

11 June 2008

**MEDIA RELEASE**



## **Culinary walks and talks at RBG Melbourne this winter**

The popular Chocolate and Spice tour is back at RBG Melbourne this winter, as is the Tea and Camellia Walk.

Both provide the perfect opportunity to join up with friends or meet new ones for a voyage of discovery into the world of chocolate and tea.

Chocolate lovers cannot afford to miss the aromatic adventure through the Gardens on selected Fridays and Sundays during June and July.

This is the chance to learn more about the stories and recipes of cinnamon, cardamon and the delicious vanilla bean.

For instance, the vanilla bean is also known as Mayan chocolate and is consumed in southern Mexico, Guatemala and Belize. This drink is spicy and often contains chilli, all spice or black pepper. It is enjoyed hot or cold, but in any case it is whipped such that it becomes foamy; the foam is considered the most delicious part.

There are many marvelous stories to be told about the vanilla bean in Aztec history, including the tale of when Hernán Cortés forced the Aztec ruler Moctezuma to grant him an audience on November 14th, 1519, he was the first European to try chocolate; less than three years later, the great Aztec capital Tenochtitlán had been shattered to pieces, and the Aztec empire had ceased to exist.

Cardamon is often named as the “third most expensive” spice in the world, after saffron and vanilla, and the high price reflects the high reputation of this most pleasantly scented spice. Despite its numerous applications in the cooking styles of Sri Lanka, India and Iran, 60% of world production is exported to Arab (South West Asia, North Africa) countries, where the larger part is used to prepare coffee.

So come along and be entertained and afterwards sit back and have a delicious hot chocolate at The Terrace.

### **Tea and Camellias**

Did you know that the leaves at the bottom of your teacup come from a camellia?

Join this special walk through the Gardens’ stunning Camellia Collection to demystify some tea leaves. Discover historic cultivars, hybrids and lesser-known camellia species then warm up with a cup of tea at The Terrace.

Camellias have been among the Royal Botanic Gardens’ attractions for more than a century. William Guilfoyle, second Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, began this collection of camellias. The plants were brought from Sydney, where Guilfoyle’s

father grew them in a nursery in the early 1880s. He used camellias, azaleas and rhododendrons in the Gardens for their colour and the variations of their foliage.

Alex Jessep, Director of the Gardens from 1941–1957, was also very interested in camellias and it was his decision to create the dedicated Camellia Collection. There are now over 800 camellias in this collection.

The camellia was originally prized as a source of tea (*Camellia sinensis*) and oil (*Camellia oleifera*). The East India Company introduced the *Camellia japonica* variety to England by mistake. They thought that it was the tea variety. Despite the failure of their commercial plans, camellias quickly became prized for their beauty.

**Program details:**

***Chocolate and Spice***

**When:** Sunday 15 June, Sunday 29 June, Sunday 13 July  
Friday 20 June, Friday 4 July, Friday 18 July

**Time:** 10am – 12noon

**Cost:** \$10 adult; \$8 concession; \$30 family  
(2 adults and up to 3 children)

**Bookings:** (03) 9252 2429 **Bookings required.**

***Tea and camellias***

**When:** Friday 1 August, Friday 15 August, Friday 29 August  
Sunday 10 August, Sunday 24 August

**Time:** 10am – 12noon

**Cost:** \$10 adults; \$8 concession

**Bookings:** Tel: (03) 9252 2429 **Bookings required.**

**Media inquiries:** John Myers, MediaWise on (03) 9818 6339.