

Global Tea Hut



NEWSLETTER #4, MAY 2012

We've been in this Tea Hut for some time, and our vision is lighter. We feel free in some indescribable way. Could it have been the tea? Was it some magic the old man put into the leaves? "What kind of tea was that?" we ask after the session is over. "Just the kind you needed." He replies with a rascally grin. He pats us on the shoulder and shoos us out the flap and into the clearing. The sun is low in the sky and the old tree seems busy gathering up its rays, perhaps saving them for the coming night. The way back down the trail is so much easier, and we walk with a newfound bounce in our step.

In the last few issues, we have discussed the magic of this metaphoric Hut we are building, and how the sharing of tea with this community goes beyond time and space. Some of you have even reported sensing this connection in your lives, recognizing the significance of others drinking the same tea with you—people you don't know, and from around our world. Though we may live on different continents, we all come to this Hut and share a bit of tea together at least once a month. Look for your new brothers and sisters in that space. Drink this tea with an open mind and heart, and in the spirit of connection, and see what happens.

For our part, we come to realize how much deeper and more profound this experience is each and every month. Not only is it creating abundance, which allows us to fund our school, offer free lodging and food, courses and roadside tea huts, publications and workshops—not only that, but it is changing us! And we have the feeling it is changing some of you as well. The abundance we are creating isn't just financial; it's spiritual and communal, too. There is also more energy coming into our center than ever before, and it is all positive!

And new insights haven't stopped coming out—steeping after steeping, there's still flavor. We have been sharing them with you as an introduction to each month's newsletter, with the hopes that they

inspire your lives as they have ours. Besides a feeling of connection with all of you, we have begun to realize that as we all drink these teas, imbued with good wishes, we carry the energy of the tea out into what we do.

Two issues ago, we started the "Tea Wayfarers" section of this newsletter, thinking that it would be nice for you all to get to know each other. We quickly realized that in getting to know what Greg Wendt does, for example, you are also getting to know what Global Tea Hut does, because GTH teas are a part of Greg's life and in all that he does, as he himself told us. We then realized that if Global Tea Hut impacts you, your work is affected, as are your relationships. In this way, Global Tea Hut is having a much larger inspiration on all of us than we thought!

And that's why we thought we'd start this issue with the moment we all get up from the session and head back to our lives, the moment we leave the old tea sage's hut and head back down to the world, somehow changed. And that change is a drop in the ocean of global consciousness; but any drop that is awakened, is a powerful catalyst indeed...

*In every breath
and every step
from the first flutter of my eyes
onto the newborn light
to the last drop of awareness
and beyond
In all that I do
and all that I am
I am preparing tea*

Your Tea of the Month, May 2012

2012 Sun Moon Lake Red Tea

The tea for this month is our all time favorite tea, and the one we send home with every traveler who stops at our center. You could say it's our signature tea: the one we use to introduce new tea wayfarers to the path—the first wayside sign of the road. It's also one of the teas we like to serve when we set up our roadside huts, serving tea to passersby.

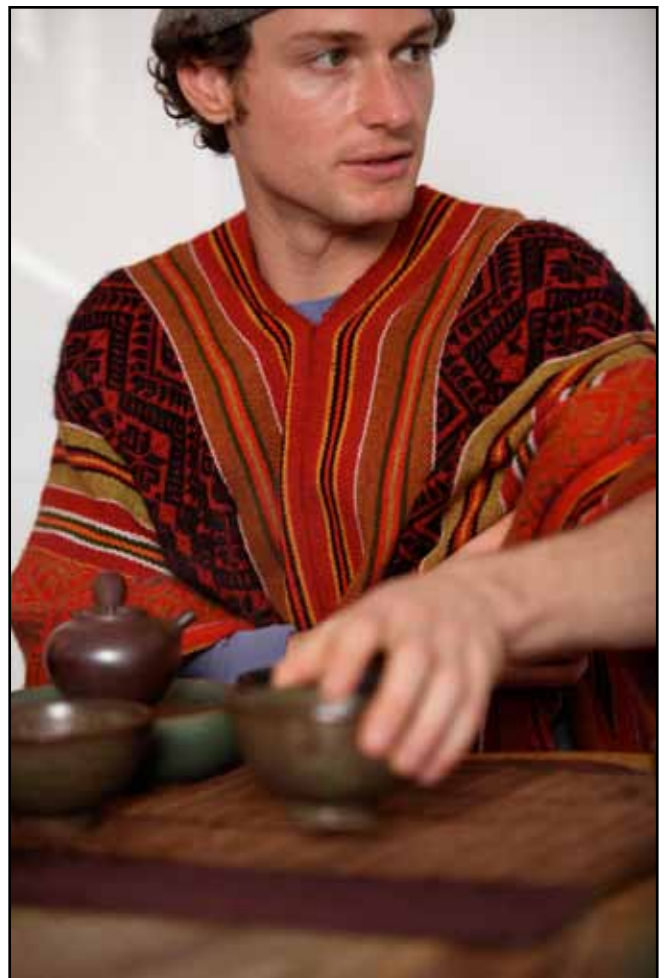
This amazing red tea is definitely a living tea, in all the ways we have been discussing in previous issues of these newsletters: It is seed-propagated, the trees have room and space to grow, there is a living relationship with the local ecology—undergrowth, plants, insects, animals, molds and bacteria—and there are, of course, no chemicals used in its production. It shines with a bright and uplifting energy that makes it the perfect morning tea, radiating your day and filling it with elevation. In fact, we have named this tea “Elevation”. It is simple and true, and you feel like you know it after your first bowl, as if a beloved friend from another lifetime came back.

As you may remember, there are two main varieties of tea: ‘small leaf’ and ‘big leaf’. Originally, all tea comes from the forests of Southwest China: Yunnan, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Eastern India. The original trees were single-trunked, with large wide crowns that can grow several meters in height. The roots are also deep, extending deep down into the earth before branching. Then, as tea traveled north and east—naturally or by human hands—it adapted to colder, sometimes higher, climates and terroir. These trees, called “small leaf”, developed into several trunks, like a bush, with roots that extend outwards rather than down. The leaves got smaller and smaller as tea progressed north into colder climes, until they get so small in places like Japan that when they are rolled they look like little needles (like *sencha* or *gyokuro*). Our tea of the month is a large leaf varietal, like Puerh, from a place in Taiwan called Sun Moon Lake.

When the Japanese conquered Taiwan, they wanted to develop several long-term agricultural projects to help their economy. They brought many large-leaf trees and saplings, as well as seeds, from Eastern India to make red tea plantations, choosing Sun Moon Lake for its accessibility and for the

way the terroir was similar to the original homes of these trees. Soon after, the Japanese were expelled and their gardens were abandoned. In the coming decades, these semi-wild gardens would grow up and also produce completely wild offspring, as well as adapting and relating to the local terroir in all the amazing ways a tea tree can—through the soil, the insects, rain and minerals, sun and rock. Our tea comes from one such small, organic and ecological garden consisting primarily of semi-wild trees with some wild ones scattered about.

The farmer, Mr. Su, is an amazing man. Many of his nearby neighbors have utilized their gardens to create more industrial plantations and get rich. He says he only wants enough to provide for his family, and therefore keeps it simple and organic. He has even bought up some nearby property so that he can control the proximity his trees have



to anything harmful others may be using. For that reason, the tea is incredibly clean and bright, speaking of its long heritage here in these mountains, and beyond to the older forests its ancestors once lived in, at the foot of the great Himalayas.

It is important to understand that what most Westerners call “black tea” is actually “red tea”. Ordinarily, it doesn’t matter what something is called, but in this case there is actually a problem, because there is another kind of Chinese tea that is called “black tea” (characterized by its post-production, artificial fermentation). So if you call red tea “black tea”, then what do you call black tea? The reasons for this error are to do with the long distances the tea traveled in chests to Europe, and even more importantly with the general lack of information for the first few hundred years tea was traded. Europeans weren’t allowed inland in those days, and never saw the tea trees and sometimes not its processing either. Buying through middlemen in broken pidgin, you could see how easy it would be to spread misinformation.

