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TMC Certified Judges

International Level

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Sufferings of Tea Leaves

Olga Nikandrova & Denis Shumakov's Stories Depot

Tea, as well as other popular products, often becomes the subject of scientific research. To see this, it is enough to install a filter for tea and caffeine (as a bonus) on any scientific data aggregator — and after a week, you will start puzzling over what can be done with this array of potentially interesting, but extremely heterogeneous and not always easy-to-understand information.

Moreover, at first glance, this information may seem not to have any practical value. Most scientific research is related to the cultivation and production of tea or its effect on health. And the majority of tea specialists in consumer tea culture are engaged in preparation and service of the drink, rather than its production or use for medical purposes.

However, the answer to the question of how to use scientific news can be found in the professional profile of the consumer culture specialist. The fact is that an important part of their work with clients is entertaining stories. A good tea master should be a good storyteller. Do not forget that one of the options for the professional development of a tea master is their gradual transformation into an expert, when their ability to tell stories turns into the ability to write expert texts.

Scientific news is an excellent building material for both entertaining stories and expert articles. Even if they are dedicated to very specific issues.



Amino Acids in Tea

doi: 10.1080/10408398.2018.1552245

Zhenming Yu and Ziyin Yang described the formation mechanisms of different amino acids in tea during its production. Amino acids in tea partially determine its taste, aroma and physiological effect. At the same time, tea leaves contain both proteinaceous and non-proteinaceous amino acids (proteinaceous amino acids can be part of proteins, but non-proteinaceous amino acids can't). The taste and aroma are influenced mainly by proteinaceous amino acids. And non-proteinaceous tea amino acids include such popular substances as L-theanine and GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid).

It turns out that proteinaceous amino acids are mainly the product of protein degradation, which occurs at all stages of the existence of a tea leaf, including both its growth and technological processing. And, accordingly, the content of proteinaceous amino acids in tea is largely



Wine experts have a popular phrase — vine must suffer, meaning that in order to get good wine, the grape plant itself must grow in uncomfortable conditions. A similar principle applies to tea — many of its virtues, as it turns out, are a direct consequence of the suffering experienced by tea leaves. It is called not suffering, but stress, but this does not change the essence.



GABA-tea, new wave of tea suffering (mechanical and anoxic stress)

determined by external factors — both natural and technological.

As for non-proteinaceous amino acids, everything is somewhat more complicated about them. The accumulation of L-theanine depends more on the tea cultivar than on external conditions, while GABA accumulation is a result of mechanical damage to the leaves and the anoxic stress they receive in the oxygen-free environment.

You'll probably admit it would be rather dramatic to serve up GABA-tea as 'a result of a unique combination of mechanical and anoxic stress'.

Photo credit: Olga Nikandrova



Oriental Beauty, classics of tea suffering (insect damage)



Stress and Aroma of Albino Tea

doi: 10.3390/ijms20051044

Chinese scientists have compared the effect of stress on ordinary green tea leaves and albino tea leaves.

The fact that continuous wounding stress (caused by twisting, insect infestation, etc.) stimulates the formation of aromatic substances in tea leaves is well known. It is this property of tea leaves that often explains the specific and vivid

Tangya White Tea

Green tea produced from albino tea leaves. Hubei, China
Please note the fair color of the leaf blades



Olga Nikandrova, Denis Shumakov

aroma of oolongs, especially those made from already damaged leaves (Oriental Beauty and its replicas). The ‘aroma in response to stress’ mechanism has not been understood one hundred percent, but it is definitively known that tea leaves that were exposed to stress contain more aromatic substances such as jasmine lactone, nerolidol and some others. Analysis of changes in the content of these substances allows us to evaluate the reaction of different leaves to stress, which, in fact, the scientists did by comparing green leaves with albino ones.

Albino teas are the varieties of tea plants the leaves of which, under certain conditions (associated with light and temperature), become noticeably lighter than those of normal tea plants. In addition to the obvious problem with chloroplasts (which, among other things, provide plants with a green color), albino teas have other specific characteristics — for example, they have less caffeine and catechins and more amino acids than normal tea. Besides, teas made from albino leaves (mostly green teas), as a rule, have a slightly weaker aroma and slightly sweeter taste.

And this aroma, in fact, became the main theme of the present study. The leaves of the same tea cultivar in its normal and mutated (albino) form were subjected to stress, and it appeared that the ‘aroma in response to stress’ reaction in albinos is present, but not so strong. So, the scientists drew three conclusions.

First, in response to continuous wounding stress, a chloroplast defect of albino teas significantly reduces the production of some aromatic components (volatile fatty acid derivatives: jasmine lactone and other compounds) and does not affect the production of the others (for example, indole and nerolidol).

Second, the ‘aroma in response to stress’ mechanism starts in both normal and albino tea leaves. But why the content of some aromatic substances increases in albinos after stress while the content of the others does not is not yet clear. Perhaps it’s all about hydroperoxide lyase, which is involved in the last stages of the synthesis of volatile fatty acid derivatives, such as the above mentioned jasmine lactone (which, by the way, has a pleasant ‘fruit-and-floral aroma’) and other compounds responsible for the ‘green leaf aroma’. It only remains to check whether the chloroplast defects in albino leaves affect the activity of hydroperoxide lyase.

Third, continuous wounding stress can be used to enhance the aroma of albino tea. Traditionally, albino tea plants are used for the production of green teas, which, as compared with oolongs, are treated rather delicately. And if you stop playing nice with albino tea leaves, perhaps they will be more fragrant.

Although, to be honest, they are tasty enough already.

Sufferings of Tea Leaves



Drought Stress and Aroma of Tea

doi: 10.1016/j.jpiph.2017.10.001

Chinese scientists have studied the effect of drought on the chemical composition of tea leaves. They have discovered that slight drought stress stimulates formation of polyphenols in tea leaves, while serious drought stress, on the contrary, inhibits their formation. In addition, the lack of watering enriched some volatile metabolite pathways; this indicates that drought stress might affect the tea aroma.



(E)-Nerolidol Is Formed in Oolongs under Stress

doi: 10.1016/j.foodchem.2017.03.122

(E)-Nerolidol is a volatile sesquiterpene that contributes to the floral aroma of teas. Since (E)-nerolidol is not known to form in tea leaves, the mechanism of its formation in tea was an interesting issue for the Chinese scientists.

During their experiments, the specialists discovered that in tea leaves undergoing continuous mechanical damage, farnesyl diphosphate (found in tea cells) transforms into (E)-nerolidol under the action of special enzyme, activated by this mechanical damage. If, in addition to mechanical damage, tea leaves are also subjected to low-temperature stress, there will be even more

nerolidol in them (toss and bruise your oolongs in the refrigerator, colleagues).

Such a mechanism of the formation of volatiles is not unique to tea. In response to damage, a number of plants produce odorous substances, which sometimes have rather funny names, e.g. bergamotene. The words *sesquiterpene* and *bergamotene* need to be remembered and used when serving fragrant tea to guests.



Jasmine Lactone and the Sufferings of Tea

doi: 10.1021/acs.jafc.8b00515

Jasmine lactone is one of the aromatic components of tea, responsible for the sweet, fruity and floral notes in its fragrance. Most of jasmine lactone is accumulated in oolong tea — therefore this type of tea was studied by Chinese researchers in order to determine the mechanism of synthesis behind the such a pleasant aromatic component.

It turned out that the synthesis of jasmine lactone is a consequence of the stresses to which tea leaves are exposed during the growth and manufacturing processes. And the sources of these stresses can be both mechanical damages of tea leaves and thermal effects.

In short, while breathing in the pleasant aroma of tea, one must always remember that this fragrance is the result of constant and varied suffering.

Snow Shan Tea

Vietnam Ancient Snow Mountain Tea

Snow Shan Tea (Shan Tuyet Tea, Trà Shan Tuyết, Ancient Snow Mountain Tea) is Vietnamese tea produced in the north of Vietnam (provinces of Hà Giang, Lào Cai, Yên Bái, Lai Châu, Điện Biên, Sơn La) from leaves of old tea trees growing in the mountains and mostly in the wild. The name *Snow Shan Tea* is explained by the fact that this tea grows in the mountains ('shan'), its buds are covered with white hair and it is sometimes freezing in the mountains and tea trees can be covered with frost.

Snow Shan is one of the most famous Vietnamese teas, and fame came to it quite a long time ago, it was appreciated by tea lovers both in Vietnam and beyond, and is often presented as an official gift to high-ranking guests of Vietnam. But the full potential of Snow Shan Tea was revealed in modern tea culture, with its attention to eco-friendly and craft teas with pronounced terroir traits.

In 2001 Hà Giang Snow Shan Tea was granted a GI (Geographical Identification) Registration Certificate which is regulated by the local authorities of Hà Giang province. In the other

provinces where Snow Shan Tea traditionally grows, its production is not yet regulated by GIs. In some localities special trade marks have been registered for Snow Shan Tea, for example, Suối Giàng Snow Shan Tea.

The leaves for Snow Shan Tea are hand-harvested from wild trees (or the ones that fell out of cultivation at some time, as there are certain signs of intended cultivation of the distant past) growing at altitudes from 600 to 2500 meters. The trees are up to 800 years old, but the majority of them are somewhere in the range of 80–150 years old. Most often, these trees grow in their natural environment, deep in the forest.

