





MOUNTAIN RAIN

This month we're sharing one of our favorite teas of the year along with a topic we have wanted to discuss for a long time: Tea and the feminine. We've asked Tien Wu to help collect and edit some articles written by some bright and beautiful women, who have very inspirational experience and strength to share!

love is Changing the world Bowl by bowl

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letter from the Editor

n November, the weather in Taiwan cools down enough for one of our favorite activities: outdoor tea. There is nothing like packing up a small brazier, some coals and spring water and heading out into the mountains to drink tea! There are small tea huts alongside just about every mountain road in Taiwan. We have some favorite spots, often near springs. There is one small pagoda that literally hangs off the cliffside that we particularly enjoy drinking aged or roasted oolongs in. It is a bit hard to hike all the stuff down the steep stairs, but well worth it for the views and ambiance. Though we don't get to go out as much as we'd like to, it's nice when the weather is so inviting. The first shou tea has already come out, and we're also drinking Cliff Tea as well.

Some years ago I was teaching a workshop on tea at Temple Tea in L.A., when a friend stopped in to visit. She looked at us setting up with the most awestruck eyes I've ever seen, pleading to join the event last minute. But it was full, so we weren't sure. She kept loitering around until, sure enough, someone called and cancelled. She was very excited and sat down front and center, telling me how she had hoped to learn about tea for the last few months or so. From that day on, she was there early in the front at every workshop in L.A., with a verve and passion for tea rarely met with these days. And anyone who has met Tien Wu recently will tell you that her love for tea and desire to both cultivate herself in Cha Dao and share tea with others has not diminished, but rather grown. Her tea spirit is like a good puerh, maturing into ever-brighter cups!

I've always been proud of her and so honored to know her, sharing tea, wisdom and learning together as we both work towards better versions of our self. She is an amazing woman, indeed. Tien uses tea to awaken the feminine, teaching at women's gatherings and retreats all around the world. If you look around this Hut, you will see so many who are here because of her, and because the tea practice can be a wonderful way to empower women, as she and many others are finding. As I came to witness that our approach to tea, these magazines and our center were contributing to the liberation and empowerment of women, in some small way, I shed tears. I am so grateful to be a part of that.

There was a time when women sat on the council of every society on earth, as wise and influential as any man. We lost our way, though, and traveled through many dark centuries of masculine-dominated societies. Only recently have we begun to recognize just how foolish that detour was. And liberating the feminine isn't just a gender issue; it is about celebrating the power of Yin, which we all have inside us, man and woman alike. Our civilization is consuming itself in Yang



excess, and our value systems no longer esteem balance. But alas, some of what I want to say is that the masculine has been speaking for the feminine too long, and yet perhaps I am guilty of the same...

A few months ago I asked Tien if we could do an issue of Global Tea Hut all about Tea and the feminine. She has curated and edited some articles by women with experience hosting tea-centric women's gatherings. There is a lot of wisdom in these writings; and since we all need a balance of Yin and Yang in us, masculine and feminine, there is also a lot that men can learn from these pages, too.

Recently, a dear brother of mine told me of a gathering he held in a teepee for his lifelong friends. They had tea ceremony and talked from the heart all weekend, which was the first time they had ever gathered without alcohol. He said that many of the men were moved to tears, and expressed how they needed such open and honest, safe space in their lives. So let us all take inspiration from these wise women, using this medicine to awaken balance in the world, bowl by bowl...

Mu De



e have a very special tea to share this month. This is the third tea we've sent out this year that is also one of our six Light Meets Life fundraiser cakes (the other two are Mountain Wind and Rainforest). "Dian" is the aboriginal word for Yunnan and "hong" is red. This month's Dian Hong is called "Mountain Rain". It is one of the best red teas we have had in a while, deep and grounding with vibrant energy. But before we discuss Mountain Rain, let's learn a bit more about red tea, as well as about tea categorization in general:

In the West, we find that there is sometimes a slight confusion in written tea materials about the nature of these categories. It is often said that all tea is a single species, *Camellia sinensis*, and that the differences in the categories of tea are all to do with *how* the tea is processed. There is some truth in this, which is why it is so often published throughout the tea world, but it is also potentially misleading. Actually, the only genre of tea that this really applies to is red tea, which is

incidentally the most popular tea in the West, which perhaps explains some of the confusion. However, for the other kinds of tea (white, green, yellow, black, oolong and puerh) tea is as much a kind of tree(s) as it is a processing methodology.

A category of tea is a mind-made concept, and can be as simple or complicated as you want, depending on what you are trying to convey. How we categorize tea, or anything else, doesn't really change the world itself; but rather our ideas, interpretations and communication of it. The idea is that the categories we use should be as accurate a reflection of our understanding as possible. And that will depend on what we are trying to communicate. From a more open, spiritual perspective, for example, Tea is all of Nature. Since tea is made of water, which rained from clouds, needs sunshine to photosynthesize and is rooted deep in the mountain and minerals, there is a perspective from which you could look out on a tea tree and see the interbeing of all Nature, without categorical separation. From a sim-

pler, down-to-earth way of looking at tea categories, viewing tea as reflection of processing alone is too myopic to be of value except in the most basic of explanations (and even then with some caveats). Again, that definition of tea really only works for red tea. For the other kinds of tea, it confuses as much as it helps you to understand or explore the world of tea. The truth is that the terroir of any tea is the culture, the agriculture of the people there, the soil and climate, the weather, the varietal(s) of tea and the processing methodology.

Once again, it is important to understand that what most Westerners call "black tea" is actually "red tea". Ordinarily, it doesn't matter what something is called, but in this case there is actually a problem, because there is another kind of Chinese tea that is called "black tea" (characterized by post-production, artificial fermentation). So if you call red tea "black tea", then what do you call black tea? The reasons for this error are to do with the long distances tea traveled in chests to

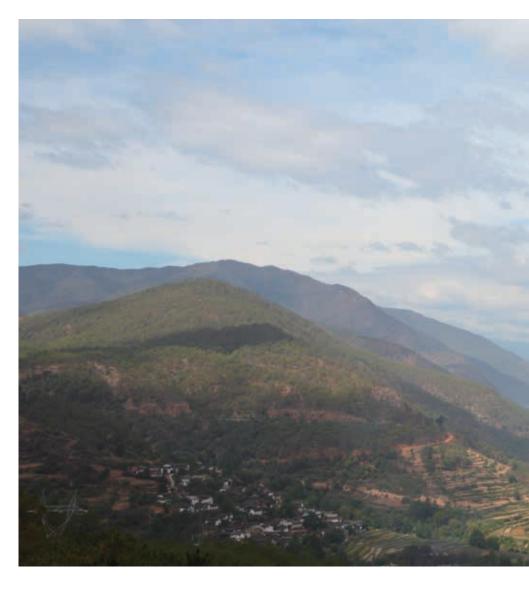




Europe, and even more importantly with the general lack of information for the first few hundred years tea was traded. Europeans weren't allowed inland in those days, and never saw the tea trees or the processing either (except some roasting). Buying through middlemen in broken pidgin, you could see how easy it would be to spread misinformation. We repeat this every time we send a red tea, because it is an important mistake that we tea lovers have to correct in the world, so that the real black tea can have its name back!

As we mentioned in previous articles, there are essentially two kinds of tea trees: small leaf and big leaf. The big leaf trees are the original tea trees. They have roots that extend very deep and straight down, and have a single trunk leading to their crowns. Small leaf tea, on the other hand, is more like a bush, with roots that extend outwards, and with many trunks. As tea migrated north and east from its birthplace in Southwest Chinawhether naturally propagated or carried by man-it, of course, adapted to the new conditions and climate (terroir) it was transplanted into. This movement towards a bush with smaller leaves was mostly to do with the colder and colder climates; and in fact, you can see that the leaves actually get smaller and smaller the further north tea migrated, until you reach Japan where the leaves are so small that when rolled they look like tiny needles.

It can be confusing when tea people say that the categories of tea are strictly defined by processing methodology, because the seven kinds of tea weren't invented at once, but rather evolved over time *in response to* the variations in the plant as it changed terroir. It is a very modern, and in many ways unhealthy practice to tell Nature what to do. Traditional farming was always about accepting the bounty of Nature with gratitude, rather than coercing Her to give certain



kinds of foods in certain amounts. Consequently, ancient tea farmers were conversing with their trees and adapting their skills to suit the tea they plucked. Cliff Tea processing was developed in response to certain bushes, in other words. And while you could potentially process any tea in the world in the same way you process a Wuyi Cliff Tea-and some people are doing that very thing, even right outside Wuyi province—it will never be the same as genuine Wuyi Cliff Tea. So is Cliff Tea a kind of tree or a kind of processing? It's hard to say, which is why the issue is complicated. But we think that reducing kinds of tea to just processing is a very human-centric approach, which doesn't account for Nature's role in the varieties of tea. By saying all tea is one plant and that the differences are just in

the processing, we are categorizing tea based only on human work, and not on weather, soil, sun and tree, which might cause a myopia that makes one forget many important aspects of tea and Cha Dao.

In this day and age, farmers are more and more trying to set themselves apart by processing tea in unique ways: taking tea from trees that have been used to make puerh for hundreds of years and processing the leaves like red tea, for example. And sometimes the results of these experiments are amazingeven beginning whole trends in the industry, like the movement towards greener Tie Guan Yin in Anxi province, as well as in Taiwan, over the last two decades. For the most part, however, these experimental teas rarely compete with the traditionally processed teas of a region. The fact



is that the processing of each particular kind of tea evolved over hundreds of years by skilled craftsman who were conversing and listening to the local leaves and refining their skills to produce the tea in the way that best suits it. There are exceptions, however, and it is important for innovation to continue, especially when the adaptation occurs in the true spirit of Tea!

The exception to all this is red tea. And since red tea is by far the most familiar tea in the West, it is easy to see why producers and consumers of it would think that this simplification applies to all tea. While you cannot make a Cliff Tea from any raw material other than Wuyi varietals (at least not well) you can make any tea into a nice red tea. Just as anyone with some wine experience would know that a so-called

"champagne" made somewhere other than Champagne is not really champagne, a tea lover would know that the so-called "Cliff Tea" was not from Wuyi. But that isn't the case with red tea. You can take puerh and make nice red tea, or high-mountain oolong, etc.

