

# STORING PUERH TEA AT HOME

Normally, most tea drinkers buy tea when their stash at home is finished, and it's no different for beginners who have started to enjoy puerh tea. They may buy different kinds in small quantities to try different brands and varieties, but they don't drink that much tea so a small amount of each kind is reasonable for them. Eventually, some of these tea drinkers will fall in love with the elegance, rich depth and tremendous variety of experience that puerh has to offer. They will become "aficionados" and begin to drink puerh every day. In fact, once hooked, the passion for tea rarely lets go. Many will drink tea for the rest of their lives. The change from interest to obsession is usually rather evident, as the collection grows and shelves go up, are filled, and so on—until a room or two is needed, and there's puerh coming out of the cracks in the walls.

## *Why We Collect Puerh*

One of the first realizations that a person comes to when they start dabbling in puerh tea is that the tea pro-

duced from a specific year, having its own special flavor, will not be available forever. Productions are limited, and the harvest changes every year, even if the same factory gets its raw material from the same place. Any given puerh tea, once out of stock, can never be replaced. And even if the same tea is still available, the price will be substantially higher as years pass; and sometimes the price will rise to a point that is higher than the collector's evaluation and appreciation of it, which only leaves him or her feeling frustrated. Therefore, most puerh tea lovers choose to store their own puerh tea at home, in order to secure their future stock.

Soon enough the puerh tea connoisseur has stacks and stacks of tea, and continues to buy large quantities of tea. The cakes eventually begin to occupy a lot of space, until they have to delegate a place for "tea storage." Similar to an oenophile setting up their own wine cellar, collectors set up puerh tea cellars. After some years of storage, the collector will quickly understand the many benefits that his or her "tea cellar" offers. For example, while others are complaining about the inflated prices of certain vintages, he

or she has more than enough for daily consumption and often even enough to share with friends. The teas that one loved when they were young are much richer, subtler and more enjoyable when they are aged. Personally, I am proud of my collection. I bought many older vintages long ago when they were cheaper and can now enjoy them on a regular basis; meanwhile, most collectors are struggling just to afford a single cake. Also, as these teas appreciate in value, they represent a financial asset that can be sold, if the need arises.

When an enthusiast reaches the point where he or she decides to set aside a space for the storage of puerh tea, the first critical question is, "How to properly store puerh tea at home?" Some experts believe that puerh tea is easy to store and that there is no skill involved: you just put stacks on a shelf, and voila! Others say that puerh tea needs proper ventilation and exposure to humidity. Actually, inappropriate storage methods or an unsuitable environment will have disastrous effects on puerh tea, leading to deterioration rather than excellence. It would be a pity to discover several years later that one's tea is undrinkable. Furthermore,

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poorly stored puerh tea is not only a waste of money; it’s a waste of time. One can always earn the money lost, but there is no getting back the mis-spent or squandered vintage in the tea. Sadly, one would then have to pay the market price for the well-stored puerh tea—the same tea they themselves bought ten years ago and wasted. Standing in the store amazed at the drastic increase in price over just ten years, the vision becomes even more distraught. Every one of us would like to be spared from such a fate. But even when the collector realizes that tea shouldn’t just be tossed onto shelves, all kinds of important questions arise concerning what exactly is “proper” storage. Humidity is needed, but how much? Exposure to oxygen, which means proper ventilation, but how much and what’s the best way to achieve this? Many experts have different answers to these questions. Sometimes certain aspects of storage are relative to the taste of the collector. I hope that my experience storing puerh tea at home will help those who are just beginning to create their own storage environment. I will divide the discussion into two parts. This first part will deal

with the prerequisites for home storage of puerh tea, and later, in another issue of this magazine I’ll offer Part II, focusing on the important details that one needs to pay attention to during the long period of storage.

### *The Purpose of Storing Puerh Tea*

It is important to understand clearly why connoisseurs, collectors and vendors store puerh tea. As mentioned above, this saves the collector a lot of money on tea, since they will appreciate in value and only be more expensive in the future. The financial investment also attracts many, including the vendors. But why are puerh teas stored at all? Why did the practice even begin?