Morphologically, these trees are usually attributed to a Vietnam-endemic variety *Camellia sinensis* var. *shan*, however, other names, such as *Camellia sinensis* var. *assamica* subsp. *lasiocalyx* and *Camellia sinensis* var. *pubilimba* are also used to describe the trees. Snow Shan tea plants are trees with sparse branches, 3–10 meters high. Their buds are covered with delicate white hair, the leaves are large, rugged, light green, elongated, with pointed tips and deep serrate. Since the growing conditions of tea plants in different provinces are different, the trees themselves and the leaves collected from them also turn out to be different. For example, in Suối Giàng, tea trees grow at altitudes of 600–1000 meters, not as high as in other places, therefore tea buds are larger there. While in Tà Xùa, at altitudes of about 2000 meters, the trees themselves are lower, with a wider canopy. The taste of Snow Shan tea leaves also differs from locality to locality.



Snow Shan Tea trees are practically not tended. They grow by themselves, sometimes they are treated with preparations made from garlic, pepper and skins of pomelo and lime to scare off insects. Sometimes, the only human interference with Snow Shan tea trees is harvesting the leaves — which is the privilege of ethnic minorities, in particular Dao and Hmong. In fact, Snow Shan Tea is not only a tea project, but also a social project. It helps solve the problem of female employment, which remains acute in traditional societies. It also enables local farmers to engage in good agricultural practices, instead of growing illegal plants.

Snow Shan Tea can be different: black, white, green, yellow, oolong or dark — but, regardless of the processing technology, the nature of the raw materials is very pronounced in these teas. In addition to the 'hairiness', which is preserved in the finished product, mountain wild teas from the north of Vietnam have a very attractive and very characteristic aroma. Fermented, dry, fresh, sweet,

with notes of tea flowers and fresh milk. This aroma is well remembered and perfectly recognizable — and very pleasant.

Snow Shan Tea is exceptionally responsive to changing brewing regimes and can become a favorite toy of a thoughtful tea connoisseur or tea master. You can brew it gong-fu style, enjoying the changes in taste and aroma with every new cup. Or do it Western style: simply pour boiling water over the leaves, infuse for five minutes, and get a delicious and very gastronomic tea that matches perfectly any tea delicacies.

Snow Shan Tea was the highlight of Tea Masters Cup International 2018, which was held in November 2018 in Vietnam (Huế). Both participants and judges of the tournament noted the excellent taste of Snow Shan Tea and its high potential as a very gastronomic drink for cafes and restaurants. And, of course, they gladly took samples of Snow Shan Tea with them to treat tea lovers around the world.



Cloudy Green Tea



Jasmine Green Tea



White and Green Vietnam Snow Shan Teas

Cloudy Ta Xua Green Tea (Trà Mây Tà Xùa). Tea origin: Tà Xùa (Sơn La province). The leaves for this unique green tea were harvested from ancient wild-growing Snow Shan Tea trees. The cloudy, misty, humid mountainous climate lends itself to an unforgivable lingering medicinal delicately bitter flavour and very appetizing aftertaste.

Jasmine Green Tea (Trà Nhài). Tea origin: Hà Giang province, jasmine origin: Hanoi. Naturally scented jasmine green tea. Green Snow Shan Tea is harvested in spring and reserved until jasmine flowers bloom in summer. Green tea is then infused with fresh flowers for several hours, the process is repeated several times. The result is an exquisite tea with delicate astringency, sweet aftertaste and delightful aroma.

Hà Giang Silver Needle White Tea (Bạch Trà Hà Giang). Tea origin: Hà Giang province. These rare and sought-after unopened Silver Tips come from wild ancient Snow Shan Tea trees that grow in high-mountain humid terrain of Hà Giang province. Hot liquor of this tea is clear and very pale, with tender, sweet and graceful meadowy aroma. Cold-brewed Silver Needle is very fresh and thirst-quenching.



Silver Needle White Tea



VITAS Vietnam Tea Association
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Lotus Black Tea



Aging Red Oolong Tea



Oolong and Black Vietnam Snow Shan Teas

Lotus Black Tea (Trà Huyền Liên). Tea origin: Suối Giàng (Yên Bái province), lotus origin: Hanoi. Nutty black tea with elegant fragrant notes of lotus flowers. A remarkable variation on the theme of the classic Vietnamese lotus tea. This tea goes well with rich creamy desserts and sweet fortified wine, like Tawny Porto or Pedro Ximénez Sherry wine.

Aging Red Tea (Lão Trung Sơn). Tea origin: Tây Côn Lĩnh mountain (Hà Giang province). Premium red oolong tea. Tea masters repeatedly shadow-oxidize and dry tea leaves. The result is an intriguing bold red oolong. It is a luxurious afternoon tea which goes well with light snacks both Oriental and Western style, sweet or savory.

Dragon Mustache Red Oolong Tea (Râu Rồng). Tea origin: Loan Estate (Hà Giang province). Red oolong made with tippy buds of ancient Snow Shan Tea trees growing in the mountainous region of Hà Giang province. The aging process creates an intriguing tea which has a light taste of Silver Needle white tea and a bright aroma of fragrant red oolong tea. This tea is a perfect professional tool for a spectacular tea and gastronomy show.

LOOK FOR GREEN-AND-WHITE LOGO
WITH THREE PEAKS WHICH GUARANTEES
THE ORIGIN OF TRUE SNOW SHAN TEA



Dragon Mustache Red Oolong Tea

Values of American Tea Culture

Tony Gebely's Insight

Tony Gebely is an IT specialist, Chief Technology Officer for Family Office Exchange and a productive tea connoisseur. His tea resume includes a great book *Tea: A User's Guide*, American Specialty Tea Alliance, Tea Epicure project, judging Tea Masters Cup International and organizing TMC USA.

On getting acquainted with Tony's systematic and thorough approach, we immediately thought that it would be great to apply this approach to the description of modern American tea culture. So we asked Tony a whole bunch of questions.

Do you have any formal tea education?

I have no formal tea education, however I have learned a lot from my mentors in the industry, traveled to many tea producing regions, practiced tea processing on a small farm in Hawaii, and have read many books on tea.

How did your tea story begin? Was tea a traditional drink for your family?

Tea was not part of any traditions for my family; rather, it was served hot when we were ill, and served cold with sugar and ice as a refreshing



summer beverage. In both situations, the tea being served was cheap black tea from tea bags. My tea journey began however during a month-long university trip to China where I was fascinated by the tea culture I experienced there. When I returned to the United States, I began consuming any information on tea I could find and I began purchasing and tasting teas to expand my palate. I eventually started World of Tea (which is now a part of ASTA) and began writing about tea publicly. Around the same time, I founded Chicago Tea Garden, which was an online tea retail and tea

education company that I ran for 3 years. While running the business, I was interviewed by Katie Herman, who was working on her Masters thesis on the topic of tea. Three years later we were married. In 2016, I published my first book on tea, *Tea: A User's Guide* after 6 years of research. In 2018,

approach the question by looking at two distinct tea cultures: people who consume commodity tea, and people who consume quality tea. Those who consume commodity tea typically take tea iced, or bottled, almost always sweetened or flavored. 'Sweet Tea' is a cultural implement in the deep



I founded the American Specialty Tea Alliance along with many of my friends in the tea industry here.

The USA definitely has its own tea culture. Having been into tea in America for 13 years, how would you describe this culture in a couple of words?

This is tough to do in a couple of words, as there are multiple ways to look at tea culture here and multiple cultures to look at. The largest percentage of tea drinkers approach tea for its proclaimed health benefits. Those who are truly passionate about tea, like us, we are the minority. We can

South where so much sugar is added to iced tea that 'you can stand a spoon upright in it'. Not really, but that's a phrase that is used to describe how ridiculously sweet the tea is. That said, quality tea, which has more of a cultural/ritual aspect to it, is entering its *third wave* much like coffee did with the explosion of craft coffee roasters, direct (and transparent) importing, and in general — the celebration of inherent quality and diversity in coffee. We are seeing this blossom in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York, with new cafes and retail outlets popping up in those cities.

Photo Credit: Lauren Rosenau, laurenrosenauphotography.com



Tony Gebely. Values of American Tea Culture

While running the business, I was interviewed by Katie Herman, who was working on her Masters thesis on the topic of tea. Three years later we were married.



Any culture can be described by its values, norms and means; what are American tea values, in your opinion? If we name some modern tea values, could you give us percentages as to how much they are important for a present-day US tea lover?

Because there are so many different types of tea drinkers, it is very difficult to assign percentages here, so I will describe their importance as best I can.

Functionality of tea (its particular health properties, ability to invigorate or calm down, etc)?

This is the most important item here for Americans. Most tea marketing in the United States is led by health statements. Tea is seen as a panacea by many. In general, Americans are obsessed with anything that is seen as healthy, or able to improve our bodies.

Spirituality?

This is the least important item here for Americans. Only a small minority have really taken to tea as a way of life, or spiritual implement.

Substitution (something which helps change one's habits)?

This is also important and related to the health aspect mentioned in 'Functionality of tea' — tea is often taken as a substitution to sugary beverages,

Attribute of lifestyle (social activities; subcultures, e.g. vegetarians; tea as a symbol of creativity; as an element of organic lifestyle, etc)?

I'm sure that this is a driving force for those who are passionate about tea. We have a strong community



mostly soda, for health reasons. Tea is also sometimes taken in place of coffee as a more mindful approach to being alert.

Adventure and new experience (something exciting, exotic, connected with different countries and cultures)?

This is important for those involved in tea's third wave, those who have a true passion for tea. The adventure of discovering new and exciting teas is what drives the passion for tea lovers.

of tea drinkers in this country. You know you will get along with a person and have similar values and likely make similar lifestyle choices if they are a 'tea person'.

Gastronomy (love of the taste of tea, both pure and/or combined with food)?

