Chai: Which Type to Buy

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **UK chai map, in summary:** The product by product chai map: bags, latte sachets, concentrates and caffeine free versions, and which one matches how you actually drink chai.

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

Chai is the umbrella term for spiced black tea (and increasingly spiced rooibos and spice-only blends). The UK chai shelf splits into four real subcategories: traditional masala bagged, latte concentrates, instant sachets, and caffeine-free spice blends. This is the working list of every chai product worth knowing about, organised by subcategory and use case.

Subcategory 1: Traditional Masala Chai (bagged or loose)

Black tea base + cardamom + cinnamon + ginger + cloves + black pepper. Brewed with milk and sweetened. The authentic Indian preparation.

- **Twinings Spiced Chai.** Mainstream supermarket option. Decent introduction, slightly thin compared to specialist brands.
- **Tetley Masala Chai.** CTC Assam-based. Stronger body, made for milky brewing.
- **Yogi Chai (Classic Indian).** US brand, well-distributed in UK. Black tea base with a herbal lean.
- **Pukka Vanilla Chai.** Black tea + vanilla + sweet warming spices. Organic. More Pukka here.
- **Clipper Organic Masala Chai.** Fairtrade, organic, high spice content.
- **Drink Me Chai (loose).** UK chai specialist. Loose-leaf masala chai for traditional pan-brewing.

Subcategory 2: Chai Latte Concentrates (liquid syrups)

Pre-brewed and sweetened concentrates. Mix 1:1 with hot milk. Café-style chai latte at home.

- **Tea India Chai Latte Concentrate.** Authentic Indian-brand concentrate. Strong spice profile.
- **Pacific Foods Chai Latte (US import).** Less common in UK but available online.
- **Numi Spiced Chai Concentrate.** Organic, specialty grocers.

Concentrate caveat: most are heavily sweetened. If you're cutting sugar, brew traditional bags instead.

Subcategory 3: Instant Chai Sachets (powdered)

Sachet contents: milk powder + sugar + spice + tea extract. Just add hot water. Convenience-focused, tastes more like spiced milk than traditional chai.

- **Drink Me Chai Spiced Chai Latte sachets.** UK favourite. Original, vanilla, salted caramel, dirty chai variants.
- **Drink Me Chai Spiced Chai Latte (caffeine-free).** Spice-only sachet, no tea base. More on caffeine-free chai.
- **Cafédirect Chai Latte sachets.** Fairtrade option.
- **Sharps Chai Latte sachets.** Budget option, available in supermarkets.

Subcategory 4: Caffeine-Free Chai (rooibos or spice-only)

For evening drinking or caffeine-sensitive drinkers.

- **Pukka After Dinner.** Cardamom-led, fennel, ginger, liquorice. Caffeine-free. Quick Buy.
- **Yogi Egyptian Liquorice Chai.** Caffeine-free spice blend with liquorice.
- **Clipper Sweet Cinnamon Chai.** Rooibos-based, caffeine-free.
- **Twinings Spiced Apple & Cinnamon.** Cinnamon-forward, caffeine-free.

Specialist and themed chais

- **Chocolate chai.** Drink Me Chai do a chocolate spiced latte. Rich, dessert-leaning.
- **Salted caramel chai.** Drink Me Chai. Sweet, rich, with a cult following.
- **Dirty chai.** Café concept, chai latte + espresso shot. The instant version exists from Drink Me Chai.
- **Iced chai.** Brew double-strength masala chai, cool, pour over ice with milk. Most chai brands work for iced preparation.
- **Turmeric chai.** Yellow chai variant, turmeric replaces or accompanies traditional spices. Pukka Turmeric Active is the cleanest UK example.

What to buy when

Use case	Buy
Traditional pan-brew with milk	Tetley Masala Chai or Drink Me Chai loose
Tea-bag convenience	Twinings Spiced Chai or Pukka Vanilla Chai
Café-style latte at home	Drink Me Chai sachets or chai concentrate
Evening / caffeine-free	Pukka After Dinner or Drink Me Chai caffeine-free sachet
Dessert / treat	Salted caramel or chocolate Drink Me Chai sachet

Making chai at home (no products needed)

For under £3 of pantry spices you can outdo most commercial chai. Heat 200ml water + 200ml milk in a small pan. Add: 4 cardamom pods (cracked), 1 small piece cinnamon stick, 4 cloves, 1 thin slice fresh ginger, a pinch of black pepper, half a teaspoon CTC Assam tea (or 1 tea bag). Simmer 5-7 minutes. Strain. Sweeten to taste with sugar or honey. The result is significantly better than any tea bag.

Caffeine across chai products

- Traditional masala chai: 30-50mg per cup (depends on tea base).
- Strong CTC-based masala chai (Tetley, Indian-brand): 40-60mg per cup.
- Decaf chai: 2-5mg per cup.
- Caffeine-free chai (rooibos or spice-only): 0mg.
- Chai latte sachets: 25-40mg (smaller tea content, diluted with milk powder).
- Dirty chai (chai + espresso): 90-130mg (chai + 60-80mg espresso).

FAQ

What's the best chai brand UK? Drink Me Chai for sachet convenience. Pukka or Clipper for organic bagged. Tetley Masala for traditional milky brewing.

Is chai latte the same as chai tea? No. Chai latte is chai brewed strong and combined with steamed milk. Chai tea is the spiced black tea before milk is added.

How do I make authentic chai at home? Pan-brew CTC Assam with cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, pepper in a 50/50 milk-water mix for 5-7 minutes. Sweeten to taste.

Caffeine-free chai brand? Pukka After Dinner or Drink Me Chai's caffeine-free sachet are the most accessible.

Curator's note: chai is the most undervalued category on the UK shelf. Most “chai” people drink is sachet tier, but the traditional pan brewed version is a different drink altogether, it doesn't taste like chai latte at Starbucks, it tastes like the real thing. Worth the seven minutes. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Read the chai pillar to understand what chai actually is, and this map to choose between products. Read the base on the box, since "chai" alone says nothing about caffeine or whether there is real tea in it. Buy the version that matches your habit from the full tea shop or a Pukka chai.

A natural follow-on: the chai range.

Reference noted

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

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Make the chai you crave, not the one the shelf points you to. Curiosity is the only reliable

guide.

More chai-side reading

- Chai tea (the full pillar)
- Caffeine-free chai
- black tea reference
- Best tea brands UK

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
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