

# GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

*November 2018*

## ELEVATION

SUN MOON LAKE & BOWL TEA





## ELEVATION

*It is that special time of year again, where we mark our calendars and return to simplicity—return to Elevation! This is our chance to give back as a community, making a difference in the life of one special farmer. This is our fifth year of Elevation, so we have lots of highlights and events to celebrate this month!*

*Love is  
changing the world  
bowl by bowl*

## FEATURES

### 15 SUN MOON LAKE

*By Editorial Team, with guests:  
Sarah Scarborough, Jing Ren (淨仁) and  
Resham Daswani*

### 37 GLOBAL TEA HUT EVENT A WEEK OF LEAVES IN A BOWL

*Join us from November 19<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>!*

### 41 ELEVATION PROCESSING

*By Editorial Team*

### 59 SPECIAL OFFER: “ALOFT” SUN MOON LAKE 20-YEAR-OLD RED TEA



03



37



41

## TRADITIONS

### 03 TEA OF THE MONTH

*“Elevation,” Old-Growth Red Tea,  
Sun Moon Lake, Nantou, Taiwan*

### 25 CHA DAO

*Choosing a Sidehandle Pot  
By Wu De (無的)*

### 61 TEA WAYFARER

*Colin Hudon (清愚, Qing Yu), USA*



活力  
舒醒



15

© 2018 by Global Tea Hut  
All rights reserved.

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



# From the editor

In November, the weather has cooled to a perfect temperature and we drink much more tea than usual. If you live in a place with four seasons, this is a magical time for outdoor tea, watching the multi-colored swirl of leaves dancing to the ground. When the weather changes, we should listen and feel connected to Great Nature. Tea can help. We drink lots of aged oolongs, Cliff Tea, aged sheng and occasionally break into a shou on a cooler day. Red teas are perennial, and great for drinking any time of year.

This month, we conclude another of our annual photography contests and announce the winners. It has been amazing to be so inspired by all your submissions from around the world. As many of you know, these last three years I have been studying photography, though in a very unique way: I only make photographs of tea and tea-related subjects! I find that there is something very Zen about photography and the way the practice of it affects our vision. It has changed the way I see the world, and often slows me down, helping me to be more present and notice more of my surroundings. As opposed to snapping lots of pics with your phone, slow down, breathe and *make* a photograph—even if it is with a phone—rather than *take* a pic. “Write with light,” as one of my mentors always says. There is much congruence between the art of photography and tea: they both include a way of seeing the world, a communion between subject and object to achieve mastery and a communication of Nature into the human realm.

My aim is to capture the spirit of tea through my photography, to help you, our reader, feel what it is like to come to the Center or sit for a ceremony, or perhaps even drink some casual tea. Of course, I also hope to inspire you through the photographs I make to put another kettle on! Photography holds a lot of weight in these issues, as it is the first thing you see when you pick up any given month. I try to translate my deep love for all things tea through the lens and onto the page. The camera is a medium to gather the light of a moment, a feeling and something spiritual in the nature of tea. There is a real spiritual connection in this art, especially when you love the subject of your photographs—the part of the photograph that you cannot describe, the “feeling” that pulls you into a great photograph, which is what I would call “spiritual.” I know I have a long way to go yet, but thought that my goals may help you understand the photography of these issues as well as our overall trajectory.

This is always one of our favorite issues and times of year: the time to be elevated! Elevation is one of our all-time favorite teas. To celebrate five years of Elevation, we have put together a “best of” issue with all the best Sun Moon Lake Elevation articles we’ve published, along with lots of new articles and photography! We also have a very exciting week of events planned for this month, from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>, which we hope you will all join. (You can read more about this exciting week on pp. 37-40.)

We have always felt that environmentalism must be more than just armchair philosophizing about changing the world and affect the real quotidian lives of farmers on the ground. In particular, we hoped that this community could make a difference in the life of one farmer whom we admire and respect. Eventually, we found the way for all of us to elevate.

We approached one of our favorite farmers in Sun Moon Lake, Mr. Su Shui Ding (蘇水定), and began a conversation about helping him. As you will read, he is an amazing man and very dedicated to his tea trees and the environment. Though he is a great farmer, he isn’t much of a businessman. He has trouble selling all his tea, lacking all packaging and marketing skills. He doesn’t want to make lots of money and leave the life of farming to others, but rather to be in his fields every day. Some years ago we came to an agreement that we would buy whatever remaining tea Mr. Su does not sell each year, so he can rest comfortably in the knowledge that he will sell all his tea out each and every year. When we told him, he shed a tear, and said that he could now focus all his attention on farming and improving his processing skills.

We were able to make this promise only together with you. Without this community, we couldn’t afford to buy all of Mr. Su’s remaining tea out each year. But by sending this special tea out every year to this community, all of our money together goes to support this wonderful man—making a real difference in the life of a farmer. And the only compromise, really, is that we all get to taste his magical tea each and every year! The changes in a tea from year to year are magical, and an important lesson for a tea lover. (If a tea isn’t changing a lot, that is a chemical-laden, “conventionally-grown” plantation tea!) The weather is different every year, after all, and we can taste and feel this in the tea. We hope you enjoy this year’s Elevation, and raise a bowl for Mr. Su!



## —Further Reading—

This month, we recommend rereading all five of the amazing Elevation issues. Some of the articles printed in this issue are remade versions of those articles with all new photography. This issue is a “Best of Elevation” issue, but there are still many details we couldn’t cover in this issue. Remember, all our past issues are archived now!

# TEA OF THE MONTH



ver the course of this month, we will once again be returning to simplicity—the beginning and foundation of so many tea practices worldwide: Elevation. This is the only tea we send each and every year, and for some very good reasons. There is nothing special about this tea. Its magnificence is its unadornedness—the grace with which it harmonizes bitter, astringent, sour and sweet and offers a more plain, naked look at the energy of the Leaf without any of our manmade tools, almost unprocessed.

In the *Tea Sutra* (茶經), the great Tang Dynasty (618-907) tea master Lu Yu (陸羽) said that the spirit of tea is frugality/simplicity. This is where Tea and Zen become “one flavor,” as the character for “Zen (禪, *Chan*)” is composed of the radicals “示,” to manifest, and “單,” “simplicity.” Zen is to manifest simplicity, and so is tea. At times, it can seem like the tea world is complicated: myriad processing techniques, types of tea, tea regions and brewing methods found around the world. But all this starts and ends with simplicity: leaves, water and heat. There is nothing else to it, really. Many of us will remember the story of the great tea master Rikyu who was once asked by a student what the essence of Cha Dao is. The master calmly replied, “Draw the water, lay the coals, boil the water and steep the tea,” to which the student exclaimed “That’s it! I could have stayed home and learned that!” Rikyu wagged his finger, tsks-tsks: “The day you can do that is the day I lay my head at your feet and call you master!”

Elevation offers us the chance to return to the foundation of our tea practice: leaves in a bowl with hot water. It reminds us once a year that all the information surrounding tea and tea quality is all mind-made. This doesn’t mean quality is completely unimportant, just that it is relative truth. If you put ten grams of very cheap one-dollar tea and ten grams of very expensive, fine tea in the forest, it all decomposes into twenty grams of dirt—and the frogs, bugs, the trees and sun all don’t care which tea we value more or less. The quality in tea is not absolute. The data, information, history and brewing methods are all real and relevant to humans, but have little to do with the plant world tea inhabits. Drinking a very simple, humble

tea together each year reminds us that we aren’t here for fancy flavors or great experiences; we are here to learn from Tea and from each other. We are here to share in this global experience together, inviting harmony into our lives and hearts, changing the world bowl by bowl... Elevation reminds us that Tea is Tea: a simple leaf from the forest, here to remind us of our connections to Nature, to ourselves and to each other.

Elevation is also important environmentally. As our Extended Edition this year taught us, our values and choices impact Nature and the lives of others around the world. We have always hoped that Global Tea Hut could be much more than just an armchair discussion of environmental philosophy and politics—a debate that some will agree with while others will disagree. We want to make a difference in the lives of actual, down-to-earth people. We hope that this community can walk the talk, that we can change the lives of humans who are behind positive change, as opposed to just talking about the problem. Mr. Su Shui Ding (蘇水定) was our choice because he is an incredible example of integrity and love. (We will share his story in greater depth in the coming section.) On behalf of this whole community, we offered to buy up whatever remains of Mr. Su’s tea each year so that he would never have to worry about making ends meet again. We could never afford this alone, but on behalf of this community, as a purchase for our Tea of the Month every year, we can get it done together. Mr. Su cried when he heard this and said that now he can just focus on what he loves: farming.

Elevation is a no-nonsense, simple tea. Most of the Assamica in Sun Moon Lake, Taiwan is processed with greater oxidation and rolling to be sweeter. We have asked Mr. Su to oxidize ours less, as we feel the sweeter flavor comes at the expense of the energy of these old trees, and we also want the tea to be simple, bitter and astringent—closer to the nature of the leaves on the tree. This is the quintessence of a “daily tea,” one that becomes a friend through thick and thin—you don’t have to sit up formally or act in any special way around such an old friend. Hold this simplicity dearly, for as the Old Man says in the *Dao De Jing* (道德經), “the Way is a returning.”





Elevation (活力舒醒)



Sun Moon Lake, Taiwan



Old-Growth Red Tea



Taiwanese



~800 Meters



# 活力舒醒



# A DEEPER SESSION

## Further Exploration into Our Tea of the Month

Over the course of this beautiful month, we return once again to the classic Sun Moon Lake red tea we've come to call "Elevation," the only tea we repeat every year. The tea for this month is our all-time favorite tea, and the one we send home with travelers who stop at our Center! You could say it's our signature tea: the one we use to introduce new teawayfarers to the path—the first wayside sign of the road. It's also one of the teas we like to serve when we set up our roadside huts, serving tea to passersby. This month is always a good opportunity to review some of the core teachings we have around tea, like understanding living tea and the difference between red and black tea. Also, by retelling Mr. Su's story, we learn the importance of the dialogue between the farmer and trees to the quality of a tea.

This amazing red tea is worthy of being called a "living tea," in all the ways we have discussed in previous issues: It is seed-propagated, the trees have space to grow, there is a living relationship with the local ecology—undergrowth, plants, insects, animals, molds and bacteria; there are, of course, no chemicals used in

its production and no irrigation either. There's also a positive dialogue/relationship with the farmer. It shines with a bright and uplifting energy that makes it the perfect morning tea, radiating throughout your day and filling it with "elevation." It is simple and true, and you feel like you know it after your first bowl, as if a beloved friend from another incarnation had come back into your life.

Though the trees are allowed room to grow between them, they are pruned. This is usually a disqualifier for what we call "living tea," but we always give Elevation a pass. The reason the trees are pruned is that the whole farm is tended by just one farmer and his wife. If Mr. Su and his wife let the trees grow up, which they would like to, they would be unable to harvest all the leaves in the time window Nature and the weather allow for picking. And they cannot afford to hire help for the harvest. Most farmers prune their trees in the autumn to increase yield, but Mr. Su does so out of practical need. We think that this exception is very minor compared to most tea in the world, and therefore Mr. Su's tea still qualifies as a "living tea" to us, despite the small compromise.

As you may remember, there are two main varieties of tea: small-leaf and large-leaf. Originally, all tea comes from the forests in and around southwest China: Yunnan, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and eastern India. The descendants of those original trees are single-trunked, with large, wide crowns that can grow several meters in height. The roots are also deep, extending far down into the earth before branching. Then, as tea traveled north and east—naturally or by human hands—it adapted to colder, sometimes higher, climates and terroir. These trees, called "small-leaf," developed into several trunks, like a bush, with roots that extend outwards rather than down. The leaves got smaller and smaller as tea progressed north into colder climes, until they became so small in places like Japan that when they are rolled, they look like little needles (like *sencha* or *gyokuro*). Our Tea of the Month is large-leaf, like puerh.

Since Elevation is from large-leaf trees grown at a lower altitude, it is more bitter and astringent because the leaves grow faster and don't store as much glucose to make them sweet. However, this rapid growth channels more from the mountain, lending the





tea a stronger Qi. Much like puerh, Elevation is also a great candidate for aging long-term. (In fact, we recently acquired some twenty-year-old Sun Moon Lake red tea made exclusively from buds. It is stellar. Check it out on p. 59.)

### ***From Past to Present***

When the Japanese conquered Taiwan, they wanted to develop several long-term agricultural projects to help their economy. They brought many large-leaf saplings and seeds from eastern India to make red tea plantations, choosing Sun Moon Lake for its accessibility and because its terroir is similar to that of India. When the Japanese were expelled, their gardens were abandoned. In the coming decades, these semi-wild gardens would grow up and produce completely wild offspring, as well as adapting and relating to the local terroir in all the amazing ways a tea tree can—through the soil, the insects, rain and minerals, sun and rock. Our tea comes from one such small organic and ecological garden consisting primarily of semi-wild trees with some wild ones scattered about.

The farmer, Mr. Su, is an amazing man. Many of his nearby neighbors have utilized their gardens to create more industrial plantations and get rich. He says he only wants enough to provide for his family, and therefore keeps it simple and organic. He has even bought up some nearby property so that he can control the proximity his trees have to anything harmful others may be using. For that reason, the tea is incredibly clean and bright, speaking of its long heritage here in these mountains and beyond, to the older forests its ancestors once lived in at the foot of the great Himalayas.

Betal nut is a mild intoxicant sold throughout Asia. The tree is easy to grow, requiring little care, so many farmers plant it in and around their tea to supplement their income. This kind of areca palm production is bad for the land, however, depleting the soil and causing landslides. Consequently, Mr. Su has killed the betel trees that were on the neighbor's land he purchased. The dead trunks are then invaded by grubs that quickly consume the pith of the betel trees. When split open, this will make a nice fertilizer for the tea trees, turning loss into the cycle of life, as Nature should be.

Mr. Su is a second-generation farmer with an incredible attitude. While his neighbors constructed new-and-improved houses with satellite dishes, he stayed humble, simple and in love with his work and trees. Three years ago, there was a drought and a plague of bugs decimated the area—insects that come only every decade or so. When we talked to him about it, he responded with great wisdom, proving that—like the ancient Daoist texts—even the simplest people can achieve harmony with the Dao, mastery of life and a great wisdom that we all can learn from. He said that at that time, he received less. If he were to stress about that, or worse yet, compromise his values and turn to pesticides for help, it would be like rejecting his destiny, arguing with Heaven. Furthermore, he said that it would show how ungrateful he was for what Nature *had* given him. “We should be grateful for what Nature provides and accept the times that Heaven takes from us—learning from times of having less, or even losing what we have, as much as in times of abundance. We all will face lack and loss sooner or later. Hardship and loss are woven into the fabric of the world—into giving and receiving.





