aged and vintage.

Tea of the Month

Since many of you will want to explore sheng puerh on your own,

drinking cakes and *maocha*, we thought that sharing a clean, chemical-free tea from a known source and region, and from old-growth trees, would be helpful to your journey through the amazing world of puerh. Such bright tea as this month’s can therefore be so much more than enjoyment; it can also be the measure of a great young puerh. As we were searching for this year’s sheng Light Meets Life cake, we had it narrowed down to three choices. This month’s tea, called “Mountain Wind”, was the runner-up this year. (You will have to wait a bit to learn more about the wonderful cake we are pressing right now.) It is, nonetheless, a wonderful tea in its own right. When we learned that we could get a large enough quantity of the *maocha* to send to you all, we were thrilled.



This tea is from the village of Da Hu Sai in Lincang. The leaves are harvested from 1-to 200-hundred-year-old trees, which means it is on the younger side of what we call “old-growth” puerh. The trees are all chemical-free, grown naturally in forest gardens with very little human intervention, which means that the tea is vibrant and healthy “living tea”.

The Lincang region is the northernmost of the three major tea areas in Yunnan. It is also the birthplace of all tea. The forests there have the oldest trees, and deepest roots in Cha Dao. There is some disagreement amongst scholars as to the origin of tea, but in traveling to the three major areas of Yunnan, we have found that the Lincang region is the home of all Tea. We especially feel this in the “Five Mountains”. Our understanding, however, is

based more on a feeling, a connection and affinity to Tea and Her spirit than on any linear proof—take it or leave it... The five mountains all Tea originated from are:

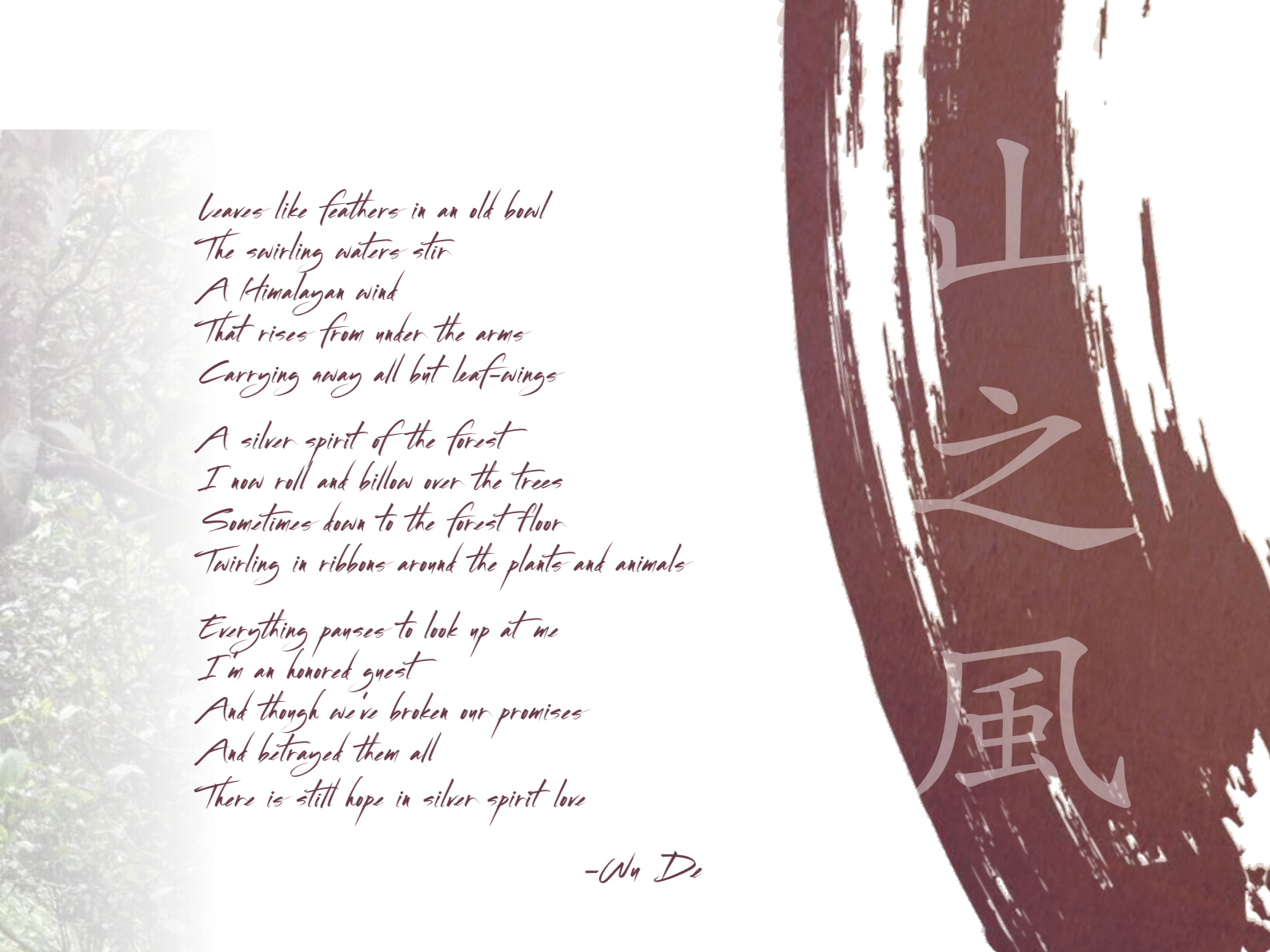
1. Ming Feng (鳴風)
2. Mang Fei (忙肺)
3. Mei Zi Qing (梅子菁)
4. Wu Jia Zhai (武家寨)
5. Da Xue Shan (大雪山)

There are many other tea-growing regions in Lincang, like the now famous Bing Dao. Tea from this area has only blessed the market in modern times, though the aborigines have been drinking this tea for millennia. The tea here is strong and deep, with sun, moon, mountain and air pouring through it.

The Da Hu Sai village tea is strong but Yin. The liquor is thick, with astringency and bitterness, but

a fast transformation that leaves a sweet aftertaste in the mouth. Such a flavor profile is often considered the ideal in young puerh—both for drinking now and for aging. The Yin energy is so full and brisk that it is on the verge of changing to Yang, like a woman late in her pregnancy, a raincloud about to burst, or that dark time just before the dawn. We find the energy very uplifting, cooling and yet so very Yin that we thought “Mountain Wind” to be the perfect name for this month’s tea. We hope you find the perfect summer retreat to enjoy this amazing spring tea, sharing the spirit of the ancient forests of Yunnan with those you love.





*Leaves like feathers in an old bowl
The swirling waters stir
A Himalayan wind
That rises from under the arms
Carrying away all but leaf-wings*

*A silver spirit of the forest
I now roll and billow over the trees
Sometimes down to the forest floor
Twirling in ribbons around the plants and animals*

*Everything pauses to look up at me
I'm an honored guest
And though we've broken our promises
And betrayed them all
There is still hope in silver spirit love*

-Wu De

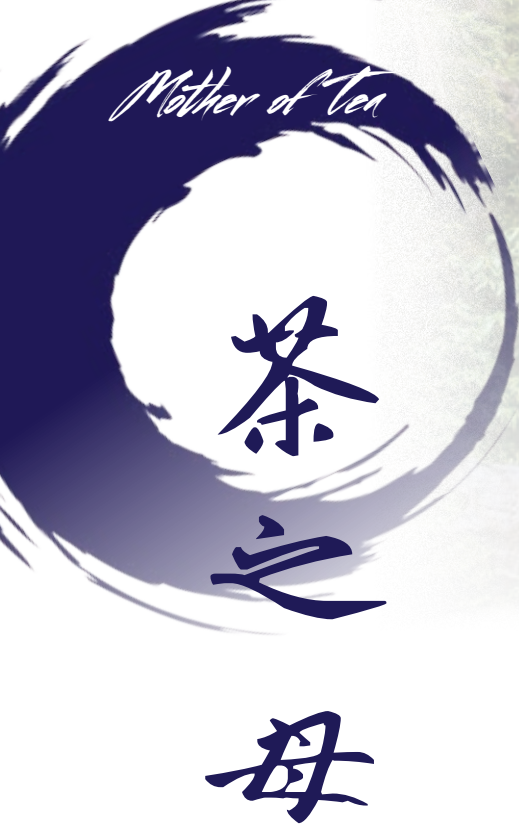
Brewing Tips for Mountain Wind

Mountain Wind is the most quintessential of all leaf-in-the-bowl teas, so we wouldn't want to suggest brewing it any other way! Even if you do decide to brew some of this tea gongfu or in a side-handle, please do yourself a favor and put a few leaves in a bowl. The summer is a great time to head outdoors for a session in Nature, and with such a cooling tea as company you will be rewarded with an amazing experience.

This tea will be more easily influenced by the water that you choose, as it is lighter, greener and more Yin. For that reason, you may want to save the extra-special spring water you have for a session of Mountain Wind. Reading through this month's issue, you will learn a lot about water for tea, much of which will help you to pair the best water with this month's tea. If you can, hike to a local spring and fetch some water for yourself. The added energy put into preparing this tea well will reward you with a transformative brew. This month's tea is truly medicine, and it is important that we begin to see our tea

that way. Such a view can extend to the food we eat and the water we drink. As you enjoy this month's tea, and read all about water as an element in the alchemy of tea, cultivate a greater reverence for water, which is a fundamental part of your body and the bodies of those you love. In that way, we become more grateful for the water and tea we have, learning to celebrate the simple joys of being alive in this world.

Be sure to surround this month's tea with a bit more reverence, as it has traveled long and far from the source of all Tea to be with you. A bowl of fresh *maocha* on a summer afternoon is one of the greatest joys a tea lover can know, especially when the tea is from old-growth trees. These amazing leaves carry great energy from old mountain forests—an energy that rises from under you like the winds rolling down the Himalayas. Watching these amazing, juicy leaves open in some fresh water you gathered yourself, feeling the vibrant, airy, feminine Qi rise from under your arms in cooling billows and you may find yourself in another place...



WATER

THE MOTHER OF TEA

-Wu De

And so we begin our exploration of water as an element in the alchemy of tea. There is no simpler, more affordable way to improve your tea than better water. It is, after all, most of what's in the bowl. But there is more in water than just better tea. There are also metaphors for living skillfully, appreciation for the source of all life on this planet, as well as a need to address the effects our civilization is having on water.

