



HERBAL MEDICINE

Feel Good and Stay Dry With *Hua Cha* This Summer!

Brenton Harvey, LAc, CH; Hong Ji

Hua cha literally translates to "flower tea." It is consumed year-round in northern China. "Jasmine tea" is the common name, as it is usually a tea blended with jasmine flower petals. Magnolia, rose, honeysuckle, osmanthus, or pomelo flower petals are sometimes added as well. It is sometimes referred to as *mo li hua cha* in China, which translates specifically to "jasmine flower tea," even though it may have other flowers in addition to jasmine. *Xiang pian cha* is another name for it, which means "good-smelling pieces."

There are written references of *hua cha* dating back to the Song dynasty (over 500 years ago). Its wide use is a rather new concept in China, dating back less than 100 years, according to one of my older Chinese professors. (Dr. Zhang proudly informed me that real tea aficionados would never drink an adulterated fine tea!) The truth is that low-grade or old green, red or black tea is often dressed up with jasmine flower to make it taste and smell more palatable (and thus more marketable). On the other hand, fine jasmine teas are usually made with very delicate-tasting white-haired (pekoe) whole leaf or whole needle green (often called white) teas exclusively. The flowers used range in quality as well.



Dragon phoenix hua cha.

Hua cha has risen to its place in the tea world largely due to the obvious pungent, aromatic scent of the jasmine petals blended into the tea, and the fact that commercial grades are readily available at an affordable price. There is more to the story, though, as I have learned from patients clinically, and from elders here in China.

Back in Colorado, I specialized in the treatment of female disorders, which quite often involved digestive/weight imbalances related to cold and/or yang deficiency. In addition to appropriate herbal formulas, I would usually suggest patients drink an oolong tea (red or green, depending on their constitution) for additional daily health maintenance. (I would also try to coach them away from coffee, due to its comparatively harsh purging action on the intestines and ill effects on the kidneys.) More often than not, after a female client got a whiff of a jasmine tea, there was no way to convince her that the oolong was better for her! (In some cases, the patient would agree to blend the two teas together.) Male patients were not as strongly drawn to *hua cha*.

I was discussing this observation with a female patient who happens to be very knowledgeable about aromatherapy. I explained that this observation proved to be consistent over an eight-year period, and was quite perplexing to me. She replied, "You big dummy! Don't you know that jasmine flower essence regulates female emotions?" The part about regulating emotions was a revelation to me, and made good sense, because in my observations, females tend to be more emotional creatures than men. (The

dummy-related part was not news to me, as this has been brought to my attention on more than one occasion, often by a woman!)

Elder herbalists in China have informed me that the dried jasmine flower is warming in nature, warm enough to counter the cooling effects of most green teas that it is added to. It is also highly aromatic, and helps to transform dampness. Thus, it is logical that it can be taken often during the day and after meals, in a generally cool northern climate, without creating a gastrointestinal problem for most people. It also serves as an after-meal breath freshener.

Hua cha is a good tea choice for helping in the treatment of emotions, late summer-related digestive dampness, and digestion in general. Besides that, most people like it! Enjoy!

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