茶 You drive down a long road of brand new factories, big new houses and much rural affluence. At the end of the road is a simple, old farmer's house with dogs and tools outside. The Su household is simple, and hasn't changed in decades. It is one thing to maintain integrity when it is easy to do so, when everyone is doing so, but it is a whole other caliber of person who sticks to what they believe in when there are opportunities to compromise all around them, as it is for most of us in this modern world. His neighbors have grown rich producing conventional tea in large quantities, but Mr. Su and his lovely wife have stuck to a small, simple life of natural growing without the use of any agro-chemicals, allowing enough to be enough! They are an inspiration to us all...

If you resist and argue with Heaven that your destiny is unfair, you don't learn and there will be greater misfortune later. Better to accept whatever Nature gives us and be grateful. "I have less this year, but it is okay because I saved when I had more last year; and maybe next year I will have more again." Mr. Su says.

Most of you know that we have made a commitment to buy any tea that Mr. Su does not sell each year at Chinese New Year for the rest of our lives. When we told him this, he actually cried and said that in doing so, we were freeing him to focus on tea farming and production, rather than on marketing, which he admitted he is not very good at doing. We cannot

ask farmers to protect the environment without caring for them and their families. When farmers are honored and respected, socially and economically, then we can begin dialogue about how we would like them to steward the land in their care. As long as they face economic hardship and are ignored/disrespected, they will make compromises. There are many ways to get involved in the ongoing shift to sustainable tea production, but working with the farmers in ways like this is paramount. We have to live our philosophy...

We wanted you to know that this month's tea is one of the ways that Global Tea Hut is working hard to make a difference, even if it is small. We hope that Mr. Su will become a

shining example to his neighbors and peers, who will see that he sells out all of his tea, every year—year after year—and maybe ask him why. When he says that a global community of tea lovers around the world is buying him out precisely because he loves Nature and is farming organically, they may reconsider how they care for their land.

Buying all of Mr. Su's leftover tea this year is what has afforded us the chance to share his tea with so many of you. He said he hopes everyone who drinks it shares it and is happy! He is very proud that tea from his garden is traveling all around the world, bringing peace and joy to so many of us, and he invited us all to his small home for a cup one day!



# Red Vs. Black Tea. Of Course

Once again, we are committed to correcting the red tea/black tea mistake. 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 another kind of Chinese tea that is called “black tea.” So if you call red tea “black tea,” then what do you call black tea?

The reasons for this mistake are manifold, having to do with the long distances the tea traveled in chests to Europe, and even more importantly with the general lack of information there for the first few hundred years tea was traded. Another layer to the confusion comes from the fact that the Chinese have always categorized tea based on the liquor, while Westerners named tea for the color of the leaf itself. The difference between black and red tea is much more obvious in the liquor than in the leaf, though the leaf is also slightly red to our eyes. 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 English, you could see how easy it would be to spread misin-

formation. 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!

The basic difference between red and black tea is that red tea is heavily oxidized through prolonged withering and rolling during production, and black tea is artificially fermented post-production. This usually happens through piling, which is akin to composting. Local bacteria are important in the post-production artificial fermentation of black tea, which means that it is a very regional kind of tea—its *terroir* includes the micro-environment, along with the trees, soil, weather and other natural elements. Red tea, on the other hand, is the only genre of tea that is truly a production methodology, which can therefore be applied to *any* varietal/cultivar.

Nowadays, the term “dark tea” is used by some tea vendors and authors to describe black tea, rather than correcting the mistake. However, we still feel that when a culture misappropriates or mistakenly terms a concept, category or idea from another culture, then it is the foreign culture’s respon-

sibility to correct the mistake, which demonstrates a respect and honor for the “host.” Honoring the proper Chinese terminology is honoring the farmers and tea masters who have handed the genetic lineage of trees, the brewing methodologies and the spiritual practices down to us. We are not trying to correct the mainstream habit of saying “black tea.” What we are doing is correcting this mistake among those who care—among our community of more conscious, heart-centered Chajin, allowing all of you to better communicate with those who produce and sell tea at its source.

The issue is, ultimately, a minor one, but here’s an example of the effect that honoring tradition and correcting this mistake can have: Last month, we met with two farmers from Liu Bao, in Guangxi, and they were so happy with our efforts to honor and respect true “black tea,” returning it to its proper place in the West, that they broke out a celebratory fifty-year-old Liu Bao tea and congratulated us again and again, cup after cup! And their gratitude was definitely sincere, as was our respect for black tea producers.

## Simplicity & Tea

In this day and age, simplicity and emptiness have become the rarest of commodities. Finding the space to be free from clutter, noise or disruption is challenging indeed. In Chinese, the word for a sage, a holy person, is “mountain person (*xian ren*, 仙人),” because there was a time when the only thing one had to do in order to seek isolation and peace was to head up into the mountains. The Chinese cliffs and crags were above the clouds and free of the dust of the city. It was assumed that the only reason someone would retire from civilization was to seek spiritual insight, and so anyone you encountered in the mountains would likely

be holy. Also, “holy” in Daoist philosophy could not be other than Nature itself—sagehood by definition is a harmony with Nature. And where better to find such peace and harmony than in the pristine mountains?

These days, things are different. We must seek the mountain within. Ultimately, the sages of old looked inside, too. There is an old saying that it “is easy to be a sage in the mountain, greater still in the city; but the highest master is at peace in the palace.” External quietude helps us to achieve inner stillness, but in the end, it is much more beneficial to rest in a stillness that is not dependent upon external cir-

cumstances—a peace that can weather the storm. Otherwise, our peace is fragile, shattered by the first airplane that flies overhead.

In the Daoist way, peace is about stillness and simplicity. Turbid water is still clear in nature; it is only because it has been upset that it has become muddied. To still the water, we have only to leave it for some time. Our true nature is bright and serene. And it is often the simplest things that bring us closer to it—nearer the joy and lasting peace of our true hearts—like sitting in meditation, quietly walking in Nature or drinking tea. These are also the gifts that bring us closer to each other.

In the material world, we compete and arm ourselves. We get busy achieving and accumulating, but in the spiritual world it is necessary to let go, step back and find the space to appreciate the simple—and the simpler the better when it comes to tea.

All too often we are looking for the rare, exclusive and special experience; as our brother Alec Bridges sings it, we are “looking for a sign.” But then we often miss out on what’s right in front of our faces—the preciousness of life itself. Our exploration of tea can be the same: we seek out great, fine teas and forget to learn how to really savor them in our hearts, how to make the time and space to sit down and fully drink in the tea—into our hearts. Teas like this month’s are important now and again. They take us back to the foundation. Elevation helps ground and center us, with a purity that even poetry cannot intrude upon. Such tea sessions wash clean the previous ones and restore our beginner’s mind.

Sometimes we all get intense in our practice, and in various ways. We can become intense in our focus on the ceremonial side of tea, forgetting that tea is also social, that it is also a healthy beverage as much as it is a ceremony. We forget to simplify and have a mug of tea while we work or in the kitchen while chatting with our moms. Other times, we get too serious in the pursuit of the perfect cup, collecting fancy and often expensive teaware and growing snobby about quality in tea, teaware and the refinement of our gongfu brewing. The cure for all of this is a simple bowl full of the simplest leaves possible: clear like water, bitter like life and sweet like our Mother Earth who nurtures us. In this way, we return to what tea really is when all the quality, culture, ideas, history and folklore are stripped away: heat, leaves and water in a simple earthen vessel.

The real miracles are all around us: the sun, the moon, the stars and the infinity of space. The eternity of time has led us to this very moment in time, and our ancestors passed through so many trials and tribulations to offer us these bodies that the likelihood of us, as we are now, is nigh impossible. We are always looking for supernatural miracles or telling stories of miracles that happened to the Buddha long ago. But what about the miracles of

sitting here on this great blue Earth, whirling through space at thousands of kilometers per hour? What about the fire at its center—the same fire in the Sun? In this tea? And what about the miracle of a connection to a plant that is so visceral and spiritual that it reminds me of the miracles all around me in my life? Maybe breathing is a superpower. Could life itself—this very one, this very me—could that be a miracle? Could I be a miracle?

Certainly these five elements blended in such gorgeous alchemy to create this experience of simplicity so focused it is transcendent—certainly this very bowl of tea, at least, is a true-blue miracle!

Take the time to enjoy some simple tea: leaves, water and heat shared between spirits. Take a breath and remember how beautiful it is to be alive today, how short life is and how we’re all connected on this Earth—to each other and Nature...

*Arise! Awaken!  
O' hundred-year moment,  
Hark, the wind and rain;  
Herald the mountain sun  
And moonlit orchestra.  
Ready your voices,  
Tune up the drone of a  
Symphony on the verge,  
Then still and wait for it...*

*An elevated kettle,  
A breath and a pause,  
Silence strong and tacit,  
Growing to a crescendo,  
The stream billows, holds,  
Then breaks with the water dance:  
Leaves twirling in dervish ecstasy,  
As steam curls and rolls,  
An infused flight  
Up beyond the red clouds  
That cascade off the lake  
And carry it all away...*

—Wu De















# Brewing Tips

冲泡技巧 完成好茶

Elevation is the ultimate leaves in a bowl tea. And we would suggest brewing it that way, but one can also brew it in a sidehandle pot, which some of you may not have tried before. Elevation is bolder and brisker in a sidehandle pot, and slightly more patient as well. We find it is better to add slightly fewer leaves than one would usually do with other red teas, resulting in a golden liquor that is still simple and strong, but with a deep and lasting Qi that wakes the whole morning up.

Even though this tea can be put in a sidehandle pot, we recommend putting these leaves in a bowl, watching them unfold in the oldest brewing method around, older than the pyramids in fact! Elevation is the ultimate bowl tea! It often defines this brewing style, as so many of us started our tea journeys drinking this very tea in this very way. It is a great morning tea, leaving you awake, bright and calm. Try waking up a bit earlier one morning, alone or with some loved ones. Put more or fewer leaves in your bowl, to your taste, and fill it with hot water. As it steeps, have a moment or two of meditation. Then pass the bowl between you, sharing a single bowl as you share a single encounter, a single chance... You may not have ever tried passing around a single bowl. It is actually an amazing experience, and a must for a tea lover!

Try sitting cross-legged with a few leaves in a bowl. Sit and soak up the warmth and feel how it invigorates you. It has an amazing energy that calms and uplifts simultaneously. Try this for a few days and you will find that afterwards your outlook each morning is getting brighter—and all from a few leaves scattered in a bowl. Try to focus on being equanimous: do not seek anything special from this tea. Leave this tea be what it is—neither too hot nor too cold, too bitter or any other “too.” Set down the mind that evaluates and just be with the experience as it is, resting in a place of leaves, water and heat. This strips tea brewing down to its most pure form, leaving the evaluatory mind at the door in exchange for a more peaceful, meditative mind that is calm and accepting of whatever is happening, as opposed to the mind’s usual modus operandi of arguing with reality and wanting to change things. We can grow snobby with our tea, and lose touch of the extraordinary in the ordinary. This very bowl, and the drinking of it, *is* the miracle!

There is an old Zen saying that “the Way is easy for the one without preferences.” This tea can teach us this type of mind: open, receptive and content with experience as it is. This tea is a return to the foundation of our mind and tea practice—letting simplicity be powerful and finding the extraordinary in the ordinary. It is a miracle that we are alive here on this giant earth flying through space, with these beautiful bodies passed down to us by our ancestors, drinking tea with friends around the world. This moment is enough!

Join us for a special week of leaves in a bowl, including three synchronized one-hour sessions at various times so that all of you can join at least one. Find out more about this amazing week of activities on p. 37. We hope to see you all there!



Leaves in a bowl

Sidehandle

**Water:** spring water or best bottled

**Fire:** coals, infrared or gas

**Heat:** hotter, fish-eye, roughly 90–95°C

**Brewing Methods:** leaves in a bowl or sidehandle (leaves in a bowl is better)

**Steeping:** longer, no flash, then growing (Elevation responds to fewer leaves)

**Patience:** twenty steepings

茶 Try using martial heat. Elevation responds well to very hot water, especially for the first bowl or two as the leaves are opening. You may then have to wait for the bowl to cool.







# SUN MOON LAKE





**T**ea leaves do not arise from the ether—they are a product of their environment. In past issues, we have thoroughly covered the processing of Elevation. Last year, in the October 2017 issue, we published a photographic journey of Elevation through all its stages of processing. If you are interested, you should take that issue down from the shelf or head over to the “Past Issues” section of the website. We thought that this year, we would take a trip to Sun Moon Lake and share with you all our favorite sites to see there. No trip to Taiwan would be complete without a foray into this glorious natural wonder, and the tea is a product of all the beauty there. Travel with us in spirit as you sip this month’s Elevation. One of the great joys of visiting a tea-growing region is that whenever you drink that tea, you are automatically transported back to the mountains that created it. We hope that you get to share some tea in Sun Moon Lake with us one day, and travel to all the beautiful sites we will show you on the coming pages, but in the meantime, let these pages carry you there. And may you find the beauty of Sun Moon Lake in each sip of this month’s tea! We love traveling to Sun Moon Lake...





## Taiwan Tea Research & Extension Station (台灣茶業改良場)

Aside from visiting Mr. Su, drinking some Elevation and seeing his beautiful trees, we always stop at the Taiwan Tea Research and Extension Station. This station has been here for decades and is responsible for the creation of several of Taiwan's most famous cultivars. The farms are beautiful, and many are natural and organic as well. On the way up the mountain, which passes one thousand meters, you can see lots of old-growth trees. There are many trees that are more than a hundred years old, and some have been allowed to grow up over the last couple of decades, reaching heights above ten meters. These old trees are wonderful to sit under and have a nice, quiet session of Elevation bowl tea, with the hum of the forest just above you, which hints at a deeper Nature that should not be intruded upon. There is nothing like drinking some Elevation under some of the oldest mother trees in the area. If you are respectful, they seem to look on with blessings and fill each bowl with their presence. (If you sit in the right spot, you can even see the mother trees reflected in your bowl.) These hills are one of the best spots to feel connected to the source of Tea in all of Taiwan.

