

Rylee Halvorson

Tea Master • CEO of Nice Tea
Born in Asia
32 years old

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A dedicated practitioner and scholar of Gongfu Cha, my mission is to share the artistry, tranquility, and cultural richness of Chinese and Japanese tea traditions with the Western world. Currently blending ancient wisdom with modern aesthetics as CEO of Nice Tea.

WORK EXPERIENCE

2024–NOW	CEO, TEA AMBASSADOR <div>NICE TEA, GLOBAL</div> <p>Founded a cross-cultural tea lifestyle brand rooted in Gongfu Cha principles Designed tea ceremonies and product lines merging tradition and modernity Built partnerships with artisan growers in Fujian, Uji, and beyond Hosted global tastings, livestreamed tea meditations, curated zen playlists</p>
2018–2024	DOCTORAL RESEARCHER <div>UNIVERSITY OF YUNNAN + KYOTO UNIVERSITY</div> <p>Earned PhD in Gongfu Cha with research on its transmission to the West Conducted fieldwork across China, Japan, and Taiwan Published bilingual thesis: “Infusing Culture: Gongfu Cha Beyond Borders” Served as guest master for temples, tea rooms, and cultural expos</p>
2014–2018	TEA APPRENTICE <div>VARIOUS TEA HOUSES, ASIA</div> <p>Trained under renowned masters in Wuyishan and Uji Practiced calligraphy, incense appreciation, and water-reading Learned to interpret <i>cha qi</i> (tea energy) in silent ceremonies Documented oral histories of elderly tea artisans</p>

CORE COMPETENCIES

GONGFU CHA	DEEP MASTERY OF CHINESE TEA TRADITIONS <p>Skilled in Yixing, Gaiwan, and wood-fired teaware handling Expert in pu-erh, oolong, sencha, matcha preparation & philosophy Developed signature “Five Breaths” serving sequence</p>
SENSORY MASTERY	REFINED PALATE AND AROMA INTUITION <p>Can distinguish over 200 aroma notes across tea varieties Developed a sensory training kit used in international tea education Consulted for perfumers and sommeliers on cross-sensory blending</p>
CULTURAL FLUENCY	CONNECTOR OF EAST AND WEST <p>Conducted bilingual workshops across continents Fluent in Mandarin, Japanese, and English — with tea vocabulary Curated exhibitions on tea aesthetics for modern audiences</p>
ENTREPRENEUR	VISIONARY FOUNDER & OPERATOR <p>Bootstrapped Nice Tea from pop-ups to retail & online success Led creative direction for packaging, digital identity, and storytelling Mentored emerging tea start-ups through Cha Collective</p>

ACQUIRED SKILLS

PATIENCE

EXPERT AT WAITING FOR WATER TO COOL

Can detect 3°C temperature shifts by touch
Once steeped a dancong 21 times, each better than the last
Makes even impatient executives sit through a 2-hour ceremony

TEACHING

SOUGHT-AFTER TEA EDUCATOR

Designed workshops for corporate wellness and mindfulness retreats
Created the “Tea leaf readings” intro course for YouTube (13B views)
Trained hospitality staff in tea etiquette at five-star hotels

AESTHETICS

CURATOR OF STILLNESS AND SIMPLICITY

Designed tea spaces blending wabi-sabi and Scandinavian minimalism
Regularly consulted on feng shui & interior flow for tea rooms
Captures ephemeral tea moments in photography and haiku

CONFERENCES

2025

World Tea Expo • Seattle

KEYNOTE: “THE FUTURE IS SLOW”

2024

Tokyo Tea Symposium • Shinjuku

PANEL: “TRADITION IN THE AGE OF TIKTOK”

2023

Cha Dao Retreat • Hualien

FACILITATOR: SILENCE & CEREMONY

2022

Kyoto International Tea Forum • Kyoto

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

EDUCATION

UNTIL AGE 12

TRADITIONAL GROUNDING

SUZHOU, CHINA

Studied classical poetry, tea history, calligraphy
Learned basic tea preparation from local elders

HIGH SCHOOL

IMMERSION IN JAPANESE TEA CULTURE

UJI, JAPAN

Participated in school-led chadō (Way of Tea)
Apprenticed with a local matcha master during summers

UNIVERSITY

PHD IN GONGFU CHA

WUYISHAN UNIVERSITY, FUJIAN

Dissertation: “Infusing Culture: Gongfu Cha Beyond Borders”
Field studies in Taiwan, Japan, and Western tea communities

HOBBIES



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I love hiking through misty tea mountains, listening to rain on bamboo, and capturing serene moments in photography. You'll often find me sipping gyokuro at sunrise or writing tea-inspired haiku with friends.



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I keep a journal of boiled water I've tasted, including notes on region, pH, minerality, and the mood they evoke. Every spring, I return to the Himalayas to collect stream water from the source.