In point of fact, puerh tea is not drinkable when it leaves the factory. There are some varieties that offer a decent cup right away, and some occasionally are enjoyable to certain tea lovers, depending on taste. However, the most fascinating aspects of puerh tea are the sensations offered in a sip of well-aged puerh tea. Young teas cannot

compare at all to the rich, smooth, elegant, sweet broth and comfortable aftertaste of older teas. Young teas must undergo a natural aging process that normally takes fifteen to thirty years. Aficionados are often not willing to buy a tea unless it has matured enough to drink, which is one reason why vintage puerh is so expensive. Because of the time factor, which incurs the cost of capital and interest, it would be impossible for puerh tea vendors to survive if the stock in the warehouse couldn’t be sold for a profit that validates the storage time. Thus, storing one’s own puerh tea is actually saving the “storage cost” that you would be charged had someone else kept the tea. Simply put, the main reason for storing puerh tea is that it is far more enjoyable when it is aged. Just as an old wine is more delicious than a new one, aged puerh tea is the real reason that most of us started collecting in the first place. It was the rich brown cup and deep flavors and aromas of our first experience with aged puerh that enticed us to start collecting. Aged puerh is a marvelous experience, and there are very few teas as fulfilling or full-bodied as aged puerh!



## Basic Criteria for Storing Puerh Tea

Even with only a few cakes of puerh, the storage environment requires careful attention. Otherwise, the tea, a handful or a ton, may degenerate. In order to age puerh tea properly, pay attention to the following basic criteria:

- 1) *Humidity of 70%–80% (exposure to high or low humidity is not recommended)*
- 2) *Adequate ventilation*
- 3) *Proper wrapping materials*
- 4) *No odor, regardless of whether it is pleasant or not*
- 5) *Temperature of 20–30 °C*
- 6) *No exposure to visible light (a dark environment is better for aging puerh tea)*

### First: Humidity

Humidity is perhaps the most important aspect of storage. Cakes stored in an environment with too little humidity won't ferment, and if the humidity is too high the quality will decrease over time. It is consequently important for the collector to be able to discriminate the affects of different humidity levels. Learning with your own senses will teach you far more than any amount of books or articles will ever be able to do. One way to experiment is to take an inexpensive tea cake and expose it to humid air on a rainy or foggy day. On a very rainy day, with the windows open, the humidity will usually be around 80% to 90%, which is too high for puerh tea. You will find that a tea cake exposed to humid air becomes soft, no longer crispy to the touch. If you break it apart, you will find that the tea leaves are also soft and don't break apart as easily. This indicates that the tea cake is too damp. If one were to then wrap up the cake in that state, the water trapped inside would lead to a decline in quality over time. Feeling and drinking a damp cake in comparison with a dry one will help a collector recognize the variations that excess humidity can cause over time.

Leaving an inexpensive cake out on a rainy day teaches collectors about the effects of too much humidity, and gives them some experience touching and handling tea that has been over-humidified. However, if you buy more than a stack of puerh tea, checking the extent of humidity absorbed by tea cakes wouldn't be possible without breaking apart the bamboo bark wrapping. Therefore, it isn't easy to tell whether there is anything wrong inside the cakes. Usually, puerh tea lovers would like to keep the original outlook of the *tong*, because the value of a wrapped *tong* is worth more than seven individual cakes, and the bamboo bark helps protect the tea over time. In that case, the only way is to check the wrapping materials themselves, feeling whether they are still hard and crisp. By itself, this isn't enough because some kinds of wrapping materials are more resilient than the tea cakes inside; the tea might be wet while the packaging is perfectly dry. Therefore, we must smell the stack to see whether there is any unpleasant odor. If there is water trapped inside a stack of puerh tea, the smell of the stack will irritate the nose and be unpleasant. If the storage conditions are good, the aroma from a dry stack of cakes is very attractive and fresh. The longer one collects puerh, and the more they go into the storage room to touch and smell their teas, the more they will be able to notice even slight changes and correct them accordingly. Try smelling the damp and dry cakes, drinking them and handling them repeatedly. One may even smell the damp cake as it sits out, noticing the changes each hour of wet storage brings.