This aspect of tea is still developing and has not yet become mainstream outside of the recent matcha craze that we've experienced. Those who are passionate about tea love the taste of pure tea. There is a sort of snobbery that prevents some from

Tony Gebely. Values of American Tea Culture

combining tea with other ingredients, especially food. But this is beginning to change as well with tea's third wave.

As a profession?

In America, it is quite difficult to have a successful career in tea. The rise of 'tea sommelier' programs has created an influx of educated tea folks struggling to find steady work in the field. Top restaurants often task the beverage director or wine sommelier with creating a tea program rather than consulting with tea professionals. It's not impossible though, as some have done it.

Following the tradition (a family drink, traditional get-together drink, etc)?

Being a nation of immigrants, there are certainly many Americans that consider tea a family drink or a family tradition.

As a first micro-business (element of self-employment, business with low entry barriers centered around one person and giving this person wide opportunities of creating added value)?

While more and more individuals begin selling tea each year, these 'micro-businesses' account for an infinitesimally small percentage of tea sales overall in the United States. Yet the owners of these businesses are some of the most passionate individuals in the tea industry. Because there are so many of these businesses in existence, many



are finding the most success creating experiences around their hometown / city educating people about tea and providing tea tasting events.

You've mentioned tea's third wave. Could you name the main features of American tea's third wave? What are the first two waves?

From Wikipedia, transposed from coffee to tea: "the third wave of [tea] is a movement to produce high quality [tea], and consider [tea] as an artisanal foodstuff, like wine, rather than a commodity".

Why third wave? This is also transposed from the coffee world, but the first wave of tea was the proliferation of mass-market tea brands: Lipton tea bags, Country Time powdered teas, etc. The second wave refers to the growth of Teavana, Argo, and tea within the traditional coffeeshop atmosphere. The third wave of tea refers to the period of time we're now experiencing — standalone high-end tea shops opening and providing experiences rather than retail, more and more people exhibiting passion for tea, celebrating the diversity of taste in tea, preparing it with intention.

You are the author of the treatise Tea: A User's Guide. It has basic information about tea, tips on brewing and evaluating tea and formalized yet comprehensive description of more than a hundred different tea styles. Such user's guides are an essential attribute of different gastronomic cultures (one definitely comes across similar kind of works on cheese, wine, etc), but they are very rare in tea world. What do you think is the reason for that scarcity? What difficulties did you

encounter when compiling your book?

The rise of the internet and content marketing has led to the widespread dissemination of tea myths and poorly researched tea articles. Getting to the source of truth when studying a particular tea can be extremely difficult: first there are language barriers, second, there is a lack of standards in the tea industry as a whole, and third, different experts may offer different explanations of a tea or tea process. At times, I would spend several weeks researching a single tea to determine what makes it unique and special, only to write a small paragraph for the book. For the Chinese teas, I utilized local experts, translation of Chinese tea texts, and at times I paid to have Guobiao standards (国标) translated to make sense of some of the production methods used for heicha. As a technology nerd, I have a CRM system where I keep track of the conversations I've had about the book and the connections I've made while researching it.

We've heard that you are currently writing your second book on tea? Could you share with us what it is going to be about?

The second book will be much simpler than the first. Due to my contract, I can't divulge too many details at the moment, but it will be much shorter and concise than the first, and cover an overview of tea culture and tea history as well as tea classification. I expect it to launch in December of this year. It will be made to reach a much wider audience, whereas my first book was meant for those in the tea industry.

Tony Gebely. Values of American Tea Culture

In 2018 you founded American Specialty Tea Alliance; what were or will be the first steps of the new organization? An Alliance is a formation where different stakeholders invest their different 'small something' to receive later a common 'big something' in return. You've cooperated with many interesting participants of the American tea world, what is their input (can you give a couple of examples, if possible) and what big common output are you aspiring to receive in the end?

Our goal as an organization is to foster growth in the United States specialty tea industry. We intend to do so by creating a common language that we'll use to approach tea education and marketing (cutting down on mystique-marketing, tea myths, and poorly researched information) and by utilizing the power of community. For example, on our chat application, members share sourcing information or discuss how they are navigating the current regulatory landscape in a non-competitive environment. Something our members have said that has been lacking in our industry. We've also been holding industry gatherings within local tea festivals. As an industry, we can be much more powerful as a united front than if we are all tackling business issues alone.

Thank you, Tony! We hope to ask you the same questions in a few years. It would be great to compare new answers with the present ones and assess the continued development of American tea culture.





TMC International 2018 Report

November 23–25, 2018. 2018, Huế (Vietnam)



Tea Masters Cup International 2018 — the world competition of the 2017/2018 cycle was held on 23–25th of November 2018 in Huế (Vietnam). Fifteen countries were represented by their national champions: Australia, Belarus, China, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Russia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Ukraine, UAE, Vietnam. Tea Masters from these countries were competing for the title of World Champion over three days in four categories: Tea Preparation, Tea Pairing, Tea Mixology and Tea Tasting.

The international panel of judges included well-known tea experts who had all been certified in accordance with the TMC Rules & Regulations: Anil Cooke (Sri Lanka), David Chanturiya (Russia), Andrei Ivanov (Latvia), Sharyn Johnston (Australia, Head Judge), Gabriella Lombardi (Italy), William R. Lee (South Korea), Nguyen Thi Anh Hong (Vietnam), Phan Thanh Hai (Vietnam), Nicoletta Tul (Italy), Denis Shumakov (Russia, Regulatory Judge).

Three days of discoveries, challenges, new ideas and experiences. “It was not easy to identify the best

of the best. Each master showcased their greatest skills, so the selection of world champion titles in their category was very difficult”, said Sharyn Johnston, the Head Judge of the competition. Nevertheless, the judges worked very hard and the following results were achieved:

Tea Preparation: 1st — Mary Jane Hua (Australia), 2nd — Viviana Petrovska (Latvia), 3rd — Polina Sagara (Russia). **Tea Pairing:** 1st — Linh Nguyen (Vietnam), 2nd — Ekaterina Sokolova (Russia), 3rd — Florian Aumaire (France). **Tea Mixology:** 1st — Yasarathna Bandara (Sri Lanka), 2nd — Dai Nguyen (Vietnam), 3rd — Evgeniy Rogov (Belarus). **Tea Tasting:** 1st — Nikolai Dolgii (Russia), 2nd — Elina Lotko (Latvia), 3rd — Xuan Tong (Vietnam).

TMCI 2018 was organized in cooperation with Vietnam Tea Association (VITAS) with the support of the Peoples Committee of Huế. General Sponsorship of the event came from Dai Nam Imperial Medical Office. Support for TMCI 2018 was also provided by Vinatea Co. Ltd, Thai Tea JSC and Bat Trang Hoang Long Ceramic Company.

Future TMC Events



Latvia
May 31
2019
Riga



USA
June 11–13
2019
Las Vegas



France
Sept. 22–23
2019
Paris



Canada
Sept. 22–23
2019
Toronto



Russia 2020
qualifying round
Sept. 24–27
2019
Moscow





Photo Credit: Natalia Bogdanovska



Cast-iron kettle

Aroma cup sets

Yixing Clay teapot

Glass pitcher

'Lotus flowers'



TMC Champion Tools & Results

Mary Jane Hua (Australia). Winner of TMCI 2018 Tea Preparation

Master’s Tea by Mary Jane

Blend of lightly oxidized Tie Guanyin Oolong Tea (China) and Sagarmatha Gold Black Tea (Nepal). Traditional brewing, serving in Gongfu tea cups.

Average scores by criteria for Master’s Tea

Technique	8.75
Presentation	9.00
Aroma	8.25
Taste	8.25
Aftertaste	8.25



Guan Yin inspired dress

Organizers’ Tea by Mary Jane

Dragon Mustache Oolong Tea (Vietnam). Classic brewing and serving in Organizers’ tea ware.

Average scores by criteria for Organisers’ Tea

Technique	7.75
Presentation	7.75
Aroma	7.00
Taste	7.25
Aftertaste	7.25

“My outfit was inspired by ‘The iron goddess of mercy’ and was a special gift — my wonderful and talented friend, Loraine, designed it. She managed to recreate the image of ‘Guan Yin’ by using only vintage and recycled materials, and through a combination of her time and kindness she was able to attach each piece by hand. It was an honour and a blessing to have a reflection of her within me”.

Photo Credit: Natalia Bogdanovska

Inspired by Red Robe

Mary Jane Hua's Passion

The Master's tea prepared and served by Mary Jane Hua at Tea Masters Cup International 2018 in Vietnam received the highest marks from the judges. Her high technical and presentation skills revealed a professional with extensive experience in hospitality industry. So, we immediately asked Mary Jane, ***"What is your occupation?"***

I am a barista by trade; coffee has been my daily grind for more than a decade and it was my curbing desire for coffee that shaped and developed my love for hospitality. Now, after many years of experience, I offer a variety of coffee courses and FOH (front of house) services, with training programs that include: Barista basics, latte art and milk texturing, advanced coffee making techniques and the values in customer service.

***How and when did you learn about TMC?
And what made you decide to participate
in the tournament?***

I remember watching highlights of the TMC championships in Turkey; one clip in particular was from Russian tea master, Natalia Lomayeva, who presented her winning interpretation of 'Big Red Robe', a performance so flawless that it honestly inspired me to pursue a potential career in tea.



So, when you started working with tea, what struck you most about this drink? Was there any noticeable difference between working with tea and working with coffee?

