

Introduction to Wu-Wo Tea Ceremony

History

Wu-Wo Tea Ceremony is based on traditional Chinese Gong Fu small pot brewing dating back to the Ming Dynasty more than 300 years ago. Traditional practice was modified by Grand Master Tsai, Rong Tsang in Taiwan in 1989 to create a ceremony that allows many participants to brew and serve tea together. Wu-Wo translates as “selfless” or “void of self”. There is no ranking of participants by level of knowledge, nationality, religion, or social status and there is no expectation of reward. The ceremony helps participants develop a tolerant attitude and cultivate cooperation and thoughtfulness toward others while sharing a cup of heartwarming tea. Everyone brings their own tea utensils and brews the tea leaves they have brought with them - already packed in their teapots. Preferably performed outdoors, participants choose by lottery to determine their seating and then brew and serve tea to the three persons on their left while reserving one cup for themselves. Multiple rounds are brewed then all gather their cups and pack to go, which completes the ceremony.

Seven Principles

Wu-Wo ceremony is based upon seven principles that help the experience flow smoothly.

1. Seating is determined by random drawing. There is no distinction by rank or social status.
2. Tea is served in one direction but received from the other. No reward is expected from those you have served.
3. Keep an open mind and reserve judgment in order to accept and appreciate different teas and brewing styles.
4. Check and review constantly while keeping a positive and tolerant attitude in order to brew the best tea you can.
5. Brewing is not restricted to any particular school or regional style.
6. Everyone follows the rules and prearranged schedule so no director is needed.
7. Silence is maintained while brewing to allow the cultivation of group rhythm and harmony and a spirit of cooperation and thoughtfulness toward others.

Equipment

Teapot (Cha Hu) — *Don't forget to add your tea!*
Tea Serving Pot (Cha Zhong)
4 Tea Cups (Cha Bei)
Thermos (Bao Wan Hu)
Tea Serving Tray (Cha Pan)
Tea Towel (Cha Jin)
Ground Mat (Di Yi)
Carrying Bag (Bei Bao)

Optional:

Timer (Ji Shi Qi) or **Watch** (Biao)
Kneeling Pad (Zuo Dian)
Teapot Wraps(Bao Hu Jin)
Cup Covers (Bei Tao)

Wu-Wo Tea Ceremony Procedure

- 1) **Register:** An idea of how many people will enter an event allows for easier preparation.
- 2) **Sign In:** The rules and times of each event are given at this time. This usually includes the time the brewing will start (as there will **not** be an announcement) and how many rounds will be served.
- 3) **Drawing:** Decides the seating for all participants.
- 4) **Tea Equipment Preparation:** Find your designated seat and set up your tea equipment. You will need to arrive with your tea leaves already packed in your teapot and a thermos of hot water.

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- 5) **Communicate:** Time is set aside to study others' tea equipment and socialize with the other participants until the designated brewing time.
- 6) **Brew Tea:** At the previously designated time, participants are to start brewing tea on their own. From this point on the ceremony is done without speaking. Pour water over leaves with a circular motion to wet the leaves evenly. Pour the tea from the brewing pot to the serving pot. Fill the four teacups on your tray.
- 7) **Serve Tea:** Serve the three persons on your left while reserving one cup for yourself. Serve additional rounds from your serving pot. The tea will be brewed, served, and tasted for the designated number of rounds - (usually three).
- 8) **End:** Clean the 4 teacups you drank from with a paper napkin or tea towel, then collect your own cups and pack up. This completes the ceremony.

Reminders:

- a. Put tea leaves in the pot ahead of time
- b. Fill your thermos with hot water ahead of time
- c. Wear shoes you can slip on and off easily and comfortable clothing
- d. Pace your brewing and serving so you are neither too far ahead or behind the other participants
- e. Keep brewing area clean at all times

How To Brew a Good Cup of Wu-Wo Tea

1. Three Important Elements:
 - Quantity of tea leaves
 - Temperature of the water
 - Length of brew time
2. Tea Leaves: it's best to choose a tea that doesn't require high water temperature such as a green, white, or oolong tea because it isn't possible to preheat the teapot as would be normal with Gong Fu tea and it may be several hours between filling the thermos and brewing the tea.
3. Water: use spring or filtered water. Pour water over the leaves with a circular motion to wet the leaves evenly.

Water temperature is the least controllable element in the Wu-Wo Ceremony. After tasting your first brewing, make adjustments such as brewing longer or using less water if water temperature is too cool or pouring water into serving pot first if water is too hot.

General Brewing Guidelines: you will need to experiment with each tea

- **Green tea** (non oxidized): 1/4 – 1/2 pot full depending on shape of leaves, 160 – 180°F, (70 – 80°C), (1) 1m15s (2) 40s (3) 50s (4) 1m15s
- **Oolong tea** (light oxidized oolong tea): 1/4 – 1/2 full depending on shape of leaves, 185 - 195°F, (85 – 90°C), (1) 1m15s (2) 30s (3) 40s (4) 1m30s
- **Black tea** (and medium oxidized oolong tea): 1/5 – 1/4 pot full, 195 - 205°F, (90 – 95°C), (1) 1m15s (2) 40s (3) 50s (4) 2m

Practice making the tea you plan to use so you can brew a good pot during the ceremony.