

TEA SOMMELIER BY GABRIELLA LOMBARDI



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Photographer Fabio Petroni specializes in portraits and still lifes. Over the years he has photographed leading Italian celebrities, and he now works with top advertising agencies where he handles the publications of some important Italian brands. His books with White Star include Horses: Master Portraits, Mutt's Life!, Cocktails, and Supercats! He lives and works in Milan. Gabriella Lombardi attended university in Granada, Spain, where she became enamored of tea and its rituals thanks to the city's numerous teterias or tearooms. When she returned to Italy, Gabriella worked as an advertising sales agent until, in 2010, she realized her dream by opening the Chà Tea Atelier, the first shop in Milan specializing in the tasting and sale of quality tea. She regularly visits China to learn more about the art of tea making and to increase her expertise in the cultures where this extraordinary beverage originated. Tea Sommelier is her first book. Gabriella lives and works in Milan.

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Like fine wine, good tea is a gastronomic delicacy that possesses a deliciously wide range of aromas and flavors. And, just like an excellent wine guide, this richly illustrated volume initiates drinkers into the art of tasting, making, and serving. A careful examination of 50 grand cru teas—including some of the best-known varieties available—will give drinkers a new appreciation of what goes into a cup. A selection of exclusive recipes, along with advice on pairing tea and food, completes this gorgeous book—a must-have for anyone who savors this ancient beverage.

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Tea is a beautiful thing!

By Alexsia Wilson 'SoggyEnderman'

Today's tea is not one you drink with your mouth, but one you drink with your mind. Ok, you can drink your tea book if you really want to, but as much as I love the smell of paper, I do not think it tastes the best. The other day when I posted on Twitter that I was thinking about reviewing the tea books I own (and ones I can get at my library) I asked if anyone had any requests...and the response was 'my favorite' which is a challenge in itself!

Tea Sommelier by Gabriella Lombardi and Fabio Petroni just might fill that bill. When I first saw this book last Christmas while browsing at Barnes and Noble I knew I had to add it to my collection, I flipped through it every time I visited the bookstore (which is a lot, Ben and my favorite dates always end up with us at a bookstore...we have a thing for books) and waiting till the price on Amazon dropped to something I could

afford. I just procured this book for my collection last week, and I am pleased as punch, because it is a beauty!

Looks alone do not make a book, unless it is a book that is specifically about visuals, which this one is not. Even though it has the look and incredible photography of a coffee table book, it is loaded with useful information. Tea Sommelier approaches the art of sipping tea very much so like it is an art and from a professional taster's perspective. Borrowing much of the jargon from the Wine Sommelier world and shaping it to fit the world of tea.

The book is divided into a typical brief introduction on the history of tea, the tea plant itself, various methods of preparing tea, a decent sized section on professional tea tasting (including ISO cupping standards) a whopping 135 pages devoted to different kinds of tea, and lastly a colorful selection of gourmet recipes.

There are some things about this book that I absolutely love. It is beautiful, a work of art showcasing fantastic teas, tea gear, and photography. The history of tea mentioning all three of the myths concerning the creation of tea was especially amusing, too many books skip over Bodhidharma (Daruma) tearing off his eyelids in a fit of rage after falling asleep and said eyelids growing into tea trees. It is a weird myth but everything concerning Daruma is a little quirky. I love how it pairs each tea with foods that it tastes good with, as the person who is always in charge of matching tea to whatever foods and people's tastes at family events...it is very nice to have a handy guide to turn to.

There are, however, some things that make me go 'eh' as well, nothing is ever perfect and I tend to be picky with books. For all that the photos in this book are fantastic works of art, I really get annoyed with lightbox photography. Some of the colors of the tea just seem wrong, either too dark or too vibrantly green, I have never seen some of the delicate Chinese green teas in that shade of green either in my own sipping experience or online, it is really a minor gripe, it just weirds me out a bit. My big gripe is the whole language and approach to tea in this book seems, well, unapproachable, similar to the way gourmet cuisine and wine tasting can seem very unapproachable to someone not already in the know. This is not necessarily a bad thing, especially for someone who is already well into tea world, but if you are new to the tea world it might seem a bit imposing. I suppose this is part of a greater rant that certain aspects of the tea world (lovingly and not so lovingly at times call tea snobbery) tend to come off as unwelcoming to newcomers, which is something I am strongly against. I am very much so in the 'oh hey, want to try tea, let me shower you with yummys until you find your favorite' mindset.

One thing about this book that has sent me into a near tizzy researching is the approach to the tea Huang Shan Huo Ya. Everywhere on the internet and every book I have read has called it a Yellow Tea, Tea Sommler calls it a green tea that commonly gets labeled as a yellow tea due to poor translation. Since I was unable to find any other factual inconsistencies anywhere else in the book I really find myself wanting to know. So far, no luck.

So, why is this book still my favorite? Because it is beautiful, because it treats tea as an art, because I still dream of one day being a Tea Sommelier. Do I recommend it? Heck yes! If you are a newbie to tea just approach with caution...the tea world is not all fancy teas, elegant teapots, and lofty concepts...we are also lovers of quirky blends, teabags, herbal teas, and re-purposed coffee mugs. Don't feel intimidated by tasting terms and Grand Cru teas. If you are a well seasoned sipper (or a well seasoned Yixing Teapot that has gained sentience) then this book is a great reference tool. Either way, the overwhelming prettiness of this book is certainly a plus!

This can also be found on my blog:

<http://ramblingbutterflythoughts.blogspot.com/2014/08/tea-sommelier-tea-book-review.html>

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Attention, Tea Lovers !

By Tea Drinker

A great book for anyone who loves tea. I bought this book for a colleague who is a true tea lover as she purchases her tea from Mariage Freres. She was so taken with this book that it will become part of her permanent library. The book was quite artistic but also was very educational as well. I also have a copy and I loved it. Therefore, I bought a copy for my colleague who will be moving out of the country. I feel this book is a must for anyway who loves tea and wishes to display a very artistic representation of the art and enjoyment of tea.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

This book presents tea with the detail only a Sommelier can give.

By Martha Jones

This is a beautiful book. Full page size photos enhance the beauty of tea and the tea pot. Each type of tea, white, yellow, green, oolong, and pu er are described in detail with pictures. In addition to the pictures, each tea is described in terms of flavor and color characteristics. The picture of each tea in a clear cup shows the color of the final infusion. Clear instruction is given for the preparation of each tea. The eastern and western methods are differentiated. If you use the proper water, at the correct temperature for your selected tea and infuse for the correct amount of time then you will achieve perfection. Certain tea pots are also recommended. For some teas you can use a memory pot. These pots retain the flavor of the tea infused. You should not mix teas with this type of pot. The "seasoning" of the pot will enhance your tea experience. Tea is vulnerable to light and air. Don't buy teas that are stored in glass jars. And don't store tea in glass at your home. The fermented Pu er teas are rare, exotic and very expensive depending on how long they have been aged. If you only get 1 book on tea, this is the book to get. Thousands of years of history, culture and knowledge are collected in this volume.

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