

Beijing

The doctor will serve you now

The Chinese capital's latest cocktail joint comes with doses of traditional medicine



CHIN CHIN

Newly opened bars across the network



Peachy's
New York

Located below hip restaurant Chinese Tuxedo in NYC's Chinatown, Peachy's serves up "elixir cocktails" like The Great Protector, which uses cacao nib-infused mezcal, Thai bird's eye chili bitters and astragalus – a root used in TCM that helps boost the immune system. peachys.nyc

The Nanyang Club
Singapore

Named after the Chinese term for Southeast Asia, this newly opened bar serves cocktails inspired by the region and mixed with TCM ingredients. Try Mamasan, a pink drink made of tequila and infused with rose, hibiscus and sweet osmanthus flowers believed to clear the lungs. **55A Boat Quay**

decades and Zhai practices at the city's China Academy of Chinese Medical Science. Former boutique store manager Schuitman brings interior design panache, decking out the bar with plush vintage furniture to complement dinky bottles of herbs arranged around the room.

There's plenty on the menu besides sexy stuff. Goji berry, a TCM ingredient highly coveted for its supposed anti-ageing properties, is mixed into vodka-based cocktails. Another concoction is designed for drinkers in need of a mood lift, featuring the daylily flower, which is often consumed for its anti-depressant effects.

Zhai visits the bar every Thursday afternoon to dispense TCM information to customers and to recommend herbs. Crucially, with TCM herbs not exactly known for tasting great, a sip of the cistanche cocktail suggests that they are skilfully balanced with tastier elements in the drinks. "We add fruit, flowers, spices and other fragrances based on those of the herbs to make the cocktails pleasurable," says Ah Jian.

Whether you're sold on the healing value of TCM tipples or not, most would agree that Herbal offers a unique romantic date option. Ah Jian signals his agreement with that statement by laughing cheekily. "If you drink five of these cocktails designed for men, six hours later you'll really...have that feeling," he says, plopping the cucumber-sized cistanche back into its jar. **12 Xindong Lu;**

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- Jamie Fullerton



IMAGES: ZHOU NA

DRINKS Wearing a starched white lab coat, medical doctor Zhai Xu is sitting in the VIP room of Herbal, a luxe new bar in Sanlitun, pivoting a knobby and extremely phallic dried herb in his hands.

The foot-long herb is a cistanche – also known as "natural Viagra" – and is an important ingredient in some of the cocktails made at the venue, billed as Beijing's first bar that mixes in Traditional Chinese Medicine ingredients.

Beijinger Zhai and his mixologist friend, Ah Jian, originally from the eastern Shandong province, have fortified the drinks with TCM herbs used widely in China to boost health, mood, beauty and other more intimate aspects of life.

"A lot of TCM herbs consumed by men to help them with certain bodily functions [appear] quite obviously for men," says New Zealander Glenn Schuitman, a partner in Herbal. He's sitting next to the doctor, gesturing towards the rudely-shaped stalk. "Around 20 different herbs can be used for this function," adds Zhai. "The function is..." he trails off.

Perking up cocktails with aphrodisiac herbs might sound gimmicky, but the Herbal team has pedigree. Ah Jian is a Beijing cocktail scene veteran of almost two