

While Tashi Choling is closed to the public for the winter, students are encouraged to restore their vows and samaya with regular tsok offerings at their own homes or in groups on the sacred days such as Dakini Day, Guru Rinpoche Day, and full and new moon.

Here are the lunar dates in December and January when you could do tsok if you wish. Don't feel you need to do tsog on all of them; it's wonderful if you can do even one or two a month, for example on the Dakini and Guru Rinpoche days:

December 2 (Dakini), 7 (New Moon), 17 (Guru Rinpoche), 22 (Full Moon), 31 (Dakini)

January 4 (New Moon), 16 (Guru Rinpoche), 21 (Full Moon), 30 (Dakini)

How to Offer Tsok at Home

Tsok can be performed in many ways, from simple to elaborate. The simplest way would be to recite a tsok offering verse, such as TSOK KHANG DECHEN or YING KYI BENDHAR, before you eat a meal.

For example, if you already say the food offering prayer TON PA LAMAI.... followed by the Chenrezig practice JOWO KYON GYI....., then the tsok offering verse can be recited just after you finish reciting the MANI mantra and before the dedication of merit.

It is also wonderful to perform a longer tsok practice such as Shower of Blessings or any of the other practices performed at Tashi Choling. For the simplest way to practice, it's not required to make tormas—simply arrange small dishes of tsok food on the

shrine to represent the tormas. And it's also not necessary to do any chopon ritual activity—arrange the offerings before the practice and bless them with water, sit and perform the practice, then share in the feast afterwards.

No matter which practice you do, the most important thing is to relax and have faith and pure view about what you are doing and confidence that your refuge vows, bodhisattva vows, and secret mantra samaya are being restored and strengthened. Don't let worries about "am I doing this right?" get in the way of your practice! We all just try our best and slowly learn how to do things better and better.

Any tsok offering should involve the four "gatherings:"

1. A gathering of practitioners: In this case, it is fine to perform tsok at home by oneself or to gather in a group.
2. A gathering of offerings: Assemble any kind of food offering (food which is ready to eat), and be sure to include a small amount of meat and alcohol as samaya substances.
3. A gathering of deities: One of the most important aspects of a tsok offering is that one recalls pure view, seeing oneself as the deity, the environment as a pure land, and visualizing countless deities who receive countless actual and mentally created offerings. This view restores our samaya, which is principally our promise at the time of empowerment that we would keep pure view and faith.
4. A gathering of merit and wisdom: By making this offering with a view of refuge, compassion (bodhicitta) and faith and pure view, we are able to generate vast merit and wisdom, the very causes for enlightenment.