

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

June 2019

光壽無量

LIGHT MEETS LIFE

A garden of dreams Lasting Peace A Center to last the ages Sharing tea for Generations Love is changing the world bowl by bowl





ELEVATION

The time has come. We must move on from our beloved Center, Tea Sage Hut. The last-ever courses are going on right now. Let us raise a bowl of our favorite tea, the only one we repeat every year, and toast all the memories of this beautiful place while we also look forward to building Light Meets Life with your help.

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

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*There is already a hearth waiting in the main hall.
Let's light the charcoal and hang our kettle there.
Raise a bowl, say a prayer and give what you can
towards changing the world bowl by bowl.*



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Christen DeLaney, USA

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力
舒
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老
齡
紅
茶



recycled & recyclable



Soy ink

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From the editor

In June, things get hot in Taiwan. We retreat indoors and drink younger sheng puerh and green tea. We brought back lots of amazing green teas from the annual trip which we are brewing leaves in a bowl mostly, with the occasional gongfu session as well. The garden is in full blossom at this time of year, and all our frangipani trees are covered in gloriously fragrant flowers that we often bring inside and place on the altars or in our chaxi. Despite the heat, things are beautiful outside.

This month is the end of an era. We have two ten-day courses this month and they are the last courses we will ever host in our beloved Center, Tea Sage Hut. It is time for us to move on. This is a very sad, exciting and scary time for us.

We have long outgrown this Center, and have a real need for Light Meets Life, our future, bigger and more permanent Center. As many of you know, when we post our schedule for six months at a time, courses fill up almost immediately, and often have waiting lists of twenty to thirty people—way beyond our capacity. It feels like we put off Light Meets Life, focusing on serving these courses, creating this magazine and leaving the future Center as some distant goal that would come of its own accord. But the Fates have given us a push out the door, and now we find ourselves homeless and with the many open roads of destiny leading off into many new adventures, over hills and dells and into different horizons.

Though there are still many potential Centers we can move to, we hope for one in particular: the most amazing, beautiful and healing Tea Center the world has ever known, which we are calling the “botanical garden” option. There is also a simpler option that used to be a guest house, which we could convert into a functioning Center. We will explore these options in more detail throughout this issue. This issue of Global Tea Hut is also very much a call to action. Which Center we move into will very much depend on you, our global tea family. We are, after all, building this Center for you; it is yours! We need your help. If you have benefited from our ceremonies or the knowledge in this magazine, if you have sat or served a ten-day course and it helped you in your life, then please help us pay it forward as we move into a new, more lasting tea Center. If you haven’t come yet, help us host you in the future. We hope that Light Meets Life will long outlive us all, and that future generations of tea lovers will also have a free school to use as they see fit, benefiting their exploration of tea on all levels, from educational and linear to spiritual and ceremonial. Please give what you can, and use all your social media power to amplify our fundraiser to the world: www.gofundme.com/globalteahut

There is much to look forward to: Not only will Light Meets Life allow us to host more people in every course, opening this practice up to more people around the world—each and every one carrying it home to serve to their friends and family and change the world bowl by bowl—but we

also will be able to offer a much greater variety of courses throughout the year. We hope to host linear courses, meditation retreats, large tea gatherings for Taiwanese tea lovers (which will include Taiwanese in our Center more), and much, much more. But before we start looking ahead, we thought it would be worthwhile to take a look back.

This issue is dedicated to all those who have given their blood, sweat, money, time and love to Tea Sage Hut, and to all of you who allowed us to serve you. This is a tradition of service, and as I always say: we aren’t here to learn how to make tea, but rather how to *serve* it. And so, without anyone to serve we couldn’t even practice. It has been the honor of a lifetime to host you all here. We will travel back through some of the memories and nostalgia of those who have come here often, discussing the history of this beautiful Center, Tea Sage Hut, one last time before we close the doors. However, despite the tears, hugs and nostalgia, we hope this issue is also a call to action and an inspiring, hopeful and optimistic look forward towards Light Meets Life in all its stunning glory. We hope that all of you feel inspired to help us build your Center.

There could be no better tea for such an issue on the beauty and service of our wonderful Center before it ends forever than Elevation—the only tea we send out every year. Usually, we send this tea in the autumn, as the summer version is the best. We wanted to send it earlier this year, as it works so perfectly with the theme of this issue. This tea is also intertwined with the history of this Center and this magazine, and was for so many of us our very first tea we connected to. It is also a tea very much connected to our future, as we will continue to share it annually in the future as well. Raise a bowl and pray for our future Center!

Also, this month your gift is the opportunity to give, which is often the greatest gift there is!



—Further Reading—

This month, we recommend re-reading all the past Elevation issues, like November 2018, to learn more about Sun Moon Lake and this magical tea. You may also want to return to the earliest newsletters, before this became a magazine experience, to get a sense of how far we have come!

TEA OF THE MONTH



Over 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 human-made tools, almost unprocessed. It is the perfect tea to drink as we cry and mourn the end of our Center, Tea Sage Hut, and look forward starry-eyed towards our future home, Light Meets Life.

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 it is completely unimportant, just that it is relative truth. If you put ten grams of very cheap 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 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. 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



A DEEPER SESSION

Further Exploration into Our Tea of the Month



ver the course of this mournful, crazy, scary and exciting 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. No tea could be more perfect for an issue celebrating our current Center, Tea Sage Hut, or as perfect for our prayers for our future Center, Light Meets Life...

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 frame 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. It is also the perfect tea for brewing leaves in a bowl, as it can steep for a long time, has long, striped leaves that won’t get in your mouth and gets sweeter and sweeter with every steeping. Consequently, it is the quintessential leaves in a bowl tea.

Elevation is produced to enhance this. We always ask Mr. Su to decrease the oxidation in our version, leaving the tea more bitter, but also with more Qi.

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.

Betel 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 dangerous 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.

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 Lunar 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 every 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 humble home for a cup one day!

Processing

As 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 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 teapot or bowl. Often-

times, 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 as much a varietal as they are a processing methodology. But you can process *any* tea as a red tea, and usually with nice results.

Red tea is often discussed as being "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. It literally turns into a pasty mass in the process. After that, red tea goes through another piling/oxidation phase. Then it is dried, usu-

ally in an oven. (Dian hong, or red tea from Yunnan, is ideally sun-dried like puerh, but it is unique).

Our Tea of the Month is processed a bit differently from most red teas. The farmers think we are crazy, but we ask to decrease the withering and the rolling period, 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 that which 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 with old-growth, large-leaf tea trees. The leaves of these 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.

Like last year, the tea this year 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

In tea production, the previous step is always more important 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 will determine what varietal of tree will thrive there. And the weather will determine the harvest time and amount. The quality of any agricultural product is determined by its environment.

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 around 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 among our favorite in the world. The trees are loved, and cared for daily. There is a vibrancy here. Tea lovers take pause here, breathe more deeply, perhaps nibbling a small bud with their eyes closed or running their hands softly across the tops of the trees. These expressions happen naturally here, and that isn't the case with every tea garden. He 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, in the hopes of preserving more tea trees. We hope our support can contribute to his goals, and more tea trees can be treated this way.

Harvest

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 rarely can 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 hand-picking tea, you will know that it is one of the reasons that tea is amongst the most labor-intensive forms of agriculture.

Withering

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 to processing. In red tea, we want to oxidize the tea as much as possible, so the withering is much deeper than in 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 is 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 aroma.

Rolling/Oxidizing

Red tea is often discussed as being "fully oxidized," but that isn't really possible. It is, however, the most oxi-

dized of all tea. This means that most stages in processing are done for much longer than with other kinds of tea. The rolling is no exception—red tea is rolled from a 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 result in him being unable to 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 sixty and ninety minutes because we want to reduce the oxidation slightly.

After rolling, the tea is piled on round bamboo trays and left 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

Long ago, red tea had to be 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 70 degrees Celsius. They then come out another, smaller 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 and leave an unwanted roasted flavor. The roast does change the flavor and the chemistry of the tea, however, and is usually more important than with our Elevation, which has lighter oxidation than is normal. Most Sun Moon Lake tea is roasted more.



✿ *The processing of red tea is very simple. The tea is harvested, withered, rolled, and withered again in piles before being roasted dry. During the first period of the enzymic oxidation, the enzymes polyphenol oxidase and peroxidase act on other polyphenols to produce theaflavins. These red-orange compounds then react with more polyphenols to produce thearubigins, the chemicals responsible for changing the leaf's color from green to brown. The thearubigins, meanwhile, are also busy reacting with some of the amino acids and sugars in the leaf, creating the highly polymerized substances that develop into the distinctive flavors in red tea.*



SIMPLICITY & CHA DAO

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*, 仙),” 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 circumstances—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 miracle 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 that we’re all connected on this Earth—to each other and Nature. Find our heart—that is—one in this very bowl...

*Hitherto uncharted destiny maps
Drawn by fingers of gold
Dipped in starlight.
Their seraphic finger-strokes
Stir the chiming bells
That lead down wind-wrought roads.
Raising a bowl in toast
To Mother Earth, Father Sky
And the star-covered fingers of the Fates,
We kick our feet and step out
Into the forever of from now on...*

—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 for leaves in a bowl. (You can add the normal amount if you choose to brew it sidehandle.)

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. 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 and putting 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, 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.

Please raise a bowl for us this month—one prayer of love for all the beautiful memories we have shared in the Tea Sage Hut. We have sat for so many bowls of Elevation and other teas in this space—too many to count. Then, if you would, say a second prayer for our future Center, Light Meets Life. May we find our highest expression of truth together, creating a space that will heal us all and help in the healing of our Mother Earth, for the good of all beings.



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)

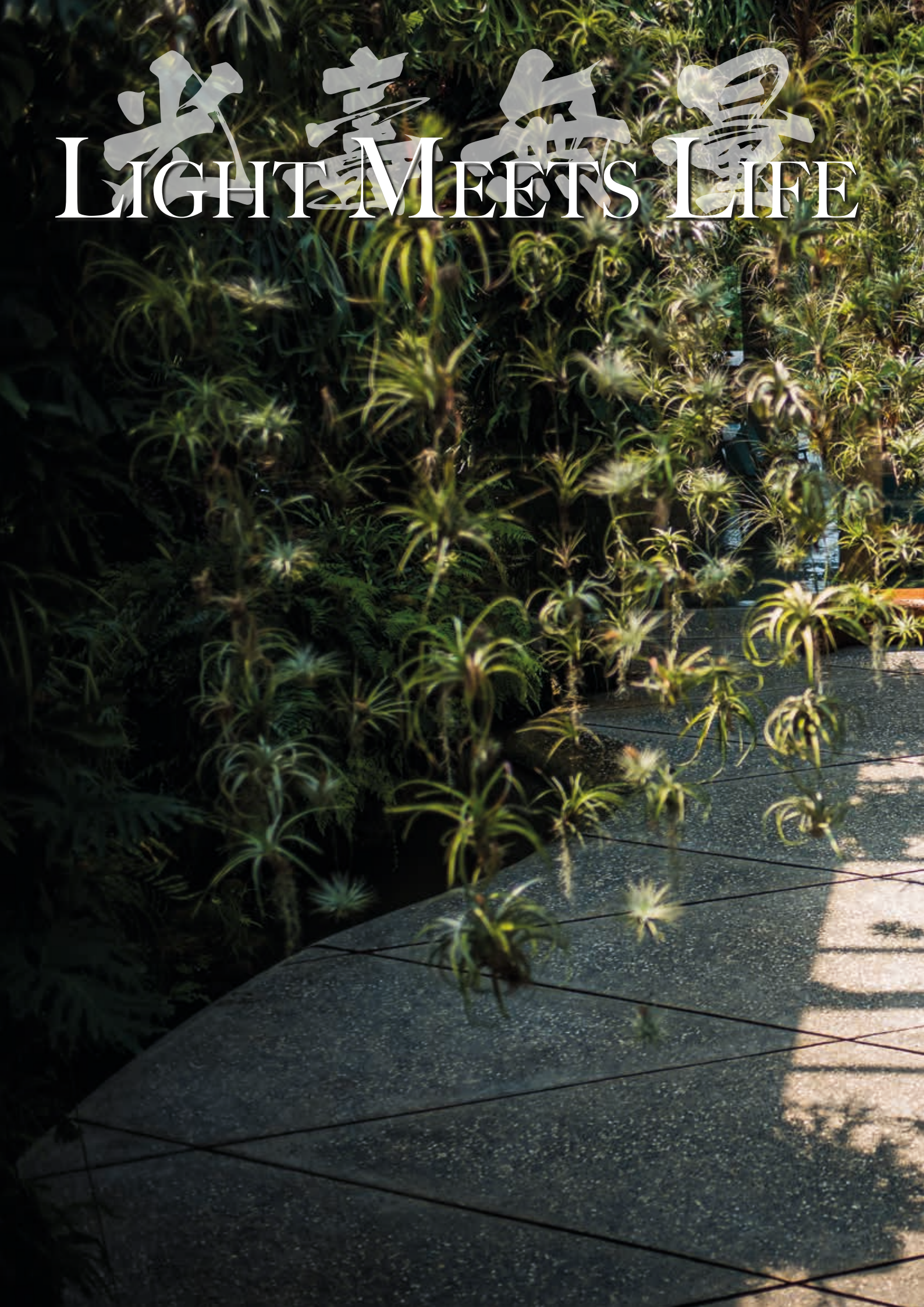
Patience: five to ten steepings

茶 Try making the leaves swirl each steeping. This helps them start steeping sooner the first time you add water and lifts them from the bottom of the bowl in subsequent steepings.