Most red tea is processed in three or four phases: first it is picked and then it is withered, traditionally on bamboo trays stacked on shelves built to hold them. The withering of red tea is very long, usually from twelve to twenty-four hours. It is then rolled for an exceptionally long time, to continue the oxidation and break down the cells. It literally turns into a pasty mass in the process. Then it is dried, usually in an oven, or the sun in the case of Dian Hong like this month's tea.

Tea of the Month

Like August's tea of the month, "Elevation", Mountain Rain is different from most red tea. It has a lower degree of oxidation than most Dian Hong teas (or red tea in general). In fact, we chose it as a Light Meets Life cake because of this. The reason for the heavy oxidation in normal red tea processing is to make the tea sweet and delicious. Nevertheless, we have found that such extreme processing removes some of the tea's Qi, and distances it from the mountain and deep essence it touches. This is especially relevant when the tea leaves were plucked from old-growth, big leaf tea trees. The leaves of these largeleaf trees are often bitter and astringent, but we can accept a bit of that along with the sweetness, can't we?



And isn't that a significant life lesson as well? In the end, we'd rather have a slightly less delicious tea with incredible and relaxing Qi than the other way around. Furthermore, when you find a Dian Hong that is a bit more "puerhy" (oxidized less, in other words), it will age faster and better than other Dian Hong teas. It also lends this tea breadth, root and power. We love our Dian Hong teas more puerhy. How about you?

This tea is from the village of Da Hu Sai in Lincang. The trees are 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 birth-place of all tea. The forests there

have the oldest trees, and deepest roots in Cha Dao. This tea was harvested in the spring of 2015.

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. This red tea is only partially oxidized, and like its older sister, "Mountain Wind", this tea is full of Yin energy that is brisk and 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, warming and yet so very Yin. You will love the powerful energy of this amazing red tea, one

of the best we have ever had from Yunnan. And beyond these wonderful bowls we'll be sharing all month around the world, the good news is that if you do like Mountain Rain you can support Light Meets Life and get a cake or two to share with others!



The rain

Washes away sediment

That wasn't for the mountain anyway.

It erodes the rock, as well

And carries both rivulet, river to sea.

After the thousand miles and

The billion-year blink,

Even the mountain will depart,

Sea breezes rising water into the sky

To mountain rain again...

-Wu De



Brewing Tipe for Mountain Rain

A red tea like Mountain Rain can be brewed in a bowl or a side-handle pot. If you get the cake version, however, it will be better in a side-handle pot. Mountain Rain can also be brewed gongfu if you like. It is sometimes nice to brew red tea in an Yixing pot. Traditionally, one with taller, thicker walls would be used for red tea to preserve heat. Red tea, especially Dian Hong, responds to higher heat.

Of course, as we've learned this year, all tea starts with water and fire. So the first step to making a nice bowl or cup of Mountain Rain is to get some good water. If you don't have access to a natural spring nearby, taste many bottled waters to find the one that is smooth, clean and without flavor. It should be of a pH7 or so, with plenty of minerals. You can use bamboo charcoal, medicine stones, Yixing shards or other tools to soften and purify it. It also helps to use crystals or jade to change the energy of the water.

After water, comes fire. As we discussed, charcoal is ideal. If you can't use charcoal, choose gas or infrared to heat your nice water. Try to heat the water as fast as possible, in what was traditionally called "Martial Heat". For this tea, you will want to bring the water to a boil of "Fish Eye", which means the larger bubbles just before a full boil.

Making a "chaxi" or tea stage also enhances one's tea greatly. Choose a nice piece of wood, stone or a tea cloth (chabu) to decorate the session and set the time/space apart. This helps us to celebrate the occasion itself. What a rare chance to be alive, awake, beautifully present, sharing tea with Nature or others you love.

Remember, the more you put into your tea, the more you get back! The quality is in the energy of each aspect. Master Lin always says that every little detail matters—maybe only a little bit, but those bits add up. Paying attention to details also allows for improvement in tea preparation and also an increase in sensitivity over time!



TEA DRINKING Woman

-Tien Wu



Tea and the feminine is a profound topic, indeed. There is more to say than words can express. Tien starts the issue off, opening the door for all the woman who are to speak in this issue. We have tried to offer a variety of voices, from the spiritual to the intellectual. Tien has a lot of experience serving tea to women's circles, and therefore is the perfect herald to start us off on our exploration of Tea, Yin energy, woman...

t is 6 a.m. and the first meditation is about to start... An immediate sense of tranquility holds the space as each sister finds a comfortable place to sit for this morning's tea. Here is a space for nourishment, cleansing, and grounding. A quiet space to slowly wake up together, shifting any discomforts, and opening our hearts, as well as a place to sit and be gently held in a warm embrace—a place to remember...

I recall a very distinct moment three years ago, at the first Spirit Weavers gathering when I tasted tears of joy steeped into the Leaf due to being surrounded by so many women who were so awake. I had been asked by a dear sister of mine to serve Tea at that first gathering, where seventy women came together to commune with Earth and each other. All weekend, the Leaf bowed in humble reverence and gave all She had to give in service to us,

grounding us and creating more space for our remembering and awakening. Each morning, I rose to serve, and one by one women piled into my tent to sit for the silent ritual of tea. With no questions asked, bowls were filled and emptied as the sun rose and hearts opened.

Since I began sharing tea, most of the ceremonies I've served in happen to be all female. In these ceremonies there is a graceful and gentle ease to the way the Tea flows, an almost immediate dive into the vast emptiness of silence. I've observed that in general, women tend to ask fewer questions and rest more readily in the space of receptivity, allowing the medicine to penetrate straight to the heart. There is a trust and surrender that happens in this space of 'Woman'. It is as though "She" (Tea) can feel this availability (I guess I can call it that) as well. Don't get me wrong, She loves you men too (as we all do), but there is

something about Her spirit that is free in a different way when held in sacred space by the Feminine; a letting down of Her hair, so to speak.

Wu De has expressed many times over that the nature of this tree's spirit is feminine (Yin), and as I have continued serving countless ceremonies, I have seen and felt the endless reflections and metaphors regarding this insight. There is this awakening occurring all over the world surrounding the feminine; I have witnessed that as this awakening occurs, the Leaf is there alongside it, continuing to spread and take root, facilitating and medicating our species. She is helping us, both men and women to understand the softening that is the true grace that the Divine feminine provides. When we hold Her in reverence (Leaf and Woman) She dances into our bowls, grounding us to the Earth and lifting us to the Heavens. Giving us more space to be and to







remember our connection to the soil, the plants, and to this Earth, which is our Mother, the creator of life and so inherently, also feminine.

The Leaf holds us and nurtures us like any good woman would. She is gentle and yet can also be fiercely strong. With each steeping She opens, giving all She has to give. She helps us to empty and dive deeper into the mystery... encouraging us to become more comfortable with the unknown, sitting in the present moment. She accepts each and every one of us for who we are, where we are, but also doesn't hesitate to give a nudge toward the edge saying... "If

you leap, I will hold your hand." She forgives us compassionately when we forget, embraces us lovingly once again, and only asks that we make space for Her to be acknowledged and witnessed.

The simplicity inherent in the practice of bowl tea provides that space for her witnessing. Communing in this way and sharing this plant medicine with 'no mind' feels so feminine. Of course in the vast world of Tea the mind also has its place and the asking of questions is extremely important—Man has sat, questioned, and listened which has paved the way for this beautiful

bowl, holding steaming hot water and spinning leaves to rest in my hands. This bowl, being a mirror of the sacred vessel, carries life and nourishment akin to the womb, and as it is raised to my lips, a softening occurs. My body is nourished with warmth and comfort, which allows me to soften my thoughts and travel that short yet long eighteen-inch journey into my heart space. The tea flows, patiently clearing and cleansing obstructions. I have watched how She safely allows one to explore their emotions, unlocking uncried tears or bubbles of laughter. When I first started sitting with Her in this



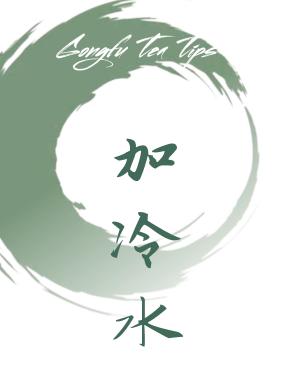
Serving at Spirit Weaver Gathering



way, I cried a lot. It was as if She was so gently washing me clean, and with every tear cried more space was created inside me to remember the essence of my spirit and femininity. Every day She continues to serve me, so in turn I serve Her and a symbiotic balance is struck. Together we remember our indigenous soul and the place from which we both sprouted, for as She has taught me, I, too, am a sprout!

For now, I will finish by saying that writing this article has been extremely challenging to write. As I sit looking for words that express Tea and the feminine, they do not seem to suffice. It feels absurd to try and capture the depth of Her and I fear that by trying to do so the whole point is missed. How does one truly explain tea? How does one truly explain the feminine? How does one explain Nature? These are the mysteries of life and words fail to encompass the magic. These mysteries are meant to be felt, experienced, not discussed. And yet, we have here in this issue a wonderful gathering of articles by different women around the world doing their best to capture the wisdom gathered in tea ceremony. As Wu De reminded me, words are

fingers pointing to the moon, not the moon itself. I am a dedicated student of the Leaf so I will continue to point the way with tea, but I am also a cultivator and awakener of the feminine, so naturally I point the way by being a woman as well. Luckily, tea and woman are one in the same in me... Let's share a bowl together and I will meet you on the moon. In the meantime, we'll point and bask in the brilliance these different women highlight in these pages...



