How Much Caffeine Is in Chai?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Caffeine in chai, in summary:** Yes, traditional chai is caffeinated: it is spiced black tea, so the base carries the caffeine and the spice carries nothing. How much depends on that base: black masala is strong black territory, a latte is a wildcard, a dirty chai is the strongest of the lot, a rooibos or no-tea chai is none.

Yes, traditional chai contains caffeine. Real chai is masala chai, spiced milk tea built on a black tea base, and that black tea is ordinary caffeinated Camellia sinensis. Past that plain yes there is no single figure, because chai is a category, not a tea, and the common kinds give very different results. Nearby in the caffeine pages is the chai guide.

"Chai" literally means "tea" in many languages, and what English speakers call chai is properly masala chai: black tea decocted with cardamom, ginger, cinnamon and clove, plus milk and sweetener. The cosy, milky, spiced character makes chai feel gentle, which is exactly why its caffeine is so often underestimated, so it is worth naming that mismatch rather than letting the warmth imply decaf.

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

Traditional masala chai (black tea base)

Authentic masala chai starts with a strong black tea, usually a sturdy Assam, simmered with milk and spice, see how to make masala chai and Tea India. Its caffeine is essentially that of a strong black tea, roughly the 40 to 75 mg black tea band from caffeine in black tea, sometimes towards the top because chai is brewed strong by design. No single figure holds up, though: a strong homemade masala chai simmered for a long time can sit fairly high, while a weak teabag chai is milder, so the recipe and the brewing move the number a lot.

Chai latte (often more, sometimes less)

A cafe or sachet chai latte varies enormously: some use a concentrated black tea base and land high, others are mostly spiced milk and sugar with little tea and land lower, see chai vs chai latte and Drink Me Chai. The answer is "read the product", because the format hides the dose. At a counter the useful question is a three way one: is it made from a brewed tea concentrate (caffeinated), is it rooibos based (caffeine free), or does it carry an espresso shot (high)?

Dirty chai: more, not less

The chai that catches people out is the "dirty chai", a chai latte with a shot of espresso added. The coffee's caffeine lands on top of the tea's, which makes a dirty chai a high caffeine drink instead of a gentle one, however comforting the spice makes it feel. Anyone choosing chai to cut caffeine should avoid this one specifically.

Rooibos and caffeine free chai

Rooibos chai or herbal chai blends use a caffeine free base and contain no caffeine at all, the spice without the stimulant, see Dragonfly Cape Chai Rooibos and the low caffeine list. This is the route for an evening chai or for children. A herbal "chai spiced" blend with no tea base is caffeine free for the same reason, and turmeric "golden milk", often shelved next to the chai, contains no tea at all.

Why it is brewed strong

Chai is traditionally decocted, simmered hard with milk, which extracts efficiently, so a black based chai tends towards the upper end of the black tea range rather than the lower, the strong brew principle of this cluster applied by the recipe itself.

Practical budgeting

Treat a black based chai as a strong black tea where caffeine is concerned; treat a rooibos chai as caffeine free; treat a latte as "depends, check it". The portable rule, on a shelf or at a counter, is read the base: a black tea base means caffeinated, a rooibos or no-tea base means caffeine free, and an added espresso shot means high. In pregnancy mind the black based versions, see is black tea safe in pregnancy and the caffeine guide.

Bottom line

Yes, traditional chai has caffeine. Past that it is a question about which chai: black based masala chai is strong black territory, a latte is anywhere, a dirty chai is the strongest of the lot, a rooibos or no-tea chai is none. The spice carries no caffeine; the base decides everything.

Chai caffeine, in one place

Kind of chai	Base	Caffeine
Traditional masala chai	strong black, usually a sturdy Assam	black tea territory, often the upper end (~40 to 75mg+)
Cafe or sachet chai latte	concentrate or syrup, variable tea	anywhere, depends entirely on the product
Dirty chai	chai latte plus an espresso shot	high: coffee stacked on tea
Decaf chai	decaffeinated black	low, though never quite zero
Rooibos or herbal chai	caffeine free base	none
No-tea spiced blend or golden milk	spice or turmeric, no tea	none

Budgeting the caffeine

General guidance puts a sensible daily ceiling around 400mg for most adults and about 200mg in pregnancy, from all sources combined, so a black based chai counts as a strong black tea against that, a rooibos chai as effectively free, and a latte as a wildcard until the label says otherwise. The black base also carries L theanine, which tends to make the same dose feel smoother and more sustained than coffee. If you want it gentler the levers are free: less tea in the pot, a shorter simmer, or drink it earlier in the day. For true zero, move to a rooibos or no-tea base. This is general information, not medical advice.

Want to actually buy a good one?

If chai is your drink, a good base tea and whole spices make a far better one than a syrup. The chai teas below are the ones that fit this question, so start with them. To see the wider range, browse chai and black tea at teas.co.uk or the full tea shop. Pick a chai from its description and what each cup works out at, and a UK order over £35 ships free.

Browse the tea range

Reference noted

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

Sensible options on the same shelf: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. The full tea shop is there for the rest, with free UK delivery past £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Freshness beats provenance for most drinkers. Buy a smaller bag more often.

More caffeine reading

- Chai guide
- How to make masala chai
- Chai vs chai latte
- Ultimate caffeine guide

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
- Caffeine-free tea
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