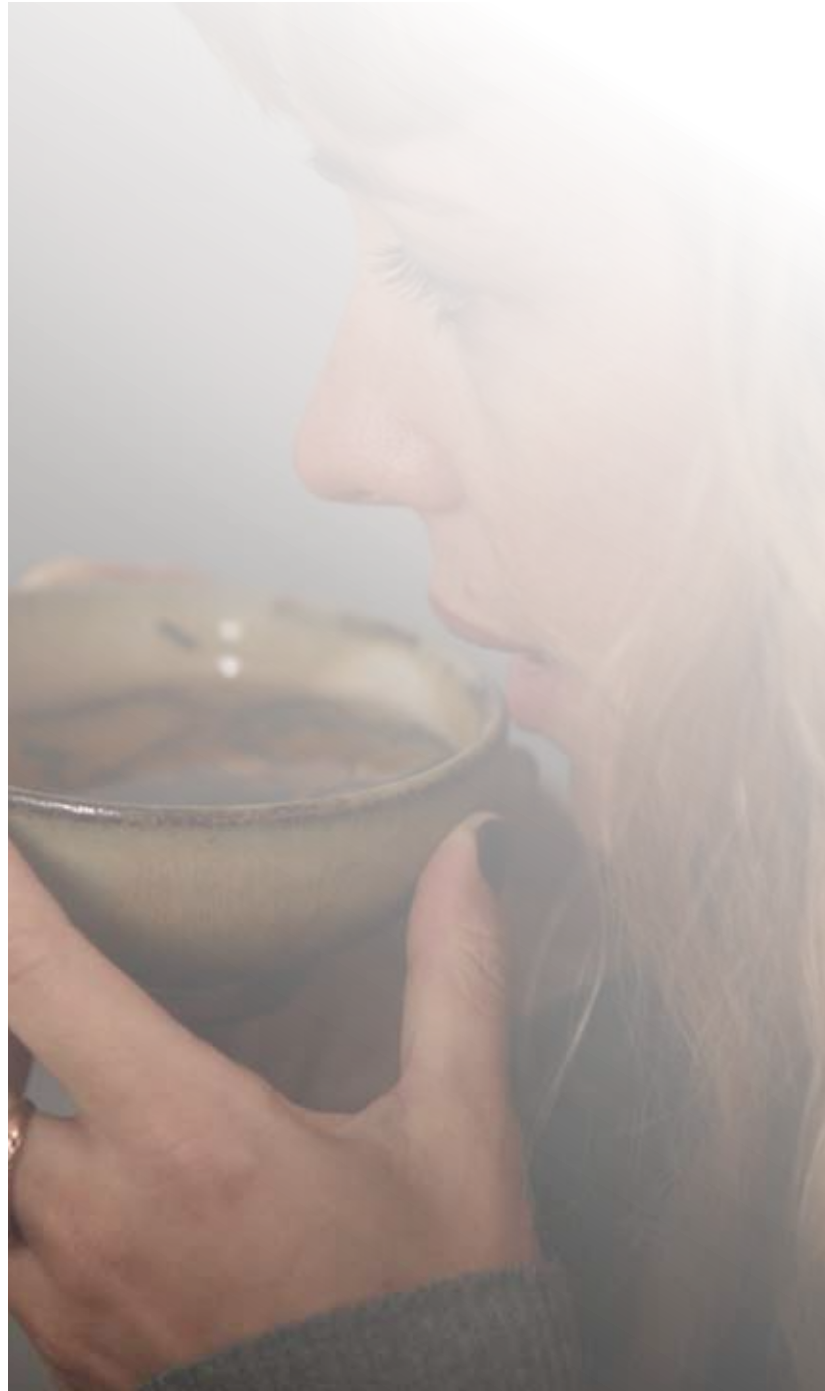
Most red tea is processed in 3-4 phases: first it is picked and then it is withered in large piles. Most tea is spread out when it is withered, but red tea is piled to completely oxidize the leaves. It is then rolled for an exceptionally long time, to continue the oxidation and break down the cells. It literally turns into a pasty mass in the process. Then it is dried, usually in an oven. Our tea, however, is completely different. The farmers think we are crazy, but we half the withering/piling period and the rolling period, leaving a lot of green in the leaves, which you will see when you brew them. The reason for the complete oxidation in normal red tea processing is to make the tea sweet and delicious. Nevertheless, we have found that such extreme processing removes some of the tea’s Qi, and distances it from the mountain and deep essence it touches. The leaves of these large-leaf trees are often bitter and astringent, but we can accept a bit of that along with the sweetness, can’t we? And isn’t that a significant life lesson as well? In the end, we’d rather have a slightly less delicious tea with incredible and relaxing Qi than the other way around.

The old farmer smiles and says he likes our quirkiness. We hope you will understand why we make our red tea like this. We don’t produce it for sale, only for free. We only wish we could give it to you for less.

This is an amazing tea to have in the morning. Try sitting cross-legged and putting a few leaves

in a bowl. Sit and soak up the warmth and feel how it invigorates you. It has an amazing energy that calms and uplifts simultaneously. We strongly recommend drinking it in a bowl, and have consequently included an entire article on bowl tea in this newsletter. Maybe you’ll want to read that before drinking your Sun Moon Lake red tea. You will find that after a few days of a few leaves scattered in a bowl, your outlook each morning is getting brighter and your life is starting to change...

** As we mentioned last month, we recommend letting the tea get over its jet lag. Let it sit a week or two and become acclimatized. Brew the tea as you wish, with slightly cooler water. You may want to use half the bag or so per steeping.*



A BOWL OF TEA

Leaves and water

There are really as many ways to brew tea as there are tea lovers, steeping and pouring in general patterns more than a strictly defined methodology. A good master doesn't ask that her students ape what she has collected, but respect it and learn from it. The ancient Daoist masters often admonished that the wise man reveres the ancients, applying their wisdom without mimicking it. Each and every tea journey gathers its own understanding and insight, tea and teaware, friends and teachers—a liquid metaphor of life itself.

Years ago, master Zhou Yu taught me one of the most powerful ways of brewing tea, which I also pass on to my students as they begin to explore the world of tea. When he taught it to me, he suggested it for beginners and masters alike. He said that he prefers to teach only that which can be continued throughout the journey. There are many convenient, simple and inexpensive ways to teach a beginner to brew tea, but many of them then need to be put aside as they progress in skill and develop a palate.

Taking master Zhou Yu's words to heart, I also never teach anything that will later be put aside. I think trust between teacher and student requires that we pass along only that which we would use ourselves.

Now, I thought I would pass on this wonderful brewing technique to you, and along with it explore some of the many ways that it is useful in your journey:

There really isn't much to it, you just put a few leaves of tea in a bowl and add hot water. Bowl, leaves and water.

You want to use a bowl that is more open, wider and V-shaped, though any bowl will do. It is also nicer if the bowl is a special, handmade piece of pottery. We have found that *tienmu* (rabbit's fur) bowls work the best for this. The beauty in their patterns, and the thickness of the glaze help bring out the best in tea brewed in this way. Zhou Yu, being a master, has gathered to him great teaware, handing you a Song Dynasty *tienmu* tea bowl when you drink such tea with him—slightly cracked and worn, the ancient bowl still sings with energy.

You don't need much tea for this, just a few leaves. We have found that this is actually the best way to brew old-growth, newborn Puerh. Since

newborn tea has not yet fermented, its nature is cold according to Chinese medicine. It can sometimes be harsh on the stomach. However, a few leaves in a bowl turns out lighter, smoother, less bitter and less harsh on the body. The result is much more fascinating and profound. We also drink old-growth Taiwanese oolong and red tea in this way, the latter of which is Taiwan's only variety of *camellia sinensis assamicas* (large-leaf, tree variety like that used to make traditional Puerh tea), brought here by Japanese during the occupation. While these teas are ideal for this method, we've tried it with everything from greener oolongs to white tea to aged Puerh, and it's all nice.

This type of brewing, like all tea, responds best to fresh and pure water, preferably from a mountain spring. The cleaner the water, the more the bowl will sing in your hands.

Even after decades of tea, master Zhou Yu still continues to drink tea in this way at least once or twice a week—a tradition I have carried on in my own way. There are many reasons why drinking tea in a bowl is so beautiful, some of which we can discuss—some of which you'll discover on your own—and some is left beyond the gate where words can never intrude. One of the most important is humility.

We drink bowl tea to reduce all the human parts of tea brewing to almost nothing. There are no, or very few parameters: adjust the amount of leaves and water temperature—or don't and enjoy the tea however it turns out. In this way, we let go of all pretensions. There is no longer any quality in the tea brewing, no comparative mind—no better or worse. A lot of skill and mastery often leads to snobbery. Then we miss the chance to connect with Nature, ourselves and each other through tea. In drinking bowl tea, and minimalizing the human role in tea, we can return to just leaves and water, where the true dialogue begins.

