



THE RITUAL  
OF TEA:  
*A Guide*



## THE RITUAL OF TEA: A GUIDE

*The Ritual of Tea is an invitation to slow down, a meditation reconnecting you to self and others and an exercise to cleanse your body, mind, and spirit.*

I'd like to invite you on a journey. Tea will be your guide. Though she is subtle, she is a wise and powerful teacher, an ancient plant spirit medicine. For millennia, tea has been enchanting, connecting, and healing humankind—and she has stories to share with you too!

This book will help you create the time and space. Once you do, the medicine in the leaf, the rhythm of the practice, and the stillness that is cultivated will work like ancient alchemy to calm your mind, ignite your life force, and align you with your highest self.

My tea journey started when I was 25. Seeking life in balance with nature, I had recently spent a decade living close to the land on organic farms from California to New Zealand, living and learning alongside other herbalists, chefs, healers, and farmers.

Since then, tea has led me across the globe in search of the most clean, ethical, high-vibration varieties. She has given me not only a living, but also grounded me in a way of life.

This is what I would like to share with you—an inner journey. Let go of your mind, open your heart, and escape into the magic, the mystery, and the medicine of the leaf.

Love,

*Sarah Scarborough*

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@TEA\_HUNTRESS

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## I. A CHECKLIST

*Whether your ritual happens every day, week, or month, tea will guide you closer to nature—both Mother Nature and your own True Nature.*

Before you begin, here are eight things to consider and to gather.

- Textile (see section II)
- Tea (see sections III and IV)
- Water (see section II)
- Clay (see section VI)
- Heat/Fire (see section VI)
- Incense (see section II)
- Nature (see section II)
- Music (see section II)

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## II. SETTING THE STAGE

*Given the time, space, and intention, tea can open doors to new levels of connection, clarity, and harmony.*

### *Find a Serene Space*

Choose a spot—inside or out, somewhere beautiful and peaceful—that you can return to each time you sit for tea. This could be an unused part of the house, in front of the fireplace, or a light-filled window in the winter and on a patio, in a garden, or under a tree in the summer.

There is nothing quite like tea in nature—on a quiet beach, in a mountain meadow, or under an old tree. You might also enjoy having a special basket to carry your tea accessories with you when you head out on an adventure.

### *Set the Stage*

Find a runner, cloth, or tea table that you love. Like a yoga mat, this will define a space that will become more and more meaningful with each session.

Often, in nature, you can find a log, large leaf, or rock to use for a tea stage. Or, add these elements to your favorite tea runner to connect with your environment. Let your creativity guide you.

### *Play Meditative Music*

Life is loud. Turn on the soothing sounds of Juliana Barwick, Jonsi and Alex, Jane Winther, or a seasonal playlist by Tea Huntress on Spotify. Music is not only restorative and calming, but can also improve memory and mood.

If you are in nature, consider opting for the songs of the waves, birds and wind, or the hum of the earth.

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## II. SETTING THE STAGE

### *Engage the Senses*

Lighting a candle or natural incense will help lift and light the spirit.

Aloeswood has a calming energy and has traditionally been paired with tea because of its subtle scent.

Palo Santo opens the heart.

Vetiver is grounding.

Sage will cleanse your space.

Sweetgrass will bring in abundance and joy.

### *Invite Mother Nature in*

Connect with the energy of the season with foraged flowers, a shell from a memorable visit to the sea, a rock your child found for you, or a crystal to call in a specific intention. Connecting with Mother Nature connects you to your True Nature.

### *Use Spring Water*

If possible, use natural spring water. It brings your tea to life and provides your body with vitamins and minerals from deep in the earth. Visit [FindASpring.com](http://FindASpring.com) to find your nearest natural spring and sustainable water-carrying containers. Also, look for spring water delivery options in your area—living water is one of our greatest luxuries.

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### III. CLEAN & HIGH-VIBRATION TEAS

*"Tea, wealth of the earth, blessed with the sweet spirit of Heaven."*

DU YU

Stretching back millennia, tea has been revered as a balm for the body, a tonic for the mind, and a salve for the soul—a wellspring of nourishment teaching humankind about life, death, and spirit.

