



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

The pretty stems of rhubarb are making their annual appearance in farmers markets. Stems are sold without the leaves since rhubarb's lovely deep green foliage, while nutrient-rich, is so high in oxalic acid that it causes gastrointestinal upset. Rhubarb's stems range in color from intense red to light pink with a dash of pale green. But the taste profile doesn't vary much by color. It's all tart.

Mouth-puckering tartness is a feature of rhubarb that people either love or hate. Even rhubarb-lovers must balance the tartness with sugar—a generous amount of sugar. With the right amount of sugar, the careful taster will be able to appreciate rhubarb's subtle earthy flavor. Rhubarb, also called "pie plant", adds zest to pies, tarts, cobblers, and crumbles, as well as jams and sauces. Strawberries, with their natural sweetness and overlapping season, make a classic pairing with rhubarb.

Other fruits that lean to the sweet side would make an excellent combo with rhubarb if it weren't for their seasonal differences. So why not freeze rhubarb for use during blueberry season? Or peach season? Rhubarb freezes well with very little effort.

Choose medium-size stalks that are firm and crisp with deeply colored glossy skin. Wash, dry, and trim the ends. Cut the stalks into one-inch pieces. Spread in a single layer on trays, freeze until firm (1 to 2 hours), then place the amount for your recipe(s) into bags or containers. You'll be glad on some future date if you label the bags with specifics such as "2 cups chopped rhubarb for pie" and the date you put them in the freezer. Frozen rhubarb can be added directly to other ingredients without bothering to thaw it first.

With rhubarb in the freezer, anytime is a good time for a piece of rhubarb pie. As Garrison Keillor puts it, "Mamma's little babies love rhubarb, rhubarb. Bebob-a-Rebob Rhubarb Pie!"

RECIPE for health

MAY 2017

featured food:

RHUBARB

Rhubarb & Strawberry Crisp

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services
Serves 8

Topping:

- ½ c. flour
- 2 T. granulated sugar
- ¼ c. brown sugar
- ½ t. cinnamon
- Pinch of nutmeg
- 1 stick of butter, cool but not chilled, cut into 8 pieces
- ¾ c. coarsely chopped toasted walnuts
- ¾ c. old-fashioned rolled oats

Filling:

- 3 c. rhubarb, large dice
- 4 c. strawberries, sliced
- ¼ c. brown sugar
- 1 T. orange zest
- 1 T. orange juice
- 2 T. corn starch
- 1 t. pure vanilla extract

To make topping, place flour, sugars, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a mixer bowl and blend on low speed. Add butter one piece at a time. Change speed to medium and blend in the walnuts and oats for about 2-3 minutes. Topping will be a little clumpy. Set aside while preparing rhubarb.

Preheat oven to 375°F.

To make filling, put rhubarb and strawberries in a bowl. Stir in sugar, orange zest, orange juice, corn starch, and vanilla. Let rest for 10 minutes.

Transfer rhubarb-strawberry mixture to a glass pie dish or pie pan. Sprinkle topping evenly over the surface.

Bake until topping is nicely browned and filling is bubbling, about 45 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool for about 20 minutes on a rack before serving.

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