Try drinking a bowl of leaves and water, simply and beyond all refinement. Returning to the simplest and oldest way of making tea is often very profound. Through drinking tea in this way you may awaken your own insights, beyond these few I share freely now:

Ancient

Putting a handful of leaves in a bowl and adding hot water is the oldest gong fu tea, dating back thousands and thousands of years. In antediluvian forests, pristine in verdure, sages exchanged wisdom over such steaming bowls. They would find wild tea trees and process the tea on the spot, withering, roasting and drying it as they talked or sat in silent meditation. No doubt they also had pouches and jars of aged teas lying around for special occasions, when distant masters chanced to visit; when certain astrological and cosmological conjunctions happened making the time ideal for powerful tea and deeper meditation; or even to celebrate seasonal changes.

Using crystal mountain water, boiled simply over charcoal, they would cover the leaves in water and in energy from their Qi Gong and meditation—passing more than just tea and water to the traveler or student, but a part of themselves. Tea has always been a communication of the Tao precisely because it goes beyond words and the concepts they engender, and there is a truer representation of my wisdom in the tea I serve you than in a thousand books or lectures. “The tea doesn’t lie”, as they say. You can’t make your gong fu any more than what it is with any amount of embellishment, fancy words and descriptions: the tea will tell the tale.

When you are drinking tea in this way, you continue this ancient tradition. Close your eyes and imagine the craggy folds of an ancient mountain chain, dancing like a saffroned scroll painting. In billowing silk robes you sit beneath a wizened old tea tree, by some rocks and a stream. You can hear the ‘wind sowing the pines’ as the kettle bowls away. The master sticks his hand into an old pouch, more cracked and worn than his hoary face. His gentle hands reach across and flutter the leaves into your bowl. He holds the kettle for a moment or two, until it whispers to hush, and then in slow, gentle circles covers your bowl in steam—swirling the leaves around in circles as they open...

Simplicity

It is important that we don’t get caught up in all the pretension that can accumulate as you learn about tea. Unfortunately, some people become snobby about their tea and lose the ability to enjoy the tea without all the perfect accouterments, expensive pots, kettles and jars. The Japanese tea ceremony was often criticized by monks and spiritualists alike, since many practitioners lost the true spirit

of tea over time and turned it into a chauvinistic obsession based on collecting expensive teaware and tea and showing off to others. Rikyu tried to right this by incorporating local, simple raku pottery and natural decoration in a simple aesthetic. Today also many people use tea to promote themselves, and get lost knowing more or having more than others.

This isn’t the only way we brew tea, and it is great to explore all the nuances of different kinds of teaware and gong fu methodology. But more important than any kind of teaware, pouring skill or brewing technique is respect—one of master Rikyu’s four essential ingredients in tea. Don’t lose yourself in connoisseurship, thinking you are better than others or know more about tea. I would much rather drink gas-station quality oolong with a humble monk in the mountains, pure of heart, than expensive tea with someone using his tea and knowledge to promote himself.

By returning to the simplest of tea brewing parameters a few times a week, we can effectively wipe the slate clean. All of our affectation is gone. There are no better cups, jars or pots; no need to pour in certain directions or from certain heights, no better or worse—just leaves in water.

The discriminating mind can often ruin tea, analyzing and criticizing what should be enjoyed, embraced and absorbed into the body and spirit. There is a time for working towards bringing the best out of teas through skill, and a time of returning to softness when the human element and all our posturing is put aside in favor of the simplicity



of Nature, which since ancient times has attracted people of spirit to tea.

I have my students follow only this method for the first months that they are learning about tea, so that when they move on to learning about all the different kinds of teaware and tea, skills and techniques, they do so from a simple base. And returning to that foundation each week, they never forget their roots in the 'beginner's mind', free of all the ego that ruins tea more than any bad water ever could.

Wabi

The Japanese tea aesthetic was long ago called "wabi", which in part means the simplicity we discussed above. Wabi is also about enhancing and then rejoicing in the imperfection of true life. It means that the moon partially covered by clouds offers more to the imagination than the radiant full moon, and more adequately represents the formless and form as one. As poet Leonard Cohen put it, "There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."

Wabi is a difficult aesthetic to master, as it is hard to contrive imperfection that is natural. It has to be spontaneous and flow out of Nature, which is also often so beautiful precisely because it is illogical and disorderly, and the mind cannot organize it. It is no wonder that such a rational society as ours would prefer the ordered, hedged garden to the forest the sages of old rejoiced in.

Of course, you can find a tea bowl made with wabi aesthetic and this may enhance your experience. There is nothing like holding a master-crafted bowl of tea, exploring all the nuances created by the kiln and seemingly or truly unintended by the artist.

Also, there is often a clearer representation of a tea's quality brewing it this way, and it may involve a fault of some kind. Rather than criticizing or even accepting the issues, why not embrace them as an aspect of the tea before you—this very moment of your life as it is, and as it ever shall be. There is an even more profound relaxation and a deeper, more rewarding attitude towards life when you can step beyond mere acceptance of the imperfect moment to an actual participation and enjoyment in the experience, despite whatever perceived defects you may notice.

Nature

"The dialogue between man and nature is needed more than all else", master Zhou Yu often reprovingly yet gently warns. All of our personal and social problems stem, in essence, from the fact that we have ignored this conversation—a subtle whisper still heard if you quiet the mind or walk in the forest where the noise of the city is far away and the river's voice more audible.

Over centuries, our analytic, rational mind has been developed to an extraordinary degree, bringing with it such wonderful advancements in technology and science, like this very computer I now type on. But this exclusive focus on the rational mind has also meant the loss of another, more ancient kind of intelligence: the feeling of being a part of this world.

Lost in the rational voice that narrates our lives, many people feel completely disassociated from each other, Nature and the world. An intelligence and wisdom born of a connection with Nature was self-evident to ancient peoples. Through this connection, they understood inarticulate aspects of Nature that are completely lost today—the stars and seasons, rivers and mountains. And in our solipsism, ignoring Nature to explore our own desires and satisfaction, we have polluted the earth; and only now that the warning voice has reached a cataclysmic volume is mankind once again beginning to hear and understand what has been sacrificed in the name of technological development.

Obviously our social problems aren't about a lack of science or information. We have so much information that huge computers can't store it all, and you couldn't learn even a fraction of it in a lifetime. Wisdom is what is needed. It isn't new technology or information, but the proper application of the sciences and awakened, aware living that is the key to our prosperity, both personally and as a species. When you drink tea from a bowl, there is an even greater connection to the Nature within the leaves. Lighter brews often reveal the deepest qualities of tea, connecting you to the sun, moon and mountain that all worked in conjunction to form these leaves.

When you then cover them in mountain spring water, the effect is powerful indeed. If you stop all other activity and focus on the bowl before you, the voice of Nature often returns, louder than ever before. You find yourself connected and complete, a part of the process that began with a seedling gathering sun, water and mountain to it as it grew into a tree, sprouted a crown of glorious leaves, which are now culminating in this very warmth and energy coursing through you as you drink.



Purity

Brewing tea simply in a bowl allows for a kind of clarity of the senses. Between sips, you can hold the bowl and close your eyes allowing the warmth to flow through your arms, just as the inner warmth spreads through your chest. With all the room in the world the leaves open up gloriously in the bowl and are a delight to behold, which is one more reason why this method works so well with old-growth teas.

There is a sense of openness to the bowl and leaves other brewing methods cannot compare to, connecting the tea more clearly to the room and people around it. This connection, more than anything else, is why my first such session with master Zhou Yu will remain one of the most memorable tea sessions of my entire life, even though we drank only a few leaves of a simple green tea at the time.

When you drink tea this way there is no question of quality, or evaluation of any kind. There is no need to record your impressions internally or communicate them externally. The tea ceremony is stripped down to its most basic elements: leaves and water, self and no-self.

In such a space, you are free to be your self. Many times the conversation naturally winds down and master Zhou Yu and I smile at each other one last time, before drifting off into our own contention, contemplation or meditation. This quietude is paramount in living a healthy life in accord with the Dao, balancing stillness and activity and acting from

depth and with meaning, when the time is right. After all, what is important cannot be expressed as well in words as it can in the direct transmission of something so intimate as liquor we ingest into our bodies, prepared by the hands of the master—the true master behind your face.

Essence

The essence of a tea is beyond its stronger flavor or aroma to the Qi deep within the veins of the leaf, just as the essence of the tea ceremony is beyond the tea or teaware. Master Rikyu once told a student, “imagine your life without tea and if it is any different than it is now, you have yet to truly understand Cha Dao.”

If tea becomes pretentious and snobby, the essence is lost. Anyone can learn about tea, reading and traveling to tea-growing regions. It is the Dao that is the more powerful and lasting part of a tea session, not the tea.