Coffee is my life, and a career in coffee demands a very busy lifestyle. Meeting new people and greeting customers requires a lot of personal energy. Baristas are constantly under pressure, especially in cafes that operate in fast-paced environments. Coffee quality is essential and consistency is appreciated when supplying consumers with their daily dose of caffeine. Coffee is physically demanding, and yes, it can be rewarding, but also draining at the same time. So when I discovered tea, I discovered myself, tea was the gateway into my inner spirituality and it was the divine Iron Goddess of Mercy ‘Tie Guan Yin’ that restored the balance I needed to revitalize my mind, my body and my soul. Today, tea is my sacred space for meditation and spiritual enlightenment.

What is your hobby (other than tea and coffee)?

Shooting film on my analogue camera; I love it, simply because I have the freedom and pleasure of capturing the life that surrounds me. When I am travelling and meeting new people, I am exposed to the world of different cultures and traditions. I learn so much about myself through these experiences that shooting film is more than just an image, but thoughts and feelings that are developed into a photographic memory. We all have a different outlook and perspective on life, and the art of photography is open to different views and interpretation.

In your master’s part of the presentation you made a blend of two rather different teas; what was the idea behind the mix?

The idea to blend two teas for taste and aroma was formed together by my friends — Alex and Tatiana. The idea simply started with: ‘what is your favourite tea and why?’

And so, I selected my biggest influence ‘Tie Guan Yin’, the famous Chinese oolong that started my journey into the ancient world of tea and Chinese mythology.

The second part of the blend was selected for its distinctive flavour profile. Imagine yourself overlooking the mountainous Tibetan plateau with this unique and rare Himalayan black tea that offers a depth of experience like no other. Now let’s blend them together. Why?

It was the simple idea of Yin and Yang that created the foundation for our Masters’ blend. Mixing together two different teas, from different cultures and origins, and joining them together in perfect balance and harmony. Over time I embraced this concept and eventually developed a presentation dedicated to ‘The spirit of tea’ and the ancient tales of Buddhist Philosophies.

What was the most difficult part of the championship?

Presenting 2 teas in 15 minutes was not an easy task, but I think the most difficult area for each participant was to include the time for translation.



Mary Jane Hua. Inspired by Red Robe



How did you choose the Organisers' tea and the way of brewing it?

I remember sharing this experience with my friends Richardo (from UAE), Yasarathna and Panchali (from Sri Lanka), all of us sitting in my dorm 'seasoning' a newly gifted tea set, taking notes on leaf, weight, time and aroma, drinking endless cups of tea and inhaling the delicious flavours of our Vietnamese Selections. It was our first tea ceremony together and it was especially helpful to receive honest feedback from supporting fans and friendly critics.

In the end, I chose to highlight the unique style of 'Dragon Moustache', a red oolong picked from the tippy buds of ancient Snow Shan trees. I learnt that this tea grows in the mountainous area of Ha Giang province, rooted in the northern parts of Vietnam and sharing a close border with the neighbouring Yunnan. The leaf itself resembles that of a Chinese Silver Needle, but the tea has an unusual colour from the aging process, giving this tea a combination of complex visuals and aromas. A Vietnamese tea reminiscent of sweet caramelised sugar and dessert notes of crème brulee.

Photo Credit: Natalia Bogdanovska

What was the most memorable moment or thing at TMCI 2018?

The whole experience was unforgettable; Hue is a spiritual city and I truly believe that my journey into the tea world was guided by something higher than myself.

What are you working at now?

I am in the process of launching 'Native Ciircles' a tea range that will be available at the cafes that I work for, and just like with specialty coffee, I aim to promote a better understanding of specialty tea. I want to offer a selection of loose leaf teas that will showcase the different types of varieties and processing methods that make an individual tea unique. By highlighting the complex nature of *Camellia Sinensis* I hope to encourage a new level of appreciation.

What are your plans and aspirations?

My plan moving forward will be to invest more time in new tea experiences and tea travels. I would love the opportunity to visit a few different tea growing and tea producing countries so that I may expand my horizons and learn more about the complexities of tea through processing and production. I know that as I evolve in the coffee and tea industry, my vision will lead me on a path towards training and education.

Thank you, Mary Jane! We wish you new inspirations, which we are sure will turn into delicious tea and mesmerizing tea shows. See you at the future Tea Masters Cup tournaments!





Aged Red Tea

Bánh Cốm

Young green sticky rice cake was the most popular ingredient for Organizers' Composition in Tea Masters Cup International 2018 Tea Pairing. Within a few hours 9 out of 10 participants concocted a wide range of tea delicacies using Bánh Cốm.

Organisers' Tea Set, small clay cup and saucer



TMC Champion Tools & Results

Hoài Linh Nguyễn (Vietnam). Winner of TMCI 2018 Tea Pairing

Master's Composition by Hoai Linh

Delicate soft bread with toasted
oat topping and lotus petals.

Lotus-scented White Shan Tea
(Vietnam) in white porcelain.

Average scores by criteria for Master's Composition

Neatness	9.00
Appeal	8.25
Presentation	9.00
Taste	7.50
Potential	8.00



Traditional Vietnamese dress

Organizers' Composition by Hoai Linh

Young green sticky rice cake roll
with cashew crumbs.

Lão Trung Sơn
(Red Oolong Tea, Vietnam).

Average scores by criteria for Organisers' Composition

Neatness	9.00
Appeal	8.50
Presentation	8.50
Taste	7.75
Potential	7.75

"The reason I selected the lotus ancient white tea for my presentation is simply because I adore it. For me, in order to choose a side dish to enjoy with the tea, a meticulous test is required to find the right one, which is not too sweet or salty and so does not overwhelm the tea's flavour. During the presentation, I dressed myself in the Vietnamese traditional dress: the Ao Dai. The contest is international, and so I felt proud and more confident wearing my country's most ancient traditional dress. I also decorated the tea table for my performance with several lotus flowers, which has a high cultural value".

Photo Credit: Natalia Bogdanovska



From Pagoda to Tea Bar

Hoài Linh Nguyễn's Tea Journey



In 2018, Hoài Linh Nguyễn won Tea Masters Cup International in the Tea Pairing category and successfully performed in the Tea Preparation category of the same tournament. In fact, during the two days of the competition, Hoài Linh Nguyễn offered the judges and guests four variations on the theme of Vietnamese tea and Vietnamese tea culture — and he did it with so much ease and grace, as if it were a routine for him.

And a routine it was: Hoài Linh Nguyễn is the owner of a teahouse. Different teas, different traditions and different guests are part of his daily work. We talked with the champion about this usual work.

What skills and knowledge are required for your job?

In my opinion, important requirements for the job are: for each category of tea, one must know the place where it's grown, the cultivar it is made of, its production process. One must also be able to make general assessment of the tea value by appearance of tea leaves, determine the most appropriate and finest brewing method for each particular type of tea.

The most mandatory skills for me are:
to understand and distinguish each type of tea;
to know the basics of brewing methods in order to
adjust the flavor for your personal tastes. And when
brewing, it's absolutely necessary to keep an eye
on water temperature, tea brewing time, etc.

Have you received any tea education?

There were no 'decent' classes teaching about tea
but I'm always eager to learn from those who are
profoundly experienced in this domain. Likewise,
I've learnt plenty of useful tips while travelling
to tea production areas across Vietnam.

How and when did you learn about Tea Masters Cup? And what made you decide to participate in the tournament?

I learnt about TMC through a friend. I decided to
sign up for the competition as I desired to know
more about tea. Moreover, I wanted to challenge
myself. I believed I'd be able to discover much more
useful knowledge, like tea brewing methods and all
different tea types from across the globe. Besides,
I was looking forward to demonstrating my personal
brewing methods to everyone.

What was the most difficult part of the championship?

The most difficult thing is to control emotions
during the routine. A perfectly stable state of mind
plays a big role in winning the competition. I tried
really hard to relax the body, making all my move-
ments gentle but still smooth, so that my routine
became a friendly, quotidian tea séance.

Photo Credits: Natalia Bogdanovska, Hoài Linh Nguyễn





Hoài Linh Nguyễn. From Pagoda to Tea Bar



What was the most memorable moment or thing during TMCI 2018?

The most memorable moment of the contest is when I couldn't stand the pressure, and I started to sweat a lot before going on stage. One of the judges, Mr. Denis, approached me and asked if I was alright. He then gave me a handkerchief so I could wipe the sweat. I felt very touched at that moment and regained my calm to get on stage. Even though TMCI is an international competition, the judges brought a comfortable and cozy ambiance to the

contestants, giving us encouragement, relaxation and confidence. An ordinary competition would be filled with an intense, stressful atmosphere; such moments when the judges or even competitors reach out, open their minds to one another, comforting each other, are the rarest, and most beautiful.

How long have you been working with tea?

I started my career in March 2016. I was entering my twenties back then.

Why tea? Was there a certain point in your life when you turned to tea? Or do you belong to a tea family?

In my family, there is nobody who runs a tea business or has any recognition relating to tea industry. And so, I have chosen tea industry as my biggest passion. Since I was only eighteen years old, I often traveled across Buddhist countries in South-East Asia. In March 2016, during a trip to Cambodia, I was invited to a dinner in a pagoda, up in a mountain. A friend of mine, who was a monk and had been pursuing his monastic practice for eleven years, gave me a cup of tea after dinner. I remember that the tea was 'Thiet Quan Am'. As I took the first sip, I could feel the tea diffusing through my body and my soul, the sensation was unforgettable. At that moment, I decided that I'd make tea my greatest passion. Since then, tea and I are inseparable, it has become one of my closest friends, it transforms me in the most positive manner everyday, making me a better person.

Could you tell us a bit about Linh Trà tea bar?

