



Raising a Teapot:

how to clean and care for a new Yixing teapot

Caring for a Yixing teapot that will perform at its peak for a lifetime of good tea steeping begins with cleaning newly purchased teapots. Cleaning is the first step in 'raising a teapot' – that is, turning a new, unseasoned clay teapot into a seasoned, high-performance tea steeping tool. To begin, simply follow these easy instructions:

1. Carefully rinse the teapot under warm water and eliminate any sand, little bits of clay debris, etc that might be inside the teapot. Run your finger around the inside and under the rim of the pot to dislodge any stray bits of clay that you find. Make sure the spout is clear and that water pours freely from the teapot.
2. Next, place the teapot and lid in a large saucepot (4, 6 or 8 qt) and cover the pieces entirely with warm water. Place the teapot and the lid near one another but make sure that they are not touching and that neither piece is in contact with the sides of the pan.
3. Put the saucepot on the stove and slowly bring up to **barely a simmer – not boiling**. Make sure that the water covers the teapot completely at all times, and that you lower the heat as necessary to regulate the simmer.
4. Simmer for 30 minutes, then turn off the heat and move the saucepan to a cool burner. Leave the teapot in the water to cool down. Once the water has cooled, remove the teapot and lid and rinse each piece again with hot tap water. Look once more for any dislodged bits of clay.
5. Set the teapot aside for 2 or 3 days, with the lid off, to allow the clay to dry out completely. Re-clean the teapot if you feel that it still has a strong, new clay smell.
6. Once the teapot is cleaned, the insides will become seasoned with time and repeated use. The tea oils from the leaf steeped in the teapot will begin to seal the microscopic pores in the clay, so water will not be able to fill up the pores. However, it is always a good idea to leave the lid off and let a Yixing teapot dry out completely between uses.
7. Steeping tea in your Yixing teapot will change the nature of the clay **inside** of the teapot over time. You can also beautify the **outside** of the teapot by calling out the natural luster of the clay. This is easily done by buffing the teapot and lid and thoroughly drying the outside of the teapot with a smooth cloth after each use. And, when you have the opportunity to watch someone skilled in using an Yixing teapot

perform **gong fu** tea service, you will notice that they always pour a little water over the teapot and lid every time that they add water to the teapot. (One needs to put a dish or tea tray under the teapot to collect this water or it will run all over the table and floor!). This watery wash buffs the outside of the teapot, too, and helps to develop patina.

8. It is best to decide on the style of tea that you will be steeping in your new teapot - **semiball-rolled oolong; dark, strip-style oolong; or Pu-erh** - and use that teapot only for that style of tea. If you are not sure what tea to use your new teapot for, then try a test. Steep the same leaf in a gaiwan and also in the Yixing teapot. Be sure to use the same measurement of leaf to water and steep for the same amount of time. One of these teas should taste better when steeped in the teapot because the clay will enhance the taste of the tea. Whichever tea that is, then that is the style of tea that you should steep exclusively in this teapot. Then, you will be on your way to enjoying the benefits of drinking tea steeped in a teapot that you have raised just for that tea.