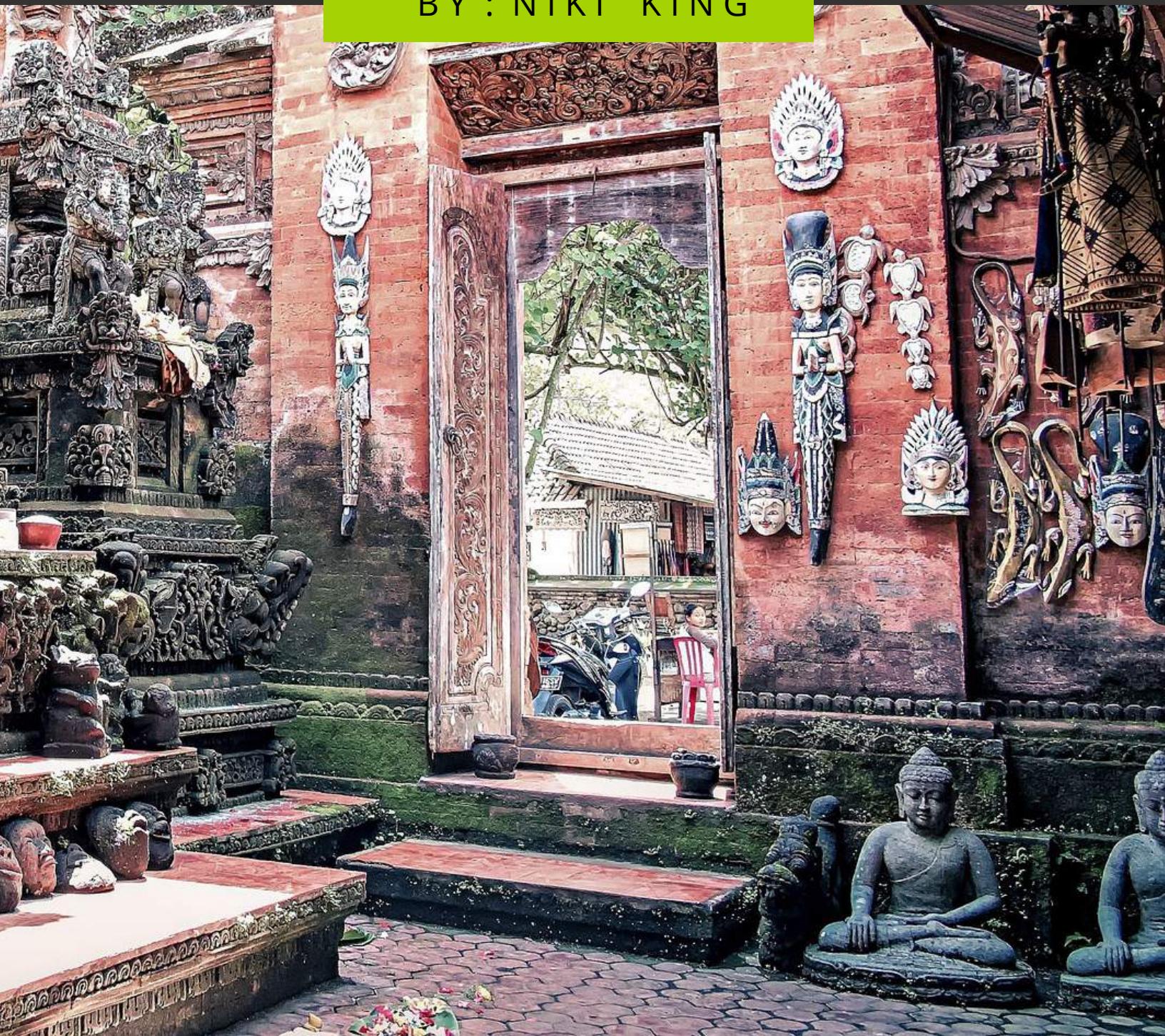


JAMU

Indonesia's Secret Cure All That Really Works

BY : NIKI KING



What is Jamu?



Jamu (JAM-OO) is a mixture of different herbs and herbal plants that is sold in Indonesia. The term 'jamu' originated from two words: 'Djampi' which means healing through medicinal mix or prayers and magic and 'Oesodo' which means health. Jamu is Indonesia's traditional herbal medicine, and is frequently associated with the Javanese culture. This traditional herbal medicine is known for its power to cure diseases. A traditional herbal medicine venerated by Indonesians of all ages. After 1,300 years of herb-smashing and pestle-pounding it is finally taking its place amongst holistic practitioners in the Western world.

Studies have been done by Western doctors dating back to the 1700's on this amazing mixture and nowadays it is gaining in popularity around the world. But remember, Jamu has been used for hundreds if not thousands of years by both Ayurvedic and Chinese medicinal practitioners.

