

# WORLD CHEFS



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# CELEBRATING EMPOWERMENT AT MJF FOUNDATION

John Clancy, Education Director, visits the home of Ceylon tea and discovers more than just tea plantations.

**BY JOHN CLANCY**  
EDUCATION DIRECTOR, WORLDCHefs



I was privileged to be invited to represent Worldchefs at the 47th School of Tea programme in Sri Lanka kindly hosted by Dilmah. This session saw 140 graduates from over 40 countries attending and who came to learn and experience first-hand about the culture, history, cultivation and production of both single origin teas as well as specialty blends that are continually being developed by Dilmah at their main headquarter research Centre. The participants were immersed in a very intensive and informative programme throughout the four days, with presentations on a variety of topics including the art and skill of making and presenting proper cup of tea.

## MJF FOUNDATION

Founded by Mr. Merrill J. Fernando this foundation was established to help and assist people both young and adult from disadvantaged backgrounds, and includes children with both physical and





learning disabilities. Applying the principle of making “business a matter of human service” is what has made this foundation truly remarkable and a testament to kindness and generosity of heart and spirit of Dilmah towards their fellow citizens.

We visited the MJF Center for dignified and sustainable empowerment. This truly remarkable company now has many identities for the under privileged.

Their latest project is the **Empower Culinary & Hospitality School** at Moratuwa. A premier culinary and hospitality training facility, the school has the objective to create new avenues for underprivileged and marginalised youth with empowerment in the gastronomy and hospitality industry in Sri Lanka. The school programme has an intensive training method with visiting international culinary professionals supplementing the Sri Lankan faculty to provide the students with comprehensive knowledge and global perspectives on cuisine and hospitality. During my visit I attended the first cohort’s inaugural graduation, where all 13 students enrolled successfully graduated, and were presented with special citations and certificates. The intense programme is run for five days a week for a 4-month duration, all students who completed the programme have receive offers from top employers in Sri Lanka.

Empowerment Culinary and Hospitality School is an initiative by the Merrill J. Fernando Foundation (MJFCF) and Dilmah, the purpose of which is to create new avenues for underprivileged and marginalised youth with empowerment through education in the Culinary and Hospitality industry of Sri Lanka.

Worldchefs was invited to review the training centre and programmes and have awarded the centre with our approved training centre and programmes and it is the first school in Sri Lanka to have achieved this recognition from Worldchefs.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and of the school governors for their vision, and commitment to this unique programme. We also met with all the recognised schools who were invited to participate in this educational programme and who in turn will deliver similar tea education modules in their respective institutes and included International Culinary Educators from, Dubai, Chile, Spain, Malaysia, Lebanon, Sweden and the UK and Ireland.

Dilmah will support this by providing specialist equipment and learning materials free of charge to all schools and is part of Worldchefs Academy which offers sponsors and partners the opportunity to present seminars and workshops to students and teachers in our recognised schools across the world.

