

Indian Chai Tea

In India, tea plants (called "chai" in Hindi) were traditionally used for herbal medicine. In the 1830s, the British East India Company took over the state of Assam (in northeastern India) and began a plantation system growing tea. Because the sales of this strong tea were low, the British East India Company decided to market the tea directly to the Indian people. The Indian Tea Association began to encourage factories to give tea breaks to their workers. Chai was sold like traditional British tea, which was composed of just milk and tea. Later, local tea sellers began adding spices, which brings us to our present-day recipe for chai.

This tea cozy was designed to keep a pot of tea warm prior to serving. It was made in India during the 19th century using velvet and gold thread.



Tea Cozy
1800-1899 CE from India
Now in Penn Museum Collection
48-29-71

INGREDIENTS

- Black tea (in bags or loose)
- Whole milk or powdered milk
- Sugar
- Optional Spices*: ginger, cardamom pods, cinnamon, cloves, peppercorns and/or star anise.

**You can use all the spices listed, select only a few, or even just one. Choose according to personal preference or taste. In this recipe we will be only using cardamom pods.*

This At-Home Anthropology activity was created by [Samin R.](#), a summer intern at the Penn Museum through the Bloomberg Arts Initiative.

Indian Chai Tea

STEP ONE: Pour 1 cup of water and 1-2 cardamom pods (and/or any of the other spices listed) into a pot over medium heat.



STEP TWO: In a cup or mug, combine 1 ½ teaspoon of whole milk or powdered milk with 1 teaspoon of sugar. Mix well.



STEP THREE: When water in the pot comes to a boil, add two black tea bags (or equivalent in loose tea). Steep for two minutes, or until the water is fully tinted with color.



STEP FOUR: When tea is to desired strength, remove from heat and pour into the cup with milk and sugar mixture. Mix well until drink is light brown in color. Add more milk and sugar to adjust flavor to your liking.

