

Tea, the second most widely consumed beverage in the world, is a fundamental part of the daily rituals and routines of people from all walks of life. This ancient and diverse product has recently experienced an explosive surge of interest among those looking for its numerous health benefits, unique flavor, and global appeal. Partly in response to the increasing demand for more exotic artisan blends, and in homage to the owner's personal passion for tea, a business with local connections and global aspirations was founded right here in Milwaukee.

Rishi Tea, an artisan tea importer whose international headquarters is based in a bustling neighborhood in Bay View is a pioneer in the contemporary art and commerce of tea. Founded in 1997 by Joshua Kaiser, Rishi Tea is the offspring of an appreciation of the handcrafted teas Kaiser enjoyed during his travels throughout Asia, but were seldom available to tea drinking aficionados elsewhere in the world. Kaiser felt that these blends, steeped in tradition, would appeal to North American consumers, and so he embarked on an entrepreneurial odyssey to bring them to the United States.

The combination of exceptional quality, Fair Trade compliance, environmental sensitivity, and strong bonds on both sides of the supply chain, has helped Rishi Tea to become an award winning business venture. In fact, Rishi Tea recently earned eleven first place accolades at the World Tea Championships, held each year in Las Vegas. The winning flavors include such mouthwatering blends as Cinnamon Plum, Jasmine Green Tea, Silver Needle Jasmine, and Tropical Crimson. All eleven varieties are available for purchase from Rishi Tea in a convenient sampler set, for those patrons who would like the opportunity to experience each of these distinctive, award-winning flavors.

Due to their exceptional dedication to quality, passion for their product and the manner in which their philosophy and business practices have earned customer loyalty for their artisan blend teas, Rishi Tea has seen dramatic growth. The facility has expanded and relocated from its original Third Ward space where it began as a two person operation, with owner Joshua Kaiser working side by side with business partner Benjamin Harrison in a small, windowless space of merely 400 square feet. Gradually the business began to take off, and as the demand grew, so did the need for more staff and a larger facility. At present, the company employs 50 people in its Bay View facility, 25 of them in fulltime capacities. To accommodate the additional staff, the warehouse was relocated to the Louis Allis building, which now serves as the international shipping and receiving headquarters for the company. The functions performed here range from the blending of such popular favorites as Organic Earl Grey, Blueberry Rooibos, and Masala Chai, to the packaging of every Rishi Tea product before it is sent off to retailers and consumers. With shipping destinations both remote and nearby, this more expansive space is crucial to what is

likely to be a robust period of growth for the company, with awareness of the astonishing health benefits of tea reaching an ever widening audience. These benefits are one of the key reasons for tea's recent surge in popularity among a customer base that may not have otherwise considered drinking tea on a regular basis.

Although tea has long been considered a staple item in the diet of many cultures, until recently, many of its powerful health enhancing qualities were not widely known. Tea's natural ingredients include the presence of antioxidants, which are believed to slow the aging process and aid in cell regeneration, and may even serve to combat cancer. There is also significant research that proves that there may be a link between tea consumption and prevention of heart attacks and strokes, as these are often caused by blood clots, whose formation can be decreased by drinking tea. This marvelous beverage can also help prevent diabetes, combat high blood pressure, and interestingly enough, aid in the prevention of cavities by decreasing the acid production of cavity-causing bacteria in the mouth. There is also compelling evidence that tea can boost the immune system, and even strengthen the benefits of antibiotics.

With so many positive healthy side effects, it is little wonder that tea has developed a broader following with people seeking ways to improve their quality of life and overall wellbeing. Not only is tea the beverage of choice for the health conscious, it is available in a host of flavors and blends that offer almost limitless choices to even the most experimental consumer.