The tea bowl before you is a gateway to yourself, and beyond that the Nature and the flow of energy through this universe. And it is often easier to transcend the tea when the process is simpler and close to the essential Nature that produced the tea in the first place.

“Man follows the Earth; the Earth follows the universe; the universe follows the Dao. The Dao follows only itself.”

What is a “living” tradition?

For future issues, submit questions to globalteabut@gmail.com

A tradition grounds us, giving us a foundation to stand upon and a sky compass to find our bearings. When we are lost we return to tradition, our center, for consolation, understanding and guidance. A tradition has a great heritage of collective wisdom hidden in all the canisters scattered around her hut, and she can always surprise us with leaves taken out of old jars we had never noticed before. The steam curls, the leaves unfurl and we find ourselves drinking a tea we never knew existed, but which is perfect, as though it has waited there in that jar just for us. We have accumulated into this tradition thousands of years of tea wisdom: some rediscovered and dusted off after much neglect and some handed down through the ages. There is a lifetime, and more, worth of guidance here—and not just in how to make tea, but also how to awaken harmony and insight as well as how to master the self. For that reason, we thought it would be nice to hold council with the wise old woman we call “Tradition” and discuss not just what we can learn from her, but how to relate to her in general.

There is a vast and deep discussion to be had over what exactly constitutes a “living” tradition. In the ancient Daoist texts, emphasis is placed on the fact that living things are flexible and changing, while dead things are rigid and firm. As a living being, a tradition should also grow and change rather than stagnate. We achieve a perfect balance, as a community, between innovation and insight on the one hand and preservation of the tradition on the other. This isn’t easy at all.

Perhaps the most inspirational teachings on tradition and its application in people’s lives come from the tribal, aboriginal peoples. Native Americans had many stories full of medicine concerning tradition. Sometimes tradition was indeed an old woman, other times a man. These stories are like a tradition itself: endless wisdom and truth hidden in the many, many pockets of her robe.

In one such story, there is a man who represents tradition. He takes a wife and moves out near the edge of camp. They have a son and daughter soon after. When the son and daughter get a bit older, the man grows frightened of them and kills his wife. He then abandons them and flees to another camp. The children are then aided by animals who teach them how to survive and give

them some powerful medicine objects. Later they seek out their father and find him in another camp where the people are starving. They seek reconciliation, but he is still frightened of them. He tells the people that they should tie them up and leave them behind, moving away quickly. He lies and says that they killed their mother and are a bad omen, promising that after they move away they will be fed. The people follow his advice and stake the children to the ground. Once again, the children are helped by animals and freed. They soon after find some food and buffalo and send a raven to the people with food, inviting them to come and learn how to gather as they have. The people realize that the man lied to them and go off to where the children are. They make the children chiefs and create a new camp circle nearby.

The man in the story represents tradition—wisdom handed down through the ages. Getting married is symbolic of his relationship to the people. He is in the camp, married to the people, guiding and advising them. His first mistake, then, is to move to the edge of camp, distinguishing himself. Despite the slight distance, the people and the tradition work together, and they birth new insights—new life. This son and daughter are full of new perspective and wisdom. They begin to grow within the hut of the tradition. But the tradition gets scared of these new gifts and kills his marriage to the people, becoming a force all his own. He abandons the new wisdom. But it grows up just the same and comes back later seeking reconciliation with the tradition. Yet again, the tradition is afraid of the new gifts and tells the people to stake them up, which isn’t necessarily killing them, but leaving them to the elements and what will probably be certain death. Nature comes to their aid, though, and they live and grow. Eventually, the people can no longer resist these new gifts, as they are starving without them, and abandon and/or kill the tradition and go off to start a new tradition with his children as leaders.

In many other stories the Old Woman, tradition, goes around stealing the people’s braids to sew some kind of huge braid-robe. She plans to use this in some way to save the people from what is actually her superstition. The braids represent the people’s experience—their personal wisdom. The Old Woman (Tradition) has good intentions, but

she is acting out of a closed mind, out of fear. She steals the experience of the people to try to create a protective robe that she thinks will save them from some monster she fears, not realizing that the monster is a shadow of herself. And every child is born and starts living, growing new hair, which means her robe keeps getting bigger. We mustn't let our tradition steal our personal experience, especially out of superstition and fear. In these stories, it is usually a magic medicine man that defeats this out-of-control old woman by turning his braids to stone so she can't cut them. He defies a tradition that doesn't allow his own experience, in other words.

There are two ways for a tradition to lose its life-force. The first is when the tradition abandons its marriage to the people and the children of that marriage. It must remain open, allowing for change as the times change. A tradition must also be open to including new insight. Otherwise, it becomes rigid and loses its connection to the living spirit. The wisdom must be embodied by all the members, and recreated anew each and every generation. This is how it grew in power over time, and if any one group forgets that and stops the flow, it will begin to wither. And though it may be a giant and powerful tree, it petrifies and no longer bears leaves or fruit, changing with the seasons. It's dead, old bark and its branches can still be used for shelter or firewood, providing warmth, but without a renewable source of life it will eventually be used up. We must be careful when our traditions disassociate themselves from the people and take on a life of their own, independent of the people they were once married to. A self-serving tradition is a nonhuman tradition, and often is cold, lacking in the compassion needed to deal with the lives of its members.

A living tradition holds council with its people, rather than moving to the edge of camp. A living tradition stays in the camp circle. A living tradition also has no fear of its children, which are the new ideas, insights and innovations that arise through its evolution, for it knows that these children not only make the tradition stronger, but they are its future as well. We are the living embodiment of this tradition, in other words, and it only lives as long as we do. To keep it alive, we willingly hand it off to the next generation of students to be a guide in the world they find themselves living in. They will draw from it, and they will also add to it!

The second way a tradition can die is just the opposite: by being too open. If we have too many other activities at our center here, then the tea wisdom will be lost amongst it all. Without

some kind of boundary, the tradition is also diffused too much and is consequently lost. We think the Japanese symbol of an *enso* is poignant in this regard. The open circle has many meanings in Zen: it symbolizes that our circle isn't complete, even when we die, but always connected to other circles, which are in turn connected to other, greater circles. Our tradition is connected to the other traditions of this earth, which is connected to the circles of the suns and stars, galaxies and planets. The *enso* also signifies the beauty in imperfection, wabi. Recently we realized that it could also be a poignant reminder of what a living tradition looks like: a circle with an opening. This suggests that we are bounded enough to have an identity and know who we are, but still have an open gate for new gifts to enter through.

A tradition lives not in books or scriptures, but in its living members. The old wisdom is embodied there, flowing through the masters and students alike. All masters are also excellent students, and if any of the great teachers was resurrected now the first thing that they would do is *not* start teaching, but rather start learning! They would have a lot to learn about our world, language and culture, as well as our wisdom, before they could start sharing again.

