

LIFE&TIMES **LIVING**

Tea of the blue tiger

What's the link between a storybook on a young boy's magical journey and a new limited edition tea blend?

Aneeta Sundararaj
finds out

FOR David De Candia, one of the world's leading tea experts, drinking tea is an activity that creates memories.

"People will say something like, 'Do you remember that time in Kuala Lumpur, when we shared a pot of tea?'" says the director of tea, buyer, master blender at The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf. To emphasise his point, he pours some freshly brewed tea into two cups and says: "No one shares a pot of coffee."

The 53-year-old was in KL recently to introduce the Blue Tiger Tea which is a limited edition rare blend variant into the company's line of tea products.

He also launched a children's storybook, *Master Davey And The Magic Tea House: Legend Of The Blue Tiger*. Proceeds from the sale of the tea and book will be channelled to the Malaysian Systemic Lupus Erythematosus Association.

Furthermore, Malaysians are the first in Asia to sample this limited edition.

The Blue Tiger Tea is a unique blend that comprises lemon myrtle from Australia, tea blossoms from China, raspberries from the US and malva flowers from Poland. This tea tastes fruity, with a tinge of lemon.

"These ingredients were chosen to give the Blue Tiger Tea its unique twist. They were also carefully selected based on the central themes of the book, which is to imagine, perceive and believe," says De Candia.

The storybook highlights the magical

journey of a young boy named Hopper, who goes on an adventurous search to save the ancient Blue Tiger Tea. "You have to experience both the book and the tea together. That's the connection here," says De Candia. For example, Camellia is a character in the book whose name is inspired by one of the elements in his blend, the camellia flower.

De Candia also relied on his many travels to create the story with one of his more memorable adventures being South Africa where he journeyed to the Eastern Cape. "We were literally fighting with baboons," he says. "These animals are not scared of humans, but we had to go into these places because I wanted to get to the bush where we could harvest our tea from."

His first time overseas was to a place that he knew he had to go to if he wanted to truly understand tea: Darjeeling, India.

"India embodies tea and I knew I had to go there. But...", he says, shaking his head, "I remember I rang my wife from New York, before I left, wondering if I could do this. But she said I had to. You know, had to get my first passport for this trip. I flew into Mumbai, then on to Kolkata. I had never in my life seen things like I saw then or..."

He takes another sip of tea before saying: "I saw goats being slaughtered by the side of the road. After all this, we stepped into the Oberoi and it was like entering a completely different world. I remember calling my family back home and weeping. I was certain I couldn't go through with this journey. It was the strongest culture

shock ever."

He takes a deep breath before adding: "But, you know, what? After a 34-hour journey, when you have a taste of the first flush of Darjeeling tea, at 1,980m above sea level and

"We aim to reconnect consumers with nature."

