

7 REASONS TO ORDER CHAI

This spicy tea is brimming with health benefits. By nutritionist **Sharon Brooks**.

They say once you have been seduced by chai tea you never look back. This traditional tea from India, where it is known as “masala chai”, contains a mixture of aromatic herbs and spices.

Whether you choose the traditional spice combination of cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, pepper and nutmeg or the modern version with vanilla, there are several health benefits.

The components in chai deliver so much goodness. Here’s why you should be consuming it regularly.

1 Reduces risk

Common chai spices such as cardamom, cinnamon and ginger contain antioxidants and phytochemicals with cancer prevention properties.

In a nutshell, cancer cell proliferation occurs as a result of “rebel” cells growing in shape and number, damaging DNA and other healthy cells.

If consumed regularly, cardamom, cinnamon and ginger may prevent this rebellion occurring and therefore reduce the risk of certain cancers such as bowel and stomach.

2 Prevents colds

Avoiding the dreaded lurgy if it is going around is often a struggle. The antioxidants and phytochemicals found in chai work in unison to support our immune system.

Ginger, particularly, has gut boosting properties which benefit our defences. Chai is also beneficial for warming the system when you do have a cold.

3 Relives PMS

If it’s that time of the month and a hot water bottle isn’t helping, a brew of chai should do the trick.

Chai spices such as cinnamon and ginger have been shown to balance hormones and alleviate pain associated with premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

4 Boosts Metabolism

There is no need to suffer cold baths and drink hot water laced with lemon and chilli to boost your metabolism as certain diets recommend.

Did you know that some spices can help boost the metabolism? Regular consumption of chai spices stimulates digestive and pancreatic enzymes. There is also improved oxygen uptake and fat breakdown.

Chai also contributes to the feeling of fullness. All these factors combined rouse our metabolic switches.

5 Prevents Diabetes

Chai spices, if consumed regularly, may assist in regulating blood sugar levels. This is particularly important in the long term to help prevent type 2 diabetes.

In the short term, it can help offset sugar cravings.

If a person's overall diet is inadequate or contains excessive toxins such as caffeine, processed flours and sugars, chai may assist in offsetting some of the damage.

About two cups of medium to strong chai per day is needed for this benefit.

Please note, though, that this doesn't give you a free pass to consume unhealthy foods to excess.

6 Reduces Bloating

Do you suffer from bloating or gassiness? All the spices contained in chai enhance the activities of stomach and intestinal digestive components.

The spices also encourage movement through the gastrointestinal system. This prevents water and air being drawn to the area and therefore prevents bloating and gas production.

7 Boosts Energy

Common stimulants contained in energy and soft drinks, coffee and lollies provide instant energy hits followed by rapid slumps.

The Indian spices contained in traditional chai teas help facilitate energy production within the body.

They are a natural and healthy stimulant. Many chai recipes currently available in stores contain black tea as the base ingredient, and therefore caffeine. However, the goodness

from the spices leads to a more balanced energy release into cells. This is beneficial as a morning kick-start and in preventing the afternoon or early evening energy slump.

Word of warning

Chai spices, while exceptionally powerful, cannot undo the damage caused by high intakes of unnecessary fats, sugars and highly processed, nutrient-poor foods. Enjoy chai as part of a well balanced diet encompassing fresh fruit and vegetables, wholegrain, lean protein, dairy, nuts and seeds. Drink water and partake in regular physical activity. Lastly, highly treated chai blends with processed sugars, colours, flavours and syrups do not deliver the goodness of the authentic spices.