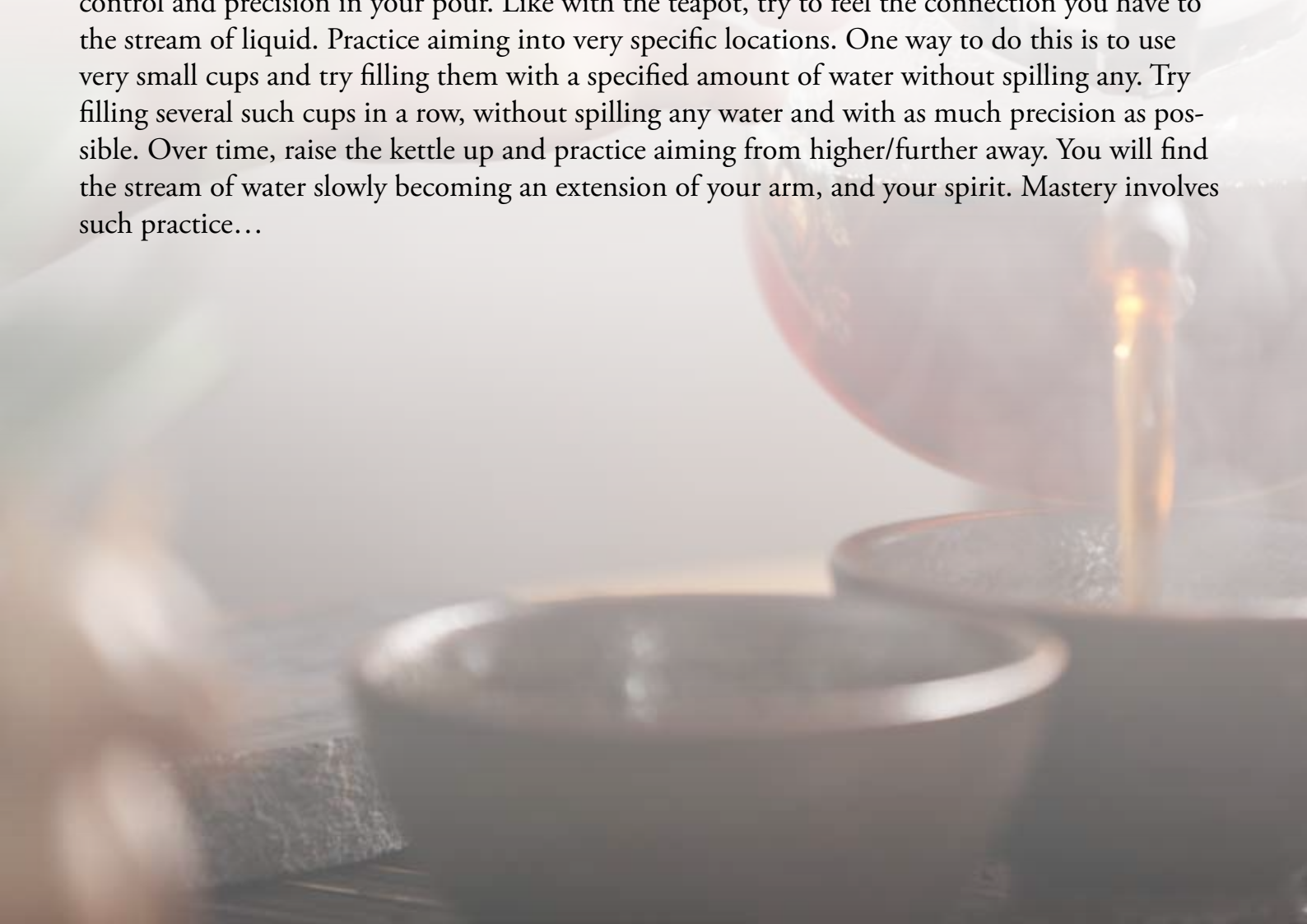
We are this tradition. We are creating it as much or more as it is creating us. Which directions will we go from here? How will our center in Taiwan develop and to which purposes? The ancient wisdom we have accumulated definitely has sent some guides to sit on our council as we decide these and other matters, and their voice is heard, but we also have our own seats and our own voices in the discussion, and the old ones are willing to heed our advice. Our faith and wisdom helps guide this community. Our participation is not just in service of spreading the old wisdom, but of facilitating and incorporating the new. All of us are the blood and bones of this tradition, as the old ones are perhaps its spirit. Together we can achieve amazing things, creating and maintaining a healthy tribe to which many starving souls will gather...

MAY GONG FU TEA-BREWING TIPS

In gongfu tea, it is very important that our skills become second nature—a part of who we are. We learn to make tea without thought, as you walk or talk, eat or drink. This frees us up from the tea preparation so that we can focus our energy inwards, or on connecting with our guests. Whether we are having an interesting, heartfelt conversation, a spiritual dialogue or resting in silence, we can do so and the tea will flow with us effortlessly because all the preparation skills are a part of us.

There is no separation between the pot and the hand, nor the stream of tea coming from the teapot. Most people can feel the connection they have between the teapot and the hand that grips it. They may even feel the Qi flowing down through the arm into the hand and then the pot. Many, however, find the connection ends there. But why? Why does the connection end at the mouth of the pot? The stream of Qi flowing from the shoulder through the arm and into the hand, then into the pot does not stop at the mouth of the pot; actually, it continues on in the stream of tea liquor pouring out. Try feeling as if this stream is an extension of you, connected to you, like a solid rope that you control.

The same can be said of the hot water poured from the kettle. We control the stream. If you are right-handed you will find that the tea session flows much more smoothly when the kettle is in your left hand. If you're left-handed, try the opposite. When pouring water from the kettle, allow your index finger to extend down the handle towards the spout, affording more control and precision in your pour. Like with the teapot, try to feel the connection you have to the stream of liquid. Practice aiming into very specific locations. One way to do this is to use very small cups and try filling them with a specified amount of water without spilling any. Try filling several such cups in a row, without spilling any water and with as much precision as possible. Over time, raise the kettle up and practice aiming from higher/further away. You will find the stream of water slowly becoming an extension of your arm, and your spirit. Mastery involves such practice...





Tadasana



HARMONY THROUGH ALCHEMY

We started this series last issue, but thought we could properly introduce it this time and then continue it each issue, focusing on an element each time.

“To know harmony is to know the Eternal,
To know the Eternal is to cultivate insight.”

—Lao Tzu, *Dao De Ching*, Verse 55—

Harmony through alchemy has always been central to the aesthetics and philosophy of tea culture, whether clearly expressed by ancient Daoist mendicants, or left unstated, yet recognized by the modern tea drinker who intuitively knows when a tea set functions well, when a tea is brewed properly, or when something in the process is off. The mixing and blending of figurative and material elements in tea truly is alchemical—both externally in the way the leaf, water, fire and teaware combine to form the liquor; and internally in the way we use the tea session to create peace, quiet and a stillness that inspires dialogue with Nature and the Dao. And harmony has always been the guiding principle of these processes, for it is the harmony of a tea set that makes it beautiful and functional, the harmony of a tearoom which inspires relaxation, and even the harmony of the leaf, water and teaware which combines to make the best liquor. In the exploration of tea and our own development towards mastery, harmony is the ideal that we must seek out, just as masters past and present have always done.

The best teas are those which are brewed in a place where all the elements are in harmony together. This needn't mean anything magical or difficult to understand: “harmony” might just refer to the way that the proper water, at the proper temperature, combines with the right kind of leaves in the right amount, all in the best teaware, etc. What could be more alchemical? More and more modern tea farmers, artists that craft teaware, and even tea drinkers are beginning to understand that harmony must guide their tea. In exploring the elements that go into a fine cup of tea, and the way in which a more harmonious approach can be achieved, we can learn not only how to develop and progress in Cha Dao, but how tea can be a part of a healthier, calmer and more productive lifestyle.

Since ancient times Chinese sages and seers have separated the material world into five elements called “*Wu-shing* (五行)”: wood, earth, water, fire, and metal. These principal elements are extremely

complicated, influencing all aspects of Chinese culture, philosophy and spirituality—from Daoism to Buddhism, Feng-shui, medicine and even tea. Lu Yu himself inscribed symbols representing the *Wu-shing* on all of his teaware, and spoke of the way they all combined fluently in the brewing of tea.

Traditionally, these elements represented much more than just material aspects of the universe. They were also processes, with fire representing temperature and earth representing yin energy for example, and much more. They guided the selection and construction of buildings, understanding of the seasons and agriculture, spiritual work and meditation as well as Chinese medicine.

For tea brewing, it isn't important that one understand the library of concepts and ideas behind the *Wu-shing* or even recognize all of the phenomena that these concepts refer to as they occur in Nature. In order to grow in tea and develop in Cha Dao, we only need to understand how each of these elements combine to make the greatest cup of tea, and the way they come together in our spirits so that drinking fine tea daily can become more than just a beverage or refreshment, but a Way of living in concordance with ourselves, with nature and ultimately with each other as well.

As an ongoing column, I thought that each issue we could explore one of the *Wu-shing* as it pertains to Cha Dao. One should remember that the elements flow in and through each other, so the earth and water are in the wood, the fire in the water, etc., and we're just separating them conceptually for the sake of discussion. In understanding each of these elements, we might begin to see how they can either make or break the overall harmony of our tea session and our approach to tea as a time for relaxation, quiet, insight or even just the desire to share good tea with family and friends.

***Last issue, we started at the source of all tea:
Water. Let us now turn to Fire...***

~FIRE~

THE CONVEYOR OF TEA

Fire is the energy at the center of our universe and our civilization. The stars of fire fill our sky and remind us of how vast a world we live in. And their nearest kin, our sun, lights our world and courses through all that we do. Even our technology is fueled by solar energy, fossil or renewable. Ancient people knew to respect the sun, and its relationship in our lives. As our sky is filled with the fire of so many suns, so too is our own Mother Earth pregnant with a deep, burning warmth. That warmth has nurtured all life on this planet as much as the sunlight that enlivens us from without.

Without heat nothing moves. Tea, like all plants, translates sunlight and starlight into Wood—into physical substances we can touch and taste, smell and drink. Through the plants, we absorb sun energy and motivate our bodies. The temperature in our bodies is a measurement of life itself, and consequently so many of our metaphors regarding death contain variations of the word “cold”. Internally, so many of our bodily and spiritual processes require heat, and externally fire is the center of our tribes—the beginning of a civilization.