EXPERIMENTATION ADDING COOL WATER

-Wu De

Developing an experimental approach to tea brewing is one of the most important tools to develop one's gongfu tea. Wu De uses the question of whether to add cool water to boiling water in the kettle to explore the need for experimentation in developing gongfu sensitivity.

ne of the questions we get asked the most is whether or not it is okay to add cold water to hot water in your kettle. Like all things tea, the best and simplest answer is to try and find out for yourself! Experiential understanding is gongfu! And that brings up a very important point, which is that you'll need to cultivate an ability to create experiments, as well as the verve to conduct them in order to master tea. A love of tea and a desire to better your practice is usually enough of an impetus to want to do the experiments, and as you are learning how to make them up you can look through past issues of Global Tea Hut for tons of ideas for testing all aspects of tea. The ability to create experiments that help you test brewing methods, new teaware you want to buy, etc. is very important if you want to understand tea in the way that matters most: drinking it! We are even thinking of publishing a book of just gongfu tea experiments (without conclusions, of course).

In order to create and conduct tea experiments, however, you will need a standard to measure the method/teaware against. One of the greatest shifts in the tea journey is a step beyond aroma and flavor to all the subtler dimensions tea offers. As soon as these other worlds are unlocked, your ability to evaluate tea, teaware and brewing methodology all develops much more quickly. In the Tea Sutra, Lu Yu says that you never discern the quality of tea by "merely contemplating its flavor or sniffing its aroma", suggesting that he, too, understood this shift in perspective. Of course, the mastery of tea is a lifetime endeavor, and there is always more to learn. But with a bit of guidance and focus, you can begin accumulating your own experience and learn how to make better and more refined tea.

Most of us born in the West are first enticed into the tea world through the amazing and exotic flavors and aromas a cup of tea offers. There is a great pleasure in fine tea, sometimes deep enough to cause a sigh. And it is difficult for some to see beyond the flavor and aroma, as they are often overwhelming. There is never a time in which they need to be set down, or enjoyment set aside, but our development in tea and ability to communicate quality will always begin at a slightly deeper level. In other words, continue to relish the wonderful flavors and aromas your tea offers while at the same time expanding and deepening your appreciation to other, more subtle levels. After all, the movement towards mastery of any art is always towards sensitivity to subtler, more refined aspects. This doesn't mean you lose the awareness of gross qualities, though.

Master Lin always uses the analogy of clothes when teaching about the differences between mouthfeel and flavor. Everyone likes different styles and colors of clothes. There is nothing wrong with that, and people should wear the style they like. And yet, when we close our eyes, we can all agree on which material is comfortable just by touching it. We all want smooth, soft material that can breathe on our bodies. Granted, some people sacrifice this comfort for clothes that look a certain way have a certain style—but as soon as they get home, the first thing they do to "get comfortable" is change back into smooth, soft clothes which are made of natural fibers and can breathe. While we all have different tastes in colors and styles, we all can feel which is the most comfortable. And ultimately, tea is the same: we all enjoy different kinds of tea more or less, and appreciate different flavors more or less, but at the

same time when it comes to the texture—the mouthfeel—of a tea, we all want it to be smooth.

Start paying attention to the way the tea touches your mouth and throat. Is it smooth or rough? We have found that the best teas are very smooth and comfortable. As soon as they enter the mouth, they splash up to the upper palate. The swallowing should occur naturally. With the finest teas, it's as if the tea goes down on its own, without any conscious energy in the swallowing. The best teas have a tendency to slide back on their own. They "want" to go down, in other words. Lower-quality teas, on the other hand, have a tendency to pool in the front of the mouth, and you have to consciously push them to the back of the mouth and then consciously swallow them as well.

Master Lin also says that the best teas coat the mouth like milk or oil, so that after you swallow, you can feel the tea everywhere in your mouth—and an aroma that slowly rises up into your nasal cavity. The tea should also be comfortable in the throat, often lingering on the breath for some time. This splashing up to the upper palate, traveling down smoothly, leaving the mouth moist and coated, as well as lingering on the breath are all signs of a fine tea. The more of these characteristics a tea has, the more comfortable it will be in your mouth.

As you move towards subtler and subtler aspects of tea, you find that

after mouthfeel there are other levels as well, including the Qi of the tea. There is of course more to mouthfeel than what we have introduced here, but just the shift in focus away from flavor and aroma, to include these subtler levels will be a huge leap in your ability to appreciate tea, and ultimately prepare better cups for others, which is what gongfu tea is really all about...

To Add Water or Not

Now you have all the three things you need to practically and experientially improve your gongfu brewing skills: 1) an ability to create experiments that matter to you, which you can learn from reading this section of Global Tea Hut now and through past issues; 2) a standard to use in evaluating methods/ teaware; and 3) an enthusiasm to practice, learn and grow. This last one should never leave your side. Zen mind is the beginner's mind, and we can always improve! And with these three we can turn to the issue of adding cool/cold water to a kettle with hot water in it...

This is a confusing topic, like many aspects of tea brewing, since different teachers, websites, shops will suggest opposite aspects of this. In the Japanese tea ceremony, a spoutless kettle called a "kama" is used, which means that cold water must be added to the hot water since it would be difficult to dump

out the remaining water at the bottom. Some gongfu tea brewers have suggested that this "refreshes" the water. Others say it destroys the structure of the water by shocking it. They suggest that the different energies of the water conflict, which makes tea rough. Here at the Hut, we suggest trying it out yourself, of course!

A simpler version of this month's experiment is done with a kettle, pot and two identical cups and a glass/pitcher of cold water. Start by filling your kettle about a third full. You want less water because time will be of the essence. Bring the water to boil and fill the first cup. Quickly add some cold water from the pitcher/glass to the boiling water and let it come back up to a second boil. Then, pour this water into the second cup. Try tasting the water back and forth from cup to cup, comparing the mouthfeel to see which is better. You can then repeat this experiment by steeping a tea with each of these waters. A more advanced version would be to use two kettles and burners simultaneously, and maybe even two identical teapots. As always, write into us at globalteahut@gmail.com, or add to our Discussion board under the Connect dropdown menu on the GTH website. I'd love to hear your results and I'll gladly share mine with you!





DISCOVERING THE LEAF

-Katherine Aplin / Mica Costerousse

Like many of our readers, these two women had a life-changing first encounter with Tea. Katherine and Mica both had amazing introductions to Tea. Their stories resonate with our own, evoking nostalgia for that first sip. They also capture aspects of Tea as medicine that remind of us of what is most important in Tea and life. These stories unfold in a way that will lead any tea lover onward, heart full of inspirational verve...

Katherine:

s the first light of the morning shines itself upon the walls of my tent and the birds begin to sing, I stir quietly. Unprepared for the temperatures that have fallen below freezing each night, the greeting of the sun means relief from the cold that has kept me awake for hours. I welcome its presence, no matter how early. I am in a tented city of women on the sacred land of Montezuma Well in Arizona, gathered to celebrate the Spring Equinox and World Water Day.

Trudging across the dewy grass in moccasins, wrapped in layers and blankets to keep warm, I make my way to a lotus bell tent with a handwritten sign, "The Tea House". Gathered outside on each side of the doorway are piles of shoes: more

moccasins, sandals, and boots, shed before the women wearing them entered. I do the same, then bow down to fit myself in the narrow opening, unsure what will be waiting for me upon my entrance.

Inside the tent, two women are seated on the edges facing inward. Low tables are placed in front of them with a group of women on the other side, perhaps ten in front of each in a half-moon shape. Soft music is playing and the smell of aloeswood incense floats above the steam rising from the bowls filled with piping hot tea. I find an empty space and sit upon the floor of rugs laid on the Earth below. The women drink their bowls in silence, many of them with eyes closed. When each is finished, she places her bowl

back on the table where they are rearranged by the woman pouring; a clean bowl is added to the line for me.

I wait with bated breath as the woman behind the table begins to serve. From the right hand, water makes its journey through the kettle to the side handle pot where it pauses for many seconds to steep. The stillness, the fluidity, the long moments with her eyes shut; she is in no hurry. Then the pot is taken by the other hand and I watch as it becomes an extension of her arm, a vessel held for many moons, a comfort and assuredness that only comes from much time spent together. The liquid leaves its spout like a gentle spring and is poured in rounded figure-eight motions, a bit into each



bowl until there are only drops left for gravity to take down, drip by drip, into the waiting ceramic below. It is a dance like I have never seen before, filled with elegance and stoicism—a proficiency gained from the immersion into a meditative state. When each bowl is filled it is placed in front of a woman, rotated from the center outwards with a twist of the hand and presented as an offering. Then the gesture of welcoming comes; it is time to drink.

I take the bowl in my hands—the deep red liquid inside steaming up into my nostrils. The first sip of tea is startlingly hot, much more so than any liquid I would have prepared for myself. The feeling of the tea going down my throat and into my body is visceral and I follow its

trace as it reaches into my core. The taste is of the Earth, a richness and purity that is foreign yet inviting. Each time the liquid reaches my lips and is taken in, I go deeper, falling into myself without any conscious effort to do so. I feel closer and more connected to the women surrounding me, none of which I have ever met. The liquor of the Leaf fills me and my skin begins to tingle. An immense feeling of gratitude settles in, an emotional weightiness that bubbles up in my throat, bringing tears to my eyes and a smile to my face.

After my inaugural experience, I come back to the tent each morning, my eyes opening easily before dawn, my body craving the warmth, the stillness and the community

of others in silence. Over the next two years, I attend two more gatherings where tea is served by the same women and where I feel the same feeling of homecoming. After the third, in the summer of 2015, the craving to connect with the leaf evolves into something deeper. I travel to Taiwan to visit the Tea Sage Hut, living at the school, seeking to learn how to make tea a part of my daily life. It is there that I meet Wu De and am serendipitously reunited with the first woman who ever served me, a sign I graciously take from the universe that I am on the right path.

