

Kentucky Rhubarb



Season: Late spring to early summer.

Nutrition Facts: Rhubarb is low in calories (26 calories for a 1-cup serving). It is very acidic and is most often eaten with added sugar to offset the tartness. It is 95 percent water and contains potassium, a small amount of vitamin C, and fiber.

Selection: Choose crisp, medium sized, firm stalks. The deeper the red, the more flavorful the stalks will be. **Warning:** Only the stalks are edible. The leaves of the plant are poisonous.

Storage: Freshly harvested stalks can be kept in the refrigerator unwashed and wrapped tightly in plastic for up to three weeks.

Preparation: Wash well, trim the ends, and use in your favorite recipe. Because of its tartness, it is most often teamed up with strawberries and baked into pies and tarts. It is also used in jam and other desserts.

When cooking fresh rhubarb, always use a non-reactive pan, such as stainless steel, for cooking this high acid plant.

To freeze: Chop into ½-inch pieces, spread them on a baking sheet, and place in the freezer. Once frozen, place in a plastic freezer bag. Packed this way, it will keep for up to six months.

Rhubarb Crisp

Filling:

5 cups rhubarb, sliced
1 egg, slightly beaten
¾ cup sugar
¼ cup flour

Topping:

¼ cup quick-cooking oats
¼ flour
¼ cup powdered nonfat milk
¾ cup brown sugar, packed
1½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons cold butter or margarine

To make the filling, in a large bowl, combine the rhubarb and egg. Stir in the sugar and flour. Pour the mixture into a greased 9-inch pie plate. To make the topping, combine the oatmeal, flour, powdered milk, brown sugar, and cinnamon. Stir the ingredients together. Cut the butter or margarine into the mixture with two knives until the mixture looks like coarse meal. Sprinkle the mixture evenly over the rhubarb. Bake at 350°F for 35 to 40 minutes.

Yield: 8 servings.

Nutritional Analysis: 200 calories, 3 g protein, 38 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 4 g fat, 25 mg cholesterol, 60 mg sodium.

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References: Kentucky Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, "The Market Basket," Kentucky Department of Agriculture, and "Watch Your Garden Grow," University of Illinois Extension Web site <www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/veggies>.

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For more information, contact your county's Extension agent for Family and Consumer Sciences or visit the Web site for Family and Consumer Sciences, College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky, at <www.ca.uky.edu/agcollege/fcs>.