There is no easier, simpler way to improve your tea or your life than water. Water is the medium of Tea, as it is the medium of life. Since ancient times it has been known as the "Mother of Tea". Like Tea, water is incredibly sensitive, taking the shape of whatever container it is placed in, adapting and flowing with the contours of the land, and consequently it has always been a tremendously important Daoist symbol. In fact, the Dao itself is often called the "Watercourse Way." Water always finds the easiest route, flowing through, under, over or around obstacles effortlessly. It also always seeks the lowest place, teaching us the power of humility. When we put ourselves beneath the lessons we wish to learn, they flow into us.

The ancient fascination with water, especially by Tea mystics, hasn't gone from the world. The Japanese water magician, Masaru Emoto, published his seminal work, *Hidden Messages in Water* changing forever the way we heal with water. In his experiments, he photographs water crystals that are flash-frozen. He compares crystals from healing springs and polluted waters, as well as the differences between water that was exposed to love and joy versus that exposed to hatred; and water exposed to sounds, words and music as well. The positive waters form crystals that are beautiful and symmetrical, whereas the negative crystals are discordant and ugly. Half the earth is water; and the human body itself is 50 to 70% water. It is easy to

see why Chajin have always sought out magical waters to compliment their tea, and how more attention to the water you drink, and the energy structure of it, is a healing shift.

There is an old Chinese saying that a great tea is ruined by poor water, but an average tea can be made great with special water. It's a shame that we have deprived ourselves of the great variety of water that was once available to tea lovers. In ancient times, water was divided into Heaven and Earth, and they tried many kinds of water with certain teas: water from snow or rain, and even snow melted from certain locations or times, like the first snow to gather on the lower branches of a plum tree. And from the Earth, they took water from certain springs



and streams, or even rivulets in the center of great rivers, like the famed “Tiger’s Eye” that once rotated in the center of the Yellow River and was renowned for its ability to enhance a certain kind of green tea. Tea sages carried magical waters in gourds, stored them in stone urns and went to amazing lengths to fulfill the alchemy of Tea.

I sometimes imagine myself by some ancient spring, brewing up the Elixir of Life with its crystal waters; or inside a hut melting snow from the highest peaks to steep my old-growth puerh from the lowest jungles—bringing Sky and Earth together through my human efforts. Such poetic visions transport me to other times more akin to the magical spirit of Tea. Perhaps it was a

puerh that told me tales of its past, reminding us both of a cleaner, brighter Earth that could be again, if we but change our ways...

Source

The source of your water is paramount. Since Sky/Heaven water is pretty much out of the question, we are left to find healing Earth waters. There may still be some places where snow or rain could be used for tea. If you find yourself in such a place, be sure to experiment, and raise a cup for us all. For the rest of us, though, water is mostly going to be about finding good Earthly sources. And could there be a more poignant symptom of the modern sickness

than the fact that we have no more water and can’t even drink that which falls from the sky? Imagine if you set up a stall two hundred years ago trying to sell bottled water—you’d be thought mad! Even my grandfather’s generation thought the switch to bottled water was insane. And considering that we *are* water, its sickness *is* our sickness.

Traditionally, Earth water was divided into: spring, stream and well. And they were generally ranked in that order qualitatively. However, relying too much on Ming Dynasty water notes betrays the true spirit of Tea, which is experiential and present. The world has moved on. It is interesting to read about the water/tea combinations of past ages, but we must focus on the tea

in front of us, and how to improve it. All the books and scholarly notes, translations and definitions won't make a better cup of tea. In fact, they can sometimes get in the way. It is nice to fly on the poetic visions of Tang Dynasty tea, but applying the water wisdom of that age to this one is foolish, and unrealistic. They had different tea, different water and a very different alchemy than we do. Nowadays, there are definitely wells that are better than springs, and springs that are better than wells. Perhaps even back then there were such exceptions. It's hard to say without drinking their tea. In general it's also dangerous to think that all X's are better than all Y's, as Nature always provides plenty of exceptions. It is not as if the old tea masters compared every single well to every single spring. I don't think this was their point anyway; rather, they were suggesting that in general spring water is better than well water because of the minerals, altitude and the fact that the water flows a bit, and that movement is important. Still, this is a generalization, not a law. Without experiential wisdom, all the quoting won't improve your water or tea.

There are some general principals we can use to navigate our exploration for good water. For example, it is always better if you can gather water yourself from Nature, rather than buying it in a bottle. The act of fetching water puts a bit of your energy into your tea. It makes it real, and demands respect. Every week we hike into the mountains to gather the week's water for the center. This ritual is transcendent, and the tea on that day is always some of the best, lit up with the morning's stroll through the mountains and the love for our favorite water. Guests are always able to taste the difference drinking such tea with fresh spring water.

Walking up those stairs this last decade has changed more than just my water for tea; it has also transformed me. In the end, making a



commitment to gather water once a week is also making a promise to hike in Nature once a week. And a good hike is healthy in its own way. One day, as I was midway up those stairs, I realized just how much this trip had affected me, my outlook and my way of being.

If you are unable to gather water from Nature, try to put a bit of your energy into the act of getting water in other ways. You could walk to the store rather than driving, for example—filling your water with intention and power, rather than viewing it as a means to an end. We should learn to respect our water as much as we respect Tea, and feel grateful

for the role it plays as medium to our medicine. In the end, the water is the greater portion of the medicine anyway.

Pay attention to the differences in your water. Don't just read that spring water is better than well water. Instead, gather water from a well and, if possible, from a spring and then taste them side by side. Use them for different teas. The best water for one kind of tea may not necessarily be the best for another. The tea mystics of the dynasties were out experimenting with different water and tea combinations, so why should we do any less? Sure, we have less variety to choose from, but



that doesn't mean we shouldn't try to find the best of what is available to us.

In general, waters that move a bit are ideal, but you don't want water that is crashing, expending its Qi. The water should not be too still either. It is also helpful if there are some minerals in the water—too little and it will seem flat, too much and it will be heavy and cloudy, leaving residue behind on your teaware and a flavor in your tea. Also, pay attention to the differences between water drawn at different times of day. There is an amazing quality to dawn water, as it is full of the Yang energy of an awakening

world. It is deeper and richer than water from the same spring gathered in the afternoon or evening.

When tasting different waters, we look for water that is smooth and rich. Pay attention to texture in your mouth. Roll it around, without slurping or aerating it. Good water feels silky and smooth, as if the atoms are together and aligned. After you swallow, is there a pinch in your throat? No? Well, good water slides down comfortably. It also coats your mouth and throat, lingering for a long time. How long can you feel the water throughout your mouth after you have swallowed it? Great water also quenches

your thirst deeply. After hiking up the many hundreds of steps on a hot morning, we are often sweating and thirsty. Even a single, small metal cup of this spring water completely quenches the thirst and penetrates deeply into every part of the body. To really test a water, try it with a tea that you are incredibly familiar with. In this way, you will surely find a water that is ideal for you.

Storage

The second way to improve our water and tea is storage. This is yet another way to develop respect for

Tea, further ingraining it into our life, as we begin to live a life of Tea. Tea fills us and permeates our lives. It becomes a part of all that we do in this way.

Your water storage jar need not be anything fancy, just a simple glazed urn. If you are unsure about the quality, use something glazed. Unglazed clay can really influence the water dramatically.

Water should be stored similarly to tea, away from sunlight and in a place where the temperature stays cool and constant. This is why plastic bottles are not ideal. Plastic is an unstable molecule and therefore breaks down into the water. It also allows light to enter, causing temperature fluctuations throughout the day. Storing your water in a jar will greatly improve the quality of your tea.

Always scoop from the top with a pitcher or *hishaku* (ladle). When water is still, the lightest water rises to the top. That water is ideal for tea, with more Qi and breadth. We often give the very bottom water to the plants at the center. Try putting water in a pitcher to rest and then drink from the top, middle and bottom. I think you'll be able to tell the difference.

Try to honor and respect your water the way you do Tea, as medicine. As we mentioned earlier, Mr. Emoto in Japan did experiments photographing water crystals exposed to prayers and emotions, as well as music. Every time we fill a kettle of water at the center, we first pause before the urn and put some loving-kindness (*metta*) into it. We all know that our mother's food is better than the food at a restaurant, because of the love she puts into it. Why should water be any different? In fact, water is even more sensitive than food. Fill your water with gratitude. This water will become 50 to 70% of your body after you drink it. It sustains you and gives you life. Ask it to fulfill and bring out the best in your tea. Introduce it

to your tea, inviting it to come and enhance your session. You will soon see a difference in your tea and life by respecting water in this way.

The Mother of All Life

Water is half our Earth. It is so intimately connected to this life we live. It is not just a part of us, but *is us*—fundamentally. Honor and respect water, not just as the Mother of Tea, but also as the flow of your life, from rain and sky to mountains and ocean. Change flows like water. Water moves the way the Dao does, and so we can learn about Infinity watching from the bank of a river.

Water is half our Earth. It is so intimately connected to this life we live. It is not just a part of us, but is us—fundamentally. Honor and respect water, not just as the Mother of Tea, but also as the flow of your life, from rain and sky to mountains and ocean.

Our tea is dry, unmoving and brittle leaves. It is the water and heat that awaken it and bring it to life. The water begins the flow of a tea session. Use the time while your water boils the way all the tea sages, past and present, have used such time: for meditation and contemplation. Wait for the “wind to sigh the pines”, which is what they called the sound the boiling kettle makes, signaling the beginning of Tea's movement.

This very water we drink has traveled through millions of other human bodies, and we now find ourselves drinking Genghis Khan, as well as all the Tea sages that have ever been. Drink of the amazing spring water, for it is still here on

this Earth, in you and I. Water flows through these global cycles—Sky and Earth, rain and river—to our very kettles, then through our pots and into us. As this stream of water flows by our tea, do you notice how effortlessly these leaves join its currents? The tea so naturally falls into the stream of hot water, going with its flow on its way to us. We should also live like this. We should also make tea like this, so that we too are just another eddy in the stream.

Rikyu often said, “Imagine your life without tea and if it is any different, you have yet to understand tea.” This deep Zen wisdom is about recognizing that Tea is a voice of Spirit and Nature. We shouldn't be distracted by the form. Tea is not a substance; it is a heart. There is no better way to actualize that wisdom than drinking just hot water. My master asked us to brew only water for three months and three days. He often said that when you can serve hot water to guests and they feel as if they have drunk tea, you will know mastery is near. “If you can't drink and understand water, you can't advance in gongfu tea,” Master Lin often says. By just drinking water, we learn to recognize that water does actually have structure, and the influences affect that structure in ways that benefit tea preparation—both in the mouthfeel and in the way the tea is taken into our beings.