From the top of the station, you can see a tea-processing facility and a nice view of the lake below. There are several experimental gardens growing here, including some for research into the long-term effects of inorganic farming, as well as the time and effort needed to restore ecologies. They have shown that agro-chemicals destroy the soil over long periods of time, making the land fallow. You can see Taiwan 18, "Ruby Red (紅玉)," which was our Tea of the Month in March 2016, as well as other varieties of Taiwanese tea. A session below the mother trees and some prayers of gratitude are a must for the Chajin traveling to Sun Moon Lake.









## Wen Wu Temple (文武廟)

There were two Wen Wu temples long ago, but the Japanese built a dam that raised the lake's water levels, and the temple was moved to its current location in 1938. In 1969, the temple was completely rebuilt by the Taiwanese government as part of a project intended to increase tourism to the lake. There are three shrine halls, rising one after the other in this elaborate temple. The first is devoted to Shennong (神農大帝) and the God of Literature (Wen Chang, 文昌帝君); the second has a shrine to Guang Gong (關聖帝君) and Yue Fei (岳飛), who are guardians that protect the virtuous; and the final hall is for Confucius (孔子). This temple is famous in Taiwan amongst students, who come here to pray to the God of Literature and Confucius for successful exams. The temple is beautiful, with sculpted dragons and prayer bells hanging everywhere. Across from the temple is one of the best views of the lake. As students of the Leaf, we always stop here to give thanks for all that we have learned and to pray for successful study. This keeps us in a beginner's mind: humble and empty like a tea bowl.





## SUN MOON LAKE MEMORIES: SARAH SCARBOROUGH, USA

A few years ago, I decided to begin to travel to China to conquer my fears and, accepting that I could never learn it all or ever reach the status of “master,” to find contentment in just being with Tea in Her native soil, of deepening our relationship and my understanding. It was time. Simultaneously, I became aware of and started to subscribe to Global Tea Hut. So, when the opportunity arose to join the journey to Sun Moon Lake, dip my toes into Taiwanese teas and learn in person of the essence of Tea from Wu De, I leapt!

It was my first visit to Taiwan, a tea origin that I had for decades lumped together with China and filed away in my mind as intimidating because of the language barrier and also the deep culture and reverence with which tea is regarded there.

As I stepped off of the bus at the station in Sun Moon Lake, I was welcomed warmly, like family, by Wu De and his students. It would later dawn on me that I was, in truth, a stranger amongst a close community of Chajin, unfamiliar with its ways.

A tea buyer of almost two decades, I had come to feel very comfortable traveling to Tea. I felt led by the Leaf and knew how to surrender, to let Her lead the way. Here, I would find myself for the first time in a long time strangely challenged by my lack of knowledge and humbled by my perspective. In short, I was about to have my mind blown.

At that moment, though, as we pulled out of the hot and hectic tar-stained city and drove into the quiet, old mountains, Oscar Isaacs singing the American folk ballad, “Fare Thee Well,” was playing on the car stereo and I leaned back and smiled at the peaceful feeling of being so completely at home in a car full of strangers in a foreign land. Blissful in my ignorance, I was washed by a feeling of warmth, a feeling of home.

Over the days we spent together with the old and wild tea trees in Nantou, Wu De spoke about the opposing forces of yin and yang, of the oneness and beautiful balance of darkness becoming light, of hot embodying cold and vice versa. I became aware of the harmonious contrasts not only sur-

rounding me, but also within me. The ancient beauty of Sun Moon Lake, for example, standing amidst so much new development, echoed my own internal experience, my feeling of being at once familiar, yet foreign and knowledgeable, yet ignorant.

For years I traveled to buy tea, often hearing the same stories and running through the same routines. I had run out of questions, yet I knew there was so much more to learn. For example, I knew that red tea was incorrectly called “black tea” in the West and that black tea, in its country of origin, was actually post-process fermented tea. What I didn’t understand was why it was so important for us to get it right.

Over countless cups of locally made Ruby Red tea, Wu De explained that, when we neglect to call black tea its proper name and call it “dark tea” instead, we are disrespecting or worse, erasing and reframing, the history and culture of the people who have been producing this type of tea for generations. I thought this was just a technical issue and not a cultural one, but now I fully understand.

Likening it to the wiping out of Native American culture in the early days of American colonialism, Wu De shed a new light on this and many other tea stories I had heard but didn’t really know.

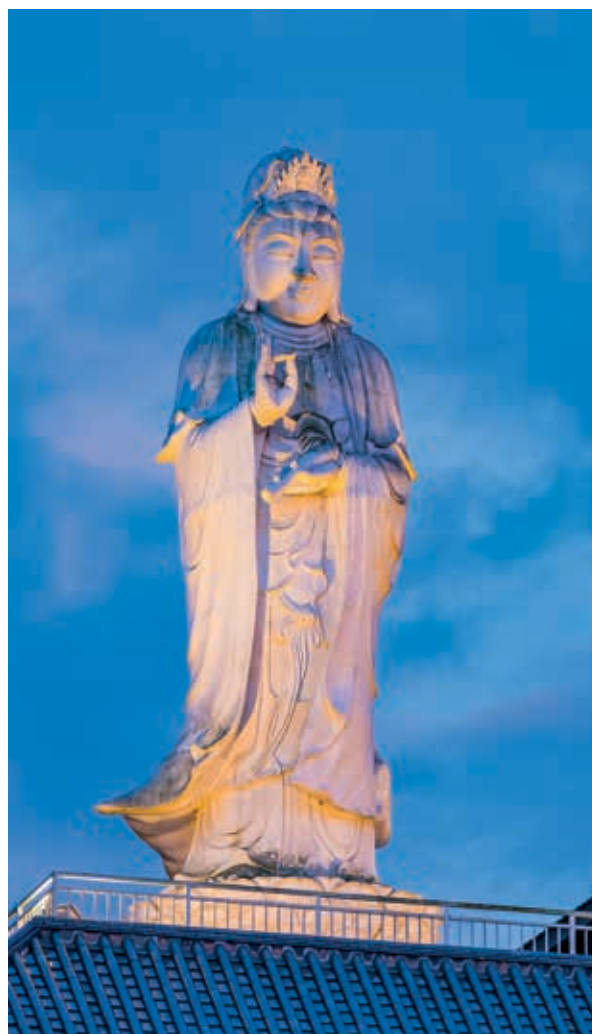
Here is another one. It turns out that all tea does not come from *Camellia sinensis*, that there are in fact many varieties of *Camellia*, especially in Yunnan, that people make into tea. Taiwan even has a native variety, *Camellia formosensis*, that was drunk by the local aboriginals.

Wu De’s perspective, rooted in Buddhism, personal experience and a lifetime of dedication to tea, nudged me out of my comfort zone and into a new light, inspiring me to begin again. Growth sometimes requires pain, just as old requires new and light requires dark. For that, I am grateful.

Like the wild red tea in the hills around Sun Moon Lake, at once warming and refreshing, my experience was one of the contrasts that births balance, awareness and perspective, all the things at the heart of a great Tea journey.







## *Xuanzang Temple (玄奘寺)*

Xuanzang (玄奘) is a hero of ours, and this temple is our favorite spot in all of Sun Moon Lake. Xuanzang was a Tang Dynasty (618–907) Buddhist monk who lived one of the most inspiring and amazing lives ever lived on this earth. He lived from 602 to 664, accomplishing more in those sixty-two years than most could do with a hundred. At a time when it was illegal to leave the empire, Xuanzang walked overland on a seventeen-year journey to India, traveling through many kingdoms on the way, facing bandits and other hardships. In 627, he left China, following a dream he had in which a bodhisattva told him to make the journey. He convinced some Buddhist guards at the border of Qinghai to let him cross in 629. He then arduously crossed the Gobi Desert, escaping robbers in modern-day Uzbekistan, and crossed through Persian Samarkand and other kingdoms until he eventually reached Kashmir in 631. Xuanzang spent several years traveling in India, staying at many monasteries, practicing with the masters there and gathering sutras. Kings and abbots alike were all impressed by his cultivation and bright mind, each inviting him to stay with them permanently. He went on pilgrimage to the important Buddhist sites and gathered sutras, commentaries and Buddhist icons to bring back to China. In 645, he returned to China with a library of texts, and instead of being punished for leaving, he was celebrated by the emperor and offered an appointment in the capital. Instead, Xuanzang retired to a monastery and spent the rest of his life translating scriptures in what would become one of the largest translation projects ever conducted. He is responsible for bringing to China and translating the Heart Sutra, which we chant every day at the Center.

The Xuanzang Temple in Sun Moon Lake has a huge copper map of all the places Xuanzang walked, and you are left stunned at how one person could walk so far. Inside, there is a shrine on the first floor, and then on the third, they have a relic, which they claim is a piece of Xuanzang's skull. (Whatever it is, it seems to have a powerful effect on the room, creating a deep and lucid stillness.) The upper shrine room with the relic is silent, and it is one of our favorite places to meditate in Taiwan. We always stop here and meditate for an hour in the upper shrine room, as the silence is deep and powerful, and our meditation is always worthwhile. Outside, the temple has a nice café where you can drink some red tea and look out at some of the best views of the lake. The quiet, meditative space of the third floor, the views of the lake and the kind nuns who look after the temple make this our favorite place in Sun Moon Lake. No matter how long we are staying, we always make sure to stop by the temple at least once.



## *Chung Tai Monastery (中台禪寺)*

Just outside the lake, in Puli, is one of the world's biggest and most beautiful monasteries. It was built in 2001 by the Chung Tai order, which was founded by the Buddhist master Wei Chueh (惟覺安公老和尚). It is the second-largest monastery in Taiwan, and the grounds are gorgeous. The gardens are filled with trees from all over the world, including a huge Bodhi tree, which is a descendant of the one in Bodhgaya that the Buddha sat under to achieve enlightenment. If you call ahead, you can arrange a tour of the shrine halls of Chung Tai. Otherwise, you can only visit the main hall on the first floor. The themed floors are stunning. There is a pure white floor and a teak pagoda on the top floor, the latter of which was hand-built and is surrounded by thousands of copper Buddhas. The monastery also has an adjacent museum, which has a gorgeous collection of Buddhist art spanning millennia and from India to China. There are many must-see pieces inside, including old stone Buddhas from before the Common Era. They also have a wonderful gift shop, where we have found a few of your gifts of the month, and a great vegetarian restaurant with the best veggie sandwiches in Taiwan.



## *Aboriginal Cultural Villages (原住民文化村落)*

You can take a cable car up to this amusement park, which has roller coasters and other fanfare. We aren't very interested in all that hoopla, though. However, if you are in Taiwan at the end of January to early February, the sakura flowers will be in blossom, and this amusement park has tremendous and gorgeous gardens out back. There is the noise of the rides to deal with, but the gardens themselves are worth it. They are among the most beautifully designed and gorgeously abundant sakura forests we have ever seen. And aside from the noise of the distant rides, there are several pockets in the gardens where you can find a nice, quiet place to drink some tea and enjoy the flowers that fill the world with a dreamlike mist of pink.

There are two small aboriginal villages on either side of the lake, which is where most of the guest houses and hotels are, so you will most likely be staying in one of the two. There are a lot of shops selling aboriginal trinkets and many nice vegetarian street food options, including tofu sandwiches (tofu stuffed with veggies, so the tofu is the bread) and mushroom rice steamed in bamboo.

Both villages are lakeside and have nice docks to stroll on. If you want, you can also buy an all-day boat pass. The boats travel back and forth between three destinations: the two aboriginal villages and a dock below another Xuanzang temple that isn't as nice as the main one we described on the opposite page. With a pass, you can catch any of the boats, which leave every half an hour or so, staying at each location as long as you like. The boat rides are kind of touristy, and we think that the boat traffic can't be great for the lake itself, so we rarely do this.



## SUN MOON LAKE MEMORIES: JING REN (淨仁), HOLLAND

Joy arises when I remember the few days we had with our fellowship of six. During these days, we did some touristy activities, such as a boat ride across the lake, drinking organic iced red tea, eating one-of-a-kind tofu sandwiches and other tasty vegetarian street food. This trip was also a time for me to relax, to meditate in my hotel room by myself, slowly eat breakfast and to drink some Sun Moon Lake tea in a mug while discussing fountain pens with Wu De afterwards. Only after this morning routine would we head out to visit the tea trees or one of the other wonderful sights around Sun Moon Lake, such as a temple dedicated to the extraordinary Seventh century Buddhist monk Xuanzang.

Most of all, this trip was a way to remember my connection to Nature,

which in turn helped me to rekindle my enthusiasm and respect for tea as well—a lesson which I cannot return to often enough.

Perhaps it was the time spent with some of these old trees surrounding Sun Moon Lake that opened my pores enough for one of the lessons of the bowl tea ceremony to finally come through. I have always felt at least a slight discomfort when serving tea right after the steaming bowls of tea were placed in front of the guests, knowing I had to make a gesture that it was time to drink the tea. No matter how I did it, I felt a bit like an actor at the end of a show, bowing towards the crowd, drawing the attention to me rather than towards the tea. But when we were seated in our guesthouse during a rainy afternoon, and Wu De

had just handed out the bowls of tea and made the gesture, the difference suddenly became obvious. The gesture that was made wasn't drawing my attention away from the tea. It wasn't a fancy, expressive, outward wave of the hands. The hands were just simply pointing towards the tea, but with the palms facing upwards, like saying: "This is what it is all about; all I can say or do will be in stark contrast with what this bowl of tea has to tell you."

It was fascinating to experience how such a small shift in orientation and movement can have such a big impact on my experience of serving tea. When I serve tea now, I enjoy the moment that the bowls have been handed out, and I can truly gesture, with my hands gently pointing towards the tea: "My work is done... have a bowl of tea!"

## SUN MOON LAKE MEMORIES: RESHAM DASWANI, HONG KONG

When the opportunity arose to visit Sun Moon Lake in August right before the first Old Student Course, my heart smiled at the timely manner and flow of things. "Elevation," our beloved red tea from Sun Moon Lake, was the first tea I had ever received from my hand-sketched Global Tea Hut envelope three years ago.

