

Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these magazines in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and Tea are becoming, as the Tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of the Tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month we would like to introduce the talented Solala Towler:

I never drank tea or coffee when I was young, but in the early 70's, while living in a meditation hut on a quiet street in Berkeley, my friend Spike introduced me to the delights of coffee. I became a dedicated coffee drinker after that. Then, in the late 70's, after a bout with infectious hepatitis, I switched to red tea. Around twenty-five years ago, when I was exploring Daoist thought, Qigong and Traditional Chinese Medicine, I switched to green tea and truly began my tea journey.

Each morning, I begin the day with several pots of Dragon Well (*Long Jing*) green tea. I find it provides a gentle lift rather than a big jolt like coffee or strong red tea. I still like a good cup of Indian chai in the afternoon, though. I had one of the best cups of tea in my life (along with the best slice of apple pie I ever had) at a hotel in Lhasa, Tibet, run by folks from Nepal. I sat in the courtyard of the traditional-style hotel at 3,600 meter on a sunny day, just happy to be alive and in Tibet, a life-long dream. The tea journey is like this: different cups of tea suit different places and times, and often seem to capture and enhance the moment in such a special way.

These days, I often brew gongfu tea for many people, including some friends who've never seen a gongfu tea ceremony and wonder why I am pouring out the first steeping when I just told them that we're drinking a high quality tea! I find that when I teach Qigong seminars, having a tea ceremony in the middle is a great way to help people arrive in the present moment and share some nice plant/water/fire energies in the middle of the weekend. I have also started having full moon gongfu tea ceremonies for around fifteen people.

A few years ago, I got to write a book called *Cha Dao: The Way of Tea, Tea as a Way of Life* published by a company called Singing Dragon. It is really a primer on Daoism and Zen, using the metaphor of Tea Mind to explore those philosophies. It was a very fun project to do, fueled by numberless cups of fine tea!

I have been publishing the Daoist journal *The Empty Vessel* for twenty-one years and lead annual tours to the sacred Daoist mountains of China to drink tea, practice Qigong and meditation.



I am so happy to connect with this wonderful family of tea through this magazine and plan on coming to visit Tea Sage Hut after my next trip to China. I am also very happy to connect with my new tea brother, Wu De. I feel such a kinship with him through his books and this magazine. I am grateful that such a wonderful thing exists and look forward to sharing these teas with so many tea brothers and sisters all over the world!

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or at my website: www.abodetao.com.