### *Do you need a dehumidifier/humidifier?*

Some people are of the opinion that the greater the humidity, the better. They argue that a dehumidifier is not required because puerh needs humidity to age. Of course, it does need humidity, but how much is healthy and whether fluctuations are important is a relevant issue to those with a serious investment in puerh. As mentioned above, the optimum range of humidity is around 70% to 80%. It may be a good idea to get a hygrometer to measure the relative hu-

midity in your storage area. If the humidity gets near 90%, or if there is a lot of precipitation during a particular season, you will need a dehumidifier. The dehumidifier shouldn't be overused. It would be unwise to run the dehumidifier constantly, creating a space that is too dry. This is as undesirable as higher humidity. When the humidity gets higher, run the dehumidifier until the humidity returns to the desired range and then shut it off. Tea collectors living in places like Beijing or Canada, on the other hand, may have a hard time storing puerh tea. It may be possible to use a humidifier, as long as it is not pointed at the tea, to try and generate more moisture. However, I must stress that areas with low relative humidity may not be suitable for puerh tea storage. Humidity is why puerh has traditionally been kept in places like Hong Kong and Taiwan. Those living in dry climates may be better off purchasing vintage puerh, or perhaps trying to rent or purchase some storage space in a better environment.

Some people try methods of natural correction to alter storage conditions. They will use chalk or charcoal to absorb moisture when it is too wet, and I have even heard of others using buckets of water in a dry climate. I think that the charcoal and chalk, as long as they are odorless, are acceptable methods of correcting excess humidity. I prefer a dehumidifier, because it is more accurate and convenient. However, I wouldn't recommend adjusting low humidity by allowing water to evaporate in the room. Such a method may cause more harm than help.

### Second: Ventilation

Some experts suggest that removing the wrapping materials from the tea cakes will accelerate the aging process. However, I am of the opinion that the risk of exposure to excess humidity outweighs the potential benefits. In fact, removing the wrapping may be detrimental to the aging process. Puerh tea does need adequate and appropriate ventilation, but, like most other aspects of the storage process, there must be a balance between too little and too much oxygen. If puerh tea is exposed to a lot of moving air, the tea will become weak and the sensations, tastes and



aromas will lose their poignancy. This happens because the oxidation process inside the leaves occurs too fast. Most puerh collectors who are serious about drinking vintage teas agree with this experience. Really, slight ventilation is more than enough for aging puerh tea. It is unnecessary to remove the wrapping. The tea should be placed in a room that gets fresh air several times a week. An open window, or even a door that opens into a larger room that has open windows, will allow more than enough air into your storage room. If you are young enough, you might even want to slow down the aging process. Every tea has a climax—a peak time when it is best appreciated. Generally speaking, puerh tea aged for 30 years is already very good. Some tea will be better stored for much longer, and others don't need as long. Much of that aspect of storing tea takes quite some time to discriminate, and is also often determined by the taste of the individual. Over time, we all learn patience, choosing when to break apart an aged cake for enjoyment and what degree of fermentation we like.

### *Third: Wrapping*

#### *My Friend's Storage Mistake*

I have a friend that stored a few tea cakes at home recreationally. One day, he brought over two interesting tea cakes. He had bought two identical late 1980s tea cakes which were clean and properly stored by the vendor. However, several months after buying the two cakes, my friend realized that one of them no longer had the same clean and dry character as the day he bought it. It was very musty and wet. He was surprised that the cakes' conditions would be so different after only some months, especially since they had both been stored under the same roof. After I asked him for some more details, the picture became clear. My friend had left the tea cakes on a table for several days after purchasing them, in order to look at them. He had bought the tea in spring, and the humidity in Hong Kong at that time is higher than the rest of the year. Consequently, the elevated humidity had affected one of the two cakes. The other tea cake did not

have the same character, because the vendor had given him a paper box for each tea cake and he hadn't opened one of them. It was the open one, exposed to the extreme humidity, that wasn't as good. However, leaving the opened cake on the table in spring wasn't ultimately what made the two cakes so different. If he had dehumidified the tea cake before repacking, it would have corrected the exposure to higher humidity. His fatal mistake was that he trapped the excess water inside the tea cake by wrapping it up.

My friend's experience illustrates that wrapping materials are important during the course of puerh tea storage. They can save your tea, not to mention a lot of heartache. Even though the storage environment of Hong Kong and Taiwan are often too humid, the wrapping papers, materials, boxes and/or bags serve to protect the tea cakes (and your heart) from excess moisture.



One needs to be careful about what wrapping materials are put on the tea and the condition of the cakes just prior to packaging, which is something many people don't think of.