This month, try having a session, alone or with friends, drinking only water. Use a pot or just bowls, or even gongfu, doing everything you would ordinarily, only without the tea leaves. In this way, you will develop a greater respect for just how much water works in and through all the tea you prepare.





STAY WITH THE TEA

-Wu De

Now and then, it is important to return to the basics. This is the last in our series on the Five Basics of Tea Brewing. Let us all use this review to refine our understanding of tea preparation and learn new and better aspects of gongfu.

Over the last four issues, we've discussed the Five Basics of Tea Brewing in great detail, renewing parts of them each issue to keep them fresh, and to continue practicing them. Remember, *advanced techniques are basic techniques mastered.* We can't repeat that enough. It is a mistake to think that the master has grown out of the basics. Many people think that the amazing concert pianist just showed up and performed, living the easy life. But most master musicians practice hours a day, and often scales are included in that practice. Without strong roots, a tree will never grow tall. In this final month of the basics, review each one and take note of the ways you've grown over time, as well as the areas you could still improve.

So far, we've talked about separating the tea table down the middle and doing everything on the right side with the right hand and vice versa. This helps us stay balanced, front and center, which is very important energetically. It is also rude in Asian cultures to turn one's back on guests. The most important aspect of this principle, though, is that it protects our teaware. In decades of tea brewing, the number

one reason I have seen for teaware getting knocked over and/or broken is due to reaching across the table with the opposite hand, which leaves the teapot in a blind spot that you can easily hit when you return to an upright posture.

Then we talked about all the circular movements in tea brewing, and there are many, like filling the pot with water or pouring the tea into the cups, etc. All of the circular movements done with the left hand should be clockwise, and with the right hand, counter-clockwise. An easier way to remember this is that the circular movements are towards the center. This is to do with the ergonomics of our body and the natural energy flow from our center to our wrists/hands.

The third Basic of Tea Brewing is to do with the kettle: always put the kettle on the off-hand side and use the off-hand to handle the kettle. This means that if you are right-handed, the kettle should be on your left side, and that you should always use your left hand to pour water. If you are left-handed, then the kettle goes on the other side. There are many reasons why this is an important basic of all tea brew-

ing. The most important reason for using the off-hand to hold the kettle, though, has to do with fluency. Smoothness and fluency in brewing are the most relevant factors of gongfu tea, which is why this basic is the one that is most applicable to a gongfu brewing methodology. When you use the off-hand to handle the kettle there is much greater fluency. You can pick up the kettle with the off-hand and remove the lid from the pot with the strong hand. Then you fill the pot and at the instant the off-hand is returning the kettle, the strong hand has already lifted the pot to start pouring into the cups. This is much smoother and without hesitation. It is all one movement, in other words.

Last month we turned to the fourth Basic of Tea Brewing, and in doing so took our list inwards: Never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever pick up the kettle until your heart is still. (That's right, ten 'evers'!) The time it takes the water to boil has always been a time for meditation. In traditional times, Chajin called the sound boiling water makes "the wind sighing the pines". If you use a metal kettle, you may also share in this



sentiment. Nothing will improve your tea brewing more than a still heart, a heart free from obstructions. And if you are talking, out loud or in your mind, nothing with mastery, quietude or grace will follow. Instead, you may leave a trail of broken teaware behind you. In order to achieve mastery of gongfu tea, concentration and focus will be needed.

This month we turn to the last of the Five Basics of Tea Brewing: *Stay with the tea*. Quieting the mind while the water is boiling, and finding the Stillness within before raising the kettle and initiating the brewing process is important, but it would all be lost if you start chatting immediately after picking the kettle up. This last principal is about putting all your attention, concentration and one-pointedness of mind (*samadhi*) into the brewing process. All your attention, heart and focus should be on the pouring, steeping, decanting and serving the tea to the guests. Not a drop of attention should be spilled—by distracting thoughts, conversations, etc. Traditionally, it was thought to be rude in Chinese culture to talk while pouring the tea, as the mind of those words would then be in the cup.

Even businessmen discussing deals or scholar-artists debating the merits of a particular poem would pause in their conversations to pour their tea. This also inspires better listening, which means better conversations.

Only when the cups or bowls have been handed out to all your guests can you withdraw your attention from the process. The master brewer becomes the brewing, as with any other art. In order to become the process, you will have to completely immerse yourself in it. The shogun Hideyoshi complimented the great tea master Rikyu, saying that when he prepared tea he was like the greatest of samurai warriors in a martial contest: there is nowhere to penetrate. His concentration was so complete, in other words, that there was no possibility of disturbance. I have seen a fly land on a master while brewing, and watched with amazement as the process went on totally undisturbed. My favorite picture of my master shows him at peace while some tea steeps, though he is surrounded by dozens of noisy guests taking photos and talking. *Stay with the tea*.

For some time, this will mean that you can't talk during the actual

brewing. This doesn't matter in a silent session. (Or does it? What about internal dialogue?) But in those where we are connecting to others through heartfelt conversation, relaxed dialogue, etc. you will find that over time these pauses are not awkward, but desirable. If the conversation drifts into topics that promote a loss of presence, you, as the host, can change the topic back to awakening things. And you always have the perfect subject to discuss: *the tea!* Bring the guests back to the tea. Ask them about its flavor or aroma. Ask them about the bowl or cup. Invite them to notice the simple wonders in this moment, here and now. Invite them to be present.

To be with the tea from the raising of the kettle to the distribution of the cups or bowls, completely focused and absorbed in what you are doing will improve your tea, not to mention bring a mindfulness to the art of tea that promotes cultivation, discipline—gongfu!

As usual, we are excited to hear about your insights: globalteahut@gmail.com



FETCHING SACRED WATERS

-Shen Su

There is a saying in our tradition that "Behind every tea master is a cha tong (tea servant)." This has two meanings: The obvious one is that the master cannot prepare tea for guests without an assistant(s) to help with the water. The second important meaning of this old saying is that the master was once herself a cha tong, serving as an apprentice to her own master. You can learn a lot fetching water for tea.

The last drop glides off the silver-tipped spout and fills the side handle teapot. The iron kettle stands empty. Steam is rising, tea infusing, fire-bound coals basking in the brazier. In the Main Tea Hall, sunset orange themes the decor: quiet, dim, and gentle on the eyes. Purple tea, our Evening Sky; jarred tea: our sacred sand; steeping tea: our ebbing and flowing ocean. It's late morning. We sit around the table in silent repose. Silent as we sleep, as we meditate, as we drink tea. Outside, the city bombs with noise, but we make room for the space in which no sound exists. Shoulders draw down, gently, hands join near the *hara*, and eyelids glide slowly like silk over polished marble. The faintest smile, often visibly without, wets

our lips. If it's fine tea—and it is—sweetness sails back on our breath, after first coating the mouth, then effortlessly rolling down the back of the throat like morning dew down a curved blade of spring grass. Awareness increases. The breath becomes more noticeable. The air is still and through that stillness the iron kettle gestures in my direction. A simple exchange is made. Bowl tea is set before each guest and it's time for me to fetch water...

Wherever I go, there I am: from the Main Tea Hall to the Zen Temple—two great traditions manifest in adjacent rooms. The distance is short but the energy shift is great as soon as I pass from room to room, a movement marked by the gentle sound of tinkling beads that drape

the doorway. The beaded curtain sways like a heavy cape in my careful wake. The path before me now: an arching mosaic of simple wooden steps embedded in a sea of white rocks. I step dutifully onto the wooden path leading to the meditation hall. I hold the iron kettle in my left hand as I touch foot onto tatami mats. The room is clean and shaded, refined and simple. Here, in this spiritual chamber, this place of purity, this sanctity, a few major players reside: First and foremost, Lord Buddha on the altar, always providing us the opportunity to take refuge in and bow to our Higher Self. And in the opposite corner, we find our water, stored in the womb of an Yixing, purple-sand jar. Inside, there's a reef of crystals,



charcoal, a broken teapot and other water-enhancing materials. By its side I kneel, moving with the center of my body. I relax the kettle from my hand. I clasp both hands on the bosom of the jar, close my eyes, and breathe...

We meditate here. We take a seated position, close our eyes, and observe the breath. We sit for the sake of sitting and we vow to attain the unattainable. We generate a particular energy. A blend of frequencies akin to love, gratitude, perseverance, determination, forgiveness, harmony, grace, friendship, liberation, peace, happiness and warming embrace to name but a few of the ingredients that flavor this hall. And who (or what rather) can taste that medley of peaceful vibrations

which permeates this space if not the receptive medium of water?

Immediately, I thank the water. Hands still clasping the urn, through the pores I pour my heart. Sometimes I feel an ocean delicately nudging the inside walls of the jar. Other times, a placid pond in a wild forest. I might sit there for ten or twenty seconds before making a request, often for nothing more than love and gratitude at the tea table. What I request of the water is often dependant on the texture of the tea session. In the way that tea, teaware, and hanging scrolls complement the seasons, my prayers to the water complement the session as well.

Unsure as to why, the next action is my favorite. A ladle hangs from the wall above the clay vessel.

Its handle is cut of bamboo, nodes roughly spaced every half inch; its head is a gourd the shape of an exaggerated pear; its belly is coarsely shattered revealing the womb in which the water will enter. This ladle hangs not from some simple hook, but from a jagged curving branch jutting out from the wall. I love reaching up towards the ladle the way plants grow towards the light, slowly and earnestly, avoiding all obstacles. With single-mindedness, I release the ladle from its branch perch and rest it by my side. I hear tea being drunk back at the table. Bowls being lifted, bowls being lowered...

I remove the lids, first from the clay jar and then from the iron kettle. Everything is open. Steam rises.



Raising the kettle, the ladle, and my body in unison, I begin to draw water. The water in the jar is calm and quiet and I intend to keep it that way. It's not so much me drawing the water as it is the water filling the empty space of the gourd. I simply guide the gourd, holding its handle like a long brush. Ever so carefully, so as not to spill a droplet, the empty kettle and the full gourd unite. With each ladle, water takes on the interior shape of the iron kettle; water laden with gratitude, pure reflective consciousness and imbued with loving-kindness. At the correct angle, with just the right pouring motion, I draw and ladle... draw

and ladle... Once appropriately full, I carefully return the ladle to its abode, fasten the lid back on the jar, cap the kettle and rise from my kneeled position.

