

Cha-no-yu (Tea Ceremony)

Introduction

Cha-no-yu (Tea Ceremony) is one of Japan's most traditional arts. In a simple, though beautiful tea house, the *teisyu* (host or hostess) makes fine aromatic tea and serves it to the guests. Both the giver and receiver are expected to follow the rules of the ceremony, which have been developed and refined over hundreds of years.

Cha-no-yu has many interesting aspects. Concern for taste and flavor is the first priority as serving and drinking a bowl of fine aromatic tea is the core of *Cha-no-yu*. Sweets or sometimes meals accompany the ceremony.

Cha-no-yu is often called a multiple art. Exquisite traditional arts and crafts such as tea-bowls, hanging scrolls, flowers, tea-room and garden are all essential parts of the ceremony. During the ceremony, reflecting the seasons, these implements are thoughtfully selected and utilized to show the *teisyu*'s mind. *O-temae*, the procedure for making tea in the company of guests, is often so elegant that the first time a viewer will doubtless be deeply moved.



Notwithstanding external grace, it is important to recognize the internal aspects of the ceremony, partly because *Cha-no-yu* comes from the backgrounds of Zen Buddhism and Samurai manners. Through exchanges of hospitality and appreciation, the *teisyu* and guests can share a quiet, heartwarming, peaceful time and reach a state of spiritual enlightenment so called *Wa-Kei-Sei-Jaku* and *Ichigo-ichie*. Since the complexity and forms of the ceremony are so sophisticated, some people feel troublesome and keep away from *Cha-no-yu*.

Nonetheless, the internal aspects and manners of *Cha-no-yu* are typical and provide the foundation of the Japanese life-style. Indeed, *Cha-no-yu*, which has integrated both spiritual and material aspects of Japanese culture, is often called a symbol of Japan.

Tea Room

In *chaji*, the formal ceremony, small tea-room is used. The entrance for guests, called *nijiri-guchi* is so narrow that you have to crawl to pass through it. This is said to represent that a tea-room is a space to share the same enjoyment regardless the social classes.

In all type of ceremonies, the tea-room is decorated with a hanging scroll and flowers. They often represent the theme of the ceremony, so the guests appreciate them.



Tea utensils

Ro (hearth) and *Kama* (kettle)

They are used in winter (November to February) From March to October, the hearth is set on tatami-mats (called *Furo*)

Mizusashi (Water container)

Water in *mizusashi* is used to wash *chawan* (tea bowl) and *chasen* (bamboo whisk) or poured into *Kama* to make hot water.

Chashaku

A spoon, often made from bamboo, use for shovel up *Matcha*.

Natsume (tea container)

Standard *usucha* container. "Natsume" is named after *jujube* because of its shape.

Chasen

Bamboo whisk to beat the mixture of *Matcha* and hot water in a tea bowl.



Hishaku

Ladle, often made of bamboo or wood.

Chakin

Moist napkin made of linen or cotton to wipe the bowl

Kensui

Slop bowl to discard water used for washing.

Guest's belongings

When attending an *ooyose-chakai*, some preparations are necessary. It is recommended that you bring a *sensu* (folding fan), *kasikiri* (sweet cutter) and *kaishi* (pocket paper)

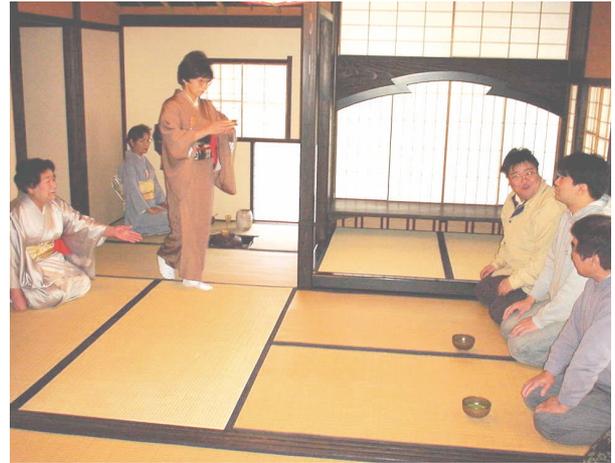


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A Closer Look at the Tea Ceremony

The formal style of tea ceremony, called *chaji*. It has a number of stages. First, the *teisyu* issues invitations to guests. The guests are served a meal, called *cha-kaiseki*, and then the sweets and finally two different kinds of tea. One type of tea is rather thin, called *usu-cha*, and the other is stronger and is referred to as *koi-cha*.

The ceremony is conducted in a solemn and ritualistic manner, taking about 4 hours. *Chaji* is actually unfamiliar to the majority of people, because it is “ by invitation ” and participants are required be familiar with the manners and customs of the ceremony.



The Seating Order of Guests

Shokyaku, the main and most important guest, is often the eldest or the most experienced guest, since *Shokyaku* represents all the guests in many scenes. It is recommended to a beginner to take the seat at the middle of the guests (*Jikyaku*) Thus a beginner can learn how to take sweets or how to drink tea by watching the former.



Sorei

(host/hostess and guests bow together)

The *teisyu* appears at the *sado-guchi*, the preparation-room door (A), then bows. At the same time, all the guests also bow, too (B) Then the *teisyu* brings tea-utensils into the tea-room and begins to clean them up.



B

Hanto Serves the Sweets

Hanto, an assistant to the host, comes from the *mizuya* (preparing room) and serve the sweets in the bowl with a pair of chopsticks to *shokyaku*. When there are so many guests, some more bowls are distributed. Bowing the *hanto*, the guest receives the bowl (C)

Sometimes the sweets are distributed individually on small plates (D)



C



D

Guests take the Sweets

Receiving a bowl of sweets from the higher guest, the guest bows to the next.

Takes a sweet onto the *kaishi* with chopsticks and wipes the tip of chopsticks with a corner of the *kaishi* (E) Then replaces the chopsticks on the bowl, and places it between the next guest and himself / herself (F), bows to the next guest (meaning “ please ”) and then begins to eat. The guest should keep used *kaishi*.



E



F

The Host/Hostess makes Tea

After cleaning up the utensils, the *teisyu* begins to make tea (G); Puts two scoops of matcha, and pours hot water into the bowl with ladles. Then *teisyu* stirs the tea into froth up with the *chasen* (bamboo whisk) and *hanto* serves it to the guests (H, I).



G



H



I



The Guests Partake of Tea

The guest bows to the *teisyu*. Put the bowl on the left palm, raises it slightly in thanks, and turns it slight in a clockwise direction, to show the respect to the *teisyu*. Then drinks the tea. After finishing, wipes the lip of the bowl with fingers at the place the guest drank. Wipe the fingers with *kaishi*, turn the bowl counterclockwise, twice, and back to face him/herself. Puts the bowl in front of him/herself and appreciate *teisyu*. Later, the *hanto* comes to collect the bowl.



After confirming that all other guests have a taken the tea, *syokyaku* says to the *teisyu*, “ Thank you very much for serving tea. Everyone has already a taken tea, please put the utensils back ”. Then the *teisyu* begins to clean up and put back the utensils.