David De Candia



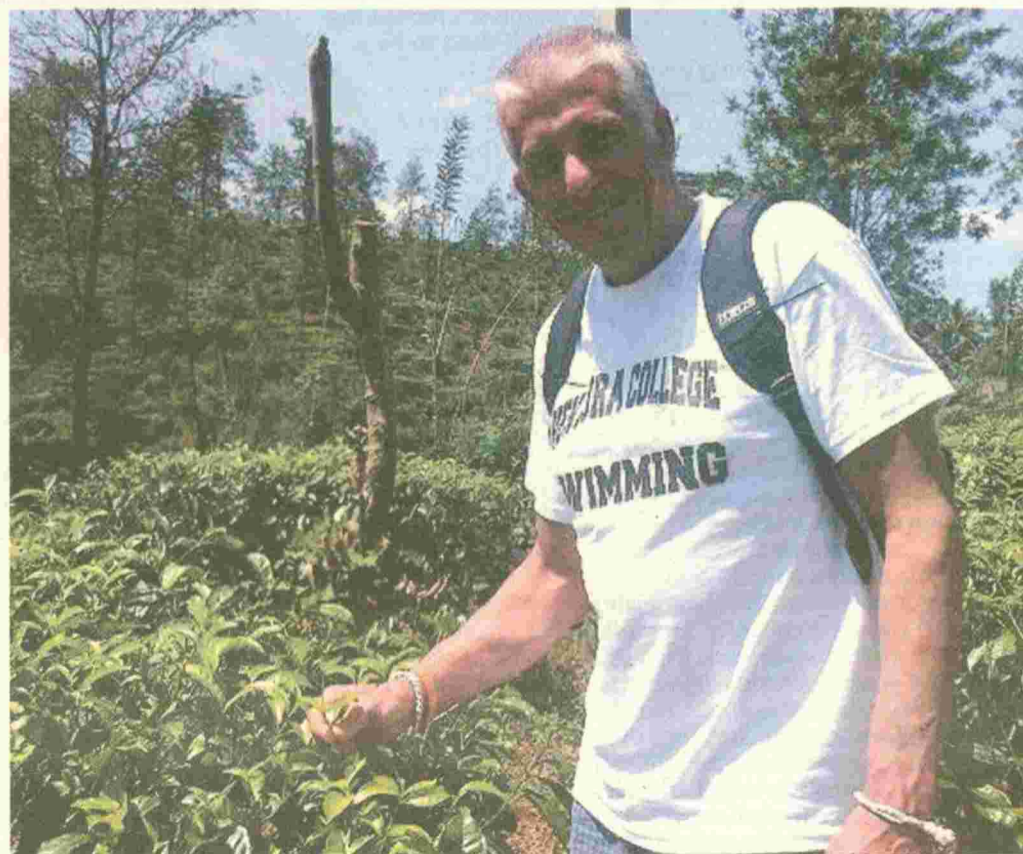
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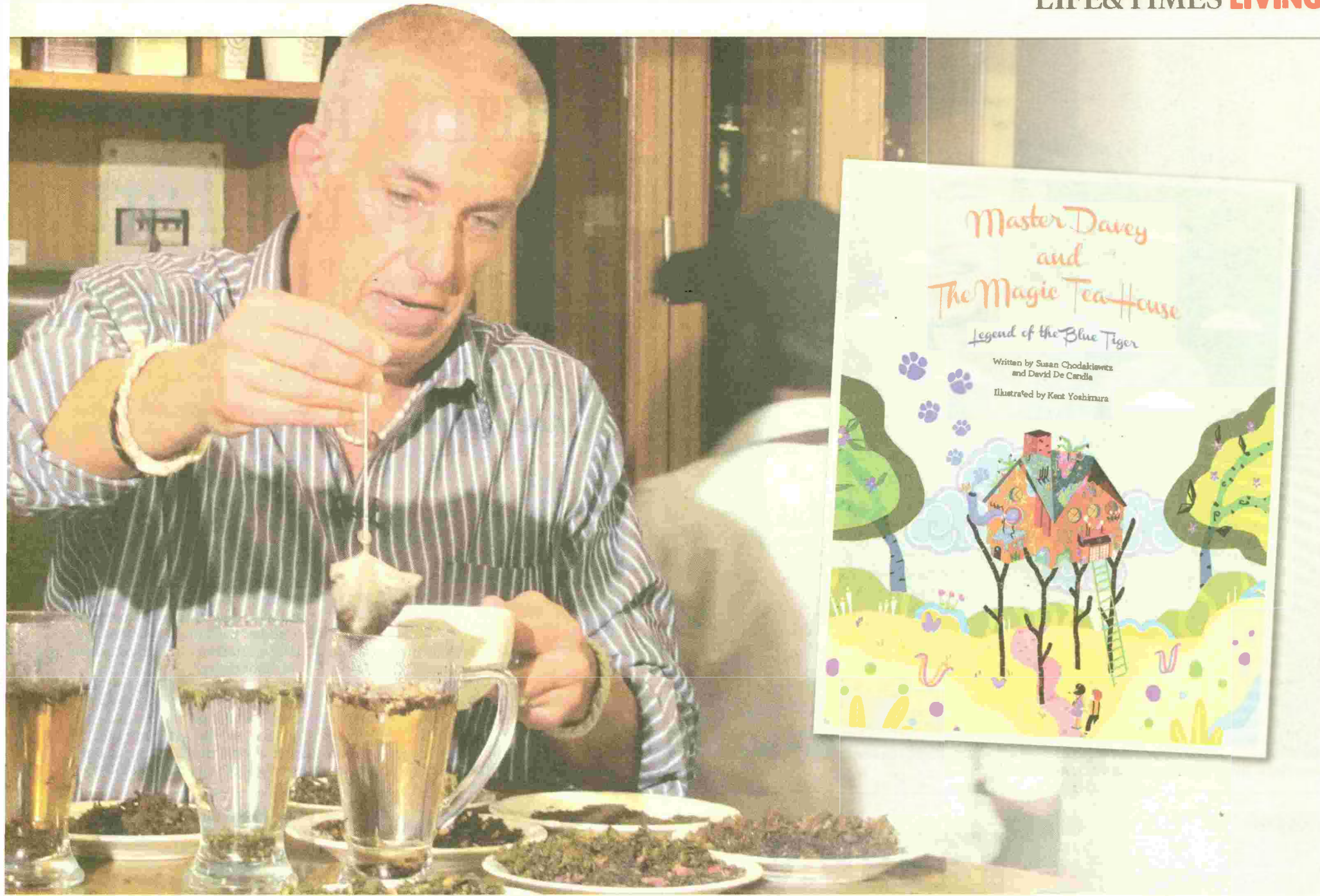
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Candia on his travels to India.



the Himalayas in the background, you know it was worth it."

