Drinks / Mexico

Agua de Jamaica

Dried hibiscus flowers steeped in boiling water, strained, sweetened, and served cold — a vivid crimson drink with a tart, floral, cranberry-like sourness and a refreshing finish.

Time 120 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 1 part Dried hibiscus flowers (Jamaica / roselle calyces)
- ☐ 8 parts Boiling water
- ☐ 1 part Granulated sugar
- ☐ 0.3 part Fresh lime juice
- ☐ 4 parts Additional cold water (for dilution and serving)
- ☐ 0 parts Fresh ginger (2–3 thin coins, optional)

Let's make it.

01 Bring water to a full boil and pour it over the dried hibiscus flowers in a heatproof pot or bowl. Add the ginger coins if using. Steep for 15–20 minutes — the color will transform from deep magenta-red to an inky crimson-purple within the first 5 minutes. Do not steep for much longer than 20 minutes: the floral notes become muddy and the tannic bitterness climbs past pleasant. After steeping, strain out the flowers and ginger through a fine-mesh strainer, pressing the flowers gently with the back of a spoon to extract every last drop of the vivid concentrate.

02 While the strained concentrate is still hot, stir in the granulated sugar until completely dissolved. This hot-dissolving step is key — trying to sweeten cold hibiscus with undissolved sugar crystals results in unevenly sweet agua fresca. Start with the stated amount, stir, taste, and add more in small increments. The balance point is personal: some prefer a bracingly tart jamaica with just enough sweetness to cut the edge; others prefer it closer to fruit punch. At this stage the concentrate is still too strong to judge accurately — dilution will change everything.

03 Stir the lime juice into the warm sweetened concentrate, then pour into a large pitcher and add the cold water for dilution. Stir well and taste: adjust lime, sugar, or water. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or place over a bowl of ice to speed-chill. The flavor sharpens and brightens when cold — what tastes almost too tart warm will seem perfectly refreshing at serving temperature. Serve over plenty of ice. Note that hibiscus agua fresca fades from a vivid crimson to a duller brick-red over 24 hours in the refrigerator, but the flavor is unaffected; stir before serving as any cloudiness from settled pigments is purely aesthetic.

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