



## **Enabling Food Innovation Project**

### **NORTHERN TEA**

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In 1926, Albert Pogson took up a sales position that was offered by 'The Ceylon Tea Growers Association' based in Nottingham. In 1936, he established the 'Spire Tea Company' and commenced selling tea door to door. The unfortunate onset of World War in 1939 meant that tea was rationed which made trading very difficult. Despite this, the business continued to flourish, and when tea ceased to be rationed in the mid-1950's he was still trading and had cultivated many loyal customers, some of whom are still purchasing tea from the Pogson family today, some 70 years later! In May 1959 his son David established Northern Tea Merchants. In 1971, the Spire Tea Company merged with Northern Tea. In 1965 the company purchased a tea bag machine making 250 tea bags a minute. They have a tea shop and factory in Chesterfield.

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#### **Project Brief: Mar 2018**

1. Tasting techniques in the tea industry have been well established for decades and the company has developed procedures already for the sensory evaluation of tea both for quality control in the factory and when out and about buying tea. The company are particularly interested in descriptive sensory analysis of their tea range and in particular would like to learn about the way to go about descriptive profiling from a scientific standing so they can compare the methodology with their current traditional techniques. They would be interested to visit the Universities sensory science centre and learn general techniques in practice.
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#### **The Response: Apr 2018**

1. A tea qualitative descriptive profiling session was arranged with 5 contrastingly different teas from Northern Tea at Sutton Bonington campus, with a panel made up of regular tea drinkers and the current owner of the company.
2. A systematic approach to assessing the tea's sensory attributes was demonstrated, discussing the reasons behind the approach during the session and other related hints and tips (such as the need for palate cleansers and the opportunity to try out different types of palate cleansers).



3. A large number of descriptors for tea sensory properties were captured on posters, discussed as a team, common descriptors grouped together and definitions/suitable reference standards to demonstrate each discussed, showing the basic principles underpinning descriptive analysis. The company learned new techniques through the session, in a practical way, bringing the techniques to life and making them relevant to their product category, as well as having the opportunity to see the power of carrying out this type of work with a team of people rather than alone (accounting for individual differences between people's sensory ability, team members teaching each other to recognise attributes etc....)

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### **Benefit to the Business:**

“Thank you for such a comprehensive and hugely interesting report. I love the way that you have taken something which was always taught to me as an ‘art’, and given it such appropriate, measurable and sensible criteria.

I will use the report extensively when I am running tastings here – particularly the descriptor generation and definition – a very useful aspect that helps people to think about the way that their palate, their brain, and their expressions are connected.

I was very impressed with our tasting session, and I admire the professionalism with which you conducted it. I will certainly be in touch with other questions / requests for assistance, and I won't hesitate in recommending your work to other members of the UK Tea and Coffee Trade. You are a star!”

With Warmest Wishes,

**JAMES POGSON**

Director

Northern Tea Merchants Ltd

