

Voices from the Hut

Tea Weddings

Love is in the air! Our community celebrated three beautiful tea weddings this year. Erika Houle and Gordon Arkenberg were married by Wu De in Connecticut this June, and Ilyas Jetybayev and Nadya Vorobyeva were married with Tea in Siberia this August. Also, in Finland Jesse and Nelly Öro were married through Tea (Petr's photography contest winner is a picture from this wedding). Congratulations to each couple. Love is truly changing the world bowl by romantic bowl!



☪ Over the past year, we worked to craft our own special wedding ceremony, which we called with some amusement an “Alchemical Union.” We structured it using Western occult traditions, but the heart of the ritual came from the tea ceremony. By centering our union on the ceremonial act of serving each other tea, we experienced an intimate stillness, as if we sat upon the hub of a great wheel. At the circumference, our friends and family stood witness, each one a tangent in the arc of our life. After serving each other, we prepared and offered a bowl of tea to each loved one in turn. We carried them one by one from the center to the edge, as if along the spokes of the wheel, with each journey inward and outward joining everyone in one breath.

This day marked the beginning of a lifelong ceremony. The guests got to keep the bowls and were given a tin of the same special tea to take home. Thus, they were equipped to extend the ceremony by preparing and sharing the tea with others. Additionally, Wu De gifted us a stunning large celadon jar to store our ceremonial tea to drink each anniversary. In remembering our connection to all of nature through tea, we feed the harmony in our relationship and to the greater cosmos. These photographs were taken by our dear friend Felix Candelaria.

Erika & Gordon





茶 On the 19th of August, I married the woman I've shared countless bowls of tea with, Nelly Öro. In our wedding ceremony, we wanted to share bowl tea together with all our guests. Thanks to our good friends near and far, we were able to do so! We had bowls from Petr Novak, tea from our favorite local teashop, water from a great spring and many hands ready to serve tea. All of us crammed into a small and intimate space, and shared bowls of fresh, green leaves. I have no words for the atmosphere then and there. We also wanted to personally offer tea to our guests, so after dinner, we visited each table and prepared gongfu tea for them. It gave us a chance to connect with everyone, and offer them a very different kind of tea experience. There was no meditative silence, but there was still all our effort and strong, aged tea! In the evening, as our guests departed, we gave them each a bowl used in the ceremony and a small package of the tea, with a wish that the bowl tea wouldn't become just a memory for them. Photography by Carolina Mobarac.





茶 For both of us, Tea happened to be not only a medicine, but also the perfect match-maker. We first met at a tea ceremony five years ago, and since then, we've been building our relationship as students of the Leaf, so there was no doubt that our wedding would be Tea-infused. And it was! We gathered our friends and, with their support, hosted a tea party with a somewhat Japanese accent: paper cranes were swaying in the air while we shared a bowl of matcha, sealing our connection. We had casual tea sessions afterwards, with some jazz and classical music played on traditional Japanese instruments in the background. There was a lot of delicious food, Japanese okashi and matcha desserts, a joint painting and even a hokku competition. All that bliss ended with a loving-kindness meditation, after which we and our friends dripped wax on a special jar full of puerh and a paper crane with a promise inside to seal the lid tight for storage. A couple of days later, we had a more traditional wedding for relatives. There, we served bowls of tea to our parents as a symbol of acceptance.

