Pumpkin spice tea and pumpkin chai: what is actually in them?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

There is almost never any pumpkin in it. "Pumpkin spice" is the spice mix used to season pumpkin pie: cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and cloves, sometimes with allspice or mace. It is named after the pie, not after the vegetable, and spice makers sell it as exactly that. McCormick pumpkin pie spice

So a pumpkin spice tea is a spiced tea. If you want actual pumpkin, you have to cook it.

Four products with similar names

What it says	What is usually in it	Caffeine?
Pumpkin spice tea	Black or rooibos tea with warm spices and flavouring	Yes, if the base is tea
Pumpkin chai	A masala chai profile leaning on cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg	Yes
Pumpkin spice latte powder	Sugar, milk powder, spices, flavouring; sometimes a little tea or coffee	Depends on the base
Pumpkin spice syrup	Sugar syrup with flavouring, for adding to drinks	No

Two questions sort them out: **is there tea in the ingredients** (that is your caffeine answer), and **is it a powder** (that is usually your sugar and milk answer).

Pumpkin spice versus chai: they are not the same mix

They share cinnamon, ginger and cloves, but the emphasis differs.

- **Pumpkin spice:** leans sweet and baked: cinnamon and nutmeg forward, aimed at pastry and cream.
- **Masala chai:** leans aromatic and warming: cardamom and black pepper carry it, with ginger and cinnamon behind. Cardamom is what makes chai taste like chai, and it is rarely in a pumpkin mix.

That is why a pumpkin chai tastes like a sweeter, rounder chai rather than a different drink entirely. Our chai vs chai latte guide covers the rest of that family.

Make it yourself in two minutes

You do not need a seasonal box.

Pumpkin spice tea: brew a strong mug of black tea or masala chai, stir in ¼ teaspoon of pumpkin pie spice (or cinnamon plus a pinch of nutmeg), add milk and a little maple syrup or brown sugar.

A proper pumpkin version: whisk a tablespoon of pumpkin purée into warm milk with the spices before adding it to strong chai. That is the version that actually tastes of pumpkin, because it contains some.

Want it caffeine-free? Use a rooibos base and the same spices.

For baking, our roasted pumpkin chai baked oats uses real roasted pumpkin and a strong chai brew, and there is an existing pumpkin spice tea latte in the recipe collection.

Reading the box before you buy

- **Ingredients, not the picture.** A pumpkin on the front is decoration.
- **"Natural flavouring"** is a flavouring ingredient, not fruit or vegetable pieces. See what natural flavouring means.
- **Check the base** if caffeine matters: black tea, rooibos or none.
- **Watch the sugar** in latte powders and syrups: they are often mostly sugar.

Common questions

Does pumpkin spice tea taste of pumpkin?
No. It tastes of the spices that go into pumpkin pie. Pumpkin itself is mild and savoury.

Is pumpkin spice tea caffeine-free?
Only if the base is rooibos or a herbal blend. Read the ingredients.

What spices are in pumpkin spice?
Cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and cloves, sometimes with allspice or mace.

Can I use pumpkin pie spice in chai?
Yes, though chai wants cardamom and black pepper too. Add a crushed cardamom pod for a more chai-like result.

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