



Spring White Dragon Phoenix Jasmine Pearls

Origin: Fujian Province, China

- Jasmine tea is like champagne. It goes with almost everything, stands alone, and makes both a perfect hostess gift and a fabulous iced tea drink.

- Rare, finest grade "Spring White Dragon Phoenix Jasmine Pearls" is one of the world's premiere delicacies, and most prized teas. In Chinese mythology, dragons chase only the largest, most lustrous pearls. A favorite since the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279), fine young leaf-and-a-bud sets picked in April of each year are scented several times with Jasmine blossoms and hand rolled by skilled tea-makers into pellets. The extra labor means the tea isn't cheap, but its flavor is exquisite and, as a bonus, it's as nice to look at as it is to drink. When infused with hot water, the pellets slowly unfold, releasing a wonderful, delicate, slightly sweet and floral flavor. You do not need a strainer for this tea, the heavy leaves will sink to the bottom of your tea pot.

- The tea is plucked in April and stored until August when the finest jasmine blossoms are in bloom. Night blooming white jasmine flowers are picked in the morning when the tiny petals are tightly closed and kept cool until nightfall. In the early evening the flowers begin to open with a popping sound which is the signal for the scenting to begin. Once open, the mating of the jasmine and tea leaves takes place in several applications, each taking up to four hours, after which the jasmine petals are removed. Once the petals are removed each leaf-and-a-bud set is skillfully hand rolled into a tiny pearl size ball, obviously a very labor-intensive process. The tea is then wrapped in silk mesh and dried, to set the pearl shape.

- I chose "Spring White Dragon Phoenix Jasmine Pearls" after personally cup-testing samples of Jasmine tea from several sources in China. This particular Jasmine tea presents to my palate the best all-around characteristics: a subtle yet distinct jasmine aroma and flavor, with a sweet smooth after taste. One of the major reasons for its superb cup-quality has to do with its white tea base. Quite simply, white tea has the most subtle flavor of all tea types, and consequently is capable of a more harmonious marriage with Jasmine. Most Green, Oolong, and Black teas have rather pronounced flavors which would distort the scent and taste of the Jasmine.

- White tea was once a rare and treasured tea reserved for Chinese royalty. When Song Dynasty emperor Hui Zhong proclaimed white tea to be the culmination of all that is elegant, he set in motion the evolution of an enchanting variety. For centuries white tea has been shrouded in obscurity outside of China, but today its much-beloved qualities are being discovered by tea lovers around the world.

- The white tea used in "Spring White Dragon Phoenix Jasmine Pearls" is harvested in Fujian Province and is made from the same tea plant, *Camellia sinensis*, used to make green, oolong and black teas. However, only a few special strains of *Camellia sinensis* are used to make white tea. The tea in our Jasmine Pearls is from the *Da Bai* (Big White) strain, and of a superior grade called *Bai Mu Dan* (White Peony). *Bai Mu Dan* grade is characterized by pearls made from the top grayish green leaves and silvery white buds (newly developing shoots) of the *Da Bai* strain of the *Camellia sinensis* plant. The fuzzy white appearance of the leaves gives white tea its name. Produced in a different way from all other teas, the leaves of white tea are not steamed or pan-fired but are dried in the sun. After drying the leaves are sorted by hand.

- The Perfect Cup: White teas are best when prepared like green tea. Water that is too hot will cook the delicate leaves and render an inferior-tasting, astringent cup. The ideal water temperature is between 175 and 180 degrees Fahrenheit. Since it's really not convenient to use a thermometer, simply remove the top of your kettle and when tiny bubbles (called fish eyes) are forming or rising from the bottom, that's the temperature. Place one level teaspoon (approximately 22 - 24 of these tiny pearls) per 8oz of water in a glass teapot or cup so you can watch the graceful unfurling of the pearls. We suggest you prepare this tea as it is prepared in China. Pour a small amount of heated water over the tea (just enough to cover the pearls), slowly swirl the water around for about 10 seconds, then pour the water out. The Chinese use this process not only to "wash" the tea but to slightly open the pearls. Then pour the required amount of water over the tea for brewing and steep for 2 minutes and 10 seconds (the ideal brewing time for my palate). During infusion the hot water causes the tiny pearls to open like flowers and then sink slowly to the bottom of the cup. Lightly stir the tea a couple of times (perhaps at the 45 second mark, then the 1 minute 30 second mark). The superb fresh bouquet, delicate flavor and unique leaf shape make this tea extra special. Of course, you can adjust to taste by either increasing the quantity of tea or lengthening the brewing time. Though many tea vendors indicate most teas are capable of multiple brewings, in general I have found this not to be the case (at least to my palate). However, it is my opinion with "Spring White Dragon Phoenix Jasmine Pearls" you can do 2 brewings with the same leaves and obtain fabulous aroma and taste both times. Also, the Chinese typically drink tea from cups without handles, believing if the cup is too hot to hold the tea is too hot to drink. Since white tea contains almost zero caffeine, it can be drunk frequently, anytime of the day or night. I have seen more and more Jasmine Pearls on the market and they are definitely not all the same. "Spring White Dragon Phoenix Jasmine Pearls" are meticulously crafted of superior white tea and sealed in foil bags in China for maximum freshness and quality.

- Modern research indicates white tea is high in polyphenols, a group of powerful antioxidants. In fact, since white tea of all teas goes through the least amount of processing, it has the highest amount of polyphenols.

- Price: 50g (1.76oz) **\$6.95** 100g (3.52oz) **\$13.40** 150g (5.28oz) **\$19.35** 200g (7.04oz) **\$24.80** 250g (8.80oz) **\$29.75**

NOTE: 50g bag of pearls makes approximately 25 cups, 100g = 50 cups, 150g = 75 cups, 200g = 100 cups, 250g = 125 cups. Of course, you can double the number of cups if you brew each serving twice.