

Mridul Tiwari



JUST TO HER TASTE

A career in tea was the *dastoor* for Mridul Tiwari, coming as she did from three generations of planters. One of India's two women tea auctioneers, the lady works out of Jaipur now

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In spite of coming from three generations of planters, tasters and auctioneers, there isn't much that Jaipur-based tea professional Mridul Tiwari can 'explain' about the art of tea blending and evaluating.

"Of course, there are certain objective parameters like the size of leaves, but ultimately it all comes down to your senses," smiles the Malviya Nagar resident, who, till a few years ago, was one of the only two women tea auctioneers in India.

"The auctions went online about one and a half years ago, but before that tea was sold in auction houses. And, was the bidding intense!" she re-

counts, vividly remembering the aggressive, rowdy buyers. "Hundreds of men screamed their bids and you had to hear each one, miss out on one voice and you're in trouble!"

To be an auctioneer, it was imperative for Tiwari to be a taster too, since only a taster can affix a price to tea. Although she can't put in words how they do it, she paints us a picture of a regular day on the job. "Some 200-odd tea cups are in front of you. You have to taste them all. Remember each one's flavour, and then determine each one's worth," explains the connoisseur.

Unlike her forefathers, Tiwari has had the opportunity to work at a

time when the nation has been introduced to the many, many variations of the good ole *chai*. Now, we cannot only have it with or without milk. We can have it in 50 shades of green! So, heeding the call of the times, Tiwari founded a premium, speciality tea brand of her own—Kamelia teas. "For now, we are only available at luxury hotels, but we plan to soon start retailing too, beginning with Maharashtra," she reveals. ■

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