Life at the Hut is simple. Moments are filled with laughter, and hugging is a daily requirement. The food we eat is pure, made with

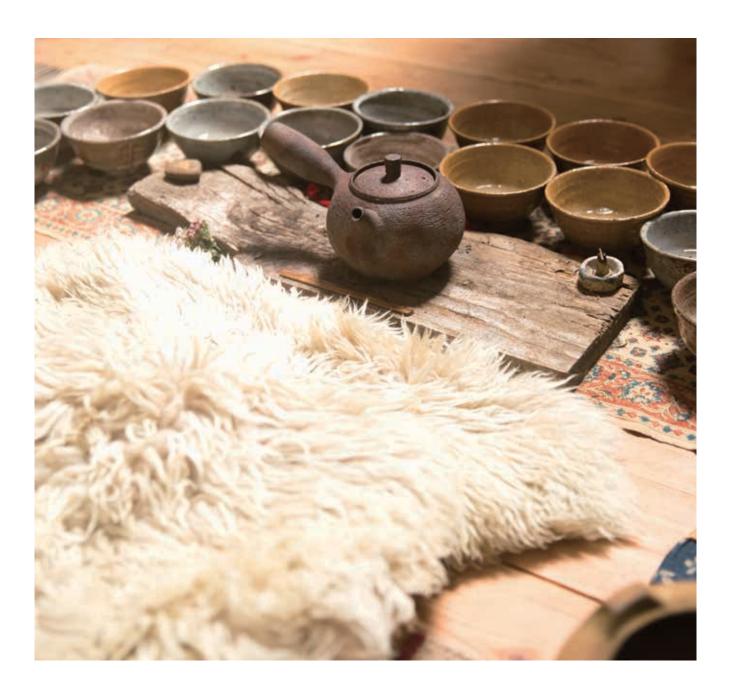


love, passing through many hands before it is eaten. Our meals are sometimes full of words, sometimes silent, but each one overflowing with gratitude. We dance as we clean and we smile as we work. We drink many bowls of tea in silence; we learn; we share. But just as life is filled with both light and darkness, my time at the Hut is not without its discomforts and difficulties: Hours of meditation are overwhelming as my mind resists. My body aches as negative energy manifests itself into the physical, ready to be released. A shifting host of distracted thoughts come and go as they please; I falter but I continue on. And then the rain comes and a small group of us organically appears outside to stand beneath it, craving a cleansing that only the falling water can provide.

All roads that lead to tea are different. As Chajin, we are guided to Her in ways that speak to us uniquely and individually. For many years I searched for a practice, for a way—for something that could both nourish and challenge me. In Tea, I found a friend and an ally to help me along the path of healing. In Tea, I found a guide and a host to bring gracious people into my life. And in tea, most importantly, I found a teacher.

位老朋友





Mica:

began my relationship with tea purely out of necessity due to medical reasons. After being diagnosed with two unrelated latestage primary breast cancers in 2009 and 2011 respectively, and after undergoing intense chemotherapy treatment for each and radiation therapy for the first, in addition to having several surgeries (some of which involved severe surgical mishaps), the second cancer metastasized to my left lung and the lymph nodes above my heart, becoming "terminal." According to my oncologist, the tumor in my lung appeared to

be pressing against my heart, which seemed to explain the intense chest pain I was having at the time. To exacerbate the situation, I had also been diagnosed with several significant medical conditions caused by chemotherapy toxicity and radiation toxicity: cardiomyopathy, two types of brain dysfunctions, lung damage, autonomic neuropathy and peripheral neuropathy to name a few. I could feel my body crying out in not so subtle ways, telling me I needed a change; Western medicine wasn't doing me any favors. It was obviously harming my body in more ways than

it was helping, leaving my spirit fragmented along the way.

I began to intuitively reassess everything about my life and lifestyle. I realized I was the only person truly responsible for the condition of my life experience on Mother Earth. One of the first changes I made was to consciously take foods into my body that would nourish and heal, and in the process I eliminated foods that had no significant value or purpose to my regeneration. I also began drinking green and white teas I bought from the shelves of my local health food store.

ten be the Leminine

I had read many articles suggesting tea, particularly green and white teas, may have anti-cancerous properties, in addition to other health benefits, due to their high levels of polyphenols, especially the catechin epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), which is a potent antioxidant. While most studies regarding the efficacy of tea in relation to cancer prevention are inconclusive, something told me to pursue tea further.

Within a couple of months of faithfully drinking my green and white teas on a daily basis while leaning against my kitchen counter, I stumbled across, of all things, a loving Instagram post about Global Tea Hut. I enthusiastically logged onto the Internet to check out the Global Tea Hut website and found myself drawn to the content within. It was evident that a love of tea and community were woven together in a very beautiful way in this Hut. It seemed to me that becoming a member of this global tea family would greatly enhance my tea experience! I immediately subscribed and shortly thereafter received my first Global Tea Hut envelope delivered to my front doorstep. The tea inside was Sun Moon Lake red tea. I opened the package of tea and

inhaled deeply. Wow! The fragrance was extremely pleasing. Now this was real tea! I hastily prepared my first bowl of loose leaf tea, not really knowing how or what I was doing. But somehow I knew this was okay (we are all novices in the beginning). I sat in silence with this first bowl of Tea. And with my first sip or two, I felt a shift. I was surprised at how quickly I felt connected to this entity. It was as if this Tea and I regarded each other as though we were long lost friends. I readily opened my heart to the healing love I found reflected in the bowl before me, grateful for the gift of connection. In this first meeting, this Tea, this medicine of the Leaf, became my teacher. Once consumed, She

knew me instantly and completely. She knew of all my trials and pain, and She knew of my joy and love as well.

Now, with each session, I can feel the calming feminine presence of Tea grounding me, guiding me, and healing me with the wisdom of a hundred lifetimes, while She teaches me to heal myself. We spend long moments together meditating, healing and simply being. I can feel her gently flowing through my veins, detoxifying as she goes. And I feel her energy moving through me connecting me to Earth and Spirit, and I am filled with gratitude.

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Since falling in love with my first bowl of Tea, I've been fortunate to be served tea by Tien Wu at retreats in Tulum, Mexico, another on Orcas Island, Washington and at the Spirit Weavers Gathering this year in Mendocino, California. This sharing of tea and space with others in such a beautiful, graceful ceremony has only drawn me in even further and deeper. And again, I am grateful for all of these healing connections. While my journey with Tea has just begun, I can't help but feel She and I have been great friends for lifetimes and have traveled through space and time together. I'm grateful for this reconnection and look forward to all She has in store for me...

I'd like to say that as of this writing, it has been nineteen months since I made the choice to discontinue the chemotherapy infusions I was told I needed to "fight" the metastatic cancer and sustain my life. My last CT scan (September 2015) indicated the cancer is no longer visible via scan. My oncologist said she has never had a patient walk away from treatment and have the same results I've had. She advised me that while the type of metastatic breast cancer I was diagnosed with cannot be said to be in remission, it could be called "NED", or "No Evidence of Disease." Regardless of the correct

medical terminology, I'm happy with the space I'm in. I'm certain the changes I've made in my life and the holistic treatments I've embraced have helped heal my body. And Tea has shown me the way—the way to heal from the inside out. Oh, and I now drink all teas, not just green and white teas. My favorite teas smell like a damp forest floor after a heavy rain.



My vessel gratefully welcomes the tea and hot water.
All three embrace with love and the deepest respect.
The aroma is intoxicating.
Into my cup I gently pour,
Each drop echoing the memory of the Leaf.
The taste is divine and soothing,
And I feel a thousand warm rains anointing my body with every sip.
Inward I go.

-Mica





AN INTRODUCTION TO CHABANA

-Shen Su

We are starting a new series of articles on Chabana, the art of arranging flowers for tea. Every few issues, we'll publish some tutorials on flowers for tea, along with some photography of our arrangements. In this first article, Shen explores some of the philosophy and ideology behind flowers for tea, as well as the proper approach. Arranging flowers is a wonderful way to improve your tea, and your practice.

Before humans, flowers were already still and beautiful, but when we bring our awareness into the equation, beauty knows it's beautiful. Flowers know they are beautiful. The flowers see themselves through our awareness. Beauty aware of itself is more powerful than beauty alone...

Chabana simply means flowers for tea. It has less to do with the actual arranging of flowers and more to do with creating space for the flowers and other elements to fall into a natural alignment. The quality of the space will of course determine the quality of the arrangement. Therefore, a clean, simple, and natural space will lend itself to clean, simple and natural flower

arrangements. Chabana is neither too informal, nor overly designed, but arranged with the nature of the flower in mind. Like tea, what matters most is the mind in which your arrangements stem from. When you are resting in a calm and balanced space, the arrangement of flowers for tea will reflect these qualities and inspire them in others. It is an art like any other, requiring frequent practice. And like any art to be mastered, freedom stems from the form, meaning more repetition and input in the beginning until you slowly step out of the way and let the creative process naturally work through you. It becomes less of you arranging the flowers and more of letting them arrange your state of being, as they do in Nature, like when

you see a simple wild flower nestled amidst some mossy rocks and arching grasses that mysteriously leaves you in a state of wonderment and joy. That is what we invite to our tea space—an arrangement of flowers that leaves the mind still, awake, and connected to the present moment. And from that perspective, both tea and *Chabana* serve a similar healing quality that awakens the stillness inside ourselves.

I'm no seasoned flower arranger. I can't talk in depth about flowers in relation to culture, religion, established schools of *Ikebana* or *Chabana*, etc., or how they've been used in festivals, ceremonies, rituals, or blessings throughout history. But I was given the opportunity to begin arranging flowers at the Tea Sage



Hut, and so I have the unique experience of arranging flowers for tea at an actual tea center.

At first, I was intimidated to write on Chabana. There are very little resources on the art, and there are certainly not any methodical, step-by-step procedures to crafting flowers for tea. In fact, the whole concept of adhering to set rules is quite antithetical to Chabana itself. However, there is a loose structure to work within. And while Chabana may have been reserved for a particular tea ceremony at one point in time, I like to practice flowers for tea at any tea session or ceremony. For the sake of this article, I use the word Chabana in its most flexible form, as flowers arranged naturally from the heart for any tea occasion.