After that exceptional event in 2016, I went back home and started to learn more about tea and, in the meantime, I was making plans to open a teahouse. As I was learning more and more, I discovered many abundant and diverse tea types. The most astonishing fact for me was: Vietnam, my home country, is one of the places with the most diverse tea types. In July 2016, I opened my first teahouse, which mostly sold traditional teas, and till 2017, it wasn't a big success, most of the customers were family members and close friends of mine.

I was somewhat discouraged. In August 2017, when bubble tea (a mixed drink of milk and tea, accompanied with soft tapiocas, aka edible pearls) became popular in Vietnam, I came up with a bright idea. With my adequate knowledge at the moment, I've decided to combine many tea types with milk to see where it would go. I was amazed by the flavour of many mixtures. I closed my first teahouse and within a short period, I reopened it as a Bubble Tea house. Surprisingly, the number of customers started growing. In October 2018, I created my personal tea company. Two months later, I opened a new Bubble Tea house which replaced my first one. I chose Hoi An (Vietnam's most famous tourist attraction) to inspire my new boutique decoration. My customers were so numerous: teenagers, couples, families, even businessmen... Besides selling bubble tea, I still keep traditional teas to sell in case some still enjoy having a warm teapot in the afternoon. I also updated the menu to include juices, coffee and smoothies to satisfy customers' needs.

Could you share your tea plans and aspirations with us?

My greatest ambition is that everyone would drink more tea each day. Tea has so many benefits that you can only discover them yourself. I also want Vietnamese tea to be more popular in the Western world. Vietnamese tea is truly the delicacy of Vietnam, the finest gift of nature.

These are beautiful ambitions! Thank you, Hoàì Linh. Good luck to you!

Photo Credit: Natalia Bogdanovska



“Unlike my fellow tea masters, I didn’t have much to prepare for the championship. I took my spoon and apron. It is more convenient to work with your own spoon, you’re accustomed to the volume of tea that fits in it, the shape is convenient, as well as the weight”.

Nikolai

ALIP
ASIA TEA

TMC Champion Tools & Results

Nikolai Dolgii (Russia). Winner of TMCI 2018 Tea Tasting

I have several aprons and can use any of them. The main characteristics of a good apron for me: functional pockets and loops for spoons, comfortable straps that do not rub the neck and a color that does not show dirt.

The spoon: weighs about 50 g, 19 cm long, holds about 7 ml of tea, stainless steel. I am not really tied to a particular spoon, I have recently switched to an enameled one with a long handle, for example. But the fact is that at the championship it's just good to be with a spoon which is already familiar to you. In Asian countries, they often use different spoons, similar to Japanese soup ones, with a flat bottom and elongated. I am not very much accustomed to them, especially to their small volume, high edges and a short handle. Therefore, in order not to depend on the organizer, tea tasters often travel with their own spoons.

TMCI 2018 Pure Tea Open Tasting

Lào Cai Snow Shan Tea	PD Black Tea
Hà Giang Snow Shan Tea	OP Black Tea
Ta Xua Snow Shan Tea	Pekoe Black Tea
Red Kim Tuyen Tea	Shan Green Tea
BOP Black Tea	Shan Xanh Green Tea

Pure Tea Control Tasting

Nikolai's Answers

Hà Giang Snow Shan Tea	Hà Giang Snow Shan Tea ✓
Shan Xanh Green Tea	Shan Xanh Green Tea ✓
OP Black Tea	OP Black Tea ✓
Ta Xua Snow Shan Tea	Lào Cai Snow Shan Tea ✗
Red Kim Tuyen Tea	Red Kim Tuyen Tea ✓

Multi-component Beverage Open Tasting

Dried Daisy	Dried Mandarin
Cullen	Dried Apple
Dried Rose	Sweet Osmanthus
Licorice	Jasmine
Cinnamon	Shan Xanh Green Tea

Multi-component Beverage Control Tasting

Licorice	Sweet Osmanthus	Dried Rose
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Nikolai's Answers

Licorice ✓	Sweet Osmanthus ✓	Dried Apple ✗
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Photo Credit: Natalia Bogdanovska



Tea Taster's Perception Horizon

Nikolai Dolgii's Career Guidance



Nikolai Dolgii is a manager at the Quality and New products department at Orimi, the largest tea company in Russia. His duties include tasting, quality control of the raw materials and finished product, and development of new products. Nikolai is the world champion of 2018 in the TMC Tea Tasting category and a charismatic popularizer of tea and tea tasting, his main tea profession.

Congratulations on your victory in Vietnam, Nikolai! We have no doubt that after your success, parents began to instruct their children with the words “Look, if you study well, you will become a famous tea taster like Nikolai one day”. Let us ask you some questions that will allow readers to learn more about your profession. And, perhaps, follow in your professional footsteps.

Nikolai, have you got any special tea education?

Before taking this job — no.

In the process, I improved my skills, studied sensorics at SCAE, the coffee association. Unfortunately, there was nothing like this in tea, and there is still nothing like that today. Then I studied Chinese tea at Hunan Agricultural University. Later, in Kenya, I practiced with local tasting professionals. And, currently, I am working with African tea. In general, I have received basic

knowledge from my colleagues, and my skills have been acquired over time by constantly tasting tea.

Products of large tea companies, like the one you work for, are not signature ones, that is, they are not associated with specific people — authors. Now we know you. And you are doing something there :) Can you say, pointing at some product, “That’s what I did!” or “In this tea, 30% are mine”? Where can we find your work?

The process of producing tea requires the labor of many people, from the farmer to the seller. When you take any pack of our tea from the shelf, you are most likely to take tea in which my work is invested. Our whole team is working on the creation of the taste of tea, therefore it is difficult to select a specific product and call it my own.

If we talk about the effect of tea on health, then, taking into account your work, you definitely can tell us if you can feel this effect on yourself. Does tea affect tea taster’s health? Is this influence good or bad? Are there limits on the amount of tea you can taste in one day? Are there ways to prevent or remove possible negative consequences? Do you get hazard allowances?

There is no hazard, and therefore there’s no hazard allowance. Tea tasters do not swallow tea, so there is no need to speak about any extra influence on health. As a consumer, I drink tea about two to three times a day. The effect on health is extremely positive. In a normal working day, we can try 60-80 cups of tea, there are no limits. This affects tooth enamel, so we are provided with free professional dental cleaning.

What professional skills and personal qualities are necessary for the work of a tea taster, including non-tea skills?

A tea taster needs good memory, keen sense of smell and attentiveness. Productivity software skills are necessary as well, as they are everywhere these



Nikolai Dolgii. Tea Taster's Perception Horizon

days. Knowledge of languages also helps a lot in the work. English is absolutely necessary. It is desirable to be aware of sanitation and hygiene issues, food production techniques, and to have specific knowledge in botany, physics, chemistry and geography.

In Russian Northern climate, the issue of colds is very relevant; does a cold interfere with the work of the tea taster? If so, what practical advice could you give to your colleagues — novice tea tasters for prevention, as well as for rapid relief of colds to get yourself into working form?

Yes, the issue with colds is quite acute. With a stuffy nose, tasting is virtually senseless. If the cold is not serious and the nose is not clogged, then tasting is generally possible, because when slurping, the retro-nasal route of aroma delivery to the olfactory center is used, i.e. through the mouth, inhaling tea from a spoon. In general, we try not to go to work in case of illness, so as not to infect others. But when it is really necessary, the one who does not feel well always works separately, using separate tea-ware. Unfortunately, tea tasters do not possess a secret technique for the control of diseases. We get ill the same way everyone else does, and as everyone else, we use typical prevention. Personally, I wash my nose and sinuses with seawater, do sports whenever possible, eat mostly healthy food, get out to sunny beaches once a year. I drink a lot of hot tea. Some of my colleagues, by the way, practice the treatment and prevention by Kudung tea. But I'm not a fan of it.

What drinks (other than tea) do you like?

I like coffee, sometimes I drink rooibos or chamomile as the mood takes me. In the summer I like to make cold brew hibiscus tea.

What are your favorite foods or food-and-drink combinations?

I love traditional food-and-drink combinations that are perfected by national cuisines. They are not necessarily complicated — it is very tasty to wash down a slice of fresh ciabatta dipped in olive oil with some light-bodied Italian wine, or refresh your mouth with green tea after a really hot meal at a Chinese restaurant. But there's no point in fixing on something, I always want to taste new things, because it expands the horizon of the perception and adds descriptors to my library.

Imagine a young person who wants to work as a tea taster and has a very rosy idea of this work: "tea tastings, trips to warm countries, all this is very pleasant and not burdensome at all" — try to dissuade this person.

We have to keep in our heads a very large amount of information. For the tasting, you need to prepare a lot of tea-ware, weigh out tea; then all this tea-ware will need to be tidied up and washed. You have to work under stress, being in charge of auctions, shipments and finished-product output. On top of that, your wrong decisions can turn into multi-million dollar losses, this is a serious responsibility.



Tea Taster's personal qualities

- Good memory.
- Keen sense of smell.
- Attentiveness.

Tea Taster's knowledge

- Productivity software & English.
- Sanitation and hygiene.
- Food production techniques.
- Some specific topics in botany, physics, chemistry and geography.

A contrary stereotyped idea of the tea taster's job: "one is like a robot, endlessly trying very simple tea, without pleasure, no creativity, a pure set of mechanical actions" — could you contradict this?

You taste the most diverse teas, discover new tastes for yourself and for the consumer, visit manufacturers in different countries, look for new teas, create blends with a unique taste — this is also the work of the tea taster.

What makes you most happy in your work?

Perhaps the opportunity to learn other cultures through tea, it is very interesting. Drinking tea the way this variety is drunk where it was conceived and produced is inspiring.

What is common between the TMC Tea Tasting category contest and your work? What is the biggest difference?