Cultivation, genetics, and environment dictate the energetic potency of each tea. Those that are tended with love and intention, grown in pure and biodiverse environments, and harvested from wild, ancient, or otherwise un-engineered plants speak more loudly than those that are not.

Seek out clean teas with an abundance of life force. Look for organic, biodynamic, wild, ancient, and naturally farmed tea.





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## IV. TEA TYPES & STORAGE

Diversity is the spark of life, and there is a tea for every season, mood, and gathering. This is thanks to a rich diversity of genetics, origins, and processing techniques of the *Camellia sinensis* plant.

### *Red Tea*

Fully oxidized tea leaves steep a brilliant red cup, so they came to be called "Hong Cha" ("red tea") in China. Once this style of tea made its way to Europe it became known as black tea.

Red tea from Taiwan and China is generally bright and lively with uplifting energy. It makes for a beautiful solo morning session and can be shared casually or ceremoniously with a group.

Long leaves that are twisted or rolled into balls steep best loose in either a bowl or a teapot.

### *Black Tea*

Britain's love affair with tea is no secret. Its embodiment is the green tea fields now covering India, Sri Lanka, and East Africa—all in homage to a lively cup of "black tea".

These teas are often found blended with local spices, milk, and sugar as in a cup of Indian Masala Chai ("spiced tea"). They can have a more conversational and social feel, and are often paired with sweets. Explore the ritual of Masala Chai at [TeaHuntress.com](http://TeaHuntress.com).

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## IV. TEA TYPES & STORAGE

### *Oolong Tea*

Oolong teas are refined, complex, and steeped in legend and mythology. Stories of abundant luck, health, and wealth surround Iron Goddess of Mercy, Eight Immortals, Big Red Robe, and others. Each oolong is an artistic expression of the leaf. What connects them all is that they are all partially oxidized.

Oolong tea is a living piece of history from China and Taiwan, though other semi-oxidized teas do exist across the world, most notably those from Nepal.

Oolongs love to be infused over and over in a small teapot and sipped slowly from small cups.

### *Puerh Tea*

Post-process fermentation enhances the flavor and health of a tea by introducing beneficial bacteria (much like aged cheese or wine). Tea from Puerh, China, the last stop on the legendary Tea Horse Road, is the world's most famous fermented tea.

A highly coveted tea used as medicine by the Yunnanese hill tribes who revered Tea as a goddess, Puerh can be fermented by aging over time (Sheng Puerh) or with the addition of microbotics (Shou Puerh). Liu Bao and yellow teas also go through bacterial transformations after being processed.

### *White Tea*

Simply plucked and dried, white tea has an elegant and raw simplicity. Native to Fujian, China, tea is now being produced in this style across the world.

Look for white teas that include leaves as well as buds to support the sustainability and health of the plant.

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## IV. TEA TYPES & STORAGE

### *Green Tea*

Green teas are grown and processed to retain the potency, aroma, and vibrancy of the leaf. Just after harvest, the tea leaves are steamed or seared so that they do not lose these native qualities.

No other tea can put you in a meditative state quite the way that a green tea can. Some green teas like Japan's Matcha and Gyokuro are uniquely produced to amplify their Zen effect. For this reason, they have birthed the art of mindfulness through tea. Another intoxicating green tea ritual is a gift from the Saharan Desert, Moroccan Mint tea.

### *A Note on Other Botanicals*

Our earth's forests and mountains are full of potent plants to nurture, heal, and guide us. Since ancient times, traditional healers would grind, extract, concoct, and steep their roots, bark, leaves, and flowers, like tea. From nettle, ginseng, and chamomile to mugwort, hibiscus, and peppermint, plants hold the answers that we seek.

### *Storage*

Keep your tea in a cabinet or chest away from the kitchen where varying humidity levels and competing scents might taint its taste and quality. Clay jars are ideal vessels for tea, which loves to be kept cool and in the dark—preferably surrounded only by other tea.