In my visits to the Hut, I had always heard amazing stories about the beauty of Sun Moon Lake and was keen to learn more about Taiwan's tea environment. I knew there would be a right time to visit and offer bows of reverence to the trees of our favorite annual tea that I have come to know and love so well, and to do so right before this new chapter was an honor I could have only dreamed of.

Upon arriving at Sun Moon Lake and after a delicious vegetarian meal at a local restaurant, we made our way to visit some "wild/semi-wild" organic tea trees to see a new varietal of *Camellia formosensis*. The last two Annual Global Tea Hut trips, and learning in greater depth about the physical constitutions of living tea as well as witnessing such tea being produced, have completely opened my realm of understanding and thinking as well as the

way I approach tea as a Dao. It is also very much at the forefront of what is a highly important topic on how the tea industry progresses forward. Human health depends on our ability to live in harmony with Nature, and the way Tea interacts and how it transforms into medicine or the degrees of "pure tea" are a huge part of a Chajin's cultivation. We all need to take responsibility, as our choices have consequences.

This is a complex topic with much to learn, and there are many aspects to appreciate from a simple organic tea plantation to a thriving living tea garden. But there is always a space for gratitude and support for farmers who are finding any number of ways to do good for the Earth and create clean tea out of love. Given the number of moving parts that determine the output, combined with the incredible amount of labor, it is the dedication of such farmers to not compromise even when conditions may not be as favorable as yesteryears. The depth of intuition, understanding and experience in how different farmers have evolved their practices to align with producing tea without harming the ecology, and the challenges and solutions they navigate along the way, cannot be easy. But

the differences are so clear, even on the surface level, between walking into a living tea garden compared with a tea plantation. The subtle kinetic energies you find in a living garden feel like you have stepped into another world of incredible eco-activity in all directions. Wu De always stresses that "the leaf is the tree's expression of its relationship to its environment," and that you cannot take the environment out of the tea.

Health also depends largely on each farmer and their way of accepting the balance of what nature decides to give and aligning to the duty and nobility of devoting one's life to the Leaf; its culture, heritage and spirit. But it also depends on individuals who can play a huge part in instigating change by making wiser choices for future generations, voting with our dollars.

After spending some time with the trees in these gardens, we were invited back to share the rest of the afternoon with this farmer and his wife in their shop, drinking several of their well-known teas and sharing about Global Tea Hut before finishing the day with an amazing buffet-style meal at a vegetarian restaurant. There is much more Sun Moon Lake in store!





### *Ci En Pagoda (慈恩塔)*

This gorgeous pagoda was built by Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) to honor his mother in 1971. It is built atop the peak of the Shabalan Mountain. The hike up is lovely, passing through calm forests. The pagoda itself is nine stories, rising over forty-six meters to well above 1,000 meters above sea level. In the courtyard, there is a house that was designed by Chiang Kai-shek as well, but we have found it is never open. It is cool to have a peek inside through the windows, though, as all the decor and furniture appears to be the original 1970s' decorations, and it still looks like a home for greeting dignitaries and guests. You can imagine the president hosting here—maybe even serving some tea, as he was indeed a tea lover. There is a lot of history here.

You can climb up the winding staircase to the top of the pagoda and have a wonderful view of the entire lake, especially at sunset. Wu De proposed to Joyce at the top of this pagoda at sunset. We always come here to honor their love, and often drink tea under the trees on the lawn out back, which is quiet and beautiful. None of the tourists ever head off to the side or the back of the pagoda, and there is a lovely lawn with some shady trees that are perfect for a picnic or a nice tea session with some friends. From the top of the pagoda, you can see in all directions: If you face away from the lake, you get a stunning view of Jade Mountain, usually enshrouded in mists. To the lake side, you can circle three directions of the pagoda and have very different vantages of the entire lake. Sunrise and sunset are both worth the hike up the mountain and then around the nine stories of the pagoda to the top.



# How to Choose

# a Sidehandle Pot

## 如何選側把壺

茶人: Wu De (無的)

In order to choose teaware for bowl tea, one must begin by understanding the relationship between bowl tea and gongfu tea in our tradition, as this is an influential factor of the form and function of teaware we choose for these methods, including the sidehandle pot. I think it is also worthwhile to briefly review the history of sidehandle pots, which we covered in the October 2017 issue, as this will also contextualize a discussion of why we like the sidehandle pots we do.

In our tradition, we practice five brewing methods: three types of bowl tea, gongfu tea and whisked tea. Since whisked tea is really another type of bowl tea, we can simplify this and just say that we practice bowl tea and gongfu tea. Having both of these methods is useful, but only when they aren't blended too much. When we mix them up, they cease to be either/or and do not offer the same range of application. This is like having two different tools that are precisely engineered to do very specific tasks, like a hammer and a screwdriver. While it may be convenient to have an all-purpose "screw-hammer," it won't do either as well as the tools that are designed to just do one alone. Similarly, when we blend up bowl tea and gongfu tea, like using an Yixing pot with bowls or using a sidehandle pot with cups, the ways in which either brewing method would be chosen for a specific tea or occasion

are muddled and not effective. Then, of course, there is the middle ground of the infamous "bups," which are too small to be bowls and too large to be cups, scrambling the brewing methods and their outcomes.

Of course, it is challenging to talk about this issue as tea is, ultimately, an aimless activity. But for the purpose of learning, we can discuss the "aim" of bowl tea versus gongfu tea, understanding that they lean towards different effects from the tea, ourselves and what we offer our guests. The type of tea we're brewing, the energy of the session and the number of people attending all influence what brewing method we choose. In fact, knowing the brewing method is one of the first and primary steps in planning a tea gathering, along with the weather and type of tea we'll be serving, and it is such an influential factor that we should know which brewing method we'll be using before we even start laying out our *chaxi* (tea stage/decorations for tea). Of course, the *chaxi* is influenced by the brewing method, which determines the teaware we'll use and the ergonomics of our movements in relation to the space we will need to brew the tea comfortably—all of which are very different from bowl tea to gongfu tea.

Blending brewing methods also dishonors the lineages from which they come. My old Zen master always used to say, "You can have the form,

but not the spirit." He is talking about those who come to learn and become the next generation of students, who then become the next generation of teachers, and those who want to take the form and adapt it to whatever they desire. "Students and thieves," he called them. "Be a student. Come to become!" he would exclaim.

There is a saying in Zen that when you take water from the sacred healing spring into your hands, if you think a negative thought about the spring, the water or lack faith in it, then the holiness leaves and you're left with just water in your hands. We must honor the sources of our learning, and we do this by being careful to preserve the method's integrity, only adapting and evolving it if and when we understand it fully. Of course, methods must improve and grow over time, but this must be done by advanced students who understand the form well enough to adapt it; and even then, this is only done in the spirit of that method, obviously improving it, as opposed to change as a way of self-expression and ego. In that way, since the changes benefit the method and only come from those living the Way, we can say that the evolution comes from within the method, so that is growing from the inside out, as opposed to forcible changes that are imposed from outside the lineage. As a result, we honor our ancestors and the devotion of their





lives, working to improve, refine and pass down these methods to us. If we honor the methods and their sources, the water is filled with our faith and heals us the way it should, sparkling with the holy light that attracted us to it in the first place.

In the West, we have a great respect for individuality and self-reliance and tend to shirk dogma and doctrine. Zen does as well, which may seem contradictory considering the great respect paid to form in Zen tea. Zen teaches us that we must find the freedom in form. True freedom is never selfish and lawless. It is not a reaction to perceived limitations. In the beginning, practicing within a form may seem constricting, but the path is always a movement from the gross to the subtle, and as one learns more and develops sensitivity, one finds that there is a tremendous amount of freedom within any form. Once the training becomes second nature and lives within us, effortlessly brewing tea in the proper way without thinking about it, we become truly free—transcending the idea of forced irregularity in the name of being different, which is immaturity (teenagers try to find themselves by rebelling in this way). Freedom without form is just chaos. The freedom of the master is a transcendence of form, gone beyond even the beyond to the other shore, which is still this shore, or as we say in Zen: “Lost, trained, found.”

Before I was a monk, believe it or not, I was a kindergarten teacher. I always use the children as the perfect example of true freedom. Every day in class we would sing and dance. These little ones are amazing dancers! They lack inhibition, caring not about “self” versus “others;” they dance without caring what other people think of them. They are also pretty good at feeling the music as well. On the other hand, reporters once asked one of the greatest ballerinas of all time, Anna Pavlova, how she performed so well. She said: “When I am on stage, there is no music and no me—only dance!” This suggests that she is also quite free: free of form, she has reached the ultimate “zone” that athletes strive for—the freedom the ancient Daoists called “effortless effort (*wu wei*, 無為).” So what, then, is the difference between her freedom and the children’s? First, she is in a lineage—she has a dance teacher who had a dance teacher and so on, passing on the form and art of ballet. Secondly, she has decades of form, lifting her leg just so thousands and thousands of times, just like a master pianist played scales and chords thousands of times before they can freely jam. True freedom, therefore, transcends self and other, regular and irregular, and, most importantly, form and the rejection or push against form.

Now that we have established that mixing and blending is not ideal, we

can discuss the different “purposes” and “aims,” or maybe effects, of bowl tea versus gongfu tea. Of course, there is some overlap in these and I feel obliged to repeat that this language is purely for the purpose of making a point. The goal of tea is the freedom discussed above, which makes tea, in its purest form, aimless and purposeless. It is an activity pursued for its own sake, in other words. Of course it is.

Bowl tea is primarily about ceremony. It is about creating a space of meditation and loving kindness, where the focus is less on the tea itself and more on the quiet, peaceful space within which the tea is shared. This doesn’t mean the tea is inconsequential or to be ignored. It is through the act of drinking tea, and the calmness that it encourages, that we find connection to the moment. In bowl tea, there is more form, as we are learning to move with honor and grace, and each of the movements has a ceremonial significance, often saluting various aspects of tea and its long relationship with humanity. That said, we are also working to make these forms a part of us so that we may transcend them and brew freely. However, since each gesture has a ceremonial significance, they are more relevant in this type of brewing, and that means that form plays a much larger role in bowl tea. Bowl tea is like a heaping plate of good old-fashioned, home-cooked soul food.



Bowl tea is also ideal for larger groups, as quality decreases as we lose control of parameters in serving more people. In essence, bowl tea is about simplicity and equanimity, ceremony and sacred intention. In bowl tea, we “aim” to create a space of hospitality where guest and host can become one—one gathering, one heart, one occasion, one moment in time. To do that, we have to shut off the qualitative mind that evaluates the tea and let it be without any “toos,” like “too bitter,” “too hot” or “too cool.” Tea returns to what it is: leaves, water and heat offered freely between spirits.

In gongfu tea, on the other hand, we work to achieve “mastery” over the brewing process. Gongfu means “mastery through self-discipline.” In gongfu tea, we honor the tea and the occasion by using skillful means to bring the best in any tea, brewing it with a grace that transcends the ordinary and comes from a rich connection to its inner nature, its essence. Gongfu is about knowing the tea, teaware and method and transcending them. In gongfu tea, form is irrelevant, unless that form improves the tea. This is about brewing the tea the way that it wants to be brewed, as opposed to the way we want to brew it—so that we are as natural a part of its unfolding from tree to cup as the sun or the rain. In harmony with its nature, we respond and adapt, pouring out the best possible version of the tea.

Gongfu tea is suited to groups of six or fewer—ideally three or four maximum, as this allows us to control the parameters and maintain temperature. Gongfu tea is about sensitivity, learning the subtle nuances of tea in terms of flavor, aroma and far beyond to mouthfeel and the energetics of tea (茶氣, *cha Qi*). We strive to be able to brew any tea well with any teaware. Gongfu tea is like fine food crafted by a master chef. It celebrates the tea, focuses on the tea, highlights the tea and demonstrates its potential to communicate with our senses in bliss.

Though there certainly is overlap, as gongfu can also be deep and ceremonial and bowl tea is not free of functional elements, bowl tea is primarily form, and gongfu tea is primarily function. Understanding this will greatly influence our choices when it comes to teaware, of course, as choosing bowl

teaware will include a lot more aesthetic criteria, while gongfu teaware is chosen because of its influence on tea. Continuing our cooking analogy, you might make better soul food with your great-grandma’s old crockpot handed down, cracks and all, whereas a chef needs a very specific copper-plated pan that maintains temperature uniformly to a decimal of a degree. Just as the method of bowl tea includes gestures that do not necessarily improve the tea but have important ceremonial significance, bowl teaware also is chosen for ceremonial reasons. Gongfu teaware is practical, based on experimentation and experiential wisdom concerning which wares bring out the best in which teas. We will return to these ideas in our final section on choosing a sidehandle. Before that, we might further contextualize our choice of a sidehandle pot by reviewing the history of sidehandle pots for a kettle or two worth of tea...

## History of Sidehandles

In ancient times, shamans and then Daoist mendicants “cloudwalking” the forgotten paths of mountains that literally had peaks above the clouds all used cauldrons to boil their herbal concoctions, including tea. The cauldrons, called “*ding* (鼎)” in Chinese, were often made of metal, large, bulky and therefore difficult to carry around. (Some were made of clay, of course.) They were suitable for medicine men working and living in a village, but not for lone hermits who needed only enough herbs for one, nor for wandering seekers who spent their lives on the move—roaming in search of a teacher or perhaps to find new lessons in Nature. And thus the small sidehandle pot and stove were born.

Early sidehandle stove and kettle sets were made of metal and clay, just like the cauldrons. But they were small, which meant that hermits living alone wouldn’t waste herbs in a large cauldron, boiling just the right amount for one. Also, traveling mendicants, medicine men, holy men and women could carry them in baskets designed for this. They would carry water from sacred springs in gourds, herbs in pouches and small braziers and sidehandle pots

with them on their travels—amongst their only and most prized possessions.

These early sidehandle kettles and stoves for boiling herbs/tea quickly changed form to be more functional, developing into a shape that had an angled handle that was raised slightly to avoid the heat of coals or wood fire, a sixty- or seventy-degree angle between spout and handle for good pouring into bowls and were, of course, made of strong stoneware or metal that could withstand charcoal or wood-fire in the brazier and sidehandle. The spout slowly migrated inward on many of these kettles as well, since most hermits and mendicants were not serving tea/herbs, but boiling for themselves, and an inward-angled spout (like thirty or forty degrees) made pouring towards oneself easier.