光無邊

LIGHT MEETS LIFE







The End of 時代結束 an Era

茶人: Wu De (無的)

After almost ten years of sharing thousands of bowls of tea, hugs, food and hosting guests from all around the world, our beautiful Center is coming to an end. But every ending is also a beginning, as every beginning is the end of something else. To many of you, the Tea Sage Hut has been a Center you visit to take courses on tea and meditation or a distant place you hope to one day visit, but to us it has also been home. Over these years, we have buried pets, watched new relationships begin and old ones end; we have played and laughed, fought and cried in these halls. This Center contains our smiles and joy, our pain and grief and all that we have experienced in these many years serving tea to our global community. Our life is here, and leaving is hard.

Long ago, Joyce and I were running a school for children, while I spent all my free time learning about tea and meditating. I haven't lost my passion for either of those things—I still spend all my free time learning about tea and practicing Zen to clean out the messy closet that is my mind. When I started in Tea in the United States twenty-five years ago, there wasn't any Internet to buy tea from and hardly a book on tea in the English language. I would have the Chinese engineering students at my college translate stuff for me for a few bucks, resulting in about what you get from an automated translation software. Garbled and broken, I spent hours pouring over those texts, soaking up whatever I could learn. I have been writing since I was young, and in the back of my mind, in a precious old chest, I wrapped up in gold cloth

an idea that one day I would do something to make learning about tea easier for Western Chajin.

As time passed, I became more and more interested in the seemingly lost part of tea: *ceremony*. I read countless times that tea “was medicine for thousands of years,” and wondered why so many authors skipped over those “thousands of years.” Even my limited exploration through garbled translations made it clear that tea was central to the ceremonial and religious lives of ancient Chinese, and played an important role in all four religions there: Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and the Shamanism of China's aboriginal cultures. But apart from Japan, it seemed that little of this remained in the world. Tea has been recreationalized and commoditized; to most people, it's now just a beverage.



The Beginning

新開啟 of Another

I have absolutely no problem with tea as a beverage. If it is made in a sustainable way that is good for the earth and for our bodies, it is a healthy beverage indeed. I sometimes drink it that way, too. Tea is also a great hobby, and I absolutely adore geeking out on tea history, art and lore with other tea lovers. But if that is all that tea was, I don't think I would know most of you, and I most likely would not be typing these words now. Simply put, I am a spiritual man, or at least I try to be. I am not holy, not by a long shot, but I do love that which is holy. Like most, I came to the feet of the spiritual stairs through trauma and darkness, which taught me to love the Light, the Sacred. Very early on, I recognized how beneficial tea was to my practice, which left me with more and deeper questions as to why no one was exploring this aspect of tea.

In my travels, I meet a lot of tea lovers from all walks of life. Some love tea because it is a beverage and others as a hobby. Sometimes I feel a pressure to apologize for the fact that tea is a spiritual practice to me. People judge our work, calling us a “cult” for ceremonializing tea. If calling us a “cult” means that we are a group of people with shared beliefs doing “weird” things counter the mainstream, I guess we are that, but if they mean some kind of holy man with power over “followers,” then, as I just mentioned, nothing could be further from the truth. I am above no one, and let me make this clear one more time (since it is important): I am *not* holy. Nor am I better than anyone in this community. I am as cracked and as broken as the worst of us. I haven't achieved any great spiritual states or even realized much.

To the contrary, I feel very much a student of Tea and Zen, with so much more work left to do. My Zen master always said that the only masters were those who have passed on, and the rest of us are students of Zen. I always tell my students the same thing: You want to call me a “tea master?” Wait until I am dead. Until then, I am a student of tea. The actual fact of the matter is that even in my role as teacher, I see myself as a servant. And let me tell you about my students—they are all twice the person I will ever be. It is an honor to serve them.

If you are one who needs an apology for my strange practices, I am sorry. I practice tea spiritually because I am a spiritual man and I hope to do everything in my life with Zen—from walking to cooking, talking to breathing, painting to making tea.

I do not ask that everyone in the world use tea as spiritual ceremony. If it is a beverage for you, that is great. If it is a hobby, that is also wonderful. I will happily geek out with you. But just as I would never ask you to ceremonialize tea if you do not want to, leave me to practice tea the way that I want to. Actually, that is enough in terms of why we ceremonialize tea. It is enough that we do it because we enjoy it, but there is also the fact that we are backed up by millennia of tea lovers who have regarded tea just as we do. This is not something we made up. The ceremonial lineages of tea go back thousands and thousands of years. And tea was spiritual cultivation, ceremony and religion long before it was a beverage or a hobby. Exploring and participating in that long heritage has been my life's work.

The Birth of the Hut

True to that chest in the back of my mind, I wrote a book about the spiritual side of tea, *The Way of Tea*. The original version was more than four hundred pages, but the publisher thankfully chopped it down in size (much of what was left out has been published elsewhere since then.) Around that time, I also convinced some friends of mine to publish a tea magazine on the more linear side of tea (as I feel that should be in balance with the spiritual side), called *The Art of Tea Magazine*. At the start, they didn't want to do it, protesting that they had no English-speaking staff and no market for the magazine. I created the entire first issue, sleeping very little over three months, and brought it to them, warning that they had better publish it now! They laughed and agreed.

As the book and the magazine started to circulate, Joyce and I started to have visitors coming to share tea. Around the same time, my teacher had been talking about me starting to teach, but then as now, I felt unready. I felt that I myself had so much to learn and so much work left to do. How can I help another when I am undone? How can I pass on what I have not yet achieved myself? How do you tell someone to be moral, when you are not yet? How do you suggest that others seek purity within when

you are not pure? I still have these same questions today... I was therefore very reluctant to teach. Then, some of my brothers who also study with my teacher were visiting, and we were drinking tea in a shop in Yingge. One of them handed me his phone, and my teacher was on the other end. He doesn't have a phone, so this was the first time I had ever spoken to him on the phone. "When are you coming here?" he asked. I went there, and in his soft gentle way, he shifted me with good advice and warm kindness, and I returned to Taiwan open to the possibility that I could teach some of what I learned. In one of those Heavenly strokes of serendipity, literally two days after I got back a friend whom I had been tutoring in English (often over cups of tea) asked if I would teach her about tea apart from our English classes. I smiled and agreed. Amazingly, three days after that, I got an email from an American living in Taiwan who had read my book and wondered if I offered lessons...

Two students quickly turned to five, then ten. In those early days, we had two classes a week, one in English and one in Chinese for Taiwanese students. We also started having more international guests showing up out of the blue. Some talk started about me making a trip to the States to teach a bit. Around that time, we formally named the Center after the tea saint Baisao's hut: "The Hut Which Conveys You to Sagehood (通聖亭)," or "Tea Sage Hut" for short.

After those early trips to the States, more and more guests started coming. In those days, there was no donation box or other means of support. To the great frustration and consternation of Joyce, I quickly spent our life's savings on hosting tea weirdos from around the world, and worse yet, we were spending our monthly income on the same, meaning we were broke. Some students who had stayed with us began brainstorming ideas. I insisted that the Center be free, so after much thought, we came up with a brilliant idea: we could have a newsletter than came with tea. It could contain some teachings, news and personal anecdotes, as well as some of the amazing teas we have access to in Taiwan, and our tiny community could stay connected that way and also help support the Center...





It was a lot of work creating a monthly newsletter, so we calculated what would cover all our expenses and decided to cap membership at two hundred and fifty. (Many old school members here will smile at that one). I still remember filling the hallway of the Center with Global Tea Hut long before we had an office. I remember handwriting every envelope, drawing a kettle and bowl on each one. I can still recall the day we lifted that silly cap on membership, the issue when we could finally afford a color cover (cheaply done), the issue where we also had a color centerpiece. I vividly remember the first-ever all-color issue and when we could finally afford to start translating Chinese articles...

In the early days, when more guests began coming, we needed some volunteers to live at the Center and help out. We weren't even sure what the Center would be. We created a weekly schedule and just let people stay as long as they wanted, joining our weekly practice. I must admit that I had no idea what I was doing in those days. Though I had experience living for years in meditation centers and a monastery, I had never created structure or been at the heart of it. I was also not a great teacher, either (maybe still). There seemed to have been a lot more growing pains in those days—a lot more personal drama between the residents living there. But we have come through stronger, slowly developing courses and attracting more and more people who want to serve the courses, as they have been touched by them in their own lives. And the Tea Sage Hut has slowly found its way, running more smoothly with speed bumps instead of running into ditches.

The End of an Era

In all our lives, there are those days that change everything. When I shattered my knee, for example, I knew my life would never be the same again. Some such days are joyful too, like the birth of a child or a wedding (Joyce was a stunning bride). When we got a call from our landlord's daughter, it would prove to be an equally transformative day. Our landlord is a wonderful host and man who has treated us extremely well, allowing us to stay indefinitely.

Our meditation hall was his mother's bedroom, where she died, and he has often said that her spirit is happy with the work we do. We haven't had much contact with his eldest daughter, however, as the family all lives in Taichung, so it was a bit strange when she called and asked to visit.

We knew that our landlord was ill, but soon learned that the situation was graver than we thought: He is dying—he is dying and has asked his family if he could return to the home he grew up in to die. At first, the family thought this was impossible, as he needs their care and they all live in Taichung. But the daughter is a devout Buddhist and when she brought this up with the monk she studies under in Taichung, he shocked her. She has had little contact with us, as I mentioned, and had never mentioned anything about us to him. Even when she came to him for support, it was merely for advice about how to deal with the grief. The monk, who apparently has some gift of vision, told her that “the people living in your father's old house have been practicing hard, cultivating themselves and sharing with the world. If he returns there to die, he will die peacefully and pass on to *Sukhavati*, the Pure Land.” She was shocked that he knew about us, so much so that she said she stopped crying.

We have a five-year lease that just started, so technically she couldn't tell us to leave. Through tears, she pleaded with us, saying that she was going to quit her job and her husband was going to have to commute to Taichung from Miaoli every day so they could move back here with her father and let him die in the home he grew up in—the Center that we have cultivated together these years. We wholeheartedly agreed—what an honor.

Practically speaking, this means we have to move by the end of the year. I was most concerned that our landlord may pass on before we have the chance to move. His daughter said that if that happened she would not be upset, knowing that she had done what she could for her father. She has generously agreed to pay us for all the renovations we have made to the Center over the years, and said she will pray every day that we land somewhere good for us. With your help that can and will hold true.



It seems that there are greater forces at work here—mystic winds are a'blowing. Over the last few years, we have put our future Center off, thinking “that will happen some day,” while we work hard to create awesome ten-day courses for you, as well as this magazine. I think the Great Spirit, the Dao, and our own karma have just given us a healthy push out the door and into the light that meets life...

Light Meets Life

For a long time, we have known that we would one day outgrow the Tea Sage Hut. We always dreamed of a permanent home for this tradition, this Way of Tea. Tea Sage Hut is great, but it is an old house we have remodeled into a tea Center. Wouldn't it be



✿ *With your generosity and support, and a nice gust of Destiny's warm winds, this could one day be our new retreat Center!*

great to architect a Center from the ground up? To design the space for what it was intended to be? And also, how wonderful to host more guests—bigger courses and more varieties of them. We could have tea gatherings for Taiwanese tea lovers a few times a year, as well as Chinese ten-day courses. Instead of just having Introduction to Cha Dao courses over and over again, what if we designed other types of courses throughout the year? How about a long Teacher's Self Retreat, where the Center could close for twenty or thirty days and I could meditate, allowing older students to join me in silence and tea? How about seven-day gongfu courses—maybe even in levels one, two and three? (In fact, my teacher agreed that he would come help with the higher levels.) And then we could have Tea & Zen retreats like we

do in Spain, linear courses like a seven-day intro to the seven genres of tea (covering one a day)... These dreams resulted in the idea of creating a new, bigger, more permanent Center that would help Chajin around the world in their tea journey, a Center that could then be passed down to future generations of tea lovers to do with as they wish, with only two strict rules to govern them: that the Center always be free and always for tea alone. We named this new idea "Light and Life Meet, and in That Meeting Both Become Infinite (光壽無量)," or "Light Meets Life" for short.

Some years ago, there was some momentum towards building Light Meets Life. A local tea lover who was attending the weekly Chinese tea classes offered to donate us some land. But we just weren't ready. When we sur-

veyed the land, we found out that it would require a large investment just to rebuild the road in well enough to begin construction. Also, the land is not flat, so landscaping would be required. The amount needed to even begin construction was way beyond us, so we planted some tea trees on the land, allowing them to grow up wild and free, and got back to work hosting courses and creating Global Tea Hut.

We decided to take the money we had raised at that time and invest it in tea and teaware, launching the Light Meets Life Fundraiser, where we could sell some tea and teaware transparently each year, allowing you to choose your donation price. Amazingly, over the last six years or so, we have turned the initial twenty thousand dollars we had raised at that time into well over a hundred thousand!



