

The World's Green Gold: Ceylon Tea

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Coffee dominated the agricultural business in Ceylon prior to 1867, when the Coffee Blight (leaf disease) destroyed plantations in the central hills.

James Taylor, the Scottish planter introduced tea to Ceylon in 1867, during the Colonial era. His first effort at Loolecondera Estate, Deltota, off Kandy the hill capital of Ceylon, made Ceylon famous over the centuries for producing teas with distinct character and flavour, thereby rating Ceylon tea as one of the finest quality teas in the world.

Ever since this first introduction, tea has been dominating the agricultural economy of Ceylon, eventually making Ceylon the largest exporter of orthodox tea to the world, responsible for over 10 percent (300 - 350 million kilos) of total annual world production.

Tea is grown in seven distinctly different agro-climatic regions in Ceylon and has been classified into three main groups depending upon the altitude at which it is grown.

The three main groups are: Low Grown, Mid Grown and High Grown teas. The categorisation according to altitudes has been established as follows:

| | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Low Grown | Ruhunu and Sabaragamuwa 2,000 feet | Teas - Sea level to just under 2,000 feet |
| Medium Grown | Kandy Region Teas from | 2,000 feet to 4,000 feet |
| High Grown | All teas grown above 4,000 feet in the Pedro range | ranging to 6,000 feet and higher |

High Growns are further sub-divided into four specific groups:

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Uva Teas | Eastern hills | |
| Udapussellawa Teas | Upper Eastern hills, | below Nuwara-Eliya |
| Dimbula Teas | Western hills | |
| Nuwara-Eliya Teas | Central hills ranging upwards | above 6,000 feet |