### *How to Prepare New Tea Cakes*

Much of what applies to cakes that have spent some time in storage also applies to newborn tea. The cake needs to be inspected to see how it has been stored and its moisture content. Even recently compressed tea cakes may have higher water content, because steam is used in the processing to soften the tea leaves for compression, and the cakes sometimes leave the factory without having been sufficiently dried. The tea cakes are dehydrated on large racks in a special drying room. Generally speaking, this dehydration process takes several days. However, every now and then, the tea factory may have a lot of orders to handle, and they, therefore, don't have enough time for proper dehydration. As a result, some cakes have high moisture content when they are wrapped up and shipped from the factory. This doesn't happen with tre-

mendous frequency, but it does occur. If you have bought a cake that is damp, or if you have purchased a cake that has been through some wet storage, one should treat it before putting it into storage. One can use a dehumidifier in a controlled space to decrease the humidity significantly. The cake should remain in this space with low humidity for several days, in order to evaporate the water trapped inside. The wrapping materials are often partially waterproof, so it's a good idea to uncover the cake for the duration of this dry stage. This is, in fact, what the factory had already done in the dehydration room. The cakes are left opened and unwrapped on the racks as they dry. In the absence of a dehumidifier, the next best thing is to wait for a clear day when the relative humidity is lower and place the cake on an open windowsill. This could even be done periodically until the cake is dry enough.

Not all wet-stored teas are bad. Sometimes one may find a good deal on a cake with some wet storage, or perhaps one of the cakes that he or she has kept themselves has become a

little wet. If there is any whiteness on the cake, it can be brushed off with a toothbrush to make it clean and beautiful again. The tea can then go through the same process mentioned here, before storage or drinking.

### *Cardboard Containers*

In my opinion, cardboard containers are a good choice to store your puerh tea collection. Cardboard is useful, because it preserves the tea and also can be written on for classification. The cardboard allows different teas to be stored adjacently, without any dissemination of odor. If your puerh tea collection is large enough, you should put the same series together in the same box. For example, the *Green Big Tree* tea cakes from the same year should all be placed in the same cardboard container. However, if this is not practical because you don't have enough of a particular tea, you may still place puerh tea cakes with similar compositions and dates together in the same box. Raw tea cakes within five years of each other are fine together. However, if you didn't purchase the

## *Ventilation & Rotation*

Even though puerh tea needs to adsorb enough water for aging, the water should not stay too long in the tea cake. For beginners, I would suggest only opening windows during clear days in the fall. On stuffy, rainy days, one should never try to ventilate the tea.

Most well-aged puerh vintages come from the tea warehouses that used to be so predominant in Hong Kong. At that time, tea vendors did not intentionally let fresh air in, but those cakes have still become masterpieces. However, in order to make the cakes have even aging conditions, tea vendors at that time did rotate the tea from top to bottom. I believe that this also improved the overall aging condition of the warehouse. Therefore, from my point of view, rotating the position of puerh is more important than ventilation, in the long term.

The major difference between puerh tea stored by private tea col-

lectors and that stored by tea vendors is amount. Large tea vendors have huge tea warehouses, which are storing several hundreds to thousands of baskets or boxes (traditionally, 84 tea cakes per basket or box). Since the amount of puerh is enormous and the puerh will not be sold immediately, it may have to stay in the warehouses for the coming five to ten years. After that amount of time, the taste of the puerh stored on the top and at the bottom of the pile would certainly be different because of the differences in ventilation. Therefore, conscientious puerh tea vendors will hire workers to rotate the position the tea in order to assist the aging process. Since this is a huge project, puerh tea vendors usually make rotations every two to three years, depending on the warehouse.

For private tea collectors, since their collections are not as large as tea vendors, it is not necessary to rotate the tea so frequently. I would advise

private tea collectors to move their tea collections every 5 years. One advantage of tea rotation is that it allows one to check the storage conditions of the tea. In a period of twenty years, four rotations aren't that inconvenient if they can really help the aging of one's cakes. These rotations should be performed in the fall because the humidity and temperature are more moderate. Make sure that the dampness of the tea cakes is low enough for repacking. Otherwise, one will make the same fatal mistake made by a friend of mine, in which the water absorbed from the air was trapped inside the cake when it was repacked (I discussed this in more detail on the previous page).

If one learns about puerh, there really is no harm in keeping it in closets or drawers, because one will know how to correct any abnormal aspects of the environment. However, this really requires practical experience (and maybe even a few tears) to learn.

cakes new make sure the dry storage and wet storage cakes are kept separately because they have different flavors and smells. Some may argue that if a cardboard container is used, the tea cakes will be contaminated by a paper smell. This may be true if the cardboard is of poor-quality. It is worth the extra money to buy better boxes without much of a paper odor, though a little smell won't harm the cakes. Later, when it's time to appreciate the cakes, a few weeks of open air will remove any traces of the cardboard smell. Puerh has been wrapped in paper for many years, and some of the greatest vintages are still without a trace of odor, even after decades. The paper wrapping is often composed of more natural fibers, and are sometimes even handmade. It is possible to find cardboard boxes of the same caliber.