Meanwhile, our courses have gotten crazy. The six-month schedule literally fills up a couple weeks after it is posted, and every course has a waiting list of twenty to thirty people! We also have started allowing people who have taken a course to come back and serve, increasing the number of people who can attend. As many of you know, Global Tea Hut also grew out of its office and we acquired a new one last year, which is much bigger, turning the old office into “Morning Dew,” which is a residence for long-term volunteers and a tea space course participants visit. We now have three large buildings and, as you may have read over the past few months, we were just about to look for a fourth small space to serve as an office for the creation of this magazine, turning the small magazine office in the Center into another dorm so we could allow more people to visit.

Obviously, we have outgrown this space—literally spreading into many buildings. I truly believe that what has just happened was the push we needed to get out of this growing list of rented buildings and into our own Center, Light Meets Life, which we hope you feel is your Center as well.

More & More Serendipity

Around seven years ago, one of the Taiwanese students who was coming to our weekly tea classes was having an art show in the nearby town of Sanyi, which is also in Miaoli County. (He painted the beautiful painting in the gongfu room of Tea Sage Hut.) We attended to support him and found ourselves in one of the most beautiful spaces we had ever encountered. It really took our breath away. Some time later, we found out that they had annual tea gatherings in the same space (including one hosted by our own Master Tsai Yizhe), which we were anxious to attend—most of all just to be in this gorgeous space. It was during one of these tea gatherings that the owner, Mr. Xie, shared his story with us.

Mr. Xie said that he had made his fortune as an architect. In his middle years, he decided that he was done creating skyscrapers and buildings according to other people’s designs, and wanted to pursue his own creativity, making spaces the way he wanted. He

would start with his own house. He purchased land in the mountains of Sanyi and started building. Alas, when he broke ground to lay the foundation, they hit a spring and water poured out. His friends said that the land was no good and that he would have to search out an alternative area, but his philosophy, like all great architects, was that a building should harmonize with Nature and feel as if it belongs in that space as much as the rocks and trees. So, he carried on and built a space that incorporated the water—with flowing waterfalls, koi ponds and streams winding from outside to in, and back out again. He also realized that the increased humidity caused by the water flow meant that they could import tropical plants from as far away as Bali to make a richer, more diverse garden.

Since then, Mr. and Mrs. Xie have gone on to build more than twenty such properties for friends who, like us, were blown away by what they did. They also moved into another property after living in the garden for five years. Since then, the space has been used for the occasional art show and tea gathering. They both believe that a well-built property will increase in value over time, instead of decreasing, and that has definitely proven true with this space, as the garden has grown more and more abundant, the wood and stone have developed patinas and Mrs. Xie has not ceased to upkeep and improve the whole space. Also, they both are very committed to preserving the craftsmanship of Taiwan, and it shows: every single inch of all their properties is handmade! Every wood lintel, every door, every stone or brick is handmade—every single detail! The added effect is beyond belief.

Immediately after hearing Mr. Xie tell his story, I started inviting them to the Center for tea, knowing that they could help us design Light Meets Life one day. They agreed to do so when the time came. I always knew that their beautiful garden property would be an inspiration for our new Center, always thinking of all the amazing details we could use in the construction of Light Meets Life. In the back of my mind these last seven years since I met the Xies, their property has always been the gold standard for what our future Center might one day resemble. I must admit that I even spent a few medita-

tion sessions redecorating their space as if it *were* our Center... And when our landlord’s daughter left, they were the first people I thought to call. Maybe they knew of a house or some land we could go look at. And I also hoped to hold them to their word and ask them to help us decorate/design our new Center.

We went to visit and after twenty or thirty minutes of catching up, Mrs. Xie teared up. She wiped her eyes and said that over the last twenty years, she has received more than a hundred offers to buy their precious garden property. Some wealthy businessmen have offered her up to three times the value of the property. They have been offered partnerships with spas, guest houses, restaurants and much more, but always refused. This was her baby. She would never sell. She said that around five years ago, she started to acknowledge her own mortality and realized the truth that she was only the caretaker of this land for a short time, not its owner. She said that she started to ask herself serious questions about what she wanted to do with it. At that time, she began imagining that many foreigners would visit the property and see how beautiful Taiwan is, feeling like the space is too big for Taiwan. She also wanted the property to be given to someone who would hand it down generationally, so it would last. And she said that she was crying because at the very moment that we explained our situation, for the first time ever she let go of her child. She would sell the property to us... The place that had always been the very standard I wanted to base Light Meets Life on could be ours. Even in my fantasies where I redecorated that space to make it a tea Center, I always woke up dismissing them as nonsense. The Xies had told me they would never sell the place. I even thought that I was jealous, fantasizing thus. And now, here we were crying together at the possibility...

Could we possibly do this together? It is hard to say, and it is hard to invest the heart in what may very well be a pipe dream. I suppose it is up to all of you. Which Center do you want?

There are no words in the tongues of gods or men to describe the beauty of this space. It changes you. It is more than attractive. It is a beauty that you feel, one that stirs the heart.

一個中心的世代 A CENTER FOR THE AGES

This space is the most beautiful property I have ever seen, but not just on the surface—certainly not in a shallow way. It changes you. When you enter, you start breathing differently; you calm down and start to feel connected to Nature, just as you do after the first few bowls of a powerful tea ceremony. You feel centered and in a heart space, in love with life, reminded of the beauty inside you and your connection to Mother Earth. You exhale and are free... Anyone and everyone who came there to take a course would be healed and transformed by this space, and never, ever forget the experience for as long as they live. *(All of the pictures in this article are of the space, and you can see more at the fundraiser websites.)*

This place is not what I would have designed for Light Meets Life; it is way better. If I did the designing, Light Meets Life would be linear, angular and masculine. It would be Japanese Zen—martial and austere. It would be peaceful, but straight. This place is wiggly and so obviously created and nurtured by the feminine for many years. It is warm and soft, peaceful and enveloping, like a bowl of tea. It is very much in the spirit of tea, and we can still bring the straight and disciplined into the space, combining Yin and Yang. I could never design the Center this well—not in this lifetime; not in this body. It is better than we could imagine.

There is still a giant hurdle to creating the best Tea Center the world has ever known, a Center to be handed down to future generations of Chajin. It is expensive. Very expensive. I think the Xies want to help us, but also want us, as a community, to show up and do our part. I believe that by bringing a large percentage of the value of the property to the table, we are first of all honoring all the work that Mrs. Xie in particular has put into this place; it is her life's opus, and it is a masterpiece indeed. Secondly, I think we would be demonstrating to them that we are not just a ragtag gang of tea weirdos, but an organized community that has the integrity and responsibility necessary to care for such a large and very special space indefinitely.

I imagine Light Meets Life as a flag pole for Chajin around the world, and not just our generation of Chajin, but all the tea people of the future as well. It will be a free and central pivot around which all our practices can orbit for the rest of our lives. Once we move in to Light Meets Life, we will light the charcoal at its center and never let it go out, so that all of you around the world will always know that you have but to arrive, and we can put a kettle on and share some tea. We want you to know that we have some backup plans and have looked at some more affordable properties that are much more doable for us, so that you don't worry. But we also want to dream big and imagine the perfect Center, envisioning it handed down to other tea lovers in the future as well.

A Call to Action

The most beautiful Center we could ever imagine is already built and right around the corner. It is very expensive, though—a whole lot of prayers! It feels daunting to be honest. But we are going to try. And we are going to need your help.

In fact, when you break it down, this dream is possible if every Global Tea Hut member does his or her part. If every one of you contributes to this vision, forsaking that new computer or vacation, we would all have the Center of our dreams.

If you have ever sat for one of our tea ceremonies and been moved, if you have visited the Tea Sage Hut and taken a course that impacted your life positively, if any of our work has inspired you, now is the time to show up! Please visit our fundraiser and give what you can.

You can also help by spreading the word; use the power of your voice. Shout it with a social media bullhorn. Call out and ask your friends and family to donate to this noble cause, helping us to create your Center. And pray for us. Imagine yourself there, in the most beautiful surrounds drinking tea, meditating, practicing tai chi and together, if we hold the vision, it may just come true for the benefit of this beautiful global community and for all the tea lovers of the future who will benefit from this space.



**Please help us build the world's best tea Center—
for us, for you and for future generations.**

You can also help us spread the word on social media.
Tell everyone who loves tea to lend a hand.

If every Global Tea Hut Member spread the word to enough people, the best version of Light Meets Life would be a reality. The dream of a lasting home for tea education and ceremony is here.

Together we can create a Center for the ages:

**www.gofundme.com/globalteahut
www.lightmeetslife.org**



通聖亭 TEASAGE HUT





FARE THEE WELL...

NOSTALGIA 茶亭之懷舊情 FOR THE HUT

As you are reading this issue, the very last-ever courses at the Tea Sage Hut that will ever be are going on. Since this Center has given so much to so many of us, we thought it worthwhile to spend some time talking to some old-timers about their memories of the Hut. As we read through their accounts, let us raise a bowl or two for all the hard work of the many beautiful volunteers who gave so much to make this place special to many of us. We are closing the book on a whole chapter of our lives and opening a new one. This is exciting, but it is important that we also celebrate the magic we have all created together over the years. As Wu De always says, we will all look back on our time at this Center, Tea Sage Hut, as the “good old days,” when we lived in a small and simple Center, long before things got bigger and better.

HOW I FOUND THE HUT

茶人: Shen Su (聖素), Canada/Taiwan

There are many turns in the road that led to my arrival at Tea Sage Hut. Perhaps most notably were the events that unfolded in Japan during my university exchange. There, I met a dear friend who introduced me to the abbot at *Daitokuji*. Together, my friend and I would bike to the temple early each morning to tend the moss garden beds and learn seated meditation with the monk. Oftentimes, the monk's wife would prepare us a simple bowl of whisked green tea while their kids ran around the temple over the wooden decks and through sliding rice-paper doors getting ready for school. At the age of twenty-two, this was really my first experience of any type of formal meditation and surely my first experience drinking tea, which prior to this meant some kind of crushed herbs in a teabag that I didn't have the slightest clue how to prepare. True, my relationship to tea began relatively late, but the love for tea and meditation was now planted

thanks to my new friend and the hospitality of the temple family, whom I will never forget and always be grateful for.

After around four months of mornings at the temple, my semester ended and it was time to return to Canada to finish my degree. I joined a small meditation group led by a Zen teacher, who unknown to me at the time was also a professor at my university. It was a small group and we only met about twice a week before losing our meditation space. Before the group completely dissolved, one of the members lived near me at the time and invited me over for tea. It turned out he was starting a tea business and so had plenty of samples for us to enjoy. We developed a friendship anchored in tea and meditation. This particular friend, older by many years and wiser than I, suggested I sit a Vipassana course at a center in British Columbia for ten days. I looked into it and signed up right away. It changed my life, of course.

During that ten-day course, I met another participant who also loved tea. He welcomed me to his home in Vancouver if I ever decided to visit, which I sometimes did because I had family there. During one such visit, I took him up on his offer. We shared tea and connected and developed another friendship rooted in tea and meditation. He was Fujianese but had lived in Canada for a long time, settling down with his family there. Talking with him was perhaps the first time I had heard anything about Fujian and Taiwan. They sounded nice. During that same visit and quite coincidentally, I happened across a tea shop on Broadway Street, where the shop owner took quite an interest in my unusual passion for tea and teaware. We got to talking about tea, meditation and eventually Buddhism, and it turned out he was from Taiwan. He gave me my first Wuyi Cliff Tea, and I remember for the first time actually feeling a tea beyond just the sense of flavor and aroma.



He told me that if I really wanted to learn more about oolong and puerh tea that I would have to go to Taiwan. It didn't seem possible at the time because I had other commitments and knew nothing about China, but I kept his suggestion in the back of mind.

I was quite free at this time in my life. I completed my university degree without any debt and didn't have anything holding me back from exploring the world: no house and mortgage, wife and kids, car or career, but also not much money! So, I planted trees in the spring to make some quick cash and started WWOOFing (Willing Workers On Organic Farms), which meant I would work for free but in return for a learning experience plus food and shelter. This allowed me to travel around the world with very little money. I ended up on all sorts of different farms in different countries. During one such experience in Hawai'i on the island of Kaua'i, I was working willingly on a very small-scale organic tea farm with an amazing couple. It was quite the dream living in Hawai'i, waking up on a beautiful farm, and learning all about tea. The farm owner told me that if I really wanted to deepen my knowledge of tea that I needed to go to Taiwan. She herself had done a ten-day tour there and suggested I join the same one because the tour guides were so enthusiastic and the experience so rich. I checked it out and had just enough cash to make it happen, so off I went from one small island to the next.

Taiwan

I was on the other side of the world in a completely new and foreign culture, in a place I knew next to nothing about and I couldn't say anything beyond "hello" and "I don't speak Mandarin." It was nothing short of exhilarating for me. The trip was very touristy and business-oriented, but that didn't matter to me at the time. During the tour, we met a family who owned a tea factory and farm in a village up in the mountains near Chiayi County. They were young and had two children and really seemed to love what they were doing, both in their factory and in their tea gardens. Full of enthusiasm, I boldly asked them (through translation of course) if they would host me

the following spring so that I could learn about high mountain oolong tea production. I offered to teach their children some English and suggested a three-month stay. A little taken aback, they politely agreed, probably thinking nothing would come of it. But sure enough, I managed to keep contact with them through the generosity of the tour guides. After finishing my work-trade experiences in Hawai'i, which also included an entirely different internship at two other farms on the Big Island for a few more months, I found myself right back in Taiwan for the spring harvest.

