

Hou De Newsletter

April/2006

News

Spring is Here!

Many of you have noticed several days downtime of our website. We were migrating our website to a dedicated server for better speed and security. It's done!

- **2006 First-Batch Spring Oolongs** have just arrived! We will post them very soon with Great Specials!
- We are surprised and encouraged by the demand for genuine and fine **yixing teapots**. We will gradually introduce more yixings to you. In this newsletter, we will take about how and why to collect yixing teapots. The quality of our offerings and knowledge, you simply have to experience!



Pre-40's "Da Hong Pao" Zhu Ni 150cc.

- Visit our new **Bulk Buy** catalogue for fantastic savings (20% off) on fines teas!
- **FREE SHIPPING SPECIAL:** To the end of April, all orders of or include our 2006 Spring Oolongs and Yixings can use the coupon code "**houde06spring**" during check-out for free shipping. Internationally and Unlimited of times!

Pu-Erh Teapot Magazine

Hou De is now the US agency for the most important tea and teapot magazine in Asia: Pu-erh Teapot Magazine 普洱壺藝雜誌! It's a quarterly magazine. We are waiting for

the arrival of No. 16 issue. Now, it's all in Chinese.

We are talking to have the first-issue English-versioned Pu-erh Teapot Magazine by the end of this year.

For now, we are fully authorized to translate any article into English. We will select one or two interesting articles and translate for you by posting them on our website.

Many actions from us in 2006 ☺. So stay tuned!



No. 15 Pu-erh Teapot Magazine

Clay Clay Clay

You know the mantra "Location Location Location" when buying a property. In Hou De,

we've found a similar guiding principle when looking for a genuinely good yixing teapots: "Clay Clay Clay".

Potters in yixing have been well known for their remarkable skills in teapots making for hundreds years. The principle we want to suggest is in no way suggest a teapot's craftsmanship is not important. What we like to suggest is: there is something more important, more fundamental, more true-to-the-core than how famous the Master who made the teapot is.

The message may only be useful for 99% of the people who are looking for good yixing

teapots. For the very 1% who are relative to the Masters, who are old friend with the Masters, who are always ready to pay extra thousands to buy, they can skip the message. For us, treat the Master's name as a reference. Why?

(1) Genuine Master's pieces are extremely rare, expensive and hard to authenticate.

(2) Almost every Master has his/her own studio. All teapots from the studio bear the Master's seal. And each studio hires quite a few pupils. Get what I mean? Even if you wait outside the studio of a famous Master, you are not guaranteed to get pieces made 100% by "the Master"!

Using Clay as a guideline is a lot simpler, truer and safer. In the end, clay is the only material that brews your tea, not the Master. As long as we have good and correct information about what to look for in genuine clays, finding a perfect yixing teapot is an amazing journey!

In the future newsletters, we will discuss in great details about each kind of yixing clay. You will find the magic Clay world that the Nature has prepared for us.

So, let's repeat again, "Clay, Clay, and Clay"!

Why Old/Seasoned Yixings?

After hundreds of years clay mining in yixing, the quantity and quality of genuine yixing clays are both declining rapidly. Many unique and precious types of clays had become extinct for a long time. To satisfy the huge market demand, yixing imports tons and tons of clay from other regions in China and overseas.

Take zhu ni (crimson clay) as an example. Zhu ni was the most treasured clay since the Ming dynasty (1368~1644). In recent years, zhu ni had become basically extinct. As a result, the skills to prepare/shap/fire zhu ni-ware were gradually forgotten.

Now, many people try to confuse zhu ni with hun ni (red clay), which is still massively available, by saying they are the same. The modern way to make zhu ni is by blending hun ni with glass sand and "tie hun" (iron red) powder.

Old/Seasoned yixings have a very deep-rooted, humble and true Chinese aesthetics in them. The picture below shows a 60's wood-fired (open mode) yixing of chin-shui ni (clean water clay). Isn't it a piece that combines the most functional, "plebeian" and humble Chinese aestheticism in one?



Old/seasoned yixings are not necessary more expensive than newly-made ones. But their patina, clay quality, and very often the without-modern-tools craftsmanship are so much more enjoyable!

What about the old smell?

We all know "one-yixing for one-tea" sutra. Yixing teapot is very porous in micro-scale. The body naturally absorbs aroma from a tea brewed in it.

Think this: when you purchased a new yixing teapot, were you not advised to do some pre-treatments before using it, as all new yixings have some degree of smell in them (worse case: wax, very worse case: industrial pigments)?

So, why worry so much about the smell from a fine old teapot? I would so much rather clean a used teapot, get rid of the smell, and enjoy forever the intrinsic beauty, clay quality, collectible value of it, than have to treat a brand new one and not very sure of the safety/quality/value of it?

You can easily reset a used yixing to "zero" just like what you would do for a brand new

one, although some of the patina will be washed away.

How can I know more about clays?

I once had a chance to see the surfaces of an old zhu ni teapot and an old hun ni teapot using an electron microscope (SEM) in a friend's lab. The zhu ni surface has a semi-transparent "sponge"-like layer, and the hun ni surface, very porous, does not have that spongy layer.

Since then, I've found it's a good habit to use a > 20X loupe to inspect closely the surface of each teapot. And that's the reason why I have a close-up macro picture of the teapot surface for most of our yixings.

We will soon send you some charts that summarize the family-tree of all yixings clays. We hope with those charts and a good loupe, you can happily start the journey of *Clay Clay Clay!*

Final

We always look forward to hearing from you! Write us an email or just pick up the phone to chat with us.

Happy 2006 Spring :)

Irene and Guang
@ Hou De Asian Art & Fine Tea



80's thin-bodied "Si Tin", 150cc.



90's zhu ni "Da Bin", 250cc.



70's open-wood-fired "Lion Lid", 125cc.