Tea Journey Vol. 1 No. 1 Spring 2016

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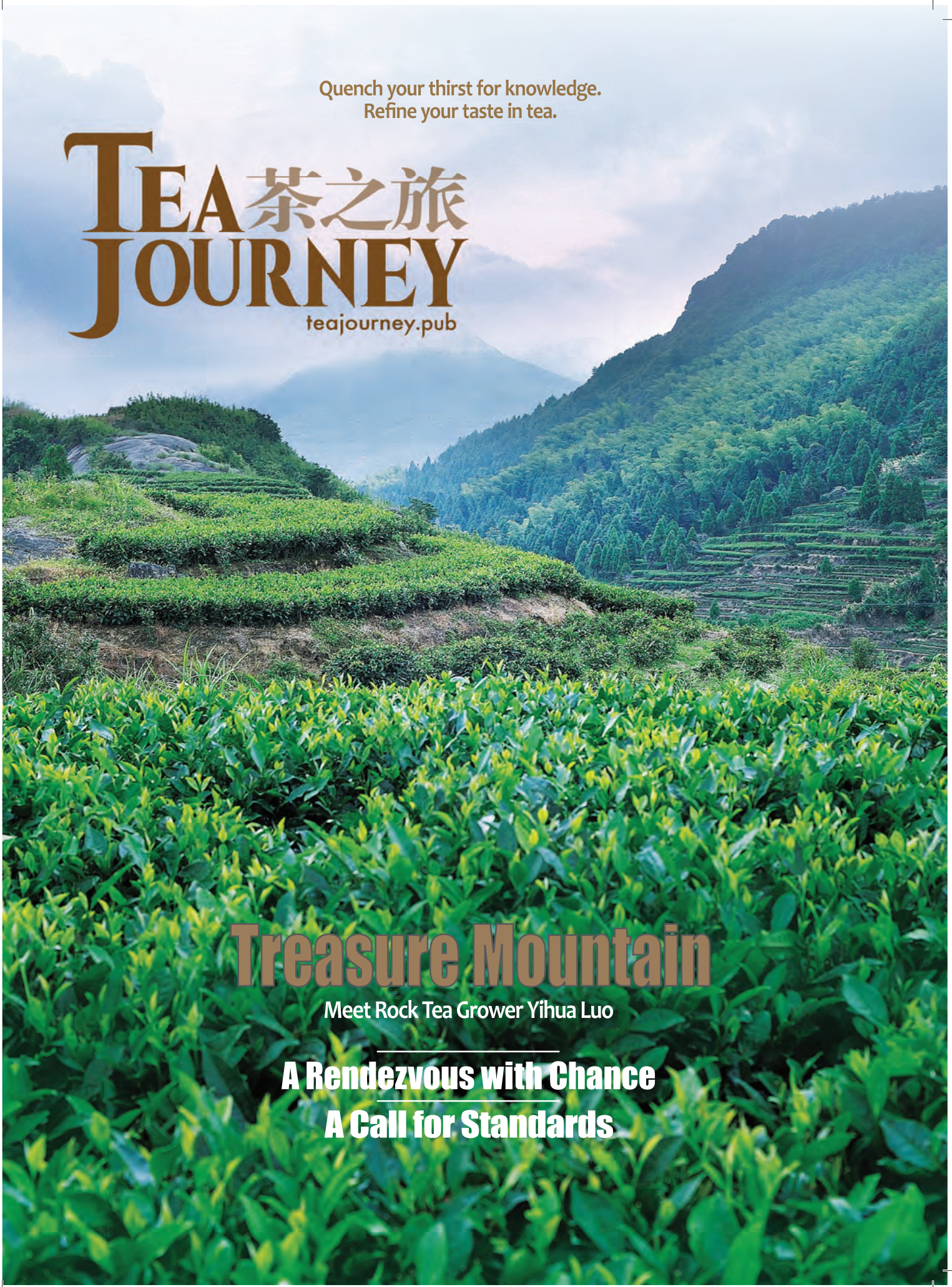


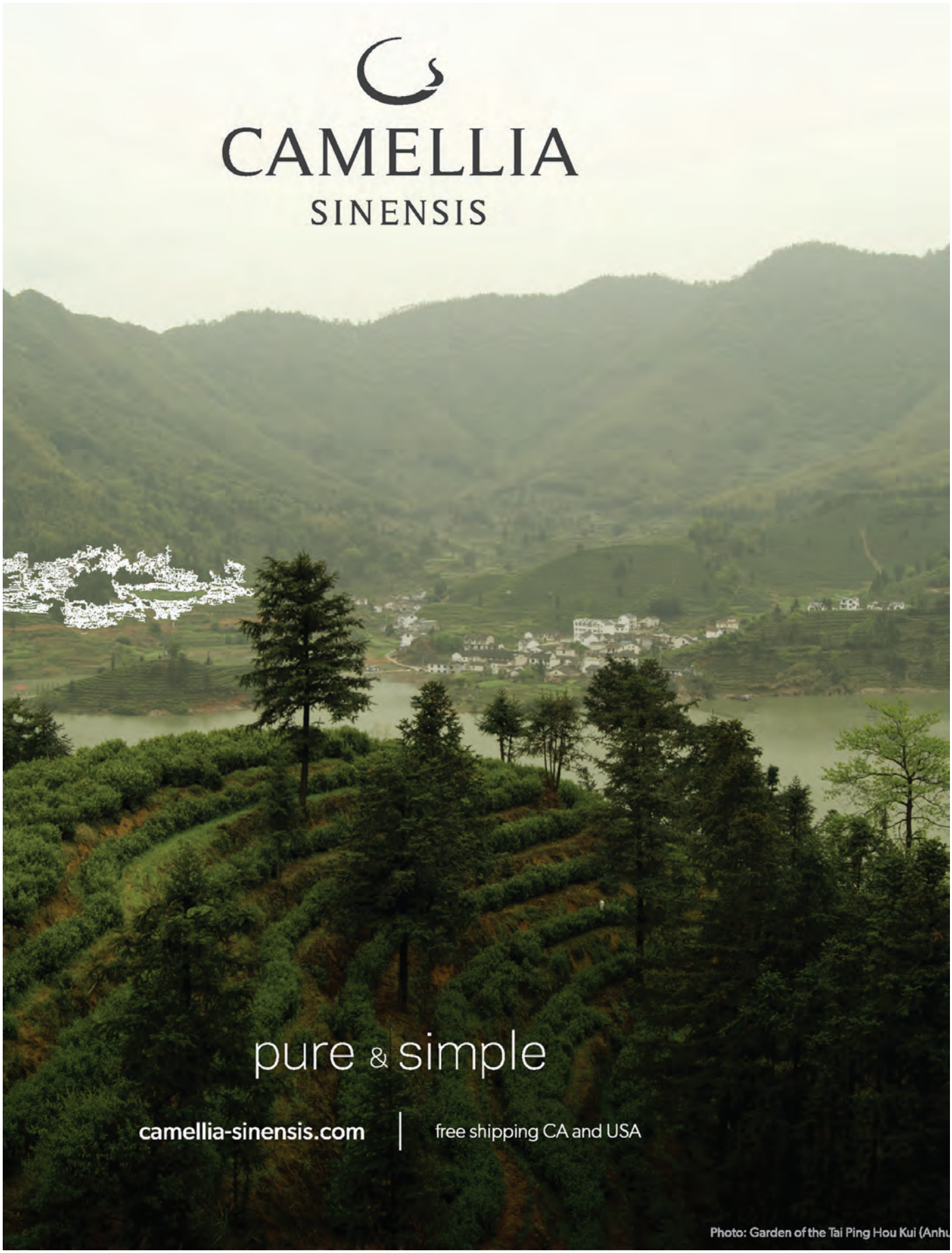
Treasure Mountain

Meet Rock Tea Grower Yihua Luo

A Rendezvous with Chance

A Call for Standards

Charter Issue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"Drink your tea slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis on which the earth revolves – slowly, evenly, without rushing toward the future."

– Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Hanh

A serene morning glow pours over the expansive tea gardens in Yunnan, China. Photo by Photosynthesis Studio.

Cover: A beautiful hill garden in Mei Shan, Fuding, Fujian Province, China. Photo by Qiu, *Cha Dao Life* magazine.

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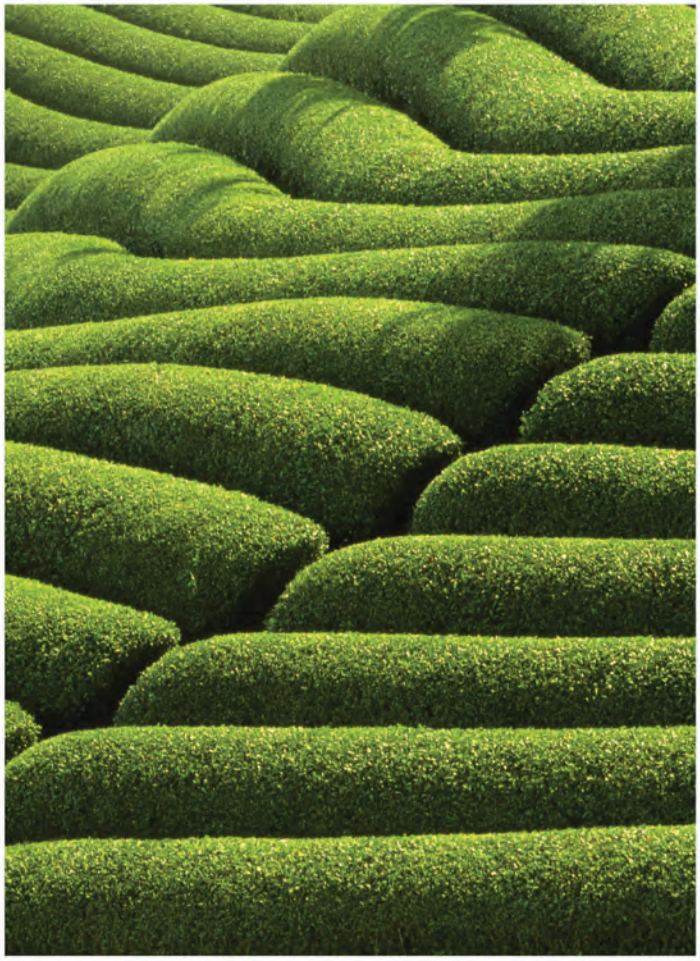

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Tea Journey is a digital magazine, website and blog published by Mystic Media Custom Publishing, 21 Roslyn Road, Suite 1108, Winnipeg, MB R3L2S8 Canada. *Tea Journey* publishes three issues per year in April, August and November with regular blog posts between issues.

The journey begins...

Half the world drank tea today. We hope to double that count.

Our enthusiasm is unbounded when it comes to fine tea. We drink it hot. We drink it cold. We drink tea at dusk and dawn. We bake with it, poach fish, and add it to salads. We stir tea-tinis and take it with a dram of scotch. We enjoy its pleasant flavor and the calm wakefulness it brings. We benefit from its healing and protective properties. We desire the social ritual of tea and revel in the conversations that follow.

And not just any tea, we prefer tea made from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. We prefer tea that is authentic. Tea that is pure. We love dark teas and white. We love green teas and yellow. We love the exotic wulong and puer. We love simple tea and blended tea. We love teas mixed with florals, fruits and the finest herbs and spices.

We love tea and we know that you will love it too.

Tea Journey is a collaborative venture founded by tea writers, expert tasters, fine tea importers, authors and tea educators. We are story tellers, traveling the ancient caravan roads and sea routes to the tea lands, returning with elusive and richly-detailed knowledge to share. Our reporters and editors in China, Japan, Africa, and India work in their native tongue to insure authentic content later made readable in English by experienced editors and tea experts in the west.

Distribution is digital by app or web, downloadable to print-on-demand. Spring, summer and winter issues are filled with in-depth articles, beautiful photos, video and recordings that bring you to origin and teach you to select, source and prepare fine quality teas for less than $2.50 a pot.

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Ju Pu Cha
陈皮普洱

a dance of dried tangerine and puer

Try this puer stuffed in a dried tangerine with its smooth and uplifting citrusy aroma. The flavor is deftly balanced with the plummy, earthy and glowing vintage puer. The wrapper is not just any tangerine - traditionally only those grown near Xinhui in China's Guangdong Province are used to make Chén Pí, (aged tangerine peel). The tangerine aids digestion. Tea masters select fruit from well-established trees and place puer that is 2-3 years old inside. The tangerine is then sewn shut and baked, aging for at least six months. 25 grams of Ju Pu Cha usually sell for $ 8-14. To brew, use 4 grams of puer and 2 grams of the tangerine peel in 600 ml of water and bring to a boil, then simmer 30 minutes. Let it cool for five minutes before decanting.

Pieces of the tangerine peel are broken off and steeped along with the puer tea in the cup.

Creating a Palette for Your Palate

Culinary experience reinvented through tea infusion and color

Vancouver-based **Tealeaves** collaborated with the **Pantone Color Institute** in curating a posh and colorful fusion of food, liquor and tea. Thirty world-renowned chefs and mixologists were challenged to create a recipe for a tea entrée, tea dessert and tea cocktail, inspired by selections from Tealeaves' Whole Leaf Pyramid Teabag collection and one out of ten selected PANTONE colors. Creations expressed a mood such as bold, peaceful or enchanted. The process is showcased on the *PaletteForYourPalate* online exhibit in sleek videos, with notes on the conceptualization and individual recipes.

Using Tealeaves' organic earl grey with lavender, the mood keyword for No.4 Pantone lavender purple color 7677C is aptly Enchanted.
The entree named Purple Haze, created by Omni King Edward Hotel, directed a refined colorful concerto.
The enchanted pastry was called The Dreamland. It was created by Rosewood Cordevalle and tells a fairy tale of the mid-summer night.
The enchanted mix was called The Lavender Bespoke Cocktail. It was created by St.Regis Bal Harbour Resort as a reminder of romantic island holidays.

Whimsical Tea Fish

A class of 28 university design students devised these whimsical tea bags for Charm Villa, a Taipei-based creative agency. The fashionable fish, which have won several design awards, are constructed of a Japanese fabric that requires 16 steps to make by hand. Flavors include a black and three wulong teas. A box of 12 is available for $72 online on Amazon.com.

Steeping goldfish are handmade from fabric and filled with tea.

Mammoth Tusk Teaset

Woven rattan is used to edge the tray and for trivets under the tea and coffee pot in this original Marc Newson design.

Photos courtesy Georg Jensen

Apple Computer designer Marc Newson recently unveiled a mammoth-ivory tea set for Georg Jensen, a Danish metalware brand.

The $120,000 five-piece hammered silver tea pot, coffee server, creamer, sugar bowl and tray were created as a limited edition offering available to just 10 buyers.

Newson, an Australian industrial designer based in London, is known for his unique furniture, but has also designed a limited edition samurai sword, a retractable fountain pen for Hermès, the interiors of Quantas Airliners and airport lounges around the world.

The “responsibly sourced” ivory forms the handles and a pill-shaped knob operates the half-moon shaped opening in the tea and coffee pots. The finished work is from a computer assisted 3D prototype and hammered by hand in a Copenhagen shop.

“Who else but Marc could bring to this domestic, modest and functional family of tea related objects the gravitas, the feeling of universality, the harmony of domesticity and ceremony?” asked Georg Jensen CEO David Chu, noting both Newson and Georg Jensen began their careers as sculptors. “Marc Newson was, for me, really the only choice,” he said.

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Tea first cultivated

3,000 Years Prior to the Pyramids

Archaeologists digging in the Tianluo Mountains near Ningbo, in Zhejiang province, China, have traced the origin of tea to around 3,000 years before the Egyptians constructed the first pyramids. In 2004 researchers discovered old roots of the *Camellia sinensis* plant which showed traces of manual digging. Evidence of cultivation and broken pottery at the Neolithic village dig led researchers to conclude that these artifacts are about 6,000 years old, according to the Zhejiang Cultural Relics and Archaeological Research Center. In a peer-reviewed report following 10 years of study, researchers concluded it was the Hemudu culture, flourishing between 5,500 BC and 3,300 BC, that first cultivated and brewed tea.

1. Neolithic earthenware etched with a plant design above was discovered at the Hemudu archaeological site in 1977.
2. Part of a *Camellia sinensis* rhizome
3. *Camellia sinensis* rhizome roots
4. Rhizomes were excavated in the hollow pit, next to which a house foundation was found.

Photo courtesy of Hemudu Site Museum, Zhejiang.


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Treasure Mountain

Tea grower Yihua Luo creates wulong more valued than gold

Story by **Nan Cui**
Photos by **Yihua Luo** and **Photosynthesis**

Long into the night tea grower Yihua Luo keeps a watchful eye over the new harvest roast. It is the critical final stage of the most intricate processing technique of any tea. He hasn't slept in 32 hours.

Luo is making rock tea (Yan Cha) precisely as it has been done for the past 300-400 years. He grew the tea in the rugged Wuyi Mountains in northern Fujian province, a range that rises to 7,000 feet.

Luo is a traditional grower. His 30-acre farm in Wuyi is 1,640 feet above the sea. The region is famous for Minbei wulong. Three quarters of his 6,500 kilogram yield is processed as wulong, the rest being Lapsang Souchong black tea.

Luo knows tea like few others. He has a shy demeanor but once he begins talking about wulong you can expect the conversation to last a long time, accompanied by superb rock tea.

1. Luo plants a row of Rou Gui, one of eight sub-cultivars in his newly expanded tea garden.
2. Bird's-eye view of Luo's hill garden. These terraces are planted with the 105 Da Hong Pao cultivar.
3. Hand-rolling and twisting tea leaves on a bamboo tray, which is called Rou Nian. Learn more about the process in the info graphic on Page 23.

"The rock flavor (Yan Yun) is unique thanks to a terroir of volcanic rock and moist climate."

Hand-picking the fresh raw leaves.

To be known as a tea master one must demonstrate more than tea-making skills. A true master is capable of delivering delicious, foolproof products that cater to customer requirements despite difficult circumstances. A tea master must compensate for variations in weather while controlling pests and training apprentices. There is more to it than craftsmanship – a tea master is also expected to distill decades of hands-on experiences to a metaphysical level that represents the art of tea.

"Tea in Wuyi dates to the Tang Dynasty in the 9th century. We have always produced the top tea in China. Visit Wuyishan City and you will see the remains of the Imperial Tea Garden that produced tea for Yuan Dynasty (13th century) emperors," says Luo. He speaks of history that deeply resonates with a proud smile.

In the 1600s when China first opened its ports to trade, the Wuyi region was called Bohea. Tea from Chongan County has always been considered one of China's top quality teas, suited for emperors.

Historical records describe more than 200 types of rock teas produced in Wuyi. The most famous is Big Red Robe (Da Hong Pao), which is also the most expensive tea in the world. In 2005, 20 grams of Red Robe harvested from the six mother plants on Wuyi cliff brought RMB ¥200,000 (USD $25,000 - $1,260 per gram) at auction. At the time the price was 90 times greater than gold.

Luo produces three styles of Wulong: Narcissus (Shui Xian), Cinnamon (Rou Gui) and Blended Red Robe which is blended with more than a dozen local cultivars to imitate the original Red Robe.

During this career Luo, 50, has tasted every major tea produced in China.

He collects puer and more recently white tea in small quantities to drink at home. Both age well and offer health benefits. He drinks Iron Goddess wulong (Tie Guan Yin) as well, preferring these teas seasonally when they are fresh on the market.

None compare to rock tea, he explains. The reason is roasting.

The raw tea is plucked in April or early May depending on weather conditions. The lightly roasted new teas are usually available by late June or July.

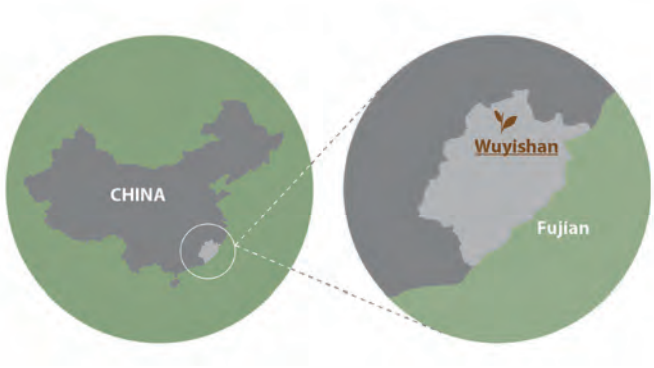
The process begins with the selection of charcoal made from local pine, indigenous to Southern China. The tea is placed in a shallow woven brazier called *Bei Long.*

Bei Long

Bei Long are braziers made of hand-woven peeled bamboo. Charcoal in the lower level provides constant heat to the raw tea (Mao Cha) above.

The largest Bei Long holds up to 4 kg of raw tea. Small ones hold 1 kg. Roasting is done in rounds that take from 6 to 14 hours, depending on the following factors: cultivar, the quality of the fresh tea leaves, moisture level, and whether the fresh tea leaves were picked in sunny or rainy weather. Timing the roast is more of an art than science. Experience and personal preference play a vital role.

Yan yun, written on a cliff of Wuyi World Heritage site.



The work is arduous. During the many hours of roasting, the master and his helpers cannot sleep. They must turn and stir the tea every 45 minutes to one hour. No one, including the tea master, knows the final number of rounds or precise time it will take until the final outcome.

Roasts are classified as light (Qing Bei), full-fire (Zuo Huo), and high fire (Gao Huo, or well-done) depending on the number of rounds. The minimum is three rounds of roasting. At that point the tea is considered lightly roasted. Once it rests it will be good to drink.

The technique is the same for all rock teas but fine tuning determines the results and that is entirely up to the tea master. Green fresh tea leaves picked on a rainy day, for example, are roasted longer to drive off the excess moisture. The cultivar Narcissus leaves are thicker than other cultivars, which means they take longer to roast. A tiny mistake will ruin the tea and render all the previous hard work futile.

A true master brings out the best in the tea.

It takes two weeks for the roasted tea to "breathe out" the charcoal flavor. The tea is sealed in sacks that prevent it from absorbing excess moisture from the air.

Experienced rock tea drinkers generally prefer a more heavily roasted tea and are willing to wait longer. A fully roasted rock tea requires 4 to 6 rounds. The tea takes on a dark color (light roast tea is still a bit yellowish and green in color). Fully roasted teas are not available until autumn starting around the Mid-Autumn Festival in September.

High-fire teas require up to 8 rounds of roasting which results in a deep black and shiny tea. These teas are not ready until the end of year— six months after the fresh tea is plucked.

Connoisseurs say that it is worth the wait. Rock teas are at their best a year after they are plucked. Savvy rock tea drinkers have the patience to wait until after the Chinese New Year and enjoy the new rock tea in spring.

Luo is dividing his time between his tea garden and factory in Wuyi and his store in Beijing's Maliandao market. He returns to his land several times a year, sometimes for two and a half months, to supervise the harvesting and processing of Mao Cha as well as repeat roastings. He also personally supervises the processing of extremely rare and expensive teas such as Rou Gui from Niu Lan Keng (considered China's best Rou Gui region).

