



Cosy and inviting interior of Ceylon Tea Moments with golden tea leaves hanging from the ceiling

Deeply rooted in Sri Lankan culture, the act of drinking tea has become a part of its history and tea has been the country's most famous export since the 1880s.

Words Celine Hirdaramani **Photographs** Damith Wickramasinghe

The Sri Lanka Tea Board was set up in 1976 and since then has been managing the premium Ceylon Tea brand as well as all the professionals that embody the tea industry, from plantation employees to manufacturers, traders and exporters.

In February 2014, the Sri Lanka Tea Board launched the first of its kind, Ceylon Tea Moments, a teahouse located at the Race Course Stadium shopping complex in Colombo 7. This trendy hotspot is home to Ceylon Tea, and offers 18 different tea brands that are produced and packaged in Sri Lanka. All the brands have obtained the highly regarded standard of Ceylon Tea and are stamped with the world-renowned Lion logo.

When entering Ceylon Tea Moments teahouse, there is an immediate sense of warmth as the friendly and welcoming staff greets you and offers you a seat. You can choose to sit at tables if you are coming for a meal, in cosy armchairs if you wish for a cup of tea, or on the upper wooden deck, which is a more private area.

Surrounding the back corner of the teahouse there is an extensive tea display of a vast array of individually boxed teas. Beautifully stacked on shelves and packaged in different boxes, sizes and colours, the tea is presented as a part of the décor as well as displayed to be sold.

As well as the more common teas like English Breakfast and Earl Grey, there are other types displayed, such as The Morning After pina colada tea, Basilur's strawberry and cream tea and other funky and one-of-a-kind fusions. In another area, the same concept of presenting teas as a showpiece features larger gift boxes of teas, mugs and t-shirts featuring Ceylon Tea. There is also a particular tea tasting area, vintage tea posters on the walls and an eye-catching ornamental piece of golden tea leaves hanging from the ceiling,

Attracting a diverse clientele, from businessmen and women to groups of friends or family of all ages, the teahouse has customers who are united with one common interest—their love of tea. The menu has something for everyone depending on whether you prefer your tea the simple way, with milk and sugar or something a little more adventurous. There is a wide assortment of teas to choose from, which come in the form of hot teas, tea tarik (a 'pulled'

milky tea), iced teas, tea shakes, tea frappacinos and hot and cold tea mocktails.

Innovative concoctions include the Tea Sunrise, which is served in a cosmopolitan glass with blackcurrant-flavoured tea, passion fruit and grenadine syrup and a dash of lime juice - ideal for an after work pick-me-up. Another creative mixture is the Hot Toddy Mocktail using black tea, bee honey, lemon juice, ground cinnamon and nutmeg for a soothing and delicious spin on your regular cup of cha.

You can also go for a fruity twist on an old classic by choosing one of the flavoured black teas with either banana, strawberry, lemon and apple. The tea frappacinos are a great option on a hot day as they are served with a generous scoop of chocolate or vanilla ice cream.

A unique aspect of the menu is its speciality regional teas from the seven tea growing regions in Sri Lanka, namely Nuwara Eliya, Dimbula, Uva, Udupussellawa, Kandy, Ruhuna and Sabaragamuwa. Each of these has its own distinct flavour, aroma and colour.

The entire teahouse can be booked for tea tastings to learn more about these regional teas, the process of how they are made and the different tea grades. This is a popular event for tourists. Drawing inspiration from the Sigiriya Frescos, Ceylon Tea Moments has also introduced the novel concept of a Tea Ceremony that demonstrates Sri Lanka's history with tea.

Ceylon Tea Moments is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner serving both local and international cuisine. Popular dishes are the mutton roast paan and the crab sandwich for lunch options. The ice cream sandwich and the chocolate waffle are the dessert favourites.

A great place to create happy memories over a perfect pot of freshly brewed tea, Ceylon Tea Moments really allows you to take: 'A sip of serendipity'.

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