Rooibos Chai

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Rooibos chai, in summary:** The generic caffeine free route to chai: warming spice on a sweeter, mellow rooibos base, zero caffeine, forgiving to brew, evening friendly.

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

Rooibos chai is the South African / global solution to caffeine free chai, South African red bush tea + chai spices. The cup retains all the warming spice character of traditional masala chai while eliminating the caffeine. Pregnancy friendly, evening friendly, child friendly, and dramatically more accessible than most caffeine free herbal teas.

Why rooibos works as a chai base

Rooibos has natural sweetness and woody vanilla character that pairs beautifully with chai spices. Unlike pure spice only "chai" (which can taste thin), rooibos provides:

- Enough body to stand up to milk
- Natural sweetness, reduces need for added sugar
- Sweet woody undertone, complements cardamom and cinnamon
- Zero caffeine, drink any time

The combination is really satisfying, closer to traditional masala chai than spice only alternatives.

What's in rooibos chai

- **Rooibos.** South African red bush tea base.
- **Cardamom.** Dominant chai aromatic.
- **Cinnamon.** Warming sweetness.
- **Ginger.** Gentle heat.
- **Cloves.** Sharp depth.
- **Black pepper.** Background warmth.
- **Sometimes: vanilla, star anise, fennel.**

The South African origin (Cape Chai)

South Africa's Western Cape, where rooibos is native, adapted chai latte culture in the 1990s-2000s, replacing the typical Indian black tea base with local rooibos. "Cape Chai" became standard café offering. The tradition spread internationally as caffeine free chai latte options expanded.

What rooibos chai tastes like

Sweet, warming, recognisably chai. The cup is amber red (rooibos colour) with the full chai spice aromatic. Drinks beautifully with milk and slight honey. Many drinkers actually prefer rooibos chai to traditional masala chai in the evening.

How to brew

1. 1 tea bag per 200ml.
2. Just boiled water (~95°C). Rooibos tolerates full boiling.
3. Steep 5-7 minutes for full extraction.
4. Rooibos chai works black or with a splash of milk.
5. Sweetener optional, rooibos's natural sweetness often suffices.

Rooibos chai latte

1. Brew 1 bag in 100ml water for 5 minutes.
2. Heat 200ml whole milk (or oat milk) to just below boiling.
3. Combine. Stir.
4. Sweeten with honey if desired.
5. Optional: cinnamon dust on top.

A properly satisfying chai latte with no caffeine.

Use cases

- **Evening chai.** The reason most drinkers buy this: the evening chai habit without the caffeine.
- **Pregnancy.** 0mg caffeine; chai spices generally safe in moderation. More on pregnancy and tea.
- **Children.** For children's rooibos chai, ages and doses are questions for a GP, health visitor or pharmacist rather than us.
- **Caffeine sensitive drinkers.** Anxiety prone, migraine prone, sleep affected.
- **Iced summer drinking.** Cold brewed rooibos chai is excellent. More on cold brew.

UK rooibos chai brands

- **Dragonfly Cape Chai Rooibos.** Organic; specifically Cape Chai style. More here.
- **Good Earth Rooibos Chai.** Mainstream accessible alternative. More here.
- **Yogi Egyptian Liquorice Chai.** Different style; liquorice forward.

Caffeine

0mg. Both rooibos and the chai spices are naturally caffeine free.

Cautions

- **Pregnancy.** Rooibos chai in pregnancy still counts toward the NHS limit on herbal tea, 4 cups a day, and liquorice root should be avoided. Ask your midwife or pharmacist if unsure. Some sources advise caution against heavy daily liquorice in pregnancy (where rooibos chai contains liquorice).
- **Allergies.** Rooibos legume cross reactions uncommon.
- **Children.** For children's rooibos chai, ages and doses are questions for a GP, health visitor or pharmacist rather than us.

Comparison with traditional masala chai

Attribute	Traditional masala chai	Rooibos chai
Base	Black tea (Assam CTC)	Rooibos
Caffeine	30-50mg	0mg
Body	Robust malty	Sweet woody
Sweetness	Needs added sugar	Naturally sweet
With milk	Yes	Yes
Best time	Morning/afternoon	Anytime / evening
Pregnancy	Within caffeine limits	Generally safe

FAQ

Is rooibos chai really caffeine free? Yes, completely. Rooibos has 0mg; chai spices have 0mg.

Does it taste like real chai? Recognisably chai. The sweet woody rooibos base is slightly different from black tea but pairs beautifully with chai spices.

Pregnancy safe? No caffeine, but not automatically fine: NHS pregnancy guidance keeps herbal tea to 4 cups daily and rules out liquorice root; check unfamiliar blends with your midwife.

Best for evening drinking? Yes: a chai with no caffeine to disturb sleep.

Best UK brand? Dragonfly Cape Chai Rooibos for organic premium; Good Earth Rooibos Chai for mainstream.

Curator's note: rooibos chai is one of the real wins of the caffeine free category. The black tea to rooibos swap retains nearly all the chai character while opening up evening, pregnancy, and child drinking. Worth keeping in the cupboard. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Rooibos chai, in one place

Aspect	Rooibos chai
Base	rooibos, a caffeine free South African herb, not tea

Aspect	Rooibos chai
Caffeine	none
Taste	warming chai spice on a sweeter, mellower, woody base
Best for	evening, caffeine sensitivity, pregnancy
Brew	fully boiling water, real steep; forgiving, can be simmered

For everyday teas relevant to this topic: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Shop the tea range at teas.co.uk for rooibos chai and every other caffeine free cup, with free UK delivery past £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Pick rooibos chai on the cup, not on the label. Explore other chais once rooibos chai has shown you what you like.

Rooibos chai reading

- Chai tea (the pillar)
- Chai category
- Caffeine free chai
- Chai from scratch

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
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