In most of the mythologies of the world, fire is stolen from the gods and given to man, usually by a relay race of animals that get burned carrying it to

us, which explains their color variations—in plumage, fur, etc. Such stories remind us, amongst other things, that our earthly lives are connected to greater, Heavenly circles. There is insight in understanding that the fire at the center of the first human councils, and the heat that powers our cars and jets, is all the same as the heat and fire in our sun; and that the heat in that sun is the same as the heat in its distant relatives, many of which are fueling and energizing their own planets full of life. Do those distant relations pay homage to their sun, knowing that it catalyzes all life on their planet or have they forgotten as many of us have?

Though the movement of tea begins with water, it is fire that stirs the ceremony and begins the alchemy. Imagine the tea ceremony as a dance: the water is the quiet rolling that begins, and a hush so fluidly lifts us into its quiet embrace, as the dancer and her music gently drift onto the stage. But it is only when she meets the first surge of energy, and the music rises in tempo and grace that the magical alchemy of music-to-dance begins. A rhythm ensues between the water and fire, and when it peaks we will introduce it to the tea.

The tea has known temperature before. It was once a leaf on a tree, gathering sun and water through its stem. It has since been in meditation, resting with-



13 out the air, temperature and water that once meant life for it. Now, we will resurrect it, returning the sun and water and air to it through the boiled water.

Fire is the conveyer of tea. Without it, tea cannot give its essence to us. Without heat in the water, the Qi is not released and conveyed to us. Also, as the tea reaches our bodies, it is the heat that allows it to spread to our extremities and communicate with our whole selves. Heat disperses the energy of tea, releasing its fragrance and flavor as well as its soul. There are traditionally four principals of gongfu tea, as handed down in this tradition. Only one of them has to do with external principals, and that is the first: maintain temperature throughout. This means that the temperature should not change from the kettle to the guests' mouths. It is way harder than you think; and like most ancient gongfu principals, this one contains layers upon layers of work and skill to get to the point where temperature can be steady throughout a tea ceremony.

Ideally, the heat for tea should be quick and Spartan, allowing the water to retain its essence as it transforms in this way. If the heating process takes too long, the water is over-cooked and flattens, losing much of its magic. (Over-boiling also causes such flatness.)

There are many kinds of heat in this modern world, and each has to be weighed in terms of alchemy and suitability for tea, as well as convenience. Many water heaters use induction to heat the water,

which is a way of reversing electromagnetic currents to create heat. While such devices are convenient and incredibly fast and efficient, they also spoil the water. We wouldn't recommend using them unless convenience and speed outweigh other parameters. As we mentioned, water heated faster is better for tea, as it preserves the water's Qi and flavor. But induction heaters send an electric current through the water—either directly or indirectly, which changes the water's constitution drastically. This is very analogous to using a microwave to cook food. While such devices are useful because of the quick and convenient way they heat food up, they also change it in some important energetic ways. This doesn't mean that they should never be used, and we feel the same way about induction water heaters, but rather that you gain speed and convenience and lose quality.

For convenience, we recommend using some kind of hotplate. Such plates can be had for very cheap. They have an element that heats up an iron or Teflon plate, often with a dial for various temperatures. These are also not ideal for the flavor or spirit of tea, but they do not allow any electric waves into the water, which change its spirit. The plus side of such plates is that you can control temperature very easily and consistently when heating water, and it is quick and convenient. The downside is that you are then using electric heat to power your tea ceremony rather than actual fire, and therefore lose one of the elements.

A step up is to use a gas or alcohol stove. These stoves at least have a real flame, closer to fire in its elemental form. Though heat and fire are related, there is something very different about them. Elemental fire changes everything. Most people can tell the difference between a room heated by a fireplace and one heated by an electric radiator, just as we can distinguish between water heated on fire and that on electric burners. Most alcohol burners are more for maintaining heat than for bringing the water to a boil, however. If you have one of those, you may want to heat the water on your stove and then use the alcohol burner to maintain the heat.

The ideal way to heat water for tea is to use charcoal. Charcoal has infrared, like the sun. It returns that energy to the tea. We aren't sure of the scientific reason why, nor is it necessary for us to figure it out, but water prepared on charcoal steams way more than other water, even if they are the same exact temperature. Also, we have done experiments heating water on electric and charcoal to exactly equal temperatures and then found that everyone present could still distinguish the water heated on charcoal



as being hotter and brighter. Sometimes we use the adjective “ionic”, though not in any proper scientific way. We mean that the heat seems elemental, like it is in each of the atoms at their core. It feels as if more of the water’s substance is infused with heat. Such heat penetrates way deeper, into the tea and then into us when we drink such tea. Penetrating the tea, the water extracts and then conveys more of its essence to us.

Using charcoal is a whole other book that exceeds this article. Our Japanese master said that a *Chajin* (tea person) who wishes to understand charcoal should keep their coals going for three years, and at the end of that time, they’ll be an expert. We suggest starting with a simple brazier and smokeless, non-toxic charcoal. Here in Taiwan, we start students out with a smokeless coal made of compressed coconut husks. It is good because all the pieces light uniformly and are all the same shape, which makes arranging them easier than the natural kinds of coal. Perhaps we can explore this aspect of tea more later on.

Finally, you should try to experience, harness and master the heat in tea. Harnessing heat was a huge step in human evolution. We must respect the heat, and not assume we create it. Rather, we invite it into our tea and bodies. If it is not harnessed with respect, fire can be very destructive. In order to experience the fire element in tea more deeply, you should learn to experience it on as many levels as possible. This means gauging temperature with your senses rather than using a thermometer.

We often start students out with a glass kettle to help introduce them to the fire in tea, so that they can make friends with it, which ultimately leads to mastery over the harnessing of heat in tea. This

allows us to see the bubbles in the kettle and associate them with various temperatures. Later you can use other senses, like hearing the different sounds the kettle makes, or touching the handle and feeling its vibrations. But start with the bubbles because that is the easiest way. The Chinese had names for different kinds of bubbles: “shrimp-eye”, “string of pearls”, “crab-eye”, “fish-eye” and “old man hair” (which is sometimes also called “dragon water”). The references to “eye” are to do with the size of the bubbles. There is a progression in size from very tiny to strings of pearls, crab-eye-sized bubbles and on up to bubbles the size of fish eyes. The “old man hair” is when the water is frantically frothing and boiling. Almost all tea is suited to water that is “fish-eye”. When water reaches a frantic boil, the oxygen is breaking away from the molecules and the constitution of the water is changing, which also alters its Qi (energy).

Experiment with different temperatures.

Some teas, especially green, white and yellow teas, can be more delicious with slightly lower temperatures. But if they are high-quality, they will also respond in a different way to higher temperatures. Usually, the more heat the better. It conveys the tea’s essence to us and distributes it throughout our bodies, facilitating deeper and longer-lasting communication.

Fire is a huge aspect of tea and life. There is so much to explore looking into its swirling depths when you are camping, or seeing it twinkle in the distant stars that map our sky. Most essentially, we can feel it burning from within the center of our earth and the center of our bodies. When we drink tea, we can look inward at the temperature as it flows in currents that awaken us, and connect us to all these greater circles around us...



THE POWER OF PARTICIPATION

This article was written by our very own Kaiya the Great (and Merciful).

It's been a couple of months now and I hope that you have all been witnessing the growth of your inner trees, your tea wisdom. I'm amazed time after time at how long I can stay oblivious to big changes in myself, but there is no doubt we all have grown in infinite ways even in the little time since my last article, whether we noticed it or not. I had a similar moment recently, looking back at the growth of this center and realizing that a tree has sprung up right beneath my nose here as well. And as this tree's roots sink deeper, increasingly embracing more of the earth as each month passes, its trunk broadens and its branches reach out further still, beckoning an ever-increasing number of weary travelers to rest beneath its leaves, and even harvest a few into their bowls if they like. As a result, these past few weeks have seen more activity than ever before, meaning that more and more time and energy have been required of everyone, and as the need for participation in the care and growth of our as yet young tree has steadily risen, so too has my understanding of what participation really means and how powerful it can be.