According to Luo, making tea the traditional way is an art that demands intense study, hard work and many years of experience to perfect. Sipping the tea from his Jianzhan cup, Luo reflected on his career: "When I was younger, it was a kick selling more tea to make money. Today I enjoy making tea much more. It is very fulfilling to be able to bring out the best features of a quality tea with your skills."

"If I were to go back in time to choose my career again, I would make the same choice, switching from government to tea." he said.

ROCK TEA

ROCK TEAS ARE DARK WULONG TEA

with high degrees of oxidation yelding complex, multifold flavor -

from peaty to floral.

1

PICKING - CAI QING

Raw material for rock teas are full grown mature leaves with stems, in order to pack more nutrients and juices to achieve the rich, full-bodied flavor.

2

OUTDOOR SUNNING - SHAI QING

Once plucked, the leaves are exposed to sunlight, reducing the concentration of leaf moisture to a desired level.

3

INDOOR WITHERING - WEI DIAO

Withering in-house follows, when necessary. The length of time varies with temperature and humidity.

4

OXIDIZING - FA JIAO

Natural oxidation of the leaves as a result of withering

5

SHAKING TO BRUISE - YAO QING

The leaves are piled in a cylindrical silo which rotates to make the edges of leaves rubbing against each other, releasing enzymes for further oxdization. The edges of the leaves are usually bruised to turn reddish, unique to wulong. The sensitive process is stopped when the tea processor judges the oxidation has reached a desired degree conveyed by aromatic notes, which is still an art than a science.

6

FIXING OXIDATION - CHAO QING

The tea is heated in special wood or charcoal fired wok to halt oxidation.

7

ROLLING AND TWISTING - ROU NIAN

Different wulong has different rolling patterns, rendering distinct shapes. Rock tea leaves are rolled lengthwise and twisted, which resemble a black dragon (hence the name Wulong).

8

INITIAL ROASTING - CHU BEI

6-14 HOURS

The teas are roasted in a two-level bamboo brazier (Bei Long). Top level contains 1-4 kilos of finished teas and charcoals in the lower level provides constant heat.

9

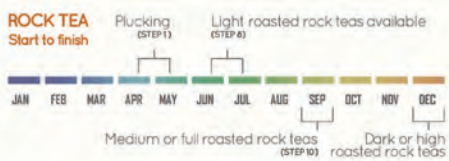
PICKING STEMS - TIAO GENG

Stems and old dry leaves, known as Huang Pian, are culled by hand. Their juices have been drawn out during previous steps. This step improves the taste and look of the finished tea.

10

REPEAT ROASTING - FU BEI

The final and most difficult step. Rock teas undergo 2 to 8 rounds of charcoal or electric roasting depending on factors such as: cultivars, quality of the raw material, and sunny/rainy weather.



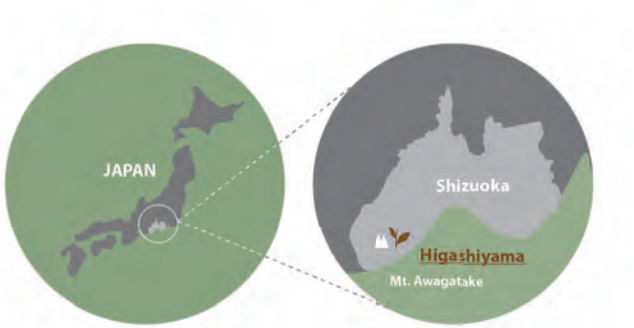
BEST TIME TO ENJOY:
Early February of the next year

A Way of Life:
Japan's Tea Grass Gardens

Story and Photos by **Ian Chun**

In the foothills of Mt. Fuji lies the village of Higashiyama where Chagusaba agriculture, a UN-designated World Agricultural Heritage System, is a way of life for tea farmers.

Chagusaba is an agricultural system in which tea fields are surrounded by semi-natural grasslands. The golden meadows of various types of grass known collectively as "chagusa" or "tea grass" are harvested every autumn, and used for tea cultivation providing natural fertilizer, preventing the growth of weeds, and helping the soil retain moisture. In return, the maintenance of the grasslands by farmers promotes biodiversity in the region.



In 1880, some 30% of Japan consisted of grasslands which provided the rural communities with fertilizer for agriculture (not just tea), food (edible grasses, feed for livestock), energy (firewood), and building material (thatched roofs were once common in rural Japan). Today, the practice of utilizing grass from these grasslands has disappeared with the grasslands themselves, but Chagusaba tea farmers in Shizuoka Prefecture continue to preserve the grasslands and utilize nature's bounty winning nearly half of the awards handed out for tea excellence. The small village of Higashiyama, where golden meadows of sasa, susuki, and other grasses surround green tea fields, produces 70% of Chagusaba-grown tea.

On this cold, sunny January morning, I had arranged to meet with Akahori-san, the prefectural employee in charge of the Chagusaba promotion. I had explained that I was interested not only in seeing the Chagusaba process, but also in meeting the people who practiced it. I hoped to uncover more than what the brochures describe as a "traditional farming method for nurturing a rich diversity of living organisms and for co-existence with the environment." What I discovered is a touching and complex story of tea not found in the official prefectural pamphlet.

As I arrived at the Ippuku Dokoro café to meet Akahori-san, I was caught off guard as two elderly gentlemen came out of the visitor center to greet me. Akahori-san introduced me and we exchanged business cards, or meishi.

In Japan upon a first meeting the exchange is a ritual; you remove your business card from the card case, close the case, place the card on the case with text facing your new acquaintance. You present with two hands and as your counterpart does the same you each remove your left hands from the case and carefully take your counterpart's card, examining it carefully.

I noticed the roughly dresse of Satoshi Sugiyama yet his title was "Director." The corporation was called Chamoji no Sato, Higashiyama ("Higashiyama, The Village of the Tea Character"). This was odd. He certainly looked the part of a farmer, not a corporate director, and government promotion bureaus of the sort that employ Akahori-san do not usually introduce individual companies. The second gentleman, Masashi Hagiwara, was another of the company's "directors".

Despite the rapid growth in tea exports from Japan in the last decade, exports still only make up 4% of Japanese tea production, and growers imagine Western tea drinkers enjoying their green tea only after spooning in mountains of sugar.

Despite a growing global tea industry, Japan's insular tea market is in decline; tea production, prices and consumption are shrinking as Japanese consumers shift to carbonated beverages and mineral water.

In tea growing regions it is a vicious circle. The decrease in demand during the last 15 years decreased production and prices, and has encouraged the younger generation to leave tea agriculture for other work. The two farmers, Hagiwara-san and Sugiyama-san, were both in their late 60s. When I asked how many younger farmers there were in the village, they started counting names on their fingers. Most of the 120

Overlooking the village of Higashiyama, from the top of Mt.Awagatake.

family farmers were in their 60s; a generation below has half as many farmers, and there are fewer than a dozen in their 20s.

I've visited many villages like this, I mentioned. In one area, participants in the local "Young Farmer Development Program" were mostly in their 50s.

As he listened Hagiwara-san then took a bag from his pocket. He emptied its contents into a tea pot, revealing exquisitely shaped, evergreen-colored, hand-rolled sencha called "temomicha." He had won a Silver Medal at the National Tea Competition with this tea. As the needles unfurled, we started talking about the difference between Japanese descriptors for tea, and Western adoption of wine language for conveying a tea's flavors.

In Japan, business in every industry begins with face-to-face meetings over tea. Green tea is something you serve to guests as a demonstration of hospitality, to welcome a guest. The best teas, award-winning temomicha, are rarely offered on the market because they are kept in reserve for special meetings and gifts.

As we sipped the golden liquor from the temomicha, I looked down at the business cards laid out neatly on the table. "I noticed your card is from a company and not the cooperative," I politely mentioned.

"This company was created to promote Higashiyama tea," Sugiyama-san replied. We talked about how in the usual supply chain, the three cooperatives that represent the 120 family farms buy the tea from each of the individual farms, process the leaves together at their respective co-op factories, and sell it in the larger Shizuoka markets as well as directly to finishing factories/wholesalers. Higashiyama's tea leaves are then likely blended with teas from elsewhere aggregating as the manufacturers further down the supply chain engage in creating their own blends.

Chamoji no Sato was established to promote Higashiyama's tea and the Chagusaba system. It was financed by 76 families from the village who pooled ¥6 million yen ($50,000) for starting capital. They are the shareholders of the corporation, which sells three-leaf rated Chagusaba-made tea under the Higashiyamacha brand name promoting both Chagusaba and the village. To qualify for the three-leaf rating, leaves harvested from farms must have at least a 1:1 ratio of grassland area to tea fields. Farms are managed separately by individual landowners and not all of the farms in the village qualify for the three-leaf rating.

We next drove to the top of Mt. Awagatake in Sugiyama-san's van to take in a view of the entire village. We passed a woman in hiking gear on the side of the road waiting. Mt. Awagatake has a number of hiking trails that attract nature enthusiasts. A bus comes to the café a few times a day, and hikers depart from there to get to the summit where the tea garden and another visitor center is located.

As we passed tea fields and grass meadows, Sugiyama-san explained that the Chagusaba system was not invented solely for the cultivation of tea, but has been a traditional practice for farmers in the area. It was only recently, in the early 2000s, that scientists began to recognize that this traditional farming method was contributing to increased biodiversity in the region. New signs now dot the village indicating what kind of species (some endangered) of plants and animals exist in the region.

During a visit to one of the cooperative tea factories, Hagiwara-san explained that the factories of the three co-ops in the village were among the largest in Japan. He was trying to sound impressive, but then added, "the machines are getting old though." Two shifts of four farmers take turns operating the factory during the harvest season. I mentioned it is amazing such a large facility can be operated with so few people. "With the decline in prices, we discussed whether it can be done with three people instead of four," laughed Sugiyama-san in reply.

On our return to the café from the tour I asked "how much do you export? You know that the average price of exported tea is rising, right? Buyers outside of Japan want the premium leaves."

"None."

"None?"

"Yes. None. We don't export and we don't know of anyone exporting Chagusaba-grown tea," said Akahori-san. The farmers understand how to sell in the domestic market—the supply chain here is an old system—but not to other countries. "The business relationships don't exist." He explained.

Let's see if we can't solve that problem, I said.


1


2

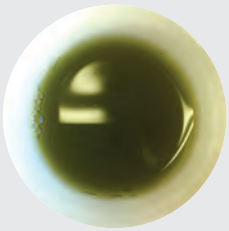
1. Producer Tetsuro Tsuchiya showing his prize winning tea leaves. (photo by Anne-Marie Hardie)
2. Hagiwara-san making Temomicha, a silver metal winner at Japan's National Tea Competition.

For a detailed map of co-op tea factories and hiking trails of Higashiyama, as well as video links of Chagusaba grass-cutting/tea-producing, please visit here.

Higashiyama Fukamushi
Tasting Notes

Fukamushi dry leaf

Fukamushi 1st steeping tea liquor and wet leaf



Fukamushi 2nd steeping tea liquor

Temomicha dry leaf

Temomicha 1st steeping tea liquor and wet leaf

Temomicha 2nd steeping tea liquor

The Higashiyama Village, like much of Shizuoka Prefecture, mainly produces fukamushi tea, a subcategory of sencha in which the leaves are steamed for a longer time. The longer steaming time (generally 60 seconds, but this may vary quite a bit depending on the leaf being steamed) results in the leaf being broken into much smaller pieces than normal sencha, and a tea leaf that steeps quick and strong, is deep green in color, and opaque due to the small bits of leaf.

This processing method was developed in the 1950s and 60s in the Makinohara region of Shizuoka on the flatlands closer to the sea in order to produce a better tea from the less tender leaves. Flatlands receive more sunlight allowing leaves to grow faster but as a result new leaves lose their tenderness faster. The stiffness of the leaves makes the rolling that releases the leaf's flavors more difficult, and therefore more raw, grassiness remains in the leaf. Deep-steaming helped to solve this, and created a deep green color that quickly became popular in Japan as more and more of the consumer population began to afford higher grade tea in Japan's rapid economic development during the 1960s.

Higashiyama Fukamushi
Steeping

The leaf will steep quickly and strongly, and changes quite a bit in flavor depending on water temperature. Start with 5 grams, 250 ml of water, and adjust from there.

For this tasting, I started with a temperature of 70˚C/158˚F degrees, and steeped for 60 seconds. This steeps a fairly strong tea. 70˚C is a good temperature for spring-harvested, first flush fukamushi tea creating a full-bodied steep balanced between astringency and umami flavors.

On a second steeping, the leaves are already primed, and require a very short in-out steep (10 seconds, slightly more time than it takes to fill the pot). As you have likely extracted most of the umami flavor out in the first steep, use a higher temperature (80-90˚C / 176-194˚F) to draw out a stronger flavor. Subsequent steepings require 45 seconds.

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Story and Photos by
Dan Robertson

Kanchenjunga: Five Treasures of the

Great Snow

Parts of Nepal, Tibet, India and Bhutan are within view of Mt. Kanchenjunga, a majestic icon whose five peaks look down on famous tea gardens in Darjeeling, Sikkim, Kalimpong, Pedong, Ilam, Hile and Taplejung.

"It is the stressors of this harsh mountain environment that give the teas their unique characteristics." -Rajiv Lochan

Once thought to be the highest mountain in the world, Kanchenjunga looms over the foothills and valleys of the southern Himalayan range.

Geographic boundaries are of little concern to the ancient undulating landscape. The unique environment has both nurtured and challenged any living thing that dares to enter its realm. The inhabitants are stalwart and enduring. Hundreds of unique plant species are found there. Himalayan firs, oak and birch trees make up the dense forests. Rare orchids and rhododendron add a spark of color to the hillsides. Citrus fruits impossibly thrive in the rocky soil and cool temperatures, and verdant tea gardens cover the slopes and plains in a blanket of green.

Parts of Nepal, Tibet, India and Bhutan are within view of the majestic icon whose five peaks look down on famous tea gardens in Darjeeling, Sikkim, Kalimpong, Pedong, Ilam, Hile and Taplejung.

It seems an unlikely place to grow tea. These gardens cling to the hills surrounding the mountain with its ever present swirling, blowing cap of brilliant snow.

The steep slopes are often precarious, even for sure-footed Sherpas. Landslides are common, especially when it rains. The entire area is prone to earthquakes. Wild tigers, boar and other deadly predators still roam the forests. Temperatures in Darjeeling can reach a low of 0◦C (32◦F). While Kanchenjunga reaches an elevation of 28,169 feet, tea gardens in Taplejung, Nepal are perched at 7,300 feet and in Darjeeling, India, as high as 6,700 feet. Compared to tea cultivated at lower elevations, the "China bush" of the Himalayas grows much slower resulting in much lower yields.

According to tea producer and trader Rajiv Lochan, it is the stressors of this environment that give the teas their unique characteristics. Tea gardens on the North-facing slopes are exposed to the unrelenting fresh, cool air descending from the mountains — one of the key factors that contribute to their special aroma and flavor.

Tea planting dates to the British starting in the mid-1800s. Smuggled seeds that sprouted enroute from China were first planted in Darjeeling in 1839, though actual production followed a few years later. There are stories of earlier plantings. Kalimpong (which was part of Bhutan at the time) was a key trading hub connecting India and Tibet through the Jelepla and Nathula passes. Because of the natural geographical advantage, and its proximity to Lhasa, Tibet, it is said that some industrious Chinese businessmen set up tea production in the Kalimpong area to supply the

Tibetan market in competition with suppliers in Yunnan. These stories are now recorded only in the memories of a few local elders, but remnants of tea gardens can still be found in places like Pedong.

While Kanchenjunga's west half is in Nepal, the east is bordered by Sikkim. A sovereign kingdom until 1975, Sikkim is unique for its environmental diversity. It has the smallest population of all Indian states, and nearly 25% of the area of Sikkim is within the Kanchenjunga National Park boundaries. Temi Tea Estate in Sikkim was planted in 1968 in part to accommodate an influx of Tibetan refugees. The 500 acres of tea trees makes the only tea estate in Sikkim that produces quality orthodox teas, mainly for export.

In Nepal, tea plantings date to 1868 with a gift of tea seeds from the Chinese Emperor to the Nepali Prime Minister. The first tea factory in Ilam was built in 1868, according to Udaya Champagain, head of the Gorkha tea estate. "One unique feature of teas from this area is that the bushes are relatively young. Also the land was completely virgin forest before planting tea bushes," he said. Champagain feels that these factors, combined with the pollution-free, organic environment and the cool, humid mountain air distinguish these teas from all others.

More recent plantings in Nepal began in the mid to late 1980s. Mist Valley estate in Ilam, the main producing region, was first planted in China clonal bushes in 1988. Their first measurable harvest wasn't until 2004. Suresh Limbu explains that "Topography is similar to Darjeeling but Nepal teas have their own unique distinctions. Special attributes can include a mellow flavor with floral, fruity, muscatel sweetness."

The five snow-covered peaks of Mr. Kanchenjunga.

Depending on weather, there are generally four harvest seasons. The new shoots of first flush are plucked around the third week of March through the end of April. Second flush teas are harvested from mid-May to mid-July. Monsoon teas get picked from the 16th of July to the end of September. The final harvest extends from October through the 15th of November and is known as the Autumnal flush.

Unlike their neighbors in Darjeeling and Sikkim, many of the tea gardens in Nepal were started by collectives of farmers who pooled their land for the common good. The idea for the Kanchenjunga Tea Estate was founded by Baskota (first names only are common), who was inspired by a visit to the tea gardens of Darjeeling and the higher standard of living the workers enjoyed. Ultimately he was able to persuade fellow farmers to join together to improve their quality of living. One of the newest gardens, Pativara Tea Cooperative, is in Taplejung district and is part of the Central Tea Cooperation Federation. Its slopes greet Kanchenjunga each morning at an elevation of more than 7,300 feet. The cooperative produces only green tea for sale in the local markets.

Other gardens belong to marketing cooperatives like HIMCOOP (Himalayan Tea Producers Cooperative). Many of these Nepal gardens produce the traditional black teas but some have gotten very creative, even innovative in the teas they are producing, including white teas, oolong teas, and steamed (Japanese style) green teas. The Gorkha Tea factory received organic certification in 2009. Some of its teas are so unique that specially skilled pluckers and tea makers are required to make their signature gold and silver teas. “Only 50 kilos of these teas are produced in the entire year,” says owner Udaya Chapagain.

ORIGIN

The jewel of the foothills remains Darjeeling. Known as the "Land of the Thunder Bolt or Thunder Clap" in Nepali, much of the tea growing area of the hills, up to the Teesta River, was once part of Nepal. In fact, most of the people in the area, and certainly many of the tea workers, identify themselves ethnically as Nepali or Gorkhali.

Darjeeling possesses unique features which are apparent in the teas. Elevation of tea growing ranges from 1,500 to over 6,000 feet. Darjeeling tea growers talk in terms of the "muscatel flavor" and the "bouquet" of these teas.

"Tea bushes growing on the slopes of the cool, humid but well drained gardens thrive in the rich soil," says Nibir Bordoloi from Glenburn Tea Estate. From the original planter's bungalows, now restored to a luxurious boutique hotel, one can sip a cup of tea that was made only hours before, while watching the sunrise on the mountain. As the first light of the day slowly expands from the golden peaks, it brings renewed vitality not only to the nearby town of Darjeeling but to all the green tea leaves that drink up the sun's rays. Glenburn has always made traditional Darjeeling teas with full body and notes of citrus. Numerous pomelo trees grow on the property as well as oranges. Today the factory makes several "specialty" and signature teas that go beyond traditional techniques. One such tea, nick-named "spring in a cup" by one of their buyers, has multi-layered complexity that evolves with subsequent infusions, ranging from a gentle spring breeze and flower buds at first sip to citrus and green banana in later steepings.

Glenburn was founded in 1859 by a Scottish tea company while the Steinthal tea estate was established by a German in 1852.

1. Beautiful clouds Contre-Jour,Darjeeling.
2. Nepali farmers carrying a humongous quantity of fresh leaves.
3. Temi kids with tea and mountains. Photo credit: Choda House, Sikkim, India.
4. A serene corner of Glenburn tea estate, Darjeeling, with Mt.Kanchenjunga in distance.
5. Steinthal Tea Estate & Resort, Darjeeling.
6. Kanchenjunga at far overlooks Glenburn estate house.

One of the oldest estates in the region, Steinthal is a sprawling estate at the top of the production elevations. Located just near Darjeeling, these teas are typically light and aromatic. Flavors range from floral and fruity in the first flush to deep and mellow in the autumn. A stay at their Singtom bungalow usually includes a visit to the 360 point where one has an unobstructed view of Kanchenjunga and many surrounding tea gardens.

Tea buyers and lovers that frequent the hills will tell you that each of the gardens produce a distinctly flavored tea. In truth, one can take a lifetime learning to recognize a garden by blind taste. Now, with so nearby gardens producing wonderful and unique teas, one may need to live as long as the mountain itself to experience all the wonderful tastes and aromas that sprout from this enigmatic and radiant region near the top of the world.


4

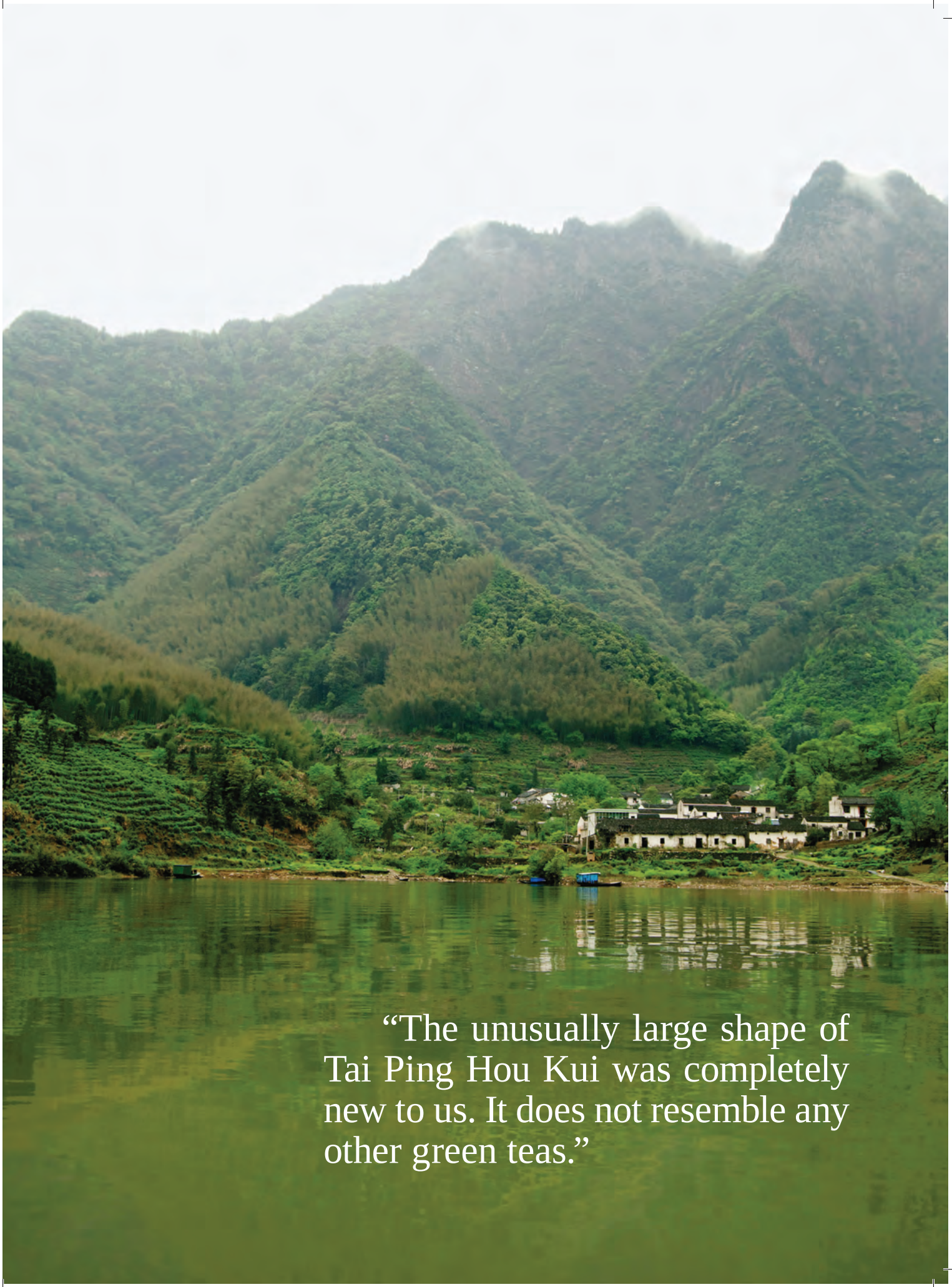

5


6

IN SEARCH OF THE ELUSIVE TAI PING HOU KUI

Story by **François Marchand**
Photos Courtesy Camellia Sinensis

Every tea taster dreams of discovering a remote, virtually inaccessible growing region producing exceptional tea. The discovery of Tai Ping Hou Kui was just such an experience for us.