The tradition of crafting sidehandle pots for Chinese herbs continues on even unto the present day, though the form has changed a lot: modern sidehandle medicine pots are much larger, and I don’t know why (maybe herbs are less potent these days and we need to drink more). The inward curve of the spout has also increased. They are unwieldy and, like many modern products, dysfunctional. As a result, many herbalists in Taiwan and China have switched to a new design where there is a teapot-style handle directly opposite the spout, resembling the large teapots used in Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) China and the West until now. In fact, our local herbalist says he hasn’t seen the sidehandle kind in more than ten years.

With a gap of many generations, such stoves and kettles resurfaced in Chaozhou with the birth of gongfu tea. This tradition of using such stoves to boil tea for water continues even now. Originally, these “Mulberry Creek Stoves” were made of a rich, white clay that produced marvelous water, but such clay has long since gone extinct, and modern versions are either made of other white clays sourced from all over China and beyond, like porcelain, or the same iron-rich red clay used to make the local teapots, which were originally begun as a cheaper alternative to Yixing pots.

The history of tea is full of wisdom that lapses into the unknown, only to resurface in unlikely places through a deep affinity with Tea,



as if the memory of these methods and teachings was stored in the Leaf. One of the constellations in the sky of tea masters, the “Old Tea Seller (Baisao, 賣茶翁),” renounced his master’s offer to be abbot of a Zen monastery because of what he saw as corruption in the practice, and donned the ancient Daoist crane robes instead. He felt that the temples’ proximity to the cities, ostensibly to help people, really just made monks dependent on the donations of wealthy citizens, and that their practice suffered as a result. With his crane robes, he built a small hut outside the city of Kyoto and continued to explore his life’s greatest passion, which was Tea, of course. He would set up by the riverside in the city, where tourists were plentiful, and offer bowls of tea to passersby for donations, often starving because he wasn’t able to earn enough to support himself. Amazingly, the crane robes he stitched out of nostalgia were accurate despite him never having seen real robes from ancient China. He also designed and commissioned all his teaware, or he crafted it himself. He created beautiful and accurate side-

handle pots and stoves, in honor of the ancient ones Daoist mendicants used, and boiled his tea roadside.

Near his death, Baisao burned his basket of teaware so that people wouldn’t turn his method into a dogma, as they had with the whisked tea of Rikyu. Alas, his students had already made drawings, and copies soon flourished. As people stopped boiling tea and began steeping it in the coming years, the stove was lost and the sidehandle adapted and evolved slowly into the “*kyusu*,” which is low and flat and has a straight handle at a ninety-degree angle from the spout. The tea, of course, was then processed differently, as people were steeping it instead of boiling it, and “*sencha*,” which literally means “simmered/boiled tea,” was altered to suit steeping.

Finally, in the modern era of Taiwanese tea, artists seeking to be unique from other teaware makers started making sidehandles of all kinds of shapes and styles, deriving inspiration from Japan and Japanese *kyusu*. (Japanese culture has had a great influence on Taiwanese tea, actually, as it has on

all areas of life. Japan controlled Taiwan from 1895 to 1945.) These many-shaped sidehandles were created to be used in a kind of altered gongfu tea, where the sidehandle replaces the Yixing pot, which works as most modern brewers also use a pitcher (*cha hai*, 茶海). We will return to these later in our discussion of how to choose a sidehandle pot for tea.

The sidehandle in our tradition was an innovation of my generation. Though I am the author of it, I cannot claim any credit. It was the tradition working through me. It was Tea speaking to me. It was also the need of the times—an innovation born of decades of practice in tea preparation. Each generation has one or two big evolutionary steps that help future tea lovers. Looking back, the basic steps involved look something like this: we had a beautiful bowl tea ceremony in our tradition (leaves in a bowl). I loved the energy of this amazing ceremony, but the choice of which tea to use in such ceremonies was too limited. Back in the day, when this ceremony was created, all tea was simple.



茶 Upper left is an antique medicine pot for boiling herbs and/or tea. There were actually medicine men/doctors who only worked with tea in ancient China, called “*cha bo shi* (茶博士).” The reason the spouts slowly evolved to point inward is that many of these hermits and traveling mendicants were not serving tea or herbs, but drinking it alone, themselves, which is why the sidehandle replaced the cauldron (*ding*, 鼎) in the first place. No doubt the *cha bo shi* served tea, and probably had sidehandles similar to our design shown above, which is an adaptation of these ancient pots developed in our generation to form new ceremonial pathways. The sidehandle medicine pots grew larger over time, perhaps because herbs are less potent and need to be drunk in larger amounts (we don’t know the reason why and neither do any of the doctors we asked). Becoming unwieldy, they have been replaced by medicine pots like the one to the left.



It was unprocessed, which means large open or striped leaves, all of which are perfect for this style of brewing. But in the last few centuries we tea lovers have seen an explosion in the varieties of tea, both in terms of new varietals brought out due to improved communication and transportation, and new processing innovations. Some teas just aren't so nice as leaves in a bowl, like all buds or compressed teas, which get in the mouth and/or are too bitter. How could we create the same energy as a leaves in a bowl ceremony, but with a vessel so that we can brew more types of tea? This was the question that drove my quest for some years. I wanted to adapt the ceremonial gestures and movements to include a vessel.

Put simply: I wanted to drink more types of tea ceremonially in bowls than what leaves in a bowl affords. And so, I needed a teapot for that.

Like most innovations, the lightbulb was also lit from the beyond, striking me like lightning one day as I was boiling tea in an old sidehandle pot and stove. Why not the oldest vessel there is? Instead of a *kyusu* or one of the modern Taiwanese pots, which are too random, why not use a likeness of the ancient masters' herbal pots, only for steeping rather than boiling? This would mean that the ware (the sidehandle pot) would have ceremonial significance, which is important in bowl tea. After this lightning bolt of truth came, it was just a matter of commissioning friends to make what I wanted, and then slowly starting the process of adapting the leaves in a bowl ceremony to include the extra steps and changes required by the addition of a sidehandle pot. Amazingly, as I worked with this evolution, I found incredible congruence and ceremonial significance much deeper than I could imagine in the "new" movements required in this "new" ceremony, as if I were cleaning off old bones at an archaeological site, uncovering old truths lost to the world until now. This is what innovation looks like when it is impersonal, arising from within a tradition and is, in essence, that tradition advancing itself. It is also why I have no problem calling this new ceremony "traditional."

The change from leaves in a bowl to a sidehandle was the tradition growing and adapting to the contours of a new tea world, which is healthy for any

tradition. As the world changes and grows, so must we and so must our traditions. This process of growth and innovation has continued to this day a decade later, with new-old insights evolving our sidehandle ceremony as we travel forward. (For details of this ceremony, see the October 2017 issue.) This has also changed the design of our sidehandles as well.

With an understanding of the differences between bowl tea and gongfu tea, as well as the importance of not blending them, and a brief recap of the sidehandles of the world, we can now turn to the functional, aesthetic and ceremonial influences in choosing a sidehandle for use in our traditional brewing method.

## The Functional Elements

Most of the factors that go into choosing a sidehandle pot have to do with the ceremonial significance or aesthetics. This is a good thing, because our gongfu practice in this tradition demands that we choose more specific types of teaware that have specific effects on the tea, requiring that function precede and preside over any aesthetic influences. This means we are not as free to support the ceramicists we want to in our gongfu tea, and we are more restricted by materials and shape. In bowl tea, however, we have a lot of leeway to choose pots that resonate with us. This doesn't mean that function plays no role, though pots with a certain aesthetic appeal could mean we might overlook functional flaws, which would rarely happen in gongfu tea. (There are exceptions, like an old pot with a flawed spout but special clay, for example.)

As our brief review of the history of sidehandle pots has demonstrated, there are various types of sidehandles: the *kyusu* of Japan for steeping sencha and gyokuro, the kettle and stove sets of Chaozhou used in gongfu tea and the artistic creations of Taiwan, which are inspired by *kyusu*, but personalized by artists through form and appearance, like glazing for example. All three of these types of sidehandle pots can be a functional gamble, and might end up requiring that you forgive functional problems because you are attracted to

them aesthetically, or perhaps because they are affordable. There are two main ways which a pot can be dysfunctional: the material and the shape. Let's talk about each one in turn.

The material used to make the pot will play a role because the clays are not always intended for steeping tea, like the case of Chaozhou kettles, which are designed to be heat resistant and to be used as kettles for water. They are under-fired and do not always respond well to a lot of teas, leaving an earthy taste in the liquor. In bowl tea, remember, we aren't focused on evaluating the tea; and so, ultimately, once it is in the bowl we turn off the critical, evaluatory mind and let the tea be tea: leaves, water and heat. We cultivate peace and equanimity through this. But that doesn't mean that before the ceremony, as the host, we can't choose teaware that has ceremonial significance, is aesthetically pure and is functional. In terms of a sidehandle ceremony, this means that at least the clay the pot is made of should leave no flavors or traces of itself on the tea. It should at least have a minimal effect, if not soften and cleanse the tea a bit.

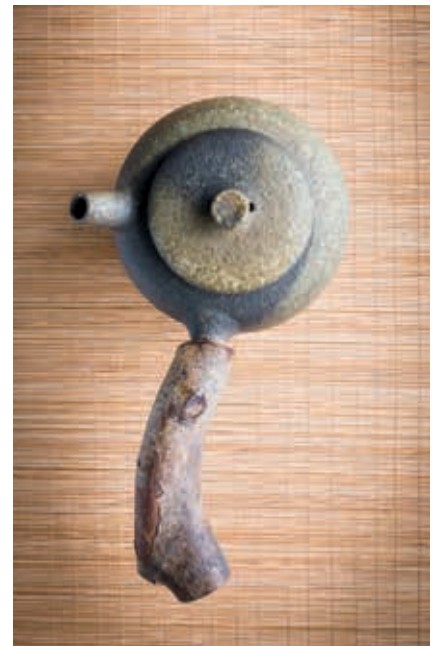
It is important that we not travel too far down this rabbit hole, as that would lead us into the mind of gongfu tea, and we would be using Yixing sidehandles, which would mean mixing up traditions. Suffice it to say that it is enough that the clay the pot is made of does not have any negative effect in terms of flavor or aroma—no trace of taste or aroma, in other words, and maybe it also smooths out the water slightly. That is enough for a sidehandle. Most good clays and firing techniques will produce this, but be careful of pots made to be kettles and ultra-cheap pots made with industrial clays and/or glazes.

As for shape, the angle of the handle, the placement of the button and the relationship these two have with the spout are all important. The reason is that there are different ways of holding a sidehandle pot. If you look in the October 2017 issue, we demonstrate the two main ways prevalent in the world today, which are using the index finger on the button, or, turning the hand away from the pot and using the thumb on the button/pearl. We also discuss that in our tradition, we always use the former (index) finger.





茶 Left is an antique Chaozhou stove for gongfu tea, above a *kyusu* and to the right a Peter Kuo (郭詩謙) pot with a tea tree handle.



This has to do with function and ceremonial significance. In terms of function, using the index finger allows for the Qi to flow better through the arm. All circular movements are more fluid with this posture of the hand, which means we have much more control over circular movements around the rim of the bowl, where we always pour, as well as a greater control over the flow of the pour, as in how much liquor we are decanting and how fast. Ceremonially, we also prefer this method because using your thumb on the button forces you to always pour towards yourself and thrust the bottom of the pot towards your guests, both of which are detrimental to the energy we are trying to create in our ceremonies. (This does not mean these gestures are detrimental full stop, just not conducive to what we want to create. This is important, as we are not trying to judge other traditions or brewing methods here. Mustard seeds aren't bad, but they may not be so useful if you are trying to make cupcakes.)

Finally, when sidehandles are large enough for bowl tea, you have to be careful about the angle of the spout (vertically) and its relationship to the pot, button and handle. When sidehandles are large enough for a bowl tea ceremony, if they are not made skillfully, it will be difficult to decant the last of the tea liquor. If the angle or placement of the spout are too high, for example, you may have to turn the pot completely upside-down, or some-

times even beyond, to get the last of the tea out, which can be less than ideal for certain types of tea.

Let's quickly review each of the three kinds of sidehandle pots one finds in the market from a functional perspective (assuming one wants to brew tea in our tradition):

**Kyusu:** Since *kyusu* are for steeping green tea, they have very fine filters with tons of little holes that protect the cup or bowl from the tiny leaves of *sencha*/*gyokuro*. However, this slows the pour significantly, which is not ideal for puerh or red teas. It also fragments the energy and frequency of the water/plant spirit. Also, *kyusu* are small, as they are primarily used with cups, not bowls, so they will really only be useful for one to three people for the most part. The ninety-degree angle of the spout to handle, which is also straight, rather than the ideal (which is a slight angle upward) makes them slightly awkward to hold. Most good quality ones are made from nice clay, though, which doesn't have a negative effect on tea.

**Chazhou kettle-stove sets:** These are perhaps the least desirable choice as a brewing vessel, because they aren't brewing vessels! They are kettles. The clay is variable, ranging from porcelain to white and red clays from all around China. Many are industrially produced in factories. They are also traditionally fired at a low temperature, which can

leave a muddy, earthy flavor in your tea. They do have nice ceremonial significance, though, as they are also created to honor the stoves of ancient herbalists. The angle of the spout to handle is also much better than *kyusu* for holding, but the tilt angle of the handle can be too high, which is to prevent it from getting hot on coals. The first pots I commissioned were at such an angle, as they were also nods to ancient sidehandles, but I later dropped the angle slightly, which is better for steeping as opposed to boiling water or tea.

**Artistic pots of Taiwan:** There is a chance of getting a nice pot from any of the numerous Taiwanese artisans who make sidehandle pots, but any of these could range from great to completely dysfunctional. Some are just works of art and do not work well, no matter what method you follow, as they are more for looking at than for using. Some are created to be held with the thumb on the button/pearl. Others are very small, created as substitutes in a modern version of gongfu tea with a pitcher and small cups, and therefore cannot be used with bowls (or maybe for just one person). It has become popular in the last ten years to use wood as the handle of pots, which can make for a gorgeous pot, but also a very dysfunctional one as the wood may be crooked and make holding the pot awkward. We have some amazing pots like this, and have to adapt to their quirks.