Continuing, De Candia says: "Then, I had to go to Assam and, I tell you, that's where you separate the men from the boys. We travelled in planes that still had ashtrays in the seats. When I reached the airport, there was this huge ledger book and the page was divided into two. On one side,

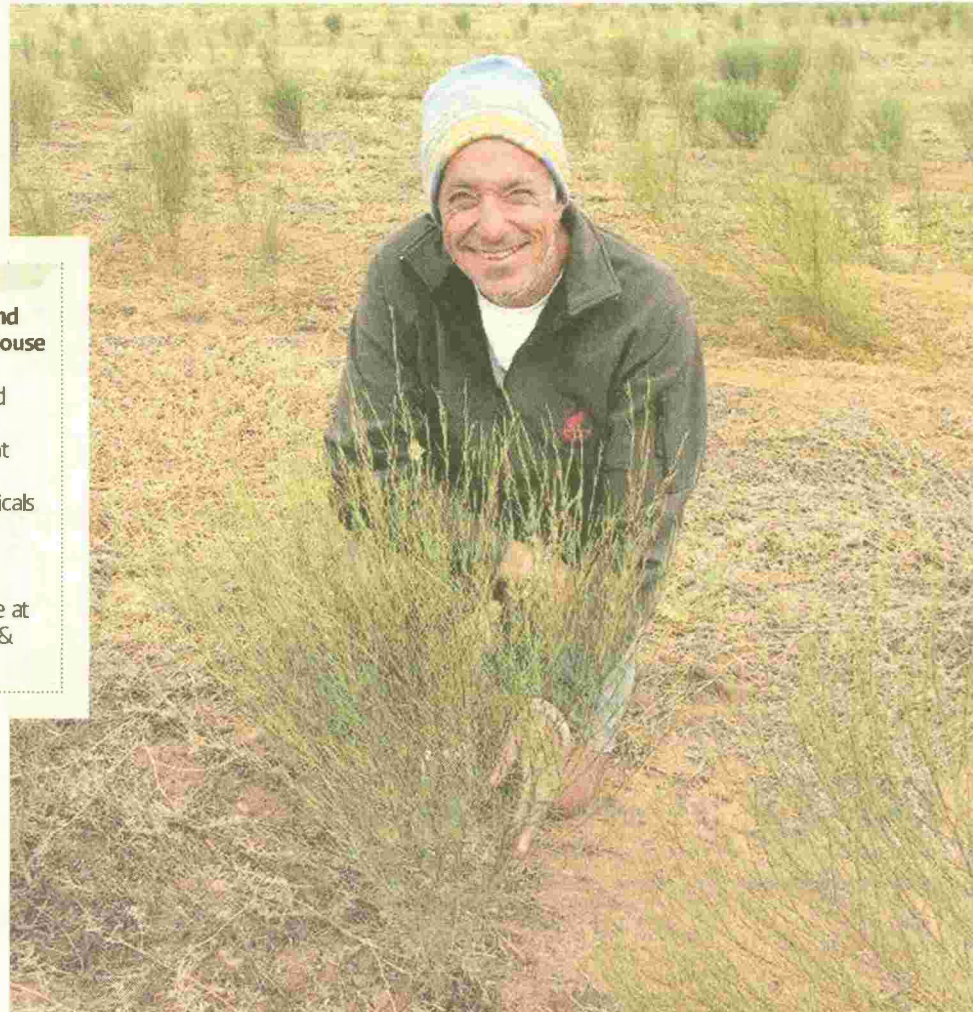
I had to write my name. When I asked what this was for, they said that when I left, I would have to enter my name on the other side. Just so they know I've left because there are so many people kidnapped and horrible things can happen. The hotel room didn't have a lock and the cockroaches were huge."

Incidentally, an interesting encounter with a guard in India was the inspiration for the character 'Wali' in his storybook.

Tea and storybook aside, De Candia is very aware of the business aspect of what he's doing. He's very proud of the business relationships with the growers. "We aim to reconnect consumers with nature, bringing to mind the needs of communities around us."

In addition, the interest the young generation show in tea goes beyond wanting to know if it's safe to drink and if it's clean. "They want to know where the products come from. They like to know that the money we generate will allow the growers to cook with LPG gas rather than relying on wood."

The younger generation he says are very receptive. Most of them no longer just drink tea. They want to know how best to enjoy the tea. "Now," he says, taking the last sip of tea, "they like to say, 'I love a good Darjeeling' and be able to talk about what they've just drunk."



Candia in South Africa.



Master Davey And The Magic Tea House
by Susan Chodakiewitz and David de Candia.
Illustrated by Kent Yoshimura
Publisher: Booksicals

Blue Tiger Tea
(RM39)
Both are available at The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf outlets