At that time, I remember telling my parents that I wanted to stay there forever. It was too good to be true. I was out in the field harvesting tea each morning, transporting the tea from field to factory up and down narrow mountain passes, and participating in every step of modern oolong production. I was learning the basics of the language and culture and sleeping right next to the withering room. I promise you, there is nothing sweeter than waking up next to a room full of fresh, green withering tea leaves. As it always does, reality quickly set in, which is something I'm only just starting to accept and even appreciate at times. Once the harvest was over, it was time for field work, and that's when it hit me. It wasn't the labor of field work that bothered me (I love physical labor), it was the striking reality of conventional farming that really shook me to tears, and I rarely cry. WWOOFing does assume organic farming, but this was an internship I'd set up on my own and I quickly learned the consequences of acting on an impulse, being naïve and not asking enough questions. I was right in the midst of a chemically controlled tea plantation. I'll never forget the high-vis colors of the chemicals, the sun-stained orange vat used to mix them or the endlessly long yellow hose used to pump the chemicals from the vat into the tea plantations, through a three-meter-long spray wand casting chemicals in plumes that spread in all directions, tea plants rendered helpless.

I sat with the boss who sold us the chemicals, listening to his story. He had a family after all, and his children's education wasn't free. I watched the field workers put on rubber boots and thin paper masks, hardly enough

to protect them from a mosquito bite let alone the downpour of chemicals raining from their hands. I tried to express concern, but that just led to confusion in a culture I didn't understand and a language I didn't speak. I looked to the family, whom I deeply respected, and knew they felt trapped in this cycle of demand and supply. I remembered reading an article in the online magazine *The Leaf* called "Romancing the Leaf" by Aaron Fisher that resonated with me because he too had experienced the destructive nature of conventional farming and its effects on tea trees. At that time, I had no idea who the author was. In all my discomfort and sadness, I emailed a handful of people asking for guidance through this challenging situation. I received an unexpected response from a friend of a friend who suggested I might find the answers I was looking for, at a place called Tea Sage Hut.

Tea Sage Hut

After looking into the website, I made a call and booked a visit. I walked in and never imagined such a place ever existed. The reverence, the cleanliness, the beauty and the reality of it all gave rise to feelings akin to arriving home



after too long a trip. After a starkly quiet first evening, including meditation, we enjoyed a simple breakfast and my first tea ceremony at the Hut. That session is still one of my highlights at Tea Sage Hut, not just because of the beauty and deep reverence experienced in that first ceremony, but because of what followed immediately after. Truly, the tea ceremony was meditative and connecting, like nothing I'd ever felt before, but what I loved so much about this session was the unexpected humor that ensued. It wasn't the beauty of the ceremony alone, or the jokes that followed, but the balance achieved between the two that gave me a keen sense of authenticity about this place. It wasn't a place to bliss out and escape from reality, nor a place of intellectual rigidity and seriousness, but somewhere in between. This experience said to me that I can rest in deep presence as a form of medicine and self-cultivation while at the same time staying anchored to the earth and the realities of daily life. It was the complement between the two experiences that created space for the recognition of our divinity and humility. There were real people there, just like me, full of wisdom, humor and lofty intentions and not afraid to work through their imperfections—it was all welcome. I felt

very fortunate to find such an honest community. It provided space for spirituality to meet the profane, discipline to meet relaxation, joy to meet anger, seriousness to meet humor, sacredness to meet the ordinary—all facilitated by Tea. This tea session and many experiences to come defined this truth for me.

It goes without saying that the other two major highlights of my time at Tea Sage Hut were my initiation and precept ceremonies. They formally recognized the most significant times of my life as I became a member and steward of this tea tradition. But those came long after my first visit.

After this initial ten days at Tea Sage Hut, participating in the daily activities and watching the students there at the time constantly serving, I knew I wanted to return and learn more through an extended stay. Little did I know just how long it would extend for! Coincidentally, during my visit, I realized that Wu De was the author of the article I'd read in *The Leaf*. I asked him if I could return as a student of the Hut and he immediately agreed; however, I had to finish my time at the conventional tea farm, which was much easier at this point because Wu De's advice helped shift my perspective. As well, I had another

three-month internship to commit to on an eco-resort in Costa Rica immediately after Taiwan. Fortunately, this eco-resort was well beyond organic in their agriculture practice and I had the chance to work with some biodynamic seed-propagated tea plants on their farm. I stayed in touch with the members at the Hut the entire time I was there.

After a truly joyful experience in Costa Rica, I visited my family back home in Canada for perhaps only a week, who have lovingly supported me in all my strange adventures, even when they don't fully understand what I'm doing, which is more than I can ever ask for, and for that I am forever grateful. Their unconditional support has been their greatest gift of love to me. Then, enthusiastically, I headed off to what would be my last major adventure for what has now been seven years of service at Tea Sage Hut, the most challenging and thus most rewarding experience of my life. Blessed are those given the chance to serve something much greater than themselves. Tea Sage Hut, Wu De and the community have given me that chance.





WHAT IT'S LIKE TO SIT A TEN-DAY COURSE

茶人: Kristina Clark, USA

To walk through the red gates of the Tea Sage Hut is to pass through a discernible threshold. You know, the kind that Wu De reminds us of: the two trees from your childhood that are a gateway fraught with the possibility of crossing into another place and dimension. This is an entering. The very air feels different. Clearer. More still. Passing through the gate, and into the house, I am greeted with hugs and love and acceptance, and the dawning of the realization that I am in for some serious schooling. This is not a holiday. The schedule is thoroughly structured. There will be reading assignments, service periods and noble silence. There is a gift left on my bed.

I am sitting the course (it is no mistake that they refer to attending as “sitting”) with Helena from Brisbane, John from San Diego, and Will from London. I am from NYC. We have all manner of English accents covered. The alchemy of all of us together (along with the Hut residents) bubbles in mirthful laughter, and the house rings out with joy. Throughout the ten days we are further bound together by the experiences of sharing bunk beds, washing each other's laundry, witnessing each other's growth, supporting each other's struggles and life-lessons, exploring English dialects, galactivating together, sitting in silence and attempting to translate our experiences of wordless matters into words together and much more laughter.

We are guided by the love, patience, care, knowledge and planning of Shen Su, Connor and Sam, with Kristen and May serving the course. We are fortunate Wu De is present, and that he teaches a handful of our lessons. He secretly explains to us that Estonians are elven folk. The Elves arrive. Rivo and Signe join Jaanus as the new photo and video crew at the Hut. They are lovely. The house is full. There is more laughter.

As much as I find myself laughing, I also find myself weeping. I weep for the smallest poignant moments, and for the moments beyond the realm of words. Shen serves us a gongfu ceremony and I hear him slurp, very slightly. The tears run down my face as I recall

our first contact with each other and the pure generosity he has for sharing information and answering questions, no matter how small or basic. (I asked him at the beginning of my tea journey, “How do you keep from burning your mouth when a tea calls for you to use hotter water?” and he very patiently explained slurping, with no condescension or judgment.)

I weep with the Cinnabar that Connor serves, which shifts something deep inside of me, awakening my very cells to something I know there are no human words for.

I weep at Wu De's whisked tea ceremony. I weep because this time as the server, he does not partake. He serves tea to us, in a sacred ceremony that requires three hours of set-up and years of training and skill. I feel unworthy to receive this. I trust Wu De and that he must see something in me worthy of receiving this. I can see the Divine in my classmates who are worthy to receive it, so I must learn to believe I am worthy too. The next morning, I feel he was honoring the growth we are all going through during our time here, which I can see in my friends, but is so much harder to see in myself.

I weep to realize that for the first time in my life I am part of a community of love, and that I am redefining my definition of “service.” I grew up with the notion that community service was a punishment. If you misbehaved in high school, you were sent to do the community service of picking up other people's litter. Community service is also what criminals have to do when they get out of jail, or to avoid serving time in jail. There is a day I realize I have fallen in love with everyone at the Hut. I love their hearts. I love watching them grow. I love their humanity. I love the sparkle and shine in their eyes. I love their laughter. I have also fallen in love with my own life. I realize that any task that will benefit this family, this community, I will do gladly, with joy in my heart. And I am free to do so. Stuffing meditation cushions with buckwheat and dried tea leaves is a pleasure. It brings us all together and we are free to laugh some more (as we discover that a “Stanley knife” and a “box cutter” are one and

the same). Our laughter and love is sewn into those pillows, and planted with the seedlings at the farm.

Our community is a unit, and every individual is critical to its functioning, but by our very nature of being individuals. The beaded curtain to the Zendo marks another threshold, quite definitively. The beads brush your body, serving as a reminder that you are entering another space. I find I want to be helpful and hold the beads for the person behind me. This is impractical, the strands slip out of my hands, and it denies the next person their experience of passing through the threshold. We all must enter the meditation hall on our own.

I am aware that my time here will close, and I wonder how I will return home after I leave. I hope to bring with me: a more refined bowl tea practice; to begin gongfu practice; a much deeper respect for water and for prayer; a strong urge to clear out unnecessary items from my home; the building of an altar space; concepts and practices of cleanliness and that the details matter; meditation practice; and, the love of everyone here.

We are all growing here, but perhaps not in a particularly linear way. It's more of a breaking open and a falling away. I am stripped of that which is not me, finding my true self. The course, and life inside the Center, are structured in a way that invites vulnerability and transformation. There is no shame here. There is love and acceptance and patience. There is laughter, there is joy. There is care and reverence and beauty and life. There is safe space for learning and healing. And here there is Tea. My soul has come home.

To exit through the red gates is terribly painful. I feel raw and heartbroken, even with dear Helena at my side. After cultivating exquisite sensitivity for the past ten days (to the subtler qualities of Tea, to Qi and to the vibrations of love), we are thrust into a world of chaos, negotiations, hustling, commerce and day-trip tourism as we make our way to Sun Moon Lake. I feel ill, and I long for my family at the Hut and for the house itself. I realize how much this course has shifted all that I am.

The garbage truck song has become as dear to my ears as our *Kanzeon* chant.

Helena and I build an altar. We brew tea. I greet the morning with a full hour of meditation at the shores of the lake and I share my bowl of tea with a group of school children. I feel the blessings of Tea returning, calmness and connection. We reunite with John and go to Xuanzang Temple, and the moment my feet step inside the grounds and I smell the incense, I feel at ease and at home. I am learning a method that saves me when my soul feels lost: Meditate, seek out the sacred places, build an altar, make breakfast beautiful, say grace, share Tea—live in Tea, in Cha Dao...

Back in New York, I am maintaining my meditation practice in honor of what I learned at the Hut, in honor of myself, because I earned the ability to, and because it connects me to the Hut and everyone in it. For the first time in my life I can sit the entire hour. I am choosing to live in a way that pays reverence to Tea and the effort and sacrifices made so we could meet, with my love, my service, my actions, and my words. "There are a thousand ways to kneel and kiss the ground..."

While the Hut residents are anchored in Miaoli for now, the four of us, the "Bindbole Box Cutter Crew," have dispersed to the four corners of the globe. It's beautiful in a way. We have the opportunity, and the respon-

sibility, to share what we have learned and cultivated together each to our quarter, until we reunite. Please come and share a bowl with us! I hold so much gratitude for my experiences, for Wu De, Joyce, Shen, Connor, Sam, Jaanus, Rivo, Signe, Kristen, May, Helena, John and Will, and for all that conspired to bring us together for this "One Encounter" that lasted ten incredible days.



TEA AS LIFE

茶人: Sam Gibb, New Zealand

Wu De carefully lifts a cake of tea down from the shelf. I know it's something special as it was hidden away beyond the view of curious eyes, like all fine tea and teaware should be. Opening the cake's box, my suspicions about the quality are confirmed. The subtlety of the smell alone transports me somewhere deep inside. With the mischievous smile of a Zen teacher, he looks up and informs me that the guests will need a meal after they finish tea. My heart sinks... I understand what he is saying. While everyone sits around the charcoal enjoying a tea of a caliber you could spend your life searching for and never find, I would be in the room next door stirring a soup pot.

This is often the beginning of how I describe my time at the Hut. While there is a poetic ending to the tale, I think it's important to note that this sentiment is what the experience of serving at the Tea Sage Hut is: *service*. I think the Hut sometimes gets romanticized as a never-ending series of magical tea sessions and in a way it is, but those who live at the Hut often are not physically at those sessions. They are lighting the charcoal, fetching water, cooking meals, making photography, writing articles or any of the other myriad of things required to facilitate those never-ending tea sessions.

Service, though, has to be to something; something we see as better or greater than ourselves; something to put ourselves below; something to humble ourselves at the feet of. For me, there were moments when being at the Hut was the closest I have ever felt to embodying this. To feeling a sense of being deeply part of something through surrender to something beyond me. The simplest way to describe this experience would be as "home." The process of letting go of myself and dissolving into something bigger and brighter brought me home to something within me. The shedding of the personal gave rise to that which was underneath, that which was more truly me.

