



Guest Presenter: Feng Han-Hirt – Sprouting Tea and Leaf

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/SproutingTeaAndLeaf>

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Worksheet

CHINESE GONGFU TEA CEREMONY WITH FENG HAN-HIRT, SPROUTING TEA AND LEAF

Feng (Fay) Han-Hirt specializes in traditional Chinese GongFu Tea, which is a way of brewing tea in China.

GongFu Tea means you take time and effort to brew a perfect cup of tea. It allows you to fully control the "life" of a tea, to adjust the taste according to your preferences, and most importantly - to reveal the full potential of the plant and characteristics of the terroir.

Owner of the Sprouting Tea and Leaf, she shares with us a way to practice a tea ceremony, GongFu of KungFu, that helps you be calm, relax, gain wisdom and improve life in general.



Specialty loose leaf tea, compressed tea, tea wares and tea accessories are available at the Sprouting Tea and Leaf Etsy shop:

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/SproutingTeaAndLeaf>

WHAT DID WE LEARN HERE?

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HISTORY

Attention to tea-making quality has been a classic Chinese tradition. All teas, loose tea, coarse tea, and powdered tea have long coexisted with the "imperial appointed compressed form". By the end of the 14th century, the more naturalistic "loose leaf" form had become a popular household product and by the Ming era, loose tea was put to imperial use. In Japan, tea production began in the 12th century following Chinese models, and eventually evolved into the Japanese tea ceremony, meant to be exclusive to political and military elites. The related teaware that is the tea pot and later the gaiwan lidded cup were evolved. It is believed that the gongfu tea preparation approach began only in around the 18th century. Some scholars think that it began in WuYi, Fujian, where the production of oolong tea for export began; others believe that it was the people in ChaoZhou in the ChaoShan area in GuangDong started this particular part of the tea culture. Senchadō in Japan started in the early Edo period influenced from China.

Oral history from the 1940s still referred to GongFu Cha as "ChaoShan GongFu Cha". It is likely that regardless of the earliest incidence of the approach, the place that first successfully integrated it into daily life was ChaoShan area. ChaoZhou is recognized by some as the "Capital" of GongFu tea.

CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS

In essence, what is desired in GongFu Cha is a brew that tastes good and is satisfying to the soul. Tea masters in China and other Asian tea cultures study for years to perfect this method. However, method alone will not determine whether a great cup of tea will be produced. Essentially, two things have to be taken into consideration: chemistry and temperature.

WATER CHEMISTRY

Water should be given careful consideration when conducting GongFu Cha. Water which tastes or smells bad will adversely affect the brewed tea. However, distilled or extremely soft water should never be used as this form of water lacks minerals, which will negatively affect the flavor of the tea and so can result in a "flat" brew. For these reasons, most tea masters will use a good clean local source of spring water. If this natural spring water is not available, bottled spring water will suffice. Yet high content mineral water also needs to be avoided. It is said that hard water needs to be filtered although the mineral content of even very hard water is solvated, and no amount of filtering will affect it.

TEMPERATURE

During the process of GongFu Cha, the tea master will first determine the appropriate temperature for the tea being used, in order to extract the aroma of the tea. An optimal temperature must be reached and maintained. The water temperature depends on the type of tea used. Guidelines are as follows:

75–85 °C (167–185 °F) for green tea (80 °C (176 °F) typical)

85–90 °C (185–194 °F) for white tea (90 °C (194 °F) typical)

95–100 °C (203–212 °F) for oolong tea

100 °C (212 °F) (boiling) for compressed teas, such as pu-erh tea

The temperature of the water can be determined by timing, as well as the size and the sizzling sound made by the air bubbles in the kettle.

At 75–85 °C (167–185 °F), the bubbles formed are known as "crab eyes" and are about 3 millimeters (0.12 in) in diameter. They are accompanied by loud, rapid sizzling sounds.

At 90–95 °C (194–203 °F), the bubbles, which are now around 8 millimeters (0.31 in) in diameter and accompanied by less frequent sizzling sounds and a lower sizzling pitch, are dubbed "fish eyes".

When the water is boiling, neither the formation of air bubbles nor sizzling sounds occurs.

At high altitudes water boils at lower temperatures, so the above temperature ranges should be adjusted.

LIST OF THE MAIN ITEMS USED IN A GONGFU TEA CEREMONY.

1. A kettle for boiling water, e.g., an electric kettle.
2. Brewing vessel, a teapot, or a covered bowl GaiWan.
3. Tea pitcher (GongDaoBei, or ChaHai), used to ensure the consistency of the flavor of the tea.
4. Strainer. A tea strainer sometimes is built into the tea pitcher.
5. Tea cups (traditionally three cups are used in most instances), matching size. Also named PinMing Cup.
6. Brewing tray, or a deep, flat bottom plate to hold spills (spills are typical).
7. Tea towel or tea cloth, usually dark colored.
8. Tea knife for separating leaves from tea cakes.
9. Tea leaf holder, or a tea spoon (Cha Ze), for measuring the amount of tea leaves required for brewing, holding dry tea leaves before brewing tea, and pouring tea leaves into a brewing vessel slowly.
10. Optional: Tea basin or bowl used as the receptacle for used tea leaves and wasted water.
11. Optional: Scale.
12. Optional: Scent cup (snifter cup) used to appreciate the tea's aroma (in Taiwanese GongFu tea).
13. Optional: A pair of tongs, tea pincer or tea clip for handling small tea cups - when washing the cups with hot water or moving them to the front of guests.
14. Optional: A calligraphy-style brush with a wooden handle, which is used to spread the wasted tea evenly over the tea tray to ensure no part dries out and the tea "stain" is spread evenly to ensure a pleasing color to the tray.

Additional Notes