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Treasure Mountain
Meet Rock Tea Grower Yihua Luo

A Rendezvous with Chance
A Call for Standards

Charter Issue 2016
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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

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Cover: A beautiful hill garden in Meizhan, Fuding, Fujian Province, China. Photo by Qiu, Cha Dao Life magazine.
THE TIMELESS PERFECTION OF YIXING TEAPOT
Tea connoisseurs are choosy about their teaware for reasons that are not obvious. Fabled Yixing Zisha teapots uniquely deserve their affection.

MARY COTTERMAN: ENTRANCED BY THE SPINNING WHEEL
Three years ago Mary Cotterman of Austin, Tex., embarked on a study of Chaozhou tea pots that has enabled her to create eggshell thin pots with lids that fit so well they make an air-tight seal, from which a graceful arc of tea flows in the perfect pour.

WHERE TREES CREATE TEAS
A happenstance meeting along a muddy uphill trail in Xi-shuangbanna, China leads to a long-time friendship sharing tea.
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CHIGUSA MEIBUTSU
Meet Chigusa, a humble 700-year-old tea jar celebrated by generations of tea masters.

TEA SCENE: NEW ZEALAND’S TEA EVOLUTION
Tea drinking has a long story in New Zealand. Today it is experiencing a renaissance.

GARDEN HOPPING IN QUEENSLAND
In 1882, four enterprising brothers rowed down the Tully River to plant tea. A cyclone and tidal wave postponed their success for 50 years.

IS IT CREAM IN YOUR TEA OR TEA IN YOUR CREAM?
Like a kaleidoscope of flavor, with each permutation of tea and dairy, a winning new combination comes into focus.

TEA MIXOLOGY
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The journey begins...

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Our enthusiasm is unbounded when it comes to fine tea. We drink it hot. We drink it cold. We drink at dusk and dawn. We bake with it, poach fish, and add it to salads. We stir te-a-nis 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.

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*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 ensure authentic content later made readable in English by experienced editors and tea experts in the west.

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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 Pi, (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 entree, 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 Tea Leaves’ 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 concert. The enchanted pastry were termed The Dreamland, created by Rosewood Cordevalle, telling fairy tales on a mid-summer night. The enchanted mixology were called The Lavender Bespoke Cocktail, created by St. Regis Bal Harbour Resort, reminding one 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 at Amazon.com.

Steeping goldfish is handmade from fabric and filled with tea.

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Mammoth Tusk Teaset

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 are being 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 Qantas Airline 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.

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

Photo courtesy Georg Jensen
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Tea first cultivated
3,000 Years Prior to the Pyramids

Archaeologists digging in the Tianhuo 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 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 were 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
Photo 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 grows the tea in the rugged Wuyi Mountains in northern Fujian province, range which 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 the eight sub-cultivars in his newly expanded tea garden.
2. Bird’s-eye view of Luo’s hilly 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. More processing notes on the sidebar at the end of the article.
“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 craftmanship – a tea master is also expected to distil 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 Bokacca. 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 are braziers hand-woven of peeled bamboo. Charcoal in the lower level provides constant heat to the raw tea (Mao Cha) above.

The largest Bei Long hold 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.
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 (Qiag 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 to 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 of 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 Matcha 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 roasting. He also personally supervises the processing of extremely rare and expensive teas such as Rou Gui from Niu Lao 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 yielding complex, multifloral flavor - from peaty to floral.

1. Picking - Cai Qing
   - Raw material for rock teas are fully grown mature leaves with stems, in order to extract more nutrients and juices to achieve the rich, full-bodied flavor.

2. Outdoor Sunning - Shai Qing
   - Once picked, the leaves are exposed to sunlight, reducing the concentration of leaf moisture to a desired level.

3. Indoor Withering - Wei Jiao
   - Withering in-house sausages, 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 placed in a cylindrical silo which rotates to make the edges of leaves rubbing against each other, releasing enzymes for further oxidation. 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
   - The tea leaves are roasted in a two-level bamboo basket (Bei Long). Top level contains 1-4 kinds of finished teas and charcoal in the lower level provides constant heat.

9. Picking Stems - Tiao Geng
   - Stems and old dry leaves known as Huang Pian, are cut by hand. Their juices have been drawn out during previous steps. This step improves the taste and looks 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 cultivators, quality of raw material, and sunny/cool weather.