#### *Fourth: Unwanted Odors*

Tea, as a leaf, has the amazing ability to absorb the ambient flavors and smells of whatever is placed near it. Therefore, if you store your puerh tea

cakes next to an aromatic essence, the tea cakes will have that fragrance. With certain kinds of tea, this added flavor is quite nice, but if one keeps puerh tea near any odor—pleasant or unpleasant—they are risking the loss of their tea. Perhaps the added flavor will enhance the tea, but actually, in almost every instance, odor transfer results in a tea of far lesser quality than one stored away from all such interference. For that reason, puerh tea cakes should *never* be kept in the kitchen. Kitchens are full of oils, odors and other influences that will definitely affect the tea over time. Likewise, if you keep your puerh tea in a metal or plastic box, the tea will eventually be infused with that odor. In the same way, if you put raw tea and ripe tea together, both teas will end up having strange odors; raw tea and ripe tea have their own special aromas, and if they are stored together they will contaminate each other. Usually, since the odor of ripe tea is stronger than that of raw tea, the raw tea is affected more for the worse. The principle is that puerh teas with similar aromas should be placed together. Accordingly, one should be very careful

to keep their tea in a completely odor-free environment.

Tea is very sensitive, and the fact that odor influences it so easily is a testament to this fact. We should therefore aim to keep our tea in clean and clear environments. This will always produce the best tea over time.

#### *Fifth: Temperature*

Proper temperature is also important for storing puerh tea. The temperature should be around twenty to thirty degrees Celsius. If the climate is too cold, the microbiotic activity and decomposition will occur much slower. The heat helps inspire this process. This factor is less discussed than humidity and oxygen, though it is still important. Environments with adequate humidity are usually in warmer climates.

#### *Four Seasons & Storage Cycles*

A relatively constant temperature is essential for puerh storage. This does not mean that the temperature should never change. Actually, puerh tea requires different temperatures during different seasons. Constant temperature means that the temperature in the storage environment should not fluctuate too much within a short period of time. Differences from season to season are acceptable, even necessary, but one needs to be careful of any quick rises or drops in temperature. Places where the night is much cooler than the day, for example, are not ideal. This is yet another reason why the traditional areas of puerh storage are so perfect. The temperature changes between seasons in places like Hong Kong is smooth and gradual, and provides the tea with an aging cycle that has different stages throughout the year. Spring has a higher humidity that freshens the cakes and allows them to absorb enough water for the rest of the year. During the summer, the higher temperature will cause vigorous changes inside the tea leaves as they respond to the added temperature, coupled with the moisture that was taken in during the spring. Then, after the stress of spring and summer, the tea starts to take a rest during autumn, which acts as a buffer, with mild temperatures and humidity.

Storing puerh in closets and drawers usually requires that one follow similar guidelines. First of all, one should be concerned about the odors from the closets or drawers when they are new or when they had stored something else previously. One should make sure that the closet or drawer is completely odor free. Some woods used in the construction of shelving units or drawers have been painted or stained, and have a distinct odor, even when new. Of course, anything else that was stored in them would also have left its odor behind. The collector will have to find a way to air them out and remove any odors. Another problem with closets and drawers is ventilation. Unless one has a habit of opening the closet or drawers regularly, the air inside them may not be enough. If a strange odor gets trapped inside, the tea will definitely be ruined. One will have to make sure that they are opened to allow the tea to breathe.

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In winter, since the temperature is low and the process is slowed down, the tea can, in a sense, hibernate. The hibernation prepares it for the next year. The temperature and humidity changes during the four seasons in places like Hong Kong or Taiwan create a perfect aging cycle. It is no coincidence that all the great vintage teas were stored here. It is almost magical how the absorption of moisture, heat, rest and then hibernation cycles through the year, fermenting the tea as Nature herself seemed to intend.

