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Scion hosts a tea party

Staff Reporter



Spreading subtlety: Stephen Twining representing the 10th generation of the Twinings family at a tea-tasting session in Bangalore. Photo: Sampath Kumar G.P.

Tea no longer means boiling water, milk and sugar with tea powder and downing it in one gulp. Today, it has come to mean relishing its varied and subtle flavours. Catering to a new group of connoisseurs, Twinings association with The Leela Palace, organised a tea-tasting session in the city on Friday.

The session was conducted by Twinings scion Stephen Twining and master blender Georgina Durnford. In the audience, who were given sips of various flavoured tea such as Earl Grey, Lemon, English Breakfast and Darjeeling, relished the tea along with the experts.

Mr. Twining, who is on his first official visit to India, said that Indians have had a long culture of tea-drinking but was only in recent years that the variety of teas and blends had become available to them.

Talking about his entry into the family business, Mr. Twining (the 10th generation of the family) said adding any tea was “barbaric”.

“Blending tea is like creating a work of art. Twinings has developed every tea recipe by focussing on minutiae right from the origin, proportion of blend, type, colour and clearness. To enjoy the delight to its fullest, tea should choose the right mix,” he said.

“Ten generations of the Twining family have watched it all happen — from the creation of the English Breakfast to supplying tea to the Red Cross for food parcels during the war. Last year, 48,733,979 cases of Twinings were sold to tea lovers around the world,” he said.

Ms. Durnford, who said she tasted nearly 3,000 cups of tea every week, said it took her years of intense training to become a master blender.

“I have been with the company for nine years and am experienced in buying teas from Sri Lanka, Kenya, India and other countries. Tea-tasting is an art again. My job is to taste various blends of tea to develop newer ones for Twinings,” she said.

Indian tastes

Ian Gowlett, Managing Director of Twinings, said the company would soon open up to cater to the Indian better way. “We have studied that 94 per cent of the Indian market prefers loose tea to tea bags. We are going to come out with super-premium loose tea in the next six to nine months,” he added.

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