

Masala Chai

Swick

Makes 4 to 6 cups s | Active Time: 10 minutes | Total Time: 1 hour

- 3 cups water
- 15 green cardamom pods (3/4 tsp gr cardamom, or to taste)
- 12 whole cloves (1/4 tsp gr cloves, or to taste)
- 4 whole star anise (1/2 tsp gr star anise, or to taste)
- 2 to 3 lrg cinnamon sticks (1/2 tsp gr. cinnamon, or to taste)
- 1 tsp whole black peppercorns (1/2 tsp gr black pepper, or to taste)
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 2 to 4 slices fresh ginger, or to taste

To start the chai, pour the water into a medium pot and add the spices and fresh ginger slices. Bring the water to a gentle boil and then reduce the heat until the water is just simmering. Allow the spices to infuse into the water for approximately 40 to 60 minutes.

Note that if you are using ground spices, they will ultimately affect the final flavor and color of the chai. We prefer to use whole spices (besides the ground ginger, which we add both ground and fresh) as pre-ground spices tend to lose their potency rather quickly.

- 2 to 3 cups soy milk (or preferred non-dairy milk)
- 4 pieces orange zest, fresh or dried
- 2 to 5 tbsp cane sugar
- 15 to 20 grs loose leaf black tea (3 to 4 tea bags), or to taste

To finish the chai, add the non-dairy milk, orange zest, sugar, and tea. Let the tea simmer for another 15 to 20 minutes, or until it is the strength that you like. Note that the amount of non-dairy milk will depend on how creamy you like your chai and what type of non-dairy you have used and how thick and creamy it is.

Once the tea has steeped, strain the mixture and serve as desired. We like to serve it hot, but it is also nice cold over ice.

A good place to buy the spices for chai is at your local Indian grocer. The spices tend to be a lot cheaper as these are many of the spices that they use regularly for all of their amazing food. This is especially cost and time-efficient if you are making up larger batches ahead of time.

Another final note on whole spices vs. ground spices, specifically more for chai.

Whole spices retain their flavor much longer and thus tend to have richer flavors. The reason for this is that they have less surface area in comparison to the ground spices, so volatile flavor oils do not evaporate away as easily. Whole spices are also easier to strain out of the chai, so they don't necessarily leave an overpowering flavor and/or a gritty residue.

A general rule when using ground vs. whole spices is to cut the volume by 25% (3/4 tsp. ground for every 1 tsp. whole). This of course will ultimately depend on personal preference and whether or not the spices were freshly ground or were pre-ground. High-quality freshly ground spices have a more concentrated and immediate taste than whole because all of their flavor compounds have been brought to the surface. This means that they're often more potent, so reducing the amount to start with is a good idea.