

# What is Chai?

Chai [tea](#) is rather a misnomer, as "chai" itself means [tea](#) in [Hindi](#). This spicy milk tea is sometimes called masala chai. Traditionally, the Indian tea takes a long time to brew from freshly ground ingredients simmered over flames. Spices, milk, black tea, and sugar make up the key ingredients.

To make this tea using a traditional [recipe](#), gather fresh spices from an Asian or Indian market. Take cinnamon sticks, whole [cloves](#), whole black or white pepper corns, a [cardamom pod](#), and grind them together into a powder. With chopped ginger root, add this mixture to a liquid of two parts half-and-half to three parts water. Use a strong, black tea from Asia such as Darjeeling, Ceylon, or Assam blends, instead of a [green tea](#). Black tea has been oxidized, and has more tannins and a higher pungency. This mixture brews over a low, simmering heat for up to an hour, unlike steeped tea that takes mere minutes. Strain out the spices and stir in a teaspoon of sugar to bring out the spiciness without overly sweetening. Your cup of chai is ready to ease your nerves and warm your soul.

Due to the increasing popularity of this Eastern tea in the West, products now make chai more convenient to serve. Dry mixes, similar to instant hot [chocolate](#), blend with warm milk, for a quick brew. Pre-brewed and packaged chai is also sold like a carton of milk to be enjoyed hot or iced. Connoisseurs can even prepare a concentrated mixture of spices and tea, with no milk and less water, to store in the refrigerator. When ready to mix just heat this on the stove with milk and sugar or [honey](#) to the desired strength.

New concoctions with a chai base create new tastes and varieties. As chai becomes a staple on the menus of [coffee](#) shops and tea rooms, people add [vanilla](#), [nutmeg](#), chocolate, [coriander](#), soap, or [fennel](#) seed. Experiment with different proportions of spice, or other milk products like ice cream, to create your individual blend.