This is a delicious drink for any time of the day. Usually it is enjoyed as a hot beverage, but also very good when it is chilled. Chai is the Hindi word for tea, and masala is a Hindi word that means “mixed spices.” Masala chai is generally made by boiling a mixture of milk and water with black tea leaves, infused with cardamom, clove, cinnamon, black pepper and ginger. I also like to include star anise for the flavor, and turmeric for the anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties of the curcumin it contains.

The spices listed below can be used in any quantity and combination. As you experiment, you will discover which flavors you like more or less of, and how spicy you like your tea. For two cups of tea you might start with 2 pods of cardamom, 2 cloves, 1 cinnamon stick, 3 black peppercorns, a sprinkle of dried, ground ginger, a piece of one star of star anise, and a sprinkle of ground turmeric. Once you know the proportions you prefer, you can use a coffee grinder to prepare lots of this spice mixture so it is available for tea making when you need it.

This is also delicious without the black tea for kids or anyone who avoids caffeine. Using whole spices and grinding them yourself will give you more intense flavors.

METHOD

Choose the spices you would like to use. The amount and ratio is completely up to you. I like to use about equal amounts of each of the spices listed. Some prefer primarily cardamom with little bits of some of the others.

Grind your spices in spice grinder, coffee grinder or with a mortar and pestle. If you don’t have any of these tools, you can use the flat edge of a big knife to crush them.

For each cup of tea, use half milk and half water. Heat the liquid in a sauce pan and add the spices and black tea. You use about ½ to 1 tsp of spices for each cup of tea. Bring to a boil, turn off the heat, and allow to steep for 5 minutes.

Remove spices by pouring tea through a mesh strainer, and add honey to taste.
As you experiment more with making your own chai and choosing spice ratios, you will find what you prefer.