I became interested in Jamu during my time living in Bali when it was given to me for "Bali Belly" and to deal with my tummy issues, the heat and humidity. It also is said to help against hot flashes, mosquitos and clears the skin. Now that's a pretty bold statement I agree. I guess you have to make your own decision after trying it just like I did.

Jamu sellers are considered "walking and talking pharmacies" and each village knows who makes the best Jamu... and just like at home "most say "my grandma's (nenek) is the best!" Word of mouth still prevails here!

Benefits of Jamu

Indonesians believe that the Jamu is a remedy for everything.

Jamu detoxes the liver, reduces inflammation and improves a person's immune system. It fights off bacteria and more and more research continues to surface on its incredible medicinal properties. It helps with both constipation and diarrhea in some unique manner. Many Westerners use it for the infamous "Bali Belly" It is said it reduces cancer cell growth and I have heard people swear it is better than chemotherapy. It is used to reduce cholesterol, speeds up metabolism, helps in weight loss and heals damaged skin.

Balinese people have for eons used it to increase sex drive for both men and women and it works wonders for menstrual cramps. It is no wonder that the Balinese say "It cures everything!" Jamu is known to be good for the skin, mothers make it a point to give their daughters as soon as they begin to walk. Aside from that, Jamu is also known to help fertility and breast milk production.

Jamu is taken by men as well. There are versions of Jamu that are specially made to increase one's sex drive and virility. Kuku Bima is a popular brand that is known to help increase men's sperm count. An older Jamu maker has told me that basically the younger generation is trying to make a profit out of their precious Jamu and have now started selling Jamu in pills and such but that it is not as effective like the real, natural, old fashioned method of making it. I would tend to agree.



History of Jamu



Despite the loss of many traditions due to modernization, Indonesians still cling to their belief in Jamu's transformative powers. Whilst the origin of Jamu is relatively unknown, some well-known stories relate the herbal medicine to the 17th century era, during the ruling of the Hindu Kingdom of Mataram. The relief at Borobudur Temple showed the making of Jamu for healthcare purposes with massages. The usage of Jamu and its recipes as traditional medicines was also found in palm leaf manuscripts, written in Ancient Javanese, Sanskrit and Balinese language.

Generally, Jamu ingredients are excellent sources of enzymes coupled with strong anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant and anti-septic properties. The most prominent and potent of all the possible ingredients are Turmeric, Tamarind and Ginger. The herbs having strong antioxidant and anti-cancer properties themselves, the Jamu preparation techniques help to boost their effectiveness and bioavailability. Many say it is much more effective than chemotherapy.

The traditional Indonesian herbal drink is known to have originated some 1300 years ago in the Mataram Kingdom, hence it is of no surprise that this concoction is heavily influenced by Ayurveda, a system of Hindu traditional medicine. Most Jamu drinks are made by the age old techniques of herb-smashing and pestle-pounding, with hand-scrawled recipes passed down generations upon generations. Jamu was and is still practiced by indigenous physicians. Popular in Yogyakarta and Surakarta - the ancient books on herbal medicine is kept in a royal library and Jamu medicine is prescribed to royalties and nobles in Javanese royal palaces.

Indonesians have a long history of contact with Chinese and Arab traders who introduced plants, herbs and spices and brought them with insights from Indian Ayurvedic traditions, traditional Chinese medicine, Arab healing practices and ancient Greek medicine. Now that's a combo punch right there.

History of Jamu

The abundant forests of Java provides healers with a great range of ingredients, including ginger, Javanese turmeric, galangal and cardamom, which are still popular Jamu ingredients. The dense jungles here are full of all natural organic herbs still today.

Jamu is claimed to have originated in the Mataram Kingdom era, 1300 years ago. Based on relics. The Madhawapura

inscription from the Majapahit period mentioned a specific profession of herbs mixer and combiner, called Acaraki (herbalist). The medicine book from Mataram dated circa 1700 contains 3,000 entries of Jamu recipes! This just totally blows my mind... whew!



The different Jamu prescriptions are not written down but handed down from family to family. So the medicine book had 3000 entries but the actual remedies were only verbally given from healer to healer to protect the sanctity of Jamu. I love this lineage or passing on of information to only "those who are worthy" and using it for good.

The Dayak people are indigenous to Borneo, and for many generations they have used jams also.



Is Jamu effective?

Much like a doctor-patient relationship, people return to the Jamu seller whose methods they trust. Because the ingredients are fresh and all natural; there are few side effects aside from the occasional upset stomach. So, you have to be the judge of that yourself. For me personally, aside from the fact that I am drinking it daily, while living in Bali, I am trying to only use holistic herbal remedies in my lifestyle. I am not saying I will never use Western medicine if I absolutely need it, but I prefer the natural herbal cures anytime I can find one that really resonates with me and I think it could help others. I talked to a Jamu seller here and she told me that drinking a cup a day keeps the cancer away!



