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People Who Inspire: Tasting Sri Lanka with Anantara's Tea Expert

At Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle, Jeeva connects family heritage, regional craft and the shifting tastes of modern travellers.



▲ Jeeva, Tea Expert at Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort

For Velaudham Jeevanandhan, or Jeeva, the tea expert at [Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort](#), each new day begins with a family tradition. Long before guests appear for breakfast, he takes his first cup of the day: black Ceylon tea, unadorned and uncompromised.

It is a ritual that connects him to the generations before him: to his father, a field officer at a tea estate, and to his grandfather, who walked the same emerald slopes. In the rising steam of his morning cup, he can still trace the outlines of the plantations where he once ran between the bushes as a child, carving whistles from tender tea tips and watching the pluckers move in

practiced synch. Perhaps because tea was his whole world, he never thought of it as a profession. It was an inheritance he recognised only later in life, in his thirties.

“I didn’t really choose tea, but it was rather a part of my identity already.”

Despite this deep lineage, Jeeva is no purist. His years in Colombo, Sri Lanka’s bustling capital, taught him how a cup of Masala Chai can shift the atmosphere of a room, and he approaches modern tastes like milky boba with curiosity. Yet he believes Ceylon tea holds something these newer fashions can only hope to match: the knowledge earned slowly, over a lifetime.

“This tea comes from people who spent their whole lives learning one thing... You cannot make that quickly.”

In the ten years since joining Anantara, Jeeva’s role has grown far beyond that of a tea sommelier. His signature Tea Quotique experience guides guests through the island’s geography, showing how a single leaf can express entirely different characters depending on where it is grown: the cool, high air of Nuwara Eliya; the salt-kissed breezes of Galle; or the white tea from the nearby Handunugoda estate, where delicate buds and young leaves are still dried the slow, traditional way.

Jeeva believes his true craft lies not only in brewing but in creating the quietness that tea invites. He recalls a couple who arrived at their tea tasting exhausted, only to fall silent as he described how his father would study the tea plants as one might study a person.

“My father would look at the plants the way you look at a person when you want to understand how they are feeling.”

In that shared stillness, the husband remembered his own father, a farmer, and the way he once read the land.

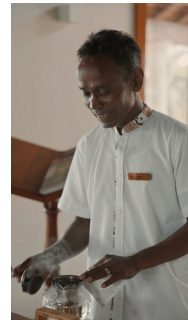
“Tea makes a certain kind of quietness, and inside that quietness sometimes people find something they were not expecting.”

Perhaps, then, tea is less a drink than a medium that returns people to themselves. Even for casual tea drinkers, the familiar morning blend has a way of steadying the mind. But in Sri Lanka, where

tea is a living legacy shaped by the hands of those who care for it, appreciation runs deeper than taste alone.

Jeeva hopes those who follow in his footsteps, whether at Anantara or on the surrounding estates, will inherit not only the techniques but the patience, attentiveness and respect for the land that has long defined Sri Lanka's tea-growing excellence.

Learn more about Anantara's 25th anniversary celebrations on anantara.com.



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