## The Aesthetics of Teaware

Discussing the aesthetics of any teaware can be very personal. In gongfu tea, we are constrained in the material and shape of teaware by the function and effect, as we are trying to make the very best cup possible. Again, a fine chef is more interested in the fact that the expensive copper-coated, high-end stainless-steel saucepan has an even temperature all throughout to some decimal of a degree than she is in what it looks like or how it “feels.” That is not to say that aesthetics play no role in gongfu teaware—nothing could be further from the truth. They just aren’t primary. But in bowl tea, we can choose what we like. Therefore, I always recommend choosing bowls and pots that resonate with you, as long as they aren’t too dysfunctional in shape or material. That said, there are some deeper levels to aesthetics, and there is also ceremonial significance which should not be underestimated.

This will be a very brief run-through of some tea aesthetics, mostly based on the largest influence on tea practice: Zen. In Zen, we strive to transcend duality, creating from a space beyond “ugly” or “beautiful.” A lot of art is a war between ugly and beautiful, with an attempt to wipe away the “dust” and show the beautiful alone; or it is a satire of the “ugly,” attempting to show the ugly side of the world and inspire us to think about it. But Zen art transcends all duality, coming from a mind that sees no “pure” or “impure.”

All of the antique crafts of Asia were made by illiterate, unknown craftsmen and women who never signed their name to their pieces. They didn’t live in a world where personal uniqueness or individuality were of importance to art. Many modern artists, like Andy Warhol, have mocked how modern Western art has come to value provenance over intrinsic quality, just as we have come to value brand names over intrinsic value. The highest arts are not individuality (ego) expressed through the medium of the human hand, but rather the artform itself, along with some inspiration from beyond, expressed through the medium of the human. The best music, art and craft is all a kind of channeling, in other words.

But teaware is more a craft than an art. It finds its beauty as much or more in its use as it does in its appearance. Some of the great pieces that line our museums from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), for example, were made by illiterate, simple people—sometimes even children. And yet, they created masterpieces with little variation between people and from day to day. They weren’t pretentious or ambitious to stand out. They were making quotidian crafts that were meant to be used, not just looked at or criticized by collectors or art scholars. Sometimes they were painting characters they couldn’t read, or images of animals they had never seen (sometimes distant or even mythical), but they were channeling a tradition of centuries, which, along with the repetition of creating the same crafts hundreds of times a day, allowed them to do so freely, deftly and without hesitation. They were unfettered and could create with disengagement, transcending what is “ugly” or “beautiful.”

Many of these craftsmen and women would stamp their pots with the names of past, long-gone masters, paying homage to the real creator of the pot: the tradition itself. The value of the pot was in the pot, not the name on it. The value in the bowl was in itself—the way it was used, its effect on tea and its appearance. These determined its quality. This is essential to teaware.

Once the Western idea of provenance started to influence the East, the effect on teaware was mostly detrimental. As long as the value of the pot is in the pot itself, any ceramicist with training can make that craft well enough to earn a decent living. But once you need a name to make a living, you have to start adapting the art so that you stand out from the many others who are making similar pots. And since the mainstream consumer won’t be able to distinguish the subtle differences of a master’s or student’s version of the same classical form, the artist will have to be consciously irregular. But forced irregularity is like teenagers trying to figure out who they are by being grossly different from the people around them just for the sake

of difference. From a strictly aesthetic perspective, this gross and intentional irregularity can be good, as it will result in competition and innovations that may create whole new styles of art, like Picasso, for example. But when it comes to a craft, the need to express individuality just for the sake of being different from other pieces in the market so you can make a living will often make the pieces dysfunctional.

Since many of these artisans do not themselves brew a lot of tea, their choices disregard function for form, sometimes completely. They focus on the color, shape or glazing style—all with the intention of expressing their individuality as opposed to the traditional way, which was to channel the form of the tradition through the hands of the craftsman or woman, creating the best piece of teaware to use and then look at.

A deeper teaware aesthetic must look at the pot not as a static object of art, but a moving craft that will express itself through use as much as through the way it collects stillness and peace when it is at rest. For example, some artists do not even understand that the spirit of tea is simplicity and stillness, and so distinguish themselves by making strong, bold wares that are energetic and distracting, and also dysfunctional. (Lu Yu himself said that the spirit of tea is simplicity.) To be clear, in works of art, creativity is amazing, should be encouraged and all the nuances of any artist using any medium are up to her, and she is free to express herself however she chooses. Break all the rules. Why not? But the greatest works of art always channel the Dao, the beyond, the Sacred and make the viewer an artist, as we read deeply into them and create as we view. The greatest works of art take us beyond ourselves, as that is where they have come from.

Nowadays, all art and lifestyles are an attempt to either to industrialize production based on consumerism and cost analysis to maximize profit, removing all heart from the products, which are dead as a result; or, in the case of art and spiritual practice in the West, the gross and *loud* expression of the individual through the art.



## 茶具的美學

Modern people want to insert themselves into the art, and stand out—as they want to do in tea and in any tradition. They want to be looked at, noticed and seen. But true art is not about expressing individuality through a medium into an object. The aim of true art is not to show difference and individual uniqueness through the medium of things, but rather to produce things through the medium of the human—work made by the work, the formless into the form. The great art critic Soetsu Yanagi said that “If there is beauty also on the side of man, it is assuredly the beauty of the submissiveness with which he has placed himself at the mercy of the great external power.” Nature is beautiful, not ego. Be the ceremony’s medium, in other words, not its director! The piece, not the artists says “I am.”

And when it comes to crafts meant to be used, the manner that the piece will be used is of equal significance as its appearance. Daily crafts are art in motion, and are to be experienced in four dimensions. For that reason, the best crafts are always made without ego, without the need to be irregular just for irregularity’s sake. They are born out of the spirit of the activity they are created for, in other words. And the more the artist understands the form, function and spirit of that use, the better his or her pieces will be. Master Lin always says the best pots show “spirit from within.” The truth is that the best teaware is always spiritual, as is true with all art. And the more attuned the maker is to the spirit, the better the art will be. Michelangelo said that an artist must strive to be a saint, so as to be near to God and channel the Holy Ghost into their works. In terms of teaware, this “spirit from within” comes from a proximity to the tea ceremony the teaware will be used in.

As an example, let me use one of my all-time favorite teaware makers, Petr Novak. When I met Petr, I realized that he is a true-blue Chajin, and considering the fact that most teaware makers nowadays make teaware because that is what is selling, the love of tea shining in his eyes impressed me. “This is someone who truly loves tea

and tea drinking. He understands the process of preparing tea, and that will influence his pieces in form and function,” I thought.

At that time, he was not brewing tea following the method of our tradition. But he was willing to make sidehandle pots and bowls for us. They were still better than choosing random pieces off some shelf, and they were imbued with tea spirit, not to mention skill and talent and a love for wood-firing, which makes a difference and, like organic farming, requires a lot more work, demonstrating a great love for the craft.

Somewhere along the way, Petr started brewing tea in the way we do. I think he likes to brew tea in many different ways, as most of us do, but he makes leaves in a bowl and sidehandle pot tea sessions and even ceremonies.

“In Zen, we strive to transcend duality, creating from a space beyond ‘ugly’ or ‘beautiful.’ A lot of art is a war between ugly and beautiful, with an attempt to wipe away the ‘dust’ and show the beautiful alone; or it is a satire of the ‘ugly,’ attempting to show the ugly side of the world and inspire us to think about it. But Zen art transcends all duality, coming from a mind that sees no ‘pure’ or ‘impure.’”

And the result of that practice is obvious: as opposed to looking in at us from without, his wares improved drastically in form, function and spirit. The form and spirit started to embody this Way and approach to tea, and the function slowly started to be adjusted based on living experience. None of these improvements were conscious: they weren’t Petr trying to make his pots more Petr-esque. The opposite—these were the function and spirit of this brewing method steeping into his soul, as he practiced more, and then channeled out through his heart to his hands. The most recent batch of sidehandle pots we got at the Center shone very clearly with the spirit of our tradition: even with my waking eye I saw that he’d been drinking tea this Way, seeing tea and the world this Way, approaching Tea the Way we do,

and then crafting pieces for others to use in this Way. His pieces were always appealing aesthetically, and as he learned to make sidehandles, which he hadn’t made many of before, they also became better functionally. Now they host the spirit of this Way, gathered from the living wisdom of this tradition, which he has now drunk up and digested, becoming a channel for it.

When I asked him about this, Petr said: “From the first, my pots were influenced by my relation to tea. And naturally over the years, as my tea habits have changed, so also has my understanding of teaware from both a functional and aesthetic perspective. With function, I now understand with greater sensitivity more of the important details related to different pots used for certain methods of tea preparation. Aesthetically, I have also grown up.

I can now see more clearly the importance of simplicity and quietness in teaware, and what that means in relation to each pot and brewing method. In other words, I have realized how the aesthetic functions in a brewing method—relating both these fields to one another. The brewing methods and teaware I use every day for my personal joy the pots that I then make. Embracing the sidehandle pot and bowls as my daily practice has felt to me like finding the center point of all brewing methods. From here, I can more clearly understand other methods, explore and create with freedom and lightness. The simple center to return to is stillness here and now, held by the pot even if not by the mind. All brewing methods are clearer from this center. I am very grateful to have learned sidehandle/bowl tea.”



## Ceremonial Significance in Teaware

This aspect of choosing a sidehandle, like the above section on aesthetics, may or may not appeal to you. It is important in our lineage, but may not be so to some of you. For us, there is a great desire to practice tea *ceremony* as opposed to just tea *drinking*. I do not feel that these things are mutually exclusive. Not all my tea is ceremonial. I love geeking out on tea information (obvious to those who read these pages), and I also drink tea as a beverage (it is a wonderful, healthy beverage, so long as it is produced sustainably). I don't think tea is a beverage *or* a sacred plant spirit medicine—I think “and” is much better than “or.” That said, the primary focus of our tea practice is ceremony: *Creating sacred space that honors Nature and Spirit and reminds us of our connection to Source.*

As a ceremony, the form is important as it connects us to tradition. Much like the craftsmen discussed above, we

draw power from the tradition. In Zen, this is called “Given Power,” as it is the accumulated wisdom and energy of our teachers, passed down over time. This sustains and helps us, even when we feel weak. Despite and in spite of the impediments of Wu De and all his defects of character, the Buddha and the tradition steep *through him*, and that tea has changed the lives of thousands, including many of you! Nothing, and I mean nothing, in me is of value save the tradition and the spirit of Tea and these teachings that flow through me when I stop casting a shadow on myself and my own work. Tradition facilitates this. Surrender to it, and it will uphold you even when your mind wanders. Even when you are full and emotional, your training will kick in. For example, I once served tea in New Zealand for a whole day of eight sessions, despite the fact that I had one of the worst cases of food poisoning in

my whole life and was weak and teetering on unconsciousness. Everyone who came was still blown away by the Tea, because my tradition did the work. I literally prayed to Guanyin before each session, asking Her to make the tea for me as I was not up to it.

Consequently, connection to lineage is important to us, and when our teaware has symbolism associated with it, it helps to foster this connection in our hearts and practice. For this reason, when choosing teaware, whether for gongfu tea, leaves in a bowl, sidehandle ceremony or even whisked tea, the ceremonial significance of certain elements most certainly plays a role in our choices. Through such symbols and gestures, we are connected to all the others who performed these ceremonies in the past. This is accumulated power, helping us to know who we are and where we belong, which we then pass on to future Chajin.





## 茶具的儀式意義

One should not underestimate form, or non-verbal transmission, as they are the basis of Zen—its first foundation. Do not underestimate forms that were grooved not just long before you began practicing them, but before you were born. Yoga, Tai-chi and Qigong all rely on such tracks and grooves, worn in and energized by generations of practitioners. These techniques have also evolved over time, adapting, growing and refining to become better with age. If I sat on an island and drank tea from early morning 'til midnight every day for eighty years, I could not learn even twenty percent of what has been taught to me!

Though sidehandle bowl ceremony has some elements that are new for our generation of Chajin, the foundations and movements are all carried over and adapted from ancient methods. This adaption is still “traditional,” as we discussed earlier, and still employs

the same forms as older ceremonies. But because it has a new vessel at the center stage, it is important to me that this vessel pay homage to the ancient tradition from which it comes. This is why I chose sidehandle pots in the first place. As I said, I had a flash of inspiration, and like Old Baisao, dusted off some old stuff, honoring lost gods, as opposed to inventing anything new.

While we have adapted along the way to suit the function of our sidehandle pots, we still tilt the handle up to honor the earliest pots used to boil herbs/tea—though not quite as much, as we don't need to protect them from heat. We also have a slight inward angle, saluting the early sidehandles, but not so much because we use our pots to serve tea, as opposed to boiling herbs/tea for just one. The spirit and material matter to us as well, and this discussion could perhaps continue in a future article as well. We also hold the

sidehandle in a certain way, which has practical and ceremonial significance, and this demands a certain shape and size of handle and button/pearl.

There is an old saying in Chinese that each and every hour of tea is a distillation of every hour of tea that has ever been, going back to the first ever bowl drunk by Old Shennong himself. Through our teaware, we can connect to our tradition, channeling its energy and power into our tea. The right teaware and form help us to make this current our own—to become it, so that whatever we do in life is an expression of its power, effortlessly and without engagement. That is living wisdom.



茶 To the left is Petr's most recent pot. It is large and deep, but the pot is designed so that it is not difficult to decant all the tea, and you don't have to turn the bottom way up, which is a functional improvement based, no doubt, on his experience drinking bowl tea ceremonially. The angles between the spout and handle and the handle and the button are all perfect for the hand. More importantly, it has gathered the spirit of our lineage and given it shape. It embodies our lineage, spirit made form.

Above are three examples of sidehandle pots we've discussed in this article. To the far left is one of Petr's pots, which has served in hundreds of tea ceremonies. In the middle is a gorgeous sidehandle made by a Taiwanese artist to be held with the thumb on the button, which you can see in the shape and angle of the handle and in its relationship to the spout. The third is a Tokoname kyusu pot made by Master Craftsman Hokuji Shimizu (born in 1945). He uses local clay and lines the kyusu with seaweed before firing to create the striations that adorn his pots. We like his kyusu because his angle between the handle and spout is slightly more traditional, though the small size and sieve inside still make them ideal for sencha or gyokuro teas.



