

Hibiscus Iced Tea
Agua de Jamaica

This refreshing iced tea, pronounced AH-gwah day huh-MY-kuh, is made from dried hibiscus blossoms. Served throughout Mexico, *Jamaica* is high in vitamin C and very thirst quenching and it can be enjoyed either on its own or as a spritzer mixed with sparkling water. You'll find dried hibiscus flowers at Mexican markets, Smart & Final, and health food and natural foods markets, where you'll likely find them in the bulk herbs and spices section. To extract the most color and flavor from the hibiscus flowers, traditionally, the tea is steeped overnight in the refrigerator before being strained. Or, for a quicker version, follow the instructions below. To highlight its vibrant color, serve *Agua de Jamaica* from a clear glass pitcher.

Makes about 1 quart

Overnight (Traditional) method

1/2 cup dried Jamaica (hibiscus) flowers

5 cups water, divided

1/3 to 1/2 cup sugar or 1/3 cup runny honey or equivalent sweetener of choice

Optional: Lime wedges

- Place the dried Jamaica blossoms in a small saucepan. Cover with 1 cup of the water.
- Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer for 5 minutes.
- Pour into a tempered glass or heatproof 2-quart pitcher. Stir in the sugar and the remaining 4 cups water. Wipe up any splashes right away, as Jamaica stains.
- Refrigerate, covered, overnight or for at least 6 hours.
- Strain the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a serving pitcher. Discard the steeped flowers.
- To serve, see below.

Quick method

1/2 cup dried Jamaica (hibiscus) flowers

1 cup water

1/3 to 1/2 cup sugar or 1/3 cup runny honey or equivalent sweetener of choice

4 cups ice water

Optional: Lime wedges

- Place the dried Jamaica blossoms in a small saucepan. Cover with 1 cup water.
- Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer for 5 minutes.
- Add the honey to a tempered glass or heatproof 2-quart pitcher.
- Strain the hibiscus water through a fine-mesh sieve into the pitcher. Discard the steeped flowers.
- Stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add the 4 cups ice water and stir occasionally until the ice has melted. Wipe up any splashes right away, as Jamaica stains.

To serve: Serve the cold Jamaica “as is” or with a spritz of lime, if desired. To make a hibiscus spritzer, fill a glass two-thirds full with Jamaica and top off with chilled sparkling water. Stir, garnish with a lime wedge, and serve.

—Linda Carucci 2009, revised 2022