KAZAKH MILK TEA (SHAI)

A warm, welcoming cup poured in Kazakh homes,
where tea and hospitality are woven into daily life.

Country, Kazakhstan
Makes 2 small cups or one generous mug

INGREDIENTS
2 C water
2 black tea bags or 2 t loose black tea
1 C warm milk or light cream
1–2 t sugar (optional)
a pinch of good, grey salt (optional, traditional in some regions, to me, makes all the difference!)

METHOD
Bring the water to a boil in a small pot.
Add the tea and steep until strong.
Warm the milk or cream gently in a separate pot.
Pour the tea into cups, filling each about halfway.
Add the warm milk to fill the cups.
Stir in sugar or a pinch of salt if using.
Serve hot.

Cultural note
Tea is at the heart of Kazakh hospitality. Guests are welcomed with warm cups of *shai*, often poured with more milk than tea and served alongside sweets or dried fruits. The blend of strong black tea and warm milk reflects Kazakhstan's nomadic dairy traditions, where milk, yogurt, and cream have long been central to daily life. Whether sweetened or lightly salted, this simple drink carries the warmth and generosity of Kazakh culture.