



Rhubarb: First Fruits of Spring

Vibrant color and pucker-up flavor make this unusual vegetable a springtime sensation. The sharp flavor of rhubarb inspires strong opinions: most people either love it or hate it.

Rhubarb, a relative of buckwheat, grows wild in China and Tibet, where it's been used to make medicines for centuries. It first appeared in North America in the late 1700s, introduced by a Maine gardener who obtained seed or rootstock from Europe. Within a mere 25 years, it was so popular with customers that it had become a regular offering at produce markets. Supermarkets generally sell only the deep-red stems, but gardeners grow hybrids with green or pink stalks as well.

Simple Baked Rhubarb

- Ingredients**
- 4 cups cubed bread
 - 4 cups fresh or frozen diced rhubarb
 - 1-1/2 cups sugar
 - 1/2 cup butter, melted

Directions

1. In a bowl, combine rhubarb, bread cubes and sugar; toss to coat.
2. Add butter; mix well, turn into a 11" x 7" x 2" baking pan.
3. Bake at 350F for 40-50 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm.



"True, it's a little unusual to combine rhubarb with meat in an entree, but my family loves this recipe! It was created by my mother in an effort to use abundant rhubarb from our farm garden. I'm sure you'll enjoy it, too!"

Rhubarb Pork Chop Bake

- Ingredients**
- 4 bone-in pork loin chops (1/2-inch thick)
 - 2 Tbs. vegetable oil
 - 1-1/2 tsp. minced fresh rosemary or 1/2 tsp. dried rosemary, crushed
 - 1/4 tsp. salt
 - 1/8 tsp. pepper
 - 2-1/2 cups chopped fresh or frozen rhubarb (1/2-inch pieces)
 - 4 slices day-old bread, crusts removed and cubed
 - 3/4 cup packed brown sugar
 - 2 Tbs. all-purpose flour
 - 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
 - 1/4 tsp. ground allspice

Directions

1. In a large skillet, cook the chops in oil over medium heat for 2-3 minutes on each side or until chops are lightly browned; drain. Sprinkle with rosemary, salt and pepper. Remove from the heat and keep warm.
2. In a large bowl, combine the rhubarb, bread cubes, brown sugar, flour, cinnamon and allspice.
3. Place half of the rhubarb mixture in a greased 11" x 7" x 2" baking dish. Top with chops and remaining rhubarb mixture. Cover and bake at 350F for 45-55 minutes. Uncover; bake 10 minutes longer.

Rhubarb Dressing

"This delicious dressing is awesome on a spinach salad."



Ingredients

- 2 cups chopped fresh or frozen rhubarb
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup white vinegar
- 3 Tbs. grated onion
- 1-1/2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 tsp. salt

Directions

1. In a saucepan, combine rhubarb, sugar and vinegar; cook over medium heat until the rhubarb is tender, about 6 minutes. Drain, reserving about 6 tablespoons juice; discard pulp.
2. Pour juice into a jar with tight-fitting lid; add oil, onion, Worcestershire sauce and salt. Shake well. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

SUNDAY SLOW COOKER COLLECTION

Easy Slow Cooker French Dip

"This makes a delicious French dip sandwich, perfect for the working mom! Nobody, not even teetotalers, have been able to detect the presence of beer in this recipe, but it adds a wonderful flavor! French fries make a great side dish, and they are good for dipping, too."



INGREDIENTS

- 4 pounds rump roast
- 1 (10.5 ounce) can beef broth
- 1 (10.5 ounce) can condensed French onion soup
- 1 (12 fluid ounce) can or bottle beer
- 6 French rolls
- 2 tablespoons butter

DIRECTIONS

1. Trim excess fat from the rump roast, and place in a slow cooker. Add the beef broth, onion soup and beer. Cook on Low setting for 7 hours.
2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
3. Split French rolls, and spread with butter. Bake 10 minutes, or until heated through.
4. Slice the meat on the diagonal, and place on the rolls. Serve the sauce for dipping.

It's a sure sign of spring when brightly colored rhubarb emerges from its long winter's nap. Cooks in northern regions, where rhubarb grows best, prize this hardy perennial for its tart, tender stalks. And although it's botanically a vegetable, rhubarb is used in recipes the way you would a fruit. In fact, its nickname is "pie plant."

Rhubarb is considered a vegetable—only the stalks of the plant that are edible—but it's most often treated as a fruit. Like fresh cranber-

ries, rhubarb is almost unbearably tart on its own and is rarely eaten raw.

Rhubarb pairs up well with other fruits to create a complex sweet-tart flavor: strawberries and other berries, apples, oranges, and peaches are all good choices.

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