

Hibiscus Punch

Serves 20

This refreshing punch is tart and sweet, fizzy and floral. It's an excellent beverage for any party or barbeque and is a perfect non-alcoholic stand-in for Sangria!

I served this recently at a Paella class and realized it's a great recipe to share with everyone.

Dried hibiscus blossoms, also known as flor de jamaica ("ha-MY-kah", can be purchased at Latino grocery markets. I've also found them in bulk in the produce section at a few Smart & Final stores around the Bay Area. The dried blossoms, steeped in hot water, make a vibrant red, tart tea that's high in Vitamin C and incredibly fragrant.

3 quarts fresh filtered water
3 cups dried hibiscus blossoms (jamaica)
3 cups granulated sugar
1 small orange, thinly sliced
1 lemon, thinly sliced
1 apple, diced
5-6 strawberries, hulled and sliced
2 litres ginger ale (or 7-up)
1 cup freshly squeezed lime juice, (about 8-10 limes)
Ice – lots of ice!

In a large stockpot, bring the water to a boil. Turn off the heat and add the jamaica and sugar. Stir to dissolve the sugar and let the tea steep for 1 hour. Strain into a clean container through cheesecloth and discard the solids. Set the mixture aside until room temperature, then put in the fridge to cool. You can do this step the day before you are serving.

Freeze the sliced orange, lemon, strawberries and diced apple. Spread them out on a tray in the freezer so that they do not clump while freezing. It's great to have the fruit individually frozen when added to the punch.

Just before serving, add the frozen fruit to the prepared tea, add the ginger ale and stir to combine. Add half the lime juice, and stir. Taste and add more lime juice if desired. It's important to achieve the balance of tart and sweet – but adjust to your own preferences!

Ladle the punch into tall glasses filled with ice – it's especially pretty if you add some of the fruit to the glasses.