"The unusually large shape of Tai Ping Hou Kui was completely new to us. It does not resemble any other green teas."

Workers handrolling Tai Ping Hou Kui on fine metal mesh.

Since our very first sourcing ventures, this tea had been on our "most wanted" list. Its name was well-known to us, as was the province where it is cultivated, but despite our efforts, we were continually returning empty-handed. Having finally located these lost producers with the help of Xie, a friend from the tea-producing region of Huang Shan Mao Feng, it became clear why the tea had previously eluded us: there are no roads leading to the gardens of Tai Ping Hou Kui.

Leaving Xie's home in the magnificent province of Anhui, we had to travel several hours of country roads before stopping on the banks of a river. Because the plantations were not accessible by car, the rest of the journey would have to be made by boat.

The calm waters of the river reflected like a mirror the majestic Huang Shan mountains surrounding it. Having floated through this spectacular landscape for almost an hour, we arrived at the sloping fields of Tai Ping Hou Kui, one of the most beautiful sites we have had the luck to visit in all our years of sourcing. A patchwork of small tea gardens along the riverside gleamed an enchanting emerald green.

Ye, the producer we had arranged to meet there, belongs to a long line of producers who have all cultivated tea. The tea trees in his field were all planted by his ancestors. Like the other families in the village, he runs a small factory behind his house. He produces a tea that is characterized by its large, flattened leaves averaging around six centimeters in length. To achieve this remarkable form, Ye uses an artisanal method of transformation that was completely new to us.

The mesh is then set on a wooden table, and a hand-held roller is passed over the screen with a rapid motion.

A crafted leaf

The large-leaf cultivar used for the production of this tea is plucked with great care. With most grand cru teas, only the terminal bud and the two delicate first leaves on the stem are used. For Tai Ping Huo Kui, however, the leaves are allowed to mature a little longer before plucking.

Once plucked, the leaves are sorted and manually fired in a pan for about five minutes.

Rolling is the next step. The leaves are laid out on a fine metal grill one by one with care taken to make sure they do not touch. A second grill is placed over the leaves. The grills are then set on a wooden table, a cotton cloth laid over the frame, and a hand-held roller passed over the grill with a rapid motion.

The leaves are left in this frame for a final, wood-fired drying. This gradual drying lasts about an hour.

As the leaves' transformation is entirely manual and the terroir's area of cultivation is small, authentic Tai Ping Hou Kui teas are hard to find, even in China. With the rarity and originality of its trademark floral aromas, the Chinese often offer this tea as a gift for special occasions.


CHINA
Anhui
Houkeng
Machuan
River

Travelling by boat on the Machuan River in Anhui, China.

Tai Ping Hou Kui close-up shot. Photo by Beibei Lu.

A Call for Standards

Commentary by **Austin Hodge**

The last decade has seen a boom in what the industry calls "specialty tea," but if you ask for a definition you will come away confused.

What is so special about specialty tea?

Not much. A close examination reveals commodity tea that has been adulterated in some way, typically by blending pieces of fruit, exotic herbs or flower petals. Since these ingredients are dried, tea blenders spray (yes, spray) on lots of flavor. In my view "commodity tea" includes any large-scale tea manufacturer where the production goal is quantity over quality. There are great quantities of traditional tea growing in every tea producing country. These include green tea, puer tea, wulong, white and black tea. There are also an endless variety of herbals incorrectly labeled teas.

Why set standards for specialty tea?

Without standards, the market faces chaos. Where would France be if it had not established standards for wine almost 500 years ago? Italy followed and prospered. Stop and think, would the debate over which is better — Italian or French wine — have turned out differently if the Italians had been the first to set standards?

It's important to understand that standards not only define products, they establish markets, and whoever defines a market, controls it. The French, beginning with standards, established formidable markets for their wine. Specialty coffee retailers have done the same.

The chaos in the 'specialty' tea market comes from the fact that no one, from buyer to seller, actually knows the value of the tea they are buying or selling, or how to clearly establish its value. Price is derived mostly from marketing — price is certainly not based on the quality of the tea. In a practical sense, words like quality, value, and excellence have been watered-down into obscurity.

Nowadays, tea is whatever the merchant says it is – a practice that encourages dubious interpretation. In contrast, standards are consistent and independently verified. The specialty coffee industry has done an excellent job of establishing standards, which has led to levels of excellence and increased profit

Austin Hodge is the founder of Seven Cups Fine Chinese Tea in Tucson, Ariz. www.sevencups.com

> "Establishing an objective quality standard raises the value that can be communicated through the entire supply chain: Excellence rewarded."

ability enjoyed by the entire coffee industry.

Coffee and tea were at first rarities reserved for the rich. Each evolved into a commodity for the masses and both are gradually becoming artisanal offerings – the choice of connoisseurs.

Everyone my age remembers that back in the day, coffee selections amounted to either the Red Can (Folger's) or the Blue Can (Maxwell House). At neighborhood diners and corner cafes coffee cost a quarter. This was coffee's so called "First Wave." Americans annually drank an average of 10 lbs. of coffee per person. Per capita consumption was measured by the gallon because commodities are cheap.

The turning point was 1974 when independent coffee shop owners established a standard for "Specialty Coffee." The adoption of standards launched the "Second Wave." Pioneers such as Alfred Peet at Peet's Coffee & Tea, Starbucks, and Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf would not exist without these standards. Innovations in growing, sourcing, roasting, packaging, and coffee brewing followed.

The market for specialty coffee was more sophisticated, resembling its European counterparts. Coffee of this quality commanded a higher price; it no longer had to be cheap. Thus specialty coffee became easily distinguishable from commodity coffee.

"Coffee's Third Wave" emerged around 2002 when small coffee businessmen traveled to coffee farms to source direct and eventually became experts in every aspect from growing to roasting to brewing. This took the small retail coffee businesses to a new level of profitability. An independent shop's offerings differentiated it from the likes of Starbucks. Stumptown in Portland, Intelligentsia Coffee in Chicago and Blue Bottle in San Francisco. They insisted on transparency and quality improvements along the entire supply chain. Not only did standards raise retail margins for retailers, the discovery of great coffee also opened the door for wholesale roasters selling to other quality businesses whose business prized artisan coffee. Grocery outlets like Whole Foods Markets began to feature locally roasted coffee

The Third Wave aspires to an even higher level of coffee experience. It begins with direct sourcing. Only direct sourcing can insure quality and answer questions about fair trade and farming methodology with confidence. Third Wave coffee also places high value on production and preparation: the goal is to get the best possible cup. Third Wave coffee owes its existence to Starbucks for building the market for better coffee, and for establishing the benchmark. Third Wave roasters realized they needed to get a whole lot better to beat Starbucks, and to do so they needed expertise and transparency along the entire supply chain.

Similarly, three years ago Starbucks changed the tea market dramatically for small independent tea busi-

Tim Ferris, 5th from the left, and Kevin Rose, center, travelling to origin.

nesses when they bought Teavana. Today every small tea business is compared to the nearest Teavana, like it or not.

The difference between coffee and tea is that there are no standards that give a tea business the tools needed to beat Teavana. Starbucks redefined the market for coffee on almost every level. They will do the same for tea. Small tea businesses and major tea corporations alike are going to feel the heat. Without standards, Teavana, with its extraordinary marketing muscle, can define tea quality any way they want.

If standards for specialty tea mirrored the standards for specialty coffee the only tea that could qualify as "specialty" is tea judged to be within the top 20% produced. Most of the tea sold as specialty tea in the West would be disqualified. I predict that few multinational billion dollar tea companies are going to support quality standards for tea. Why would they?

Tea's Third Wave

In 2014 Jesse Jacobs, founder of Samovar Tea, wearing a cream-colored canvas apron over a fashionable t-shirt, announced the coming of the tea industry's Third Wave.

Is the tea industry really on the verge of entering into a movement equivalent to that of the coffee industry? It is going to take the tea industry a very long time to catch up to the sophistication of the coffee industry. The discussion about standards for specialty tea has just begun.

Looking forward, a profitable market for small tea businesses will require standards. These standards need to be objective, understandable, and replicable. Standards provide growers with a definable goal for crops and harvesting. Standards enable tea makers to formulate products clearly identified by buyers, which give the producers incentive to improve. Direct sourcing will become increasingly important for the tea retailers. Consumers will demand to know what they are paying for, when it was plucked and where it originated.

Establishing standards brought extraordinary advantages to small coffee growers including unimaginable financial success. Think what standards for quality would mean for small holders in Southeast Asia and India and Africa, areas still economically strangled by the colonial commodity system. Establishing an objective quality standard raises the value that can be communicated through the entire supply chain: excellence rewarded.

Right now China is realizing the benefits of standards in its domestic market for tea. Their tea industry was virtually destroyed during 150 years of war and internal strife. As China recovered following World War II and the Mao era, the tea produced

was mediocre at best. In the 1990s China established standards for quality and freed tea makers to create and profit from their own business. Since then, China has experienced a renaissance in tea making: teas produced for the domestic market are the best in history. China is now the largest tea producing country in the world. The Chinese consistently get the highest prices for their tea, and China has the highest average price for tea. China has the best tea in the broadest categories; it has defined standards, and grows the largest percentage of tea using traditional, chemical free growing practices.

The coming of standards is inevitable. Small businesses that are dedicated to quality in real terms, not just in the marketing of their products, will benefit.

It took years for standards to significantly improve coffee, but things will move quicker with tea due to the benefits of the information age. The tea industry is ready for professionals to lay the groundwork for "Third Wave" tea. Let's leave it to Teavana to push the second wave along in building the market, like their parent company did for coffee.

What is great about getting the ball rolling towards standards for quality and (eventually for excellence) is that small businesses that are struggling to establish new business models need not worry, for the best practices for quality in the tea industry go beyond the reach of corporations, economies of scale, and deep pockets of marketing departments. Standards are the essential tool for the tea entrepreneur.

So become a pro, take some Chinese classes, and get your passport up to date, and by all means study the specialty coffee industry. They are experts in coffee on every level.

Standards, direct sourcing, transparency, expert level knowledge about tea and its culture, logistical mastery, inventory management expertise, and tea preparation skills are all requirements for ushering in tea's third wave. Herein lays opportunity, challenge, and the promise of excellence. Let's hope tea entrepreneurs' passion for tea is strong enough to take them where they'll have to go.

12 characteristics of Specialty Tea

1. **The condition of the leaf** adddresses skill of the tea maker. The leaf should be intact and, with few exceptions, unbroken.
2. **Adherence to the plucking standard** addresses the skill of the picker and the garden man agers.
3. **Uniformity of the leaf** also addresses the skill of the picker, and the garden managers.
4. **Origin**
5. **Harvest date**
6. **Cultivar**
7. **Tea maker**
8. **Processing**
9. **Percentage of moisture remaining in the tea**

The first nine are objective anchors for examining quality. Without this information, authenticity becomes impossible to verify, making the quality objectively questionable.

10. **Color**
11. **Aroma**
12. **Taste**

Items 10 to 12 require multiple measurements at differing times. These last three criteria demonstrate a more subjective evaluation done by professionally trained evaluators with significant experience.

All of this information must be disclosed in order for the tea to meet the minimum standard. The goal is a clear differentiation between specialty tea, where the focus of the whole tea making process is quality, instead of quantity.

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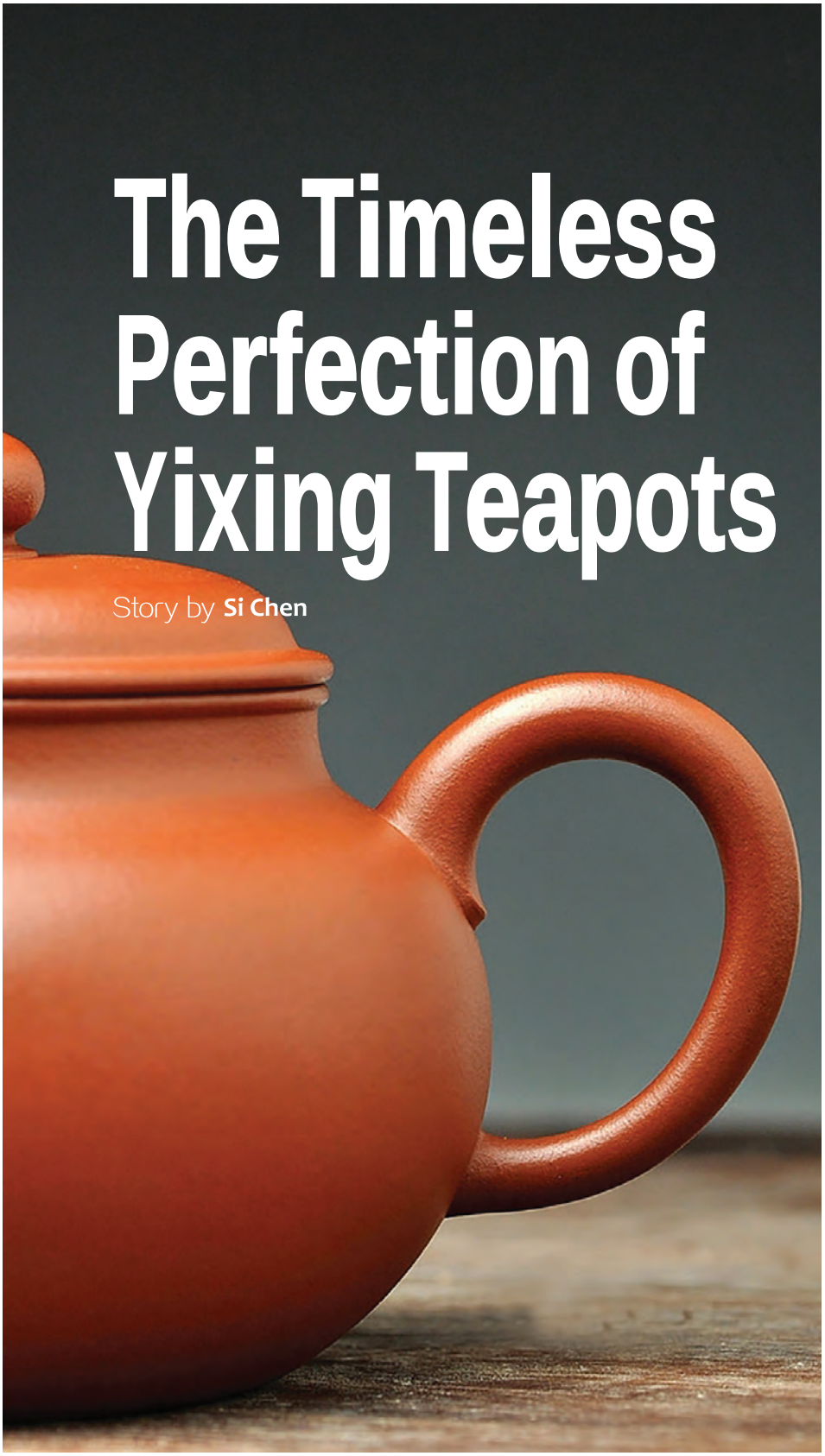


The Timeless Perfection of Yixing Teapots

Story by **Si Chen**

Tea connoisseurs are choosy about their teaware for reasons that are not obvious.

They differ from wine lovers who are prone to lengthy discussions about the wine-making processes, dwelling on details such as the wood used in barrels that age the liquor or the distinctive shape of glassware for each varietal.

Teapots are essentially the tool to '*make*' the tea, more so than a decorative vessel to pour it. Afterall, dry tea is a half-finished product. The attention to teaware is justified because the pot performs such an important function.

Yixing Zisha (pronounced Yee-Shing zee-sha) teapots seem to be less functional tea pots at first glance, but they uniquely deserve the affection of tea connoisseurs. Yixing clay is composed of fine silt with an unusually large concentration of iron. These clays also contain mica, kaolinite and varying quantities of quartz. The percentage of clay, quartz, and iron in Zisha is optimally balanced to achieve low

In the households of Yixing, home of the celebrated purple clay teapots, ordinary potters are crafting something extraordinary.

thermal conductivity and high permeability, as the texture of the clay has minute pores that trap the heat while permitting the exchange of air. This prevents the tea from becoming stale.

Zisha ('purple sand') describes the reddish-brown color of the sedimentary soil which settled in ancient lakes and is now buried deep underground. The clay is compressed under heavy sedimentary rock formations throughout the Yixing region, southwest of Shanghai, in China's Jiangsu province. Huanglong Mountain near Dingshu has been the source of high quality purple clay ore for centuries. The mountain itself is rather ordinary – neither grand or pretty – but it is 350 million years old.

These teapots are prized because their unglazed surfaces absorb traces of the beverage and develop a patina, which enhances the taste, color, and aroma of fine teas. Generally, Yixing teapots are single-serving pots with 100-300ml capacity, considered small by western standards. Flavors concentrate in the pot and are better controlled during brewing, then gradually revealed through different rounds.

Preparing purple clay

Preparing the clay is a lengthy process and closely guarded trade secret. In the past, workers descended into the mountain to car-

Teapot Making Process

Purple clay is not only more sensitive to humidity and temperature, but also much harder in consistency than common clay, thus it requires advanced skills of artisan potters to work with the material. Potters begin by beating a lump of aged clay into a flat sheet using bamboo tools. The walls, bottom and lid of the teapot are cut from the same sheet of clay. The Masters then shape the clay entirely by hand or with wooden spatulas. The body, spout, handle, lid and feet are all made separately, then assembled on a simple, hand-turned wheel, stuck together with a simple mixture of clay and water.

Photos by Xinfa Ouyang

Featured teapot from the prized USD$28.75 million nine heads cherry blossom teaset. Detail view from side and above. Artist's seal ('Jingzhou') is visible in the x-ray scan.

Factory facts

- Yixing clay for the No.1 Yixing factory is exclusively extracted from the No.4 well at Huang Long Mountain.
- The factory antique kiln was destroyed in 2002, making it impossible to replicate teaware.
- The No.1 factory was founded in 1955 by seven prestigious Zisha masters: Yungen Wu, Shimin Pei, Ganting Ren, Yingchun Wang, Kexin Zhu, Jingzhou Gu, Rong Jiang.
- Peak production was during the years 1977-97 when the factory produced miscellaneous articles for daily use, notably teapots. Most of these works were exported.

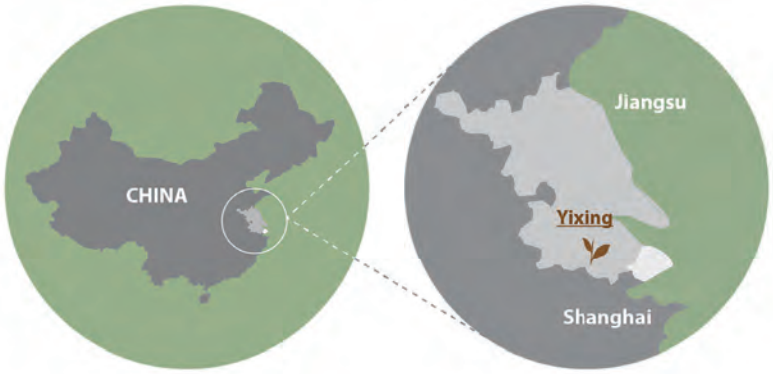
ry the Zisha ore by hand. The ore was then left in the open for years, allowing temperature changes from season to seasons to break it down naturally. Workers then pared the piles, sorting the pieces with the highest concentration of the purple clay. The sorting process is so inefficient it becomes a ritual.

The next step is to screen the clay, isolating particles of the finest grit size. The uniformly fine clay is then mixed in with water in a cement mixer to create a thick paste, after which it is piled into heaps and vacuum processed to remove air bubbles and some moisture. The quality and quantity of water in Yixing clay is critical because it determines the quality of the stoneware products produced. After processing, the clay is then ready to be shaped.

How to value a teapot?

Consumer teapots are usually classified into three categories by techniques: partially handmade and molded teapots. An entry-level handmade pot sells for RMB ¥2,000, around USD $300, while the more expensive ones sell for thousands.

Style-wise, the pots are grouped into three major styles. The most common are smooth-bodied pots called 'Guangqi,' the most ornate are decorative pots called 'Huaqi' and those with a distinctive petal vein pattern are called 'Jinwenqi.' Smooth-bodied pots, embodying abstract geometric shapes, are sub-divided into square- and round-shaped works, demonstrating beauty in brevity, the 'introvert elegance,' which symbolizes the pursuit of the ultimate human spirit. They are designed to reflect the simple relationship between the teapot and the tea drinker.



In contrast, decorative pots resemble real life objects. The artistry is to depict real world objects as complicated carved shapes with lines that suggest their essence without merely copying the shape. Decorative pots require techniques such as piling and carving to imitate shapes of things in life and nature, reflecting the awareness of artists of their relationship with the environment.

Unethical manufacturers complicate the purchase of authentic pottery. Sellers are known to mix in questionable chemicals or counterfeit clays. To authenticate pots from Zisha masters, one has to send a pot to experts or refer back to the masters themselves. Zisha masters can tell which pot they made because they placed a mark on the pot known only to themselves.

