



New Washington Tearoom Evokes Cherry Blossoms

Photo by Dan Chung, Urasenke Foundation

It took six months, five types of wood, and a team of carpenters from Kyoto to construct the eight tatami mat room.

D.C.'s Urasenke Center celebrates Chado with its new tearoom

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Contributor*

WASHINGTON, D.C.

It's not too late to capture a glimpse of cherry blossoms in the nation's capital. The ephemeral blossoms are now visible year round, carved in cherry wood inlay in the main beam of the Urasenke Center's new tearoom.

The tearoom opened in Washington in conjunction with the centennial celebration of Japan's gift of cherry blossom trees to the United States.

The new tearoom is dedicated to spreading understanding of Chado, the Japanese Way of Tea and is "another gift to the city," says Christine Bartlett, director of the Urasenke branch in San Francisco. Bartlett took part in the inaugural ceremony in March.

It took six months and five types of wood for carpenters from Kyoto to design and build the sleek chashitsu (tearoom

facility), set inside an office building in downtown Washington.

A roji (garden path) with its tsukubai (low stone water basin) sits on a small balcony. Before entering the tearoom guests can pass along the garden path and rinse their hands to symbolically purify themselves of the dust of the everyday world.

Two connected tatami-floored rooms open onto each other to create the authentic chashitsu. Above the sliding doors that can separate the rooms is the beam designed to look like a stream with inlay cherry wood blossoms floating on the water. The formal alcove with its scroll and cedar log pillar dominates the sparse room.

Inside the tearoom every detail — the food served, utensils used, the flowers chosen — is meant to reflect the mood and season. There's a fine interplay of textures: a delicate bamboo tea scoop, a heavy stone jar, a utensil stand built of dark, carved wood.

Before tea is served to guests a sweet is offered: "Sweet before bitter," Bartlett explains. To tie in with the cherry

blossom festival theme, small cakes, decorated with pink edible blossoms, were presented in blue bowls.

The tea used is Matcha, a fine ground, powdered, green tea introduced in Japan in the 12th century by Zen monks returning from China.

"The flavor is fantastic. It's a strong, clean flavor. Sometimes people call it Japanese cappuccino," Bartlett says of the bright, frothy drink.

The opening ceremony for the Washington tearoom was hosted by the family of the Grand Master Zabosai Soshitsu Sen XVI, the 16th-generation grand master of the Urasenke Chado tradition.

The Grand Master christened the new chashitsu "Washin'an." The word "wa" translates as harmony, the word "shin" means deep. Together the words communicate the idea of a deepening of harmony. "Wa" also is a word for Japan, marking the tearoom's role as a place to deepen a sense of closeness to Japan.

For information about taking part in a tea demonstration or gathering contact the Chado Urasenke Tankokai Washington, D.C. Association. (<http://tankokaidc.org/>). 🍵



Photo by Dan Chung, Urasenke Foundation

The roji garden promotes peace and simplicity.



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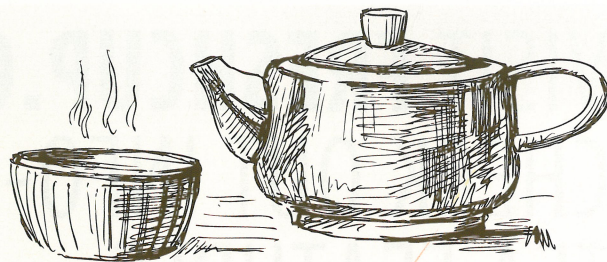
Urasenke Foundation branches and Chado Urasenke Tankokai Associations are located throughout the world. In the United States the following centers have tearooms:

**Chado Urasenke
Tankokai Washington
DC Association**
<http://tankokaidc.org/>

**New York Urasenke
Chanoyu Center**
urasenkeny@earthlink.net
<http://www.urasenkeny.org/>

San Francisco
contact@urasenke.org
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Hawaii
urasenkef001@hawaii.rr.com



The Urasenke Chado Tradition

Urasenke Konnichian of Kyoto, Japan is one of three major establishments that have preserved and furthered the cultural tradition of Chado or the Way of Tea. For more than 400 years the organization has celebrated what it calls "a timeless formula for sharing a beautiful moment."

The Urasenke Foundation carries on the seven rules of tea gathering, starting with "make a satisfying bowl of tea" and ending with "act with the utmost consideration toward your guests."

It honors the principles of harmony, respect, purity and tranquility set forth by its founding father Sen Rikyu.

In keeping with these principles, at a tea gathering there should be harmony between host and guest, guest and guest, mood and season, the food served and the utensils used. Sensitivity to the changing rhythms of the seasons and the harmony with these changes pervades the Way of Tea.

Respect, resulting from a feeling of gratitude, is extended not only to the people but also to the objects in the tearoom and garden.

When the host purifies the tea utensils, he or she is simultaneously purifying his or her heart and mind. The guests, too, symbolically purify themselves of the dust of the everyday world.

The careful preparation teaches the host and guests spiritual fortitude and tranquility to face whatever comes their way in the future.

For more information about the Urasenke Chado tradition, visit <http://www.urasenke.or.jp>.

