

Pine River Library Program in a Bag: Make Your Own Masala Chai



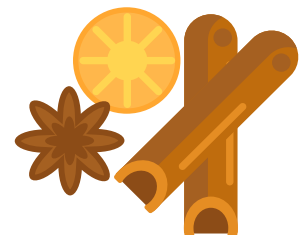
What is Masala Chai?

- Masala chai is the full name for what is often referred to as “chai” outside India. In India, masala means spice, and chai means tea. So, masala chai is literally “spiced tea.”
- History: Assam and Darjeeling teas had been grown and consumed in India for centuries, but chai masala grew in popularity when the British East India Company began to promote tea in order to counter the growing influence of China in India. Before that, coffee was preferred as a strong and flavorful beverage; basic tea and milk was often seen as under-flavored and not suited to the vibrant flavors of Indian cuisine. When bold spices were added to perk up the flavor of the tea, masala chai was created and it eventually became India’s drink of choice. Today the country consumes around 837,000 tonnes of tea every year!
- Masala chai is typically black tea brewed with fragrant spices. The blend of spices used varies between different regions, chai vendors, and households. In India masala chai is served in glasses, poured with some room left at the top of the glass so it is cool enough to hold.

Ingredients in Masala Chai

Typically there are four components to every cup of masala chai. Making your own blend allows you to find your perfect balance of each.

- Black tea: Assam and Darjeeling are often used in India because they are grown there.
- Spices: Ginger, cardamom pods, cinnamon, cloves, peppercorns, fennel, and star anise are all commonly used.
- Milk: Some like a 1:1 ratio of milk and water, but feel free to play with that ratio to your liking. Whole milk is preferable as it helps to best bring out the flavor of the spices, but you can also use lower fat milk or your favorite milk substitute.
- Sweetener: In India, jaggery (unrefined cane sugar pressed into a block shape) is traditionally used. You can use regular sugar, honey, maple syrup, coconut sugar, or even a few drops of liquid stevia or monk fruit extract.



BASIC CHAI MASALA RECIPE

Makes One 16 oz Mug of Tea

Feel free to multiply ingredients to make a bigger batch. You can make the tea ahead and keep it in the fridge for a few days- just leave out the milk or milk substitute and add that in when you re-heat.

- 5-7 green cardamom pods
- 3-4 whole cloves
- 1-2 star anise and/or 1 t. fennel (optional)- for those that like a licorice taste
- 5-7 peppercorns (optional)- for those that like a spicier tea
- 1 cup of water
- 2-3 dime-sized slices of fresh ginger (or more if you like, skin on is fine!)
- 1/2 cinnamon stick
- 1 tablespoons loose leaf black tea, (or 1-2 tea bags)
- 1 cup milk of your choice
- 2-3 teaspoons (or more or less) sweetener of your choice

1. Lightly crush cardamom pods, whole cloves, fennel (and/or star anise), and peppercorns, and place in a small pot with 1 cup of water.

2. Add ginger, cinnamon and black tea. You can muddle the ginger a bit right in the pot.

3. Bring to a boil. Turn off heat (don't boil the tea, it will get bitter) and let it steep for at least 10 minutes and up to half an hour. The longer you steep the more the flavors will develop.

4. Add your choice of milk. Bring to a simmer once more, turn off the heat.

5. Stir in your choice of sweetener. If it tastes bitter, you need more sweetener. Strain into a "chai glass" or mug using a fine mesh strainer.

NOTE: This recipe makes a very concentrated brew after steeping. Feel free to add more water and adjust the milk ratio to your taste when you make your individual cup.

Ingredient sourcing:

Spices: All spices were bought from the bulk spice section of Natural Grocers in Durango. Nature's Oasis and Durango Natural Foods all have these spices in bulk as well, which is a much cheaper way to buy them.

Fresh ginger root: From the produce section of Natural Grocers. If possible use organic ginger since the skin is left on during the steeping process.

Tea: The tea used in this kit is "Tea India CTC Assam Loose Tea," bought on Amazon for \$12 for a 2 lb. bag.

NOTE: This kit contains all the spices you'll need to make two batches of the recipe, plus enough tea to make four batches in case you get inspired to make more with your own spices!

References:

www.feastingathome.com/authentic-masala-chai-recipe/
www.senchateabar.com/blogs/blog/how-to-make-chai-tea

Questions?

Contact P.R. and Programming Librarian Darcy Poletti Harp by email at darcy@prlibrary.org or by phone at 970.884.2222 ext. 522. You can also let her know if you have any ideas for "Program in a Bag" kits you'd like the library to develop.