

exotic spiced tea of india

masala chai

by Charlene Phillips



The word "Chai" is from the Chinese word Cha, meaning tea, and the word "Masala" meaning spice. Historically, Masala Chai is an authentic revered drink with recipes that date back over 5000 years. In America, the term Chai is most commonly associated with a spiced powdered or instant tea drink. The coffee counter variety is usually made from ground tea, powdered milk, and a lot of sugar.

Traditionally, Masala Chai is a blend of exotic spices and Indian black tea. As hot dog vendors are a common sight here in the US, Chaiwallahs or Chai vendors are a common sight in India, setting up shop on every street corner.

Chai has had an enormous impact on American culture. It is sold in every imaginable form. You can find Chai scented bath products, candles, Chai flavored candy, and more. There are over 100 American vendors who sell the drink known as "Chai." It is sold in both powdered and liquid forms. Masala spices are used to make Green Tea and Herbal varieties of Chai as well.

From scratch, a Chai vendor will make a cup of Chai with a full-bodied loose leaf tea. Assam tea from India is commonly used. Its rich, malty flavor is the perfect accompaniment to the traditional sweet and savory spices which are added next. The common spices used in masala chai are cloves, ginger, cinnamon, pepper, cardamom, and nutmeg. The mixture of tea and whole spices is steeped in a combination of water and milk. The sweetener, usually honey, is added to bring out the full flavors of the warm spices. Nothing replaces the warm flavor and aromas of a traditional authentic cup of Chai.

And you don't need to be a Chai vendor to make this inexpensive and easy recipe at home. The benefits include a superior tasting cup of Chai loaded with the antioxidant properties of loose tea.

Another wonderful reason to drink Chai is the healing power of its spices. In India, the ancient holistic system of health care known as Ayurveda is a common Hindu practice. The word Ayur means "life" and the word Veda means "knowledge." The Ayurvedic healing properties of ginger and cardamom are associated with digestion. Cinnamon is said to have warming properties that help relieve chills and symptoms of the common cold. Cloves can help fight feelings of lethargy, and nutmeg is said to ward off nausea. There is no

substitute for the health benefits or flavors of a good cup of masala chai.

When you are comparing Chais, be sure to look for a blend that is made with good quality loose leaf tea and whole spices. Look for spice blends that appeal to you. Not all chai recipes are the same, and the ingredients vary. When you do find your favorite, be sure to find a nice quiet spot to sit and relax. Enjoy this unique warm beverage as you savor the crisp air of fall and the beauty of the season.

For more information and Chai recipes visit:
www.tealightfultreasures.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Charlene Phillips is the founder of the Rochester company Tealightful Treasures, a national business focused on teas and allied products.



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