



## May 2002 – Rhubarb

Rhubarb is one of those underrated plants that can be trusted to come up every year in your garden during the spring. It originates from northeastern Asia at high altitudes. It can be found in Chinese texts on herbal medicine dating back nearly 5000 years, mainly being used for intestinal tract complaints. It is thought that Monks brought it back to Europe, but it took til the early 1800's before any recipes were written to value the plant for food.

Rhubarb is a vegetable, but in 1947, the US Customs Court in Buffalo, NY ruled that it was a fruit, because of the most common way it was being cooked was in desserts. So be it! Rhubarb is regularly eaten sweetened in pies, tarts, jams, wine and crumbles. I have found great chutneys, drinks, sorbets and compote recipes with rhubarb as the main ingredient. With research I found a number of countries use rhubarb like a vegetable; in Poland it is cooked with potatoes, In Afghanistan it is added to spinach and Italy they make a low alcoholic drink from it, which they regard as a health drink.

When harvesting rhubarb one should twist the stems, not cut them. The seedpod that comes up through the centre should be cut out; this will insure more stem production. The leaves are poisonous because of their oxalic acid content, so should be removed and discarded. If time doesn't permit for you to jam you excess rhubarb, then freezing is the easiest way to store it. Just trim and clean the rhubarb and cut into 1" pieces, pack into containers or ziplocks and freeze.

### **Rhubarb Compote with Balsamic vinegar.**

3T Balsamic vinegar

2/3c Sugar

1t fresh ginger- finely minced

-simmer the above ingredients until the sugar is dissolved.

2c Rhubarb-cut into 1/4" slices and stir into the above syrup.

-simmer for above 2 mins, then remove the rhubarb with a slotted spoon.

-reduce the liquid by simmering for about 5 mins, til thickened.

-remove from heat, stir in the rhubarb and serve warm or at room temp.

### **Rhubarb upside down cake with anise**

Topping:

1/4c Butter

-melt in a 10" cast iron frying pan over medium heat.

3/4c Light brown sugar-packed

-Sprinkle evenly over bottom and allow to melt for about 3mins.

1 1/2lbs Rhubarb (3c)-trimmed and cut into 1" pieces

-arrange decoratively in the melted sugar.

**Cake:**

1t Anise seed-finely grind  
-you can use a coffee grinder or a mortar and pestle.  
1 1/2c Flour  
1 1/2t B/P  
1t B/S  
1/2t Salt  
-Sift together all the ingredients.

1/2c Butter-softened  
2/3c Sugar-beat with butter til light and fluffy.  
1/2t Vanilla-beat in  
2 Large eggs-beat in one at a time.  
1/2c Butter milk  
1/4c Milk-mix with buttermilk and mix in to butter mix alternating with the flour mix. Beginning and ending with the flour mix and beating til just combined. Be careful not o over mix.  
-spoon the batter over the rhubarb, trying to keep it even, bake at 350\* for about 45mins. Til the tester comes out clean and the top is golden. Cool cake 10mins.  
-run a knife around the skillet, and carefully invert on to a plate. Remove skillet and serve warm.

**Rhubarb Iced Tea**

8c Rhubarb-trimmed and cut into 3-4"lengths  
8c Water  
-combine and bring to a boil, simmer for 3/4hour and strain.  
1/3c sugar-add to taste, stir until dissolved.  
-Allow to cool. Serve over ice with a sprig of mint.

**Rhubarb and Strawberry crisp**

8oz Strawberries-cleaned, hulled and cut in half if large.  
1lb Rhubarb-trimmed, cleaned and cut in to 3/4" dice.  
1/2c Sugar  
-combine all the above ingreds and place in a 10c baking dish.  
1/3c orange juice  
1T Cornstarch-mix with the OJ, then pour over fruit and stir to coat.  
Topping:  
1c Flour  
1c Oats  
1/2c Light brown sugar-firmly packed.  
1/2t Cinnamon  
1/2c Ground almonds  
-blend together  
2/3c Butter-cold  
-cut in, until it resembles coarse meal.  
1 egg-slightly beaten  
-stir into oat mix and spoon the mix on top of the fruit. Pressing down gently.  
-Bake @ 350\* til brown, about 50 mins to 1hour. Serve warm.

### **Rhubarb pie with crystallized ginger**

A recipe of your favourite pastry dough, rolled out and lined a pie dish with a decorative edge.

Filling:

1 1/4 lbs Rhubarb-trimmed, cleaned and cut into 1/2" slices.

1 1/3 c Sugar

1/4 c Flour

2 t Orange zest

1/2 t Nutmeg

1/4 t Cinnamon

1/4 t Salt

3 Lg Eggs-slightly beaten

2 T Butter-cold and cut into small cubes.

Mix all the above ingredients. And place in lined pie plate.

Topping:

1/2 c Flour

1/2 c Light Brown sugar-lightly packed.

2 T Australian candied Ginger-finely diced.

-mix together

1/4 c Butter-cold

-cut into dry ingredients til it resembles coarse meal.

-cover the top of the pie and bake 10 mins @ 450°F

-reduce temp to 350°F and bake a further 40 mins.

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