I write this article because I too am a beginner and also due to the fact that I simply started arranging flowers for tea without any training in an established school of floral art, and that's probably where many of you find yourselves. This can be an intimidating barrier to face if you want to start. How can one go about doing this without some sort of guidelines? In this introduction, while I can't offer specific instructions on how to arrange the flowers themselves, I can give practical guidelines for setting up and getting started. It's not so much about formal training as it is about cultivating the skill to quiet the mind and work from there, which is also why it's a suitable way to express one's Zen.

"Whatever you think you can do or believe you can do, begin it. For in action there is magic, grace and power."

—Goethe

Just as we invite people to start brewing bowl tea when they come to the center, which is simpler and more accessible than gongfu tea, I invite you to start with *Chabana*, as opposed to more formal and complex styles of arranging flowers (*Ikebana*). Like bowl tea, there are less parameters to consider, and the focus is aimed at connection with spirit. In this case, connection between yourself and the spirit of the arrangement.



Flowers & Fillers

First, you will need a source of flowers and other floral elements. There is usually plenty of material to work with by simply stepping out the front door with a good pair of pruners. Look to your teacher for all that you need.

"Open your eyes and take the time to look. The trees will be happy to unveil their secrets to you."

-Mother Nature

There really is no greater teacher than Mother Nature when it comes to Chabana. It's very useful to have a demanding Zen teacher around to scold your every arrangement, but look no further than the forest path, the nearby river, or the weed in the shadows. She is your inspiration manifest. But, you'll probably need to find a local flower shop, too! Choose things in season and only take what you need. Don't get lured by large and lavish flowers. The beauty of Chabana is found in that mysterious simplicity, even frugality (as Master Lu said in the Cha Jing). Just watch what happens when you create a sacred space for the unadorned... It's not meant to excite the senses, but to stop them in their tracks. Again, I stress the importance of working from a calm space, from which calm arrangements arise, and from which calm inspiration ensues. A cluttered space and a frantic mind will reveal itself in a contrived and haphazard arrangement.

Fillers can be anything that fills the space within and around your arrangement. I often use bushy, green fillers, but there are plenty of varieties and colors to choose from. Also, be careful not to fill space simply because it's there. Open space is just as important as filled space. Keep the stems of your flowers and fillers immersed in water as much



as possible, from the time they were cut or purchased, to the time they are placed in the arranging vessel. This will ensure a longer life and greater respect towards your work.

Space

"Zen is creating sacred space around mundane activities."

—Wu De

Just as you will need a special space to display your *Chabana* you will also need a space to arrange it. That could be anywhere on any level surface. It too should be clean and organized and at a comfortable height when sitting to help facilitate the process. A clean space is inviting and open to creativity. Here at the

center, I do most of my work near our kitchen on a low, round table in front of an altar. We have chosen the sill of an open window peering into our gongfu tea room as the display for our *Chabana* and more formal flower arrangements.

Tools & Equipment

As any cook loves a sharp knife, a good pare of pruners and scissors makes the process much more enjoyable. In fact, that's a great lesson for starting any endeavor: motivate yourself in the beginning. I'm much more motivated to create *Chabana* when I have quality tools. Make it something you look forward to! In the beginning, your tools should be simple and basic,



but not cheap. Spike pads are useful but not always necessary. And though we are fortunate enough to have a wide selection of vases at the center, my teacher had me start with only two. They were wide and open and easy to work with.

Arranging

Once you've gathered your flowers and other elements and set up your work space, take a few minutes to just sit and breathe. This is possibly the most important step. Begin mindfully and finish in the same manner, before the analytical mind kicks in. Place your *Chabana* carefully on its display and take a step back. At this crucial point, I intuitively know the state of my mind

while I was arranging the flowers. Be both satisfied and determined to better represent Nature's simplicity in your next arrangement.

Clean your space and carefully tend to the unused cuttings. Compost them, cast them back into nature, or if in large volume, at least separate them with other organic waste. How you finish any job is how you begin the next one!

If there's one thing sadder than a house without any flowers, it's a house with old and wilting flowers. Their lifespan is fleeting and soon they will wither. Better to change your arrangements frequently and to dismantle them before they turn. Again, dispose of the arrangement in a respectful way, showing gratitude for the time it served. Say some prayers and set them in a grave or the river, even...

Chabana is another excellent opportunity to remember that it's not what you do that matters but how you do it. The intention with which you practice Chabana will be your greatest asset, teacher, and measure of your work. Like tea, it will remind you of that feeling of connection to nature you always have but sometimes forget. If you find inspiration to start arranging flowers for tea, take some photos and post them on our Facebook or Instagram websites. We'd love to see your Zen!





MOTHER EARTH SINGS TEA

-Yvonne Gallegos

This cosmic and poetic piece channels a lot of the power that Tea has to heal our relationship with Nature, ourself and others. These words are medicine themselves, and definitely worth reading a few times through. We found ourselves stopping, as Yvonne suggests, pushed back off the page by the power and beauty of her prose. There is a lot we can learn from her wisdom.

Before you begin reading this article, put this magazine down and close your eyes for a few minutes. Take a moment in silence to reflect on the article you read before this one. Or, if you've just sat down and are flipping through this magazine and are reading out of order (which I like to do), take a moment in silence, reflect on what you have just experienced and see how you feel. Finish your thoughts. Breathe...

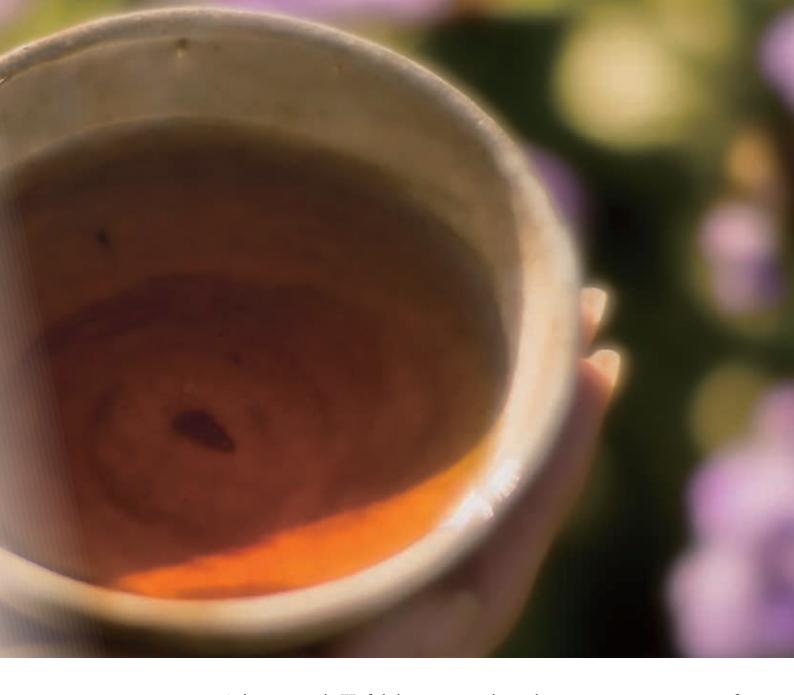
It is said that planet Earth formed 4.54 billion years ago—the only planet with life in our solar system. Methuselah, a North American ancient Bristlecone Pine 4,847 years old, is the second oldest known non-colonial organism on Earth and is one of the most majes-

tic trees you'll ever behold. Her bark skin dances right before your eyes. With every twist, turn and bend, she tells a story long forgotten. The Queen of the Andes, the largest species of bromeliad native to Bolivia and Peru takes 80-150 years to flower-a gorgeous towering spike reaching twelve feet high encrusted with thousands of pretty little purple, green and white flowers. It's a triumph of the plant kingdom. A human fetus takes roughly nine calendar months to gestate, which is a miracle of evolution. A shimmering dragonfly lives for about four months, while a marigold seed will shoot through the soil within seven days.

All of these time frames are moments compartmentalized, doc-

umentation of a life in so many words. Whether it was a big bang or a tiny little seed that fell to fertile ground and eventually grew to be a wise old oak, there was a period of "time" in which all of these events took place, a time that was not calculated or measured by the organism or being itself. A time in which time doesn't exist. A duration in the creation of life that flows to its own rhythm. This is the natural rhythm of life where the trees, the plants, the animals, and all life are one with the sun—one together within Mother Nature's womb that is Earth. Every sun is a new sun and a rebirth of everything.

In order to further understand our world through science, this compartmentalization and docu-



mentation are necessary. As human beings, especially right now with devices that seem to be inextricable from ourselves, we are wrapped up so tightly within the threads of time, such as alarm clocks, deadappointments, birthdays, lines, calls, etc. Time perception differs around the globe dramatically. For example, American culture tends to process time in increments of five minutes, while Europeans process time in increments of fifteen minutes. From the moment we wake till the moment we close our eyes at night, we are constantly aware of what time it is and use time as a way to guide and shape our everyday schedules. We impose unrealistic expectations on ourselves of what can be accomplished in a day's

work. We feel that we are not living to our full potential, though we sometimes don't even know what that means. Not understanding our own rhythm and how to live in concordance with the rest of the world stifles our awareness of the Divine essence. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could rise with the sun and feel the change of the seasons within our bodies or even our sense of smell alone? Or, how about being so in tune with the behaviors of the animals in our environment that we can trust them as our guides? We put up so many roadblocks to inhibit our own free, natural state, which would allow us to live a natural rhythm.

When I think about what the feminine means to me, I think

about an exquisite unawareness of time: a gorgeous surrender into letting things flow and grow as they will, focusing on the now and really being present in the moment. There is no other moment than this one right now. It is where the rhythm of all the expansive creative energy lies and is harnessed. I think of the feminine as an accessible state of fertile energy that exists outside of time. I see it as the polar balance to the sun, and his force on Mother Earth. If we can but just attune ourselves to these subtleties, we will not only expand our consciousness, we will awaken our lost wisdom and soul's purpose within our DNA. What a beautiful life this is: And this life is the world, not just a part of it.



To some people, feminine energy, the state of 'being pure love' and being 'in the moment' is a place that is hidden or hard to find-constantly searching for that inner peace, when it has always been within them. I get that it is hard to wrap your head around the concept that you are the stars and the stars are you, that we are the trees and the plants and the flowers—but we are. As I cultivate my tea practice, I can say for myself that I know I am the trees, the plants, the flowers, the air, the water, the fire... I am this moment, which is the living reality. Tea has taught me this.