# Elevation

活力  
舒醒









# A WEEK OF LEAVES IN A BOWL

## 一週茶碗裡的葉子

**J**oin us worldwide from November 19<sup>th</sup> through the 25<sup>th</sup> as we celebrate the first-ever global week of shared leaves in a bowl! We hope to start a new tradition in which we all return to leaves in a bowl every morning for one week every year during our Elevation issue, beginning a new life of tea practice or returning to our foundation if we already have a practice. This will be an exciting way to celebrate the only returning we have in this community each year—the simplest tea is also the one we can mark our calendar by each year!

When we start out on our tea journeys, we can be confused by the vastness of the tea world. There are so many tea-growing regions throughout China, Japan, Korea and beyond, as well as myriad brewing methods with all kinds of tea and teaware involved. It can all seem very complicated. Do I need a pot like that? Or how about a kettle like that? And shopkeepers can be unhelpful, as they provide teaware for people in all kinds of traditions brewing teas in myriad ways, mixing and matching on their websites, which makes it all the more intense. Add to that thousands of pages of

Global Tea Hut magazines, which haven't even scratched the surface of the tea knowledge out there, and we can feel a bit overwhelmed. But tea doesn't have to be complicated. It didn't start out that way, and the spirit of tea is still one of simplicity. Beyond all the history, science, types of tea and teaware, not to mention brewing methods, tea is really just leaves, heat and water. It always has been.

All the manmade culture and knowledge can get in the way of an intuitive, life-affirming practice of Cha Dao. Sometimes it helps to learn the basics before one starts gathering knowledge. The basics are Tea's own language, not the various human cultures and accoutrements that we've accumulated over millennia of relationship to Her. At its core, Cha Dao is plant spirit medicine. The plant is Tea; the spirit is your quiet dialogue with Her as She converses with your body, mind and soul; and the medicine is the healing that results. Let the rest be unspoken...

This unsaid, unspoken communication is important. Plants communicate with each other and the world through chemical signals, not language. They create fruits, which are delicious to animals due to their chemical make-up (including sugar), and the animals then spread the seeds of the plant, propagating future generations. Scientists have also found that plants

communicate with each other by sending chemical signals through the air and through their roots, carried by fungal networks in the soil that send these signals in exchange for sugar. The connection to this plant is therefore through the physical ingestion of it into our bodies, hearts, minds and souls. If you quiet yourself in this next bowl, you can feel the energy of mountain, water, sun and moon coursing through you... It's easy to breathe deeper. Afterwards, take a walk in the mountains near the Center here, and you'll see that in this state, the songs of the crickets and birds have a new, more recognizable cadence. A life in harmony with the Earth is a healthy life. Nature isn't fallen, and it isn't broken. The world wasn't waiting around for us to come and repair things, and our meddling causes more problems than it's worth. Nature is always talking to us through all our senses; Tea helps us understand what she is saying...

Living in harmony with life doesn't mean we have to reject our creative power, as that too was created by Spirit. We can create and build, but why not *with* the flow rather than against? Why not organize our lives in harmony with the concert that has been playing here billions of years before we joined the chorus, disturbing everything with our off-beat cacophony? And that's all easy to do when you feel connected to the Ten Thousand Things.



# NOVEMBER

## 19<sup>TH</sup> TO 25<sup>TH</sup>







When you see yourself in the world, and the world in yourself, it's literally second nature to create in harmonious ways. I'm not sure how or why we stopped feeling connected (maybe because we stopped taking our medicine), but I am sure that when I drink Tea medicinally, I feel the world in myself immediately. It's almost too obvious. Look at your bowl: what was outside will soon be inside, and then it's difficult to tell who's drinking whom. Maybe Tea drinks people.

## The Practice

Keep it simple: put some leaves in a bowl. Any leaves will do, but ideally, they should be produced in a clean way, free of agro-chemicals. It also helps if they are large and striped-shape, but that is not necessary. Also, any bowl will do—even a rice bowl or cereal bowl, whatever you have at hand. Later you may want to get a tea bowl, made for this purpose out of and for the spirit of Tea. Then add hot water. Any water will do, heated on any flame in any kind of kettle. Ideally, later on, you may want choose a nice spring water; a decent clay, iron or even silver kettle, and maybe even heat your water over charcoal. But, for now, *keep it simple*: any leaves in any bowl, covered in any hot water! The essence of tea is simplicity, just as the most uncommon thing is to truly see the common.

Make a commitment to try drinking three bowls of Tea in the morning every day for a week, and see what happens. You'll find it's easy to start a Tea practice in the morning, as we're all dehydrated when we wake up, and nothing starts the day like a warm beverage. Do an experiment for the week from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>: after you get up, drink at least three bowls of Tea. There is only one guideline for this (remember, any tea, any bowl and any water): While you're drinking this Tea, **do not multitask!** Only drink Tea. No music. No newspaper. No computer. And no phone. Just Tea. It's best to sit cross-legged on the ground, but a chair will do if that isn't possible. You can drink as many bowls as you want, but at least three. If you have a sensitive stomach, you may want to nibble on something first, but don't get distracted—head right to the Tea as soon as possible. And don't miss a single day for that week!

When we wake up in the morning, our minds are most impressionable. What we take in goes in deeper and stays longer—our minds are softened by sleep. It's important to wake up in a positive way, because the first note of the symphony sets the tone for the whole piece. While it is possible to shift course later on in the day, the more momentum we build in a certain direction, the more difficult that will be to achieve. It's much better to start the day right: *being before doing*. Sit in

a receptive state and take the world in, bowl by bowl. Also, early in the morning the world is awakening, shifting from Yin to Yang, and if we empty our hearts, Nature will fill us up too. Be open and receptive to the Tea, for at least three bowls, and see what effect this has upon your daily life!

## A Return

If you have already done this before—maybe it was even how your tea practice began—what a great opportunity this is to return to the foundation and strengthen it. As we always say: Advanced techniques are basic techniques mastered. The beginner's mind is the mastered mind, which is open, receptive and constantly learning. Wu De's master always said that the only Zen masters are those who have died, and the rest of us are students of Zen. Wu De himself always criticizes people who call him "master," quickly snapping back: "I am master of *nothing!* You want to call me a master, wait until I am dead. Until then, I am a student of the Leaf!"

There is an old tradition in tea, often put up on scrolls in the tea room, of practicing "One to Ten and Ten to One." This means that we work our way up from the basics to more advanced practices only to return to the basics again, moving back down, refining and strengthening our foundation.





Don't be in a hurry to learn everything there is to know about tea. This will make our foundation weak, and also the journey is the goal. In Zen tea, we just reach the top and move back down to the basics again, so there really is nowhere to get to anyway.

This week is an excellent opportunity to return to the basics. It is a chance to solidify our foundation. This helps keep us humble, lest we start thinking we are “experts” or “masters” who have achieved something, as opposed to what we really are, which is students who have a lot left to learn and improve upon. Thinking you are “in the know” blocks new insights and growth and causes stagnation, which is a spiritual illness. It can also make us snobby. Sadly, the tea world is filled with snobs. We should never get so snobby that we cannot enjoy a simple, clean tea like Elevation because it is not fancy enough for us. Or perhaps someone offers us the hospitality of some tea out of a love for kindness and we reject it in our minds because it wasn't expensive enough or served in what we consider the “right way” or using the “right teaware.” All of that betrays the spirit of tea. One of the greatest tea masters of all time, Takenoo Joo, said: “Those who speak ill of others' tea do not yet understand tea.” Drinking leaves in a bowl only for a week reminds us that all the quality we see in tea, teaware and brewing skills is all manmade and mind-made, and

prevents us from blocking ourselves off to new insights and learning opportunities by thinking we have achieved something or to making new friends because we are snobby about tea. Stay humble and stay open, like the bowl—like Tea herself.

## *A Global Community*

Besides the opportunity to start tea as a practice, a Way of life—plant spirit medicine, or a return to the basics for those of us already on the path—this week of leaves in a bowl will be an amazing opportunity for us all to drink tea together using the same method, connecting our hearts to each other around the world. Who knows, maybe we'll shift the energy of the whole planet in doing so.

Throughout the week, we will be hosting three separate group tea sessions at three different times so that people from different time zones can tune in. Feel free to join us during the session most convenient for you, or even wake up and stay up for all three. We will all drink tea in silence over the same hour-long period around the world, sharing love and energy with all our tea brothers and sisters. At the end, we can all then offer a bowl up for all the rest of our human brethren and for peace on Earth. We will stream our sessions on the Internet, so keep tuned and we will post about them.

We will also be blasting tons of social media coverage of this week of leaves in a bowl and ask that you all join us, using the exciting hashtag [#teahutweek](#). We will be offering quite a few prizes to inspirational posts anywhere on the Internet, including tea cakes and teaware. We hope that this week of peace, light and love can help raise awareness towards a cleaner relationship to Nature and a more loving relationship to each other. Help us spread the word and welcome non-members to join us in a week of three bowls of tea every morning, perhaps even joining us for one or all of the three global tea sessions we will be hosting!

Please join us for the global sessions at least, and if you can, return to a week of three bowls every morning with all of us around the world. We will hopefully raise our awareness, find our tea and community stronger than ever before, and who knows what ripples this peaceful act, born out of a love for kindness, will have across the world. Once more, we strive to change the world through Love, bowl by bowl....





# ELEVATION PROCESSING

## 活力舒醒的製程

**A**s we've explained in previous issues, different tea types are processed differently. While processing is not the sole differentiating factor (indeed, varietal, terroir, harvest season and many other factors are all just as relevant), processing often makes the most profound difference in how a given leaf's liquor will look, taste and feel by the time it reaches your tea-pot or bowl. Oftentimes, Western authors mislead us by saying that all tea is the same plant and only differs in processing. Actually, of the seven genres of tea, this is really only true of red tea, which happens to be the most consumed tea in the West—and that helps explain some of the confusion. The other six genres of tea are distinguished as much by varietal as they are by processing methodology. But you can process any tea as a red tea, and usually with nice results.

Red tea is often described as "fully oxidized," but this is actually impossible. It is, however, the most heavily oxidized tea there is. Most red tea is processed in three to 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, turning into a pasty mass in the process. After that, red tea goes through another piling/oxidation phase. Then it is dried, usually in an oven (dian hong, red tea from Yunnan, is ideally sun-dried like puerh).

Our Tea of the Month is processed a bit differently from most red teas. The farmers think we are crazy, but we ask Mr. Su to decrease the withering and the rolling periods, leaving some green in the leaves, which you will see when you brew them. (Essentially, we've asked that the tea be less oxidized than what is produced commercially). 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, large-leaf tea trees. The leaves of such 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.

The old farmer smiles and says he likes our quirkiness. We hope you will understand why we make our red tea like this. We don't produce it for sale, only for free. We only wish we could give it to you for less.

The tea this year, like last year's, was a bit more oxidized than usual, due to a lack of rainfall. Mr. Su still decreased the withering and rolling for us, but not as much as in previous years. The raw tea leaves themselves were also more astringent, so a bit more oxidation was necessary. Let's take a detailed photographic journey through the making of Elevation to understand the origin of one of our favorite teas.







## *Terroir & Trees* (風土和樹)

In tea production, each step is more important than the next to the overall quality of the tea, as it determines what follows. And that means that Nature will always be the most important element in crafting fine tea—the terroir of a place: its soil, climate, rainfall, minerals, microbial activity and so much more. This will determine what varietal of tree will thrive there. And the weather will determine the harvest time and amount.

The terroir of the hills around Sun Moon Lake is perfect for large-leaf red tea, with lush, humid hills that aren't too high in elevation, stay consistent in temperature most of the year and have rich red soil like the jungles of Yunnan where this tea comes from. The large-leaf trees were planted here about a hundred years ago and then left abandoned until the red tea industry was rekindled in the '80s and '90s.

Mr. Su's farm is one of our favorite gardens in the world. The trees are loved and cared for daily. There is a vibrancy and poetry walking amongst them. Tea lovers take pause here and breathe more deeply, perhaps nibbling a small bud with their eyes closed or running their hands softly across the tops of the trees to feel the new life thrumming up. These expressions happen naturally here, and that isn't the case with every tea garden. Mr. Su bought the land on one side to take out the betel nut, which is harmful to tea, and to prevent his neighbors from affecting his trees. He is currently trying to work out an agreement with the farmer on the other side as well.









## *Harvest* (採收)

Most of the plucking of Elevation happens in the late summer—July and August. However, with changes in the climate, picking can come any time these days. Usually, Mr. Su gets two or three harvests a year. Elevation is picked entirely by hand, and Mr. Su can rarely afford help the way that larger commercial farms can, which means he and his wife stay very busy during harvest time. The tea is picked in traditional bud-and-two-leaf sets. If you've ever tried your hand at picking tea, you will know that it is one of the reasons that tea can be among the most labor-intensive agriculture. These are large-leaf trees, so the underneath leaves can be huge as they grow up and begin to gather sunlight. They are very juicy when picked. Skilled pickers can learn to use two hands simultaneously to fill their baskets quickly.









## **Withering (萎凋)**

The withering of red tea is done for a long time. Withering reduces the moisture content of the tea and begins oxidation. It is like when an apple or a banana turns brown from sitting on the counter—cells are breaking down due to exposure to oxygen. When tea leaves are first plucked, they are brittle and stiff because they are full of water. As they wither, they become soft, limp and pliable for processing. In red tea, we want to oxidize the tea as much as possible, so the withering is much deeper than for other genres of tea.

Traditionally, red tea was withered like other teas on round bamboo trays stacked on shelves. These days, Elevation and other red teas in Sun Moon Lake (and some parts of China) are withered in long troughs with ventilation beneath. Warm air is blown from under the trough, which allows the farmers to control the temperature, humidity and airflow during the withering stage. Elevation was withered in this way for around twelve hours, which is shorter than usual, as we want the tea to keep its green Qi.

The room where the withering is happening smells amazing! It is a rich and broad smell, hinting of camphor, mint and sweet fruit. Once you've smelled withering tea, you won't ever forget this smell. We love visiting the withering room when we come to Sun Moon Lake!













## *Rolling/Oxidizing* (揉捻和氧化)

Red tea is often called “fully oxidized,” but that isn’t really possible. It is, however, the most oxidized of all tea. This means that most stages of its processing last much longer than for other kinds of tea. The rolling is no exception—red tea is rolled from half an hour to ninety minutes. The rolling breaks down the cells of the tea, furthers oxidation and also shapes the leaves.