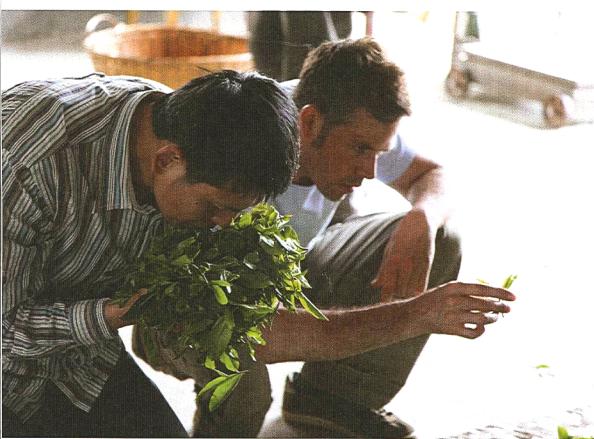
In addition to boasting a wide variety of artisan blends and unique flavors in its assortment, Rishi Tea offers something truly extraordinary to their clientele that many other tea purveyors do not. This particular aspect of Rishi's product line is to offer patrons loose-leaf teas, which are largely unfamiliar to tea drinkers in the Western Hemisphere. The brewing of loose-leaf tea is sometimes perceived as a complex and mysterious process, but through the efforts of a loose-leaf tea demonstrator, Rishi Tea is hoping to educate its consumers on the finer points of this brewing method. A traveling "Tea Coordinator" visits many of the establishments throughout the Metro Milwaukee

A Rishi denotes a poet-sage through whom the Vedic hymns flowed. According to post-Vedic tradition, the Rishi is a "seer" or "shaman" to whom the Vedas were "originally revealed" through states of higher consciousness. The Rishi's rose into prominence when Hinduism was in its early stages, perhaps as far back as four thousand years ago.

area where Rishi Tea is available for purchase and offers would-be tea enthusiasts guidelines on the proper way to prepare loose-leaf tea, and how to appreciate the different flavors and nuances that the various blends have to offer. This one on one interaction with customers gives Rishi Tea a valuable opportunity to educate while promoting, and affords Rishi Tea the chance to share their passion for artisan teas with a much broader audience.

To aid customers in enjoying loose-leaf tea at home, Rishi also offers a wide assortment of teapots, cups, and tea sets for purchase, as well as special storage containers that preserve the blends and maintain their flavor until consumption. These distinctive cups, pots, and containers are made of a variety of different materials, including tin, copper, ceramic, and glass, and range from ancient to contemporary in both design and method of production. Some of the pottery making techniques has been employed for centuries, and the use of these vessels adds an aura of authenticity and history to the tea drinking experience. However, not everyone who enjoys tea appreciates it for its lengthy historical and cultural appeal. For those with more experimental tastes, or who would prefer to take their tea in a slightly less traditional manner, Rishi Tea has worked to develop a number of tea infused cocktails, some of which are offered to discerning patrons at restaurants and nightclubs throughout Milwaukee.

According to Ghazal Sheei, Marketing Coordinator for Rishi Tea, some of the hottest trends in cocktails include the infusion of flavored

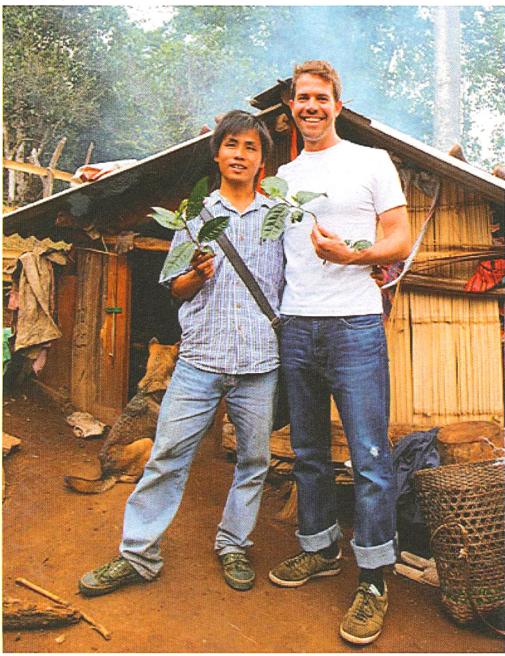


tea blends, such as Tangerine Ginger at Roots, or Mache Martinis (called "Machetinis"), which are served with a powdered tea as one of the main ingredients. Rishi Tea is known to infuse vodka with herbal tea for an unexpected twist. Imagine the concept of gaining tea's numerous health benefits while indulging in an alcoholic beverage. Sound too good to be true? Sample a "Mar-tea-ni" and find out for yourself!