When we drink Tea, we are meeting Her spirit-to-spirit. We are taking into our bodies centuries of feminine energy, letting it connect us back to that time that exists outside of time. She is a coming-home for us. She is the river that flows through our bodies, knocking on our spiritual door saying: "Hey! Wake up; it's time to play!" She is one with the rhythms of the Earth, so wholly and completely. There is no time within her existence. She is a wise medicine woman with many lessons to teach. She is stillness, mindfulness, awareness, patience, kindness, happiness and so many things... But, most of all, She is love. That is the state of true enlightenment: Being Love.

Actualized in Tea

Every time I prepare my tea table for a ceremony, I slow down, breathe in deep breaths of love and put all time aside. I am in the moment from the time I dust off the tea table, to placing my mat down, gathering flowers, selecting my tea, selecting bowls, music, heating the water and finally sitting down with my sisters and brothers to share in the majestic power of all creation within a single bowl of tea. I am ever-present in these

moments, committing myself to this unique experience with a new and open heart. I aspire to live every moment like this. In kindness, gratitude, love, patience, grace, mindfulness and presence. There is no other medicine that connects me to the stars and moon like Tea. My loving-cup will always be filled.

Can we imagine ourselves being present, radiating this Divine feminine all the time? I'd like to think so. We have already started creating a conscious collective of love all around this beautiful planet in this Global Tea Hut. This has all been manifested through our mutual love of the Leaf.

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She is re-aligning our hearts and our spirits so that we may fully connect with our friends, families, plants and animals. It is so important that we listen to these lessons of connecting. We create more love by connecting and loving more. This is Her way.

After you finish reading this article, take another moment to pause and reflect and just be. If you think you can't because you have to bathe your children right now, I'm telling you, you still can (I have to do that, too). Don't think about what you've just read or how long you think you'll let them play in the bathtub. Surrender yourself to that moment with them. Notice how they are growing. Give them your full attention, and that will in turn give them the opportunity to talk

to you about something important or tell you a funny joke you might not have heard. Resist taking your phone with you to the bathroom and disconnecting. Keep your hands free so you can feel the temperature of the water, feel the bubbles, feel your child's wrinkled fingertips. Notice a new beauty mark on their back. Surrender to the Divine feminine that just 'is', and maybe even perhaps remember your inner child. Your full attention is fertile ground. If you are blessed to have beautiful animals, connect a little deeper. Voltaire, an animal lover, once said that the advantage of being an animal is that they never

hear the clock tick. Take advantage of this open invitation to sit with them in their space at their level and be in their world. Try to smell what they smell, notice what they notice. Lastly, stand in your grace and connect to the amazing sun every morning, bask in its rays and find your rhythm. Talk to the wind and the fire. Tell them your worries, your tales of joy and happiness. Release to the waters and sing to the stars. Bow down to our Mother Earth and offer your gratitude. Give in to this moment. And, of course, best of

all: offer tea to Her, to yourself and to the moment!



Yvonne lost in a bowl of tea.



2015 LIGHT MEETS LIFE CAKES

2015 Big Snow Mountain Set

We have six amazing Light Meets Life cakes this year! A few are already dwindling in stock, and almost gone. This amazing set is the pinnacle of this year's tea. It is some of the most stunning young sheng puerh we have ever had, and in a very special set, with a one-of-a-kind box painted by Wu De.

This is the third year we have produced some limited edition puerh cakes to be sold transparently as a fundraiser for our new center Light Meets Life. Amazingly, both the previous years' cakes have sold out and so many people donated beyond the suggested donation. Last year, we made a limited edition set from Ai Lao raw material we collected on the first annual Global Tea Hut trip and Wu De offered to paint each box by hand. Those one hundred sets sold out immediately, giving us ideas for how to improve in 2015. And we have!

This year's special limited edition sheng puerh is one of the most amazing cakes we've ever seen. The fresh tea is so deliciously pungent, you can smell Her breath right when the lid of the box lifts. This tea comes from old-growth trees on Big Snow Mountain (Da Xue Shan, 大雪山) in Lincang, Yunnan. With a height of 3,500m and a prominence of 2,041m, Da Xue Shan is the most prominent peak of the Indo-Malayan Mountain Range of Southeast Asia. Big Snow Mountain is one of the Five Mountains that are the origin of all tea, and it happens to be our favorite because of its expansive, deep breadth.

The vibrations of an environment *are* the organism itself, and the organism is the environment. There is great wisdom in understanding that living things "go with" their environment, as Alan Watts used to say. Any change in the environment is a change in the organism—physically, and more subtly on the vibra-



tional level as well. When you watch a documentary on "Rivers", it isn't just an hour of water flowing by; it also contains the fish, frogs and crayfish. Each of these affects the water chemistry of the river, the levels of its banks, etc. And the river in turn affects their lives. They are the river, in other words. Similarly, tea trees are their environments, which is why it is so important that we promote living and/or organic teas! And that is why it matters so much where a tea comes from. In fact, when it comes to puerh, the quality is all in the trees and the terroir!

The terroir of our cake is amazing. It comes from old trees in pristine mountains. The energy of Big Snow Mountain is amazing, with

jungle forests and great snowy peaks above. The openness of these mountains is in the tea. When you drink it, you will understand. It has a very open quality. These days, it is tricky finding clean, living tea in Yunnan since some dishonest farmers will switch the tea. However, our tea came from a very reliable source. If that wasn't enough, though, we had the tea lab-tested just to be sure and it came back as chemical-free.

Nowadays, puerh tea is mostly produced in three areas: Xishuangbanna, Puerh (which was called "Simao" for a long time) and Lincang. Historically, the most famous of these was Xishuangbanna, which literally means "Twelve Rice Paddy District". During the early eras of

Puerh, almost all commercial tea came from this region. It is in the very south of Yunnan. 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 the 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:

> Ming Feng (鳴風) Mang Fei (忙肺) Mei Zi Qing (梅子菁) Wu Jia Zhai (武家寨) Da Xue Shan (大雪山)

This tea was handpicked and processed by the Wa aboriginal tribe. It is a very rare and limited treasure that was hard to find. Each 400g cake was completely stone-pressed by hand in the traditional way, leaving them looser, which is better for aging. These days most puerh that is labeled as "stone-

pressed" is actually only partially so. They will press the cake on a machine and then finish under stones so that they can label it as such, which we have witnessed many times in Yunnan. A complete stone-pressing takes longer and is easily discernible in the looseness of the cake, especially when the leaves are high quality. Better tea leaves are juicy and will resist the compression, machine or stone, meaning that great stone-pressed cakes will be doubly loose. This is ideal, as the tea will be easier to break up for brewing without damaging the leaves. Also, this provides the perfect environment for storing in normal humidity conditions, as the tea is not too tight to slow down aging, but still better than loose-leaf (which you will know if you did last month's gongfu experiment).

We find the liquor ethereal beyond description. The color is perfectly white and golden, shining bright in any light. It is both light and deep, uplifting and centering. It is crisp and clean and tastes like wind, but it has the strength of young puerh as well, which means it will go the distance. It is a great candidate for aging or drinking young.

One of the things we felt we had to improve last year was the boxes. While they were nice last year, they didn't have an insert for the cake, which we made ourselves by folding paper. This year, we made boxes from the same wood, but with inserts to hold the cake in, which means you can also display the cakes upright. Each box is different, with a unique painting hand done by Wu De. For many of us, some of the value will be in this as well. Wu has already spent dozens of hours painting these boxes. The set also comes with a description card and eight photos of the mountain and trees.

Of course, all the proceeds from the 120 numbered cakes will support the creation of our new center, Light Meets Life. In this way, the old and wise trees will be contributing to our Way of Tea through bowls of joy and new centers to share those bowls in... The minimum donation for these amazing sets is 150\$ + shipping. Maocha from old trees is very expensive these days. Our cost was around 100\$ for the tea, boxes and photos, not including Wu De's time or art, which he's donated freely.

We have already sold more than one-third of the available sets, so if you are interested in getting one you should order yours today. We must, of course, express our deep and heartfelt gratitude for your support!

Check the Tea & Teaware section of our site for more information.





TEA, FEMININITY & THE COSMIC YIN





The winner of our 2015 photo contest is back with pen in hand, bringing her vast experience and profound intellect to the table. She is currently working on a Ph.D thesis on femininity and Buddhism, so she is a perfect voice for this issue. Her article brings some temper to the more poetic writings of previous articles, focusing and honing in on some issues relevant to women and Tea, including some social injustices in the tea industry that we all should be aware of!

discussion of Tea and the feminine brings together layers and layers of possible exploration. Just as the world of Tea has mind-boggling complexities and variations, influences and sensitivities, for me, so does the term "feminine". Like Tea, femininity can come in different manifestations, expressing itself in such myriad forms that it doesn't do the terms "Femininity" or "Tea" justice to use just one.

I spent quite some time pondering the topic of "The feminine and Tea", and I would get stuck on "The feminine", asking myself, "What is feminine? What is a woman?" I decided that I don't really know what it means to be "feminine", or what it means to be a woman. The labels attributed to feminine and the

biological requirements for being female fall short of what a woman is, and the vast array of expressions across the wide Earth. Gender fluidity and the loosening of so many roles previously attributed to a certain gender has afforded modern people the opportunity to redefine for ourselves, and what it means to be embodied on the earth in one form or another, or both, neither or even switching gender roles to the moment. Since the feminine is such a fluid and individual experience, I feel I can only speak from my own perspective and experience how Tea and the feminine (or my version thereof) come together...

To begin exploring the relationship between Tea and the feminine, let's look at the common definitions

and explanations of the feminine. The idea of the feminine within many cultures is often exemplified within a relatively narrow range of qualities. Dictionaries define feminine as: the quality of being female; womanliness; and the quality or nature of the female sex. Many characteristics are also traditionally associated with femininity including sensitivity, gracefulness, nurturance, compassion, gentleness, tolerance and deference. Of course, every human regardless of sex or gender can embody these traits. Nonetheless, these linear definitions and stereotypes don't do justice to the vastness that is "the quality of being female; womanliness".