It's a celebratory ritual: a deep reverence, a slow dance and an honor. It's one of the few things I can honestly say I perform without trying to speed up or make more efficient. If ever I draw slightly faster, *gulp* and *drip* are the indicative sounds pointing to my state of mind. If ever I ladle apace, spilt water wets the outside of the kettle. If ever I lack presence, uncertainty stains my movements. But when I regulate speed and employ patience,

there is no sound, no trace. When I am present, I become *fetching water*. In those moments, I learn about myself and I learn to love.

Exiting the room, kettle in hand, I walk the wooden path and wade through the beaded curtain once again. A simple exchange is made and I rejoin the rhythm of the tea ceremony. All that I can do for the water has been done—until the next kettle empties. Like a calligraphic *Enso*, the circle is never complete, always starting again. From here, the water will go through countless other influences until reaching our guests in the form of tea. What traces remain from the process of



Fetching water from the purple-sand (zisha) water urn in the Zen Temple of the center. Wu De always says this urn and what's in it are the center's greatest treasures, and should be treated with according reverence.



fetching can only be experienced by each individual in each individual brew.

Even if this reverence towards water is just poetic, there's something special about it that changes people. Moreover, if I myself have become more grateful and loving as a result of fetching water, that will have an affect on everyone in the tearoom. Whether my consciousness changes the water or not doesn't really matter; through it all I am changing myself in a way that benefits my growth.





WATER IS THE JOURNEY

-Max Raphael

We have a long-standing tradition of hiking up to Celestial Mountain each week to draw our water for tea. It's an integral part of a visit to our center, and central to life here. Max shares what it's like to gather this mystical water we all love.

I look up at the first set of stairs before me, under a great wall of trees that lead further up the mountain. Setting down my empty container for fetching water, I pause to take a silent, mindful breath before beginning the hike. With a quiet mind, I join the others again, slowly pacing the several hundred steps up the winding stone path, enclosed by lofty pines and arching bamboo. Suspended in the cool morning mist some 1,000 meters up, my mind goes inward.

Only a few minutes in, I find myself thinking over many things. Great life questions pass through my mind; things to figure out, ways to improve myself, lessons to learn... It seems with each step along the worn stone path, I go deeper into reflection. After only a few more steps, I realize that the same familiar thoughts seem to visit me each time I walk up this path. What is it that causes the deeper parts of me to come to the surface? Could it be this mountain? Could it also be the reverence people have brought to this place for many years now?

Walking a little farther, we pass a big-hearted Taiwanese woman with an auntie-like character about her. She booms a strong "hello" and "good morning" to each of us, echoed by a wide, genuine smile, as we walk by with our empty water containers...

At our tea center in Taiwan, each day is punctuated by morning and evening meditation—except for one morning each week, when we head into the mountains to fetch fresh spring water for tea. Packing breakfast and empty water jugs, we share silence during the drive up, still welcoming the meditative mind to start the day. In less than an hour's drive, we arrive at *Xian Shan* (仙山, "Celestial Mountain") in Shitan Township. The water there is well worth the drive and hike to collect; Wu De often says it's essentially the best water for tea in all of Taiwan, and is the primary reason that our center is situated in Miaoli County.

We often say that we raise a bowl to you, our global tea community, while drinking tea here at the

Hut—and it's true! The same can be said about our altars, upon which we regularly set a freshly brewed cup of tea; this tea is also offered to our brothers and sisters around the world, to signify that there is always a hot bowl or cup of tea waiting for you, whenever you should make it to our center or not. Indeed, our Way of Tea at the center is inseparable from this ritual of gathering water at this spring. Wu De began fetching water for tea at *Xian Shan* twelve years ago. For many of the early years, he would go even twice a week, cradling between his arms a large ceramic urn full of the water. Such urns are quite heavy even when empty; we can only imagine how much more demanding it was to carry water, as we now use metal and plastic jugs that are much lighter! But Wu De relates to the challenging passage each week as an experience that changed not only his tea, but also his life. Constantly engaging both his physical strength and mindfulness for the sake of Tea would call for an alignment of body and mind... of tea and everyday life,



of taking the seat at the tea table and walking on the Earth. This is why we treasure this ritual of fetching water; beyond the calm we find on the mountain, or the special water we tap at the spring, we get to connect with our tea much earlier than the moment we pour from our kettle.

When brewing tea, I focus on creating a space of harmony and awakening for myself and my guests sitting before me. When fetching water, I don't even know who will drink it, or in what ways it will serve their hearts, bodies or minds. And I don't need to know. I can bring my mind and body in alignment, knowing that I am taking these steps for Tea itself, for this wonderful Dao that is always a path home to our true selves, unfolding itself in the next hot bowl of tea passed our way...

I keep this in mind when carrying this fresh, magical spring water down the mountain. I know that this water will not only serve those physically at the center this week to enjoy tea; it will also facilitate our practice of Cha Dao here at the Hut, where our cultivation influences hundreds of people around the world. With this in mind, I try to remember there are many joining me on this drive into the mountains, and with each step up the quiet mountain trail...

The Temple

The road quickly transforms from city streets to country roads, bordered by vibrant flowers and foliage that climb the encompassing valleys.

Stepping out of the car, the air is cooler and mistier than before, and the morning is often blanketed by clouds and mist rolling through. We put on our hiking shoes, and maintain silence as we begin the hike up to the spring. The empty jars in our hands will be filled with

twenty liters of fresh spring water, and brought back down the several hundred steps on the canopied trail.

We often pass people along the way, also coming to visit the temple and sacred spring. Many are locals, though people sometimes travel from all parts of the island to visit the temple and take of the spring water.

People have been coming to *Xian Shan* for spiritual and healing purposes for over seventy years now, ever since locals spread word of the water's healing properties. As the story goes, a local family in Shitan was stricken with malaria. Living in the mountains several decades ago, the parents and children alike had little options or medical resources to turn to. They had all but resorted to prayer for their solution, until one night, someone in the family had a dream. In it, a spirit told them of a mountain that could heal their illness. At first, they didn't think anything of it, but being so desperate, they decided to ask around. Sure enough, rumors had been spreading among locals of a strange light appearing on a certain mountain, which was thought to be auspicious.

The family eventually came to this place and bowed down to Great Nature herself, humbly asking for a blessing. They lit incense, offered tea, and prayed at this mountain-top, also taking of its heavenly-tasting spring water. Miraculously, after a short time everyone in the family was healed. They attributed this wonder to the mountain, giving full credit to the spring near its peak.

As word spread about this, more people began to come to the humble mountain to pray and take water. In less than ten years, a sizable Daoist temple called *Ling Dong Gong* (靈洞宮, "Temple of the Spiritual Cave") was constructed in an area slightly lower than the peak, which the spring still fed.

Some years later, large stone steps were laid by hand on the steep slope of the mountain, forming two trails up to where the spring orig-



inates, so that the freshest water could be gathered. At the top of the trail, locals constructed a much smaller Daoist shrine to the deity *Jiu Tian Xuan Nu* (九天玄女, "The Mysterious Lady of the Ninth Heaven"). She was invoked to preside over this temple, called *Xie Ling Gong* (協靈宮, "Communal Spirit Temple"), and to protect the spring. *Xuan Nu* is often depicted holding a sword for battle in one hand, and a gourd of the elixir of immortality in the other, symbolizing healing and longevity. As legend has it, she equipped the Yellow Emperor to defeat the war-rrior god, Chi You in a legendary



battle some 4,500 years ago. Maybe she was invoked here for her fierceness, to secure this precious spring that locals have come to revere. Indeed, to this day people bring water down from the steep path by hand to deliver to those who are sick and in need of healing.

Within this temple is a series of sinks and faucets where the spring has been tapped into for people to drink from. Incense, fruit, flowers and other offerings adorn just about every surface in this open-air temple. Statues of the deities worshiped here sit behind their altars, looking out onto a magnificent view that of

the valley below, cupped by steep hills and mountains.

Setting down my empty container once again, I bow facing the main altars, feeling gratitude for this sacred place, and join those who erected this temple in revering the Nature before me. I then walk to the edge of the shrine, where the water is fetched. A few sinks fed by the spring are arranged around a large column, along with a small altar to the water itself. Here I bow yet again, connecting with this moment, and why we are here.

I feel stillness in my heart, as I ask for blessings to rain down on our center and the people in

this community. I set an intention that our thoughts, actions and speech positively affect all whom we encounter. The idea that water can help fulfill such a wish may sound far-fetched. However, I experience each day how sensitive water is as a medium, especially in this practice of Tea. As a Chajin, and/or reader of this magazine, you are no doubt familiar with the idea of water as a great communicator and container. Far beyond things like taste and flavor, it conveys healing and wisdom on many levels: from Spirit to tree, leaf to brewer, bowl to guest.

Brewing tea, you notice how water carries the flavor and aroma

of the Leaf, along with all the characteristics of the teaware and materials it passes through; you experience Qi through this medium of water, further activated by the element of heat. And, maybe you've tried the gongfu experiment where you try drinking the same tea prepared by two different brewers, using the same teaware, water, etc. What ends up in the cup or bowl for our guest is not only the steeped tea, but also our own cultivation in that moment—from the gross to the subtle dimensions, water will convey it all.

After my prayer before the water's altar, I join the others once again. Before rinsing and filling the containers, we each fill up a cup at the sink, and taste the spring today, while looking out towards the valley below. It tastes pure and clean, with the perfect balance of mineral content and hardness-to-softness. Its texture is thick and coating. When I swallow it, it almost disappears like a cloud, without leaving the faintest bit of dryness or pinch in my throat. It was almost as if I was enjoying an amazing tea right in that moment! Indeed, ideal water for tea should exhibit most of the same qualities of a good tea: splashing to the upper palate and coating the mouth pleasantly; moving to the back of the palate on its own, swallowing effortlessly; coating the throat and causing salivation.

Though it changes in interesting ways depending on the weather of a particular week, the water at *Xian Shan* takes on all of these qualities in an exceptional and undeniable way. I remember my very first hike up the trail to taste this water; after climbing the several hundred stairs on an empty stomach with stiff legs, I could feel how the water immediately penetrated and nourished my body. The very moment I swallowed, it was absorbed and integrated. The feeling was more like breathing fresh mountain air than drinking. Ideal water for drinking—

and for brewing tea—should satisfy and nourish in this same way.