The Most Commonly Used Herbs in Creating Jamu

Turmeric - held in high regard in both India and China where it is commonly used for Ayurvedic and Chinese medicinal purposes. Curcumin is said to alleviate arthritis and joint inflammation, aid in the reduction and prevention of cancer cell growth. High antioxidant and has a positive effect on cholesterol levels. Used in conjunction with 'detoxification programs' due to its cleansing and anti-inflammatory effect on the liver. Turmeric looks like a cross between ginger and a carrot. It has a brownish-reddish outer layer. If you peel off or cut through turmeric, you'll see a rich orange color like a carrot or sweet potato. Your fingers turn orange immediately as soon as you touch the root.

Ginger - known to aid gastro-intestinal issues and aid in the relief of nausea. Contains potent anti-inflammatory compounds called 'gingerols' which have been known to reduce pain and inflammation for people suffering from arthritis or sore muscles. Spiciness associated with ginger can help promote healthy sweating - relief from the flu - aids in the natural beautification process of the body

The Most Commonly Used Herbs in Creating Jamu

Raw unprocessed honey is an amazing anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-fungal ingredient. Contains both the pollen and the resin from the bee's themselves which are the elements that contain these outstanding benefits

Now that the secret is out, many families refuse to give up their age old recipes. Grandmothers pass it down to their daughters and they in turn pass it down and so on... Some families have refused to write down the exact ingredient proportions to keep the recipe in the family and despite the fact that recipes for Jamu vary from family to family, there are herbs that are included in all of the recipes. This is the list of the most commonly used herbs in creating Jamu and their individual benefits.

Herb	Benefits
Turmeric	detoxifying, curbs snoring, eases menstrual cramps, reduces odor, prevention of cancer cell growth, positive effect on cholesterol levels, liver detoxifier and kidney cleanser, speeds up metabolism, helps in weight loss, heals damaged skin
Galangal	seasickness and sore throat, help keep vocal cords performing at top notch; singers are given this drink to calm the vocal chords, anti-oxidants help in indigestion and acidity
Ginger	detoxifying, morning sickness and to warm the body, improve circulation, aids gastro-intestinal issues, helps relieve nausea, reduces pain and inflammation of sore muscles caused by arthritis
Lemon Grass	alertness, stop gum bleeding and repel mosquitoes
Tamarind	constipation and to improve skin softness, source of dietary fiber that flushes out toxins and excessive cholesterol, step up blood circulation, maintain nerve function
Sulfur	for rashes and itchy skin. Used in beauty products

Make Your Own Jamu

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup washed, roughly cut turmeric root

3cm piece ginger, roughly chopped

4 cups filtered water

2 tsp raw honey or coconut sugar

Juice of 1 lime

1/2 tsp black pepper (optional)

METHOD:

1. Put the turmeric, ginger and half cup of water in a small blender or bullet; Blend until smooth and resembles a puree.
2. In a small pot, pour the puree and the remaining water and honey. Bring to a boil. Reduce to lower heat and allow to cook for 20 minutes.
3. Turn off the heat. Add the lime juice and black pepper.
4. Strain the mixture into a bottle using a sieved funnel.

The Jamu is now ready to be served! Jamu is bitter and it is best taken if you add on a little honey to be able to drink it. It is said it is best taken immediately after preparation and there is really no specific amount one should drink. I have found; however, some say to take a shot glass full every morning and night and some say to drink 8 ounces every day. Some people sip on it all day, some say to take it when you start to feel sick. They say to warm it up just a little before drinking and it can keep in the fridge for up to three days. So, on this part, you shall have to "let your own body be your guide" which is what listening to your body truly means. For me, I took about 8 ounces in the morning and also in the evening and I have had no ill effects. Each person is different, so listen to your gut! Literally. I like to put my Jamu in a dedicated pretty glass bottle that I use only for my Jamu. By keeping my herbal elixirs and tonics in different colored bottles, it makes it easier to grab when I am in a hurry.

I hope you loved what you learned about Jamu. As more of us who are called as healers join together using herbs and natural cures, we can strengthen our own constitutions and in addition help to preserve the ancient traditions that have served so many for so long so well.



About Niki King

Niki King is a Registered Nurse from California. After getting so burned out with the healthcare system in the United States and dealing with all of the inconsistencies handed out to caregivers... from nurses to doctors at home caregivers and insurance companies, she decided to move to Ubud, Bali where she is currently living and creating amazing destination retreats for burned out caregivers. Niki is teaching caregivers everywhere how to go from "Burned out to Bold and Bodacious again"!

To learn more about Niki and what she has to offer, go to www.nikiinspired.com