

## *A Brief History*

*Tea was first drunk as a medicine and gradually came to be enjoyed as a beverage.*

*During the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, a Japanese monk named Eisai went to China to study Zen and returned to Japan with some tea seeds. They were taken to a temple in Kyoto where they were planted and cultivated. Tea was drunk for medicinal purposes by monks as well as by the aristocracy and upper-class samurai.*

*While tea was mainly used in religious ceremonies, tocha, tea gambling or tea contests, developed as well. People competed for high-valued prizes by trying to distinguish between different brands and their sources. This was carried too far and tocha, or tea gambling, was prohibited during the thirteenth century.*

*Takeno Joo (1502-1555) was the first person to teach the concept of "wabi." "Wabi" means to seek honesty, humility and subtlety in tea drinking, in contrast to the pomp associated with tocha. Among the many followers of Joo, Sen Rikyu (1522-1591) was the most prominent. He perfected the practice of "cha-no-yu" (tea ceremony) by combining the aristocratic tea with the subtle style of the "wabi tea" of Joo. He transformed tea into the highest aesthetic art form in Japan. He brought the spirit of art, morality, philosophy and religion (the ideals of Zen Buddhism) into the serving and drinking of a bowl of tea.*

*For the past 500 years, the service of tea has been continued by the descendants and disciples of Rikyu as a uniquely Japanese art and as a living part of Japanese culture. Sen Rikyu said "Tea is enough if it satisfies thirst." This sentence has a broad*

meaning. It means that tea satisfies not only physical thirst, but mental demands as well. The important thing is not the technique of tea preparation but the training of our minds to be peaceful and serene. He appreciated four qualities in the practice of cha-no-yu: "wa," "kei," "sei," and "jaku." These can be translated as follows.

"Wa" means harmony. It is the atmosphere created by the host and the guests. During the presentation of tea, you may hear the sound of the simmering kettle which sounds like the wind blowing through pine trees. Also, the sound of water pouring into the kettle and the bowl are reminiscent of the sounds of a stream. This is being in harmony with nature.

"Kei" means respect, which indicates mutual respect between the host and the guests. All people in the tearoom are equal. There is also respect for the beauty of wild flowers and the artistry of the utensils, etc.

"Sei" means purity. Sweeping and cleaning are the very first steps in the tea ceremony. Before entering the tearoom, the guests rinse their hands and mouths. This indicates purifying not only the body, but also purifying the heart. The host or hostess will clean the tea utensils during the tea ceremony. He or she is cleansing his own heart by doing this.

"Jaku" means tranquility. Free from worldly and impure desires, one attains a peaceful and tranquil mind. This is also the state of mind achieved with the first three principles. This is the world of "wabi" and "sabi."

We hope you enjoy the tea and the sweets!