Drinks / Mexico

Agua de Jamaica (Hibiscus Water)

Mexico's crimson flower water — dried hibiscus petals steeped in just-boiled water until the liquid turns a deep, jewel-like garnet, then sweetened, squeezed with lime, and diluted into a tart, floral agua fresca that is at once refreshing and complex. The colour alone stops you in your tracks.

Time 30 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 60 g Dried hibiscus flowers (jamaica)
- ☐ 120 g White sugar
- ☐ 1 L Cold water (to dilute)
- ☐ 1 L Boiling water (for steeping)
- ☐ 60 ml Fresh lime juice (about 2 limes)

Let's make it.

01 Place the dried hibiscus flowers in a heatproof pitcher or bowl. Pour the boiling water directly over them — the water will turn crimson almost immediately. Stir once to submerge all the petals, then let them steep uncovered for 20 minutes. A shorter steep yields a thin pink agua; a full 20 minutes produces a deep concentrate that holds its colour through dilution. Stir in the sugar while the concentrate is still hot so it dissolves completely.

02 Set a fine-mesh sieve over a large jug or pitcher and pour the sweetened hibiscus concentrate through it. Press the spent petals gently with the back of a spoon to extract every last drop — but do not force them through the mesh, as they will cloud the liquid. Discard the spent petals. The strained concentrate should be a clear, deep ruby-red with a glossy sheen from the dissolved sugar.

03 Pour the cold diluting water into the pitcher and squeeze in the lime juice. Stir well and taste: a good agua de jamaica should be emphatically tart, with the sweetness playing a supporting role. If it tastes flat, add more lime juice. If it's too sour, add a little more sugar. Refrigerate until cold — at least 30 minutes — and serve over plenty of ice. The colour will lighten from garnet-red to a vivid cranberry-red as it dilutes, which is exactly right.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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