As I mentioned earlier with regards to humidity, I would advise tea lovers to only store puerh tea if the area they live in has four seasons with gradual temperature fluctuation. Otherwise, it would be more time and cost effective to buy aged puerh tea for consumption. If you factor in all the time, machinery and electricity you will need to create an artificial environment with the proper elements, it would approach or equal the cost of vintage teas. In the past, people have argued that one could use air-conditioning and other machinery to create fine vintage tea, but this idea has lost validity in recent years. Once these collectors began to experience how slow the aging process was, and how inefficient, the theory was tossed out. Furthermore, it is doubtful that such teas, even given adequate time, would be nearly as good as those stored naturally.

Although the most suitable aging environment is a natural environment, it is not practical for all Hong Kong puerh collectors either. Hong Kong is small and real estate is expensive, so living space is often cramped. Therefore, some people have had no choice but to place their tea at the office. I will discuss how to store puerh tea at your office in Part II of this series. Many people in Hong Kong also store tea throughout their house, since they can't afford a specific place for tea alone. They put the tea in the living room or the bedroom. This is actually not good if there is an air-conditioner in the room. Air-conditioned environments cause temperature fluctuations that are detrimental to the tea. One turns on the air-conditioner at night to get a good sleep and then turns it off in the morning on the way to work. I personally have experience with the effects of this improper storage.

If you have enough puerh tea, an independent room for storage is ideal. It allows one to regulate the humidity and temperature much more easily. If it is wet outside, one may simply turn on the dehumidifier and close the door of the storage room, creating a dry environment that isn't influenced by the climate outside. A storage room or closet will also be very convenient to handle the cakes, check on them and organize them by kind and date.

### *Sixth: Light*

Not much is known scientifically about why light is detrimental to the storage of puerh. The idea is based more on the experience of several experts and collectors alike. Perhaps the light encourages unhealthy mold growth or even dries the tea out too much. Nevertheless, several experts have done experiments or recorded accidents caused by long-term exposure to light. It's much better if all of your tea is kept somewhere dark, with little to no light exposure. Many of the warehouses that puerh tea was traditionally stored in had no windows at all, and the lights were only turned on periodically, when the collector came in to check on the tea.

### *Storage Conclusions*

After reading so much information, you may wonder how long one needs to wait for the harvest. The flavor of raw puerh tea cakes are changing every year. In fact, newly made tea cakes aren't undrinkable. They are just not as tasty, smooth or rich as the well-aged vintages. If one enjoys the green taste of newborn puerh, there is no reason why one should wait. Enjoy the tea now. However, from most connoisseurs' point of view, the most fascinating aspect of puerh is the rich and smooth broth offered by a marvelously aged cake—a peaceful bliss, comfortable feeling and sweet aftertaste that lasts for quite a long time. Therefore, the term “drinkable,” in the connoisseur's eyes, often means that the cake has reached this maturity.

I first started storing tea in 1993, and my first cake was the Zhongcha

Brand Traditional Chinese Characters Seven-son Tea Cake (“Traditional Character”). It is now 14 years of age. It already offers me a pleasant and soft, slightly green, honey taste. However, the bitter astringency is still there, though not as bitter as in its first five years. Following this trend, I expect that my Traditional Character cakes will be very tasty when they reach 20 years of age. Still, I wouldn't advise drinking a lot of these immature raw tea cakes, because they are too green to appreciate. It is nice to taste the changes, but better not to waste too much of these '90s cakes, and save them for the time when they are truly mature.

In the meantime, while storing raw puerh, one will need some ripe puerh, wet-stored puerh, or even some well-aged tea, if one can afford it. Self-stored puerh is mostly for future consumption. If one does not appreciate the green taste of newborn tea, saving them and finding some of these alternatives is better. Although I have a lot of newly made raw puerh tea cakes, I seldom brew them unless I want to trace their aging process. My daily puerh favorites are 1970s Zhongcha Brand Simplified Chinese Characters Seven-son Tea Cakes, 1970s Yellow Mark and 1980s 8582 Seven-son Tea Cakes. In short, puerh tea cakes should be appreciated at their appropriate ages.

I hope that my experience storing puerh tea at home will be of some benefit to others who also wish to start a puerh collection. There is great joy in this hobby, and an even greater reward years down the road when it comes time to harvest one's delicious aged tea. The guidelines discussed here will help prepare one to face the challenges that decades of storage will surely present. There is no way to cover all the possible problems that one will face, but learning from experience will be better anyway. Every real collector has paid a tuition somewhere along the way. Despite my own losses, I still feel that collecting puerh tea is very rewarding. Through puerh I have made great friends and many lasting memories. Hopefully, you will also find such treasures in the world of puerh tea!





