

# 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 Lauren Stern.

It began when I was a little girl in the 1980s. My father returned home from a trip to Asia with a tea set (one I still have!). A few nights later he shared with us what he experienced, what was to become my first of many Tea Ceremonies to come. I remember our family sitting in silence, in glowing candlelight, huddled around a small kitchen table in our apartment on the Upper West Side in New York City. The ritual, the ceremony, the gestures, the meaning—it was an island in time, and I was floating in a cloud canopy, high above the concrete jungle I called home. It reached such a deep part of my little heart, and I am constantly grateful for my parents' desire to seek out meaningful ways to invite the holy and sacred into our home, and inspire us to do so in our own ways as my sister and I grew. A few years later, at the age of thirteen, Shunryu Suzuki's book, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, fell into my hands at a bookshop. I immediately understood that something very profound had been awakened and would continue to awaken in me.

Tea. I see how She has woven into and out of my experience over the years. How even when I have forgotten Her, She has remembered me, returned to me. An invitation like an ancient song, never asking from me more than I was willing or ready to offer. I have had to grow into what it means to be in a right relationship with Her, and learn more each day. This love has been an intricate re-weaving, a slow remembering, a willing unfurling into a deeply rooted unknown becoming. Over the years, opportunities to sit with and drink fine living Tea kept showing up. Each time I reached out to grab a hold of Her, doors closed, information would become scattered or hidden, and She would run a bit farther out of reach. About a year ago, I completely surrendered to Her. I stopped running after Her and instead, I built a real space for Her in my life and home, and I invited Her in. In this slow way, with this kind of careful approach and patient, loving courting, over time, things began to change.

With each sip I hear Her whisper, "What does she wish to become?" It is as though together, we are in the process of returning, of remembering, of discovering what we are made of and why we are here. Each day choosing how we will walk upon this Dear Earth and how we will treat each one we cross paths with. She reminds me to be light, to share more than I think I am capable of sharing, to love more than I think I am capable of loving. To embody that love. Oh, there are so many gifts! I have only just recently, while drinking tea, remembered the details of my first assignment as a first-year undergraduate student in architecture school—a tea bowl. How perfect, my introduction to



茶人: Lauren Stern

architecture, to creating space, was in fact about learning to make space for Tea. And, how my true return to Tea was through building a Home for her. That is some deep-deep right there! After a twelve-year break from the world of architecture, I am finding my way back, to start work on a tea and bath house project. I know this beautiful return is because of Her, and Her gentle way of reminding. Her lessons practically, majestically and magically unfold, blossoming in ways I shall never hope to secure words for, as some words are best left dancing somewhere wild, unknown, and in between.

One of the biggest gifts She has given me is the opportunity to be a part of this Global Tea Hut community. The integrity and dedication to heart-path that this lineage led by Wu De holds is a rare and exceptional offering. Creating space for and witnessing others first encounter Her in this sacred and intentional Way lifts my heart each and every time. Since my stay at the Tea Sage Hut in February, I have been changed, and I am even more inspired to grow my capacity for loving, sharing and serving tea. I am so grateful for the life-long friends I have made and have yet to meet within this grace-filled Tea community. I am currently in the process of moving back East, but when I land on some land, you, dear friend, are welcome by my fire to share tea anytime.