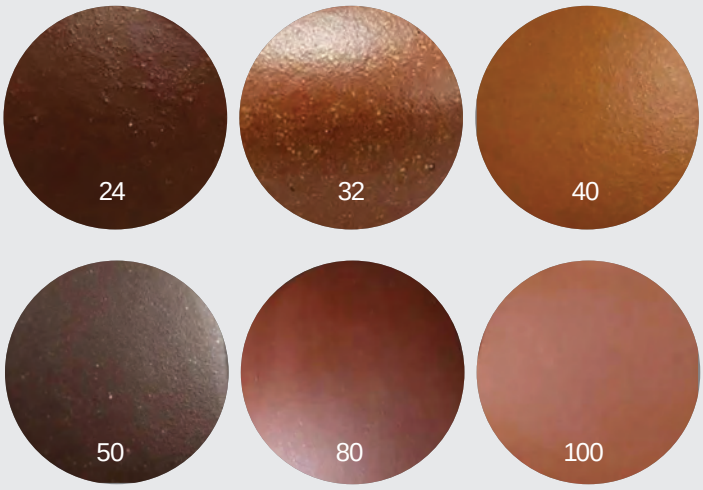
The wait is as long as two years for pots commissioned by a master craftsman. Jingzhou Gu, one of the founders and Deputy Director of Research and Technology at the No. 1 Yixing Factory. He is now deceased, and was the most accomplished master artist. In November 2015, Gu's nine heads cherry blossom teaset, made in 1955, was auctioned for RMB ¥92 million (USD $28.75 million), at the 2015 Beijing Dong Zheng Autumn auction (shown previous page).

Consumer advice

If you are in the market for a new Zisha pot, think about the one type of tea that you want to make in your teapot. If you want to buy a Zisha pot for puer, then choose a bigger pot allowing comfortable expansion for big leaves of puer tea inside the teapot. Ergonometry is also important: The mouth of the teapot must align with the center of the lid and the handle. The proportion in weight in the mouth needs to balance with the proportion of the weight in the handle.

Texture

Differences in texture are achieved by using different sizes of mesh when filtering. It's a matter of personal preference whether to choose bigger or smaller mesh, depending on the look one wants to achieve. Using a finer screen (100 mesh or higher,) produces a finer, smoother, shinier finish. A lower grade mesh imports a more rustic, minimalist tone. Neither the age of the raw material nor the fine mesh enhance the texture in value.



Shape

瓦当
Wa Dang

牛盖莲
Niu Gai Lian

梨形
Li Xing

美人肩
Mei Ren Jian

笑樱
Xiao Ying

西施
Xi Shi

石瓢
Shi Piao

仿古
Fang Gu

掇球
Duo Qiu

素权
Qin Quan

水平
Shui Ping

虚扁
Xu Bian

Illustration by **Beibei Lu**

Color

Despite the name "purple sand," the Zisha pots can exhibit different colors. Zisha is divided into three categories – red ("hong ni"), purple ("zi ni"), and green ("lv ni"), extracted from different strata layers from Huang Long mountain, and each type can be subdivided further.

Duan Ni

Zi Ni

Zhu Ni

Lv Ni

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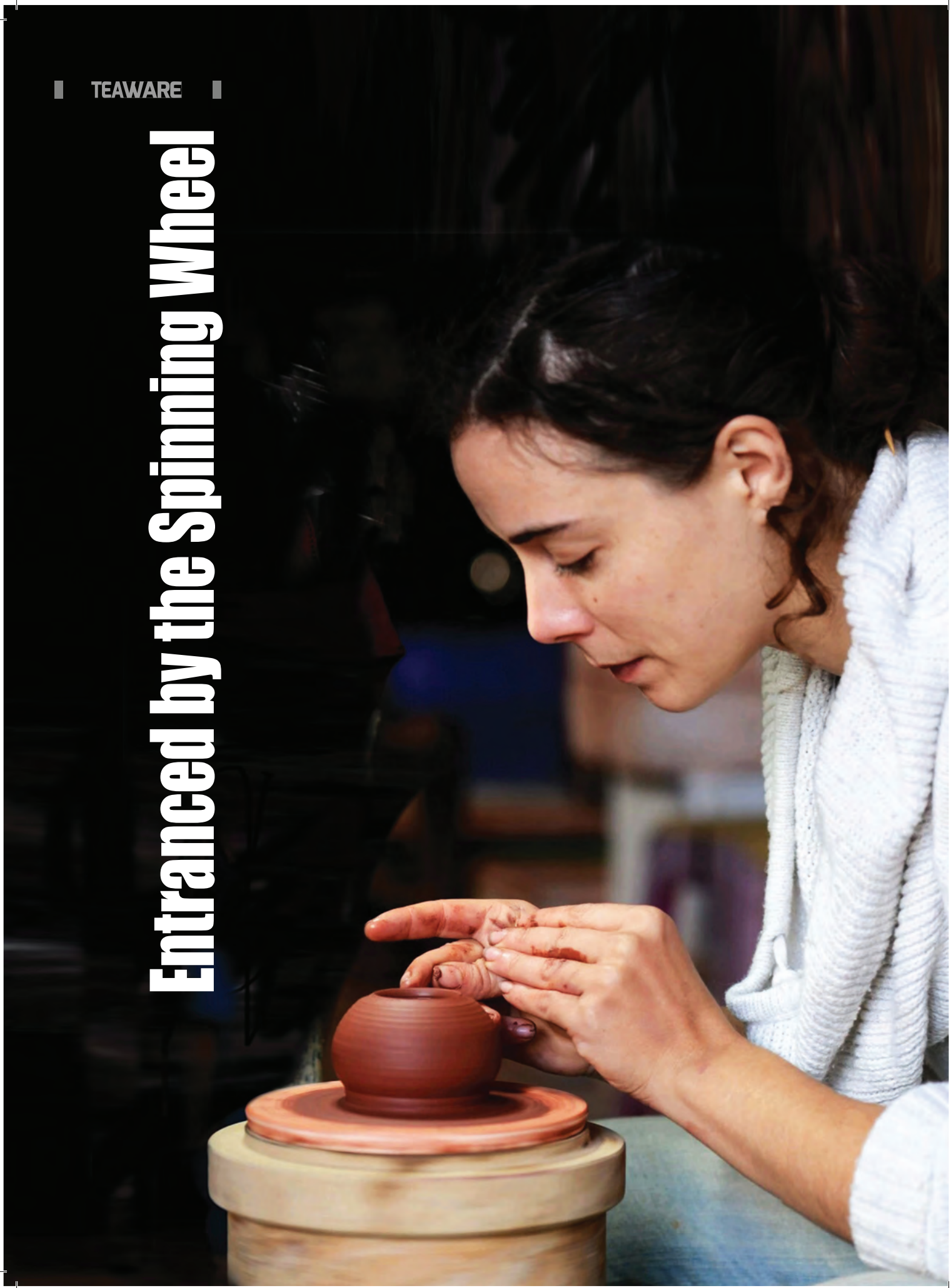
Entranced by the Spinning Wheel



Story by **Elyse Petersen**
Photos by **Xiaohua Chen & Tealet**

Thin walled clay pots known as Hand-pulled teapot (Shou La Hu).

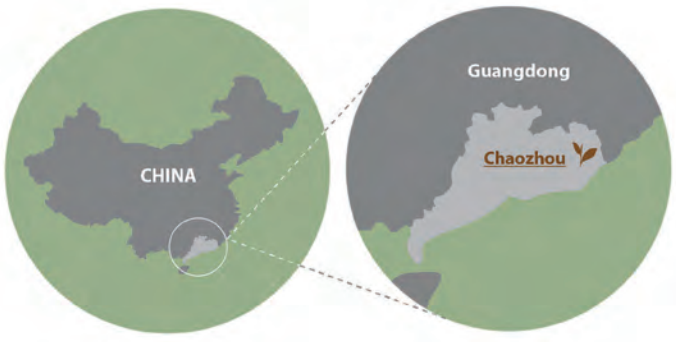
Our three-wheeled moto taxi dropped us off 10 minutes outside the Xishuangbanna city center, a meeting place agreed upon by our taxi driver and So Han Fan, the owner of West China Tea Company. Fan, an avid student of Chinese tea and culture, offered to take my brother and me to meet several people who would become the foundation of my Chinese tea culture education. We spent the following five days exploring the communities and teas of Nannou Mountain. It was there we met Fan's friend, Mary Cotterman, a woman on a personal journey to leave a legacy in tea pottery.

Cotterman was on an adventure to learn the craft of Chinese tea and the teapots that enhance it. She was traveling with Fan, a friend from her hometown of Austin, Texas, and would soon begin an apprenticeship with the masters behind Chaozhou teapots. A year has now passed and Cotterman is ready to bring life to the skills and inspiration she has acquired while navigating the path of Chinese language, culture, and art.

A passion born

At a very young age, Cotterman developed a passion for pottery, making pinch pots in the rocky Texas dirt. By age 12, she had her first formal experience with a throwing wheel during a summer camp class. Throughout high school, she continued pursuing her pottery, taking classes at a local pottery studio. In college, she formalized her education by studying art, sculpture, ceramics, and jewelry making. She struggled to find a path through the morass of aesthetic and intellectual theories. Disenchanted by the art world, she took a much-needed break that reintroduced her to pottery in a manner that was personal and meaningful. Pottery is now something she pursues with sincere dedication.

From the beginning, Cotterman was entranced by the process of pottery making. She fell in love with the "wheel turning round and round, the cool, wet mud between my fingers, and the transformation of raw material through such simple means into something useful and meaningful."



Cotterman enjoys a community meal with locals on Nannuo Mountain in Yunnan.

Cotterman with Elyse Petersen, So Han Fan, and locals in traditional ethnic clothing.

To her it felt like magic; like alchemy. Her obsession only grew as she discovered the magic of firing: coating a pot with a chalky dull powder dissolved in liquid and then heating it in the kiln, turning up the flame until the bricks glow orange with heat.

"Every time the door of that kiln opens, it's like Christmas morning as a child," Cotterman passionately explains. "Bright as jewels, the pots line the shelves in all the colors you could imagine, smooth and glossy, transformed by fire and time. It feels like reliving the story of the earth itself: dust from the stars collected into mud, pressed into rock to form something entirely new, but still containing the story of what it used to be. Every object in your life made of clay used to be a mountain, which used to be a star," she said.

It's that transformation – the feeling of something vast and immeasurably old contained in something you can hold in your hand – that has always inspired her to work with clay.

A passion evolved

Cotterman's enthusiam for the process has not changed, but her passion for the pottery itself has matured into one that contemplates those who use the wares she creates. She came to the conclusion that she didn't want to tell people what her work meant, she wanted them to be able to create meaning for themselves. Her intention is to make something that can come into one's life, be touched, used, broken, repaired, gifted, re-gifted, travelled with and create stories, memories, and meaning. Her passion for pottery today revolves around creating objects that are collaborations between the maker and the user.

"I think teapots are the perfect form for this," Cotterman explains. "They are tools for learning through experience, for meditation, for expression, for connection. They become more beautiful as they are used and loved; the tea becomes more delicious. The patina on a pot reflects a thousand pourings, and every chip and crack a story."

Cotterman says the most important thing that clay has taught her, that tea has taught her, is how to be humble and listen.

"Clay is a fickle mistress; you can't tell her what to do, you must ask nicely and listen to what she has to say," she explains. "You must work on her terms, she will not work on yours. If you make demands of her, it's disaster every time."

From her travels through China, she has seen that tea is very much the same way. The tea lover must learn, pour after pour, how each tea likes to be brewed. This lesson has rippled through the rest of Cotterman's life. She now seeks to be present and listen to what the world is telling her instead of barreling ahead. When pots are created in this way, it feels more like something being born than something being made.

An unfinished education

Three years ago, Cotterman embarked on one of the most challenging journeys of her life, when she moved to Chaozhou to learn the practice of gongfu cha.

"As a long time tea drinker, potter, meditator and plant enthusiast, it seemed like a miracle that these

Cotterman with Elyse Petersen and So Han Fan climbing a very large 800 year old tea tree in Yunnan.

ostensibly separate loves of mine could be combined into one galvanizing experience," she says.

She practiced making awkward gaiwans and clumsy teapots. It wasn't until she met Fan in Texas that things really started to click. Both were selling their wares – her pottery and him tea – at a friend's backyard Christmas bazzar. The two became fast friends and Fan shared with Cotterman his incredible collection of Chinese teaware. Never before had she seen such beautiful craftsmanship.

Cotterman describes "eggshell thin pots with lids that fit so well they made an air tight seal, from which a graceful arc of tea flowed in the perfect pour."

The most beautiful pots, she says, were from a place called Chaozhou. The two friends would go on to spend many late nights together sitting on the carpet of her studio apartment drinking tea and testing her new teapots modeled after those in Fan's collection.

Finally, after about a year of making teapots on her own, Cotterman decided she needed to go to China to learn from a master. She knew she wanted to go to Chaozhou and, the following spring, she packed up her life in Austin to make the journey. Through sheer luck and the good graces of the locals, she was able to find a studio to work in – a small production studio and school sponsored by successful businessman and master potter, Xie Hua. They were introduced to the studio by a new friend they made after wandering into a dusty antique shop whose shelves were lined with jade, old teapots and Song Dynasty celadon bowls. The shop owner spoke in heavily accented Mandarin and poured Phoenix Oolong so strong and bitter, Cotterman says they were tea drunk after three cups.

"The studio where I work is, to my knowledge, the only place in Chaozhou to learn this traditional craft openly, as traditionally teapot making is a family craft, tightly guarded and only passed down to other members of the family," Cotterman tells. "There's a word in Chinese for this kind of serendipity, it's called yuan fen 缘分."

When Cotterman first moved to Chaozhou, she could speak only a few sentences of Mandarin. Now, with conversational Mandarin skills and the ability to create a traditional teapot from start to finish, she expects to continue to study in Chaozhou until early summer 2016. After this, she plans to travel, do some artists residencies and eventually open a studio in the states. Her hope is to find a clay that is native to America and analogous to the clay used in China to make teapots that are a fusion of East and West.

Little did I know on the hot April morning when I met Cotterman that I was meeting someone on such a mission. Her goal as a potter is two-fold: first, to make a living playing in the mud all day, and, second, to make tools of connection. In her creations, she shares the art of connection with other people, with nature and with ourselves. She strives to break down social barriers, and make life just a little more beautiful. In a male dominated field, Mary hopes to inspire and help other women to follow their passions in making pottery. She also would like to share the joy and healing qualities of working with clay. Ultimately, she hopes to leave behind in this world objects that will speak for her after she is gone, that will enrich people's lives, and bring them joy, peace, and connection.

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A Rendezvous with Chance

Story by **Coco Liang**
Retold By **Nan Cui**
Photos Courtesy ***Cha Dao Life* Magazine**

"Sometimes as you stare into the porcelain you lose yourself, immersed in a kind of surreal beauty," says Chenglong Lu, research fellow at the Forbidden City Museum in Beijing and a standing committee member of the Ancient Pottery and Porcelain Study Council of China.

These bowls do not appear to be the work of man, he marvels. "Rather it is work from the Creator, rendering it unique and non-duplicable, mysterious, sacred, *transcendent*" he said. "Even the greatest master craftsman has no way of knowing if a masterpiece will emerge from the upcoming batch" says Lu.

Lu is describing stoneware from Jianyao kiln, an ancient royal kiln famous during China's Song Dynasty and crowned as one of the National Intangible Cultural Heritages.

Jianware (Jianzhan) is known for firing pots with high iron content mined near Shuiji in Jianyang City, close to Wuyishan. Iron content can be as high as 7-9% — enough for a magnet to stick to the bowl.

Three precious glaze patterns

In the kiln changes occur at very high temperatures (1,300°C) during the firing process. The pottery emerges in various glaze patterns that change color. These distinctive patterns are known as Hare's Fur, Oil Spot, Dark Gold, Tea Leaf and Persimmon Red.

"Amazing endless changes and color in such a delicate small tea bowl – you just cannot take your eyes off of it," he said.

The best Oil Spot (You Di) patterns form individualized, fat and round drips that exhibit a shining rainbow of color. The streak above is an example of the yohen tenmoku effect.

YAOBIAN

2

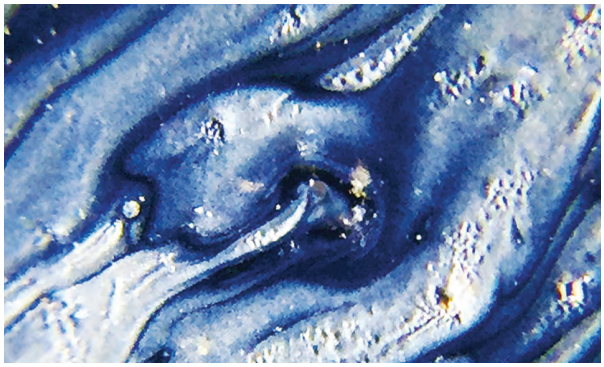
2. Yohen Tenmoku (Yao Bian) bowl. Top and side view.
3. Below Hare's fur (Tu Hao) at 60 times magnification.

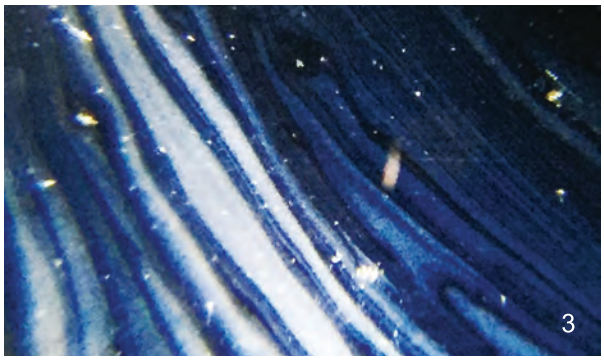
The diameters of Jianware tea bowls range from 11 to 15cm, including a 13.5cm standard size for cupping and tea evaluation. Jianware can be roughly classified into three types according to its glaze patterns: Yohen Tenmoku (Yao Bian), Oil Spot (You Di) and Hare's Fur (Tu Hao). Yao Bian describes the intricate and variable glaze of Yohen Tenmoku. You Di, also known as Zhe Gu Ban, is the pattern named from the francolin (grouse). Both are fortuitous "accidents" that occur during the firing process in the kiln, Lu explains.

Anomalies bubble and flow across the surface of the glaze throughout the firing process but these "are a gift from God," he said.

Yohen Tenmoku bowls reflect light from deep within the glaze. The most amazing thing is that its spots give off a spectrum of colorful reflective halos when observed under light. And what's more, the light shifts and changes as one changes one's angle of observation.

"I had the honor to see with my own eyes this 'cosmos in itself' bowl and indeed it is like the cosmos — amazing endless changes and color in such a delicate small tea bowl — you just cannot take your eyes off of it," he said.





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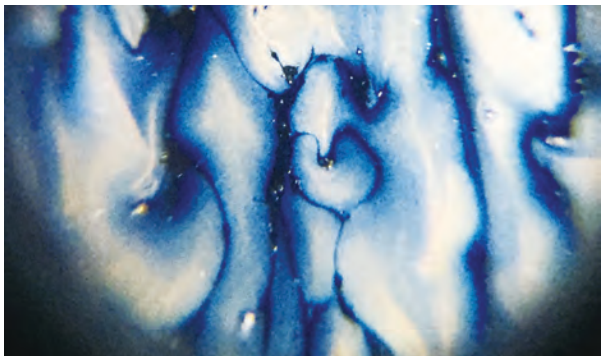


YOUDI

4

4. Oil Spot bowl. Top, side and bottom view. The typical Oil Spot pattern exhibits a cluster of tiny duckweeds which converge without merging, rendering a ripple effect, also known as the francolin (grouse) pattern.

JINYOUDI

5

5. Gold Oil Spot bowl. Top, side and bottom view. Height: 7.8cm. Bowl diameter: 21.8cm. Base diameter: 6.8cm.

Original glaze ore

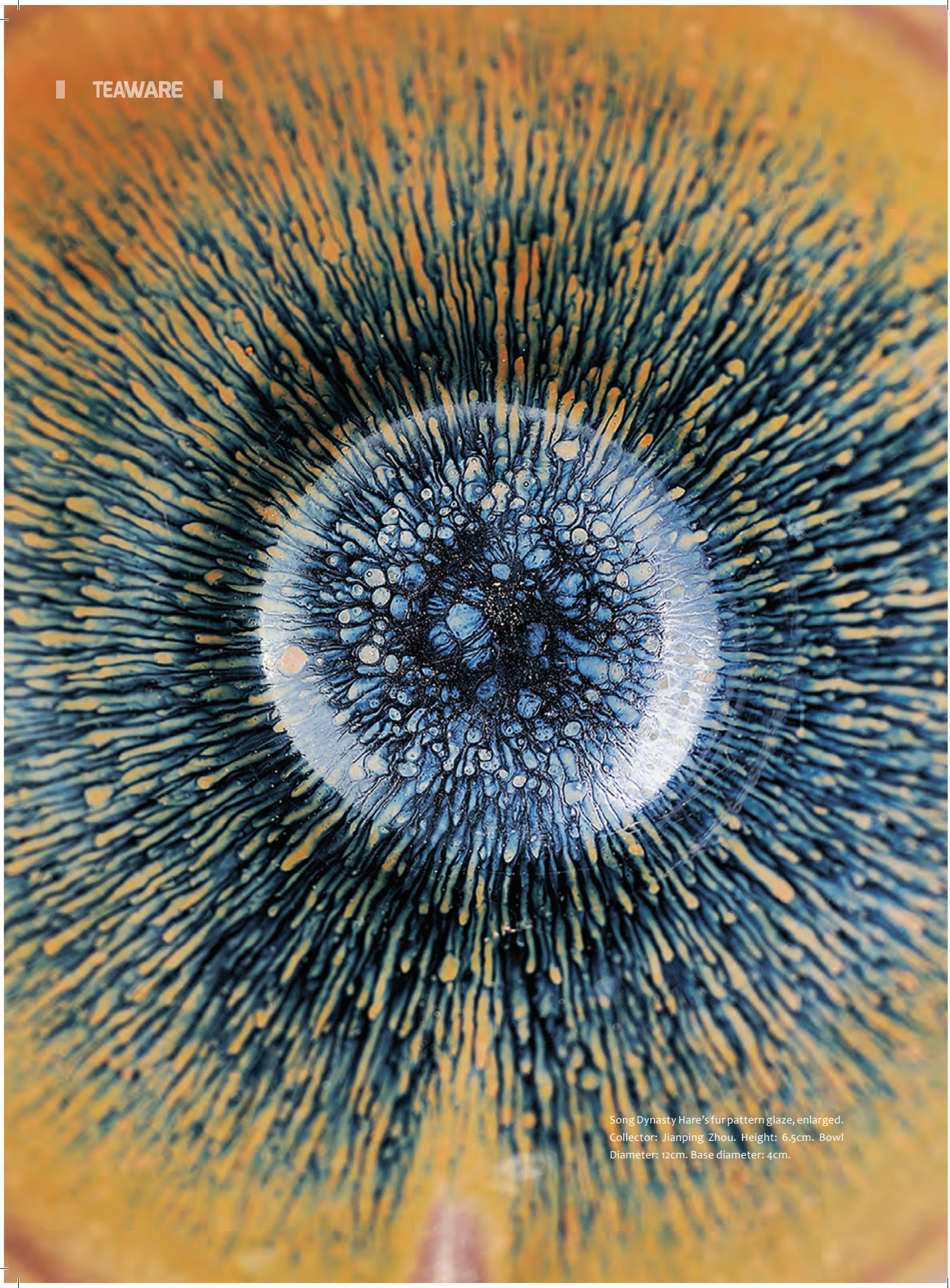
The glaze used particularly for Jianware can be divided into two major types: black glaze and mixed color glaze. Jianyao black glaze is a crystal glaze rich in iron. During the firing process, iron elements are reduced from the glaze according to changes in temperature and conditions in the kiln. Various desirable drip glaze patterns occur but they are difficult to control and impossible to predict.