I guess the question people most often ask when I say I lived at a tea Center is: "Why?" What is this thing

we bow before? To me, beyond everything it was seeing people awaken, to having those moments when they feel connected in a way they have never experienced before. To me the Hut created a space where people could come home in themselves. The Hut was a place serving other people's journey to reconnect. It was what made me fall in love with the Hut in the first place, my own reconnection. Watching that process in others was my inspiration for being there.

One of the things that has always touched me about tea is its universality, the way it reaches into all aspects of what it means to be human. I always felt the little Hut in Miaoli did this too. It's sort of a balance between the lay life and monastic: not quite monks or nuns and not quite worldly people, but somewhere in between. A day could begin with an intensive meditation morning and end with an evening of popcorn and movies. With so many things in the world seemingly black and white, the Hut and life there seemed to flow in between these, teaching those living there to develop a sensitivity to what the individual moment required.

Many of us have heard Wu De talk about drawing a line around our tea practice and entering this space as the person we want to be. My time at the Hut was the beginning of the process of widening this beyond the tea table, into more and more of life. At times, I shrank away from this expansion and other times I embraced it. You start to see the difference between the individual tea sessions and living life as a continual tea session. It is easy to get attached to the individual ceremonies, especially when the tea is hidden on the top shelf at the Tea Sage Hut, but ultimately these individual tea sessions, like everything else, are experiences that arise and pass. I am not saying that a single tea session does not have the power to transform us, but more that every moment and thing has that ability. Tea sessions are like signposts along the path of Tea, in other words.

As I walked into the kitchen, my heart was heavy. I heard the music beginning as I chopped the carrots.

I imagined what it would be like to be sitting at the table, fetching water, listening to the sound of the kettle... The slow boil of the stock on the stove reminded me of the kettle and I entered back into what I was doing. I saw the guests leaving the tea table after a deep tea session and sitting at the table to a beautiful meal that in a way, continued their journey into themselves. In that instant, I saw I *was* at the tea table; I *was* part of the tea session. My mind went still, and I could taste and feel the tea moving throughout my body. My movements changed, as though I was brewing tea with my knife. In this moment, I embraced the widening of a life of tea in a way that to me embodied what the Tea Sage Hut teaches and offers to the world. In a way, we can learn to see that tea and life are not separate. The Hut provides a space to experience Tea as Life.



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THE CENTER IN OUR HEART; THE CENTER IN OUR HOME

茶人: *Jing Ren (靜仁, Jasper Hermans), the Netherlands*

I have been thinking for days about what I could put to paper that would do justice to this place in Miaoli, Taiwan that has a very special place in my heart. The Center has been my home and refuge for the past six years. I discovered it in search of a Way of Tea; I returned to it in order to find meaning in my everyday life back home and retreated to it for longer periods of service and study. This place has helped me to experience how any space can be transformed into a living environment that is conducive to self-cultivation, living harmoniously and compassionately, and how such a space should shift, change and grow in order to keep serving its residents and visitors in their attempt to live life skillfully.

The ways of the Center have been thoroughly steeped into my everyday life. Over the years I have come to appreciate the habits, rituals and ceremonies that at first felt slightly neurotic, obsessive or just not so useful. Arriving back home after a visit to the Center, I would often find myself introducing those same rituals into my daily life towards which I had felt resistance at first.

During one of my longer stays at the Center, I came to realize that all these habits and rituals share a very basic principle, but one that is very hard to live by, which is to have “zero tolerance” towards using any space or thing in any other way than what we have intended them for. “Zero-tolerance,” in this context, also means to

not do or treat anything carelessly, but to be careful and respectful towards the spaces and things we use. Here are a few very practical examples of what this may imply:

茶 The meditation room is for sitting meditation, not for lying down, sleeping, talking or other activities.

茶 Drinking glasses are to drink from, and to be put away properly into their designated place after use, not leaving them scattered around the house.

茶 The sidehandle teapot is for bowl tea ceremony, not for casual tea or any other tea. After the ceremony the teapot is cleaned properly and left to dry at its designated drying place.



我們心中的中心, 我們的家

This may sound very simple and perhaps you wonder: “Why for Tea’s sake would these rituals be helpful?” One of the most practical pieces of advice often given in Zen is to do things single-mindedly: To sit when we sit, to eat when we eat and to do the dishes when we do the dishes. We so easily start one thing before the other is finished; we worry about this when we are doing that, or we want to do something different from what we are doing right now all together. These rituals come out of a mindset that encourages doing one thing at a time. To start something consciously, to do it properly and carefully and to finish it thoroughly, in other words.

Having made an attempt to follow these principles in daily life, I have of-

ten asked myself: “Why would I *not* live by them? Why would I not put away the groceries right after coming home? Why would I not fold up the laundry and put it away when it’s dry? Why would I allow things to stack up, try to combine multiple activities into one or leave something unfinished?” Most often I realized that I cannot give a justifiable answer that makes sense in the long run. Most often it is that I’m in a hurry and try to stuff an activity in a corner where there is no place for it, that I feel aversion to doing it or that I’m just absentminded altogether.

Discipline provides space. It provides space to take breaks in between each activity we do. It prevents us from getting overwhelmed by all the tasks that are on our “to-do list,” and from

constantly running after ourselves fixing the mistakes we’ve made due to putting too many different dishes on our plate. This human life is precious, and the majority of our lives consist of performing ordinary activities that we too easily forget to appreciate. But if we don’t appreciate these everyday activities, what is there left to appreciate? And if the time is there to finally go on that holiday, drink that fine cup of tea, will we be in the right frame of mind to really appreciate them after we have created the habit of running from one thing to the next, day in day out?

Zen is the everyday mind, but Zen is not just the everyday mind. “Zero-tolerance” breaks the habit of our everyday mind’s hard-wired doing mode, which encourages stress in our lives.



茶 道



Zen encourages us to spend more time *being*. In that sense it is no tolerance towards forgetfulness, absentmindedness and carelessness. It prepares the soil of our mind for doing things consciously, carefully and respectfully. Discipline might seem hard, stiff and rigid, but it is quite the opposite! It gives us space for anything that we want to do. It grants you the possibility to thoroughly enjoy, focus and reap the fruits of the wonderful mind that says: “That’s a job well done!”

At the Center, every space, every object has a purpose. And since the purpose of the Center is to promote, cultivate and express an awakening of harmony through Tea, everything is intended to serve this higher purpose as well. To treat the spaces and objects at the Center according to their purpose wholeheartedly therefore means to promote, cultivate and express an awakening of harmony through tea in everything that you do.

The altars represent qualities of mind that serve this purpose. The chaxi at the main table is constantly changed in order to serve the guests and the occasion, which also serves this purpose. And the meals, their ingredients and the bowls that are used to eat out of are carefully selected and combined in order to serve this purpose as well. When all the activities at the Center are done with respect towards this purpose—with zero tolerance towards deviation—the people serve the Center and the Center serves the people. The host serves the space and the space serves the guest through a bowl of tea.

The Center is always meant to serve the guests who come and visit it. And because of this, it is different every time I return to it. The Center is constantly being maintained, innovated, improved and changed in order to serve the guests as best as possible. The free-flowing nature of the Center therefore perfectly allows for such

a big change as changing the Center’s location altogether. I hope that we as a community, as a group of tea lovers, can support this change and make it happen! Although I will always look back to the old Center, Tea Sage Hut, with a sense of nostalgia for the “good old days,” I believe the future Center, Light Meets Life, can be something of value to us and countless people in a way that is beyond the capacity of the current Center, and beyond what we can foresee now, or even imagine for that matter. I have faith that the new Center will serve the purpose of promoting, cultivating and expressing an awakening of harmony through tea even better than our current one! May the new Center be a refuge for countless people to be inspired, to learn and grow. May they encounter themselves endlessly through a cup of tea; may their eyes be brightened and their hearts be lightened. And may this light create our new Center as well!



As I mentioned in the beginning, all these words put to paper will not do justice to the Tea Sage Hut and the place this Center has in my heart. What will come closer though is to take action and to put the things I've learned into practice. Though I *do* hope that you all go to your computers and make a donation through the GoFundMe website (www.gofundme.com/globalteahut), if there is to be a new thriving Center that serves the tea people of the world, it also has to live in the hearts of the people that support it. Therefore, I propose that as we give, we all also bring a piece of the Center into our homes, and experience what benefits this brings into our lives. And when you notice the benefits from doing this, then the support for the new Center will truly sprout roots. Let us give knowing that we can always visit the Center to be even more inspired or so that others can benefit as well. This Center belongs to all of us!



What are pieces of the Center I propose you bring into your home? Unfortunately, it is not one of the Qing Dynasty teapots or one of the spectacular aged teas (these will all move to the new Center for you to enjoy when you come by for a visit). What I propose is that you bring into your life some of the rituals, habits and ceremonies that are an integral part of the Center and the way it is designed. If you have visited the Center before, you can sit down for a bowl of tea and contemplate what part of the Center you would like to invite into your house. For those who have not yet had a chance to visit, here are a few examples:

茶道 Create an altar that will remind and inspire you to be the version of yourself that you love to be. This can be a spiritual symbol, like a Buddha statue or Guanyin statue. But if you don't find this helpful, choose something else that inspires you, like a picture of your grandfather whom you admired for his strong qualities, for example. Put the altar in a prominent place in the house. You can light candles or place lights, create a place to light incense, and place a cup of tea on the altar. Make sure you return to it daily to take care of the altar, light some incense, keep it clean, say a prayer or remind yourself of the qualities it represents—and don't forget to refill the cup of tea! Perhaps it helps to choose a time of the day that you do this, like right after waking up in the morning, or after coming home from work. And finally, make sure it doesn't turn into an empty ritual that needs to be checked off from your "to-do list," but rather, do it wholeheartedly—really feel the qualities this altar represents with all the pores of your body.

茶道 Create a space that you will dedicate towards tea ceremony or sitting meditation. It doesn't have to be anything fancy or big; even a corner in the house that is just large enough to sit with a bowl of tea will do. Perhaps this space can be right next to the altar you've created. Spend time in silence in this space every morning and evening for at least some time. Don't do anything else in this space! Make sure that you turn off your devices and leave everything to the side. Keep this space clean from any clutter, don't even leave

your teaware sitting there, but clean it carefully after a tea ceremony. Come back into this space whenever you feel the need to, breathing consciously for a few minutes or just to relax. But make sure you remain awake in this space; don't lay down! Remain upright with a posture of dignity whenever you spend time in this space.

茶道 Share the wonderful space you have created with people. Invite a friend over for tea in silence, or practice sitting meditation together with a couple of others. Clean the space thoroughly, light some incense, place a flower or make a chaxi, and make sure you leave some time to sit in silence before the guests arrive. There is no need to talk about tea, share your knowledge or to guide the meditation. Do not charge money for this, or even talk about donations! The purpose of this is just to share the space freely. Approach it as if this space is not yours. This space is meant for silence and ceremony, and anyone who wants may come and share in this space. May others benefit from spending time in silence, ceremony and meditation just as you do.

These are just three examples of practical changes I have made in my home and rituals I have integrated into my everyday life after being at the Center. There are many more examples I could give you, but the most important thing is that you choose something that resonates with you and stick to it, apply it, get accustomed to it and see what benefits this gives in your everyday life (and post about it in the Global Tea Hut app). You don't have to be perfect (neither am I), but do your best to live by what you want to change in your life and home. Perhaps you will realize that there will always be a Center for refuge, of peace and harmony, right where you are. And that it is always possible to return to this silent space. And before you know it, you may find yourself at the new Center in Taiwan and feel familiar, welcomed, supported—*home!*





LEARNING TO CARE

茶人: Qing Yu (清愚, Colin Hudon), USA

Nostalgia refers to a wistful sentimentality for some previous time or experience, to a magic time that is gone, only to persist in one's memory and heart. As the Tea Sage Hut grows and evolves into the next incarnation, I'm unable to find a better word than "nostalgia" to describe the time I've spent here all these years; nostalgia not for some forgotten time, but rather for the qualities of deep fondness, love and joy associated with my memories here. When we grow old, our eyes wrinkled with a lifetime of laughter, our hands creased from a lifetime of hard work and handling teaware, we may not have the mobility to travel into the mountains on Global Tea Hut trips, but we will certainly have a lifetime of tea-drenched memories to warm our glowing hearts.

I've been visiting the Hut twice per year for nearly ten years and while each visit stands alone, they also represent a continuum of experience. In the same sense that my life feels sometimes like one long tea session, my biannual trips maintain a similar quality of continuity. On the plane yesterday from Tokyo, I reflected on this quality. I reflected on the way I feel every time I travel to the Hut, what I eagerly anticipate, and what it means to come here every year. I reflected on how open, spacious, and welcoming the Hut always seems, how it feels like my home away from home. I found this quality surprising because the place and environment are so removed from my prosaic reality in the mountains of Colorado. Visiting Tea Sage Hut always represents a deep exhalation, a time to reestablish my sometimes-wavering meditation practice, to get perspective on where I am in my life, to clarify issues in my growth process, to set new aims, and ultimately, to experience healing. This final quality predominates over the others—my visits here represent a place and time for healing and rest. It's interesting to note that the days are long and very full, yet I always leave feeling nourished, renewed and with a greater sense of internal spaciousness. The Hut is a place of healing and inner work amidst the humdrum activities of

life. This reminder, this air of Zen, saturates life around the Center and serves as an indispensable intimation that we must find our inner work within the normal activities of our lives. I come to the Center to renew my commitment to this work, so easily lost in our modern world. The Center, above all, embodies what the Taoist alchemist and Chinese Doctor Sun Si Miao called "yang sheng," or "nourishing life." This is a place that nourishes one's life, one's vitality, one's destiny, one's essence and the light that nourishes all life.