Both at work and during the championship I taste tea and describe it, i.e. technically the same thing, I do it every day. But I have other tasks in my work, I need to carry out the tea's conformity assessment, its quality; during the competition, I need to remember and describe it correctly, for myself, so that later, focusing on the descriptors choose the correct answer. The main differences are rivalry and limited time. Under such pressure, it is very difficult to concentrate. In everyday tasting, everything is more measured and calm.

Thank you, Nikolai. Many tasty tastings to you!

Photo Credits: Natalia Bogdanovska, Christina Gavrilina



Glass teapots



Sherry glasses



Standard bartender tools



A note from the Regulatory Judge: serving a snack or decoration separately from the glass is penalized in Tea Mixology. In this case, the participant retained the lead, even with a penalty. But following this practice is discouraged.



TMC Champion Tools & Results

Yasarathna Bandara (Sri Lanka). Winner of TMCI 2018 Tea Mixology

Master's Mix by Yasarathna

Black tea (Sri Lanka) + lemongrass + jaggery + allspice leaves + mango + Ceylon Arrack + Amaretto. Allspice leaves, jaggery and tea garnish.

Average scores by criteria for Master's Mix

Neatness	8.25
Appeal	8.00
Presentation	8.50
Taste	7.50
Tea Synergy	8.00
Potential	8.00



Organizers' Mix by Yasarathna

Red Vietnamese tea + local vodka + chocolate syrup + vanilla syrup + orange. Fresh fruit decoration.

Average scores by criteria for Organisers' Mix

Neatness	8.25
Appeal	8.00
Presentation	8.50
Taste	8.25
Tea Sinergy	7.75
Potential	8.25

Master's Mix original components

Ceylon Arrack. Traditional Sri Lankan spirit distilled from fermented sap of the coconut flower.

Jaggery. Non-centrifugal cane sugar, a concentrated product of cane juice and often date or palm sap without separation of the molasses and crystals.

Allspice leaves — leaves of *Pimēnta diōica*. Dried unripe berries of *Pimēnta diōica* are a popular spice, also known as allspice, pimento(a), Jamaica pimento, Jamaica pepper, or myrtle pepper.

Photo Credit: Natalia Bogdanovska

Move On!

Yasarathna Bandara's Aspiration

In 2018, a national round of Tea Masters Cup was held for the first time in Sri Lanka, and two tea masters, the winners of the national tournament in Tea Mixology and Tea Pairing, represented their famous tea country at TMC International, also for the first time. The routines of the Lankan participants were remembered by the guests and judges of the tournament for their vivid emotionality and the masters' full involvement in preparing and presenting their drinks.

Yasarathna Bandara, a bar supervisor at Habarana Village Hotel by Cinnamon in Sri Lanka, won in TMC Tea Mixology 2018 and became a hero of this breviloquent interview.

Yasarathna, what skills and knowledge are required for your job?

- Proven food and beverage experience.
- Knowledge of various software (MS Office, SAP, POS).
- Ability to spot and resolve problems efficiently.
- Delegating multiple tasks.
- Communication and leadership skills.
- Beverage knowledge.

Is your work connected with tea in any way?

Photo Credit: Natalia Bogdanovska







amtr3



Yes, of course. We have high tea concept in our hotel. There is a selection of about 20 tea varieties.

How many cups of tea a day do you drink and what is your favourite tea or tea drink?

3 cups. Ceylon Black Tea.

Living in one of the largest tea-producing countries, do you have a favourite tea place?

Yes. It's Lumbini Tea Valley in Deniyaya, Sri Lanka.

Where do you have tea most often (home, or some establishment)? Who makes the best tea for you?

Best tea is made at home, by my mother.

Have you received any tea education? Who were your teachers in tea?

I have attended many tea competitions and won gold medal two times. I have attended tea training sessions conducted by Ceylon Tea Board. My mother is my first tea teacher who inspired me to build my career.

How did you train to prepare for TMCI finals in Huế? Did you have a special plan? A trainer?

My plan was to be number one in the World Tea Masters Cup. The Department executive's team helped me to prepare for the competition.

What was the most difficult part of the TMCI championship?

It was difficult from the very beginning till the end of the TMCI finals.

Did you have enough time to choose the best ingredients and make the recipe for the Master's Mix?

Yes, timing was okay. I managed it well.

What was the most memorable moment or thing during TMCI 2018?

The most memorable moment was when I became the Champion of the competition in Tea Mixology category.

Do you serve your champion mixes at the hotel where you work?

Yes. We will be serving my Master's Mix and it's in our beverage menu.

Could you share your plans and aspirations with us?

My aspiration is to move to the next step in my career and participate in future competitions.

My plan was to be number one in the World Tea Masters Cup... Now my aspiration is to move to the next step in my career and participate in future competitions.



Photo Credit: Natalia Bogdanovska



Tea Masters Cup Russia 2019

Tea Preparation, Tea Pairing, Tea Mixology, Tea Tasting. March 13–15, Moscow

On March 13–15, in Moscow, as part of Coffee & Tea Russian Expo, the sixth national final of the Tea Masters Cup championship was held in all four categories (Tea Preparation, Tea Pairing, Tea Mixology and Tea Tasting). The tournament gathered participants from various Russian cities who had passed regional qualifying rounds in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Rostov-on-Don and Novosibirsk.

The system of regional qualifiers ensures that Russian national finals gather participants with good tournament experience who are able to both improvise and work with home-prepared stuff. All the judges noted the high level of participants in Tea Masters Cup Russia 2019 and tea solutions presented by them.

In the category of Tea Preparation, the winner was **Artem Kakhansky**. In the Tea Pairing category, **Julia Yakunina** won. **Andrei Kolbasinov** was announced the winner of the Tea Mixology category. And, finally, **Vladislav Renzhiglov** became the winner in Tea Tasting.

We congratulate the winners and wish the Russian team a successful performance at Tea Masters Cup International.

Photo Credit: Christina Gavrulina

TMC Russia Features

Regional
qualifying rounds

High professional level
of participants
in National finals



Hosted by
specialized
coffee & tea expo

Highly concentrated
attention of sponsors
and visitors





Tea Masters Cup Belarus 2019

Tea Preparation, Tea Mixology. March 12–13, Minsk

On March 12–14, 9525 Tea Festival was held in Minsk within the framework of the 28th International Specialized HoReCa RetailTech Exhibition. Tea companies and tea specialists treated the guests of the festival to tea and organized various tea activities for them. And at the same time, the participants of Tea Masters Cup Belarus competed in Tea Preparation and Tea Mixology categories.

Oleg Yusov became the winner in Tea Preparation, **Anton Martoplyas** won in Tea Mixology. Following tradition, both 9525 Tea Festival and Tea Masters Cup Belarus tournament were hosted by Alyona Velichko's Tea Studio.

An interesting feature of TMC Belarus is the variety of competition sites. Every year in Minsk TMC takes place following a new format and with new activities. TMC Belarus competitions were held in a business center, a luxury hotel, one of the main museums of the country, in a city park and at an exhibition. In parallel with the tournament, tea fairs and festivals, a variety of business, educational and entertainment events were held.

In fact, the team of TMC Belarus has developed a know-how of organizing the tournament in any locality.

Photo Credits: Alex Skidan, Andrew Slavinskiy

TMC Belarus Features

A broad variety of venues

Every year the championship takes place in a different locality. The diversity is appealing



Like-minded team

Keeping and developing the spirit of the championship as well as facilitating its preparation work





Tea Masters Cup Georgia 2019

Tea Pairing. May 5, Ozurgeti

On May 5, a festival of organic tea was held in Ozurgeti (Georgia), during which samples of tea and tea products from various regions of the country were presented. The festival included a conference, the participants of which discussed the tourism potential of the Georgian tea culture, and a certification session for national judges of Tea Masters Cup Georgia.

The highlight of the festival was the Georgian national Tea Masters Cup championship, Tea Pairing category. As an Organizers' Composition, the participants brewed Georgian tea in a decanter and served it in wine glasses, in combination with traditional Georgian delicacies. As for the Master's Composition, in accordance with the Rules, each participant prepared it in their own way, but at the same time all participants worked in the national style, giving the judges the opportunity to get acquainted with various combinations of Georgian tea with dishes from different regions of Georgia.

The winner of the tournament is **Nana Bigvava** (Megrelian Tea). She will represent Georgia at the Tea Masters Cup International championship. We congratulate the winner, wish her good luck and thank all the participants and organizers of the festival and championship for a great tea festivity.

Photo Credits: Anna Vartanova, Sofia Gabrichidze, Ozurgeti City Hall

TMC Georgia Features

The championship
is based on local tea

And helps create
local tea culture



The championship
is the basis for local
tourist activity

It increases the tourist
value of the region
and attracts the support
of the authorities





Fantastic Day and Fantastic Event!

Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Georgia
Louisa Vinton



This is a fantastic day and a fantastic event! I think what's happening here is the developing of an identity for region and Georgia as a producer of tea, but a producer of fine tea that has distinctions by region, by area, by where the water is produced and what mountain it's grown on.

For us, for UNDP, it's all part of creating an image that will not only help with the production and

consumption of tea in Georgia and its export to other countries, but also with developing touristic offering in Georgia that is very specific and very authentic, that will encourage domestic and international tourist to come to Guria and see what tea is all about. And to really experience how it's grown and harvested and served — which was a big part of this competition today.

So, I am really full of very positive impressions. I think that the competition adds a lot to the identity; and I was thinking even that it would be great to turn it into a television programme, which puts all the drama on top: with comments from judges and backstage guests.