Glaze used for traditional Jianyao is quarried in local valleys from strata known as the glaze base (You Ku). This sticky, acidic glaze is rich in iron and phosphate. Calcium is then added as a mix of ash from burned grass and wood. High density enables artisan potters to apply a thicker glaze resulting in a darker colors after firing. In modern ceramic terminology, this is known as iron crystal glaze.

The ratio of ingredients to achieve the effect is adjusted by the master. The pattern with its variations in color is caused by uneven temperature within the kiln. Different glaze formulas produce either of the three precious patterns.

Notably, there is inferior Jianware-like pottery on the market that is made with chemical glaze or natural glaze with additives used to achieve color and pattern effects, at lower temperatures.

Traditionally Jianware uses a single glaze to achieve the various colors and patterns, hence the saying “one color into the kiln, ten thousand colors from the kiln.” Different colors can be achieved by firing at different temperatures: 1,280°C produces a dark gold/oil drip effect. 1,330°C a dark reddish brown glaze and 1,350°C a persimmon red.



Song Dynasty Hare's fur pattern glaze, enlarged. Collector: Jianping Zhou. Height: 6.5cm. Bowl Diameter: 12cm. Base diameter: 4cm.

Yohen Tenmoku

Yohen Tenmoku (Yao Bian) literally translates "changes happened in the kiln," and describes the magnificent irregular yellowish spots against a deep black glaze of Jianware bowls. Under light a bluish rainbow flares from the Yao Bian pattern. Colors and patterns inside these bowls change with every movement of the admirer.

During the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644) people believed the blood of young boys and girls contained the essence of life and that it could be condensed in porcelain, resulting in miraculous effects. There are records of human sacrifices during the superstitious ritual performed when dedicating a Jianyao kiln.

Three well-known Yohen Tenmoku bowls from this period are still revered as national treasures in Japan. The bowls are displayed at Tokyo's Seikado Bunko Art Museum in Setagaya; the Fujita Art Museum in Osaka, and in Koyoto at the Ryuko-in of Daitoku-ji Temple. It is the most valued Yohen Tenmoku pottery in the world.

How are flare spots formed?

In the firing process, there is a short period when flare spots appear on the black glaze as the ferrous iron is reduced to ferric iron in a split second. The ferric iron is highly soluble and quickly dissolves into the glaze. The pattern disappears leaving a very thin membrane that forms around the spot. This creates the flare effect. If this fleeting process can be "frozen" the flare spots appear. In most instances the bowl will emerge with a solid black glaze. The likelihood of catching and freezing the process at the precise moment during the firing process is close to zero. This is why Yohen Tenmoku bowls are so rare they have become national treasures.

TU HAO

7

7. The Tu Hao pattern displays a long, thin thread flowing from the edge all the way down to the centre of the tea bowl. The pattern resembles rabbit fur.

Oil Spot and Hare's Fur

Oil spots vary in diameter from 3-4 millimeters to a needle point. Some oil spots emerge golden and some silver. Iron oxide degrades elemental iron and oxygen at 1,300°C. Oxygen bubbles carrying iron ions float to the surface of the glaze in the shape of tiny duckweeds. The individual duckweeds flock together to form larger blocks displaying a ripple effect. They converge without merging.

At a slightly higher temperature all the lines and ripples become molten again, and flow with the molten glaze into long lines, creating the Hare's Fur (Tu Hao). The lines should flow from the edge of the bowl all the way down to the bottom, filling the inside of the bowl.

Tu Hao is the most common firing. There are many fewer Oil Spot bowls.

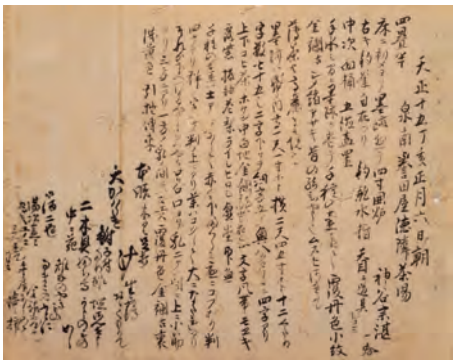
1 Chigusa

Chigusa Meibutsu

Ancient Japanese diaries document the legacy of a humble tea jar

Story by **Stephenie Overman**
Photos courtesy **Freer Gallery of Art**

2 Diaries



3 Set of three nesting shipping boxes

Sixteenth century Japanese tea men who immersed themselves in chanoyu, or "art of tea," can point the way to enriching the experience of modern tea aficionados.

Those discerning Japanese merchants, scholars and rulers participated in tea rituals and recorded detailed observations in their diaries, chronicling their appreciation not only of the matcha itself but of the objects used in the drinking of the tea as well.

"The diaries show how much they paid attention to all these things and by paying attention not only to the taste of the tea, but to the vessel it's drunk from, how it increased the enjoyment," says Andrew Watsky, a professor of Japanese art history at Princeton University.

"Looking at and appreciating objects' shape, size and so on was part of the pleasure of tea. They took this very seriously," Watsky says. "It's not just pulling out any old mug. It's paying attention and being very aware and alert to not just the tea itself, but to the vessel you drink it from.

"I'm talking about something based on the experience of the moment, a sensory experience. It's experiencing the now and enjoying the moment. It's holding that bowl in your hand," he says, adding, "personally, I pay a lot of attention to what I drink tea from."

A revered object

Particularly fine items used in these Japanese tea rituals were designated as *meibutsu*, or revered objects, by the tea men.

Chigusa is a meibutsu tea jar and one of the most famous of several hundred antique ceramic storage jars still in existence.

Watsky has spent years studying Chigusa and myriad tea diaries' entries about it. He and Louise

4 Silk cords

Cort, curator of ceramics at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, in Washington, D.C., are editors of the book "Chigusa and the Art of Tea." He was co-curator of the Chigusa exhibit at the Princeton University Art Museum last year.

Those tea diaries recorded descriptions of Chigusa's physical attributes and accessories that allow contemporary scholars to see the jar through the writers' eyes, notes Watsky. The diaries detailed its size, shape, appearance and pedigree. They even noted characteristics like glaze texture and blisters from the kiln's heat.

The tea men's diaries described Chigusa's use in the *kuchikiri* or "the cutting of the mouth," the annual ritual of cutting open the paper seal of the jar and the grinding and serving of the new tea.

Fresh tea was picked in the spring then stored in a ceramic jar in a cool place. In the autumn, the removal of the wooden lid and cutting of the paper seal marked the opening of the jar for the first time after it had been stored through the hot summer months.

In the book "Chigusa and the Art of Tea" tea scientist Omori Masahi explores how this process of storing the tea in jars in a cool place during the hot, humid Japanese summers improved its taste.

When Masahi asked tea drinkers to compare un-aged new tea with aged "autumn new tea" they reported that "the un-aged new tea somehow attacked the tongue, while the autumn new tea did not."

Compared to the un-aged tea, "autumn new tea had approximately 10% less polyphenol, caffeine and amino acid. Unlike new tea, the autumn tea appeared blackish and the oxalic acid and the DDPH radical-scavenging activity had decreased by approximately 10%."

As Watsky puts it, in lay terms: “It removed some of the bitterness. The tea was rounder in the mouth.”

In studying the documents about Chigusa and other jars, Watsky learned that the 16th century tea men even found that tea stored in different jars developed different tastes.

“They might talk about how the tea stored in a certain jar is delicious, wonderful. In a way they were saying that part of the greatness of a really great tea jar was that it actually improved the flavor of the tea.”

Lessons from Chigusa and chanoyu

Modern connoisseurs can learn from Chigusa and chanoyu.

They don’t need to go out and buy a tea jar, although Watsky comments that he has thought of it. What they can learn, he says, are the benefits of taking care of tea to get the most out of it.

“It matters where you get the tea, how you store it, that you make sure it’s properly prepared,” says Watsky, a confirmed matcha drinker who buys all his tea in Japan.

“I talk to people at the shops I go to. I trust them; I’ve developed relationships with them. If I go to a new place I ask them to tell me what the differences in the teas are.”

“It’s almost as if you’re buying a bottle of wine. Take the time to get to know where the tea is from and let people who know share their knowledge.”

5 Kettle

6 Tea bowl

1. Tea-leaf storage jar named Chigusa with mouth cover and ornamental cords. The mouth cover for Chigusa was made by Tsuchida Yuko in 2013; the cords for tying ornamental knots are from the Japanese Meiji era (late 19th–early 20th c.).

2. Historical records of viewers of Chigusa, transcribed from a tea diary entry dated 1587, 1st month, 6th day Japan, Edo period, ca. 1633–43 Ink on paper. Dimensions: 35.7 × 45.6 cm.

3. Set of three nesting shipping boxes for Chigusa. The outer box is the most recent, from the Meiji era (late 19th– early 20th c.). The middle box, formerly the outer box, is from the Edo period (1615–1868), and is made of cedar stained with persimmon tannin. The inner storage box, from the same time period, is made of lacquered paulownia wood. All three are Japanese, designed to nest within one another.

4. Tray for the inner storage box enclosing Chigusa, with ornamental cords and storage envelopes.

5. Kettle for boiling water for tea formerly owned by Insetsu, the first known owner of Chigusa. Muromachi period, late 15th–early 16th c. Japan. Cast iron and bronze 17 x 29.1 cm.

6. Tea bowl formerly owned by Insetsu, created in Fujian province, China during the Southern Song dynasty, 13th c. Stoneware with iron glaze, copper rim 6.8 x 13.3 cm.

Meet Chigusa

Please meet Chigusa, the object of so much fascination. At first glance, the jar looks like an ordinary old storage container. Chigusa is old — more than 700 years old —and over the course of those centuries it has become one of the most revered objects of Japan's chanoyu, or "art of tea."

From the extensive records kept by Japanese tea men, scholars today know that Chigusa originated as one of countless utilitarian ceramics made in southern China during the 13th or 14th century and was shipped to Japan as a container for a commercial product.

In Japan, Chigusa, like other Chinese storage jars, was endowed with special status, and over the years it became a highly desirable antique. Only a few hundred other tea storage jars survive and fewer still are accompanied by such a wealth of artifacts and documentation.

Japanese tea enthusiasts awarded each jar its own name, often tied to poetry or literature, as a sign of respect and reverence. The name Chigusa means "abundance of varieties," "abundance of plants" or "myriad flowers." Since Chigusa has a distinctive name, scholars have been able to trace its story precisely to the present day.

Believed to have been made during the Yuan dynasty, Chigusa is colored with a mottled amber glaze with four lugs on its shoulder and a cylindrical neck with a rolled lip sealed by a silk cover and secured with cord.

Tea men noted Chigusa's characteristics and recorded minute observations in their tea diaries. One eyewitness, who saw the jar at a gathering in 1586, admired its large size (16.5 inches tall) and the reddish color of the clay.

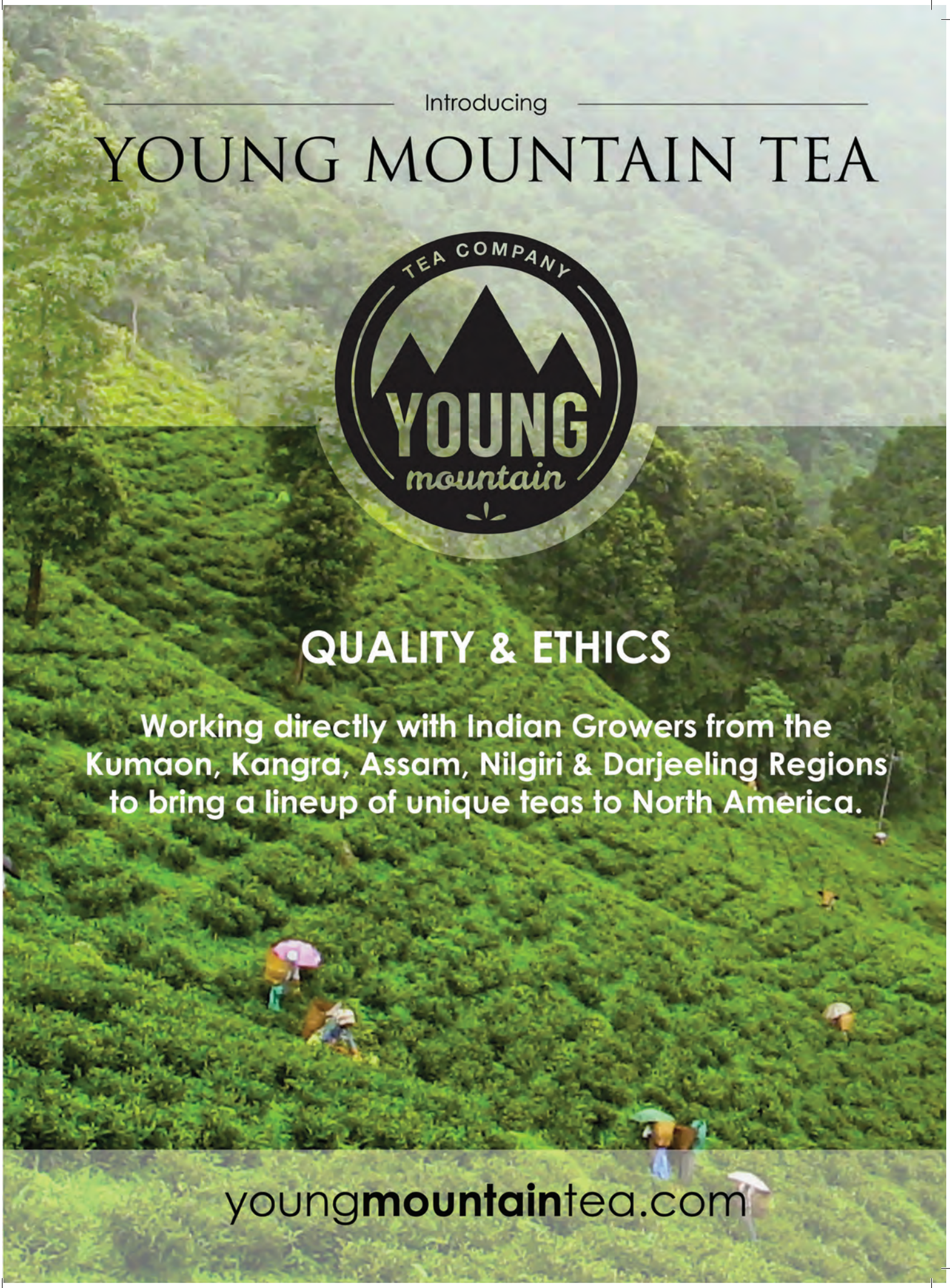
"Tea men looked at Chigusa and found beauty even in its flaws, elevating it from a simple tea jar to how we know it today," says Louis Allison Cort, curator for ceramics at the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. "This ability to value imperfections in objects made by the human hand is one of the great contributions of Japanese tea culture to the world."

In the 15th century, participants in Japanese tea ceremonies were impressed "by the quantity of objects," according to Cort. But in the 16th century — the high point of chanoyu — the emphasis was on the harmony of the objects within the group.

"There was a combination of precious and easily available objects and the contact of highly different materials. It was a powerful aesthetic experience for guests" at tea gatherings, Cort says.

The jar bears four ciphers written in lacquer on its base. The oldest is attributed to Noami (1397-1471), a painter and professional connoisseur for the Ashikaga shogun. According to researchers, this suggests the possibility, otherwise unrecorded, that the jar circulated among owners close to the Ashikaga government. The next oldest cipher is that of Torii Insetsu (1448-1517) an important tea connoisseur and collector in the international trading city of Sakai, known for innovative tea activity. The next owner to inscribe his cipher was another Sakai tea enthusiast, Ju Soho, who hosted a tea in the new year of 1573 for guests, including the esteemed tea master Sen no Rikyu (1522-91).

The Smithsonian Institution acquired Chigusa at auction in 2009. The famous tea jar had a brief U.S. tour and is now in storage, waiting to be exhibited at the Freer Gallery after renovation there is completed some time next year.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Where Trees Become Teas and Strangers Friends

Story and Photos by **Nicholas Lozito**

A happenstance meeting along a muddy uphill trail in Xishuangbanna leads to a long-time friendship sharing tea.

Nicholas Lozito inspecting fresh picked tea leaves.

The rain is pouring heavily and the walk just begun. My shoes are clods of mud. My rain jacket hangs over a chair in a hostel hundreds of miles distant. I am searching for Mr. He, someone I read about on the blog of another wanderer. Mr. He is my only connection, or hope, for photographing the unique tea processing in this village.

It is November, and I am at 7,000 feet in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, China, the region of the world where the earliest tea was cultivated, and where the Da Ye (large leaves) used to make puer are plucked just as they were thousands of years ago.

Postcard photos of landmarks and shrines have never motivated me to purchase a ticket for a distant land, but the image of a family squatting in a bamboo hut, roasting tea leaves over an open fire led me to travel this road for the next five years. I have learned that understanding more about the people who make our teas enables us to appreciate them that much more. Tea is not merely a beverage, in this part of the world it is a way of life.

Mr. He lives a few miles from where the bus dropped us. My wife, Boualai, and I had traveled nearly five hours over difficult roads and nearly lost our lives when our bus crashed into a cement truck. When the bus finally stopped near the village, we had no idea where to go.

We started up a dirt path that has now been our only guide for the past hour.

"Mr. He, cha," I say gesturing to a villager walking past us. I pretend to take a sip from an imaginary teacup.

He squints, shakes his head and keeps walking.

"Why do we have to see him? Can't we just take photos of anyone making tea?" my wife asks as the climb gets steeper and the rain falls heavier.

I look at her and shake my head.

My wife comes from an even smaller village. Her people are as nomadic as these tea growers. In her village, outsiders are the ones who can ruin the insider, so they are always protective. In these ancient tea villages, the Chinese guard their tea and the processing secrets behind it, using any means necessary.

The rain is heavier now and puddles are everywhere. I know what my wife is thinking, so I won't ask her if she needs to take a rest or look for a place to stay.

I see a young man wearing black sunglasses sitting in his garage. He nods as we come closer.

"Sorry, do you know Mr. He? Drink tea?" I ask him, pointing down the path.

He puts down a wineglass full of tea and jumps up. "Go. He." He motions towards the top of the mountain.

"Straight, go straight?" I ask, pointing to the top of the mountain.

"Okay." he says, smiling and pointing again to the path.

I once walked 20 miles in India on a seemingly endless path that I thought was only three miles. Whenever I stopped villagers would tell me I was very close. Just keep walking. So I did, for nearly two days.

We nodded, smiled and kept walking.

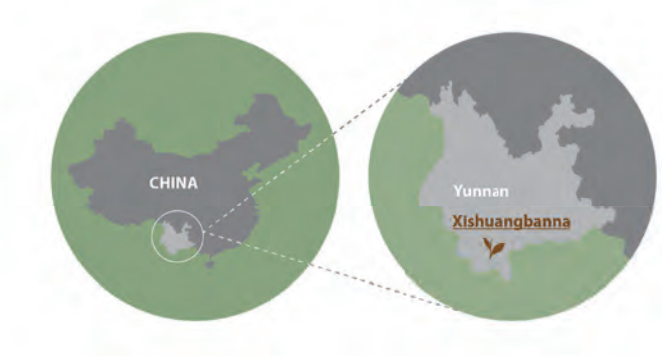
Ten minutes later we reached the end of the path. There were no signs and only two options: left or right.

A motorcycle pulled up.

In villages thousands of miles from the West and hundreds of miles from a town, local residents don't often encounter people that look like me. The motorcyclist slows down to stare.

Where

XISHUANGBANNA, CHINA



Xishuangbanna is Yunnan province's southern-most prefecture, with a population of 1 million. The Mekong River (Lancang River) runs across the province, which has a tropical climate that attracts tourists. Xishuangbanna is the home of the Dai people. Xishuangbanna is one of the four main tea production areas in Yunnan.

"Mr. He? Drink Tea?" I yelled over the high-pitched muffler.

He took off his helmet and pointed to a large house about 100 feet away.

"Mr. He? Cha?" I asked again, and motioned with my hand like I was drinking tea.

He quickly nodded then put his helmet back on.

By now we are drenched. We have walked hours since arriving at the village. Along the way, we were invited in by smiling villagers helping us get out of the rain.

We are tired and uncertain of what to do.

As we approach, we see that the house is more like a compound. Tall white walls topped with barbed wire surrounded the home. The place looked as old as the giant tea trees that surround us. The rain finally let up and we can see that there is a gate. It is open, inviting us to enter.

Within 50 feet of the entrance we hear a vicious growl, then the barking of several dogs.

Dogs here are trained to protect homes, vehicles and even tea fields. In these parts, dogs are not pets, they are dogs.

My wife looked at me and motioned for us to turn back.

We can smell fresh tea being cooked over a wok. The sweet scent permeates the wet air inviting us closer. The view down the mountain is tropical and enchanting. The barking gets louder and the dogs know their role in this village.

I step forward to get a better look. The sound of heavy chains dragged across cement convinces me to jolt back to my wife.

I still have not seen the dog but the menacing bark convinces us to run full-speed back down

the path. Or pockets rattle with the sound of Chinese coins, prayer beads, and camera lenses as we shuffle our legs quickly down the dirt path filled with rocks and tree limbs.

"Hurry up!" I scream to my wife.

She is running but barely keeping up.

At the bottom of the hill we slow down, and don`t bother to turn back. Rain and sweat cover our faces, green trees and bamboo huts line the streets and the dogs are nowhere to be seen.

I look at her and shrug my shoulders. She wipes her face with the edge of her sleeve.

"Let's head back into town. Forget Mr. He," I say to my wife, wishing she had said it first.

Ahead of us, we see the young man who pointed us up to the top of the mountain. He is sitting in his garage. Two hours may have passed since we met. He waves us closer.

"Hello, tea," he shouts, motioning us into his garage where a giant tree trunk serves as his tea table.

I turn to Boualai, shrug as all men do. She kicks off her sandals and enters.

Liu, the young man, reaches into a giant bag of loose tea leaves. The bag is the size of a small car.

He motions with his hand, "drink tea?" We scoot closer to the table. We scooted closer to the table. He turns on the stereo and we hear Chinese instrumental music and we both catch our breath.

He pours a cup of tea and we sit back. Completely unexpectedly, this single cup turns into us sitting with him for twelve hours.

Liu's family has been picking tea from their ancient tea trees for hundreds of years. Now it is his turn. He rented this small garage to get away from the factory while he designs his first wrapper, and prepares for his first production of his own puer.

Timing is the heartbeat of our lives; it is the main element of fate and exercises far greater control over us than we know. How different a minute, a left turn instead of a right, a barking dog, can make.

Liu invites us to stay with him. He has a spare bed in his tea factory and will show us around the village in the morning.