The truth of modern life is that we are bombarded by external influences that can insult the delicate Shen, or Spirit, in Daoist medicine. We are exposed to abhorrent levels of violence through the media and film. The endless, artificial glare of neon lights and mechanical noises in our technological age prevent connection with the natural rhythms and sounds of Nature. We often complain that there's not enough time for our relationships, for ourselves and for pursuing our interests. Because many people in the modern world experience lack of spiritual warmth and authentic connection, they are enticed by the false promise that through consumption, they will experience connection. In modern urban life, we are bombarded with advertisements that use sexuality to sell everything from alcohol, cigarettes and coffee, to electronics, potato chips and garden fertilizer. Ironically, the more we consume, the more we buy into this cheapened sexuality, the emptier we feel, and the cycle only reinforces itself. Trips to the Tea Sage Hut show us a different way of life, a way that is possible within our everyday lives away from this special place. At the Center, we learn to live simply and modestly, noticing how time expands and the days become longer, the connections deeper and more authentic, the experiences richer. Through a daily quiet tea practice and meditation, along with the values that we learn through observation of Nature, we can support and cultivate the heart-spirit, living a fuller, more meaningful existence. Trips to the Hut teach us how to live with more authentic-

ty, integrity, discipline, awareness and love. Simply put, I've learned to be a better person by coming here.

While there are far too many wonderful memories to capture in this short reflection, and some memories too difficult to put into words because they mark moments of interpersonal growth, some easily articulated memories stand out: I recall my very first visit here before it was a well-established Center. Wu De quietly took his time in assessing the travellers from the West, and a resounding stillness filled the main tea hall, meditation room and yet undeveloped spaces of the future Center. I recall my first night here and how after meditation and tea, Wu De perhaps realized my genuine interest in Cha Dao. I had just finished reading his book and was ecstatic to be here. We talked late into the night. His joy in sharing about tea was palpable, and filled the room.









Despite my exhaustion from all the travel, I was able to remain attentive based on his enthusiasm alone. His extraordinary love for tea serves as the cornerstone of this tradition and the heartbeat that carries the Center forward. I recall him recounting stories from Rikyu's life, and our shared joy in an acknowledged love of all things Tea. This visit represented the beginning of a journey that would change the trajectory of my life, and I had no way of knowing what a deep impact it would have. The beginnings of things often brim with a special shimmer as if life knows all along what is to come, and the joy of growth spills over sur-reptitiously as we move forward on our path.

Joyce's presence at the Center has always represented lightness, kindness and a steady willingness to help. I can hear her laughter in the kitchen, the driveway, the car and on the phone helping with plans to get one place or another. For some reason, one memory stands out in particular. I recall walking one day from the Center to the fruit market, five minutes away. We passed one another on the road, smiled and casually waved. I remember glancing back over my shoulder because she was walking slowly, ambling with her hands in the pockets of her baggy pants, and taking in the "scenery" as if it were all fresh and new. I noticed how at peace she seemed, how quick to smile and laugh, how uncomplaining and willing to help. It seemed like I was afforded a beautiful glance into her essential nature and felt great appreciation for her presence in that moment.

I remember meeting Shen Su for the first time and sensing his commitment to supporting the Center. There has always been a steadfast loyalty about Shen, a sense that he will do what he says, and he will show up and see things through no matter what it takes. I remember seeing the garden for the first time and the elated twinkle in his eyes at finally putting his green thumb to work. So many moments with Shen are defined by this twinkle: carving Christmas gift scoops at midnight under a headlamp, the kombucha and sprouts he oversaw at the new office, the demanding upkeep of the Koi pond, even the time he led us three hours out of the way by train on our way home from Yingge (which just

gave us all more time to talk and get to know each other). These experiences were all enjoyed in a spirit of levity, service and commitment.

I remember my first trip to Hope Market to serve tea to "passersby" and appreciate the sense of community created by the market. Upon loading the van with the "Baisao-dream-inspired" tea stall, I recall the level of meticulous planning and attention to detail that are so essential to a life of tea. Every article of teaware, every detail of the setup, had its proper place. It had all been thought through, even the way the car was packed and unloaded. Participating in the packing and unpacking, multiple times throughout the day, gave me an insight and new appreciation for the level of deliberateness and intentionality with which the Center is run. This attention to detail expresses a deeper value of tea: *Care*. Caring for our lives, our things, our relationships, our values, our precious time on this Earth; this value has been perhaps the most important teaching that I've gained from the Center. This value is one that I will work on for the remainder of my life. To see it embodied every day through the meals lovingly prepared and served, the extraordinary tea, the help with travel plans and irksome guest requests, the lessons offered, the patience of meditating and praying throughout the day, the endless service embodied by all the beautiful souls who have lived at the Center: these represent the real memories that I take from my time here...

I've learned from my time at the Center what it means to take my life seriously, to care about my words and actions, and to truly pursue a life of service. We don't often recognize what's missing in our lives until we experience what it's like to have it. Whenever I come to the Center, I feel how much people care for me, for the guests, for each other, and for their commitment to embody the teachings. While I could write tomes of special memories from the Hut, the golden thread throughout all of them is this heartfelt care, so rare in the world. This care makes the Tea Sage Hut a truly unique bastion of hope, growth and beauty in the world.





THE EARLY DAYS

茶人: Ci Ting (慈聽, Steve Kokker), USA

As I lay down to sleep on my first night of my first visit to the Tea Sage Hut, back in 2011, I lay awake reflecting upon this tea Center with this thought: “This can’t last.” Not as in “This thing will never work out.” And not even in a pseudo-somber philosophical sense as in, “Alas, the passage of All Things—nothing lasts!” I was simply acutely aware that the way the Hut appeared then—a few students coming in here and there but almost empty; Wu De and Joyce handling 100% of all duties and paying for everything personally; being able to receive unbridled, unfiltered attention and boundless access to teas and deep knowledge—would not, indeed could not last long in this form. “This is going to be much, much bigger and busier very soon,” my mind whispered as I lay down in the humid guest room, its sole occupant. “Enjoy this privilege while it lasts!”

And so it was in my first few visits to the Tea Sage Hut. I absorbed as much as I could of the atmosphere and attention as I tried at the same time to figure out what was going on and entertained visions of a very popular and very busy expanded-version future. As with all moments that I am conscious enough to recognize as precious and beautiful and not take them for granted (I wish I could tell you that this is a daily occurrence), I tried to remain fully open to the personal change the Universe seemed to be asking of me now that I had made the effort to find myself there. I tried to keep my mind as flexible as possible.

There I was in the dimly lit, hot, moist, sticky kitchen, my body still acclimating to the foreign climate—my first evening in Taiwan, at the Hut. I had been picked up at the train station by a refashioned biker fellow in the Good Old Rock ‘n’ Roll tradition: tattoos, scraggly black hair, stained white t-shirt underneath a hemp-hippie overshirt. (Jesus mixed with Black Sabbath?) But those eyes, those searing eyes that bore crow-like into the crevices of my uncertainties. And that observant kindness that shone through as well, a gentleness of spirit that was somehow as comforting as the attentiveness was unsettling.

(Alice Cooper crossed with Thich Nhat Hanh?) I didn’t know it then, but these were moments I would remember for the rest of my life.

I stood in that kitchen and I told him what I had planned to say even before arriving, inspired by one of the most famous Zen tales of all, certainly my favorite, and especially as told by Osho. I read it on the flight, several times, dedicated to living it out: “I come here with an empty cup.” Though part of me certainly pronounced this for some dramatic effect, I meant it. Over the next few days, this noble resolve would certainly be tested, as my bowl would be filled and refilled countless times...

It All Starts in New Jersey of All Places

I wound up at the unlikely spot of this back alley in Miaoli gently but insistently rushed forward by the Hands of Fate. I’m certain of this, to this day. And all because of a drab New Jersey shopping center.

The previous autumn I had made my way on a whim during a short stay in New York City to a Japanese grocery store situated in a shopping center in New Jersey, partially wondering why I would go all that way and take so much time away from an otherwise brief stay in my beloved Manhattan to get some matcha cookies I could likely find in town. Yet I had recently opened my dream teasshop, Chado, in Estonia and I was puppyishly enthusiastic, hoping to discover some cool do-dads for the shop, get decoration ideas and immerse myself in Japaneseana. I almost listened to that voice telling me that it wasn’t logical to go there...

Upon arriving, I was disappointed to see the dollar-store depressing array of kitsch Asian-style. I settled on a few chopsticks and poked around listlessly. But in this red sea of plastic crap, and in between the Hello Kitty onslaught of cute things, was this one book, wrapped in quadruple plastic: *The Way Of Tea* by Aaron Fisher. Such a beautiful cover, so classical, sublimely perfect in its simplicity. It stood out aching-

ly earnest and elegant in this context and instantly grabbed my attention, and from a space deep within, not just from the mind.

I picked it up, and looked at the back cover. The linear mind switched on again: Who was this new cat on the tea scene, this Aaron? I had been researching everything there was about tea for over a decade now, never had I heard of him! And certainly, I will not buy this one—I had after all made a solemn promise to myself not to buy more tea-related books. I had amassed a small library already and most were so uninteresting I left them barely opened, at best half finished. I will not contribute to the pile!

That it was shrink wrapped gave me an extra excuse to bolster my decision to not buy it. But there I stood, and it ate away at me, damn, this one looks different, it *feels* different! When the attendant wasn’t looking, I set to unpeeling the book from its vile sheath. She saw me anyway, or likely heard me, and came over robotically to help liberate the book. I mumbled an embarrassed thanks and opened the crisp book, feeling somehow as if this was a momentous moment. I can almost remember the sound of creaking, fresh binding bending backwards. And I read the first few paragraphs...

This felt to me like plunging into a little vortex. The words went instantly very deeply and stirred something up that had been longing to be touched for several years already. After having followed the Western approach to tea—via my already established tea importing business and many trips to visit with European and North American tea experts, tasters, sommeliers, importers—I had come to sense that there was an emptiness to that mind-dominated world where flavors reign supreme, where categorizing and analyzing were the main paths to experience. And I was never much interested in that either. I did try to remember the names of the chemical compounds that changed through the Maillard reaction to produce different flavor compounds, I did attempt to memorize studies on epigallocatechin gallate’s neuroprotective properties, but not with as much gusto as I pretended.

Something was definitely missing, and this hole I felt that I couldn't quite articulate was getting wider and wider. Reading those paragraphs there and then sent a reverberating echo through that chamber and I tried to silence the mind that was still certain that I should not buy this yet another book and walked straight to the cash register, silently muttering, "I can't hear you!"

A few months later I wrote my first long, enthusiastic letter to Wu De, wondering vaguely if he ever gave lectures or seminars around the world, and to my excitement he replied quickly, asking me to join his Tuesday morning classes—in Taiwan!

"Tai-what?" I replied in my mind.

A couple of months later and there I was standing with this super cool biker dude among Buddha statues in

an oversized and in need of attention white t-shirt in his dimly lit kitchen (no evening meals, as you know), telling him that my cup was empty. It could have been from a *Dharma Bums* outtake.

That was the very beginning. I've never looked back since. (Well... a few glances over my shoulder here and there, to be honest, but never really *fully* back.)

I Close My Eyes & Recall

My most vivid memories of the Hut are all from my first few visits. Times I got to be entirely alone in the Center while Wu and Joyce were at their English language school. "Make

yourself some tea. Practice!" I looked around Tea Paradise understanding I had fairly free reign in using precious teaware and absorbing at my pace on my own the heady atmosphere of the space. Two specific occasions come to mind, cherished as among my dearest memories ever. Both have to do with rain: Alone at the Center, I remained downstairs (so as not to frighten Fresco upstairs), in the subdued hues of Tea Paradise. Outside, it began to pour with rain, typhoon-caliber rainfall. I sat in the main hall, dizzy with living tea, candlelight reflecting from my skin, with the first door slid slightly open to better hear the almost deafeningly relentless sound of torrents of water descending from Heaven. Another sip, eyes closing. Sitting now on the carpet in front of the door.



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Even the stray mosquitoes were like companions. A deep and trippy state emerged, one in which it was possible to compare priceless Yixing pots.

Speaking of which... my life's first and in some ways most stunning (for lack of a better term) psychedelic experience occurred there in the main hall of the Hut. Not that Wu had prepared funny brownies for us, but he was in a coyote mood that eve and prepared a Five Elements of ferocious power for me and another guest. He didn't build it up in any way, just "Let's have tea," as usual. But the elements were all in sync—darkness outside, no one in the Hut aside from me and another guest, free time, a deep mood and the right medicine. These are also memories that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

I've written about this experience in these pages before, so I know everyone will remember all the details and wouldn't want to get repetitive at my advanced age. In any case, as we know, content is not very important—that there *was* content is. Suffice it to say that the journey involved vivid, ultra-clear visions of me as a wolf racing through a dark forest being chased by an immense dark force. This was so unexpected to me, even somewhat distressing, I found myself walking around the room, back and forth to the door, flirting with the idea of escaping from this place where the biker had clearly spiked my drink.