It's a great opportunity to promote tea and promote Georgia. Not many people are aware of the fact that tea is a lot more than just a beverage for drinking. It's a great centrepiece for something that is much, much more than that: it is about the ceremony, the presentation, the accompanying sweets and savoury dishes. I don't normally have days when I feel like I've seen a whole new world! So, I'm really pleased to be here; and I am really, really proud that UNDP has had something to do with organising the festival hosting the competition.

Photo Credit: UNDP Georgia

Tea Masters Cup Turkey 2019

Tea Preparation, Tea Pairing, Tea Tasting. May 3, Rize



On May 3, national Tea Masters Cup Turkey competition took place in Rize. The participants competed in Tea preparation, Tea Pairing and Tea Tasting categories.

The first place and the right to represent Turkey in Tea Masters Cup International finals was won by **Yusuf Pirim** (in Tea Preparation), **Naz Gül Balli** (in Tea Pairing) and **Serpil Hut Kondakçı** (in Tea Tasting).

Tea Masters Cup Turkey was part of an extensive tea program (TMCI Champions Program) prepared by Çaykur and Rize Commodity Exchange for tea masters and judges of Tea Masters Cup.

As part of this program, for the first time in Turkey, certification of national level TMC judges was organized. The very next day after certification, Turkish national judges took part in the work of TMC Turkey. They judged in Tea Preparation and Tea Pairing categories, and organized Tea Tasting.

Guests of the program visited tea plantations and production facilities in the vicinity of Rize, studied aspects of Turkish tea culture and got acquainted with Turkish cuisine as well as elements of mountain tourism. We hope that such tea visits by tea masters to tea Turkey will become a tradition. See you!

TMC Turkey Features

The championship
is based on local tea
and tea culture

And helps promote them



TMCI Champions Program

Allows one to combine
the championship
with interesting pastime
and tea education

Photo Credits: Mehmet Sedat Önder, Olga Nikandrova







10 000 Hours & Freedom of Creation

Florent Cheveau's Philosophy

Florent Cheveau is a chocolatier, executive pastry chef at MGM Grand Las Vegas, the winner of the US national qualifying round of World Chocolate Masters, 2018 World Chocolatier Championship third prize winner and champion in the Best Fresh Pastry nomination. Florent is a master of taste, an artist and a bit of a philosopher.

Florent, what skills and knowledge are required for your job?

Cooking, art, team management.

By art do you mean classic art education? What should artistic skills include?

I mean understanding volume and texture through the edible ingredient that you work with on daily basis, like chocolate and sugar. It is mostly a self-taught process that you build through the years and the passion that you create for your profession.

Photo Credit: Florent Cheveau

“The best way to master necessary technique is copying an outside profession, like duplicating glass blower's work with sugar for example, or repeating carpentry and woodwork with chocolate.”





Mango passion jelly,
chocolate sweet dough,
chocolate ganache, pastry cream,
meringue for chocolate chiboust,
chocolate chiboust, chocolate cream,
chocolate financier, chocolate shell

fresh pastry
by Florent Cheveau

Instant CH3

Florent Cheveau. 10 000 Hours and Freedom of Creation

It's about fiddling and creating, using such techniques as carving, painting, molding... The best way to do it is copying an outside profession, like duplicating glass blower's work with sugar for example, or repeating carpentry and woodwork with chocolate. You basically use the main chemistry of each ingredient with an outside technique that fits them the best.

Could you tell us a few words about a job of chocolatier? It is a fascinating job?

Actually it is not a job, it is a pure passion.

How many years did you have to study to become one?

I have been in the industry for 23 years.

Is it a must to have gone through professional education, or is it still possible to be self-taught in your profession?

Based on my personal point of view, yes, you should go through a professional education, but that can be as minimal as you want it, then after the introduction to the industry you have to build your skill by working in different places with different chefs based on your personal criteria and what you want to learn with them. My belief is that this profession is mostly a self-taught industry with people that share their knowledge with you and inspire you to be better, and I believe that the rule of 10,000 hours applies to the food industry more than to anything else.

What is the most joyous thing in your work, something that brings pleasure the most?

I would say eating and experiencing all kinds of styles, flavors, shapes of bonbons, chocolate and cakes, I can't think of anything better in the world.

You gained third prize at World Chocolate Masters 2018 in Paris; was it the first time you participated?

Yes, it was.

Have you participated in other professional competitions?

Yes, in many. I usually compete when I want to push myself to reach a new level of technique. So I mostly competed during the first 10–15 years of my career at least once a year. Now I compete when I want to achieve some bigger goals that I set for myself many years ago.

What does participation in such competitions give you?

It gives the freedom to do what you want. You know what you can accomplish when you put the time and effort together. You just feel intuitively that you want more than your daily job! You also want better technique, more knowledge, or you just want to be recognized. And the best way to achieve this is to challenge yourself and participate in a competition. Once you pushed yourself and started participating in competitions, you become on par with talented

Florent Cheveau. 10 000 Hours and Freedom of Creation

professionals who used to inspire you. So the feeling of freedom increases as you work for yourself.

Can you give us some tips on pairing different chocolate with different drinks?

My favorite pairing in chocolate and drink is 60% cocoa chocolate with warm passion fruit green tea and a drop of lemon juice — the acidity washes your mouth and helps you get more feeling and flavor.

What drink would you recommend with your winning 'Instant CH3' fresh patisserie piece?

A fresh Guava juice goes very well with it.

Do you use tea in your work?

Yes, in different mini pastries. I mostly use Earl Grey and green tea, depending on the recipe.

Do you drink tea?

I would say that the word 'yes' can't even express how much tea I drink.

How often? Cold or hot?

7 to 10 times a day. Hot.

In what circumstances and with what food (if any)? Is it a home drink for you or do you prefer to drink it at tearooms, cafes, etc? When was the last time you drank tea?

All the time and with everything. I drink tea

everywhere and all the time. I'm drinking tea right now.

Thank you! That's a surprise to find such a devoted tea drinker in Las Vegas. Does it run in the family, or is it rather a part of your passion for gastronomy and for different tastes?

I developed the habit of drinking tea a couple of years ago, I just radically changed my diet to be more healthy, to avoid any health concerns.

What three epithets come first to your mind when you hear the word 'tea'?

Warm, floral, health.

What question would you ask a tea expert?

What is the ultimate tea experience that one can have? And where can you find the expert or experience near Las Vegas?

This June there's going to be quite a big meeting of tea people from different parts of the world in Las Vegas (World Tea Expo).

I would love to go if that's possible.

We redirected the question about the sources of the ultimate tea experience to Kevin Gascoyne and Jens de Gruyter, experts who are actively working with bright and varied tea experiences.



Kevin Gascoyne

Tea taster, co-owner of the Camellia Sinensis Tea Houses (Canada), co-author of 'Tea, History, Terroirs, Varieties'

Kevin Gascoyne:

For me the ultimate tea experiences are those rare moments when we manage to summon all our focus. We block out the distractions of intellectual preconception, ignore our knowledge of region, manufacture and cultivar. We separate all that noise and centre in on the sensorial experience of the tea's chemistry as it stimulates our senses, becoming completely immersed in the visceral effects of the mouthfeel, the body feel and the inner world of the flavour-profile.

Jens de Gruyter:

I really appreciate tea pairing. For example, tea and cheese pairing. It works wonderfully! High-mountain Taiwan Oolong with Goat Milk Gouda; or French Blue Cheese with Ceylon tea; or a Chinese Gunpowder with Camembert.

Or tea and music. We have collaborated with a small Jazz club here in Berlin where on some nights they serve just tea — Pu'er, Oolong, and a potent



Jens de Gruyter

Tea expert, founder and project manager of Paper & Tea (Germany)

White Tea — and the evening is just Jazz & Tea. It's a young crowd, and they love the fact that they can get 'drunk' and buzzed just on good music and tea.

My personal favorite tea experience is vegan gourmet cuisine and tea. Once, Mayumi Nishimura, a chef from Japan, made a nine-course vegan dinner. We developed a paired tea menu and served different teas and herbals to match each course. For distinguished guests (businesspeople, industrialists) the fact that neither meat nor dairy would be served already represented a big psychological hurdle. But when they found out that the whole evening would be without alcohol, some literally panicked! But the balanced vegan dishes satiated them, and the teas also gave them a buzz, and the more they became 'tea drunk', the less they missed the alcohol. And some of them talked as if they drank a bottle of wine! But with a clear head and no side effects.

After lunch, we served a delicate Lapsang Souchong blend in a cognac glass, semi-warm, and the guests enjoyed it very much.

Noble Heritage Guard

Dr. Phan Thanh Hải's Friendly Tea

Dr. Phan Thanh Hải is a researcher of heritage preservation, Director of the Huế Monuments Conservation Center, one of the most important and famous museums in Vietnam. The Centre is inextricably linked with the Vietnamese tea culture — because the city of Huế itself and its palace complex were shaping and developing the tea culture of the country during many years.

To manage such a museum and not be a tea connoisseur is impossible. We were lucky to ask Dr. Phan Thanh Hải several tea questions and are happy to share his answers with you.

Are there any intersections with tea in your work?

There are interesting relations with the tea culture in my heritage preservation. Specifically, at the Huế Museum of Royal Antiquities that is under the management of our Centre, there are lots of antiques belonging to the tea tool group reflecting the tea drinking styles of the emperors, lords or royal figures of the ancient Huế. We preserve both the tangible heritages and traditional cultural values, including the tea drinking traditions of Huếans (the people of Huế).

What is known about the old Huế's tea traditions?