With increasingly creative ways to incorporate tea into our daily diet, the benefits of this wondrous beverage are becoming apparent to an ever-growing audience. However, tea isn't limited to drinking as its only means of consumption. There are now a significant number of resources available to those who want to try adding tea to their culinary efforts, with recipes for entrees as diverse as Jasmine Orange Chicken and Marinated Pork Chops, and desserts such as Baklava and Irish Pound Cake. Many dishes that are part of our regular repertoire have been transformed simply by adding this unexpected ingredient, thereby changing not only the flavor of these foods, but also increasing their nutritional benefits. With the diversity of blends manufactured by Rishi Tea, and the number of foods that lend themselves to the addition of tea as an ingredient, cooking is simply one more way to enjoy the exotic flavors and aromas that tea has to offer.

Having earned a loyal following among tea connoisseurs throughout the world, as well as consistently winning awards for the caliber of its artisan tea products, Rishi Tea has proven that its product stands far above that of its competitors. One of the key elements in the success of Rishi Tea is the relationships that the company maintains on the supply side of the business, which directly impact the quality of the product itself. The company operates on a "garden direct" basis, working closely with the farmers and villages where the tea is grown, rather than obtaining their products through a secondary outlet, such as a distributor or broker. This hands-on approach guarantees that the tea will remain in line with Rishi Tea's exceptional standards, and provides a level of control that working through an intermediary would render impossible.

Due to the direct partnerships with the farmers, it is possible for the staff at Rishi Tea to see firsthand how their support impacts the people they work with as a direct result of purchasing tea products from villages in China, India, Africa, and elsewhere throughout the



world. These small communities are better able to sustain elements of their tea growing culture, and offer a higher standard of living to their

inhabitants through the benefits they receive because of these Fair Trade initiatives. Better schools, housing roads, and irrigation systems are all possible in part due to the financial support Rishi Tea and other Fair Trade merchants are able to provide through their patronage. Because of their diligence and commitment to fair business practices, Rishi Tea has made a positive impact on all involved parties, a cornerstone of the philosophy on which the company was founded.

This combination of dedication to both environmental and social initiatives, coupled with a first-rate product line, makes Rishi Tea a



formidable player in the international tea market. Between their partnerships with the farmers whose families have cultivated these artisan teas for generations, to their commitment to organic products and environmentally sensitive packaging, such as acid free paper and biodegradable packing materials, Rishi conducts business in a manner respectful of both the past and the future.

With such an exemplary record of accomplishment thus far, one might wonder what's next for Rishi Tea. The focus for the near future is the launch of an exciting project dedicated to elevate tea to the same kind of appreciation that fine wines or single origin coffee currently enjoy. The project is entitled "Taste of Origin", and will offer as part of the product packaging the complete details on where the tea was grown, the specifics of its climate conditions, processing methods, and the date on which it was harvested.

These items will be offered in Organic and Fair Trade Gift Sets, ideal for both experienced tea lovers and novices alike. There will also be continued partnerships with local businesses and organizations that seek to benefit the greater good through Fair Trade, environmental, and civic issues, as well as special events and promotions throughout the area to familiarize consumers with the benefits of drinking tea. Most importantly, there will always be the commitment to share the universal appeal of fine artisan tea, the calling card of those who work to spread Rishi's mantra - "Taste Your Tea". [\[rishi-tea.com\]](http://rishi-tea.com)