Afterglow

These visits in what shall be known as "the early years" shifted my life irrevocably and in a very positive manner. It was the summation of years of searching for some bond to the tea world that was completely other than what I had known (this feeling of finding what one has not known they were looking for is close to my definition of bliss!).

For me, my time at the Hut managed to fuse two threads I had ignorantly kept apart for decades—my attraction and pull towards herbs and medicines, and my childhood attraction towards Great Mystery in the form of religion, the occult and communion with Nature. I was wandering around as if inside a pinball machine

(or so it seemed—of course ultimately mine was the right trajectory for the time) until Wu De flipped the correct lever and landed a bullseye.

Dizzily lucky is how I saw myself. I knew that in my future visits there would be many more people there and that Wu himself would be consequently much busier. Those would surely have their blissful moments (and oh, luckily there were many blessed ones) but these moments in which I could wander the halls and have the time and space needed to absorb the details (of decoration, objects, organization, atmosphere, attention, aromas and essence of the Hut and all it represented) likely sank deeper than later visits where my socially-minded brain divided its attention.

It is a thing of great beauty to me to see how the Hut has flourished from its initial wild seed sprinklings, how it has, as Alan Watts might have said, "peopled," meaning organically grown a community. The heart and soul poured out there in heavy doses is immeasurable, and the tireless dedication with which Wu De shares his knowledge and passion is of the same caliber as when I first arrived, only balanced with rest and retreat too.

While nothing ever, ever lasts, it is sad to see when great things fade away; in this case they have but blossomed into even greater things and for many others...



茶 The lineage tree in the main hall of the Center has something precious hanging on it, given by each and every one who has been initiated in our tradition. It is a powerful symbol of the Tea Sage Hut. We will have to plant its roots in a new home soon!

我們會永遠銘記的日子
記憶鎖在心裡
最純淨的寶藏



FINDING A WAY

✪ ✪: Connor Goss, Australia

As I sit here with a bowl of tea, reflecting on the countless memories of my times at the Center, there is a feeling of nostalgia at how things were and how they have changed over time, flowing and changing constantly into a form that better serves tea and offers people from around the world the opportunity to have a deep ladleful of tea—beginning their own tea practice and touching the heart of what it means to be human. For me, the Center has always been the physical embodiment of the intimacy of human life. Something that all of us seek in our lives, to touch and experience as a living truth. I am sure there are many dear Chajin from around the world who share and echo what I have written. Perhaps each of our voices will join together, as a louder and more united chorus that will flow out through the rivers of time and space, touching the hearts of the future generations of Chajin whom I deeply hope have the opportunity to experience this living truth, to share a bowl of tea at the greatest tea center in the world!

I am ceaselessly amazed how deeply something can become a fundamental part of one's life, without any real conscious movement to integrating it. That is what the Center feels like to me. I have been there many times over the years, during many different stages in its evolution, and each time it has become a greater part of my life.

I fondly remember the first time I visited the Center. It was a decision that to this day feels effortless, and what a profoundly life-changing decision it has been! I had made the journey to Taiwan and the Center shortly after finding out about Global Tea Hut through Google of all places! It is not a particularly exciting tale to tell as one probably expects to hear about some mysterious realization or fantastical tale of how I found the Center but in reality, it is rather mundane, and I would have it no other way. As soon as I received my first Global Tea Hut envelope filled with so much love and each page, each little detail steeped in tea, I knew I had to make the journey

to Taiwan. I really had no idea what awaited me. And really there was no way to know the depths of what I would experience there and how much a single place can change someone.

I remember waiting at the entrance for someone to answer the door, filled with varying degrees of excitement and nervousness. One of the students at the time greeted me at the door and from that moment it felt like home. It turned out that the day that I had arrived they were having a movie night, celebrating someone's birthday, and sitting together with everyone, I realized that this was one of the first moments in my life where I genuinely and deeply felt a connection to a group of people. It was one of the first times I felt a deeper connection to others. It felt like I had arrived home after a long journey and despite knowing everyone for only a few hours, they all were family to me. And the popcorn was incredible! Since that first evening I have lost count of the amount of times I have felt like that there. My gratitude for that feeling of connection grows every time I visit the Center. It was a pivotal moment in my life that has shaped and quietly guided much of my life since. Growing up in a society and world where that connection and feeling of belonging is rare and difficult to find only deepens the joy I experience in finding it so effortlessly.

There are countless memories of my time at the Center that are steeped in nostalgia. If I sat down long enough, I could easily fill an entire book with those memories. It was the first place that I learned the importance of having a Way in this life and how beneficial it is to share and practice alongside other people in a community. I remembered what it means to truly honor and celebrate each moment. The little moments of each day from sharing food in quiet joy with others to chanting after evening meditation or celebrating more special occasions from birthdays to my first Christmas there will always be truly fond memories for me. In reflecting on each memory of the Center, each experience that rests dearly in my heart, the essence found

throughout is connection. Whether that be connection to my own self, to everyone else there, or to the sacred. I have experienced profound and often-times ineffable joy through the space that deeper connection offers us. It is something that we all seek in our lives, finding it in so many different ways and at different way markers on the journey of life, but when we do experience the connection that bubbles forth from a shared love of tea or whatever the catalyst may be, then we cherish it greatly and wish to share it with those around us.

Many of my dearest memories of the Center are the countless tea sessions that I have experienced. That really goes without saying, as an unspoken truth throughout the times that I have been there. Perhaps the most profound and life-changing tea ceremony was the first time Wu De served tea on my first stay. There has been a penetrating depth to every time that I have sat for tea at the Center, but that first tea session with Wu De touched my soul in ways that words cannot express. If I had any doubts that a life of tea was for me or any doubts about the Center, all of that was purified and washed away during the many, many bowls of Five Element tea. It was during that tea session that I really met Tea and began to cultivate a relationship that would change my life immeasurably. Sitting around the main tea table with Wu De, Shen Su and a bunch of Russians, I had never felt such a deep sense of connection and familiarity that did not require words. I will always carry the experiential realization that tea transcends the human boundaries of culture, religion or language with me, as it did not matter that I had not the slightest grasp on Russian; all that was needed was Tea.

One of the constant threads that flows throughout my experiences at the Center is the wondrous joy that can be found in service. I had always felt a desire to serve others. But it was not until I first visited Taiwan that I realized one of the primary ways that I could serve others. Back when I first stayed at the Center there were no ten-

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day courses being offered as there are now. It was a different time altogether, where guests could stay longer than ten days or sometimes only a night or two. I ended up staying the first time for an entire month. During that stay, I was endlessly amazed at how much energy went into the smallest details—things that often went completely unnoticed. It was not until a few years later, when I came to live and serve at the Center, where I really realized the true depths of what went into each moment there, especially when it came to the food. As a guest the first time I was there I knew somewhat the amount of love that went into each meal, but this did not really become fully realized until I had the opportunity to cook for everyone. To this day, I cannot express how much joy it brought me to cook for everyone or the immense gratitude

for having the honor to cook and serve others. It has touched me profoundly. I hope everyone has the opportunity one day to experience the food there. And of course, share many bowls of tea together!

There will always be a part of the Center residing within me that I will carry with me wherever I journey, wherever I find myself in this life, and I cherish that living essence tremendously. As no matter how long I am away from the Center it continues to burn brightly, reminding me of all the joy, beauty, connection and love that flows through me in remembering that place. It is not something that I can really express properly through words, as it is an incredibly personal and intimate experience, but one that I hope every Chajin has the honor to experience. And in carrying a piece of the

Center with me always, it sustains me and those that I serve. Also, a part of me resides there always.

Reflecting on these memories that are vividly alive, I am offered the space to understand the vastness and depths of the gratitude I have for finding the Center and all that it contains, heralding a simpler time that is steeped richly in nostalgia and shining towards what can be brought into existence if we work together tirelessly in the service of Tea. It is that which weaves together all of my memories into a living being that reminds me that the greatest things are done in the service of others. It inspires me greatly in each moment and has given me a way of navigating this life.





Joyce

MEANT TO BE

茶人: Resham Daswani, Hong Kong

I often get asked the question “So, how did you discover tea?” Although the question is seemingly general, my reply is usually a long pause, a few lines of context about the Center and the mention of the words “dharma” or “duty.” Truth be told, this was an inherent path chosen before I even knew it to be mine...

The story of how I found the Tea Sage Hut really does start from the very beginning. In reflection, I can see that my journey has been a type of “join the dots” puzzle and the greater picture is becoming increasingly clear. These days, I find no separation between myself, how I live and this lineage of Tea. Although I fall short every day, I fully trust that all my daily ways align with the Way and feel Her compassion and grace as a guiding light.

I can only summarize my journey to the Hut (the full version would be pages long), but there are moments I can now recognize as transformative shifts or the new loop of a new spiral. To start right at the beginning, I was born in Hong Kong, into a traditional Hindu family where ceremony, ritual and mapping the moon was just another Wednesday, or walking around a sacred basil plant 108 times was a Friday. Day-to-day life has always been saturated with deities, *pujas*, celebrations and reverence for the Divine.

I grew up in the center of concrete-jungle life in Hong Kong, a city where “yum cha” (Chinese brunch involving tea and dim sum) may as well be everyone’s middle name. Tea has always played a huge part in Hong Kong historically and now more so in a social context. Likewise in India, Tea (in my opinion) is what makes the entire country operate. I could almost guarantee that nearly one billion people would fall to chaos without tea being part of a permanent daily schedule! No one would show up to anything, or at least not in a formidable state of mind, without drinking tea in the morning and a friendly visit from the local *chaiwalla* in the afternoon. So, since my youngest days, tea has always had a very strong presence from both my Chinese and Indian relations.

As I got older, to say I fell in love with science would be an understatement.

I wanted to study everything—from the structure and workings of the cosmos, to the intricate details of transportation in plants, and the communication between corals. It was the most heart-opening feeling I had ever felt. Getting lost reading about black holes or watching Nature documentaries was how I wanted to spend every minute of every day. Soon after, I developed a keen interest in hiking, and I felt the same feeling of peace and vastness amongst the trails in Hong Kong. I would feel so connected in those moments that I began trying to capture them. I started sketching out every landscape or tree, tracing the wild way the banyan roots would spread over rocks and trying to mimic onto paper the way the winds would feel against my face at the top of a mountain. At the time I couldn’t explain it, but now I realize how much I was seeking to learn the language of Nature, which I felt my spirit identify and come alive with truth, and my only tools to do so were versions of painting and poetry.

About 1,500 drawings of trees later, my pursuit of fine arts was well on its way. At the same time high school was coming to an end and I was faced with a decision between attending medical school or art school. To me the two were intertwined, the space to think in non-linear and creative ways provided the inspiration to conceptualize new ideas and solutions towards innovations in science—one field only served the other, however there was no da Vinci-like degree for that.

Years later, life had moved on (or off on a tangent), and although I was pursuing an artistic career in fashion, it was light years away from what my heart was seeking. I had silenced my own wisdom and told myself I was “climbing the corporate ladder like everyone does.” I stayed in an unhealthy head-space of growing angst and denial for a long time, and every so often when I would let my guard down, I could feel every cell of my being asking me to return to the truth of who I really was and do better. The dance of superficiality against what I knew was real caused much dis-ease.

One day, I subtly began making more space in my life for things I re-

membered mattered most. I think it might have been as simple as a walk on a trail. Yet as soon as I consciously decided to remember my own true nature, to awaken into that heart-expansion feeling again, it was as if someone waved a magic wand. I immediately started noticing that the manifestation of all the threads dearest to my heart were weaving together, and somehow this rapidly snowballed. One thing led to another, and another and so on and so forth, until everything that my soul ever recognized as truth was neatly pointing to a Tea Center in Taiwan. I had never heard of Global Tea Hut before, and in rather blasé state of mind, I had a brief look at the website and bookmarked it as something I would look at later—knowing the odds of doing so were rather minuscule. However, this was the moment of cyber connection when my life began getting extremely interesting; it was as if a portal had opened and the Universe began conspiring in a way I cannot explain.

For the next six weeks, every which way I turned, whoever I was in contact with—colleagues, neighbors, friends, passersby on the street—were in no mistaken way whatsoever, directing me to go to Taiwan, and in every way I could, I pretended like I wasn’t paying attention despite the voice inside asking me to simply be open and at least consider the signs. At the time, I was just weeks away from launching my own womenswear line, which I had worked on for the last fifteen months. However, it eventually came to a point where the message was so blatantly in my face (literally), I couldn’t look away. I found the website again, applied to visit without reading anything much at all and just trusted it would all make sense. I went back and forth trying to understand why after all this time of feeling isolated, I was finally beginning to allow myself to lower the walls I had built against my own heart and experience a state of harmony and connection.

The Universe was suddenly speaking to me again, and what was bewildering was how the storyboard featured all the most important and influential people who fueled my greatest passions.

It was all in the most perfect alignment towards one particular direction. In a way I couldn't believe how life was anything but random when you step into your authentic way of being. I booked my ticket, told next to no one as I could barely explain it, and left.