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## V. INTUITIVE STEEPING

*There are no mistakes, only lessons to be learned when steeping tea. This journey is one of intuition, connection, and presence, rather than tools, rules, and metrics.*

A transcendent cup of tea is as sublimely simple as water and leaves. Remember that the magic is in the leaf, and once you begin, the details of how much tea to use, what water temperature is ideal, and how long to steep the leaves will become intuitive knowing over time.

Simply begin.

Start with a pinch of leaves in your pot or bowl. A rinse of the leaves prepares them for steeping, so cover the leaves with water from the kettle. Discard the rinse water in a bowl.

Cover the leaves again with water. Let a bit of time pass and then sip or pour. Bring your awareness to the aroma, the taste, the feel of the tea in your mouth, and the color in the cup.

If the tea is too strong, simply add more water. If it is too weak, use less or hotter water on the next infusion.

For boiled and whisked tea rituals, like Masala Chai, Matcha, and Moroccan Mint tea, visit the journal at [TeaHuntress.com](http://TeaHuntress.com).

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## VI. TEAWARE

On her journey across the world, tea inspired the creation of myriad teas and teaware—each an extension of local cultures and agriculture, each as varied as the peoples that birthed them.

Choose teaware that brings you beauty and joy. The stronger your connection to your teaware, the more satisfying your practice will be.

### *Small Pots*

Small pots are made for tea sessions where leaves are steeped briefly many times in one sitting. After each steep, tea is decanted into small cups.

Small pots are best for puerh, oolong, and Japanese green teas. They can be used to steep red tea as well.



GAIWAN  
(CHINA)



GONGFU TEAPOT  
(CHINA)



HOUHIN  
(JAPAN)



SHIBORIDASHI  
(JAPAN)

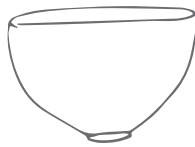
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## VI. TEAWARE

### *Tea Bowls*

The most primitive form of steeping tea is to simply place a few long leaves in a bowl, pour water over them, and sip while the tea steeps. The bowl can be refilled with hot water as many times as you like.

Tea bowls are best for long leaf red, puerh, or white teas. They can be used to steep oolongs as well.



TEA BOWL

### *Medium and Large Pots*

Larger pots and cups are used when you want to prepare your tea all at once rather than continually pouring, steeping, and sipping. Generally, less tea is used per amount of water, steeping times are longer, and leaves are steeped just once or twice.

Larger pots can lend themselves to more casual or social gatherings. They suit smaller leaf black teas and botanicals that have small particles requiring a strainer.



TEAPOT

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## VI. TEAWARE

### HEATING WATER

#### *Stoves & Braziers*

Stoves use gas, charcoal, or electricity to create heat to boil water. They can also be used to keep your kettle hot. Some types of stoves: kitchen stove, gas burning camp stove, electric infrared hot plate.

Braziers are portable heaters that can be used to heat water, but more often, they are used to keep it hot. An alcohol or charcoal burner is placed inside the base and the kettle is placed on top.

If you love to have tea outdoors, consider finding a portable gas or alcohol burning camp stove that you can carry in your basket or backpack.

#### *Kettles*

A tea kettle is used to hold water to heat for tea. Kettles can be made of stone, clay, metal, or glass, each material adding a different attribute.

#### *Thermoses*

A good thermos is a necessity for any tea-loving adventurer. It will keep hot water hot without the need for a stove or brazier so that you can drop into a tea session whether you are on a plane, a train, or on top of a mountain.

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## VI. HOW TO PRACTICE

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

THICH NHAT HAHN

Create a sacred space.

Begin.

Light a candle or some incense.

Set an intention.

Add some meditative music.

Then, pour your tea in silence.

Watch the steam swirl together with your incense. Take in the aroma, the taste, and the warmth as it washes through your body, mind, and spirit. Listen. Notice the way your physical and emotional states begin to shift.

Repeat.

End.

Practice daily.



"When water is still like a mirror,  
it can behold the moon."

RUMI



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