Rock Tea

- Best Time to Enjoy: Early February of the next year
- Best Time to Enjoys: Green tea, black tea, light wulong

Different Tea Processing Complexity

- Green tea: 1
- Black tea: 2
- Light wulong: 3

Tea Journey | 23
A Way of Life:
Japan’s
Tea Grass Gardens

Story by Ian Chun
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 “chagusu” 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 to win nearly half of the awards handed out for tea excellence. The small village of Higashiyama, where golden meadows of saas, suzuki, 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 meeting the people who practice 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 prefectoral 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 meishii.

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 dressed Satoshi Sugiyama’s title: “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 sipping in mountains of sugar.

Despite a growing global tea industry, Japan’s insular tea market is in decline; tea production, prices and consumption is 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 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 Higashiyama 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 pointed out several caretakers huddled around the fire and began to tell us of the care taken to maintain the tea gardens, and the importance of the ceremonial side of tea.
yama-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 Akaorin-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. Producer Tetsuro Tsuchiya showing his prize-winning tea leaves. (Photo by Anne-Marie Hardie)
2. Hagiwara-san making Temonomcha, a silver metal winner at Japan’s National Tea Competition.
**Higashiyama Fukamushî Tasting Notes**

The Higashiyama Village, like much of Shizuoka Prefecture, mainly produces fukamushî 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 steep quickly and strongly, 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 Makino Hara region of Shizuoka on the flatterlands 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 Fukamushî Steeping**

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 fukamushî 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.
There is no better way to learn about Japanese tea than by tasting it. But where do you start?

Tea experts at both Yunomi and our cooperative of 80+ Japanese tea farms, factories and shops have created the Yunomi Dojo to help you learn about Japanese tea. Taste the differences in seasons, regions, and more.

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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 fir, 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 7,500 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 lowest 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 Gurkha 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. Suraj 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.”

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 Tapplejung 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.

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 “muscateel 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 genteel spring breeze and flower buds at first sip to citrus and green bananas in later steepings.

Glenburn was founded in 1859 by a Scottish tea company while the Steinhall tea estate was established by a German in 1852. One of the oldest estates in the region, Steinhall 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.
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.”
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.
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 Hou 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.
Travelling by boat on the MaChuan River in Anhui, China.
A Call for Standards

Story 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,oolong, 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

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

Establishing standards, which has led to levels of excellence and increased profitability 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 transpar-
encry along the entire supply chain.

Similarly, three years ago Starbucks changed the tea market dramatically for small independent tea businesses 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 stan-
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, economics 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, challenges, 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 addresses skill of the tea maker. The leaf should be intact and, with few exceptions, unbroken.
2. Adherence to the picking standard addresses the skill of the picker and the garden managers.
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 Teapot

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. After all, dry tea is a half-finished product. The attention to teaware is justified because the pot performs such an important function.

Yixing Zisha (pronounced Yeh-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 thermal conductivity and high permeability, as the texture of the clay has minute
“In the households of Yixing, home of the celebrated purple clay. Teapots, ordinary potters are crafting something extraordinary.”

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 carry 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.

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**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.

No.1 Yixing factory

Quick 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, Cating Ren, Yingchun Wang, Kexin Zhu, Jingzhou Gu, Xong 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.

Teaware

Yixing clay is used in teapots and other teaware. Workers first mix the clay 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 teaware 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 ‘Huashi’ and those with a distinctive petal vein pattern are called ‘Yinweis’. Smooth-bodied pots, embodying abstract geometric shapes, are sub-divided into square- and round-shaped works, demonstrating beauty in brevity, the ‘introvert elegance’, which sym-
bolizes 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).
Teapot varieties

Shape

- 瓠当 (Wu Dang)
- 牛盖莲 (Niu Gai Lian)
- 梨形 (Li Xing)
- 美人肩 (Mei Ren Jian)
- 天柄 (Xiao Ying)
- 鼎扁 (Xi Shi)
- 石瓢 (Shi Piao)
- 仿古 (Fang Gu)
- 紫球 (Zhu Qu)
- 景权 (Qin Quan)
- 水平 (Shui Ping)
- 虚扁 (Xu Bian)

Illustration by Beibei Lu

Color

- 红泥 (Hong Ni)
- 紫泥 (Zi Ni)
- 绿泥 (Lv Ni)
- 紫泥 (Zi Ni)
- 红泥 (Hong Ni)
- 紫泥 (Zi Ni)

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. Ergonomics 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.
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Entranced by the Spinning Wheel
Story by Elyse Petersen
Photos by Xiaoflua Chen & Tealet

Our three-wheeled moto taxi dropped us off 10 minutes outside the Xiashuangbanna 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 Chaoshou 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.”