After a couple of cups of the pristine water, I set down my mug and proceed to the rear of the sinks where we collect the water for our tea. The empty containers we carried up with us are now rinsed out in the sink, and set on the ground under a couple of taps. Still observing silence, I kneel before my container, alongside another tea brother or sister. We each place our hands on our containers as they fill up with the fresh pure spring water, setting our own intention while the water pours into the silence of the morning. In a shamanistic manner, I ask that each of us here on the mountain may let this water's qualities penetrate our bodies and minds; that we welcome and embody the characteristics of water within ourselves. After all, water is free and unobstructed, happy wherever it finds itself. As it is said in the *Dao De Ching*:

*The supreme good is like water,
Which nourishes all things
without trying to.
It is content with the low places
that people disdain,
Thus it is like the Dao.*

More than a Journey

Water is accepting and forgiving, taking the shape of whatever container it is in, and gracefully embracing what enters it. Often referred to as a metaphor for the Dao, water can subtly teach us how to live our lives. And because water can transmit our own energies and states of mind so purely, we can awaken or harmonize others through it.

In our center, our tea water is stored with respect in a special urn that sits right beside us in our meditation room. In this way, not only is our water exposed to the higher vibrations of everyone meditating, but the act of filling up each kettle

for tea becomes a meditation as well. Even outside meditation times, we are still moved to bow before entering the meditation room, and to observe silence there. And, before filling up each kettle for our tea sessions, we place our hands on the water urn and send it *metta* (loving-kindness), along with any other special intention for the tea session. The water responds to all of these things, and in return enhances our tea sessions and the rest of our day!

This is my intention, in one form or another, whenever I go to gather water for all of you:

*May our very selves be imbued
with those qualities of water, and
use this great communicator to
share any and all merits that come
from our efforts as Chajin and as
students of life.*

Our particular rituals of fetching water shouldn't discourage you from bringing your own unique ideas and meaning to your tea. You don't need a mountain to hike up, or a famous river or spring to draw from. Even if your water fetching involves heading to the supermarket to collect filtered city water, it can be done thoughtfully and mindfully, and with gratitude. Just the same, storing the water and filling your kettle can be done with similar reverence and attention; in its yielding nature, water will take on the energies that you bring to it. In this way, the purity and sensitivity of water make your tea an extension of your mind and cultivation. No longer is it the water you collected at such and such a place, or a tea you received or purchased from this or that shop—it becomes "your tea", and anyone you serve will take it in for their highest benefit.

May you connect with yourself, others, and Great Nature through your tea sessions. May more and more of the things you do throughout your day become your tea brewing, and may you join us in each step up and down this mountain.



生命之於水，入水於一生





WATER FOR TEA

-Nick Hudis

The decision to hike into Nature and fetch one's own water changes so much more than our tea; it also changes us. There is an indescribable energetic shift that comes from being in the quiet of the Wild, communing with Nature through sacred water and then returning home. Despite the ineffability, Nick so beautifully takes us along for the ride.

The day the clocks change to British summer, it dawns foggy and chilly. I'm not up particularly early and it is mid-morning by the time I am at the entrance to Jesmond Dene with Lexi the Collie.

Jesmond Dene is a remarkable place, a deep wooded valley in the heart of the bustling northern city of Newcastle, which was preserved for the community by the 19th century philanthropist Lord Armstrong. Walking into the Dene is like stepping out of the city into the wilds, and also like stepping back in time. It is a magical place.

Today the Dene is mist-shrouded—the tops of the tall trees lost in the fog. There is something Oriental about the steamy scenery.

In the fog, the veil is thinner and the trees and rocks seem nascent, sinking back into the unknowable, formless beginning. The crocuses and snowdrops have come and gone, but a scattering of wood anemones and primroses, the first greening of the trees, the chirping of songbirds and the occasional drilling of a woodpecker reminds that spring is well underway.

We follow zigzag paths to the valley floor where the Ouseburn gushes its way down to the Tyne. The paths are busy with Sunday morning dog walkers and runners. Today I am on a mission, and instead of the familiar route along the burn I seek a path I've not taken before that climbs steeply up the other side of the valley. Lexi is puz-

zled. She keeps running ahead and then looking back questioningly, unsure which way to go.

I am not sure either. I have found out that somewhere just beyond the west side of the Dene there is an ancient holy well known as "St. Mary's Well". I am on a quest for water for tea.

The path leads through a short tunnel under the road and emerges in an unkempt grove where stands the ruined chapel of St. Mary. Once, long ago, this was one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Britain and the home of a cherished Christian relic. Now it is all but forgotten—a few ruins amid a tangle of scrub and sycamore. But not entirely forgotten: vases of flowers and crucifixes adorn some of



the empty window holes. There is a sense of holiness here and also of sadness and a longing for transcendence and tranquility that is just out of reach.

There is the inevitable tourist information sign, but it makes no mention of the well. However, a muddy path between the houses on the other side of the road looks inviting and a short walk leads to the place that I seek.

Through a wooden gate, down a short flight of stone steps into the shade of an ancient yew tree, there is the well, a stone lined basin set into a mossy bank. There are more flowers here, a crucifix and a small statue of the Virgin Mary. She looks so similar to Guanyin. The word

“gratias” is engraved on the stone above the basin.

And here, hidden away in suburbia, is water: living water, flowing from the Earth, pure and unpolluted as it has been for hundreds, maybe thousands of years. *“Gratias,”* indeed.

While Lexi sniffs around, I stand for a while in meditation, feeling the Earth under my feet and the Sky above and letting the sense fields open to my surroundings: the vegetal, earthy smell of the place, the shades of green, brown and grey, birdsong, the steady drip of water from nearby trees, the sound of an airplane high above.

Wordlessly, I begin to feel that sense of connection, that Nowness which tells me that the spirits of this

place welcome my presence. I would like to linger for longer, but Lexi is getting impatient. I’m not sure she really approves of Daoist contemplation. I taste the water. It is sweet with a hint of stoniness and surprisingly warm.

I fill the two bottles that I have brought and after a few more minutes of contemplation, toss the traditional offering of a small silver coin into the well, call Lexi to heel and depart.

An hour later I am home. I decant the precious water into a stoneware jar I found yesterday in a charity shop. This is an important moment for me. I have been feeling my way into Cha Dao for some time, but up till now have been content to use bottled or filtered water.

I carry my jar of water to the music room which doubles as a tea space. My *chaxi* is simple today: a green man printed cloth for the connection with ancient Britain and Nature worship that the well represents. A candle floating in a bowl of water, a few shells, a piece of driftwood and a small statue of a turtle, a Daoist symbol for the Water element, completes the theme. My teaware is a little rice bowl which serves as a *chawan*. And the tea? What could be more appropriate than the puerh I have received from Global Tea Hut!

After a few minutes of silent sitting, I carefully ladle water into the kettle. I've never done this before; it's usually been a matter of glugging some water haphazardly from a bottle. But I really want to be with the water today and the slow mindful ladling seems to honor the water with the respect it deserves. Looking, really looking at the clarity of the water I am pouring reminds me of Laozi's words:

Do you have the patience to wait until your mud settles and the water is clear?

I have a smart temperature-controlled kettle that I couldn't really afford, but a few months ago seemed essential. At the time, the idea of being able to judge water temperature by eye and sound seemed impossibly difficult. But today, I leave the lid off the kettle, ignore the temperature dial and watch and listen as first steam begins to rise, then the first tiny bubbles, then strings of bigger bubbles....

Bowl tea is for me perhaps the ultimate expression of Cha Dao. The simplicity and the immediacy of leaves, water and a bowl takes me right into what Daoism calls "*zi ran*", the spontaneity, the naturalness of things as they are. I have no words to describe the rest of this tea session...

Why so much fuss about water? Am I crazy to have spent the best



part of three hours collecting enough water for a couple of tea sessions? What is wrong with bottled water or filtered water? For me this is part of a process of growth as a Chajin. For most of my life, I drank tea as a beverage and was content to fill a kettle from the tap. Later, I passed through a short phase of tea connoisseur, or perhaps "tea snob" would have described me better. I filled my supermarket trolley with bottles of Volvic or Highland Spring water because only the best would do.

However, very soon Tea became my teacher, and in silent sessions alone and intimate tea sharing with friends awakened me to Her deeper meaning. Cha Dao became "practice" as much as sitting meditation, and it became a way of being in the spirituality of Nature. Bottled water

was perhaps "gongfu" but it was not Cha Dao.

Cha Dao taught me that the essence of Tea was not about indulging in elitist or exotic taste experiences. Cha Dao taught me too that the essence of Tea was not just about drinking fine tea with meditative awareness. Cha Dao taught me that harmony, reverence, purity and tranquility are not confined within the walls of the tea hut, but like water, need to seep quietly into every part of one's being, purifying, nourishing and flowing gently but inexorably down to the vast ocean of Dao.

I can sit in my tea space and pour Volvic into my kettle. I can have an outer appearance of simplicity and tranquility and ignore the environmental impact of plastic bottles transported by fossil fuels across hundreds of miles, but how deep is such harmony and reverence?



Cha Dao was asking me to see clearly and be responsible for my wasteful, consumerist actions and step back to a simpler and more honest connection with Nature. Cha Dao was asking for more effort and mindfulness on my part than casually turning on a tap and filling a filter jug.

In my journey, I had already embraced the idea of “living tea.” Tea that is organic, grown lovingly by small farmers following ancient tradition and passed to me through bonds of friendship rather than business. My teaware has that living quality too, almost all of it coming to me in chance finds or as unexpected gifts. Now it was time to bring water to life as well.

There are hundreds, maybe thousands of wells and springs across Britain to be sought out as sources of water for tea. Some are officially

sacred, some quietly ignored in the perfection of their ordinariness. Not long since, almost within living memory, they were our only source of water. If the well dried up or became tainted, there would be no water. Water mattered as it does today in so many parts of the developing world. Water, *all water*, not just water from “holy” wells, is sacred!

This does not mean that I will never again turn on a tap connected to the public mains supply to brew tea, but I hope that when I do there will be a little more awareness that water is just water... and is more than water.

