**Japanese Style Tea Bowl Project**

**Goals Checklist:**

1. \_\_\_ Inside is at least 3” (7.5cm) across at the rim and holds one cup. Walls are less than 1/4” (6mm) thick.

2. \_\_\_ Rim is smooth, not square and sharp-edged, and feels good against lips.

3. \_\_\_ Piece is balanced; has pedestal foot that holds cup steady and is around 1/3 as wide as the cup.

4. \_\_\_ Piece has no carved-in lines, especially inside or on/right below rim.

5. \_\_\_ Created a Summer tea bowl or a Winter tea bowl.

**Directions for forming a cup using the pinch technique:**

Cup your hands. The inside of your cup at the top should be about this dimension; the cup should seem a little large in your hands when you make it. (The cup will shrink 11-15% as it dries and is fired.)

Wedge out one to two pounds of moist clay and form it into a ball. Stick your thumb about two-thirds of the way through the clay ball (leave 1/2 inch or so of thickness at the bottom), then begin pinching the hole wider between your thumb and fingers, rotating the ball in your hand constantly and evenly as you work. Do not set your bowl on the table as you work on it, or work on one spot at a time, or you will end up with a lumpy uneven ashtray (that I will not fire). As you pinch, also stroke the clay upward with your fingers to make the form deeper, or sideways to make it wider. Leave the rim alone and a little thick for now.

Work steadily and evenly, concentrating on getting the inside smooth and the size and shape that you want it (remember, it will shrink). Leave the walls a little thick. Do not worry about what the outside looks like yet. Many

Oriental potters believe one finds the soul in the inside of a tea bowl, while the outside is mainly cosmetic. A little depression in the bottom, made by the fingers or carved away later, will collect the last residue of tea and be reminiscent of small pools found in the woods.

The heat of your hands will dry the clay as you work. If the clay begins to crack, hold it upside down and dip it at an angle into a container of water so that water gets on the inside as well as the outside. Pull the cup out of the water immediately and continue to hold it upside down, shaking any drops off the rim. Wait until the clay absorbs the water and goes from being glossy wet to a matte surface again before returning to work, or you will just make your piece a mess. If the clay is once again good to work with, smooth and compress out the cracks and continue; if not, repeat the dipping process.

After you get the inside right, score and slip on a small doughnut of clay, making sure to do a good job of blending the join into the cup body. Remember to re-moisten the bowl if it is drier than the foot ring.

Make the walls an even thickness of less than 1/4 inch (6mm). Let some tool marks and the making process show if you desire. A nick or ding can even add to the rustic and natural feel. Make the texture suggestive of natural things – wind, water, stone, bark, and so on.

**The foot should look like it grows out of the cup, rather than looking like a poorly attached smashed coil of clay.**



**The cup rim or “lip” is the finishing touch. Make sure the lip is smooth and has rounded edges, not sharp or square edges. Do not cut the edge level and then just leave it – the cup will look ugly, unfinished, and be uncomfortable to use. Seriously: toilet bowls have better rims. You’re going to be putting this to your lips.**

**Wabi-sabi Aesthetic:**

**Wabi-sabi is a beauty of things imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. It is the beauty of things modest and humble. It is the beauty of things unconventional.**

**Nothing lasts. All things are impermanent.**

**Nothing is perfect. All things are imperfect.**

**Nothing is finished. All things are incomplete.**