

A Popular Indian Chai Recipe

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Contrary to most Americans' impression, chai in India is generally made with few spices, or none at all. The most common addition is fresh grated ginger root (as here), and/or a few crushed cardamom pods. The most important ingredient is the tea itself, which should be strong-liquoring "Assam CTC" (readily available in several brands at Indo-American grocery shops; "Wagh-Bakri" is one recommended one), and the milk—I recommend organic whole milk. Water for tea should be only briefly boiled, to conserve oxygen content and bring out the "bright" notes in the leaves. The following recipe makes two modest servings, or one generous one.

1 cup water

1 cup milk

1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger (and/or 1-2 crushed cardamom pods)

1 tablespoon CTC tea

1 tablespoon sugar

Bring water and ginger to boil. Turn off heat and add tea, milk, and sugar. Turn heat back on to medium and reheat to nearly boiling, stirring occasionally. If necessary, simmer for a few minutes to bring out rich, "red" color. Strain and serve. (I like to add a tiny bit of good honey at the end. This recipe produces a semi-sweet drink in which the flavor of the tea dominates.)