



### **How Starbucks is changing up its chai to give customers more choices**

For more than 25 years, Starbucks Chai Latte has delighted customers with its creamy comfort and warming spices. Now Starbucks is reimagining its classic tea latte with a recipe that allows customers to customize the level of sweetness and chai flavor.



When Starbucks first opened its doors in 1971, there was no espresso bar – but dozens of wooden bins full of coffee beans, tea and spices hand-scooped for customers to enjoy at home. It wasn't until 1987 that Starbucks would become a coffeehouse with baristas who crafted coffee beverages inspired by the Italian café tradition. Over the next decade, Starbucks would go on to revolutionize coffee culture – introducing millions their first latte, cappuccino or macchiato.



In January 1998, Starbucks tried something new with a small beverage test in the Los Angeles area that showcased both the company's heritage in tea and spices and its expertise in handcrafted beverages. This new drink was made with tea inspired by masala chai, a beloved part of Indian culture for centuries ("chai" is the Hindi word for "tea"). Starbucks Chai Tea Latte was made with many of the same ingredients as traditional chai – like black tea, cinnamon, clove, ginger and other spices – and combined with steamed milk and topped with foam. Starbucks Chai Tea Latte was an instant hit. Later that year, the Los Angeles Times declared, "Chai It, You Liked It!"

By 1999, the Chai Latte and Iced Chai Latte became a permanent part of the menu across the United States and Canada and even made it on the road at Starbucks kiosks at summer arts festivals and concerts. In the more than 25 years that followed, customers continued to love their chai. Seasonal chai beverages became new favorites, like [Iced Pumpkin Cream Chai](#) in fall or [Gingerbread Chai](#) during the holidays, and Starbucks Reserve Roasteries offered their own inventive creations (Pumpkin Spice Chai Martini, anyone?). They also loved making it their own, whether by topping it with a cap of vanilla sweet cream cold foam or turning it into a "dirty chai" with a shot of espresso.



## **Reinventing an icon**

Bernadette Apostol is one of the beverage developers on Starbucks R&D team who led the reimagination of Starbucks chai, which launches in U.S. coffeehouses on March 3. Her mission: To create a chai recipe that would enable customers to customize the beverage while keeping that iconic chai flavor that they know and love. By de-coupling sweetness and flavor, customers can adjust each component to their own preference.

“Our chai recipe now has just a hint of sweetness from the honey,” Apostol said. “Our chai includes cardamom, cinnamon, and ginger - great quality ingredients that get to shine, at whatever sweetness our customers choose to have.”

The standard recipe adds that sweetness back with the addition of classic syrup, but customers can now tailor the level of sweetness to their preference by adjusting the number of pumps. Or they can adjust the flavor by swapping classic syrup for a flavored one. Vanilla, for example, will dial up the spicy notes. The beverage is also delicious unsweetened.

## **Spring into chai**



Starting March 3, chai lovers can enjoy a fresh new flavor for the season with the launch of Iced Lavender Cream Chai on the spring menu. The beverage is made with Starbucks premium chai and milk, served over ice and topped with lavender cream cold foam. Available in U.S. coffeehouses for a limited time.