To her it felt like magic, like alchemy. Her obsession only grew as she discovered the magic of firing; coat-
ing 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,” Coterman 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

Coterman’s enthusiasm 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,” Coterman 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.”

Coterman 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

In humility, Cotterman has embarked on one of the most challenging journeys of her life. Her journey to Chaozhou began three years ago when she was introduced to the practice of gongfu cha.

“As a long time tea drinker, potter, meditator and plant enthusiast, it seemed like a miracle that these ostensibly separate loves of mine could be combined into one galvanizing experience,” she says.
 Cotterman describes “eggshell thin pots with lids that fit so well they made an airtight seal, from which a graceful arc of tea flowed in the perfect pour.”

The most beautiful pots, she says, were from a place called Chaoshou. 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 Chaoshou 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, Xi 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 Chaoshou 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.”

When Cotterman first moved to Chaoshou, 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 Chaoshou until early summer 2016. After this, she plans to travel, do some artist 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.
Who’s Making Your Tea?

www.tealet.com
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 exhibits a shining rainbow color. The streak above displays, which almost becomes a yohen tannoku affect.
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 Zhu 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.
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 Ka). This sticky, acidic glaze is rich in iron and phosphates. 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 color 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 are 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 temperature: 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 Kyoto at the Ryuku-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 and become national treasures.

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.
Chigusa Meibutsu

Ancient Japanese diaries document the legacy of a humble tea jar

Story by Stephanie Overman
Photos courtesy Freer Gallery of Art
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.

These 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.

“ar 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 Cort, curator of ceramics at the Freer Gallery of Art and Ar-
thur 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 Masaki explores how this process of storing the tea in jars in a cool place during the hot, humid Japanese summers improved its taste.

When Masaki 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 percent less polyphenol, caffeine and amino acid...Unlike new tea, the autumn new tea appeared blackish and the oxalic acid and the DDPH radical-scavenging activity had decreased approximately 10 percent.”

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 teapot 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.”
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 contrast 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 Inetsu (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 by Nicholas Lozito
Photo by Nicholas Lozito

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

Xishuangbanna
China
Nicholas 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.
“Tea is not merely a beverage, in this part of the world it is a way of life.”

“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 back convinces us to run full-speed back down the path. Our 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, motions 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 scoot up 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 to a 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 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.
Tea Scene
New Zealand’s Tea Evolution

Story by Felicia Stewart
Photos courtesy Zealong

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

There is no doubt 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 nations 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 5 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 1990’s signalled a change in tea drinking habits due to the growth of a cafe culture and a 316 percent 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 (International Tea Committee, 2011-2013).

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, 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 Earl Grey 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 99% 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. “Cafe 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 trend is showing for the good old-fashioned cuppa,” says Wakeford.

The movers and shakers
Urban teahouse, Chapter, 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 cafe market,” says Loo. “And tech savvy companies with online purchasing options have helped make it easier for consumers to seek out and pur-
chase 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.

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 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’s 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 Ferry Fresh and Nosh, are jumping on the bandwagon, 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 Leo. “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 the 20s and 40s demographic, 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.”

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 McMenamin 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 prevalent 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 cafes. 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.

The future’s bright

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 cafe market — but offer not only good tea but tea ware and education.”

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.
Tea Total is a collective of Australian professional artists who share a passion for all things tea. They specialize in personally sourced specialty teas from China, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. They also offer 'off the beaten track' tea tours to the important tea zones of China, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea.

Unique tea wares from Australian artisans, decorative arts for your tea room, tea training and education in all tea cultures and tea types.

Tea Total's contact details are:
teatotal.net.au • teamaster@teatotal.net.au • 0403 981 055
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 Australia 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 Cutton 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

Nuclfora 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. Nuclfora run tours and you can purchase tea direct from farm via a roadside stall.