Many of these more traditional characteristics of the feminine can



be seen throughout the Tea world—in the gracefulness of ceremonies and the softness of the liquor, the sweetness of the aroma or when we feel nurtured by Mother Nature with warmth and gentleness. Imagining the beauty of the elegant leaf dancing in hot water, the steam curling and delicate, evokes an effeminate sentiment.

However we choose to embody/ explore the feminine (regardless of the body we currently experience), it sits within the dualistic framework contrasting with the Masculine. These aspects are just different sides of the same coin, since our consciousness (or whatever you would like to call our non-material "self/ being") is genderless and without socially constructed qualities. Being

within, or experiencing a particular side of this metaphorical coin can take on various qualities, expressed in a diverse range of traditions—as Yin/Yang, Shiva/Shakti, Sun/Moon, etc. One side can only be whole and balanced when partnered with its "opposing" quality, in a complementary dualism. An oversimplification of the Taoist version is expressed through tai chi with Yin, the cosmic feminine, having characteristics of dark, cold and damp; and Yang, as the cosmic male, with the opposing bright, hot and dry qualities. These cooperative sides create the natural world, the seasons and weather, etc., and neither side is independent, or better than the other. In the Indian context (again oversimplified) Shiva, the masculine, symbolizes consciousness, the passive, transcendent, unmoving eternal principle. This is seen in a sense as having no movement or "life" within it without the feminine, symbolized by Shakti. Shakti is activation, movement, energy or life force that moves creation. Again Tea embodies these two sides perfectly through the meeting of stillness (silence/ dry tea leaves) and energy (movement/ water, heat). And when they come together, something new is created.

As our discussion on complementary dualism continues, I would like to briefly discuss the "darker" side of the feminine. As previously explored, the stereotypical expressions of the feminine come in a clean, white, pure capsule embodying grace, beauty, tenderness and



delicacy. These ideals of the feminine have been deeply ingrained through the ages with the demonization of women who were deeply connected with their power and the Earth, whether through the tens (some say hundreds) of thousands of women killed as witches, or the "savage" women found on newly colonized continents around the world. Much social stigma still exists around women's bodies—especially when topics of menstruation, abortion and childbearing (including breastfeeding) are discussed. These topics seem to disrupt the cleanliness and purity that women are always meant to embody. The "dark" side of the feminine is not dark in the sense of bad or evil, but the dark mysterious void from which life arises. A chapter of the Dao De Ching poetically explores this idea:

The Valley Spirit never dies.
It is named the Mysterious Female.
And the doorway of the Mysterious
Female
Is the base from which Heaven and
Earth sprang.
It is there within us all the while.
Draw upon it as you will,
It never runs dry."
(Translated by Waley 1958, p149.)

To continue our brief dash through the idea of the darker embodiments of the feminine, we return again to Hindu mythology, and this time, to the Goddess Kali, who is one of the embodiments of Shakti we discussed earlier. Kali is the Goddess of power, change, time and destruction and is quite literally dark: with her black skin, symbolizing her all-embracing and transcendental nature: "Just as all colors disappear in black, so all names and forms disappear in her" (Mahanirvana Tantra). Interestingly enough, for me, this perfectly describes much of my experience when drinking dark, earthy, living tea. Kali is bloody, fierce and unapologetic, and quite the opposite of what most of our social constructs consider feminine. My interest in discussing these various aspects of the feminine isn't to claim one superior to the other, but to explore and embrace the multitude of ways it can be expressed. Just as Tea, She can come as light, uplifting and Heavenly, or dark, viscous and rooted in the Earth.

There are interesting threads woven between Tea and the feminine, and another that I find resonance with is the idea of invisibility. Tea is the second most consumed beverage in the world, and in many ways it is quite invisible through the commonality of it. In the UK, 60.2 billions cups of tea are consumed in a year, and in the US, Americans consumed over 80 billion (in 2014), which is still nothing in comparison to China or Turkey. When something is so common, it can become invisible, taken for granted and undervalued, for example, simple leaves—just water and heat, like a mother healing her family though providing daily nourishment through her food. When our medicine is what we consume everyday, it would seem to someone outside peering into our lives that we don't consume any kind of (what the western world considers) medicine. Just as the medicine women in native cultures were invisible to the European settlers because all of the women were medicine women. Women of color are also particularly subject to invisibility within our Euro-centric cultures and ideals of beauty and worth. Undervaluing the lives of women and our Earth, however, has not only traumatizing effects on those directly involved, but on us all collectively as well.

The aspect of invisibility in the feminine contributes to much of the exploitation of the Earth, women and children around the world. There are no words for the marginalization, exploitation and violence that women have experienced in our current and past world. The same can be said to what has occurred to our Mother Earth when we consider the pillaging and poisoning that

happens everyday. Because of this invisibility, it can be easy to ignore. The majority of Tea is picked by women and children, many lacking basic needs. Due to the incredibly low wages of tea pickers in India for example (around 1\$ a day), many young women are coerced with promises of a better life by traffickers, who often sell them as maids or into prostitution rings. Stories of sexual abuse, forced labor, lack of access to education, healthcare and horrific living standards abound when looking into many larger tea producers. Exploitation and abuse of women and children on tea farms has been documented in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Brazil and a number of African countries (Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon and Zimbabwe). Forced labor is also reported in China, claiming that a quarter of China's tea is produced by Laogai penal camps. The number of tons yielded by the top three tea producers in the world is boggling: China with around 1,980,000 tons, India with 1,184,800 tons, and Kenya producing 445,105 tons in 2014. Combining these quantities with the vastness of the countries tea is produced in; it paints a bleak picture of the number of people suffering in such unacceptable conditions. And this isn't accounting for the contribution of the heavy use of toxic chemicals in pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers on the workers' health. Some light has been shed on the toxicity of pesticides in tea due to it being heralded as one of the latest health trends in the West, and now concern is spreading about what some are consuming. These chemicals directly affect the lives of everyone involved directly with tea plantations, and their families. Though there are countless dire stories, there are also many individuals, communities and organizations committed to a more ethical and sustainable Tea production, like Global Tea Hut, of course.



Once we begin to have a deeper relationship to our Earth, what Tea means as medicine and to our fellow humans, these invisible aspects that cause so much harm and destruction are brought to the surface. In a sense, we can't heal wounds that we don't know exist. Changing our perspectives to see what we consume—our food, water and tea as medicine—brings respect back to our Mother Earth, and those who share this planet with us. When we begin to truly honor what is so often marginalized (whether it be through greed, ignorance, our capitalist/consumerist/patriarchal societies, etc.) we can begin to heal some of the damage and move into a more sustainable future.

One of the ways I find further honors Tea and the women in my

life is to bring the two together in women's tea circles. This has the benefit of not only sharing space and Tea as medicine but can also work as a platform to further discuss our relationship with Mother Earth and the necessity for ethical sustainability. Our societies are made of communities, which are made of families, which are made of individuals. Even on the micro level, my relationship to Tea, water, Earth as a whole, and others I come in contact with is the foundation of where we can grow healthy and whole families, communities and societies. I am often reminded to never underestimate the power we have to influence others simply by living our own truth. It seems for me so natural and so simple to serve tea, and yet many have profound experiences through

it, reminding me to not underestimate this seemingly simple act and the medicine that Mother Nature offers us. Connecting through Tea is without dogma, expectation or judgment, allowing a safe space for authentic expression which is usually rare for many living in such an opinion/expectation-driven world. To be able to support others in this way is such an incredible gift, especially when participants describe their experience: "What I particularly remember is the enormous gratitude and the deep universal trust, which I experienced more and more with each bowl of tea." A deep bow of gratitude to all those serving, receiving and living the multifaceted expression of the feminine.





MIROSLAVA RANDOVA THE CREATIVE URGE

-Petr Novak

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One of the ambitions of Global Tea Hut magazine is to introduce you to as many tea artisans working in the true spirit of tea as possible. And since this issue is devoted to Tea and the Feminine, we though it would be a great time to introduce you to Mirka, who makes many of the braziers we use here at the center. Many of you are already familiar with her work. Hopefully, Petr's article will enhance your understanding and appreciation for her art.

🕽 ome months ago, Wu De asked me to send bowls and side-handle pots to the center in Miaoli. He also asked for two or three of "the amazing braziers you make". My first thought was, "Hey! People always say that! The braziers are Mirka's creation, not mine." As I am more visible to the world, quite regularly people mislabel her work as mine. Mirka is my partner in both life and clay, and a huge inspiration of mine. When I explained this confusion to Wu De, he immediately offered space for her story in this magazine, hoping to prevent any further confusion and honor a great ceramicist in her own right.

As are many creative people, Mirka is not so interested in talking about herself or her life; she'd rather communicate through her art. But I feel her story is interesting enough to tell, and it will give you a bit better understanding of and appreciation for the wonderful pieces of teaware she creates. I will try to keep this story short so there will also be space to talk about her work as well—the braziers we all love to use.

Mirka grew up in a small village not so far from Prague (I know, there is nothing far from Prague in the Czech Rep.) Growing up with loving parents who do not understand the creative need can be complicated, though. Maybe some of you know that look on a parent's face that seems to say: "What is

wrong with that kid? Why is she not playing with her dolls, and stealing paintbrushes and paint from her father's workroom? And why has she brought those strange branches from the forest into her room?"

The feeling that she didn't fit in stayed with her throughout her young life. Later, that very feeling, compounded by the realization that office work was not her cup of tea, led her to Art's doorstep. In her twenties, she would not have believed that her journey would keep her abroad for almost ten years. And as for clay—well, she thought about it about as much as mud, the creative games she played as a child sitting on river bank...

