

Letter from the Editor

In December, we start to feel winter setting in. At the center, we start to add weekly trips to the hot springs to the schedule. The natural heat is soothing and the water is mineral-rich, penetrating into the body and soul deeply and filling the week with a warm glow. In ancient times, hermits and Daoist mendicants alike used hot springs in the winter to extend their life force, conserving their natural heat and warming the body from the inside. You're welcome to come to the center and join us on a trip to the hot springs with some nice tea in a thermos to drink while there!

We know our winter here in Taiwan is mild compared to where many of you live, but it is still chilly, especially without central heating! As the cold sets in, we move towards darker teas, boiled teas, aged puerh or Liu Bao. We love to make a blend of red tea and shou puerh in the mornings. Try mixing some shou with just a tad of Dian Hong or even "Elevation" and you will find the mixture delicious and rewarding on a cold December day!

There are so many gatherings, meetings and organic fellowships developing through this community. As you'll read about soon, we held a retreat in Spain last October and fourteen people attended from ten countries, a very significant testament to all the tea family we've made around the world. Several of the people I met on this recent trip to Spain and France have been members of this community for a long time. Like others, I felt an immediate kinship, as if we'd always known one another—perhaps living only blocks away and sharing tea weekly. Such meetings always feel more like reunions to me.

In this issue you can read about some of my travels in Spain and France, as we hope to include you in our trips and help inspire similar gatherings where you live, with or without any of us. In making these articles about our personal tea journeys and our work to share this plant medicine around the world, we also help make you a part of that work, as loving witnesses! I set a bowl out for you all at our three-day retreat!

We love the holiday season around here. We cherish the significance of being with the people we love, giving gifts as tokens of affection and taking the time to honor the year's relationships. We do the holidays right at the center! There are always a lot of guests, great food and tons of gifts. We like to take the time to open them one-by-one for hours and say thanks to each gift-giver, making eye contact. Maybe this helps make the practice of gift-giving feel less materialistic. Anyway, these are some of our holiday traditions. And we want you to know that you are here with us in spirit. We will be thinking of all of you with gratitude and warm hearts this holiday season!



December is a month for family gatherings. Let this month's magazine be another such gathering. If you aren't accustomed to drinking these teas in the spirit of fellowship, please make an effort to do so this month. As you drink the tea, think of all your tea brothers and sisters here at the center and all around the world drinking this warming brew. As the warmth spreads from your chest, feel the same warmth spreading with these envelopes around the world.

Maybe you have some relatives visiting this month, or you are going to visit them. What a great time to serve some tea to the ones you love, and what better than this tea—donated lovingly, then sent with love and devotion to you and your family, so that they may also be warm on what is for most of you a cold day!

Let us use this holiday season as an important reminder of what is truly real: *our beloved sits near us*. Tomorrow we say goodbye, but today here we are together. What a miracle! Let us say what needs to be said. Let us treasure these moments together, sharing a warm tea that fills our hearts with warmth so that we may look once more deeply in each other's eyes and say, "I love you!"

We love you all! You are the greatest of our gifts this year! We honor each and every one of you. In America, there is a tradition of sending extended family a photo for the holidays. Since you are our family, we do that with all the warm-hearted cheer we can muster. Wishing you all a glorious celebration these holidays! Tea and cheer, spread bowl by bowl...