As I mentioned in my last article, I don't live in the center now. This means that I don't just sweep, mop, wash dishes, empty the garbage, keep tea spaces clean and tend to altars at the center, I have all the same responsibilities all over again at "my" home as well. I have made this a bit easier on myself by working as few hours as I can in order to cover my expenses and such, but as more and more people begin coming to visit the center, it has grown more and more difficult to juggle the two. For a long time, I spent every bit of my free time serving or cleaning one place or the other, and I must admit that as this went on I occasionally developed a bit of an internal grumble. As I cleaned a floor at the center, I might think of the dirty floor in *my* house, and that if I didn't have to spend my precious time cleaning this floor, I could have some time to relax and drink tea after I clean *my own* floor. As more and more travelers have begun coming here, I've found that it has no longer been possible to keep both places in their best condition, and have also realized that there is no choice but to let go and accept a bit of messiness in my home. As it turns out, being completely wrung-out and unable to handle it all has been the best thing that could have happened.

The moment I let that "*my*" go, a whole new vista of reality has opened up before me. I have not only found joy in my daily tasks, but have started seeing the very same joy reflected in the faces of our visitors. I've also begun to more clearly witness the transformations and healing that has always been going on, in myself as well. But above all, I've found myself more deeply connecting to the people coming here, in absolutely everything that I do. And it wasn't that all this wasn't happening before, but in looking constantly at myself through my grumbling I was blinded to a beautiful garden that had been growing and flourishing all around me the whole time. In essence I was complaining that I was cultivating another tree instead of cultivating my own. Yet, to what end am I cultivating my tree in the first place?

Until quite recently, if asked what the purpose of meditation, drinking tea, and otherwise developing stillness and peace in myself (in other words, why am I growing this tree within myself), my first response would have been: "So that I can be still and peaceful and rest beneath it, of course." If this is really what I want, though, why am I doing all this work? And more importantly why am I drinking tea? Truly, it's a foolish choice of medicine for this dis-ease. After all, there are a huge variety of more powerful and direct medicines geared to just that kind of self-centered peace: tranquilizers, marijuana, a few beers even. But tea teaches us that this is no way to live. In fact, this was its very first teaching! It was this very teaching that motivated it to speak out to Shen Nong, as he sat blithely beneath its branches. And like any good teacher it led by example, reaching out to touch the Emperor and drop a few leaves into his bowl, in essence declaring: "Cease your solitary confinement, make an effort for someone else, share your fruits, and witness the power and beauty of connection!"

Now I hope that nobody misunderstands this and thinks that I am proposing that you are wasting your time and are selfish if you drink and enjoy your tea alone from time to time, or even most of the time. Actually, the one big relief of all this is that I realized that it's not that I wasn't connected to the joy all around me because it wasn't there before: I simply didn't have my eyes open to it! Similarly, you can't really hoard your tea and drink it alone and not share it with people even if you want to, because the

moment you drink it, the tea becomes you, and then everything you do and everyone you touch that day are also touched by your tea. If we don't participate in this process then it is we who miss out. And although that connection is of course always there, it can't do us much good if we aren't conscious of it.

This is the essence of this Hut we are building together; to increase global participation in our connection to each other through tea. Participation connects us to others, gets us out of our selves and into each other. We have a saying around here that there can be no understanding without involvement—no understanding of people without participating in their lives and of course no understanding of tea without actually getting involved in how it's grown, where it comes from and how it's prepared and drunk. One wonderful thing about this is that although so young, this tree has the strength to offer some shade and even a few leaves to those of you who are far away. And so many of you feel this and

want to care for this tree which gives of itself so freely. Visitors and distant friends alike are constantly asking us: "What else can I do? I want to help more!" And that is why I wanted to write this article. My life has been drastically changed by your participation, and I wanted you to be aware of that and thank you for it. I also want to encourage you all to try to step a little bit more out of yourselves, and participate more in the connections you are already a part of every day, some of which you might be unaware of.

Share your tea! Make the tea we send you each month with someone new, perhaps. Or make it for yourself with intention, absorbing what it has to say. And then you can say that same thing to everyone you meet and take heart in knowing that even if you can't see the differences you are making in the world, they are there—they are even there thousands of miles away on the other side of the world and beyond (Galactivation!). I raise my bowl and the universe spins...

The two incredible *Chatong* that made it all possible, and served with a grace and humility that we all could bow to.



TADASANA

This April, we had the incredible fortune to serve tea at the Tadasana Yoga Festival in Santa Monica California. The hosts of the event designed a three-day fair near the beach with tons of music, yoga and workshops. They also graciously afforded us a huge tent to serve tea to the yogis and yoginis. We had an amazing time answering questions, some silly and some incredible, sharing tea and tea wisdom, and occasionally resting in some meditative calm, which was easy since most of the participants were heading into our tent after yoga, meditation or healing sessions.

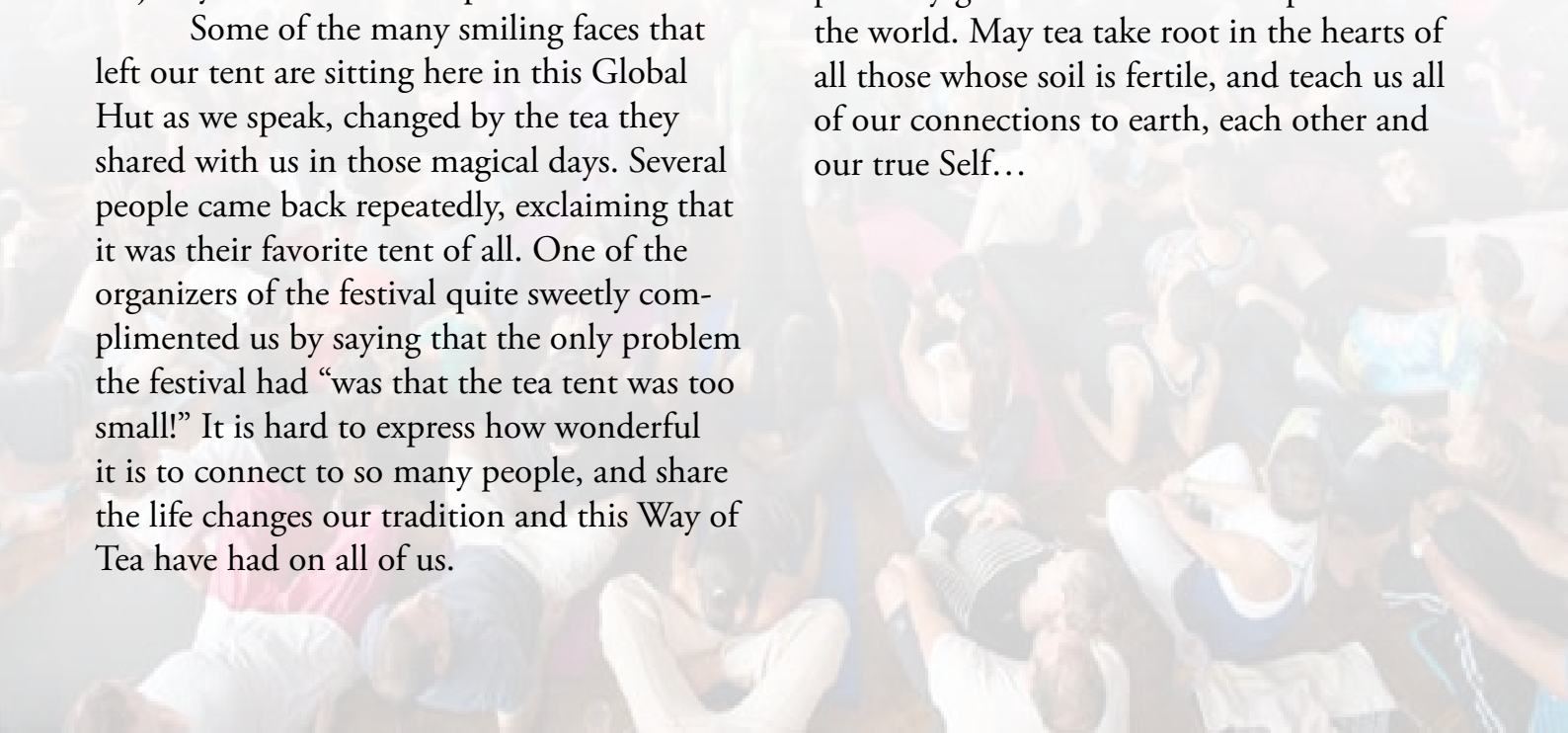
We set the tent up with three main tables: one serving boiled shou Puerh, with the occasional sheng to teach people the difference; a second table offering a variety of teas in different styles, with different brewers; and a third table offering Sun Moon Lake red tea in bowls, as you will be drinking this month. And they were so often full. Fortunately, the schedule at the festival offered the participants so many activities that few had time to stay for more than a few bowls, which allowed space and flow for others. There were several thousand people at the festival, and though we aren't sure, it is likely that we served the majority of them at some point.