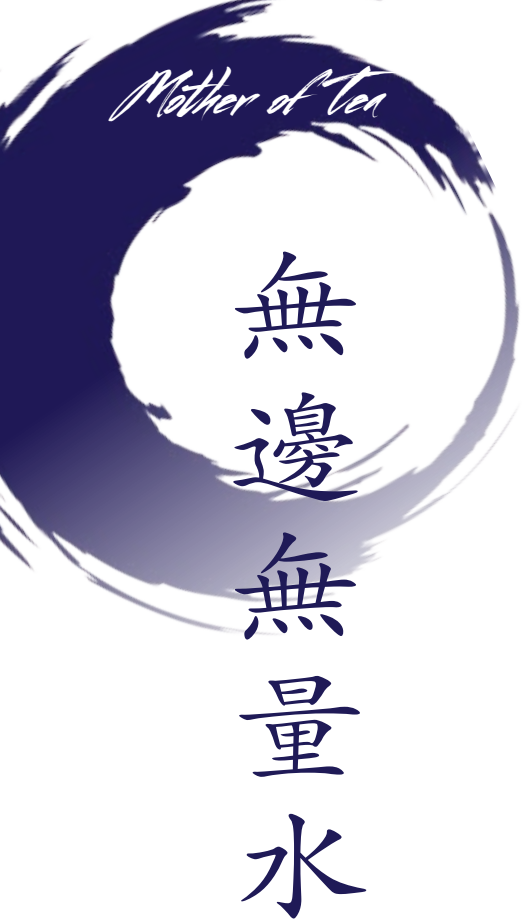
The water I drew from St. Mary’s well had once been ocean, had once been clouds, had once been rain. This water had been all these things since beginningless time and would be all these things again. The water

that makes up most of my body has also been all these things and will be again. Through water I am one with Great Nature. Water is the common medium and material of life.

Just as I am finishing this article, I open We De’s book, *Tea Wisdom*, at random and find these words by Buddhist scholar Dennis Hirota:

One does not prepare the water for one’s own use, but rather participates in and enriches the water’s existence as the water participates in and enriches one’s own life. In this relationship, one experiences both a sense of wonder in the existence of the water just as it is, and a profound sadness that reverberates through the shared existence.





VAST WATERS

-Frederick R. Dannaway

We've convinced this most erudite Daoist scholar, and long time teaist, to pause from his contributions to various academic journals and write for us. In this excellent piece, Dannaway reflects on the "Mother of Tea" with all the historical, scriptural and literary insight at his disposal. These pages are overflowing, and worth reading a few times over.

In the year 1833, on the 15th day of the eight month, a group of Japanese tea mystics placed a jar of Chinese water deep into the source of the Yodo River that flows into Kyoto. In contrast to the wasting of tea as protest in Boston, these *sencha* adepts felt guilty in hoarding the precious—and laboriously imported—Chinese water and so decided to release it into their home waters and thus share its potency with their countrymen. The ring-leader of this plot, the literati tea-master Kakuo, had requisitioned the water from China via Nagasaki and after a year's wait was blessed with three bottles (18 liters) of the water. There was a brief reactionary response to the plan by the government who “feared the Chinese water would poison the drinking supply” but they eventually acquiesced and the population imbibed the water in “minuscule” but nevertheless symbolic doses (Graham 1998).

Connoisseurs of tea and tea literature meet frequently with such seemingly eccentric exploits of water obsession amongst tea sages. Moun-

tain water is most exalted, second is river-water and third is deep well water for the all important consideration in choosing the “medium” for tea. Water is catalytic, it releases flavor and the Qi from the tea while reacting with the Qi of the kettle and exerting its own unique energy, depending on its source. Many tea-masters confirm the potency of specific mountain springs and show a preference for old or wild-tree teas (also from famous mountains) for both flavor and for their energy and healing powers. These attributes, if deduced empirically through generations of observations as well as from a Daoist “mystical primitivism”, can be seen to have retained an influence from the earliest religious observations, of water in China and into Japan. On a practical level, water and tea from remote areas would indeed have special characteristics, such as taste or purity, as well as a metaphysical association with the powerful mountains and wilderness that were the mystical abodes of the Immortals. As the Tea “god” Lu Yu states, “Tea that grows wild

is superior; garden tea takes second place.” There is even a special class of water, Immortal (*shui xian*), associated with the waters and springs of remote regions. The rather technical term *xian* or Immortal, in its simplest form is “man and mountain together” (Needham 1974). The associations of teas and waters from remote mountains and Daoist Immortals are validated by potent, Qi-filled puerh teas that are still available, for a price, to modern tea drinkers. Indeed, seasoned tea drinkers will judge a tea by the Qi they feel from drinking it and some antique puerh, properly stored, are kinetically charged with the energies of their origin. The same preference for the “wild” versus “cultivated” can be found amongst those familiar with ginsengs and certain mushrooms as well. The mountains produce superior plants and Qi, so it is logical that the water they produce be the most coveted. Famous mountains produced famous teas and held famous springs. Likewise, the diversion of water for agricultural purposes was one of the essential steps



of “civilization” which in its best sense is analogous to the cultivation of inner energies of alchemy, or “turning the water wheel.”

The myth of the legendary emperor Shennong, likely from a tribe of the same name practicing swidden agriculture, is credited with discovering the Leaf in his taxonomic research on behalf of the starving, poisoned and uncivilized masses (Dannaway 2009). As the story goes, he was boiling water for sanitary reasons when a few tea leaves fell from a gust of wind into the water, which was perhaps a gourd container. If such legends extend to a prehistory before pottery and metallurgy then water might have been heated in bamboo or in gourds. In light of the cosmological and horticultural myths of China with the bottle gourd, treated with utter mastery by Girardot (1986), one might speculate that the primitive tribesman used stones heated in the fire and placed in the bottle gourd to boil water, perhaps making it the first “kettle.” Many of the alchemical stills of Daoists were traditionally gourd shaped as well.

Sage Advice

When it comes to water, I bow before the pure-flowing channels of the Min.

A tea master like Lu Yu had such a sophisticated palate that he could determine with almost supernatural accuracy the origin of freshly drawn water. Hearing of the exceeding quality of the rivers of Nanling in Yangzi, Lu Yu and a friend dispatched a faithful servant to obtain the precious water. Upon tasting it, Lu Yu judged the water as drawn from the banks, and not from middle of the river as desired. He eventually elicited a confession after exactly determining which parts of the collected water in the jar came from certain parts of the river.

The bewildered servant conceded that he spilled some and replaced it with the water of the riverbanks. Such anecdotes are common among tea masters and serve to highlight the fanatical attention to detail that went into making their holy libation.

The metaphysical qualities of water were certainly considered by tea masters as well, and their symbolic expressions can be found amongst the teaware and in scrolls hung in alcoves. On Lu Yu’s brazier legs, for example, there was the inscription “*k’an* (water) above; *sun* (wind) below and *li* (fire) in the middle.” In the windows on the rather ornate brazier there were grids. On one grid was a pheasant,

The spiritual dimension of Lu Yu’s tea cannot be underestimated, and he clearly abhorred the vulgar “popular” tea culture that had no religious roots. Tea was a medicine and a sacrament at once healing and allowing communication with oneself and divinities.

a fire bird with the trigram *li*. On the second grid there was a small tiger whose trigram is *sun* or wind. The third grid was graced with a fish, trigram *k’an* as a water creature. As Lu Yu wrote, “*sun* rules the wind, *li* rules the fire, *k’an* rules the water. Wind can stir up the fire and the fire can boil water. This is why the three trigrams are on it.”

The spiritual dimension of Lu Yu’s tea cannot be underestimated, and he clearly abhorred the vulgar “popular” tea culture that had no religious roots. Tea was a medicine and a sacrament at once healing and allowing communication with oneself and divinities. The reverence for brewing tea must be placed into an exceedingly ancient culture of

elixir alchemy, macrobiotic potions and magical plants. Daoist cosmology permeated Chinese thought and the elemental theory based on the trigrams held deep spiritual significance for the cycles of Nature and of the fundamentals of reality itself. Tea, brewing in water atop a fanned fire, has a deeply alchemical relationship with the elements that corresponds to the internal organs in sympathy with the elemental energies. As the outer-alchemical arts evolved into internal visualizations, a beverage like tea would have remained an exoteric link to the past.

Daoist theories certainly spread to Japan with the tea seeds brought by Buddhist priests and Daoist fortune tellers associated with various cults. Rikyu’s traditions mention such associations, such as the advice, “In winter start the kettle at 4am, the Hour of the Tiger.” While Rikyu would have no doubt preferred famous mountain waters, he was practical in accepting well-water for his tea. But these were subject to Daoist/Buddhist considerations:

Always use water drawn at dawn for tea, whether the gathering be in the morning, at noon, or at night. This is a matter of the alertness of the practitioner of Chanoyu—of making ready sufficient water for the whole day’s tea from dawn into night. Just because it is a night gathering does not mean one uses water drawn after noon. During the period from dusk to midnight Yin prevails; water’s spirit subsides, poisons are present. Dawn water belongs to the beginning of Yang, when its pristine spirit surfaces; it is the ‘flower of the well.’ This water is vital for tea and demands careful attention on the part of the practitioner.

As Hirota (1995) notes of spiritual water-drawing, “*Seikasui* [is] a Buddhist term for water drawn from 2 to 4 AM. This water is considered especially pure for compounding



These old Daoist drawings depict man as the mountain, with his internal Qi as the springs, rivers and streams. They mirror the macro in the micro, connecting man to the cosmos and his place in it. Drinking tea often evokes a feeling like this, even in those participating in their first ever tea ceremony. We often here people say that they feel like the mountain the tea is coursing through like an old river...

medicines and for altar offerings.” Elsewhere (Hirota 1995) Rikyu, based on traditions written after his death, alludes to “secret matters of Yin and Yang” but as to what he meant exactly would be speculation. So while Rikyu’s obsession with details are no doubt part of a Zen practice of hyper-alertness and single-mindedness, there are intriguing suggestions of a much deeper esoteric, oral transmission.

A 19th century tea-adept in Japan, Ogawa Kashin apparently dictated oral transmissions on his death bed that were published as *Korakudo’s Talks on Tea Drinking*. As Graham (1998) describes, the preliminary sections deal with practical matters such as teaware and boiling of water while the remaining three correspond with the three abovementioned elements of fire, water and wind. Like the Vedic veneration of the *Soma* plant as a god, Kashin believed that the leaves of *sencha* were a “living entity for which systematic preparation meth-

ods existed in Nature” that were revealed through a “ritualistic presentation method for *sencha* that adhered to the principles of and respected the elements—Yin and Yang (*in-yo*) fire, water and wind—which regulated the natural order of the universe and the calendar.” (Graham 1998) Kashin wrote that the teapot “contained the essence of Heaven and Earth” and explains the trigrams on Lu Yu’s brazier and its meaning to tea mystics:

Drinking tea invigorated the body, but the spirit could only be harmonized with the universe when quietly seated besides a brazier observing the convergence of the natural forces in the tea. As the wind picks up, the fire burned hotter. The fire caused the water to boil, and then, as these essential elements were synchronized, their natural rhythms brought forth the true flavor of the tea (Graham 1998).

