# Iced Chai: Concentrate, Dilution and Milk Guide

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Iced chai, in summary:** Iced chai is chilled spiced milk tea, best from a strong concentrate over ice; mind the sugar.

Iced chai should taste of tea and spice that happen to be cold, not of melted ice with a memory of cardamom. Almost every weak, watery iced chai fails for the same reason, and once you understand it the drink becomes very easy to make properly.

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

## The dilution problem, and the fix

The single mistake behind disappointing iced chai is treating it like hot chai poured onto ice. Ice melts, and a brew built to taste right hot will taste thin and washed out the moment it is cold and diluted. The fix is to build it deliberately strong, knowing it will be let down by both chilling and melt. Brew the spiced tea noticeably stronger and a little more sweet and spiced than you would want it hot, because cold dulls both sweetness and aroma on the palate. Compensate up front and the finished cold drink lands exactly where a hot one would.

## Two ways to make it

**Brew hot, chill fast.** Make a strong spiced masala chai decoction, simmering crushed cardamom, ginger, cinnamon and clove with a generous amount of strong black tea, but use less water than usual so it is concentrated. Sweeten it while hot, since sugar dissolves cleanly in heat and barely at all in a cold glass. Cool it quickly and refrigerate until properly cold, then pour over ice and add cold milk to taste. This is the fastest route and the most reliable.

**Cold brew the tea.** For a smoother, less tannic result, steep the tea and bruised spices in cold water in the fridge overnight, then strain. It is gentler and rounder but slower, and you must still sweeten with a sugar syrup rather than granulated sugar because nothing granular will dissolve in a cold brew.

## A build cold ratio guide

Built cold, the proportions are not the same as a hot mug, because the ice is part of the recipe rather than an afterthought.

| Component | Per tall glass | Why |
|---|---|---|
| Strong chilled spiced tea | 150ml | Brewed double strength to survive melt |
| Cold milk or oat milk | 100ml | Full fat; thin milk vanishes |
| Sugar syrup | 1 to 2 tsp | Dissolves cold; granulated will not |
| Ice | Large cubes | Slow melt, less dilution |

## The details that matter cold

Sweeten with a simple sugar syrup whenever the drink is built cold; dry sugar simply sits at the bottom of the glass. Use full fat dairy or oat milk, since thin milks vanish entirely against ice and spice. Chill your serving glass if you can, and use larger ice cubes, which melt more slowly and dilute the drink less than crushed ice or small cubes. A clever trick is to freeze leftover chai concentrate into cubes and use those as the ice, so melt strengthens the drink instead of weakening it.

## Making a jug for a crowd

Iced chai is an excellent thing to make ahead for people. Brew a strong, sweetened, spiced tea base with no milk, chill it, and keep it in a jug in the fridge. When guests arrive, fill glasses with ice, pour the cold base two thirds full and let everyone top up with the milk of their choice, dairy or oat, so one batch serves every preference. Because the milk is added per glass rather than stored, the base stays fresh for two or three days and the drink never develops the stale, cooked milk note that a pre mixed jug would.

## Iced masala chai versus an iced chai latte

An iced masala chai is the spiced tea decoction itself, chilled, with a splash of cold milk: tea forward, lightly sweet, refreshing. An iced chai latte is milkier and sweeter, closer to a cold chai latte, often built from a concentrate or syrup over a lot of cold milk and ice. Both are valid summer drinks. Knowing which you actually want stops you being disappointed by a cafe handing you the milky one when you wanted the brisk one.

## Two recipes for warm weather: chai lollies and a chai frappe

**Chai lollies.** Sweeten a batch of strong spiced tea slightly more than you would to drink it, stir through an equal quantity of milk or oat milk, pour into lolly moulds and freeze. They make a lightly spiced treat for children and a tidy way to use up chai that would otherwise go to waste.

**Chai frappe.** Blend strong, cold, sweetened spiced tea with cold milk and a good handful of ice until thick and frothy. It is the homemade answer to the blended iced chai a chain will sell you for several pounds, with the sugar set by you rather than by a syrup pump, and it takes about a minute.

## A cleaner spiced iced tea, without milk

Not every iced chai needs milk. For a sharper, more refreshing summer drink, brew the spiced tea strong, sweeten it lightly while hot, chill it hard and serve it over plenty of ice with a squeeze of lemon or a few mint leaves and no dairy at all. It reads more like a spiced iced tea than a creamy chai, and it is far more thirst

quenching on a hot day than the milky version. It is also the easiest one to scale into a big jug for a garden, since there is no milk to manage per glass.

### How it compares to Thai iced tea

People often meet a brilliantly orange, very sweet, very creamy iced tea in Thai restaurants and assume it is iced chai. It is a cousin, not the same drink. Thai iced tea is a strongly brewed, often heavily sweetened black tea, traditionally coloured and finished with condensed or evaporated milk poured over ice. It shares the strong tea over ice with milk shape of an iced chai but is sweeter, richer and built around sweetened condensed milk rather than a spice mix. If you like that style, an iced chai built milky and a little sweeter than usual, with a touch of evaporated milk, gets you most of the way there with the spice added.

### Sweetening a cold drink without it tasting flat

Cold blunts sweetness on the palate, which is why a cold drink often needs a little more sugar than the same drink hot to taste balanced rather than flat, and why the sugar must be in a form that actually dissolves. A simple syrup, equal parts sugar and water boiled briefly and cooled, is the reliable answer and keeps in the fridge for weeks. Honey works but should be loosened in the hot tea before chilling. A spiced syrup, made by simmering the chai spices into that sugar syrup, is a clever upgrade that sweetens and spices in one move and is excellent stirred into a plain cold tea.

### Glass, ice and the order you build it

Small mechanical choices change the finished glass more than people expect. Build it in a tall glass rather than a short one so there is room for enough ice to keep it properly cold without the drink becoming all ice. Add the ice first, then the cold strong tea, then the milk last poured slowly over the back of a spoon, which gives the attractive layered look before you stir and also stops the milk clouding flat. If you are using frozen chai cubes instead of plain ice, allow for the fact that they sweeten and strengthen the drink as they melt, so start the base a touch less sweet. None of this is fussy once it is habit, and it is the difference between a glass that holds up to the last mouthful and one that is grey water halfway down.

### Common questions

**Why is mine always watery?** The base was not strong enough for the ice. Brew it roughly double strength and the problem disappears.

**Granulated sugar will not dissolve, what do I use?** A simple sugar syrup, or sweeten the tea while it is still hot before chilling.

**Best milk for iced?** Full fat dairy or barista oat. Thin milks disappear against ice and spice.

Cold drinks expose a weak tea even more harshly than hot ones, so the base leaf does the heavy lifting here. A ready spiced chai blend from our shop, on a brisk Assam, brews a strong, properly spiced base that survives ice, milk and the freezer, which is precisely what an iced chai, a lolly or a frappe needs.

### Reference noted


- NHS: Common cold

Shopping notes for this topic: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. More in the tea shop; baskets over £35 go out with no delivery fee in the UK.

FROM THE CURATOR

*teas* · Pick what you'll actually drink every day. The chai you make a second glass of is worth more than the one you admire.

### More from the tea wiki

- The history of tea
- Loose leaf vs teabag
- Tea tasting for beginners
- Tea and caffeine
- Herbal tea
- Green tea
- Tea storage
- Tea ethics & sustainability


**Earn rewards on teas.co.uk**

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

**+100 pts**

**Create your free account**

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



**100 pts = 1 tree**

**Plant a tree in Scotland**

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



teas.co.uk · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@teas.co.uk · 3-click cancel at teas.co.uk/cancel/