Puer tea, especially sheng (green) puer tea, is known and loved for the feeling it brings. There are many other aspects including its many health benefits. By now, we are feeling very, very, good. Our bodies are restored, our spirits are elevated, and our minds are more alert than ever. The tea is naturally sweet and tastes like apricots and guava. We later see these fruit trees are planted next to the tea trees.

Being that I know little of the Mandarin language at the time, we use translation software on our phones, and Liu walks us through the history of tea and the story of his family's involvement in tea. The trees were planted 200 or more years ago. He explains why the finished leaves have jagged edges and why this particular leaf is bitter but the swallow is sweet.

Over the next few days, we photograph tea being picked and processed, and try our hand at it as well. Months later, realizing that this tea is special, I send samples it to random tea businesses and wait in anticipation to see if they like it. I had no business in tea and surely never thought of selling it; I just wanted to see it being made.

The roads eventually dried and the monsoon season passed. In the weeks that follow phone calls and emails confirm what I suspected: this tea is phenomenal.

This tea is a bridge between the many and the few; the cities of the world to the nooks of mountainsides. Tea is that great binder as strangers become friends or when family haven't not spoken in years. Through tea, I hope to take admirers one-by-one on that old bus and when we arrive, I will point their way to the top of that mountain.

1. Puer drying after being compressed.
2. After being fired and rolled, the tea is left to dry under the sun.

New Zealand's Tea Evolution

Story by **Felicia Stewart**
Photos courtesy **Zealong**

Until the introduction of specialty coffee into New Zealand in the late 1980s, tea was the Kiwi's go-to beverage. Today it is experiencing a renaissance. Specialty loose-leaf teas and wellness herbals, innovative tea professionals, and the success of locally produced tea are powering trend changes.

New Zealanders are some of the biggest coffee drinkers in the world. This tiny nation is the inventor of the flat white and, for the customers of the thousands of cafes dotted around the country, long may it rule. Yet coffee hasn't always been number one. Tea drinking has a long history in New Zealand: in the huts of whalers, in the rations of the early settlers, in the cultures of its immigrants. And the stats confirm it. Up until the 1960s, traditional (black) tea was the beverage of choice with the average Kiwi consuming more than 3 kg each year (more than their British counterparts). And then came the tea bag (dip, dunk and discard); it's the mantra of tea making that many Kiwis grew up with.

The 1990s signalled a change in tea drinking habits due to the growth of a café culture and a 316% jump in the price of tea (more than all other non-alcoholic beverages, according to Statistics New Zealand). Today, Kiwis down an average of 0.98 kg each year.

A quick look into most New Zealand cafes will confirm this. If consumers are after coffee, it is likely they can choose everything from the origin of the beans, the intensity of the roast, the amount of milk,

Early-morning mist wafting above Zealong's meticulously maintained tea gardens.

and of course a trained barista to prepare the brew. The tea might be on display, or it might not. But chances are good that the selection is a predictable handful of blends and herbals, and delivered with boiling hot water and tea bag pre-dunked.

In the supermarket, the selection has evolved beyond canisters of traditional loose-leaf blends such as Bell, Choysa or PG Tips. Shelves reveal rows of boxes containing what was once black or green tea; heavily disguised by as many varieties of spice, herb or fruit you can imagine – not to mention artificial flavourings. And of course, there are layers of packaging that are contributing generously to the size of New Zealand's landfills.

Australasian Specialty Tea Association spokesperson Nathan Wakeford says New Zealanders are determined tea drinkers, with supermarket sales worth close to $90 million.

"Much like Australia, tea sales are driven by the at-home segment with 59% of Kiwis (over 10-years old) downing tea at least once a week. One of the big problems with commodity tea is customers are becoming more savvy about health and sustainability. The amount of information available about what we consume has exploded over the past decade, leading to very educated consumers."

"Tea producers (and importers) are under pressure to reduce pesticides, artificial flavourings and packaging, and embrace ethical practices," he says. "Cafes and restaurants also need to up their game, with younger drinkers demanding tea is given the same attention as coffee."

A report by Euromonitor confirms this with key forecast trends noted as sustainability (with a focus on ethical sourcing), health and wellness, and premiumisation. "The strain is showing for the good old-fashioned cuppa," says Wakeford.

Tea movers and shakers

The Chapter Book and Tea Shop has been in the business of promoting tea to New Zealanders for close to 20-years. Proprietor, Frances Loo, says there have been two game changers in this time: the advent of the silken pyramid bag and rise of online sales.

"People like the sophisticated look of the pyramid bag and quality of the tea, but more importantly they have penetrated the café market," says Loo. "And tech savvy companies with online purchasing options

have helped make it easier for consumers to seek out and purchase teas that they encounter during experiences such as a high tea event."

Loo says she has seen companies come and go during her tenure. But she says a consistent performer is New Zealand-owned Bell Tea and Coffee Company, probably best known for their black or 'gumboot' tea in red boxes.

Kiwis have been drinking Bell tea since 1898, when Norman Harper Bell founded the company in Dunedin, and it still makes 4 million teabags daily at its two factories in New Zealand; almost enough for everyone in the country to have a cuppa each day. With the license to market English brand Twinings in New Zealand, Bell holds more than 40% of the total tea market.

Meticulous quality control.

Since his arrival 11 years ago, Bell's master tea blender Matt Greenwood noted sales of tea beyond regular black tea were slowly growing due to the perceived health and wellness benefits. "Gumboot is obviously a mature market, but there was opportunity for Bell to move into other areas such as green tea which is growing steadily, and herbal infusions."

Figures from market research company Nielson confirm that of the $89 million worth of tea New Zealand's supermarkets sold in the year to April 2015, about $52 million is the gumboot variety (with a fall in value of 2.4%). The value growth is in herbal, (9.3%) green, (7.3%) ready-to-drink (RTD) teas (1.7%) and powdered chai (4.5%) .

Drawing on knowledge gleaned from years working in the British tea industry, Greenwood has created and launched the 'NZ Live' line which features native botanicals, Bell Zesty Green Tea, Bell Herbal & Fruit Tea, and a single-country blend, called Kenya Bold.

"Kenya Bold came about because we found there was a gap in our mostly male audience that was looking for a stronger brew," says Greenwood. "We sourced a tea with strength and character, put more leaf in the bag, and created a whole new segment."

Another company with a forward thinking attitude is Sri Lankan-owned, Dilmah – known widely for its ethical growing, production and business practices. Dilmah recently launched their supermarket

Gentle processing of the precious leaves.

Organic Fruit & Herbal range and top-shelf 'T-series' destined for New Zealand's top restaurants and hotels. The company has also redefined supermarket packaging by identifying the estate on its boxes. This is progress given that until recently there has been a complete absence of any reference to the provenance of the leaves used by tea retailers.

Additionally, Dilmah has gone added-value with its tea marketing, pushing its luxury teabags and loose leaf tea into cocktails and into food by holding its annual Real High Tea Challenge where chefs compete on pairing tea with food in "tea gastronomy".

New Zealand's only tea producer, Zealong, has

also upped the ante with their five world-class organic teas available to enjoy as part of a fine (tea-infused) dining experience at Zealong Tea Estate.

Marketing Manager, Sen Kong says the early days were "a bit of a venture." Customers were not accustomed to the nuances. Each order required a detailed conversation. But he observes: "In 2015 consumers are making informed choices about what they put into their bodies, and many are embracing beverages that not only taste good, but are 100% pure. That puts Zealong in a strong position."

As well as educating customers, the company is dedicated to helping established businesses to spread their (tea) wings. Even gourmet supermarkets, such as Farro Fresh and Nosh, are jumping on the bandwagon,

Pickers at work.

stocking wulong tea alongside the ever-increasing range of specialty coffee.

Harney Fine Teas, too, is taking the high-ground by supplying boutique hotels, restaurants, gourmet cafes and stores, spas and salons, and have won a captive audience with the female demographic.

This is the competition that industry heavyweight, Unilever Australasia, faces with the launch of two new T2 shops in Auckland. "New Zealand is not a mature market and there are already a number of players," says Loo. "T2 has come late, but they are bringing some new concepts to Kiwis such as attractive gifts which will appeal to a certain segment."

All steps in the right direction, but there remain two unaddressed issues: the sizeable gap between (tea) auction and consumer prices, and how to correctly prepare tea.

Rise of the niche entrepreneur

More and more frequently Kiwis are coming across small niche operators plying artisan blends at farmers' markets around the country.

"The artisan tea merchant is not your traditional tea retailer. The new wave, largely driven by those in their 20s to 40s, is getting creative," says Wakeford. "They source ethically and organically grown tea (bypassing wholesalers), blend (often using local produce), package responsibly, price moderately, and tell the world about it via Instagram and Facebook."

Zealong's country club-like surroundings.

Chai and medicinal teas, in particular, seem to be creating interest with two companies, Mister Chai (Hawkes Bay) and Forage & Bloom (Auckland) taking consumers far beyond the traditional tea bag.

"With the natural health and vitality segment booming, botanical infusions are becoming popular across all demographics," says Hannah McMenanin of Forage & Bloom, whose dispensary-style herbal blends include a nutrient dense liver tonic made from batch-roasted dandelion root. "Part of the desirability of our brand is that we enthusiastically foster consumer understanding of plants and their benefits."

Hand-crafted ready-to-drink teas are also prev-

alent at farmers' markets, with many now moving into local dairies, cafes and food stores. Kombucha, in particular, is moving rapidly with a number of providers operating on both islands.

With such a vast selection of tea offerings available, education is critical. Australian Tea Master Managing Director, Sharyn Johnson offers a range of tea courses to Kiwis and Aussies, including executive level tea training. Some graduates will help bring specialty tea into restaurants, hotels and cafés. Others will set up as niche traders. Whatever their chosen path, Johnston is certain her 'tea masters' will be the ones to increase the presence and knowledge of all types of tea in New Zealand.

A bright future

While the specialty market has been slower to grow than many other regions there is tremendous scope for further expansion and innovation – particularly with fair trade and organic products currently accounting for only a small portion of the industry.

Niche offerings have definitely had an impact. But it is wishful thinking for anyone in the tea industry to believe that we will see a 'monkey-picked' Wuyi wulong on a shelf in the supermarket in the near future. A far more probable scenario is that premium tea will take a sizable bite out of the current offer of entry-level products, just as coffee beans displaced their inferior 'instant' cousin.

And for those companies interested in entering the market, Loo offers this advice: "If you want to dominate the New Zealand market, become the biggest supermarket trader or broadly penetrate the café market – but offer not only good tea but tea ware and education."

Freshly harvested leaves on the heating floor.

Quintessentially Kiwi

- In New Zealand, ordinary black tea is sometimes called "gumboot tea" – the equivalent of the UK's "builder's tea." A fairly recent New Zealand idiom, it probably arose when more exotic blends of tea like Earl Grey became popular. The New Zealand Dictionary Centre's first citation for 'gumboot tea' is from 1997.
- During the First World War a one-pound Bell Tea tin had exactly the right dimensions to be sent to troops overseas at a special postal rate. Friends and relatives bought the tea, emptied the tins, and packed them with food and other small items to post away. Bell struggled to keep up with demand. New Zealanders at the front lines left a trail of Bell tins behind them.
- In the 20th century picnickers and travellers brewed tea outdoors, often boiling water from a stream nearby in a thermette – a metal container for water with a cavity underneath, in which a fire was lit.
- New Zealand ranks no.16 in the world for consumption of tea per capita (International Tea Committee, 2011-2013); above Australia and not far behind world leaders Turkey, Ireland, England and Egypt.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Photoshoot for Dan Cong Oolong in Mt. Phoenix, Guangdong China

Garden Hopping in Queensland

Story and Photos by **Felicia Stewart**

Australians are discriminating coffee drinkers. Walk into any café and it's the aroma of coffee beans that captivates. From coast to red centre, it is the (hot) beverage of choice.

But coffee hasn't always been King. Tea was the number one beverage of Anglo-Celtic Australians from British settlement in 1788 to the 1950s. The iconic image of Australian outback life is of a swagman sitting around a fire with a 'billy' on the boil for tea. Perhaps the most famous example is found in Banjo Paterson's (1895) poem 'Waltzing Matilda' that has become Australia's most recognised bush ballad.

Many stories have been told over a cup of tea, except (perhaps) the story of tea in this nation. Join us as we travel to one warm, green destination: North Queensland.

Early settlers (mostly convicts) brought tea to Australian in the 18th century. Low-grade Chinese green tea known as 'common green tea' was used as a currency to pay convicts. If times were hard or Chinese tea unobtainable the leaves of the Australian tea tree and the sweet tea vine were substitutes.

In the 1880s there was a dramatic switch in Australian buying habits from Chinese green tea to Indian black tea. British Indian suppliers played on British loyalties, emphasising 'empire' tea over 'foreign' Chinese tea at a time when India's tea plantations flourished. Since green tea was associated with Australia's

convict past (and Australians were keen to erase associations with its convict legacy), Indian black tea literally bounded into the country. It was also fortuitous that the Australian dairy industry expanded at this time, making fresh milk available, so black tea with milk and sugar became the national beverage.

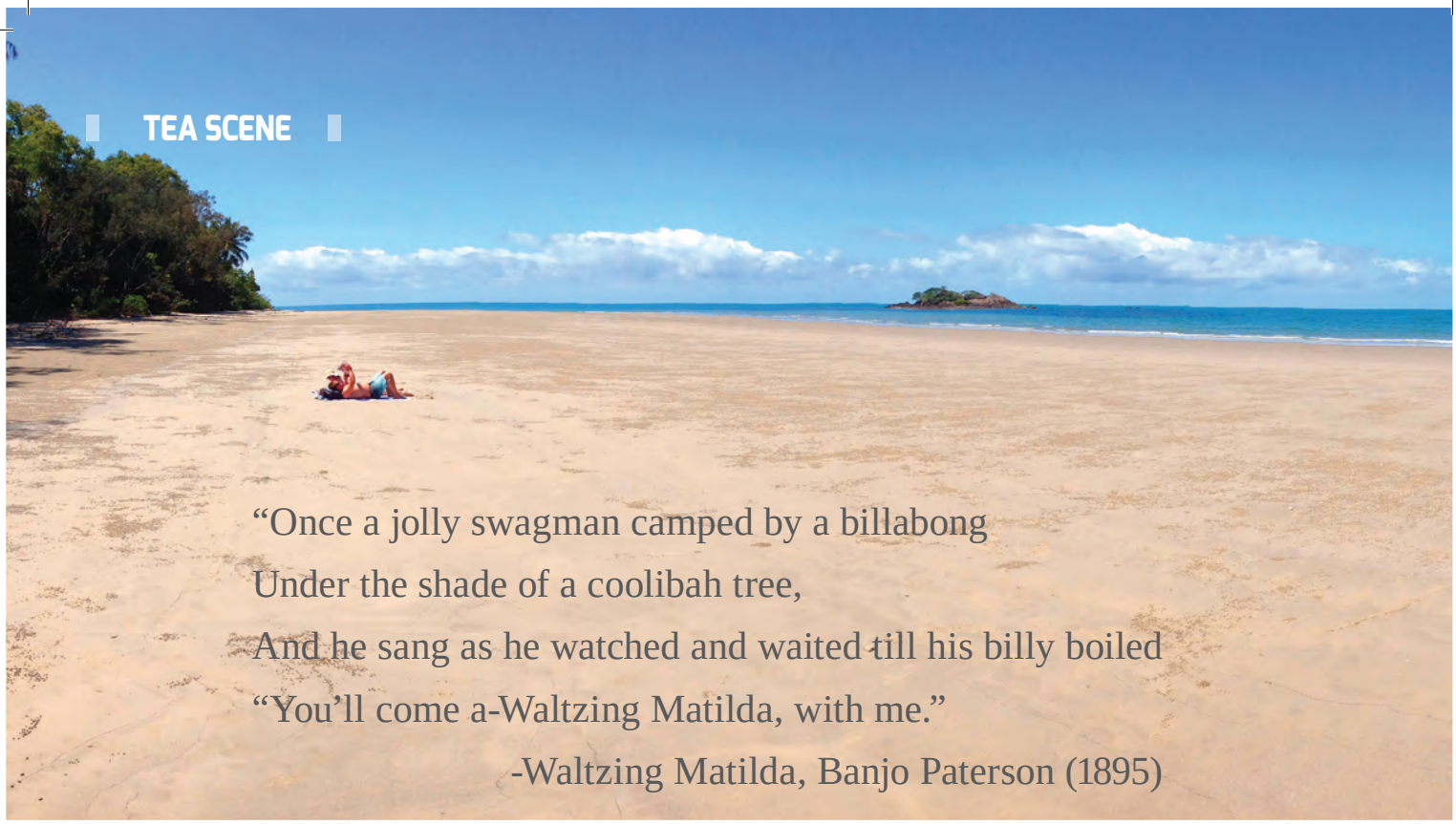
Demand for tea was so great that Australia became one of the world's premier tea-drinking nations in the late 19th century, prompting local entrepreneurs to seriously consider growing tea.

In 1882, four enterprising brothers rowed a boat down the Tully River and started growing tea and coffee near Bingil Bay, just over 100 kilometers south of Cairns. The Cutten brothers' choice of far North Queensland was thwarted by a cyclone, tidal wave and the worst drought in a century.

It wasn't until half a century later that Indian-born doctor, Allan Maruff (of Nerada Tea fame), went in search of the Cutten farm. He found tea plants over 15 meters in height deep in the rainforest, as well as numerous seedlings in the undergrowth. He collected hundreds of seeds and seedlings and started a tea nursery behind his surgery in Innisfail. And, thus, Australia's tea industry kicked into gear.

Visitors to the Far North can still find a handful of tea estates in an area called the 'Wet Tropics,' stretching from the eastern coastal forest fringe to the Atherton Tablelands in the west and far north to the Daintree Rainforest.

The tea experiences in Northern Queensland are well worth the effort. Go there before the rest of the world catches on and lose yourself in the peacefulness and timelessness of a heritage that's gone but not forgotten.



"Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong
Under the shade of a coolibah tree,
And he sang as he watched and waited till his billy boiled
"You'll come a-Waltzing Matilda, with me."
-Waltzing Matilda, Banjo Paterson (1895)

The Tea Trail

Nucifora Tea

East Palmerston

Rows of tea plants greet travellers on the road between Innisfail and Atherton Tablelands. The plantation covers 150 acres and the rich volcanic soils have produced quality black tea for more than 15 years. No pesticides or herbicides are used on the plantation and the leaves are not blended with those from other areas or crops. The tender tips of the plant are harvested every 21 days by machine. Nucifora run tours and you can purchase tea direct from farm via a roadside stall.

Location: 2402 Palmerston Highway (near Millaa Millaa), East Palmerston
www.nuciforatea.com.au

Nerada Tea

Atherton Tablelands

Nestled into the foothills of the Tablelands (790m), you can't miss the Nerada Tea Estate; strips of bright jade green contrast against the red volcanic soil and other local crops. One thousand acres of tea plants deliver more than six million kilos of fresh tea leaves to the Nerada Tea processing factory every year.

There are tours through the estate where visitors can engage in various tea-related activities like plucking from the tea bushes or watching the tea being harvested and processed. Or one can simply sample the tea in the Visitor Centre, while appreciating the lush carpet of green outside.

Malanda is a 1.5 hour drive 90km south west of Cairns. The Visitor Centre is open seven days a week.

Location: Nerada Tea Visitors Centre, Glen Allyn Road, Malanda
www.neradatea.com.au

Daintree Tea Company

Daintree

Run by the Nicholas family, the Cubbagudta Plantation is situated in the heart of the Daintree Wilderness and Rainforest area. Just pull over on the roadside and peruse the self service centre, which contains photographs, information brochures, and old machinery displays. Tea is available for sale as loose-leaf or tea bags next door at the Lync-Haven Rainforest Retreat. A fresh pot of Daintree Tea costs just a $4.

Location: Lot 12 Cape Tribulation Road, Diwan, Daintree
www.daintreetea.com

The Tea Chest

Daintree

If variety is the spice of your life, then head to The Tea Chest in the centre of Diwan town which offers seven chai blends, including Chai Green and Chai Chilli. The company prepares the right tea in the Daintree using mostly local ingredients to reduce their carbon footprint. (Not too hard when you have a tea plantation right next door!)

Location: Lot 143 Carbeen Road, Diwan 4873
www.theteachest.com.au

The Malanda Dairy Centre

Atherton Tablelands

Fancy milk with your tea? The Malanda Dairy Centre is an innovative retro milk bar style restaurant, showcasing the food and produce of the Tablelands region. It also includes a Taste of the Tablelands retail section and an interesting tour and interpretive centre for the local dairy industry.

Location: 8 James Street, Malanda
www.malandadairycentre.com.au

Coffee Works

Mareeba

Lastly, if you're all done with the Far North but your tea quota is still unfulfilled, head towards the town of Mareeba, 60km west of Cairns. There you'll find some quality tea – with exotic names like Misty Mountain and Hill of Clouds – amongst an extensive range of coffee and chocolate. And everything is available to sample! Pay the A$19 admission to Coffee World museum downstairs whose walls resonate with the ambience and aromas of years of tea and coffee-making history.

Location: 136 Mason Street, Mareeba
www.coffeeworks.com.au

The Falls Teahouse

East Palmerston

Located on the turnoff to the beautiful Millaa Millaa Falls, this teahouse is the perfect place to rest and enjoy a Devonshire tea.

Location: Palmerston Highway, Millaa Millaa
www.fallsteahouse.com.au

Photo by **Qiu**

Tea is the New Wine

Commentary by **Jennifer English**

Welcome to the Global Tea Renaissance.

Together we are embarking on an exciting, healthful, delicious and revolutionary journey of discovery that will last a lifetime. Tea is experiencing a massive shift in global awareness that will fundamentally change how every individual views this glorious infused beverage.

Comparing tea and wine is not a novel notion; more precisely we are ready today to explore and experience this tea moment, because of our experience with wine. Wine served as our sipping apprenticeship.

In 1976, it was widely known that the world's best wines were made in France. In those days the wine world was dominated by connoisseurs and wine geeks, sommeliers and

snobs. The near universal consensus: the best wines were Grand Cru, a French label for "best of the best."

That year, a British wine merchant, who sold only French wines, organized The Paris Wine Tasting. The event promised to be a celebration of the mastery and domination of the French–wine industry. Dozens of experts and leaders in the field were scheduled to gather and drink the world`s finest wines. The eleven judges were all French with impeccable vines credentials.

Two premier categories of varietals were judged: A white and a red (Bordeaux from France and Cabernet Sauvignon from California, Chardonnay from each).

This event is now known as the "Judgement of Paris." In blind tastings the California wines were judged superior to the greatest wines from France. Little-known California vintners placed far ahead of vintages from Chateau Mouton-Rothschild and Chateau Haut-Brion. It was a shock. To the French it was a horror. To the Americans, it was seismic. It was the genesis of the wine world we live in today. We can directly trace to that very moment in Paris how attitudes and perceptions about American wine changed, and more specifically when our love affair of food and wine had its inception.

Think of your personal relationship to wine. When you first discovered wine and how you learned to appreciate it. Most importantly, retrace how you learned about wine and why a particular wine became your favorite. Do you drink wine with meals? Do you gift wine to friends? Do you have a collection in a wine fridge?

Now imagine reliving and rediscovering that awakening, education and discovery (without a hangover). It is time for Grand Cru Tea.

