



A Sweet Valentine

Instead of wine and champagne, show your loved one you really care with a nonalcoholic dessert drink. Chocolate is always a favorite on Valentine's Day, but this recipe combines cinnamon, ginger and cloves with rich cocoa for a warm spiced end to a delicious meal. Research shows that the antioxidants in tea and chocolate may improve blood vessel function and lower blood pressure. Remember though, that chocolate is a high calorie food, so moderate consumption is important for overall health.

Chocolate Chai

- 4 cardamom pods, cracked
- 1 (4-inch) piece cinnamon stick
- 4 whole cloves
- 1/4 tsp. anise seed
- 2 - 4 (1/4-inch) slices fresh ginger, peeled (see note*)
- 2 cups water
- 2 black tea bags
- 2 Tbsp. unsweetened natural cocoa powder
- 1/4 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 cups unsweetened almond or soymilk
- 3 Tbsp. agave syrup, honey or stevia, or to taste

Place cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, anise seed and ginger in medium saucepan, add 2 cups water, and place over medium-high heat. When water simmers, cover, and simmer over medium-low heat for 3 minutes. Remove from heat. Add tea bags, cover, and steep for 4 minutes. Remove tea bags, cover, and steep brewed tea with spices for 20 minutes. Strain to remove spices, and return spiced tea to saucepan.

In small bowl, whisk cocoa with 1/4 cup of hot tea until dissolved, then add to tea. Mix in vanilla, and almond or soymilk. Heat chai over medium-high heat until steaming. Sweeten to taste then pour into mugs, or divide chai among 4 mugs and sweeten it to taste individually.

*Note: Ginger root varies in thickness. If you have a fat piece, 2 slices may be enough.

Makes 4 servings.

Per serving: 120 calories, 3.5 g total fat (0 g saturated fat), 21 g carbohydrate, 4 g protein, 1 g dietary fiber, 65 mg sodium.