

Shortly after launching a range of products last September, our attentions turned to the upcoming season's catalogue, as per usual. The question in our minds was what to shed some limelight on. Although the company had been selling excellent orthodox teas for a considerable time, OXALIS still remained best known as a producer of flavoured teas, which ultimately was really only part of the picture. We felt it necessary to redress the balance and attempt to change the public's perception. So, with a new range of pure teas in our sights, we got down to work.

To this end, we've augmented the section on Indian tea by incorporating more gardens from Darjeeling (Castleton, Thurbo, Namring Upper, Badamtam and Glenburn) and Assam (Amgoorie). Exploring the Kangra region in the north-east of the country has led to securing a black tea from a local plantation, Wah. In actual fact, the company participates in various small-scale but worthwhile tea projects. These are characterised by obvious enthusiasm for the end product, as well as a highly professional approach to harvesting and processing the tea leaves.

More news. We've imported some remarkable pure teas from New Zealand, from a project run by Vincent Chen in the Waikato region, while Malawi is home to another scheme, this time overseen by Alexander Kay from the Satemwa tea garden. Moreover, from Nilgiri, in the south of India, we've sourced leaves from Gurrinder Khanna in the Coonoor area. Revisiting Vietnam, venturing into the district of Tam Duong in the north-east, has reaped the rewards of a brilliant black tea and a white one, complimented by the popular green tea Che ngon. We're still not talking about large scale production; instead these products bear the all the hallmarks of the finest quality. Additionally, the boundaries of black tea from Kenya have been pushed further back, with examples from Kericho, Nandi Hills and Kisii now figuring in the assortment.

China's contribution to the catalogue is incredibly varied; actually, no tea group could be considered as AWOL from it. Examples include an early green tea known as Jade Dragon Mao Feng from Hubei Province, one of the finest black teas from Yunnan – Black Buds, a rare oolong called Zhangpin Shui Xian, a white tea from the buds of wild tea bushes named Yunnan Wild Buds, and a yellow tea - Huoshan Yellow Buds. Clearly, pure tea is going to be in the forefront of our minds for some years to come, the endeavour on OXALIS' part being to offer a superior and diverse range to consumers and distributors.

Meanwhile, the range of flavoured teas is even wider, as we're introducing sixteen new varieties that fall within a theme of four geographical regions: South America, the countries of the Orient, Japan and China. Most flavoured black teas are now based on high quality leaves from Nilgiri in the south of India.

Our line-up of herbs is now bigger. We've begun to offer two herbal blends that were awarded KLASA status, which is a national mark of quality conferred by the Ministry of Agriculture; the two novelties are Caltrop & Lemon Balm and Serene Head. Fresh to the assortment of herbs sourced from the Czech Republic are Hemp Leaf, Lemon Balm, and Peppermint and Calendula. Meanwhile, we've developed some flavoured tisanes with particular functions, namely Settled Blood Pressure, Optimum Sugar Level and a herbal blend called Woman's Hormonal Balance.

As for pure coffees, we've incorporated several outstanding arabicas from El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Brazil and Ethiopia. Also of note are two flavoured coffees – Apple Pastries and Peanut Butter Cookie. In addition, our Ikona Coffee brand has proven a success. In an anonymous cupping session by an expert jury, ahead of the Barista of the Year competition, it was judged as ranking amongst the ten best roasteries in the country. What's more,



the coffees we source from Kenya and Rwanda were presented at a highly prestigious event in the Czech Republic. Behind the plaudits are hours of endeavour, endless tweaking, consideration and constant searching.

We've also refreshed the accessories available. Some designs really stand out, such as Panda and Mandala, while the popular Wildlife Wellness motif has been lent to a 100 g square caddy.

The tasty treats have been fine-tuned to include alcoholic elixirs based on herbs in cooperation with the Rudolf Jelínek distillery. Plus, there's more honey to tempt, taking in examples from the ecologically clean environment of the Lower Fatra mountains in Slovakia. A fascinating innovation is the energy beverage known as Samurai, founded on strong tea extracts of OXALIS teas.

As for the company and its premises, qualitative changes have been made in the form of two professionally furnished tasting rooms – one for pure tea and the other for pure coffee. Indeed, we've completely separated the manufacturing processes of our teas and coffees, even in terms of pure and flavoured forms. Millions of Czech crowns have been invested in machinery, examples being the purchase of a new blending machine for mixing and flavouring coffee, significant upgrades to the KESTREL roaster and installation of equipment for producing bags. The company's retail network now totals 64 shops (34 OXALIS stores and 30 franchise outlets). Moreover, we're exporting more widely, taking in the territory of Uzbekistan in Central Asia, while our cooperation with Rudolf Jelínek might get us into Chile and the USA.

In the digital realm, our e-shop has been given a make-over at www.oxalis.cz. Its functionality now encompasses greater filtering of results, while also easing and speeding up purchases in the retail and wholesale sections. Social networking is important, and we've stepped up our game in the Czech language on Facebook and Instagram, mainly with the aim to promote Matcha green tea. Please don't forget to follow us at www.facebook.com/OxalisEng or Twitter (Oxalis Tea and Coffee) for curated English-language content.

Well, that's nearly all, except to say that OXALIS is still moving on in so many ways. No lack of ideas or notions here. We're now beginning to look ahead to the next year, which marks the company's 25th anniversary. Believe us when we say that it'll be filled with many pleasant surprises.

Just like this one!

Petr Zelík

Slušovice, July 2017

