



Cinnamon is processed under stringent conditions

Ceylon Cinnamon has got a glamorous makeover for the first time ever.

Words Yomal Senerath-Yapa | **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda



Cinnamon bales stacked and ready

There was a time when Ceylon and Cinnamon meant the same thing. Before tea became the country's mascot this fragrant spice carried the flag for Sri Lanka. Europeans saw the lush, tropical, exotic soul of our little island in the burnished, brittle bales of cinnamon.

Though True Cinnamon is virtually the trademark of Sri Lanka, we have hardly done anything creative with it. Not surprisingly, it took a woman's vivid imagination to envision a range of sparkling value added products that can be made from the spice.

Upuli de Silva is the wife of Nihal, director of G P de Silva and Sons International, the world's largest exporter of Cinnamon, established in 1955. Observing from a side, Upuli

realised that exporting the spice entirely in bulk form was a waste when the spice could shape shift into a thousand attractive possibilities. With her resourcefulness, she went ahead to craft an extensive range of exclusive, cinnamon-infused luxuries: personal care products, beverages, cocktail infusions, spice kissed chocolates and corporate gifts. When Upuli and Nihal launched their exclusive boutique Cinnamon Legends in the heart of Colombo in February this year, a new and highly promising vocation opened up for cinnamon.

The cinnamon that is at the heart of each Cinnamon Legends product comes from the G P de Silva factories. We visited them in Ambalangoda, next door to the elegant, stately ancestral home of the de Silvas.

It was fascinating to tour the factory that supplies the biggest amount of cinnamon to the world. In vast halls peelers scrape the sticks clean of the green skin, then make a neat incision on the bark to remove the bark which, though tight like a second skin, comes off beautifully. After the peeler it is the job of the grader, whose uncanny specialty, Nihal says, are sensitive hands that can grade cinnamon the moment skin makes contact with bark.

In the factory, standards are stringent. Uniformed staff and floors that sparkle justify the impressive number of accreditations GPDS has garnered, including the ISO 9001:2008 certification and the presidential award for the best value added exporter in 2015.

It was from this nitty-gritty of processing that Cinnamon Legends emerged to become the newest sensation in Colombo. With hindsight one wonders how value added products made from Cinnamon, so glamorous and attractive, were not thought of before by anyone.



The range of innovative products at Cinnamon Legends

It is exciting to go through the glittering array of products Upuli and Nihal have managed to coax out of cinnamon. They have delicious, exquisite beverages which come in wooden boxes, metal canisters and recycled gift packs. Specialty cinnamon teas sit next to drinks with scintillating, thirst creating names like “Pineapple Cinnacolada”, “Elixir of Life” and “Granadilla Amber Twist”. They also have a top to toe upmarket, exclusive wellness spa range made out of essential oils: body washes, body lotions, body scrubs and bath salts. The ‘Spice Kissed Chocolates’, dark chocolate handcrafted by a master chocolatier, contain cinnamon bark oil. On offer are also exotica such as EOS candles, aromatic toothpicks, oil burners and, of course, the highest quality essential oil.

The full range of value added products, numbering over 70, capture the romantic allure of cinnamon. It has a whiff of old Ceylon, of seafaring Europeans and an adventurous age of which we are all nostalgic. But more than that, they have a core of natural goodness and they are health-giving. Cinnamon helps treat muscle spasms, vomiting, diarrhea, infections, the common cold and loss of appetite. It lowers blood sugar in Diabetes and lowers cholesterol. It fights bacterial and fungal infections and could help prevent Alzheimer’s

disease. It is, in essence, a feel-good spice that can enhance your lifestyle in a huge number of ways.

You can get lost amidst all its charms at the beautiful, chic Cinnamon Legends boutique, which stands like a sumptuous gift box at Lotus Road.

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