Exclusivitea Of Ceylon!

Posted on

As you drive higher and higher up into the heart of Sri Lanka’s Hill Country, it’s the beautiful misty mountains that instantly capture your heart. It’s not so much the eucalyptus trees, the cool breeze and the pure air that wash your lungs, but the distinct sprawling tea estates in their vast openness that strike you as unique and otherworldly. And yet, as you crawl up the expansive tea strewn hills that touch the clouds, you rarely see past their scenic beauty, into the rich history and tradition of Ceylon Tea that spans across 145 years into a distant past.

Words Kamalika Jayathilaka

The tale of Ceylon Tea began when the majority of Ceylon’s then principle crop, coffee was destroyed by the coffee-rust fungus in the late 1800s. Thereafter, James Taylor sowed the first batch of tea seeds in a 19 acre land at his Loolecondera Estate up in the hills. Since then, the journey of the tea industry has been a success story, bringing the country into its present status of being one of the world’s largest

orthodox tea producers and exporters, producing approximately 300 million kg of tea within a single year.

Individualitea

Produced to suit the taste buds of tea lovers around the world, Ceylon Tea is distinct for its rich, mellow flavour along with its golden colour and natural aroma. Apart from orthodox tea, Sri Lanka also produces a small quantity of CTC (cut, tear and curl) teas, Green tea, instant tea and organic teas. Today, Ceylon Tea has been recognised as the cleanest tea in the world as far as pesticide residues are concerned having recently been named ‘Ozone Friendly’ by “Montreal Protocol”, for not using the highly ozone depleting substance Methyl Bromide. Ceylon Tea is the only tea to have achieved such a feat so far. The promotion of Ceylon Tea is linked to the Lion Logo, the symbol of quality, which is the trademark of the Sri Lanka Tea Board. The Ceylon Tea Lion Logo that appears on Ceylon Tea packs denotes not only the country of origin but also the distinctive quality of Ceylon Tea.

Diversitea

Even though the Hill Country is more popular as a tea growing region, it is actually grown in the seven major agro-climatic regions of Nuwara Eliya, Uva, Uda Pussallawa, Dimbulla, Kandy, Sabaragamuwa and Ruhuna, giving Ceylon tea its colourful variety in taste. The high-grown category of tea thrives 4000 ft above sea level in Nuwara Eliya, Uva, Dimbulla and Uda Pussallawa while medium-grown tea is grown in Kandy, which is 2000 to 4000 ft above sea level. Low-grown tea is grown in Sabaragamuwa and Ruhuna, from sea level to 2000 ft in elevation. The strength behind the Sri Lankan tea industry is suprisingly the low-grown tea, constituting 60 percent of the total production and providing a unique type of tea unavailable anywhere else in the world. The seven agro-climate regional teas in all their variety have today been registered as geographical indications.

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95 percent of the Sri Lankan tea production is exported to over 160 countries around the world. In terms of export destinations, 50 percent of all the exports go to the Middle East, Gulf and the North African Region. Another 23 percent goes to Russia and the CIS countries. The largest consumer of Sri Lankan tea however is

Russia, with Iran and Syria following close behind. Then, there are countries like Iraq, Jordan, Turkey and Japan that are some of the other well known consumers of Ceylon Tea.

145 years of Exclusivitea

For the first time since achieving permanent peace, Sri Lanka prepares to celebrate the 145th anniversary of its tea industry in 2012 together with the global tea fraternity. Parallel to this, several significant events are to be hosted in the country, organised by the Colombo Tea Traders Association and the Sri Lanka Tea Board. The series of Events will commence with the International Tea Committee Producer/Consumer Members Forum on January 29, 2012, followed by the 20th Session of Food and Agriculture Organisation/Inter Governmental Group on Tea from January 30 to February 1, 2012. Finally the Colombo International Tea Convention will be held from February 1 to 3, 2012.

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Unlike the FAO/IGG where attendance is only through invitation, the International Tea Convention to be held at Cinnamon Grand, Colombo, is open to all tea lovers and will be held under the umbrella theme ‘Exclusivitea’. On February 1, 2012, the opening ceremony of the Tea Convention will be marked by a tea party at the Temple Trees hosted by President Mahinda Rajapaksa followed by welcome speeches. On February 2, several sessions under the themes ‘Ceylon Tea Today’, ‘Social Responsibility/Environment’ and ‘Logistics’ will be held with presentations from various local and foreign delegates. The final day of the convention, February 3, will include presentation sessions dedicated to the themes ‘International Trade’ and ‘Marketing’.

What is more, several associated programmes will be held during the Tea Convention for the spouses of foreign delegates attending, including trips to the Hill Country, tea museums, tea auctions as well as other leisurely activities.

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The next time you explore the beautiful sprawling tea gardens up in the Hill Country

or sit down to enjoy a relaxing cup of Sri Lankan Tea, make sure you feel privileged to be a part of the remarkable industry that brings out into the world the unique tastes and blends of pure Ceylon Tea.

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