Traditionally, all tea was, of course, rolled by hand. In the case of striped, large-leaf red tea like Elevation, this meant rolling the tea across a bamboo tray so that the ridges would knead the tea. It would be hard for Mr. Su to hand-process all his tea, and would most likely mean he could not harvest all his tea on time. Like most farmers, he uses a large rolling machine to roll the leaves. The machine takes longer than hand-rolling, as the batches are bigger. Most batches go through two hours of rolling. We stop our Elevation between an hour and ninety minutes because we want to reduce the oxidation slightly.

After rolling, the tea is piled on round bamboo trays for two or three hours to let it oxidize more. This is the final oxidation in which the tea’s aroma will be sealed into the leaves. The leaves are all pasty from the rolling, and the juices glisten on them.





## Drying/Roasting (乾燥和烘焙)

Long ago, red tea had to be dried in ovens or sun-dried like dian hong (red tea from Yunnan). These days, ovens are used. The tea is fed into the oven, which separates the leaves with a rotating rake, flattening them out as they travel down a conveyor belt through the warm air that dries them at around seventy degrees Celsius. They then come out onto another conveyor where they are sorted, inspected and then caught on a bamboo tray. The tea will go through the oven two or three times until it is sufficiently dry. More passes at lower temperatures preserves the essence of the tea. You can roast red tea dry with heavier heat, but in the case of our greener Elevation, this would damage the tea. The roasting of red tea isn't just for drying; it also matures the flavors when done well.









# Our Fourth Annual

Every year, more than a hundred members and non-members submit photographs that express their Tea spirit. We so enjoy seeing how people creatively show the ways Tea is manifesting in their lives. It is always so hard to choose our winners each year. We discuss our favorites, ask guests what they think and are often awestruck by so many of the entries that it is hard to choose a winner. Alas, it is a contest! We would like to commend the bravery of all the photographers and to say that we love them all. They will stay up on our website as beacons of Tea spirit to the world! Check them out:

[www.globalteahut.org/photocontest](http://www.globalteahut.org/photocontest)

Our winner this year is:



**Herkko Labi**

He's from Estonia. What a glorious photograph! Notice the colors of the house, the poses of the subjects, reflections in the glass and even the baby carriage—it all tells such a story and welcomes you over for tea. Herkko will receive a cake of our Righteousness tea!





# Photography Contest

## 年度攝影比賽





*There were so many amazing photographs this year that we chose four runners-up to receive some great cakes of tea (three on this page and one on the next):*



*Helena Haro, Spain/USA*





*Erica Ekrem, USA*

*Dmitri Bukreev, Russia*





*Our fourth runner-up is Erika Houle of the United States. "In an effort to align my photography and Tea practices, I devised a way to develop film in tea. Like most things in life, this practice can be approached like bowl or gongfu tea practices. The photographing stage is much like bowl tea, as it invites a heart full of equanimity and connects people. The darkroom alchemy is like a meditative gongfu tea session since it involves focus and discipline during the brewing, developing and printing stages." The photo is of our dear brother and fellow Global Tea Hut member, Grippio, offering tea with a warm heart in Brooklyn.*





*We also let Petr Novak choose a winner to receive three bowls he made. As a potter, and a great photographer himself, he has a good eye:*



*Petr chose this beautiful photograph from Sarah Jane of the United States to receive his three bowls. Sarah said this: “This photo was taken on 35mm film in Pharphing, Nepal. This incredible teacher and mother made tea with her heart, and I’ll never forget the lasting impression she made on my being as well as taste buds.” This photograph also tells an amazing story, and captures the hospitality that is the spirit of Tea. It feels like a picture from a travel magazine, captivating the viewer and inviting us in for some simple mountain tea after a long and weary journey up and down steep trails.*



# SPECIAL OFFER



# Aloft

## Aged Sun Moon Lake Tea

老日月潭紅茶

Every year, we try to find some amazing teas for our Light Meets Life fundraiser, sharing teas that range in quality from the everyday to the spectacular. We are transparent in our costs (if the website doesn't say, feel free to email and ask), and offer the teas at little mark-up, allowing you the choice to contribute more or less. All the proceeds are saved or reinvested in tea and teaware, aiming towards the day when we can begin building our future Center, which we have named "Light Meets Life (光壽無量)." Like you, we also want teas that are affordable enough to be drunk every day, as well as more special teas to save for rare occasions. And we want them all to be clean, sustainably-produced and free of agro-chemicals. This range is what we try to offer each year in our fundraiser, usually focusing more on puerh and dian hong teas, with the occasional oolong, black tea (Liu Bao) or Taiwanese tea thrown in.

With our teaware, our goal is to refine and improve the process of slip-casting affordable teaware that

beginners and advanced students alike can use to start brewing tea following the ceremonial methods of this tradition. In the future, we hope to work only with one or two factories to make better and better kettles, braziers, side-handle pots and bowls—each generation better than the previous. We also aim to provide gongfu teaware to you, including Yixing pots, porcelain cups, teaboats and trays and waste water bowls (*jian shui*, 建水). Like the teas in our fundraisers, our mark-up on these wares is minimal, and we leave the price open to "Your Contribution to Light Meets Life," so that you can donate whatever you can afford towards building your Center.

It is worth repeating that none of these funds are used to support our current Center, Tea Sage Hut, or this magazine, Global Tea Hut. If you haven't been to our Center, or are new to the global community that surrounds this experience, you may not yet feel like Light Meets Life will be *your* Center, *not* ours. But we hope that as you relax and drink a few bowls, month to month, or visit our free Center, Tea

Sage Hut, for a ten-day course, you will start to have this feeling. We are striving to build the world's biggest and best *free* tea Center, where we can host courses on Cha Dao, gongfu tea, bowl tea, tea and meditation and much more. This will be a permanent Center for unsolicited tea wisdom, without any financial motivation, that will serve our generation of Chajin and hopefully outlive us all, so that this lineage, its teachings and brewing methods will survive into the distant future, helping later generations of Chajin as well. Along with sustainable tea production and the farmers who are working towards a chemical-free tea world, this vision is what you are supporting when you purchase a Light Meets Life tea.

For our fifth anniversary of the Elevation edition of Global Tea Hut, we wanted to get some aged Sun Moon Lake tea to offer to you. Through our friends, we spent some time scouring the area for an old red tea and found this one, which we are calling "Aloft (高處)" in honor of its younger brother "Elevation." It is rare to find an aged





red tea, let alone one stored well. Most aged red tea was not intentionally aged, like oolong. As we discussed in last month's issue on aged and aging oolong tea, the practice of intentionally aging oolong was essentially lost from mainstream tea culture in Taiwan and China for most of the twentieth century, only carried on by a few tea masters who were in the know. Recently, aging oolong has come back into popularity, so we can expect more well-aged, intentionally-stored oolong in the future. But most aged oolong is tea that was unsold and carelessly left in the backroom or warehouse of a tea shop. This means it was often exposed to high oxygen and humidity, which means poor storage. Red tea faces all these issues as well.

Most aged red tea is also not intentionally-stored, and was simply left in the back of a shop. This may mean the tea is low quality, since it didn't sell when it was new. Unlike oolong, intentionally aging red tea has yet to become popular again. We hope to change that. Aged red tea is wonderful! And it is far less location sen-

sitive than puerh or black tea, which means that those of you in dry climates can age red tea perfectly. Like oolong, it oxidizes, as opposed to puerh and black tea, which oxidize and ferment as they age. Aged red teas are rich and bright, changing faster than oolong even. They are a treasure worthy of our space!

Aloft is an intentionally-aged red tea of around twenty years. It was all bud sets, so the leaves are smaller than Elevation, which comes from *Camellia sinensis*, var. *Assamica*. This tea is from small-leaf trees growing wild in the Sun Moon Lake area. The farm and farmer have never, ever used any agro-chemicals to this day. At the time, before large-leaf tea had gained such traction in the red tea market, becoming famous along with "Ruby Red (紅玉, Taiwan 18)," Sun Moon Lake red tea was sorted like most red teas according to the amount of buds, or how "tippy" it was. Our friend bought a few boxes of one of the higher grades and put them in storage, wrapped up tight, for twenty years. This time has made the tea deeper, richer and very powerful.

The energy is as strong as the flavors and aromas, developing beautifully.

Aloft is thick and rich, dark and malty, with some sourness as well, which is not uncommon for an aged red tea. With some steeping skill, you can minimize the sourness and bring out more tart, berry flavors. The Qi is magnificent, rolling upwards in beautiful and peaceful waves. This makes for a long session of beautiful tea memories.

**Each 250-gram packet  
of Aloft is a  
minimum contribution of  
\$75 + shipping**



# TeaWayfarer

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

I feel destined to have found tea. Our greatest passions in life are not things we discover accidentally along the way, but rather, they are etched into our contract with heaven. The moment we walk through the door and first encounter our purpose, we are forever changed. My journey with the Leaf started many moons ago, and yet my earliest recollections of this fated relationship seem clear as yesterday. I recall as a teenager buying a box with sixteen compartments, each for a different tea, and taping descriptions of each under the lid. I gave this box to family and friends for Christmas (a number of years in a row), and admittedly drank most of my parents' box myself. I was fascinated by the extraordinary variety of teas, spending hours in the local teashop in Denver, Colorado, asking the employees questions that they couldn't answer, nor did they care to. I suppose this box experiment was my first unknowing step in "aging" tea. Some years later, another teashop opened in Colorado, and the founder was very enthusiastic about tea. This was the first place I would meet my oldest friend whenever we were both in town, catching up for hours over endless pots of oolong and red tea. One day I had a sudden vision of a place somewhere in the mountains, built out of all wood, with a healing spring running through the land. In this vision, people were sitting at low tables in beautiful subdued light, sipping tea. I approached the shop owner and asked her if there was something special about this tea, and she replied, "there's something special about every tea." She then suggested that I read *The Book of Tea* by Okakura Kakuzo, and this simple suggestion would later initiate a grand adventure and lifelong love that to this day serves as the cornerstone of my life, and grows ever deeper with every passing season.

Some years after that experience, I was living in Los Angeles studying Traditional Chinese Medicine, and I wandered into a Japanese teashop. There it was, *The Book of Tea*. After reading it, along with some poetry by Baisao, I decided that I had to travel to "where the wild trees are." I had unsuccessfully searched around Los Angeles for a tradition, school or teacher of tea, and wished for a deeper engagement with this ancient practice. After many months of travel, and many serendipitous, synchronous encounters, I found myself at the Tea Sage Hut. At last, I had discovered a living tradition, and my suspicion that there existed a deeper way of engaging with the Leaf proved true. It felt like



茶人: Colin Hudon (清愚, Qing Yu)

I had made my way home after a long time away. I'd found the path that I had been seeking my whole life. I felt like Tea herself had led me here, guiding me to this amazing Hut.

Fast forward nine years and I find myself living with my girlfriend in a wooden house deep in the forest atop a mountain, with a healing spring running through the land. We host tea ceremonies multiple times per week with longer seasonal retreats, blending Cha Dao with Traditional Chinese Medicine and "seasonal living." Tea is our way of life and a gift we share with others, with the hope that they might find inspiration and meaning through this Way. If you ever find yourself in Colorado, please come for a visit. We'd love to share a bowl, or two or three, with you. Meeting Global Tea Hut members is always a joy. Regardless, I hope to meet you in person, along the way, in this Life of Tea. May the Leaf continue to bless your life, and may our love for this Way continue to spread and grow, offering healing medicine to this world, and transforming it cup by cup, bowl by bowl. "Lovers don't finally meet somewhere. They're in each other all along." —Rumi



# Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Tea & Diet

茶道

茶主题: Classics of Tea

茶主题: Chajin & Teahouses

茶主题: Masterpiece Era Puerh



Global Tea Hut is looking for an SEM and Facebook ad professional to help us set up and optimize evergreen SEM and Facebook campaigns in order to reach people we might not otherwise reach. We want to work with someone who is deeply experienced in this field, and who will be thoughtful and loving. Volunteers have done a great deal of the groundwork already. We need the right person to take their efforts the last mile. For compensation we can offer tea and a small monetary consideration. Let us know if you can help!



Wu De will be teaching at Esalen from December 7 to 9. The course is full, but there are maybe off-site spaces available. You can find out more information at: [www.esalen.org](http://www.esalen.org)



Check out our live broadcasts on Facebook, Instagram and soon YouTube, which we do every month. Also, check out our "Life of Tea" podcast on Soundcloud and "Brewing Tea" video series on YouTube!



We have created a vast array of teaware for this community, both for bowl tea and gongfu tea. There are also some amazing Light Meets Life teas this year, including a gorgeous shou puerh, some dian hong cakes, a sheng puerh and an aged Liu Bao as well!



We are looking for a PR person with experience who can help us spread the word about Global Tea Hut. The job entails contacting blogs, magazines and other periodicals to send sample issues to review, and trying to facilitate interviews for articles, radio, television, podcasts, YouTube channels, etc. Also, if you know anyone with a podcast or video channel who would fit us and would be interested in interviewing Wu De or another student, please let us know. Help us get the word out and grow this amazing community!

## Center News



Before you visit, check out the Center's website ([www.teasagehut.org](http://www.teasagehut.org)) to read about the schedule, food, what you should bring, etc. Make sure you apply early for courses as they fill up fast. This is why we need a bigger, more awesome Center.



We have opened all the ten-day courses to service! This is exciting for those of you who have already taken a ten-day course and want to come serve one. You can apply on the website. This is also another way to visit if a course is full!



We have been contemplating a big decision for the last year, finally coming to a conclusion: Starting next year, in 2019, all ten-day courses at the Hut will be 100% tech-free, meaning no computers, cell phones or other devices for the duration of your stay!



We are saving up to buy or lease a van to drive you around during service periods and to take you to the tea farm and mountain to fetch water during courses.

## November Affirmation

### I am elevated

Every day, I make a choice to transcend this level or go around one more time at this level. I choose to elevate. I walk forward towards a higher version of myself today. I orient beyond the things that hold me back.



# 開悟



[www.globalteahut.org](http://www.globalteahut.org)

*The most elevated Tea magazine in the world! Sharing rare organic teas, a magazine full of tea history, lore, translations, processing techniques and heritage, as well as the spiritual aspects of Cha Dao. And through it all, we make friends with fellow tea lovers from around the world.*

GLOBAL TEA HUT

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