Similar to that seismic moment in Paris, this is the "no going back" moment for tea; The Golden Age of Global Tea. We can trace it to specific events like the emergence of fine tea vendors and the explosion of options online, compounded by our own readiness thanks to our wine education.

Today superior teas exist but they are scarce, produced in finite quantities. From the most respected tea producing regions of the world, these are teas so exquisite and rare they never leave the town where they are produced (or get past the highest levels of government). There was no need for big budgets to market these teas, no deep-pocket multi-national corporations to bag them and box them for grocery shelves. There was not sufficient demand or supply.

Prior to the Judgement in Paris and sadly, for a long time afterword, the best wine was scarce. Much of the wine commercially available to the consumer at that time was comparatively inferior to the finest Grand Cru. First sips of wine piqued the interest. Then came, tasting, education, exploration and passion. Along the way, quality was discovered and served as context for all other sips.

A similarly exciting, remarkable tasting journey lies ahead. Discover passion in a cup, a new favorite tea, the very ones Tea Journey will feature for you to select, source and prepare, most for less than $2.50 a pot. Everyone has sipped tea: hot or cold, black or green, sweet or unsweetened. With few exceptions, these sips were nothing at all like the Grand Cru Teas awaiting your discovery.

Is that Cream in Your Tea

or Tea in Your Cream?

Story and Photos by **Robert Wemischner**

There's nothing new about placing tea and dairy in the same cup. The origins of the practice may be clouded in history but the Brits certainly aren't the only ones who enjoy the combination. Think about Thai tea with its sweetened condensed milk, the salted yak butter-enriched black tea of Tibet and Nepal, spiced milky chai in India, Hong Kong milk tea and East Frisian cream tea.

The debate may rage on about whether one should put milk in the cup first and pour hot brewed tea over it, or the other way around, but there's no contesting the pleasures of drinking a whitened cuppa mellowed, like a bit of liquid caramel in a cup. But what about extending that alliance beyond the china cup into the realm of dessert where milk, cream and also butter become the medium to carry tea's wonderfully complex flavor? As a pastry chef and baker driven by flavor and the potential of ingredients including tea, I have been exploring that intersection to arrive at tea-flavored sweets whose simple execution belies their satisfying complexity on the palate.

But not just any tea. I like to keep good quality Indian or Ceylon black teas, kitchen grade matcha and the smoky teas of China front and center in my cupboard, at the ready to infuse their special character into dairy of all kinds. Whatever the dessert or sweet, there's a tea that will make it even more delicious.

Ways to use liquid dairy

Tea Panna Cotta

Serving: 4

Ingredients:

- 1-1/2 c. (approximately 12 ozs.) whole milk OR a combination of ¾ c. (approximately 6 ozs.) whole milk and ¾ c. (approximately 6 ozs.) heavy cream
- 1 T. fragrant premium quality whole tea leaves of your choice (My favorites include Indian teas from Assam or Nilgiris and Keemun)
- 1/3 c. (2-2/3 ozs) granulated sugar or honey
- 2 t. (.20 oz or 5.6 grams) OR 2 gelatin sheets (weighing 3 grams each)

Note: If using powdered gelatin, mix it with 2 T. cold water and set aside. If using gelatin sheets, cover them in ice water for about 5 minutes or until softened, squeeze out any excess water and then set aside.

1. Bring the milk or milk and cream mixture to a boil in a heavy saucepan.
2. Add the tea leaves, remove from the heat and allow to infuse long enough for the tea flavor to come through clearly; the mixture should also appear slightly colored by the tea.
3. Pour the mixture through a fine meshed sieve into a clean saucepan and again bring to the boil.
4. Remove from the heat and add the sugar, stirring to dissolve completely and then add the gelatin, stirring again.
5. Now pour the mixture into 4 individual-serving sized molds. Carefully place the molds on to a level shelf in the refrigerator and chill for about 2 hours. (This dessert may be made a day in advance of serving.)
6. When ready to serve, dip the molds into hot water for 20 or 30 seconds and then invert on to dessert plates. Serve immediately.

This recipe for Tea Caramel is another example of how fragrant fresh tea leaves of premium quality can flavor a simple sauce for plain cakes, ice cream or even as a dip for rich chocolate chip shortbread cookies. Try making it with Darjeeling or a rich malty Assam tea. Refrigerated in a container with a tight fitting lid, this handy sauce will keep well for about a week.

Tea Caramel

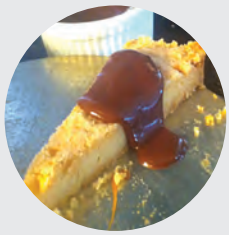
Yield: approximately 2 cups

Ingredients:

- 1-1/2 c. granulated sugar
- 1-1/2 c. heavy cream
- 2 t. premium quality whole leaf tea of your choice
  Salt to taste

1. Place cream and tea leaves into a heavy saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove from the heat and allow the tea leaves to infuse in the cream until the flavor of the tea is apparent.
2. Pour through a fine meshed sieve into another clean saucepan and keep warm on low heat on the stove while you make the caramel as follows.
3. In a clean heavy saucepan, melt the sugar, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon or heatproof spatula to ensure even melting. When the mixture starts to lightly brown, carefully and gently stir any unmelted sugar into the melted molten liquid sugar. Continue to cook until you produce an amber tea colored liquid. Do not burn the mixture or the resulting caramel will be bitter. Remove from heat just as the liquid turns amber in color.
4. Immediately pour the warm tea infused cream into the caramel, carefully stirring until the caramel re-liquefies completely (this mixture will bubble up violently so stir very carefully).
5. Add a pinch of salt to taste (remember the caramel is very hot so cool it off a bit before tasting).
6. When cool, pour into a heatproof jar with a tight fitting lid. Cover and refrigerate. It may be necessary to rewarm the mixture before serving. You can do this by placing it in a microwave safe vessel and warming in 2 or 3 second increments until fully melted and warm.

Here's an example of how three ingredients combine to prove that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. A sauce, a filling for a bonbon, or a spread to go on toast with your morning cup of tea, this Tea Ganache is another way to showcase the flavor profile of your favorite tea. I like to use a smoky Lapsang Souchong here and a dark high cocoa solids and cocoa butter-containing chocolate (60% to 70% will be on the label).



Tea Ganache

Yield: approximately 8 ounces

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces high quality chocolate, chopped
- 1 c. (approximately 8 ounces) heavy cream
- 1 T. premium quality whole leaf tea

1. Place chocolate into a heatproof bowl and set aside. In a heavy saucepan, bring the cream with the tea leaves to a boil.
2. Remove from the heat, allow to infuse for about 10 minutes or until the flavor of the tea is discernible in the cream.
3. Pass the mixture through a fine meshed sieve set over a clean saucepan, pressing hard on the tea leaves to extract as much of the liquid as possible. Bring again to the bowl and pour the liquid over the chocolate. Stir until the mixture is smooth.
4. Allow to cool and store in the refrigerator in a container with a tight fitting lid. This will keep for about a week.

For another example of simplicity on the plate, you need go no further than the dairy case in your supermarket. Buy good quality heavy cream, pick your favorite tea of the moment and boil them together until the tea gives up its flavor and color to the liquid. (I suggest ½ ounce of tea leaves to 8 ounces of heavy cream). Sieve out the tea leaves, pressing hard on them in a fine meshed sieve to extract as much of the liquid as possible and then thin down with a bit of milk, if you like. Depending on your intended use, now add a pinch of salt for a savory dish, and a bigger pinch of sugar for a sweet one. Now simply add that soupçon of richness to a salmon steak as a main dish (here I use about one tablespoon of Lapsang Souchong-infused cream per serving) or about the same amount for a single serving of summery peaches poached in Darjeeling tea at the finish of a meal.

Ways to use
solid dairy butter

Beyond flavoring sweets with tea, many savory dishes are particularly well suited to being accented with tea-flavored butter. Simply melt unsalted good quality butter until liquid, add aromatic tea leaves to it and then allow to simmer for a couple of minutes. Cover the pan to capture more of the tea flavor and allow the tea butter to cool. Now sieve out the tea and reserve the infused butter. This may be stored refrigerated for a couple of days in a container with a tight fitting lid. I like to use this tea butter as a simply basting liquid on an oven roasted filet of fish or as a finish for a quickly sautéed paillard of chicken breast. And poaching lobster out of its shell in tea butter is an indulgence for special occasions.

Returning to the world of sweets, butter, the fat of choice in baking, can be melted, flavored with tea, sieved and then used in cake batters such as a flourless chocolate tea torte or as part of the butter in a short dough, chilled and then rolled thinly, baked until golden brown and served on the saucer next to your tea cup full of a perfectly brewed Assam, Keemun or Yunnan.

Feel free to experiment with your own favorite teas. Like a kaleidoscope with its shifting interior designs revealed as you turn it, with each permutation of tea and dairy, a winning new flavor combination will come into focus.

Top tips for pairing tea and dairy
at a glance

	When paired with heavy cream	Suggested pairings	When paired with butter	Suggested pairings
Assams	Malty character is intensified	Sweet: Panna cotta (molded gelatin-set dessert); pastry cream (milk, eggs, sugar, starch and tea as flavoring) Savory: Medley of mushrooms including chanterelles, shiitake and porcini	Chocolate-y notes emerge	Sweet: Chocolate tea torte, flourless with tea ganache Savory: Sauteed scallops
Darjeelings	Delicate peach notes come through	Sweet: Sauce for summer stone fruits Savory: White meat chicken or pork	Any hint of astringency is mellowed	Sweet: Bread pudding with custard and fresh apricots (dried if not in season, reconstituted in brewed tea) Savory: Tea butter basted dark meat turkey
Chinese black teas Keemun and Yunnan and Lapsang Souchong	Light smokiness is perceived	Sweet: Chocolate and sesame truffles Savory: Salmon and artichokes	Rich meaty umami-inflected flavor comes through	Sweet: Tea butter shortbread Savory: Turkey breast with mushrooms
Japanese green teas including matcha	Slightly bitter edge is rounded out; grassy character	Sweet: White chocolate Savory: Grilled Shrimp	Use tea sparingly in warm, not hot, melted butter, whisked to a froth and served over chicken, fish or seafood	Sweet: Sautéed rhubarb with matcha-infused pastry cream Savory: Fish filets sautéed in green tea butter with a bit of lemon juice and honey

Coffee is not our cup of tea.

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Tea Mixology

Story and Photos by **Cynthia Gold**

It is with great fascination that we can study the evolution of the modern cocktail. Tony Abou-Ganim, one of the pivotal leaders of the craft cocktail movement, points to first production of commercial vermouth in 1786 by Antonio Benedetto Carpano as the earliest significant development in the world of mixology. Numerous milestones occurred along the way to the golden age of cocktails from the mid 1800s until 1919, when the advent of Prohibition brought the development and refinement of the craft in the US to an abrupt halt.

It was during this golden age that the term *mixologist* was first coined, as well as the first ever cocktail book: the historic Jerry Thomas Bartenders Guide published in 1862. During Prohibition, exciting things were still happening in London and Europe, and a certain level of creativity came into play in the US as bartenders strived to find ways to disguise the poor quality and harsh taste of illegal "bathtub gin," but it took the repeal of 1934 to truly begin the forward movement again.

In the mid-1980s, industry icons such as Dale DeGroff began to embrace the use of high quality fresh ingredients and crafting drinks from scratch. In the 1990s, the culinary and cocktail worlds began to merge, embracing ingredients that had seemingly never before found their way out of the kitchens and behind the bar. As part of this mixology renaissance, we slowly began to see the use of tea, *Camellia Sinensis*, popping up in drinks more and more often. What an exciting new trend! Or was it?

Tea and punch

Tea cocktails are in fact not new. You can find it used in the Jerry Thomas classic, but as early as 1632, references to punch were found in British literature. The word *punch* is derived from the Hindi word for five (panch) and was believed to have been created, or refined by British East India "company men" before or during their visits to India. For many of us, the word *punch* brings to mind the questionable day-glow versions of our college party days, or overly sweet and fruity concoctions. Instead we should look to the complex and well balanced version of our forebears, or modern variations created for modern audiences with discerning tastes.

Punch

Punch refers to the five required ingredients of every punch:

- **Spirit**
  Many early punches often made use of Batavia Arrack from the East Indies (present-day Indonesia) with brandy added when it could be afforded. By the 18th century, rum was often used, especially in the American Colonies where rum distillation was prominent.
- **Sour**
  Ideally citrus, but when not readily available, vinegar, tamarind or even verjuice was often used.
- **Sugar**
  This luxury was originally in loaves or cones in less refined versions than today.
- **Spice**
  This was more often than not tea, often with or without nutmeg.
- **Water**
  Conveniently often used as a vehicle for the tea leaves, i.e., steeped tea.

Early punches were served in taverns from communal bowls that were passed around. They typically held 2 or 3 quarts, but after the wealthy elite embraced punch, large and magnificent punch bowls and sets were created that quickly became status symbols and family heirlooms.

The alcohol in the early punches was distilled in Chinese pot stills that weren't as pure and clean as modern column distillation allows. Hence, similar to punches in Prohibition, additional ingredients were used to disguise the harshness and impurities. Like many styles of seasoning and preparation in the culinary world, punches and later cocktails were as much a form of self-defense as an epicurean innovation!

Punch meandered its way towards the modern cocktail, through the Hot Toddy (not always just a remedy for the common cold), and to tea sangria, a milder version of a five-ingredient punch. Upon arrival at the modern cocktail, the use of tea had evolved and diversified. Instead of the steeped tea in punches and sangrias, tea in modern cocktails is often a direct infusion into alcohol or a simple syrup.

Please visit teajourney.pub/recipe/oleo-saccharum/ for a step-by-step guide to make Oleo Saccharum Punch.

Alcohol infusions

Infused alcohols have been gaining popularity for several decades now, but they too are not new. They are astonishingly easy to make and a great way to put a new and fresh spin on a classic cocktail, or create original signature drinks.

When infusing alcohol, unlike with water, you almost always keep the alcohol at

Fish House Punch

"Fish House Punch" was created in 1732 at the gentleman's club, "The Schuylkill Fishing Company" in Philadelphia. This angling club was the first of its kind in the American Colonies, and claims to be the oldest social club in the English-speaking world. George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, as well as the Boston patriots, enjoyed Fish House Punch. Who knows? While the original 1732 formula is still secreted away at the "Fish House" as the club is referred to, many recipes and variations have circulated over the last 280 years, through the colonies and beyond.

It is typically shown being diluted with either water or tea. All written records of variations refer to either black or green tea, which is what was available at that time, but to tease forward the flavors of the Peach Brandy, we prefer a good wulong.

Ingredients:

- 1.5 cups superfine sugar
- 1.5 quarts water
- 1 quart fresh squeezed lemon juice
- 2 quarts dark rum
- 1 quart cognac or brandy
- 6 to 8 ounces peach brandy
- 4 tablespoons Oolong leaves

1. Bring 1 quart of water to around 185 degrees and steep tea leaves for 5 minutes.
2. Strain and discard leaves. Set tea aside.
3. In a large bowl, dissolve the sugar in two cups of the tea, and then incorporate the lemon juice. Add the spirits and the remaining water and tea to taste.
4. Place a block of ice into your bowl and let stand in a cool place for the flavors to develop for an hour or so before serving.
5. The ready availability of ice is a modern luxury. Since our forefathers were typically drinking at room temperature, they would balance it with more water and tea than you might, as they did not have to account for dilution from the ice.

room temperature. It's tremendous fun to use multiple ingredients to get a complex, layered flavor profile, but keep in mind that different ingredients may require different steeping times. While running tests, it can be handy to separate your different ingredients into cheese cloth bags, t-sacs or other neutral holders. Then add and subtract ingredients as you experiment, keeping track of optimal steeping times.

A neutral vodka offers a blank canvas for your creativity, but most spirits work beautifully if you select your ingredients and times carefully. After vodka, rum and tequila are the most flexible and easiest to work with. Gin, whisky and cognac are a little more challenging, but they are worth the effort to play with because when you hit it right, they can really sing.

Tips

1. When developing new recipes, work small. There is no need to use a full bottle on a test run!
2. Use good quality alcohol or tea, but there's no need for top-shelf quality.
3. Check your infusions often for the right balance. Longer doesn't necessarily just mean stronger.
4. Fresh ingredients give different results than dried and infuse at different rates.
5. Strain, strain, strain! Strain multiple times through t-sacs, coffee filters or multiple layers of cheese cloth. Fine particles of tea, fruit, spices, etc., will continue to steep and break down, changing the balance of your infusion and eventually decreasing the shelf life.
6. Store the finished infusion in an airtight container away from heat and light and ideally refrigerated.

Simple syrups make wonderful flavor vehicles

Sugar can be introduced to a cocktail in various ways, and simple sugar or gomme syrups are a crucial part of a bartender's arsenal. Syrups not only add sweetness, but can also add richness, silkiness and subtle, complex flavors and aromatics. As long as you are making a sugar syrup, why not use it as a vehicle for additional flavors? Botanicals of all kinds, including of course Camellia sinensis, are ideal for creating unique and special simple syrups.

Many bartenders prefer to minimize the amount of heat needed to avoid breaking down sugar. Others embrace simmering the sugar syrup to enhance the ability to extract secondary flavor additives. There is no one right way; you should simply enjoy playing with various approaches and decide which one you prefer.

Add ingredients to your syrup at different points depending on the level of heat stability of the ingredient. Dried ingredients tend to be more heat stable and can be simmered for extended periods as needed. Fresh fruits, herbs and tea retain their flavors best with minimal heat, so introduce them relatively late in the process or use low heat.

As with infused alcohols, straining is the secret to shelf stability. Strain through a fine sieve rather than coffee filters. When strained and refrigerated, syrups should last a month.

What's next in tea mixology?

Tea is a flexible botanical that belongs behind the bar and can inspire a mixologist from many directions. Although the concepts and inspiration are centuries old, modern interpretations continue to evolve. For example, food scientist Dave Arnold in his book *Liquid Intelligence* shows us a variant on the 17th century milk punches where milk is introduced to the punch, curdled and strained. He instead uses "milk washing" to soften and round out an intense infusion of tea in vodka that would otherwise be too astringent.

Here are a few other ideas:

1. Rim a glass with tea-smoked salt or finely ground tea to rim a glass (or use directly as a garnish)

2. Garnish cocktails with fresh or candied tea leaves as cocktail garnishes.

3. Use tea as part of a signature ice cube that transforms the cocktail as it melts.

The possibilities are endless. It will be exciting to see the role that tea plays in the continued evolution of the craft cocktails.

An elder Dai woman sorts through leaves in Jing Mai town, southwestern Yunnan. The nearby ancient tea forests are some of the largest in the world and have long been treated with a kind of reverence that speaks to their vital nature in the lives of local indigenous.

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JALAMTEAS CLUB
GENUINE PUERH

Puer Chazuke
(tea over cooked rice)

Courtesy *Cha Dao Life*

Serving: 2

Ingredients:

- **Rice mélange:**
  - 1/4 cups cooked white rice
  - 1/4 cups cooked brown rice
  - 2 tbsp cooked black rice
- **Vegetable Mix:**
  - 100 grams mushroom
  - 100 grams julienned carrots
  - 100 grams any green leaves
  - 20 grams beancurd sheet
  - 20 grams edamame bean
- **Crunchy Topping:**
  - 3 pcs Nori sheets
  - 1 tsp black sesame
  - 1 tsp white sesame
  - 10 grams peanuts

1. Soak brown rice and black rice in water for 4 hours. Mix and cook with regular white rice.
2. Soak beancurd sheet into cold water until it softens and expands fully.
3. Make vegetable topping: Dice mushroom, carrots, any green leaves, and julienne beancurd sheet.
4. Bring to high heat. Sautée all the above mentioned vegetable ingredients.
5. Mix rice into the vegetable. Season with a pinch of salt.
6. Make crunchy topping: bake Nori sheets until crispy and julienne strips. Lightly toast black and white sesame until aroma comes out. Crush peanut and toast until the flavor comes out.
7. Brew Puer tea and drain the leaves out, and pour the tea soup into the dish.
8. Garnish with crunchy topping.


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Got GABA? Does It Matter?

gamma-Aminobutyric Acid (GABA)

By **Stephenie Overman**

- GABA is a neurotransmitter in the brain
- Produces a calming effect
- Improves mood
- Improves mental acuity

In a stressed-out world, plenty of people are hoping GABA will soothe them.

GABA, which stands for gamma-aminobutyric acid, is a neurotransmitter — a chemical messenger — that occurs naturally in the brain. It's a calming agent, helping ensure that information reaching your brain cells moves accurately and efficiently.

BioFactors is a journal of the International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, presented two studies that examined how GABA affects relaxation. One study looked at the effect of GABA on brain waves. The other put GABA recipients in stressful situations and monitored their immunoglobulin A levels. Together the studies indicate that GABA can have a positive effect on reducing anxiety and encouraging relaxation.

Consumers take GABA supplements in the hope of lowering stress levels, reducing depression and anxiety and improving sleep.

Some types of teas have naturally high levels of GABA, giving tea drinkers reason to pay special attention to the claims about GABA's calming properties. Japanese and Taiwanese producers even sell GABA-enriched green and oolong teas.

Unfortunately, it's not clear that GABA taken as a supplement or in tea can actually reach the brain and increase your chances of a good night's rest.

"It is very unlikely that GABA has any part to play in the calming influence of tea," according to Norman Bowery, emeritus professor of pharmacology at University of Birmingham, previously chair of pharmacology at the School of Pharmacy, University of London.

That's because under normal healthy conditions GABA as a zwitterion, an ion with both a negative and a positive charge, will not cross the blood-brain barrier (BBB), says Bowery, whose scientific career has been devoted to understanding the pharmacological and physiological significance of GABA in mammals. The BBB is a filtering mechanism of the capillaries that carry blood to the brain, blocking the passage of certain substances.

"There is no evidence to my knowledge that GABA taken orally under normal circumstances has any effect on the brain," says Bowery. It's possible that "some other component in tea may get into the brain and cause the local release of GABA or some other neuroactive substance. But, again, there is no evidence to support this notion."

The open-access journal *Frontiers in Psychology* looked at *Neurotransmitters as food supplements: the effects of GABA on brain and behavior* in an article published in 2015.

The researchers found that although many consumers claim that they experience benefits from these products, "it is unclear whether these supplements confer benefits beyond a placebo effect. Currently, the mechanism of action behind these products is unknown."

The researchers found conflicting evidence re-

garding GABA's blood-brain barrier permeability: "There are both a number of studies that were unable to show that GABA crosses the BBB and a number of studies that did show GABA's ability to cross. … it is not possible at this time to come to a definite conclusion with regards to GABA's BBB permeability in humans."

They concluded that even if a calming effect of GABA can be reliably demonstrated, "the mechanism through which these supplements work is unclear.… Indeed, at this point it is even too early to conclude whether these supplements reach the brain in sufficient concentrations to exert a biologically relevant effect."

Dr. Nada Milosavljevic, who is both a Harvard-trained physician and Certified Tea Specialist, is looking into a specific supplement called PharmaGABA that is produced through a fermentation process.