Some of the many smiling faces that left our tent are sitting here in this Global Hut as we speak, changed by the tea they shared with us in those magical days. Several people came back repeatedly, exclaiming that it was their favorite tent of all. One of the organizers of the festival quite sweetly complimented us by saying that the only problem the festival had “was that the tea tent was too small!” It is hard to express how wonderful it is to connect to so many people, and share the life changes our tradition and this Way of Tea have had on all of us.

It was also amazing to see so many of our local friends and students show up to serve. They did an amazing job keeping a steady flow of water to the three tables, and did it with grace and humility. Others brewed tea—some with little or no experience making tea for such large groups—and did it smilingly and with open hearts. The response, of course, was what you'd expect. A lot of “I never knew...” and “Tea...*really?*”

It was also amazing to feel the positive energy that most of our guests were bringing in with them. There were several large yoga tents around us and sometimes we could hear kirtan from one, meditation from another and a workshop of some kind from the third. The energy was consequently sparkling, and I doubt so many people would have returned again and again if they hadn't been opened up and made ready to receive the tea. You could always tell the true tea lovers, though—the ones who the Leaf has been seeking. They were the ones asking the deep questions, resonating with the tea, the tent and us. They were the ones who felt like brothers and sisters before they sat down.

We had an amazing time. May all the positivity generated at Tadasana spread round the world. May tea take root in the hearts of all those whose soil is fertile, and teach us all of our connections to earth, each other and our true Self...





Tadasana



When you begin down an Eastern path, and Cha Dao mostly heads East, you quickly realize the important role language can play in our thinking, and consequently our insights. For the most part, we come to love the ancient spiritual words in languages like Sanskrit and Chinese—for their subtlety and breadth. There is one English word we've come to like better than its Eastern equivalents, however: "Enlightenment". When most people think of "Enlightenment" they see in the word the "light" and are reminded of the light in us, which we all travel towards. But "light" in English has another meaning: not heavy! Being enlightened means, literally, *lightening* up! Don't take yourself serious, or anything else for that matter. There is an old Indian saying: "beware the spiritual/religious man that takes himself seriously!" And many of you know how we here do so love laughter and humor. We thought that these newsletters might be getting a bit heavy and that we would en-lighten them up.

Prior to Tadasana, our students in LA were doing some rehearsals to get ready and practice brewing. They sent us a list of questions they thought many people would ask at the festival. Some of the questions were silly and so are the answers. None of them were real questions or real answers given at the festival. We thought we'd share them with you, sending some chuckles along with this month's tea...



1. What's special about this tea?

It is alive, as are you. Rest in your own soul and meet it as you would another soul.

2. Is there caffeine in the tea?

Yes. What does "caffeine" mean to you? Is it a Gremlin or a snark?

3. Where is your actual teahouse?

Down the path of the soul, just past the smurf village and into the hermitage of your heart.

4. What's the difference between Puerh and Oolong?

Vast, like the difference between America and China. This requires some explanation: Puerh and Oolong are different trees and different processing methods, but it's more complicated than that. I think you may be too dull to understand, but you sure are cute!

5. What's Puerh?

You just asked me this. Shut up you or I'll smash this bowl over your head!! *Hahah I'm kidding (*maybe*). Puerh is a kind of tea produced in the Southwest province of Yunnan in China, the birthplace of all tea (and tea weirdos like me).

6. Are different teas prepared in different ways?

Of course, like food (and yoga festivals).

7. Does water make a difference? Water temperature?

Of course. A cup of tea is 99% water. Temperature is the medium of tea. It awakens the leaf and conveys its essence to our bodies, as well as serving to spread the Qi of the tea throughout the body. Wanna dance?

8. What are all these tea utensils used for?

Why for making tea, my dear. Say, you're kind of cute. Wanna go out some time and get a tofu wrap?

9. Why do you use different tea pots?

The way you do at home in cooking. There is an art to tea preparation, and having more utensils helps. You can make food with one simple pot, and tea is the same, but it helps to have more tools, of course.

10. Fermented tea? Like kombucha?

Yes a bit. Fermentation is a magical, *smurfy* process, far beyond what we can understand. Especially with regards to tea! And it is natural. Even elephants do it!

11. What are the health benefits of tea?

Whiter teeth, less fat, a super heart, excellent kidneys, shiny skin, complete spiritual enlightenment, a stress-free life: basically all the stuff those people shown in your yoga catalogue have... Really, try to see tea as medicine in the Native American sense of the word.

12. Is there a proper way to drink tea?

Yes, in your mouth rather than over your head or in your pants.

13. How long have you been in business?

Well, our boss Hudon has been plotting and scheming since he was little, but Temple Tea, his latest scheme, was born in the last couple years. Fortunately, his business partner Taylor mitigates some, not all, of his scheming with love energy.

14. Where does this tea come from?

All our teas are from China, Taiwan or Greg Wendt's home planet of Triglon.

15. Where can I buy more of this awesome tea and teaware?

At Temple Tea of course, you boob!

16. What's the point of tea?

What's the point of living. Why don't we just abolish the universe? It would save a LOT of energy!

TEA WAYFARERS

From now on, we plan to introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you each month in these newsletters. We hope that this helps us all get to know each other better. 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 show you some glimpses of such beautiful people and their tea. Since Wu De went to LA last month, we thought we'd introduce you to one of your amazing sisters there, Suzanne Toro.

Suzanne Toro has expressed her gifts as a shamanic broadcaster, sound-intuitive healing channel, author, poet, food alchemist and "co-creator" in projects inspired to transform and rejuvenate humanity and Planet Earth.

Her love for trees and tea has opened an ancient part of her soul. Somewhere in the mountains jutting up from the valley and with a large body of water below, she seems to recall a time when she sat in a cave with a fire keeping her kettle of water warm for the next bowl of tea. She would sit at the mouth of the cave watching over the canopy of trees, as the sun would reflect the earth's beauty on the still water below. These memories of long periods of silence and unwritten prose fill her heart with each sip.

As she allows the past to drift with the morning mist, she has welcomed her ancient friend Tea into her healing practice and sanctuary where each visitor abides in a warm cup of tea before they drift off into their harmonic sound-bath conducted by their soul and orchestrated by her. Ahh the wisdom of tea....

Suzanne says about herself:

Who am 'I'? In all truthfulness, I am 'Nothing'.

I have gathered endless words to describe my accomplishments and often what seemed like exaggerations to justify my own self-worth. When, I get to the core of my existence in this moment, I realize with great humility that "I" am "Nothing". And with great joy I feel the freedom in those words and in embodying that truth. Within "Nothing" I have found the possibility for "Everything!"

**She can be found at
www.suzannetoro.com**

Bowl arrives
right by side
Side sits
leaves wait
wisdom lifts

water incubates
mist creates
the drift
fear dissolves
memories rise

Freedom pours
bowl arrives
right by side
leaves penetrate
wisdom shifts



CENTER NEWS

The Global Tea Hut website now has a forum up, where we can all discuss this month's tea and ask or answer questions, as well as share our experiences. It is a great way to meet some of your brothers and sisters in the hut. Come and join us:

www.globalteahut.org/forum

(We are also on Facebook and Twitter now!)



We are planning to launch a free video series of teachings this month, from our center here in Taiwan. Wu De will give some teachings on tea and share some life wisdom each week. This is definitely coming together. We have a director on his way to make the intro and first couple of videos. It should be great!



There are currently almost 70 people in Global Tea Hut from all around the world, countries like Spain, Russia, Estonia, Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada, USA, the U.K. and Taiwan. We have passed the cost of our center, 1000 USD per month, and are now saving towards some of our long and short term goals. You can read about them on our site. We are so overjoyed to be a part of this abundance and exchange.



If any of you are interested in seeing these newsletters in color, you can read them on the Internet at the GTH website, under the link for 'newsletters'. Some of the photography is worth taking a peak at.

We have used some of your contributions to buy some very nice, adult bunkbeds and remodeled the center to be able to host more of you if and when you find yourselves Eastward bound. We look forward to sharing tea with more of you!



We have given out 3 scholarships for a free year of GTH to people who want in but cannot afford the cost. If you know anyone else interested, please let us know. It is a great joy to expand this community!



Let us know about what you think of Global Tea Hut so far, either by contacting us or expressing your thoughts on the new forum. We would love to hear your comments or criticism. We are here to serve and make this experience better for everyone, bringing us all closer together.

www.globalteahut.org

www.teasagehut.org

www.the-leaf.org

Be happy!

“There’s magic tea in here!”

