



CHAAYEN · FREE GUIDE

The 7-Day Thai Tea Brew Guide

From powder to a perfect orange glow — one small step a day.
Tested on the streets of Bangkok.

Welcome to the glow

Cha yen — Thai iced tea — looks simple: tea, sugar, milk, ice. But the difference between a watery orange drink and the layered, aromatic glass you get from a Bangkok street cart comes down to a handful of details. This guide gives you one of those details each day for seven days. By Sunday you'll pour a cha yen you'd pay for.

Each day takes 10–20 minutes. Days 1–2 are shopping and setup; days 3–7 are hands-on.

Day 1 — Know your mix

The foundation is a spiced Thai tea mix, not plain black tea. Authentic mixes blend strong Assam/Ceylon leaf with star anise and crushed tamarind seed — that's where the licorice depth and subtle tartness come from. The classic is ChaTraMue ("Number One Brand"), the red-label mix street vendors have used for 75+ years.

Today: get a proper mix. Avoid 'Thai tea flavored' syrups and powders — you want loose spiced leaf.

- ChaTraMue Original Thai Tea Mix — [Amazon \(US & intl.\)](#) · [Lazada \(Thailand/SEA\)](#)

Day 2 — The gear (you need less than you think)

Three things: a cloth filter sock (strains the fine leaf AND aerates the tea as you pour), a tall glass, and a spoon for floating milk. That's it. No machines.

The sock matters most — fine Thai tea leaf clogs mesh strainers and slips through coarse ones. The traditional cotton sock with a metal handle is a \$7 tool that lasts years.

- Traditional filter sock / strainer — [Amazon \(US & intl.\)](#) · [Lazada \(Thailand/SEA\)](#)
- Double-walled glasses (optional, but the condensation look is half the joy) — [Amazon \(US & intl.\)](#) · [Lazada \(Thailand/SEA\)](#)

Day 3 — Learn the ratio

Everything in cha yen hangs on one ratio. Per two glasses:

- 24 g Thai tea mix (about 4 tbsp)
- 480 ml water, just off the boil
- 25 g sugar (about 2 tbsp)
- 45 ml sweetened condensed milk (3 tbsp)
- 30 ml evaporated milk for the float (2 tbsp)

Scale it linearly — 6 glasses is simply 3× everything. Write it on a sticky note; after a week you won't need it.

Day 4 — The brew

Water just off the boil (95°C+). Add the mix to your sock, pour the hot water through and let it steep a full 5 minutes — Thai tea is meant to be brewed strong and slightly tannic, because ice and milk will soften it. Stir the sugar in while the tea is still hot so it fully

dissolves.

Weak tea is the #1 beginner mistake. If it looks too dark in the pot, it's right.

Day 5 — The pull-pour

Street vendors "pull" the tea: pouring it between two containers from height, through the sock, several times. This does two jobs — it cools the tea fast and aerates it, giving the drink its silky body and frothy top.

Practice over the sink: pour from 30–40 cm between two jugs, 4–6 passes. Watch the color shift as air works in — that's the 'sunset orange' developing.

Day 6 — Ice and the float

Fill the glass all the way with ice — cha yen is diluted by design; the ratio already accounts for it. Pour tea to about three-quarters. Then float the evaporated milk over the back of a spoon so it sits as a white cloud on the orange tea.

The float isn't decoration: you drink through it, so the first sips are creamiest and the drink evolves as you go.

Day 7 — The full run + troubleshooting

Do the whole sequence start to finish: brew, sweeten, pull, ice, float. Ten minutes, two glasses.

Too bitter? Shorten the steep to 4 minutes — don't reduce the leaf.

Too sweet? Cut the condensed milk before the sugar; sugar carries the spice notes.

Watery? More ice, not less — a packed glass melts slower than a half-full one.

No froth? Pull from higher, more passes.

Where to go from here

You now brew a better cha yen than most cafés outside Thailand. If you want the whole map — every Chaayen recipe (boba, latte, lime tea, smoothie, cake, cookies, ice cream, popsicles, cocktail), the cold-brew and concentrate methods, vegan swaps, and printable recipe cards — that's the Chaayen Recipe Vault.

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