



Pearl Dexter

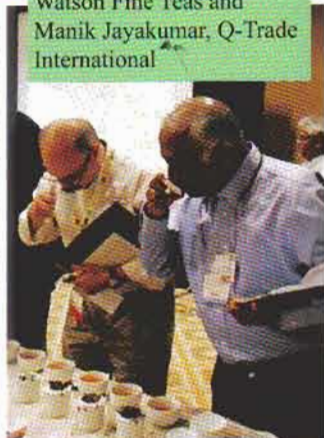
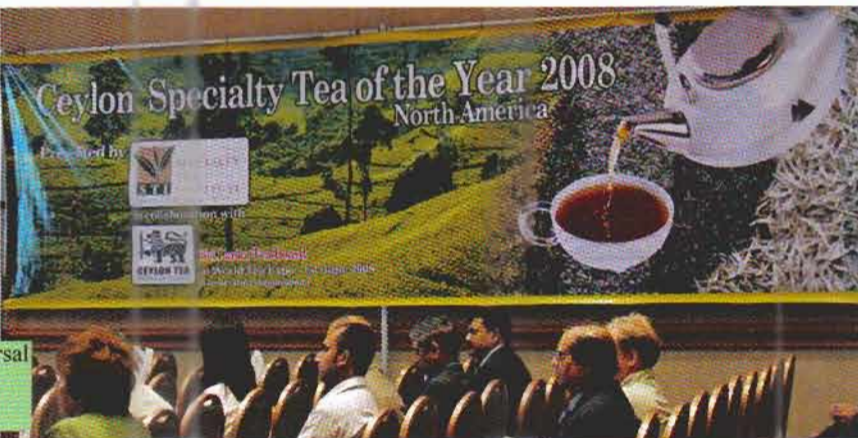


Anil Cooke - Asia Sivaka  
Commodities (Pvt) Ltd.

Reported by Pearl Dexter  
  
Photographs by  
Julian Landa and  
Pearl Dexter



Jem McDowall, Universal  
Commodities (Tea)  
Trading, Inc.



Ken Rudee, Barnes &  
Watson Fine Teas and  
Manik Jayakumar, Q-Trade  
International



Left to right: Tony  
Tellin, Tazo Tea  
Company, Devan  
Sha, International  
Tea Importers,  
Gerry Vandergrift,  
Metropolitan Tea  
Company, and Mim  
Enck, The East  
Indies Tea Company.

# 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Auction of Sri Lankan Teas

## TEA AUCTION RAISES MONEY FOR TSUNAMI AFFECTED CHILDREN IN SRI LANKA

Having made two magical trips to the “pearl of the Indian Ocean” in 2004 and 2007, I am acquainted with several Sri Lankan tea estates. Lumbini, Pedro, Delmar, and Kirkoswald are names that I know, and they were among the more than 40 finalists in the CEYLON SPECIALTY TEA OF THE YEAR 2008 held on June 1st at the World Tea Expo in Las Vegas. They had been pre-selected from hundreds of entries received by the Sri Lanka Tea Board. Together with the Specialty Tea Institute, the tea board sponsored this event at which a panel of judges evaluated and tasted teas from the seven major regions in Sri Lanka—Nuwara Eliya, Dimbula, Uva, Uda Pussellawa, Kandy, Ruhuna, and Sabaragamuwa.

The first auction in the United States of Sri Lankan tea took place following the judging. Two teas were put up for auction. The balance of the teas will be auctioned through the regular auction system in Colombo.

So, as the bidding began and the energetic auctioneer Anil Cooke kept a spirited audience on the edge of their seats who would have guessed that I would take an active role in the bidding. I was there, after all, to observe and report on this event, not to engage in the bidding. But when I learned that the money raised at this auction would be donated to the tsunami affected children in Sri Lanka, I found myself raising my hand bidding against corporate giants. Caught up in the moment, I became the recipient of the first Sri Lankan tea auctioned on U.S. soil. The tea was high grown on the eastern slopes of Sri Lanka’s central mountains on the St. James Estate. When the auctioneer’s hammer came down, I was the proud owner of 50 kilos of fine OP (orange pekoe) tea. There was excitement in the crowd as they started the bidding on the next tea, New Vithanakande, a low grown tea from the Sabaragamuwa region. The tea buyers were well acquainted with this estate. I watched and listened eagerly, but did not raise my hand again. After several minutes of animated bidding by three competitors, Gerry Vandergrift of Metropolitan Tea in Toronto, Canada walked away with the prized New Vithanakande tea.

Revenue from the U.S. auction, when combined with the proceeds raised at the Colombo auction, will bring much needed relief to the victims of the tsunami in Sri Lanka.

### OVERALL WINNERS

Low & Medium Grown Category  
New Vithanakande Ex. Special  
(Sabaragamuwa Region)

High Grown Category  
St. James OP  
(Uva Region)

Green Tea Category  
Melfort Gunpowder

### REGIONAL WINNERS

New Vithanakande  
Pothotuwa  
Imboolpitiya  
Norwood  
Delmar  
Pedro  
St. James  
Melfort

### RUNNER-UP

Houpe  
Lumbini  
Imboolpitiya  
Kirkoswald  
Gampaha  
Pedro  
Glen Alpin  
Ceylon Company  
Soumee

### OVERALL RUNNER-UPS

Low & Medium Grown Category  
Pothotuwa Ex. Special  
(Ruhuna Region)

High Grown Category  
Samia FBOPI (tie)  
Glen Alpin FBOPI (tie)  
(Uva Region)

Green Tea  
Ceylon Company  
Soumee

### 2ND RUNNER-UP

St. Andrews  
Diyagama West  
Court Lodge  
Samia



Left to right: Joseph Simrany, president of Tea Association of the U.S., Pearl Dexter, Anil Cooke, and Gerry Vandergrift.