Spiced Tea: Chai and Beyond

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Spiced tea, in summary:** Spiced tea is a family, not one drink: chai, spiced herbals and rooibos, spiced fruit infusions, united by warm aromatic spices and best from whole spices.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in May 2026.

Spiced tea covers a wide category, masala chai (Indian), spiced winter blends (UK Christmas tea), turmeric led blends, cardamom rose blends, ginger cinnamon variants. The category overlaps with chai but extends beyond, any tea blended with warming spices counts.

The major spiced tea categories

Masala chai

The Indian original. Black tea + cardamom + cinnamon + ginger + cloves + black pepper. Traditionally pan brewed with milk and sugar. Traditional recipe here.

Christmas tea / spiced winter blends

Black tea + cinnamon + clove + orange peel + sometimes star anise. UK Christmas themed; warming festive cup.

Turmeric blends

Turmeric led blends with ginger, black pepper, cinnamon. Antioxidant positioning. Pukka Turmeric Active is the UK leader.

Spiced rooibos

Caffeine free version, rooibos + chai spices. More on rooibos chai.

Cardamom led blends

Cardamom forward without full chai spice complexity. Pukka After Dinner is in this territory. More here.

Ginger blends

Ginger forward. Pukka Three Ginger; Twinings Lemon & Ginger; many others. More on ginger.

Mulled tea

Hot tea with mulling spices and sometimes alcohol, Christmas Eve or after dinner specialty.

The chai spice palette

Common spiced tea ingredients:

- **Cardamom.** Dominant chai aromatic; sweet floral.
- **Cinnamon.** Warming sweetness (Ceylon vs Cassia varieties).
- **Ginger.** Heat; antioxidant.
- **Cloves.** Sharp, slightly numbing.
- **Black pepper.** Background warmth.
- **Star anise.** Liquorice leaning aniseed.
- **Nutmeg.** Warm, slightly creamy.
- **Allspice.** Cinnamon clove nutmeg combination flavour.
- **Bay leaf.** Aromatic depth.
- **Vanilla.** Sweet rounded character.
- **Saffron.** Premium specialty addition.

How to brew spiced teas

For chai style with milk

1. Pan brew if possible (50/50 milk water with whole spices).
2. Or brew bag in mug + add hot milk.
3. Sweeten generously.
4. Steep 4-5 minutes.

For winter spiced black

1. 1 bag per 200ml.
2. Boiling water.
3. Steep 4-5 minutes.
4. Drink black with optional honey, or with milk.

For caffeine free spiced rooibos

1. 1 bag per 200ml.
2. Boiling water.
3. Steep 5-7 minutes.

Why spiced teas pair well with milk

Spice led blends benefit from milk's softening effect. The whole spices (cardamom, cinnamon, etc.) integrate beautifully with dairy or oat milk. The cup becomes richer, more comforting, more dessert leaning.

The cooking with spiced tea opportunity

Spiced teas work in cooking:

- Spiced tea poached pears or apples
- Chai spiced rice pudding
- Spiced tea braising liquid for pork
- Mulled wine with chai tea concentrate
- Chai spiced biscuits and cakes

More on cooking with tea.

Caffeine across spiced teas

Type	Caffeine per cup
Black tea based chai	30-50mg
Strong CTC chai (Tetley Masala)	40-60mg
Rooibos chai	0mg
Spice only blend (Pukka After Dinner)	0mg
Decaf chai	2-5mg

UK spiced tea brands

- **Pukka.** Wide spiced tea range (After Dinner, Three Ginger, Three Cinnamon, Vanilla Chai). More Pukka.
- **Twinings.** Spiced Apple & Cinnamon, Spiced Chai, Christmas Tea.
- **Tetley Masala Chai.** Mainstream Indian style chai.
- **Drink Me Chai.** Sachet based chai latte specialist. More here.
- **Whittard.** Various spiced specialty blends.

Cautions

- **Liquorice containing blends.** Heavy daily intake can push up blood pressure.
- **Pregnancy.** Spiced black teas carry caffeine, and in pregnancy the NHS limit is 200mg a day across everything, so count these cups. Ask your midwife if unsure. Discuss with midwife if heavy daily intake.More on pregnancy and tea.
- **Reflux.** Some spices can trigger reflux in sensitive individuals.
- **Caffeine sensitivity.** Standard tea based caffeine.

FAQ

What's spiced tea? Tea blended with warming spices, chai, Christmas tea, turmeric blends, ginger blends.

Best UK spiced tea? Pukka After Dinner after meals; Tetley Masala for traditional chai; Pukka Turmeric Active for a turmeric led cup.

Caffeine? Depends on base. Black tea base = 30-50mg; rooibos base = 0mg.

Best cooking application? Chai spiced rice pudding; spiced tea poached fruit.

Pregnancy safe? Spiced black teas carry caffeine, and in pregnancy the NHS limit is 200mg a day across everything, so count these cups. Ask your midwife if unsure. Avoid heavy liquorice containing varieties.

Curator's note: spiced tea is one of the most rewarding tea categories. The chai tradition is centuries old; modern UK variants (Christmas tea, turmeric blends) extend the category. Worth keeping multiple spiced teas in the cupboard for different moods. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Picks from the same corner: the herbal & fruit infusions and green tea range.

Reference noted

- EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine (2015)

FROM THE CURATOR

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Spiced tea reading

- Chai
- Masala chai
- Herbal tea overview
- How to make masala chai

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
- Loose leaf vs teabag

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