Huế Monuments Conservation Centre: hueworldheritage.org.vn
Huế Museum of Royal Antiquities: baotangcungdinh.vn



Huế noble tea drinking style has been famous for a long time. This land used to be the headquarter of Nguyen Lords in Cochinchina of early 17th century, then the capital city of Nguyen Tay Son Dynasty (1788–1801) and finally Nguyen Dynasty (1802–1945), so the Huế noble lifestyle was formed long ago. The cultural interferences with China and Japan considerably influenced the tea drinking tradition of Huếans. The tea drinking tools (small teapots, cups, plates, etc.) and famous teas of China were imported and brought to the Court. Several hundred years ago, Huế dynasty and nobility

ordered high-class tea tools at famous ceramics kilns of Jing De Zhen-Jiang Xi (China). The tea-drinking style of the Court and of Huế noble families was very sophisticated and elegant with high-quality tea tools as well as well-known Chinese teas. Sparrow-tongue tea was a famous tea of Huế.



Up to now, this tea drinking style has been preserved by some royal families of Huế.

What artifacts help one learn about those traditions?

You can get to know the tea drinking tradition of Huếans by examining the collections of tea drinking tools at Huế Museum of Royal Antiquities, or those of royal families of Huế. You may see a variety of tea tools there, such as teapots, cups, trays, and so on, made from different materials including porcelain, bronze, precious wood, and so forth.

We've learned that you have a tea collection. What do you collect?

I collect some traditional tea tools of China and Vietnam. The Chinese part of my collection consists of teapots, cups and some other kinds of tea tools



made from 'Zisha' clay of Yi Xing; and the Vietnamese one — from the pottery of Bat Trang, a traditional 1000-year old pottery village in Northern Vietnam. My collection is not large, but these are all my favorite things. It suits my daily tea type and style (mainly white, green and yellow tea of Vietnam and China).

Is collecting a part of your job, personal interest or a revenue-producing business?

It is not my job. It's simply my personal habit and preference. However, in doing research and

Photo Credits: Natalia Bogdanovska,
Huế Monuments Conservation Centre



Dr. Phan Thanh Hải. Noble Heritage Guard

Occasionally, on holidays, I invite friends for tea parties. I use my tea collectibles and the best tea. Those moments are opportunities for us to share knowledge and tea stories...



preservation of the traditional history and culture of Vietnam and China, I approach the topic of tea traditions. In addition, in the traditional royal culture of Huế, tea drinking and inviting for a tea are an extremely important part of the diplomatic norms, which still need researching.

Is there a market for collectibles in Vietnam?

In Vietnam, the antique market with public auction is yet to be developed. However, antique purchases and exchanges do happen. Hence, it is not difficult to find tea collectibles. Personally, I do not collect

antiques, but buy brand-new tea-ware of my preference.

How often do you drink tea?

I started drinking tea when I was a child, since my family planted tea, and my father and elder brother were good at making green tea. I drink tea early in the morning and in the evening before going to bed.

Who brews the best tea for you?

I do it myself, and I think that I can brew the best tea to my taste. In Huế, there is a kind of pure water



for making good tea called Bach Ma, it is naturally filtered water from Bach Ma National Park. I have good tea tools and teas, hence brewing good tea for myself is not difficult. In the recent Tea Masters Cup competition hosted in Huế, I could taste different kinds of delicious tea brewed by talented tea competitors from many different countries of the world.

What does your usual tea drinking look like, what food do you take with tea? Do you have special tea sessions on festive occasions?

I often drink white tea and green tea in the morning before breakfast. They are light and pure, thus foods are unnecessary. When I drink yellow and black tea, I have some kinds of traditional low-sugar sweets of Huế elaborately made from fruit, vegetable, rice, tapioca, and so on. Huếans are very good at making sweets. In the royal palace, there used to be hundreds of sweets prepared by royal chefs.

Occasionally, on holidays, I invite friends for tea parties, during which I choose the best teas of Vietnam, China and Taiwan for brewing. My friends, tea connoisseurs as well as amateurs, are interested in tea. That is the joy that I want to share with them.

Do you use collectible items for your tea sessions?

Of course, during those tea parties I use my tea collectibles and special tea. Those moments are opportunities for us to share knowledge and cultural stories concerning tea traditions of Vietnam and neighboring countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, etc.

Huế Royal Antiquities Museum headed by Dr. Phan Thanh Hải has preserved over 2000 objects of commissioned patterned porcelain — porcelain ordered by Vietnamese courts from kilns in Jiangxi and Guangdong from the late 17th to early 20th centuries. Typical Chinese motifs on such objects were replaced by Vietnamese ones, which included images of Vietnam's landscape or poems written by Vietnamese poets.

Lê-Trịnh Era



Porcelain plate decorated with Dragon and Phoenix

Nguyen lords Era



Porcelain bowl decorated with the old Huế market scene

Lê-Trịnh Era



Porcelain plate decorated with Vietnamese Dragons

Nguyen lords Era



Porcelain bowl decorated with a landscape of Tam Thai Mountain

Thank you, Dr. Phan Thanh Hải for your work, for judging tea masters at TMCI 2018, for excellent interview and for love of tea.

Wake Me Up!

Masters' Morning Tea

The first meal or the first morning drink may have very different meanings for different people. For someone, it's just food without any additional meaning. For others — a ritual, starting a new day. For others still — a dose of caffeine and energy, without which it is impossible to 'turn on'.

One way or another, the first meal and the first tea are associated with awakening. We asked tea masters what wakes them up and what they pair their first tea of the day with.



Kevin Gascoyne

Tea taster, tea writer,
tea entrepreneur
Canada

First Flush Darjeeling is my morning brew. This Chinese plant transposed to the high altitude Himalayan terroir gives a rare dynamic vitality and a flavour profile of crisp clarity that is hard to beat first thing. My senses are awakened and the caffeine and L-theanine levels in my system are re-established. A classic slice or two of multi-grain toast makes for a perfect breakfast pairing to start the day.



Florian Aumaire

TMCI 2018 Third Prize
Winner in Tea Pairing
France

For spring and summer mornings, I love two things. 1. A First Flush Darjeeling Namring garden with a cream of lemon (from Sicily) with bread. The first flush has some vegetal and almond notes, especially when it's AV2 cultivar that makes the lemon so refreshing. 2. Long Jing with a special goat cheese called Rove (goats are fed with thyme and rosemary only). When you eat it with a green Long Jing you have a lot of aromatic herbal notes, and roasted notes come later with something more animal.



Mary Jane Hua

TMCI 2018 Champion
in Tea Preparation
Australia

I normally have filter coffee in the morning, so if I am replacing my morning coffee with loose-leaf tea, then a black cup of Kenilworth tea from Sri Lanka would be my perfect substitute. This tea holds a bright coppery amber colour and subtle fruit and honey aroma with a smooth sweet lively flavour. I'd have it with classic Australian breakfast 'Vegemite' and avocado on toast.



Yasarathna Bandara

TMCI 2018 Champion
in Tea Mixology
Sri Lanka

My favourite morning tea is Ceylon Gold Color black tea. Traditionally, I take it with hot milk.



Gabriella Lombardi

Tea Masters Cup
National Coordinator
Italy

I start my day with a Sencha. No additives into my cup. For breakfast I eat some toasts (black bread) with jam and a soy yogurt. If my Sencha doesn't wake me up enough, I prepare a matcha at 10 am.



Dr. Phan Thanh Hải

Director of Huế Monuments
Conservation Center
Vietnam

I often drink white or green tea in the morning before breakfast. They are light and pure, thus foods are unnecessary to be included.



William Lee

Tea Masters Cup
National Coordinator
South Korea

I usually come to my office at 8 am and the first thing I do is boil the water from volcanic Jeju Island. Every day I choose different tea depending on my mood, but my favorite drink to wake me up is the fresh Woojeon green tea from wild ancient tea plants growing in Jiri mountain. Its milky yet savory aroma and taste push my body and mind to the next level and are perfect for the morning. With green tea, I usually take slightly sweet cookies or chocolate with 70% or more cacao. When I feel chilly in the morning, a bit of Ginger and Ginseng powder boosts my metabolism.



Nikolai Dolgii

TMCI 2018 Champion
in Tea Tasting
Russia

In the morning, I brew my tea strong. But I don't have any particular morning tea. Sometimes, it's Greenfield Kenyan Sunrise, I love Kenyan black tea; sometimes — Darjeeling, sometimes — Golden Ceylon, sometimes — red Yunnan. I love fragrant teas, I cannot single out any one of them. Everything is good in its own way. I do not eat anything with tea, just enjoy every sip.



TMC Certified Judges

International Level



In November 2018, the Tea Masters Cup judges certification program was launched. The first certification session was held before TMCI 2018 in Vietnam.

The Tea Masters Cup framework stipulates two qualification categories for judges; placement within these categories is confirmed by proper certification.

A National-level judge may be invited to judge regional qualifying competitions and national Tea Masters Cup finals in the country that has issued the judge's certificate. An International-level judge has the right to judge Tea Masters Cup international competitions as well as regional qualifying competitions and national finals in any country.

Currently, the following persons have International TMC Judge certificates:

- David Chanturiya (Russia)
- Anil Cooke (Sri Lanka)
- Dmitriy Filimonov (Ukraine)
- Andrei Ivanov (Latvia)
- Sharyn Johnston (Australia)
- Sergey Khorolskiy (Russia)
- William R. Lee (South Korea)
- Gabriella Lombardi (Italy)
- Nguyen Thi Anh Hong (Vietnam)
- Jury Podusov (Latvia)
- Nicoletta Tul (Italy)
- Denis Shumakov (Russia)
- Aliona Velichko (Belarus)

Certification sessions at the national level took place in Turkey and Georgia. In the near future, such sessions are scheduled to be held in North America, Europe and Asia.





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