

Easy to find and cheap to buy, Tea Eggs are a quick and easy breakfast fit for those on-the-go.



Tea Eggs

茶叶蛋

cháyè dàn

By Jackie Hong

Tea Eggs represent traditional food in China. Ever since ancient times, the Tea Egg was well-known by all Chinese people, so it has had a long history of many years. The cooking methods have changed throughout these years, but the taste hasn't. Because Tea Eggs are made with tea, after people eat them, their breath has the smell of tea, too. Also, Tea Eggs include useful nutritional elements for the body. With tea and eggs cooked together, the eggs absorb the tea's nutrition. It's good for our health.

INGREDIENTS

- Eggs: ten fresh eggs
- Tea: Oolong tea, about fifty grams
(you can also use MoLi tea [jasmine tea])
- Salt: thirty-five or fifty grams
- Caraway: fifteen grams
- Capsicum: twenty grams
- Fennel: ten grams
- Cassia: ten grams
- Anise Seed: fifteen grams
- Ginger: ten grams
- Water: enough to cover the eggs

EQUIPMENT

Boiler; Chopsticks; Scoop; Gauze material; String



DIRECTIONS

First, put the eggs in water and wash them because the eggs we use must have clean shells. We must keep them clean! Then put the fennel, cassia, anise seed, capsicum, and ginger in the gauze; bundle them together in a pouch. Also, you can put in a little curry powder. I like curry very much.

Next, use the string to tie up the gauze pouch. By doing this, you can use it many times. After everything is done, put the eggs and wrapped seasonings into the pot and add enough water to cover the eggs (about 5 cm higher). In the beginning, we use a hot fire to hard-boil the eggs.

There are many ways to hard-boil eggs, and different people prefer different methods.

Choose the method you like.

Third, after boiling them for ½ of the time, lift the lid and use chopsticks to knock the eggs and give them a little crack. This crack will allow the eggs to absorb the tea's nutritional elements and the spices' flavor. Now, put the salt and Oolong tea into the boiler and stir everything around.

Following this, a few minutes later, we can see the eggs' color turning black from the Oolong tea. Now we start to use a slow fire to simmer them for the remaining minutes. This will make the eggs absorb the flavor as slowly as possible and keep them soft.

Finally, after about five minutes, remove the pot from the fire. The Tea Eggs are done; enjoy!

Although the cooking method is simple, the cooking time is very important. Just hard-boil them your favorite way. But if you boil them too long, the ginger will make the egg whites become tough and the taste will be bitter. And if you boil them too short, the eggs won't absorb the spices.

So focus on the time.

When winter is at an end and spring is coming, Tea Eggs are called "Golden Treasures." In Chekiang, the local people call eating Tea Eggs "Taking Golden Treasures."

When I was ten years old, my mother began to teach me how to prepare Tea Eggs, but I needed a lot of practice because I couldn't control the fire very well. When I was a senior in high school, my mother put many Tea Eggs into my bag before I left home. She was afraid I wouldn't eat well at school. Whenever I eat Tea Eggs, I always remember my mother's face. I tell myself that Mother can see me, so I must do better in my studies. So, Tea Eggs and I have a love which can't be broken as easily as an eggshell is broken. This love includes my mother and me – an invaluable asset. Now I study at SIAS University and miss my mother very much, but I have a unique method to deal with this: eating Tea Eggs! When I eat them, thoughts and memories of living at home emerge before my eyes one by one.

Tea Eggs: Their preparation is simple, their taste is savory.
Tea Eggs: From childhood to now, they give me nice memories.
Tea Eggs: They're a bridge of love between my mother and me.