



**GLOBAL TEA
SCOUTING**
A more peaceful
world through tea

Tea events for Scouts

Introducing the GongFu
Cha ceremony and culture.



The main aim of a tea ceremony is to encourage consideration

Tea ceremonies:

- **Bring young people together**
- **Are an accessible way to develop an understanding of different faiths (and no faith)**
- **Introduce complexity and contemplation with drinks in an alcohol-free setting**
- **Help young people to develop leadership and presentation skills**
- **Promote peaceful dialogue**

Tea is one of the most accessible food crops in the world. It has many types, flavours, and blends, and there are also cultural and even spiritual understandings of the drink. Tea comes from the *camellia sinensis* plant, known as the tea plant. Other hot drinks that don't use tea leaves direct from this plant are known as herbal infusions or tisanes.

The aim of the GongFu Cha ceremony is to achieve a quiet, reflective space that is religiously neutral but spiritually engaging. Discussion of the tea flavour and type is encouraged, as are all forms of spiritual questioning.

The GongFu Cha or KungFu tea ceremony dates back over 3,000 years and comes from Tibet, Nepal and China. It's the oldest form of basic tea ceremony in the world and it has remained largely unchanged throughout history. Once people understand the ceremony, you could introduce them to the many other styles of tea ceremony from Asian, African, European and Russian regions.

The following guidance will help you learn how to deliver activities and events around tea using the GongFu methods.



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The World Buddhist Scout Council (WBSC) Tea Scouting Group is an international team of Scout leaders from around the world of many different faiths and no faiths. We're made up of a growing number of adults and young people who have discovered that engaging with tea in this way is a great motivator.

The aim of this group is to support Scouts of all ages to discover tea cultures and develop events where young people become engaged and empowered.



As well as being invited to work with Scouts at many national events, we're also part of the Faith

and Belief Zone programme at the 24th World Scout Jamboree in North America in 2019. You can find tea ceremonies being performed in the 'Journey of Shared Spirituality' tent at the centre of the jamboree site.



GongFu Cha

The basic equipment you'll need for training or an event includes:

Tea. We recommend using good quality loose tea. Green, white, oolong or black teas are all fine. We don't recommend the use of teabags for environmental reasons (and they don't work as well either).

Tea tray or table. A surface to frame the ceremony space and create a stage for the tea performance. It could be a simple rolled bamboo mat, a piece of fabric, or a more elaborate wooden tea tray with drainage facilities.

Kettle or hot water source. A reliable source of hot water (around 80 degrees) is essential. You could use a tea kettle, an electric kettle, or large boiling pan. Use fresh, clean water which hasn't been boiled before.

Sharing jug. A glass or clay jug of the same capacity as the tea pot or gaiwan, which you'll use to pour the tea into the cups.

Tea pets or zisha. Small decorative figures – see page nine for more about tea pets.





Tea strainer. A simple tea strainer that fits over the sharing jug will stop unwanted leaves entering the tea.

Tea hand. You can use a tea hand to present the dry tea to the audience before the ceremony. Pass it around so people can look at and smell the dry tea.

Gaiwan or teapot. A teapot (or traditional gaiwan) is used to infuse the tea with boiling water. One with a capacity around 200 to 300ml is a good size. If you can, get one made from porcelain or Yixing tea clay.

Teacups. Small tea cups (that hold 30 to 50ml) are best suited. If you can, get one made from porcelain or Yixing tea clay.



Tea kits. We've found that the small tea kits (likes the ones in the images) are perfect for a small ceremony of six people. They can also be a more affordable way into tea training. We recommend these as a starting point with added flourishes and ideas from your surroundings. You can use them wherever you are and include elements from your surroundings as part of the ceremony.

Whatever equipment you use for the GongFu Cha ceremony, we recommend you set enough spaces for at least six people. Have a few more items ready as replacements in case of breakages (or extra people who want to get stuck in).



Teaching Dutch Scouts how to perform a tea ceremony. The aim of the session should always be to enable young people to perform the ceremony themselves.

Here's how to hold a simple GongFu Cha tea ceremony.

1. Wake the set. Arrange your tea ware on the tea table or display area. When the water's at the correct temperature, pour hot water over all of the items to wake the tea set. This also warms the equipment to a good temperature for infusing tea and removes any dust or particles.