After a couple of years traveling and living in the UK and Germany,



she settled in Chicago. From the start, she took advantage of the open education system there, taking different classes at Lake County College. And there is where the spark truly ignited. One of her major interests at that time was photography. Inspired by her photography teacher, Mirka started to work on techniques of developing photography on materials other than film or print—glass seemed too cold, metal too sharp. Her teacher's advice was: "Why don't you join a ceramics class. You can make some tiles, and then come back and we'll develop some pictures on them and see what happens." She never went back, though... Clay consumed her fully. Her old reflex camera was covered in dust for years (though she recently took it out, but that is another story).

Later, she moved to Cologne, Germany for two years to continue exploring clay at Alte Feuerwache. There was a rich community of ceramicists in Chicago, though, which pulled her back. She found her home at the Terra Incognito Ceramic Studio. She worked there as an assistant/monitor. In exchange for mopping the floor, cleaning, recycling clay, loading kilns and mixing glazes for students, she had her own space to work, fire, exhibit, and most importantly a community of people to share her art with—to share ideas, learn from and fire with. She says, "Working in Terra was hard, but it was the best school of my life. When you recycle clay by

hand, load different kilns, prepare glazes and space for others, then you will really deeply understand what pottery is all about. And that's what I did." Workshops for visiting artists allowed her to be close to really exceptional ceramicists, with different approaches, sharing their techniques and ways of living a life of clay. What an environment for a ceramic student, hungry to learn!

In 2004, Mirka finally decided to make a change and move back to Czech. This happened for many reasons, but one clear vision resonated stronger than the other reasons to come back: she wanted to build a studio, a wood-fired kiln and over time to become a potter in her own right. We met each other in 2005—two very different souls, but with





similar dreams. After a short time in Mirka's small studio near Prague, we decided to take a big step and buy an old house-studio space in a small village called, "Doupě" (In English, the village name would be something like "Den", and you can imagine many things of a village by this name). The house is built of stone; it's one hundred years old, without electricity, running water or a toilet... just four walls and a feeling that this was the right space to harbor all our dreams. (Sometimes, we are still not sure why we bought this place.) Nine years later, we are still here, behind pottery wheels, two wood kilns, and many ceramic adventures and several challenging projects.

Moving from the American to the Czech dream was not without its bumps for Mirka. From the technological difficulties of using different materials here to creating a new portfolio of ceramic work for new, and very different customers, to lack of brother-sisterhood of potters, she struggled through many vicissitudes. Adopting new techniques was interesting, though, with many cool discoveries and lots of fun. Building a new body of work for a new market was challenging, indeed. Being a full time potter is not easy, no matter where you live. It took her time to get established, but she is doing very well now. She still misses the community of potters in Terra Incognito, like anyone who misses family.

When we started to work together, it was a blessing to my own ceramic work. Such knowledge and experience as she has are very rare here in Europe. Many of the techniques I use now in my work come from Mirka's knowledge and teaching. She has given me more than I can repay. But one of the few things I brought to the relationship was my focus on tea, teaware and tea community. Mirka quickly

started to apply her creativity to teaware as well. From the beginning it was clear that her approach was more artistic and sculptural. With a great attention to details, she always hopes to create un-seen things. Both teaware (mostly the braziers, tea boats and puerh jars) and tableware (where her main focus lays now) have many rules, traditions, and expectations from the consumers who use them. Both give her a framework she has to fit her free, artistic soul into, finding the freedom in the form. That is beautiful in its own way, pushing the borders. Sometime challenges reveal unseen roads. Doing what you love is happiness, but it does not mean that it is always smooth sailing. Thanks to the generous support of many tea lovers, our dreams of being full-time potters has been realized. But the journey goes on...



Tennare Artisans

Braziers

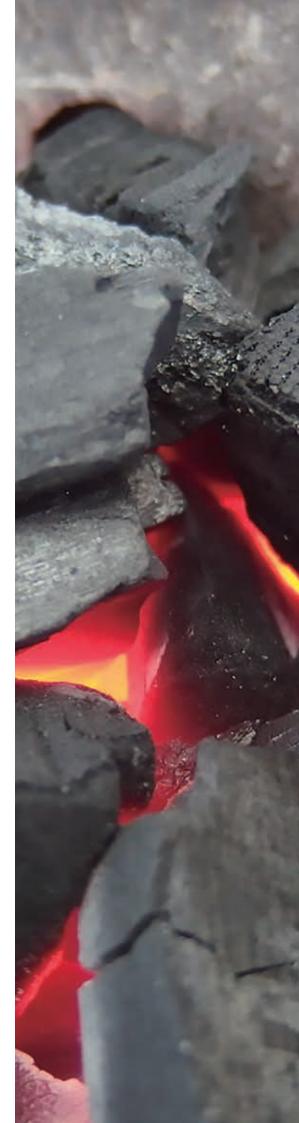
I'd also like to share with you about how Mirka's braziers were born: The first idea to create stoves for heating tea water came to us many years ago. We had many discussions with tea friends, who are students of the Japanese tea ceremony. The first stoves were from my hands, trying to copy a Japanese kama and furo. They were not bad, but we wanted something better. How many people really practice Japanese tea ceremony with charcoal? Just a few. And how many people drink tea in different ways and would like to use charcoal to heat their water? Many! For that reason, we knew we needed to try something different.

At that time, we still hadn't seen "the real thing". How did people heat water for gongfu tea in the past? After seeing first pictures of Chaozhou brazier sets, sets for Japanese *Senchado*, etc. we knew that that was the direction we needed to go. When a few pieces cracked, I decided to let the idea go altogether. "It is too complicated! Our clay does not respond well to thermal shock." I thought. But Mirka picked up the challenge when I set it down. And thank the Heavens she did!

She blended new clays, and after numerous trials using different combinations, shapes and designs (I had to test them all, becoming the official brazier tester!) she ended up with ceramic brazier with a kind of basket inside for the coals. It was nice-looking, could be made in different shapes and sizes, and be tuned to one's kettle size. A few months after the first series in 2012, we found a problem. Some of the baskets cracked. Some worked for a long time, but others cracked right away. We were sending new baskets overseas, refunding people, looking for solutions, etc. Finally, we stopped offering them to people. At that point, Mirka started to think outside the box, making a similarly designed basket insert into the brazier for coals, but cast in iron. Playing with this idea, she created a clay model and started to inquire with iron casting companies all over the Czech Republic. Out of thirty, just four got back to us, and finally only one of them was really able to do it. It is pretty complicated to shape iron cast molds. They made the first prototype in the spring of 2013, and after another small but important change in design, we received our first bulk order of cast iron baskets in 2014. Since then, Mirka has been exploring new clays, surfaces, and shapes of brazier to fit them. As many of you will remember from the August issue of Global Tea Hut, there are two basic brazier styles. Mirka's braziers with cast iron baskets are the "closed" variety. These are generally easier to use. In our experience, even beginners can figure out how to use them quite easily.

Mirka's spirit will never allow for a mere copy of an antique brazier. They are always fresh, creative pieces made with a deep respect for Tea and all of us sitting around it. I feel honored to witness her creative process and grateful for the opportunity to have such teaware in my daily tea practice!







Mirka's wood-fired braziers with cast iron baskets for coals.





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 Mia Maestro:



o describe tea, my relationship to tea, when I met Her, my first encounter with the Leaf should be easy, right? And yet, I struggle to put into words a relationship so simple yet so vast, so infinite and yet also tangible... Who am I without tea? Who am I when I'm embraced by Her? How to talk about a meeting that often resembles an orphan finding her lost mother, a savior, or sometimes even a lover...

How to write about the energy held within the bowl—the void staring back at me, my will diving into its unmovable centered precipice? How to speak of the times I become invisible while serving my higher self in every cup I hand to others, or the numerous times I've created interference with every movement of my unsure hand, or held my breath occupied with other matters, unfocused and rattled?

How to tell about those instances when the construction of myself disappears and I faintly catch a glimpse of my true spirit—I become see-through, Nothingness dressed as magic settles in; and, like a light mist amongst the cliffs of Wuyi, it inadvertently sways

through me like a lonely stick of incense yearning to be lit, the way you and I want to be ignited. It's like the piece of charcoal I just placed on the fire that becomes a dinosaur egg: red, full of magma spirit, reminding me of the same fire that once broke a seed open, the sun-fire that awoke that sprout of a camellia tree, that brought nourishment to that leaf—to the leaves in my bowl and in your bowl that have been dancing around like dervishes since the beginning of time, since the birth and death of the last time...

I guess poetry is the closest I'll come to expressing what Tea is to me. I'm Mia. I'm this month's tea way-farer. My home is in Los Angeles and everywhere I am. I'd love to share a bowl of all this poetry with each of you someday, my tea family...

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 teabai@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 7/7:30 pm. 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 <u>events@firstflush.ee</u> for more details. In Tartu, there are tea gatherings held every Wednesday evenings. Contact <u>kaarel.kilk@hotmail.com</u> for more information.

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

Movember Affirmation

Am I in touch with my feminine side?

All people are a balance of masculine and feminine. Am I in balance within myself, connected to both Yin and Yang. Do I fearlessly live such balance? In England, Nick Dilks holds regular Tea events all around the UK. For more information, please contact him at livingteauk@gmail.com.

In Finland, Ville, Tertti and Bosco hold regular tea sessions. Contact them at: ville.sorsa@helsinki.fi.

In In State College, Pennsylvania the Penn State Tea House holds biweekly tea meditations. Contact Tea Hut member Teddy Smith at txs397@psu.edu for more information.

If you have been a member for some months already and are hosting regular Global Tea Hut gatherings, please use the site to contact us and we'll let everyone know!

Center News

Before you visit, check out the center's *new* website (<u>www.teasagehut.org</u>) 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 here. We have some amazing teas this year. Check the site regularly for details. They are going fast, so if you want one you should order soon!

If you haven't yet, check out the "discussion" section of our webpage. There is now a place for you to leave reviews of every month's tea, as well as your experiences with the gongfu tea tips!

Help us figure out ways to connect this community: we are looking to create and develop some kind of accessible GTH database/platform. Let us know if you can help or have any ideas! We want to support dialogues and gatherings amongst members, solidifying this community!

