

Of Sweet, SOUR & TANGY SIPS

Like a tasteful prelude, the soothing and savouring drinks of India give you a glimpse of its rich culinary heritage.



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India has always been extolled for its rich food and beverage diversity. With every invasion, the gastronomical section had undergone transformations and so did the beverage section. The *Mughals* introduced the concept of *Sharbat* (fruit or flower fragrant beverage) which was a royal affair earlier but gradually disseminated among the Indian natives. And, the British introduced the concept of “tea-time” which was attuned by everyone and almost instantly lapped up by all the classes. Even our *Vedas* also touch upon the luxuriance of drinks. On digging through the pages of the *Vedas* to find reference of the first beverage, it drills down to *Somras*, a *Vedic* ritual drink, which was made by the extract of *som* plant and was obtained by compressing the plant between the stones. The beverages at that time were made up of extracts of fresh flower, fruits and grains.

Fresh And Healthy

Indian beverages are crowned as the most refreshing, economical, flavourful liquid refreshments unlike anywhere. The aromatic drinks with the authentic Indian touch, generous amount of spices and herbs, palatable flavours, make the Indian beverages absolutely magical. A plethora of natural and non-alcoholic beverages exists here, which are perfect to reanimate yourself in scorching summers and in congruence with being, equally comforting in the winters. The beverages of India are interesting and are an integral part of different cultures.

The most traditional Indian beverages include Tea (*chai*), *Chass*, *Sharbats*, *Shikanji*, *Lassi*, *Kanji*, *Jal jeera*, *Sol Kadi*, *Aam Panna*, *Thandai*, *Sattu Sharbat*, *Khawah* and much more. Each beverage is the forte of different communities and all the states have their local drink, which is very inviting as well as healthy. These beverages are definitely a healthier choice over the carbonated or artificially flavoured drinks available worldwide. Eating and drinking healthy is always prudent and Indian beverages prepared from natural ingredients and seasoned with spices makes it a wholesome affair.



Wide Variety

Although, the culture of pairing a particular drink with a meal is not very familiar in India yet these beverages can complement any meal or can be relished solely. *Jal Jeera*, a popular summer drink of India is also served as an appetiser to trigger your taste buds. The delightful yogurt based drink *lassi* (sweet) and *chach* (salt) originates from *Punjab*. Many variations are available now with different fruit bases.

Shikanji or *Nimbu pani* is another popular street beverage available in many cities. *Chach* is another traditional beverage and is the vernacular term for butter milk. *Thandai* is another revitalising and royal drink made up of dry fruits and milk as the base. *Sol kadi*, a regional beverage of *Maharashtra* made with coconut milk and kokum fruit. A spiced up raw mango pulp drink *Aam Panna* is another popular beverage with a distinct sweet and salty flavour fused together.

We - The Chai Lovers

The description of Indian beverage is incomplete without the mention of ‘Tea’ (*Chai*). A typical Indian street picture is incomplete without the view of ‘*Chai stall*’ and the tea vendor pouring piping hot tea in a cup, glass or *Kulhad*. Tea is not only to boost your morning, but also it is an integral part of life. Tea or *Chai* is a tradition, an experience and an indication of India’s vast cultural plurality. A lot of conversations, bonding, discussions and even decision-making can happen over a cup of tea.

Masala Chai is downright the most famous and flavoured beverage, which is relished in every Indian household and has created a buzz in the West too. *Masala chai* is an aromatic, spiced, flavoured beverage made using dried tea leaves, milk and water. *Chai* or Tea is the most legendary beverage of India, herbs, flowers, fruits and spices are added to inflate the taste. *Darjeeling*, *Assam* and *Niligiri* are the producers of the finest tea quality. In *Mumbai*, tea is referred to as ‘*cutting*’, that is half glass tea. Like coffee cafes, nowadays *chai* cafes are also gaining popularity.

The traditional Indian beverage recites tales of various cultures and people associated with them. In India, every region has a unique preparation of beverages which make us cherish memories associated with these traditional drinks. These traditional drinks come with a myriad of health benefits which makes their pre-eminence remain unchallenged and it can never go out of style. **fnb BUZZ**