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

Norada Tea
Atherton Tablelands

Nested into the foothills of the Tablelands (790m), you can’t miss the Norada 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 Norada 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: Norada Tea Visitors Centre, Glen Allyn Road, Malanda
www.noradatea.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 Lynce-Haven Rainforest Retreat. A fresh pot of Daintree Tea costs just a $4.

Location: Lot 12 Cape Tribulation Road, Diwan, Daintree
www.daintreetae.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.thebeachest.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 $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
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 cup. 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 it cream in your tea or tea in your cream?

Story by Robert Wemischner
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 vice versa, but there's no contesting the pleasures of drinking a whitened cuppa mellowed, like a bite of liquid caramel, in a cup. But what about extending that alliance beyond the chino 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.
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 1 cup

**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.
4. When the mixture starts to lightly brown, carefully and gently stir any unmelted sugar into the melted molten liquid sugar.
5. Continue to cook until you produce an amber tea colored liquid. Do not burn the mixture or the resulting caramel will be bitter.
6. Remove from heat just as the liquid turns amber in color. 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).
7. Add a pinch of salt to taste (remember the caramel is very hot so cool it off a bit before tasting). When cool, pour into a heatproof jar with a tight fitting lid. Cover and refrigerate. It may be necessary to re-liquefy 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.

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 1/2 ounce of tea leaves to 8 ounces of heavy cream). Strain out the tea leaves, pressing hard on them in a fine meshed sieve to extract as much of the liquid as possible. Bring again to the boil and pour the liquid over the chocolate. Stir until the mixture is smooth.

### 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 boil 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.
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

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

Story by Cynthia Gold
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 refers to the five required ingredients of every punch:

1. 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.

2. Sour.
Ideally citrus, but when not readily available, vinegar, tamarind or even verjuice was often used.

3. Sugar.
This luxury was originally in loaves or cones in less refined versions than today.

4. Spice.
This was more often than not tea, often with or without nutmeg.

5. 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 sta-
Fish House Punch

'Fish House Punch' was created in 1792 at the gentlemen's club, 'The Schuykill Fishing Company' in Philadelphia. This angling club, which is still in existence, 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 of course, the Boston patriots, enjoyed Fish House Punch. Who knows? It may have been used to fortify the nerves and warm the bodies of the Tea Party participants on that fateful night. While the original 1792 formula is still re-created at the Fish House, as the club is referred to, many recipes and variations have evolved over the past 230 years, through the centuries and beyond.

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

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups superfine sugar
- 1 1/2 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.

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 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 to keep in mind:

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 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 melts.

The possibilities are endless. It will be exciting to see the role that tea plays in the continued evolution of the craft cocktails.
**Puer Chazuke**
(tea over cooked rice)

**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 juliennded carrots
  100 grams any green leaves
  20 grams beancurd sheet
  20 grams edamame bean
- Crunchy Toppings:
  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. Sauté 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.

*Courtesy of Cha II Life*
Coffee is not our cup of tea.
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Leading journalist and beverage retail consultant. Dan is a frequent speaker at industry seminars and conferences. He currently manages STHR and contributes to the weekly World Tea News.

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With more than a decade of tea education experience, Suzette is now an Independent Executive Consultant on tea programs and training. She works with both private companies and Industry trade groups in America and Europe.

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Ian Chun is the founder of Yunomi. He believes that tea is a focal point of a lifestyle that enables Japanese to live longer than anyone else in the world.

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Joshua Kaiser co-founded global tea supplier Rishi Tea in 1997 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA.

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James Norwood Pratt is widely acknowledged as an instigator and prophet of America’s present tea renaissance. The Ultimate Tea Lover’s Treasury remains the most comprehensive compendium on tea in English.

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Austin Hodge is the owner of Seven Cups Fine Chinese Teas, the first American to be published in the Chinese International Tea Culture Institute’s Journal, and served two terms as Honorary Director of the Chinese International Tea Culture Institute.

