How to Make Masala Chai at Home

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Masala chai, in short:** Real masala chai is simmered, not steeped: a sturdy black tea and whole bruised spices cooked in milk and water, sweetened in the pot.

Real masala chai is not a teabag in hot milk or a syrup, it is a decoction: black tea and bruised whole spices simmered in water and milk, sweetened in the pot and strained. A clear guide gives you the authentic method and how it differs from the cafe shortcut.

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

What you need

For two cups you need 2 cups of water and 1 cup of milk (adjust to taste), 2 to 3 teaspoons of strong black tea (Assam style CTC is the traditional pick, as it holds its own against milk and spice), bruised whole spices (cardamom, ginger, cinnamon, clove, often black pepper), and sugar to taste. There is no single correct masala; the spice mix is personal and regional.

How to make it, step by step

Lightly bruise the spices and add them to the water with the ginger; bring to a simmer and let the spices infuse for a few minutes. Add the tea and simmer briefly, then add the milk and bring back to a gentle simmer (watch it does not boil over), simmering a few minutes more so it properly decocts. Sweeten in the pot to taste, then strain into cups.

How to make it genuinely good

Good masala chai comes from decoction, not steeping: simmering in water and milk is what draws out the spice and the tea and gives chai its real character. Use a sturdy tea that holds up against milk and spice, bruise whole spices instead of reaching for stale ground ones, and tune the spice, strength, milk and sweetness to your own taste over a few attempts; that variation is the tradition, not a mistake.

One thing to know

This real method is why homemade chai tastes of brewed tea and spice rather than vanilla syrup; a cafe or powder "chai latte" is often a sweet syrup or spiced powder reconstituted with milk, a different, usually much sweeter drink. Masala chai is also caffeinated (black tea base), so it is a real, if gentle, lift, not a decaf. Made

at home this way, the tea, spice, caffeine awareness and sugar are all firmly yours to control.

Masala chai at home, at a glance

Element	Short rule
What it is	Strong black simmered with whole spices in milk and water
Tea	Sturdy Assam style black that survives a simmer
Spices	Whole, bruised: cardamom, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, pepper
Method	Simmer, do not just steep; sweeten in the pot to taste
Vs deep guide	This is the home quick version; the from-scratch guide goes deeper

Reference noted

- Britannica: Tea

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Match the tea to the moment. Chai at 6am and chai at 4pm do not have to be brewed the same way.

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