

Chai Tea

Chai is a great spice milk tea from India that is quickly becoming extremely popular in the West as people discover it at coffee and tea houses everywhere. The ingredients of chai are touted to have healthful benefits, which is typically prepared by boiling loose leaf tea and adding milk, sweetener, and various spices depending on personal preferences. In India, chai is more popular than coffee, and there are many different versions of the tea, which has been a staple there for hundreds of years. Chai tea can be enjoyed hot or cold, morning or evening, summer or winter. There are instant chai mixes and chai concentrates that just require milk to be added. For vegans or the lactose intolerant, soy milk is a great substitute for the whole milk and cream that traditional chai tea recipes call for. Low-fat versions are also popular for anyone looking to avoid the extra calories.

The most common method of making chai tea is to boil water with sugar, molasses, or honey with one or more spices including cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, star anise, peppercorn, cloves, nutmeg, chocolate, cocoa, vanilla, licorice, or saffron, and then add the tea and milk/soy/cream and simmer a bit longer. Once it's done, just strain and serve. The key to making good tea is to leave the tea leaves in the boiling water long enough, but not so long that the tea is bitter. If you're a bit intimidated, check out this recipe for a dry mix for instant chai tea that you can keep on hand for those frequent chai tea emergencies, and also a great gift for any tea enthusiast. Oregon Chai Tea, found online at www.oregonchai.com, features a delicious Indian chai made from concentrate, "to nourish your yin and elevate your yang with this creamy blend of tea, spice, and spirit."

It's easy to find lots of great recipes online, including traditional chai, and other quick and easy variations of spiced chai tea that you can make at home. Odie.org features recipes collected from around the world, as well as chai brewing hints and tips, and a chai ingredient glossary. Choose a traditional chai like Chandra Chai Moon Tea, or a quick and easy chai like Romantic Chai, and if you're looking for tasty treats, mix up some chai cookies or a chai milkshake. If you're in a hurry and don't have time to whip up your own, Starbucks features a tasty Tazo chai tea latte, which is a steamed blend of rare black teas, milk, exotic spices and comforting vanilla. Tazo Teas are also available from the company's website at www.tazo.com.