

SRI LANKA THE HOME OF CINNAMON AND THE ART OF PEELING

By Lydia Peroni

The main purpose of Sri Lanka participation in EXPO Milano 2015 is to arouse interest among visitors in the glorious cultural heritage of the country, its ancient traditions and flavours, with their medicine values and properties.

One of the traditional products showcased at the Sri Lanka Pavilion is cinnamon. Cinnamon is the most important spice commodity among the spice sector. Cinnamon is widely used in bakery products, pharmaceutical preparations and cosmetics world-wide. Sri Lanka is the world largest producer and exporter of cinnamon to the world.

The Sri Lanka Pavilion also celebrates the art of cinnamon peeling carried out by artisans who are groomed and trained for many years. From generation to generation, the skills of peeling cinnamon bark have been laid down as a path for a son or a daughter to follow. Today, in Sri Lanka, a select few of them have perfected their traditional methods to peel through and deftly roll the cinnamon into the form of quills. These quills are then dried and used to add flavour to people's lives all over the world.

Cinnamon is harvested after 2 – 3 years by skilful workers who manoeuvre their knives to remove the bark in two halves and then pack one inside the other until cigar like quills are obtained. Only the thin (0.5mm) inner bark is used to fill the quill. The processing of cinnamon complies with the standards of good manufacturing practice to cater to the food and beverage industries as well as in pharmaceuticals.

Growers sell their cured cinnamon at seasonal fairs - which serve as meeting points for producers and buyers - and at auctions. Peelers traditionally attend the fairs with the growers, and the proceeds are often equally divided. This it's argued ensures quality control because it's in everyone's interests to maintain high standards.

Therefore, the true art of the Cinnamon production process is the result of skill and technique unique to the Cinnamon peelers of Sri Lanka. Cinnamon peeling is a highly skilled



technique which has been handed down from generation to generation in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is situated in the midst of the Indian Ocean, a short distance from the equator. This gives to the country a uniquely advantageous location, benefitting from the year-round sun that provides a tropical climate, ideal for the growth of richly flavoured cinnamon.

Cinnamomum Zeylanicum is named after the island's former name Ceylon (ancient name of Sri Lanka) and its brand name "Ceylon Cinnamon" signifies its origin, and has been in the market for centuries. Sri Lankan cinnamon, in its early days was cultivated and collected from wild natural groves owned by the Sinhalese Kings. Today, Sri Lanka produces over 15,000 metric tonnes of cinnamon, which accounts for more than 80% of the world's authentic cinnamon from nearly 28,000 hectares of plantation.

The earliest recorded reference to cinnamon as a product of Sri Lanka dates back to the 13th century, when the Chinese, who traded with Ceylon were interested in the discovery of the valuable qualities of the bark of a Sinhalese tree, similar but superior to the cassia of their own country. It is reported that when the Sinhalese product was imported to Europe, its superiority was soon recognized and the product fetched a very high price. Cinnamon, also known as the "Spice of Life" is produced from the aromatic bark of cinnamon tree, which is indigenous to Sri Lanka and now grows in Madagascar, Seychelles, India and West Indies.

Ceylon cinnamon is widely used in sweet dishes and gives a flavour which cannot be achieved from any other spice. It is used for processed food and also in a range of curry powders for flavour enhancement. Cinnamon is used in the preparation of meat, fish and vegetable dishes and as well as for baked products such as cakes, buns, biscuits, pies and desserts. As a medicine, it is carminative, antispasmodic, aromatic, stimulant, stomachic and known to be effective against type II diabetes.

To know more

[Document in thecinnamonvilla.com](http://thecinnamonvilla.com)

[Picture gallery in bbc.con.uk](http://bbc.con.uk)

[Article in traveensart.wordpress.com](http://traveensart.wordpress.com)

[Article in wordagroforestry.org](http://wordagroforestry.org)

[Article in btoptions.lk](http://btoptions.lk)