"Virtually all of the GABA found in the brain is manufactured there. This implies that supplemental GABA would not increase levels of GABA in the brain. That appears to be the case with synthetic GABA, but not with PharamaGABA," she says. "It's manufactured from Lactobacillus hilgardii - the bacteria used to ferment vegetables in the preparation of the traditional Korean dish known as kimchi. Supposedly, this form of GABA crosses the BBB and increases brain alpha waves and lowers beta-waves."

Not only are there plenty of GABA supplements on the market, there are lots of GABA-enriched food and beverages: cookies, chocolate, candy, rice, sodas, coffee — and tea.

A processing method that involves exposing fresh leaves to anaerobic conditions (meaning without oxygen) significantly increases GABA in teas, reports *Fresh Cup* Magazine.

In the end though, it's not just about the science. Linda Villano, in the *Fresh Cup* article, notes that these GABA teas "have a distinctly different aroma and flavor profile. Common descriptors include woody aroma, pleasant fruity sour notes, silky smooth liquid, and some Taiwanese GABA oolongs have overtones of cinnamon that evolve in the cup and linger on the tongue."

Compiled by **Stephenie Overman**

Too Hot to Handle?

If you drink your tea very hot, that may increase your risk of cancer, according to a World Health Organization research agency.

How hot is "very hot?" The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) defines it as any beverages consumed at a temperature above 65 degrees Celsius/149 degrees Fahrenheit. Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius/ 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

IARC said it found "limited evidence" that showed positive associations between drinking very hot beverages and developing cancer of the esophagus, the eighth most common form of cancer worldwide. A summary of the study was published in *The Lancet Oncology.*

"These results suggest that drinking very hot beverages is one probable cause of esophageal cancer and that it is the temperature, rather than the drinks themselves, that appears to be responsible," IARC director Christopher Wild said.

But are you likely to be drinking tea at such hot temperatures? If you live in China, Iran, Turkey or in South America — yes. People in those parts of the world, usually drink beverages at temperatures above 70 degrees Celsius/158 degrees Fahrenheit.

A Cuppa Day for
Better Heart Health

Even one cup of tea a day may be good for your heart's health.

A study led by Dr. Elliott Miller at Johns Hopkins Hospital found that when compared to people who never drank tea, daily tea consumers had 35% lower risk of cardiac arrest, stroke, heart attack and death by other cardiovascular causes. Their coronary arteries also stayed clearer.

"We found that being a moderate tea drinker was associated with a decreased progression of major adverse cardiovascular events," the Johns Hopkins researchers told the American Heart Association.

The subjects who were studied had had no previous heart disease for at least 15 years. They spent five years tracking how many calcium deposits were in their blood vessels and 11 years recording any incidents of chest pains, stroke, heart attack or death from cardiovascular disease. The positive effect was found for those drinking one to three cups of tea a day.

But, Miller noted, "This is an observational study and we can't say for sure it was the tea or just the healthier lifestyle of the tea drinkers."

So far, this study, *Association of Tea Intake with Coronary Artery Calcification and Cardiovascular Events: Results from the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis,* has been presented to the American Heart Association. It has not yet been published by a peer-reviewed journal.

Green Tea Promising for

Treating Adult Acne

Decaffeinated green tea extract (GTE) shows some promise in treating adult women with acne.

In a study published in Complementary Therapies in Medicine, 80 women 25-to-45 years old who had been diagnosed with moderate to severe acne received either three 500 mg. capsules of decaffeinated GTE or placebos daily for four weeks.

The researchers noted that "Epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGGG), the major polyphenol in green tea, has anti-carcinogenic, anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial activities" and "these observations led us to hypothesize that EGGG may be beneficial in women with post-adolescent acne."

The treatment resulted in "significant reductions in the number of lesions on the nose, perioral area, and on the chin between the two groups," according to the authors. However, there were no significant differences between groups in the number of *total* lesions.

If Drinking Tea While Pregnant or Breastfeeding,

Moderation Is the Word

By **Stephenie Overman**

It's a common question: Is it safe to drink tea while pregnant or breastfeeding? The simple answer: Yes, it's safe, in moderation.

There are, of course, a few caveats.

First, "always check with your healthcare provider about any dietary issues, including teas and herbs, as they can potentially interact with some medications and cause side effects," says Dr. Nada Milosavljevic, a Harvard-trained physician and Certified Tea Specialist.

And it's wise to limit caffeine.

"The literature has generally suggested the risk from caffeine to humans during pregnancy is low but present," says Milosavljevic, who is director of the Integrative Health Program at Massachusetts General Hospital and a faculty member at Harvard Medical School.

Typically, it's suggested that pregnant women who consume caffeine should limit their intake to less than 200mg/per day. An 8 oz cup of tea has 26 mg of caffeine, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Specialty Tea Institute estimates that a cup of tea has about 40 mg of caffeine.

Something to keep in mind, Milosavljevic adds, is that caffeine is metabolized more slowly in pregnant women and easily crosses the placenta.

"Although the risk from small doses of caffeine are generally low, several studies have shown moderate to heavy caffeine consumption increases the risk for spontaneous abortion and IUGR (intrauterine growth restriction)," she says.

There are some studies that have associated caffeine, along with cigarette smoking and alcohol, with IUGR, she notes. IUGR is defined as fetal weight that is below the 10th percentile for gestational age during pregnancy, as determined through an ultrasound.

For this reason, she notes, to be safe, some women decrease or omit caffeine from their diet during pregnancy.

There are plenty of options to consider if you want to avoid getting too much caffeine; there are lower caffeinated teas and herbal tisanes. How you prepare the tea can also make a difference in how much caffeine it contains.

An added benefit to herbal tisanes is that they can be quite soothing, according to Milosavljevic. "For example, studies have shown that ginger tisane can help with morning sickness and chamomile tisane can sooth an upset stomach. Another is dandelion tisane which can help with morning sickness and also contains nutrients and minerals."

Also, there's an herbal tisane, raspberry leaf, which is purported to help strengthen the uterine muscle, she adds. "But, do consult with your healthcare provider and consider this option only for later in your pregnancy."

Milosavljevic recommends avoiding the herbal tisanes licorice, black cohosh, and berberine.

If breastfeeding, consider that teas and herbs may be passed in the breast milk, Milosavljevic says. "Those teas and herbs that are safe during pregnancy will likely also be safe after birth. Likewise, the same precautions exercised while pregnant are prudent choices while breastfeeding."

Dr. Nupur Gupta, director of Well Woman Clinic in Gurgaon India, warns breastfeeding women that too much caffeine may affect an infant's sleeping pattern, since the caffeine is passed through the blood stream and then breast milk to the baby.

"Bear in mind that moderation is the key," Gupta told The Health Site, an Indian website.

Pile-fermentation

The Catalyst that Creates Shou Puer

Furrowing (see Page 110 for details). Photo by Zhaoshun Duan. Courtesy of *Puer* Magazine

Story by **Hongkuan Huang,** courtesy of *Puer* **Magazine**
Retold by **Si Chen**
Photos by **Ulumochi & Zhaoshun Duan**

Pile-fermentation is a modern technique to enhance microbial activity that transforms Sheng ('raw') Puer into Shou ('cooked or ripe') puer.

The 45-day process involves moistening large stacks of crude Sheng Puer tea leaves. The leaves are piled high and carefully monitored to produce a dark composted tea that is pressed into cakes and sold in round bamboo containers.

One common unit when purchasing puer cakes, often for collection rather than consumption, is known as a *tong.* One *tong* consist of seven cakes which are usually wrapped in bamboo leaves. One piece of puer cake is also known as qī zǐ bǐng (七子餅, seven-*liang* cake), a term derived from the most common weight (357 grams).

Puer is generally sold in units of seven *liang* (one *liang* weighs 50 grams). When shopping at a Chinese tea market, merchants price their tea by *liang* rather than grams.

Left: one *tong* consists of 7 pieces. Referred as "88 Qing," the cake pictured above is one of the best received and prized raw puer cakes produced in 1988. Photo courtesy: Artron auction

Not Quite Right

It is very easy to introduce odors and odd — even disturbing — flavors in the artificially-induced fermentation process. Here are four tell-tale tastes to avoid.

- **Sour taste**

  A sour taste is caused by insufficient fermentation. Tea processors deliberately halt the process prior to complete fermentation to let the Shou Puer finish aging naturally. But undue compression can suppress microbial growth leading to sour- or thin-flavored tea, and sometimes both! Low temperature can be another cause. Souring is a flaw that may require several decades of aging to remove.

- **Numb tongue**

  Numb tongue and a dry, sticking sensation in the throat is caused by excessive fermentation. It may initially taste mild, but gradually make your tongue feel numb and throat feel dry. Evidence of this flaw may be found at the bottom of the puer cake which will appear black, due to carbonation caused by excessive fermentation.

- **Muddy cup**

  The taste of mud is often caused when the crude tea was machine dried rather than sun-dried (which is more expensive). Excessive temperatures during machine drying can kill the delicate balance of natural bacteria in the leaves. Pile-fermentation subjects leaves to a humid and hot environment over a long period of time, permitting offensive bacteria to contribute unpleasant flavor notes.

- **Thin flavor**

  Inferior raw materials make the normally dark tea too light in appearance and taste. Blending before fermentation is essential: I prefer crude teas that are handmade and sun-dried from mountain tea gardens; and I personally recommend blending 30% of the crude tea produced in Lincang with 70% from Menghai (both are sub-regions in Yunnan provinces). This blend insures abundant and balanced characteristics in the finished tea.

Turning the pile. Photo by Zhaoshun Duan, courtesy of *Puer* Magazine.

Black oxidized cement floor after preparation

Crude teas are arranged in a large pile, ready for the process to start

Some tea processors have recently begun piling leaves on large stainless steel bins that rest on legs several centimeters above the floor. The plates are perforated with active colonies sandwiched between layers.

Making Shou Puer

Tea processors begin the process by creating large-scale incubators for the microbes – a mix of *Aspergillus niger* bacteria and *Blastobotrys adeninivorans* – that impart the pleasant forest-floor flavor of Shou Puer. Each plays an important role in the conversion of tea polyphenols into bioactive compounds beneficial to health. Controlling moisture content is critical. The bacteria thrive when water content is 30% or less with a slightly acidic pH value of 5 to 6.

In the 1950s a few Hong Kong tea houses discovered that controlled fermentation, completed in as few as 45 days, removes the bitterness in Sheng puer that previously required more than a decade to age well. Maintaining optimal humidity necessary for natural aging for prolonged periods was very costly and the results were unpredictable. The new process of spraying water on the tea in large fermentation rooms and frequent turning proved challenging from the onset but saved considerable space and time.

In 1973 several Chinese experts were sent from Yunnan to Guangdong Province to study pile-fermentation and, within two years, had introduced several refinements that made it possible to produce Shou Puer on a mass scale. By the 1980s tea processors had refined these techniques to eliminate defects introduced during fermentation. Today the process is well known and relatively mature. The introduction of pile-fermentation generated large profits as pent-up demand for these healthful teas soared.

Precise preparations

The entire surface of large warehouses must be prepped before fermentation. Tea processors start by covering the cement floor to a depth of one centimeter with broken leaves of Shou Puer and fannings (dust). Water is then sprayed liberally to soak the fannings. Every 2-3 days the processors will water the fannings until they no longer smell. By then the cement floor has turned charcoal black. The floor is rinsed and dried leaving a uniform layer of starter material on which the leaves are piled.

The tea is arranged in windrows. Temperatures immediately increase as the bacteria multiply, remaining at around 50°C (122°F) for the first 35 days before gradually decreasing to room temperature, a pattern that is consistent with rapid propagation of fungi and yeasts.

Throughout the process the tea leaves are turned to achieve consistent fermentation and prevent the formation of compressed blocks of tea.

Here are the major steps in detail:

1. Moisten the crude teas

The amount of water applied is critical based on factors such as leaf quality, ambient temperature, humidity and the quality of the water itself. Good practice is to spray water on top of the pile in amounts from 30% to 50% of the crude tea's total weight. That is, for every 100 kilos of teas workers spray 30 to 50 kilos of water. When fresh tea leaves are used, less water is needed; if the leaves are stale and dry, more water is sprayed. The piles must be moistened evenly over a short period of time to ensure the leaves ferment at roughly the same speed.

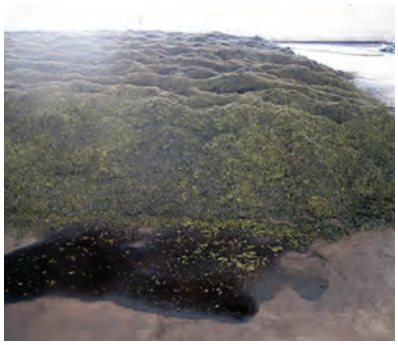
2. Pile the tea

The windrows are initially 50 to 70 centimeters high. The coarser the tea, the higher the tea is stacked. The top of the piles are then flattened and the sides sloped. A small pile might weigh 100 kg. The largest piles can weigh 10 to 20 tons.

3. Cover with cloth

The teas are covered once the piles are wetted. Heavy cotton material reduces evaporation and helps retain heat and keep the temperature consistent. It is not necessary to cover the piles all the time. Experienced workers determine when to uncover the piles and for how long based on temperature and moisture levels.

Crude teas after being sprayed with water



Wetted teas being piled up

Teas covered with Polypropylene(PP) Knitted bags

4. Turning the pile

During the period when the bacteria are growing rapidly the covers are removed and the teas are turned every two weeks to maintain a stable temperature between 50°C and 65°C (122–149°F). The piles will be turned 4 or 5 times, depending on the characteristics of each particular batch. Every time the pile is turned, the height of the pile drops by about 60 centimeters as excess moisture is released.

The moist leaves form clumps that can settle into dense blocks. Tea processors break these clumps apart using special tools and then scatter the leaves into existing piles, in order to maintain a balance of temperature, humidity and air permeability. Failing to keep a close eye on the process results in excess carbonization which ruins the tea flavor. This is known as "pile-burning" and results in scrapping the entire pile.

5. Furrowing

As fermentation nears completion workers must furrow the pile on a daily basis, to facilitate drying and reduce temperatures. Timing is key – if they start furrowing prematurely, the teas will not be fully fermented, resulting a thin taste; furrowing too late will result excessive fermentation. Ventilation is not needed in the fermentation rooms during the first half of the process but toward the end every window and door should be open, so teas will dry quicker. Due to constant turning, the height of the pile has now been reduced to 40 centimeters.

Around day 35 the pile's temperature drops to 35°C (95°F). That is the time to cool down the tea. It takes 3-5 days of furrowing to reduce the leaves' water content to 14%. This is a natural and gradual process. Baking, roasting, and sun-drying are prohibited when drying the puer tea.

6. Airing

After 45 days the crude tea no longer needs to be furrowed. It is spread flat and aired until it reaches room temperature and water content returns to normal.

7. Separation

Processors then use machines to separate stones, chaff, old stalks, flowers, fruit – anything that is not puer tea is removed from the pile.

8. Sterilization

Tea factories with high production standards sterilize the tea to deactivate microorganisms.

9. Steam-pressing, packaging

Freshly-processed Shou Puer tea exhibits a strong smell. Many tea factories store the teas for 1-3 years to dissipate the smell before it is compressed with a seal of authenticity embedded in the cake and wrapped for sale.

De-blocking tool(left) and a thermometer for temperature to monitor temperature(right).

Freshly fermented Shou Puer

Puer Pages

No other tea elicits passion like puer. High quality puer provides an earthy, mouth-rich taste sensation unique among teas. Enthusiasts praise its health attributes and ability to impart an overall sense of well-being. Most teas are best viewed as perishable produce to be consumed within a year of harvest. Puer has a shelf-life known to span centuries. The flavorful polysaccharides and complex amino acids of post-fermented teas appreciate with age. Vintage puer sells for thousands of dollars. This is why puer is so popular with counterfeiters. It is also the tea most likely to be mislabeled as to origin and composition and vintage and the easiest tea for consumers to be misled as to value. Buyer beware.

The listings below are free, but by invitation only. Tea Journey carefully selects every vendor listed for their authenticity, competence and selection of puer. Qualified firms from around the world are encouraged to apply for a listing.

If your company is a reputable puer retailer in business for at least five years, visit https://teajourney.pub/trusted-suppliers/ to complete a listing form. Puer Page listings are based on truthful answers to industry surveys and posted in good faith. These vendors reside within a circle of trust. Firms that violate that trust are removed.

— Dan Bolton

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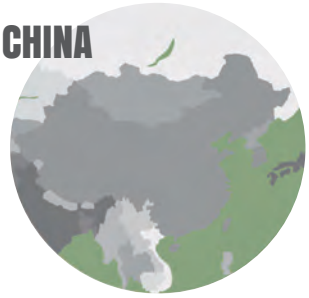

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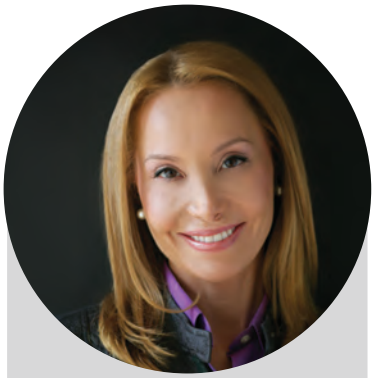

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*

"With every tea I taste, and every word I read, I sink deeper into such a joyful state of being that I want to keep going and going. It's a bit challenging sometimes to find good information about tea in the west, so when I learned of this magazine, not only did I decide that I would contribute, I set my alarm for 12 a.m. the morning that the Kickstarter opened, in the hope that I could say I was first to contribute!"

– PETER WILSON

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"I have a strong feeling that there are many people interested in getting to the next level with tea, but they don't have a good way to get there specific with tea knowledge until now."

– RON STUDD

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"Once I set eyes on the preview, I was overjoyed with the coverage and type of content afforded to us by what I consider to be the most important tea magazine to date. Congratulations to all of you!"

– DAVID HAMMER, Purple Cloud Tea

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"I really love how a main focus of the magazine is to highlight the people involved with tea from growing through to production, and how many of the articles are written by people from the places where tea is grown and produced. I think Tea Journey will be an invaluable source of information and insight for readers, and it's wonderful that so many influential people in the tea world are in support of it."

–DAVID PASIEKA

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Order this premium tea from our website: hawaiirainforesttea.com call our phone: **808-966-8831** or email: **jacobs@hawaiianisp.com** with your questions or orders. Minimum order is 100 grams with free domestic shipping. Mahalo, Bob and Julie Jacobson

Festival Calendar

July

July 15-18
Taichung International Tea & Coffee Show
Taichung, Taiwan

August

August 13
Lone Star Iced Tea Festival
Lewisville, Texas

August 21
Sydney Tea Festival
Sydney, Australia

September

September 7-9
COTECA 2016 (Coffee, Tea Cocoa)
Hamburg, Germany

September 25–26
Canadian Coffee and Tea Show
Toronto, Canada

October

October 1-2
Northwest Tea Festival
Seattle, Washington

October

October 17-20
Moscow Coffee and Tea Expo
Moscow, Russia

October 20-22
World Tea & Coffee Expo
Mumbai, India

October 20-24
China Xiamen International Tea Fair
Xiamen, China

November

November 5
Vancouver Tea Festival
Vancouver, Canada

November 5-6
Coffee & Tea Festival Philadelphia
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

November 6
San Francisco International Tea Festival
San Francisco, California

November 24-28
Guangzhou International Tea Expo
Guangzhou, China

Festival Listings

Events open to the public that are billed as city, county, regional, provincial or national festivals are eligible for listing in the online and print-on-demand calendar. To qualify for promotion, events are typically scheduled for at least a half day and draw a minimum of 500 tea enthusiasts. Events with a long history are given preference but new festivals launch every year and are encouraged to submit. Include dates, venue, city and country and a brief description of activities in an email to: **Dan Bolton**, Editor/Publisher **dan.bolton@teajourney.pub** Listings are free. Tea Journey staff are located in many countries and attend many tea events each year. The magazine will always consider an offer to assist in promoting public festivals with in-kind advertising and donations of gift certificates in exchange for media sponsorship, speaking opportunities and exhibit space.

— Dan Bolton

What's Steeping

Look for these articles in the August issue of Tea Journey magazine...

Global Harvest Report

Tea Journey in August will deliver an unprecedented global harvest report with posts from in-country growers in 40 distinct tea growing regions. Regions are defined by geography and growing conditions (*terroir*) as well as national boundaries. Reports on harvest conditions around the globe are filed by resident tea experts, garden owners, government officials, seasoned tea brokers, academics, agricultural extension agents and tea journalists.

Once tea is plucked skilled artisans work tirelessly to produce the finished teas. It takes about five pounds of fresh tea leaves to make a pound of processed tea. Workers typically pluck 42 kilos (90 pounds) a day. Since tea grows in both the southern and northern hemispheres the global harvest is nearly continuous. Processing is generally completed within a few days or weeks of the harvest but some roasted wulongs take months to settle after firing. Puer rests for up to three years before it is pressed into cakes that age for decades.

Purnima Rai

Nepal homestead and tea garden

Eva Lee in the Volcano, Hawaii.

Ever Green Hawaii

"Nothing is more hallowing than the union of kindred spirits in art."

This quotation from Okakura Kakuzo's classic *Book of Tea* is the mantra for Hawaii tea growers Eva Lee and Chiu Leong. The age-old sentiment is the refrain that infuses the lives of this talented couple as they grow tea in their rainforest garden nestled on the slopes of Hawaii's Kilauea Volcano. "Okakura would say their mission is steeped in the true spirit of Teaism," writes contributing editor Bruce Richardson.

She Rises with the Sun to Pluck Tea Each Day

Purnima Rai is a 65-year-old tea grower in Illam, the most famous of Nepal's tea growing regions. Each day from spring until fall she rises with the sun to pluck a basket of newly formed buds from randomly scattered tea bushes that she has nurtured for decades. Purnima was married at 13 and raised a family of four on 1.5 hectares (3.7 acres) that was inherited by her late husband. The high-mountain soil produces grain for her chickens, enough grass to graze two cows and amlisso beans for her table. Alaichi kheti (cardamom) and tea are her cash crops. Now widowed, her family grown, she devotes two hours a day to weeding and pruning her precious trees. She is very selective about which leaves she plucks to insure they are suitable for purchase by an organic-certified factory in the nearby village of Sunderpani. "Where there is tea, there is hope," she told Tea Journey reporter Susma Bastola with photographs by Italian photojournalist Giacomo Orlando.

Do you Drink your Raw Puer Blended or Straight?

Single origin or blend? In the world of whiskey, some prefer blended and some prefer single-malt. The preference holds whether a novice or connoisseur. The same applies to puer: from a single origin or a skillful mélange, tea professionals in China share their advice with *Puer* magazine.

Yongzhong Xie Tireless Tea Master

The first time we met Yongzhong Xie, he strode into the Keemun tea factory with a 9-foot bamboo stick on his shoulder tied with fresh strands of bamboo leaves. He then used his self-made broom to clean the dust from high atop the machines just like the Monkey King. By Yanmei Guan, from *Cha Dao Life* magazine (Keemun Issue).

Plus:

Authenticating Puer

CIS: Georgia Tea

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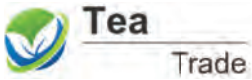

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