The harmony of utensils, the selection of proper fuel for the fire, the source of the water and tea all combine under the subtle skill of the master to produce the “world in a bowl of tea.” But water’s role in tea, especially in Japan, was not confined to the kettle and teapot. From deft and defiant flowering arrangements of morning glories to the sprinkling of the *roji* path to give the sensations of coolness in the heat of summer, water is a rich symbol and aesthetic medium in the hands of tea masters.

Like the rules of hospitality in the arid deserts of Arabia, water is everywhere a symbol of hospitality. In the tea garden, the role of water and hospitality are inseparable; from the water in the basin, to spiritually and physically refresh, to the cups of hot water sipped between rounds of tea. All these were advised upon as crucial for the student to understand, not for the blind observance of rules, but to impress the degree of concentration that a

host must summon to render himself utterly hospitable to his guest. As Rikyu said, "Concerning the water in the stone basin, it is wholly the cleansing of the heart and mind that is crucial to the Way." Water washes away the red dust of the world and conducts the tea's fragrant power into the soul, allowing the supreme truth of perfect tea to emerge. This is truly the Way to the tea of "no host, no guest."

Care was taken lest the water boil too quickly, too slowly, or for too long a time. Lu Yu's well-known descriptions for the stages of boiling water are: the first boil, "like the eyes of fishes and with a distant voice." The second boil, was like "a bubbling spring around the edges like a string of pearls." The third boil was like "the crashing of breakers upon the shore" and any further heat would exhaust the water's Qi. Salt might be added to "sweeten" the water and when the boil reaches the second stage "one should withdraw a ladle of water, set it aside, and then stir the center with bamboo chopsticks (Soshitsu1998)." This water could be added to the again boiling water later after tea had been added, directly, and then by reducing the

boil again one could "Nurture the flower of the tea" (Soshitsu 1998). Tea adepts in Japan adopted similar practices in *Chanoyu* (literally "hot water for tea") as water is changed from the kettle, which was prepared for the gatherings the night before. As it heats "only part of the water" is exchanged "or it will boil too slowly" (Sadler 1998).

Other designations for the stages of boiling are variations such as "shrimp eyes" for bubbles on the water's edge, "crab eyes" for bubbles from below, and "dragon water" for the large bubbles of the rolling boil. Experts note ways to determine the nature of the boil in a time before thermometers that describe three major and fifteen minor ways. The three major ways are the aforementioned designations of the shape and size of bubbles in relationship to the shape of a shrimp, crab or fish eye. The minor methods deal with the sounds of the churning, shaking and whooshing and then silence of a deep boil. The rest of the minor methods entail observations of steam "threads" that are one, two, three, four or intertwining until yielding to the straight upward steam of a serious boiling. Other

treatises warn of "old man water" which is water boiled too much at the expense of its Qi (not to mention oxygen). Cai Junmo of the Song Dynasty expressed a preference for "young hot water" versus "old hot water" for similar reasons.

K'an and Li

Rikyu's comments above on the spirit of water and its relationship to the "Hour of the Tiger" speak about traditions that came into Japan from ancient China. The powerful Qi-filled water of the mountainous abodes of dragons and Immortals was the most sought-after. But even mountain water was subject to grading by tea masters. Gently rippling water amongst rocks was thought to be the best while turbulent, violent water was to be avoided. No doubt, these energies were thought to affect the body by their peculiar environment in which the waters were collected. Lu Yu cautioned against drinking mountain water that flowed to the ground with no outlet and counseled that waters should be drawn as far away as possible from human habitation. He advised that well water, if it had to be used, should be drawn from the depths or that other waters be let to flow and "drain off" before use. He also cautioned that from the 7th to 9th months there could be toxins present from dragons (Soshitsu 1998).

In Japan, there were special tea ceremonies held when particularly potent or famous water was available called "*meisui-date*" and the water was always to be served in a special, unfinished "bucket" called a *tsurube*. Dragons hold a special significance for Buddhists, Daoists and tea alchemists as potent symbols of the power of the watery and fiery realms. The *nagas* of India, the *long* of China and *ryu* of Japan are mythological creatures that represent the earth's energies. Associated with mystics and hidden *terma* treasures

The Daoist alchemist meditates on the inversion of k'an and li. "Bringing the (feminine lines of the) kua k'an (k'an) to fill up the kua of li." Within k'an there is the red-yellow boy whose name is the Ancestor of Mercury... within li there is the mysterious girl who belongs to the Family of Lead. (Needham 1983).





and sutras, as well as power plants and mountain demons, the snake-dragon entities have an often ambiguous relationship with humanity. They are the source of power but potentially of toxins as well in metaphors that capture the dual nature of a precarious existence, especially in ancient China. Waters drawn from the deep regions could be powerfully medicinal or deadly poisonous. Such is the power of the Primordial Dao as described in the 7th chapter of Chuang Tzu, which refers to the *t'ai-ch'ung*, which is a “particular stage of returning to an identification with the Dao (Girar-

dot 1986). ” The dark abyss of primordial waters and the reptilian creatures that issue from them are depicted as spirals and snakes that perhaps eventually evolved into the alchemical ouroboros. For an enlightening discussion on dragons, water and the Japanese *kappa* spirits see Eiichiro (2009).

Girardot’s magisterial etymological survey links this with Chapter 4 of the *Dao De Ching*’s context of *chung* as the sense of an empty container (gourds and kettles), and the relation to the word *yuan* as “bottomless pool” and *chan* “deep” or “clear as water” which suggests

an allusion to the watery, chaotic conditions of the primordial Dao. This is the cosmogenic chaos of the primordial epochs of undifferentiated potential expressed in the *Dao De Ching* with such terms as *hao-haohan-han* or the “moist embryonic mystery” cognate with “vast expanses of water.” Confucian, as well as Mencius’, attacks on the Daoist notion of an idyllic golden age often use such terms as “the waters in their wild course” (*chiang shui*) that deluged the world, bringing snakes and dragons which together pushed humanity into a desperate refuge in caves. But the

mystical counter-culture of certain Daoist and Buddhist sects embraced the chaotic powers of the wild, of mountains and dragons as a way of connecting back to the primal unity. The wild *aghoris*, *mahasiddhas*, wild *yamabushi* and Zen lunatics of various traditions all understand the energy of the “ultimate source” which emphasizes the “mundane” concerns of choice of water (i.e., simply purity and taste).

As external alchemy evolved into internal alchemical arts, the body became increasingly identified as a microcosmic representation of the world. The inner landscapes followed similar winding courses and waterways as the Yellow Springs that were thought to feed all of the water in China. The alchemical conjunction of opposites with water (the abysmal *kan*) and the fire (the clinging *li*) express symbolism employed in *feng shui*, alchemy and the bedroom arts of Daoist macrobiotic practices. Their respective trigrams are “*Yin* without and *Yang* and *Yang* without and *Yin*” and are complementing and completing in the alchemical fusion.

There is deep significance that these two trigrams in alternating positions should complete the *I-Ching*’s permutations in the 63rd and 64th hexagrams. The 63rd hexa-

gram *Chi Chi* (After Crossing the Water) has water in its proper place above the fire, bodes good fortune and heralds the cycle complete (as in crossing the water), only to begin again with the final hexagram and the repeating from the beginning. The 64th hexagram *Wei Chi* inverts the position and connotes “Before Crossing the Water” and the vexation of “a young fox trying to keep its tale.” In Daoist alchemy the process involves cultivating and blending the Yin and Yang energies into the inner cauldron to achieve a balance of the essences of water and fire. In tea, as in alchemy, the fire must be controlled lest the water boil too hot and become exhausted or too slightly rendering its heat impotent. The water must be pure and undefiled while balanced with the fire in proper proportion or the results will be too strong or bitter or too weak to awaken the flavor of the tea.

Lu Yu’s writings have a subtle esoteric dimension as do his symbols on his teaware. As discussed above, the legs of the brazier expressed the elements of fire, wind and water. Scholars note the brazier’s resemblance to the *Ding* used for ceremonies and formal sacrifices to the gods. His devoutly Buddhist upbringing and displea-

sure at the vulgar use of tea cast him solidly in the alchemical tradition that replaced the furnace with the incense burner or kettle and brazier. The simple, elegant instruction of the sage encodes the most profound truths of Nature, Reality and Tea, which, as Lu Yu would agree, are one and the same. The perfect cup of tea, like the “great work” of alchemists, is essentially the harmony of the elements in dynamic balance.

Water is a most precious resource that is all too often taken for granted, especially in the West. As the news and environmental scientists release report after report of toxic levels of pharmaceuticals and industrial chemicals even in filtered drinking water, we more and more realize that the situation is dire. From the waters that quench thirsty tea plants to the water in the pots and kettles, the tea drinker has both a practical and spiritual imperative to vocalize the need to be stewards of water, the very foundation of life.



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The alchemy of tea starts with water and fire meeting like old friends here to share tea again.



脱落練習

FALLING OFF THE TEA WAGON

-Mike Baas

In his own profound and humorous way, Mike shares his experience starting and falling off a tea practice, inspiring himself and us all to start again.

There are many spiritual traditions that advise a daily practice. After attending a ten-day course in Vipassana meditation as taught by S. N. Goenka, a non-sectarian technique open to one and all, it is strongly underlined that the bare minimum amount of practice required to maintain continuity of progress on the Path is one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. A neophyte might shudder in disbelief that one could meditate that much every single day. From the experience of the wiser among us, this is what it takes, and so that is the prescription. There is no strict regimented prescription for a particular pattern of Tea practice, yet one can safely assume its practitioners think drinking tea regularly, if not daily, is a great idea!

In *Tea Medicine*, one of the homework assignments given is “A Week of Tea”, drinking bowl tea in the morning every day for a week. My experience of the homework went something like this: I drank Sun Moon Lake red tea in a bowl (Thanks, Wu!) one-on-one with my wife for five of the days, one day by myself and missed one day somewhere in the middle. The results were invariably wonderful: my wife and I grew closer; my wife realized how deeply she loved drinking tea.