On the plane over to Taiwan, I felt it. It was a feeling I had once known so incredibly well when I was younger, and during those magic hour moments of feeling completely nestled in the rhythms of Nature. Only this time, the feeling wasn't outside of me; it was slowly and gently wrapping its arms around me, becoming me. As soon as I got out of the taxi,

ment and I began to find peace and a long-awaited comfort in that. The sacred directions of the heart always lead the way, even when my head thought otherwise; Sacred had placed me in this room, with these new brothers and sisters at that very moment in time.

That was four years ago. I returned to Hong Kong transformed, and every decision since has been with the support of Tea gracing my life. I am dedicated to sharing the awakening of harmony through the Leaf in a city where most have perhaps forgotten Her purpose as medicine and healing. Ceremony is very much needed in this big city, as it is wherever people are too busy.

“A bigger Center awaits, in the aligned timing of all things, it is clear we have now outgrown the current space. Each of us will always cherish the countless life-changing moments we experienced but this is change for the highest good. The world is accelerating at such a pace where it is clear such shifts and sanctuaries are needed to support.”

I saw Wu De and Tian Wu and since that moment life has never been the same. Tian Wu, who was ultimately the final piece of my orchestrated discovery of Global Tea Hut, served me my very first tea ceremony.

In a way, I feel there is no need to share more than this; words are surface-level at most. The best I can do is say that in the days and weeks I spent at the Hut, every day was a shift of great magnitude. I was in full surrender from the inside out. It was like I blinked and everything that no longer served me was gone. Instead, there was an instant recognition of something I knew so well, a rebirth into the womb of awareness and the encounter of Divine intelligence on a deeper level than I had ever experienced before.

I clearly remember during one of the evening meditations, I traced through a vast map that seemed to light the way home. A compass of sorts to the Source, and as I followed, every nucleus of every cell in my body felt transformed. It was like a battery being charged, yet I understood it was my inner self realigning to the ways of the Earth. All the dots connected, right from the beginning. Everything was happening in a timely, perfect arrange-

ment. Over these years, tea has been shared in Hong Kong through community offerings, wellness festivals, women's gatherings, corporates and now will take a seat in a more prominent way at a permanent space that highlights the stories of the farmers and honors a commitment to clean tea as a central role. We have the sweetest budding Global Tea Hut Hong Kong group and it only continues to grow.

This community, lineage and Way of showing up and emptying has shifted everyday life into more miracles than I could have ever imagined. I am grateful every day for Wu De and the blessings of the many teachers who came before. I bow to all, seen and unseen, who support the journey and pray that we continue following this “dharma” or “duty,” for the good of as many as possible.

A bigger Center awaits, in the aligned timing of all things, it is clear we have now outgrown the current space. Each of us will always cherish the countless life-changing moments we experienced but this is change for the highest good. The world is accelerating at such a pace where it is clear such shifts and sanctuaries are needed to support. Wu De often says we are

not building our Center, but *your* Center and this could not be truer. We are all building this Center together, and it will outlive us all. What an honor to be its forebears!

It is undeniably clear that this community is supported by something greater than us all, a wisdom of the sages and our ancestors looking down upon us, but it also requires responsibility of action. This practice will transform our world, bowl by bowl, bringing peace into lives in an age where we are so easily connected yet disconnected at the same time. She teaches us a better way, and reminds us of the divinity we deny ourselves when we think we are not worthy enough. She holds our hand and shows us the path of beauty one could only dream of.

I am in full conscious surrender—all efforts are dedicated towards building Light Meets Life, a school that is filled with Zen, tea, incredible food and Nature, and teachings of the Dao. I am immensely grateful to be in Hong Kong, to have opportunities to share and educate in my own humble way, and partake in a ripple effect. I know it will happen, as much as we may miss sleeping on bunk beds with three other people who will become life-long friends, we are making space for a bigger family. Our global tea community already has so many beautiful faces, and everyone who steps in feels like familiar kin from another lifetime.

We all want our new Center to be Heaven on Earth, and why wouldn't it be? If we truly believe that Tea has brought more into our lives and we orient to this vision with dedication, reverence and our highest efforts and perhaps ask Guanyin for help, this new Center can be realized easily. This is an opportunity for us to come forth and give back to all the countless ways Tea and this Center have selflessly given to us over all these over the years. We can together create our vision for a conscious-connected world, and one day, when we are at the new space, we can smile at knowing how it couldn't possibly be any better than this...





W. D.



A CALL TO ACTION

Help us make Light Meets Life a reality!

Our Goals:

茶 Establish a non-profit organization in Taiwan for the preservation and education of tea and tea culture.

茶 Purchase property in the name of this organization to serve as a free, donation-based tea center offering a variety of tea courses throughout the year. (The property we choose will depend on the results of this fundraiser!)

茶 Renovate and adapt the space to suit our needs.

茶 Design new courses, involving more teachers to provide a richer experience for guests, including Taichi/Qigong, Traditional Chinese Medicine, flower arranging, incense ceremony, and more in-depth tea studies.

茶 Create a schedule and begin offering courses in 2020.

茶 Eventually, we hope to build sister Centers all over the world.

www.lightmeetslife.org

愛正在改變世界一碗接一碗

呼吸改變世界的行動

茶道

Types of Courses We'll Offer:

茶 *Ten-Day Intro to Cha Dao*

An introductory course with meditation instructions, daily meditation morning and evening, an experience of different types of tea ceremonies, flower arranging, incense ceremony, daily Taichi/Qigong and time to retreat, heal and transform. This is an opportunity to begin or deepen a tea practice.

茶 *Deeper Zen & Tea Retreats*

A silent, intensive meditation retreat with long periods of seated and walking meditation followed by tea ceremonies. This would be a chance to explore yourself in a profound and supportive space.

茶 *Tea Brewing Workshops*

These would be intensive workshops on all the skills needed to improve your tea brewing. We would learn about water for tea, fire and arranging charcoal, different brewing methods and all the skills you need to start serving bowl tea and gongfu tea. These courses may also be specifically devoted to either bowl tea or gongfu tea.

茶 *Educational Workshops*

These would be shorter courses devoted to specific aspects of tea or tea culture and may involve experts in tea and tea culture lecturing on the genres of tea, certain tea-making methods, teaware production and any other types of classroom learning surrounding tea history, production, science and lore.

茶 *Environmental Seminars*

We will host seminars involving organic farmers, biodynamic experts and others who are interested to explore the need for sustainability in tea production and how all tea lovers can help improve the environment and humanity's relationship to Nature. We hope to fly in farmers from around Asia to host panels discussing all aspects of sustainable tea production.

茶 *Tea Gatherings*

We very much want to involve the local, Taiwanese tea community in our Center, so we will offer several tea gatherings throughout the year, offering a space where tea lovers and guests in Taiwan and from abroad can come for the day and combine tea and music or perhaps drink rare teas together.

We have many more options, spaces and locations to check out as we make this transition together as a community. We are confident that we will land where the wind picks up the leaf, tremulously lifting her from her branch and carrying her to the right bowl, the way the water gently lifts the essence of the leaf is so softly transformed by its touch.

The botanical gardens space is the Tea Center of our collective dreams, and the opportunity for its reality depends on all of us. The simple guest house is our current backup plan. No matter what happens, we will make the best of our new Center and create a beautiful home and tea temple for all of you.

Life Meets Life can be a reality we will all see in our lifetimes, in the most splendid architecture and enchanting location. With your donations, it is no longer our future Tea Center, but our right now Tea Center. Your Tea Center.

There is already a hearth waiting in the main hall. Let's light the charcoal and hang our kettle there. Raise a bowl, say a prayer and give what you can towards changing the world bowl by bowl.

www.gofundme.com/globalteahut

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 Christen DeLaney.

I had several rewrites of this article, as I assume most people did before handing it in. It's a daunting task to try to encapsulate all that Tea has taught me into something digestible. Because of our global community, it feels like the influence of this practice is everywhere—that everyone knows about it. However, as Tea starts to make its way into mainstream culture, I've been getting asked a lot more how I found Tea, but it truly wasn't like that. Tea found me: In the desert of Joshua Tree, in 2014, during the second annual Spiritweavers Gathering. I had moved to California only a few months prior and having never heard of this practice, my world was immediately blown open by the overwhelming softness and love that the Leaf brings to the bowl. I left that weekend open and inspired, but not fully understanding what I had encountered or the significance it would hold in my life. Tea had taken root in my life, and since then my devotion to what She has to offer myself and the community only grows with each sit.

An aspect of the sit that I so deeply cherish now, but was very hard for me in the beginning, was the honesty that is opened up within you after a sit, allowing you to share from your depths with your tea brothers and sisters. You can feel it in your heart and in your soul, but then sharing that with others whom you may not know was foreign to me. That type of defenseless open-hearted communication is so rare. It's not something afforded to us in our day-to-day interactions. It wasn't a strong suit for me, and stretched me far beyond my comfort zone with every sit. However, over the past five years of sitting with Tea in ceremony each day, She has taken my formerly hardened exterior and dissolved it bowl by bowl. I am fundamentally softer, more compassionate and disciplined.

An aspect that can make Tea hard to write about is that it permeates every pore of your life. I started viewing the house that I lived in differently. I wanted the clutter gone. I started opening things up for a better flow, allowing meditation to come more easily. I made sure my dedicated space for Her was tended to and constantly in view in order to make my morning meditations seamless. Instead of allowing my sacred items to lay around on display as decor, I learned about altars and how to properly tend to them, allowing that practice to become part of my morning ritual. You find yourself rising earlier to catch the morning silence so you can hear Her better. Clearly Tea at any time in the day is a fantastic idea, but for me personally, there is something magic about pre-dawn and sitting with Her while the sun comes up: The world is quiet, and She is able to create a hum in your body. Sitting with Her each day ingrains that hum into your bones, and maybe for the first time ever, your body, mind and soul experience a deep silence and peace that is nearly lost today.



 **Christen DeLaney, USA**

In September, I will become a mother of another little girl, (both of whom have been steeped in so much tea starting in utero). Tea, ritual and ceremony were the first things I craved after giving birth. Clearly your world changes for the better with these little humans, but my practice was something I had to make a huge effort to get back. I noticed when I'd get set up and sit down with my newborn daughter her little body would settle into that same peaceful hum so effortlessly and off to sleep she would go. She had been waiting to feel it in my body again so she could feel it in her own.

Now she is a bit older, funny and noisy. Long gone are the days where she'd sleep in my lap during tea. Yet, Tea is the one thing I can point to and say that it made me a better parent, especially as times are more challenging and patience has become paramount. Spending at least an hour with the Leaf in the morning before everyone gets up allows me to settle my energy into a calm vibration for the day. It starts from the first step out of bed: I get ready quietly in the dark with the lights dimmed low. I light my altars while the water boils and arrange my tea table. As a mom, I have found that some tea and meditation are far superior to no tea or meditation. So, I keep the set up simple. It allows me to keep coming back each morning with very little effort, which at this stage in life I need.

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Tetsubins

茶道

茶主题: Classics of Tea

茶主题: Chajin & Teahouses

茶主题: Annual Trip



We need your help to get to a place where we can build your permanent Center, Light Meets Life. (And we do hope that you feel that our Center is yours, not ours.) If everyone in this community donates, we can together buy the most gorgeous Tea Center ever. Obviously, not all of us have a lot of money to give, but we can all do our part. Each of us is also connected to a larger community of people who can share in the building of this project. As a global community, we can do this for us and for future tea lovers!



Please spread the word about the fundraiser. We will be giving away lots of amazing tea and teaware to Global Tea Hut members who are most active in helping us build Light Meets Life.



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!



Have you listened to our podcast on Soundcloud yet? We have some amazing interviews there. The aim of that forum is to discuss Tea as an aspect of spiritual cultivation. These podcasts are great for a morning session or even a long drive.



Your donations will cover: first, fees related to starting a non-profit organization in Taiwan; second, GoFundMe processing fees; third, finding a location within the budget of what we fundraise that is suitable for Light Meets Life; fourth, remodeling and crafting this space into a Tea Center, including any construction we need to do. We will document this whole process as we go, publicizing the expenditure in a section of every issue and on our social media platforms as well, so everything is transparent.

Center News



It is Light Meets Life time!!! We have launched a giant, worldwide fundraiser to make the move this very year. This will be our permanent Center, offering tea courses for the rest of our lives and beyond, serving future generations of tea lovers. Visit www.lightmeetslife.org now!



Before you visit, check out the Center's website (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.



The Center will be closed indefinitely after June for obvious reasons. There will be no courses for the second half of 2019, though if all goes according to plan, we hope to restart in 2020 with an even better and more varied schedule than ever before.



We are all human here. Say prayers for us. This is stressful, busy, scary, sad and exciting in waves. Our meditation and tea practice keep us rooted, but we could use your good wishes!

June Affirmation

I dream big

Do I sell myself short with negative, limiting story lines? Why limit our dreams? Dreams are infinite; dreams are as vast as the imagination. I dream big and take even bigger leaps towards fulfilling my destiny, for the good of all beings.



www.globalteahut.org

*The most centered tea magazine in the world!
Sharing rare organic teas, a magazine full of tea his-
tory, lore, translations, processing techniques and
heritage, as well as the spiritual aspects of Cha Dao.
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lovers from around the world.*

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