2. Introduce the concepts. Briefly explain what the tea ceremony is and how you'd like people to join in, as well as anything else you'd like to discuss as part of the event. You should introduce the equipment and tools and discuss the tea itself. Once you've finished, pass the tea hand around clockwise so everyone can see and smell the dry tea.



3. Rinse the tea. Once the tea's returned to the tea master or performer, put it in the gaiwan or teapot. Then pour hot water at the correct temperature over the tea and drain it off almost immediately into the tea tray (possibly over a tea pet or zisha). This is to 'clean the tea' from dust or contaminants

4. First infusion. Once the water's at (or near) the correct temperature, pour water from the kettle into the teapot or gaiwan. Leave it for the required amount of time (it'll depend on your tea – check the packet or use the rough guide below). When it's ready, pour the tea from the teapot or gaiwan into the sharing jug, using a strainer if you need to. If your jug is see-through, hold it up to show everyone the colour of the tea as the light shines through.



Pour the tea evenly and calmly into the tea cups; stop when they're about one third full so the tops don't become too hot. Try to pour the same amount into each cup. Pour any leftover tea onto the tea pets.

Use your right hand to pass the tea cups around the group clockwise. Leave the lid off the teapot or gaiwan between infusions to avoid spoiling the leaves.

Rough infusion guide for the first infusion: black tea 60 seconds at 85 degrees; green tea 30 seconds at 70 degrees; oolong tea 60 seconds at 75 degrees; white tea 30 seconds at 72 degrees.

5. Second infusion. After the first infusion, the tea master or performer should gesture for the cups to be returned to the tea table.

Pour over more hot water without changing or adding to the tea leaves from the first infusion. Explain that the same leaves will taste differently on each infusion. Serve the tea as before, using the sharing jug and the cups.

Rough infusion guide for the second infusion: black tea 65 seconds at 85 degrees; green tea 40 seconds at 70 degrees; oolong tea 65 seconds at 75 degrees; white tea 50 seconds at 72 degrees.

6. Third infusion and beyond. On the third infusion, some teas will improve while others will start to fade. From this infusion onwards, encourage people to discuss the differences and try to notice sweeter flavours or fruit hints to the tea. Depending on the tea (and how much time you have), you can continue for 10 (or even more) infusions to fully explore a tea.

Rough infusion guide for the third infusion and beyond: black tea 80 seconds at 85 degrees; green tea 60 seconds at 70 degrees; oolong tea 75 seconds at 75 degrees; white tea 60 seconds at 72 degrees.





7. Finish the ceremony. After the last infusion, bring the cups back in and spill any leftover tea over the tea pets. Move the cups off the table, tip the wet tea leaves from the tea pot or gaiwan over the tea pets, and make a pleasing arrangement with them to display the tea pet and the damp tea leaves. Thank everyone for joining in.

Fully clean the tea equipment in near boiling water. Don't use soap or detergents, so you don't impair the flavour of future teas.

Tea pets or zisha. These are small ornate ceramic creatures or objects. They originated around 900BC when potters used the leftover clay from teapots or gaiwans to add small charms. They serve no religious or ceremony purpose other than fun. They change colour and scent over time because of the teas they've shared with you – this is called training a zisha or tea pet. Tamagotchi and Pokémon were inspired by this custom.

Between infusions. Encourage people to notice the difference between each infusion and guide them on the tea taste. You could also pass Tibetan singing bowls around between infusions or play tea themed music. Discussions often start during ceremonies – keep them going as long as they're suitable.

Where to get more

Support

- Email tonykeithmalone@icloud.com
- Badges and neckers will be available soon
Join us on Facebook: search for 'Global Tea Scouts'
- Join us at many Scouts events around the world



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Global Tea Scouting aims to support and encourage young people to engage with tea ceremonies as a way of cultivating friendships and peace. You can like our Facebook page to share experiences and find out more information.

The World Buddhist Scout Council offers support and guidance on Buddhism through international Scouts events. You can email them at wbsc.sg@gmail.com

ChaDao School of Buddhist Studies is the official tea training arm for many forms of Buddhism including Zen, Chan and Tibetan. Check out their website at chadao.co.uk

38th & 40th Explorer Sea Scout Unit is a very active group in the UK. They have monthly training sessions on tea and tea culture in Kent, south east England. You can get in touch via email at stroodessu@icloud.com