I began the process of “giving myself permission” to enjoy tea (I have very strong monastic and stoic tendencies), and we both opened up to Tea as a spiritual path. We saw tangible benefit to our lives throughout that week. It took some time afterward for me to establish this practice as a habit. (Having three small children to wrangle each and every morning doesn’t help the cause!) But once Tea took hold of my life, it became one of my strongest allies, supporting me at every turn. It became a tool I could use to feed energy into my meditation practice if it ever became burdensome. It became a way to reconnect with people if relationships turned sour. Every session told me yet another important story and pointed me in another important direction. Tea was money in the bank. Wu De says it like this:

It’s important to wake up in a positive way, because the first note of the symphony sets the tone for the whole piece. While it is possible to shift course later on in the day, the more momentum we build in a certain direction, the more difficult that will be to achieve.

In my experience, the continuity of a tea practice ensures a certain level of protection—most impor-

tantly protection of myself from myself! Also, in my experience, not maintaining continuity of practice dramatically increases the potential for unskillful engagement with the world, which tends to bring about various forms of misery. I am here to talk about that in more detail. Like a parent who tells their child a foreboding story in order to get them to behave properly, here are some examples from my life that should serve to keep you on the straight and narrow Tea path: After a long run of daily meditation and daily tea, I was really happy. Elements in my life that were previously damaged, like my love of making electronic music, started to get repaired.

Because I was waking up to a meditative tea session each morning, my inner guide was lit up and ready to go. As I started to tarry with my musical demons, I found that decisions about which way the art was supposed to go were made thoughtfully and with care. I quickly repaired all my broken equipment, software and music making methodologies after years of stagnation. Solutions that were previously unavailable to me appeared suddenly. Not only was this sharp new “me” making art fun and alive again, life itself was more fun and alive. Relationship issues between



my wife and I began to improve, slowly. There was a palpable sense that things were on the up and up. A positive momentum had established itself in my life.

In some sense, it is true that all good things must come to an end. For me, falling off the Tea wagon came after I took advantage of Tea's generosity one too many times. A few months ago, after a particularly difficult patch of fatigue that came from the grind of raising three kids, with all the crying and gnashing of teeth and obstinacy that only one's own children can provide, I spontaneously gave myself permission to stop meditating every day. This was after months of successful meditating and drinking tea, in whatever hours I could get, staying committed to what I knew to be the best way to live a life so far, and honoring, through the discipline of daily practice, all that Tea and meditation had done for me.

Rather quickly, the spots I had reserved to start and end the day right, before and after all the din of the household life, were taken over by a less wholesome lifestyle. Without waking up to tea and meditation, I started waking up to doing chores straight away, to nonsense on my computer or to convenience foods instead of a healthy break-

fast. Without closing the day with a reflective tea session, I was staying up later and later trying to play catch-up with everything I felt I needed to get done. This soon led to waking up to feeling like everything I had in my life was annoying: my bothersome kids, my overwhelmed wife, my messy house... (Even the fact that I wasn't drinking tea or meditating regularly itself became annoying!)

Regularly sitting and drinking tea had amplified the volume on the shrill inner voice inside of my own head that acted as a guide and set me up for sure success. Tea was a taskmaster: it told me when it was time to stop drinking tea and transition to doing the accumulated dishes in the kitchen. It told me when it was time to close up late night work on a song and head to bed. Without Tea, this voice got quieter and quieter. The dishes piled up. I kept myself up all night working until the early morning on music tracks that usually turned out to be uninspired. Soon, after all the physical abuse to my body, from both the exertion and the accumulated stress, I got sick. Not just any sick—three weeks of fever and a nasty bout with tonsillitis at the end. I couldn't meditate or drink tea even if I wanted to. My wife had to

bear the brunt of the household and she wasn't happy in the least.

After reestablishing my health somewhat, it still felt like restoring myself with good daily habits was Herculean work. I continued on without regular Tea and meditation. At a certain stage, weakened and disheartened, self-absorbed and addicted to avoidance, I started mistreating the ones I was supposed to be loving in my life. But I am happy to report that I've recently received the wake up call that enough is enough and I am now back on the Tea wagon. And now my kids are my kids again, my wife is my wife, my house is my house...

The juxtaposition between what I remembered my old noble life to feel like and the new Tea-less wasteland started to become abundantly clear. Only a Tea life is worth living! I am not saying that drinking tea would have prevented me from getting sick or that it can provide absolute protection from the vicissitudes of life, but I am saying that the disciplines we are lucky enough to have knowledge of and access to, those that we experience directly as powerful formulas for healing and success in life, are much more useful to us than the supposed freedom we gain once we let go of them. May I be yoked to the Tea wagon for life!



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 Rich Allum:

I've been a lover of tea for as long as I can remember, just not tea as I've come to know it in these last six months. As a child, long before the Leaf existed outside of a Yorkshire teabag, I would always enjoy the cups of tea my Mum would lovingly make for me. She would also always offer any and all of our guests tea as soon as they had made themselves comfortable, and looking back it's now clear to me that Tea is, and always has been, a symbol of heartfelt generosity. All over the world, an Englishman drinking tea is a stereotype and one that we're all proud of. Making tea for others is definitely a part of our culture, although I suspect most of us simply do it for no other reason than to be polite; the connection goes no deeper. Tea, whether we're aware of it or not, represents a spontaneous moment of togetherness—a *Time*. And Tea Time for me is sacred, more so now than ever.

During my early twenties I spent several years working in a chain of coffee shops where serving hot beverages became my livelihood. I fell in love with the atmosphere—the shop always felt alive with energy (no doubt caffeine-fuelled), and it was here that I developed a sense of love and enjoyment for being of service to others. It's no wonder that, almost a decade later, long after leaving that line of work, I still dream of owning my own teashop. For now, I run the stockroom in a family-run locksmith supplies firm, where thankfully there's still some time for tea. A few years ago, when the business was much smaller, I would have the chance to make dozens of cups each and every day for myself and the other employees, enjoying the five minutes of solitude whilst waiting for the kettle to boil, along with the smiles of gratitude as I would hand them out. Sadly, I'm a little too busy these days, so I have to settle for serving them all just once a day in the afternoon. It may not be a bowl of aged sheng puerh, but to a certain extent that doesn't matter; my intention remains the same regardless of the tea or the teaware and that sense of enjoyment and fulfillment is still ever-present. (Truth be told, I do relish the opportunity to share my newfound love of different teas with others whenever possible!)

It was in October 2014 when Prabhasvara visited the Nottingham Buddhist Centre to perform a tea ceremony and talk about his life of Tea that my partner Becky and I found an amazing connection



to both Tea and to each other. And that has changed our lives immeasurably. As I sit here now in Shen Su's room at the Tea Sage Hut in Taiwan, sipping a bowl of this month's tea, it's impossible for me to imagine a life without Her. I drink five bowls in silence each and every morning before meditation and I have never felt such a profound sense of peace and interconnectedness. I know so many others have said the same, but if you haven't yet begun this practice I sincerely urge you to start today, right now if you can! As Wu De often says, drink just three bowls of tea in silence at the start of your day for a whole week and see what a difference it can make to your life. I can say hand on heart that it's changed mine.

I have six more amazing days left at the Tea Sage Hut and another six days thereafter to explore more of Taiwan and its tea culture before returning home to Nottingham, England. If any of you ever find yourself nearby, please drop me an email and let's meet for a bowl or two. You can reach me at:

richieallum@gmail.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. The community in LA also has a new meet up page: (<http://www.meetup.com/Los-Angeles-Tea-Ceremony-Meetup/>).



In Barcelona, Spain, Global Tea Hut member Antonio holds tea events each month at Caj Chai Teahouse. Contact him at info@cajchai.com for more info. In Madrid, Spain, GTH member Helena hosts a monthly GTH session. Contact her at helenaharo@hotmail.com



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



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



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



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



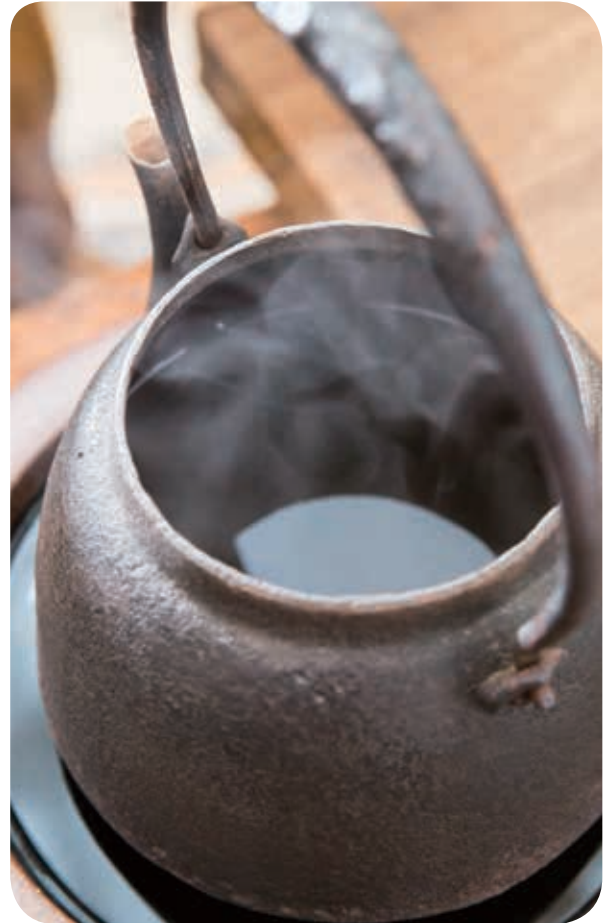
In Tallinn, Estonia, *Chado* tea shop holds events most Friday evenings at 7 PM. Contact events@firstflush.ee for more details.



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



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



Center News



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



Our 2015 Light Meets Life cakes are starting to roll in, beginning with Inner Path. We have some amazing teas this year. Check the site regularly for details.



If you haven't yet, you should listen to Wu De's podcast on Zen and Tea with Rich Roll (www.richroll.com). Please leave a comment on his site to help support us!



Wu De will be in Bali in July and Holland, Belgium and Estonia in August/September. Contact us for details.



Submit your feedback and help spread the word about Global Tea Hut!

July Affirmation

Like water, I find the path of least resistance.

Am I resisting what is? Have I reached an impasse in my life? Can I change form and go through, like water through even the densest forest?