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Nada Milosavljevic MD, JD is a Board-Certified Harvard-trained physician. She has served on the Advisory Board of the Specialty Tea Institute and Education Committee since 2013. Her interest and experience allows her to delve into the health and wellness aspects of tea through the lens of modern science and evidenced-based research.
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Brian Keating is the founder of the Sage Group, a consultancy focused on the specialty tea and natural products industries. Brian was the first tea blend master and tea buyer for Whole Foods Market (Allegro). Brian works closely with entrepreneurs and Fortune 500 clients to optimize tea/herbal supply chains.

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Rob founded CTC tea wholesale and his wife Cory runs a tea retail shop in Winnipeg, Canada. Boreal Wildcraft Tea Co. partners with Algonquin Tea Company and Northern Delights herbal tea, a Nunavik Inuit company that is part of the Avataq Cultural Institute representing Nunavik harvesters.

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Rob McCaleb is founder and president of the Herb Research Foundation (HRF) in Boulder, Colorado, an internationally recognized research and education organization dedicated to providing facts on the health benefits of herbs.
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Hartley E. Johnson
Mary Crawley
Christine Brown
Zach Anderson
Janet Whang
Valerie Zygmunt
Bill Pope
Tianbo Liu
Martin Pickave
Annette Abbott
ANUPA MUELLER
Sloj Sun
Jeff Fuchs
Robin Zheng
Wen Wen
Ken Deng
TheTeaBook-Jeffrey
TheTeaBook
Phil Bleich
Jessica Campbell
Lisi Tagakula
Michael McCall
Suzanne Brown
Jenny-Lyn Usher
Jennifer Sauer
erik
Doug Cornell
Virginia Pfau
Thompson
Amy Lawrence
Stephenie Overman
Gloria Long
Caroline
Arne Wagner
Teajouet
Roy Thatcher
RAUL MORENO
Stephanie Bracken
Leon Wong
Nathan Wakeford
Nicole Martin
Ratna somantri
Brandon Ford
Kimberly Ochal
Carol Webb
Frederic Bigras-Burroguano
Hillel Bromberg
Scott Sind
Siddhartha Aaran Phukan
Genevieve
Matt Grove
Cheryl Graf
Julie
Paula Winchester
Rashed Bin Tamim
yasu haru matsumoto
Henry Patterson
Luka Vuckovic
Nada Milosavijevic
Dan DeParolesa
Heather
Linnea G Covington
Mary Ann Roliano
Kaia Eakin
Ashok Kumar
Susan Robinson Peters
david shippen
Katherine
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Longyi Li
Jurga
Christopher Harz
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Shervin Youssefian
Cui Lin
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Katherine Bellman
Jessica Van Humbeeck
Allison Cooney
Salina Hainzl
J Brian Pfeiffer
Ty McM Lorenzo
Diane Wreford
Shauna Poach
Kathleen Flinn
Lou Thomann
Wolfgang Boehm
Shamant M. Rao
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Efrat Schorr
Qingqing
Kevin Lampe
Karl Mitchell
Rustam Bekmuradov
Janis Hashe
BAFrangle
John Imbergamo
Katrina Avila Munichiello
Geoff
Judy Gibson
John Smagula,
Crossings Tea
deborah hatton
Alicia Colmenar
Virginia (Gina) Witt
Mina Park
Cindy Ertell
Bjarke Johannesen
Arthur Fitzpatrick
Nepall Tea Traders
Louise Roberge
Cynthia Fazekas
Kenneth Son
Alice Mendoza
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Aria
Judith Perrin
Noah Fecks
Zama Tea
and Kombucha Inc
Ahmad Saqfalah
Barbara Leskie
Allison Benowitz
Artemis
Alexis Kae
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David Relss
Elisabeth Eaton
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100% Hawai`i Estate Grown/Processed Certified Organic White Tea

HAWAI`I RAINFOREST TEA PO BOX 900, 16-1672 Opeapea Road
Kurtistown, HI 96760, jacobs@hawaiianisp.com 808-966-8831

Top Organic White Tea finisher and 2nd place overall in the White Tea category in 2015 TOTUS Championships
Winner of the First North American Tea Competition Gold Cup for the United States for white tea in 2014

"Hi Bob, I have been meaning to write so much earlier to tell you I have been sipping away at your elegant white tea. Thank you so much for sending - I have used it in my classes and people are thrilled to try something so light and subtle from such an unusual origin."
Jane Pettigrew

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
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