

**Rhubarb! Recently, I had my first (of many to come) fresh rhubarb dessert.
It got me dreaming about all of the things I cannot wait to make.
This week is the first of a two-week feature. Stay tuned for the next issue, for great savory and sweet breakfast recipes to make good use of this wonderful multi-use vegetable!
Enjoy some new ideas and options. Maybe you, like me, will be finding a spot for your own plant!**

Rhubarb Juice

Rhubarb chopped and washed into 1/2-1" pieces

Place chopped rhubarb in a large pan. Add just enough water to cover the rhubarb, bring to a boil, and then simmer on "low" until rhubarb is soft, about 30 min., stirring occasionally.

Strain the mixture through a jelly bag, or a very fine sieve, pressing with the back of a spoon to extract the juice.

Discard the solids or use them to make another rhubarb recipe!

If you want to sweeten the juice, do so by adding about 1/4 C. of granulated sugar for each 2 lbs. of rhubarb.

Add the sugar immediately after straining the stewed rhubarb and stir to dissolve the sugar completely.

Refrigerated, this juice will keep for up to a week.

Sugarless Rhubarb Jelly

*Makes approx. 4 jars.
(250 ml. size)*

8 C. rhubarb, finely chopped about 1/2" length

1 lemon, juice and zest

15 whole allspice

1 pkg. (approx. 49 gr. size) No Sugar Needed Pectin

1/4 tsp. butter or margarine

If using a Sweetener: use 1 1/2 C. No Calorie Sweetener

or

If using "less sugar": use 1-1/2 C. granulated sugar

or

If you are making totally Sugarless Rhubarb Jelly, skip this step.

Place 4 clean 250 ml jars, on a rack, in a boiling water canner, and fill with water. Cover and boil hard for 10 min. to sterilize the jars.

Boil the discs for 5 min. to soften sealing compound.

Keep jars and sealing discs hot until ready to use.

In a blender or a food processor, purée the rhubarb.

Pour the purée into a dampened jelly bag or a dampened cheese cloth - lined sieve suspended over a deep bowl. Squeeze to extract as much of the rhubarb juice as possible.

Using a potato peeler, remove the colored peel from the lemon, and squeeze the juice. Add the lemon juice to the rhubarb juice and measure 3 C. It may be necessary to add water to have a full 3 C. of liquid.

If using a sweetener or sugar, measure and set aside.

In a pan, over high heat, bring the juices to a boil.

Tie the lemon rind and the whole allspice by creating a spice bag using a large square of cheesecloth, and add this to the juice in the pan.

Add the entire package of pectin to the mixture above, and whisk until dissolved.

If using sweetener or sugar, add to the mixture, and return to a boil, stirring constantly to avoid sticking and burning.

Add the butter or margarine to the mixture to reduce foaming. (Sugarless Rhubarb Jelly will not foam up as much as preserves with regular, full sugar recipes).

Boil hard for 3 minutes, and remove from heat.

Remove the spice bag and discard.

If necessary, skim off foam.

Immediately pour the jelly into the hot jars, leaving about 1/4" headspace at the top of the jar.

If necessary, wipe the rim of the jar to remove any food residue.

Add the hot sealing discs on top, and screw band down until fingertip tight.

Return the jelly filled jar to the rack in the canner.

Repeat the above process for the remaining jelly.

Cover canner, return water to a boil. Process the jelly - boil the filled jars for 10 minutes, or as per manufacturer's instructions, and then remove jars.

Cool, undisturbed, for 24 hours.

Store in a cool, dark place.

After opening, jam must be stored in the refrigerator.

Raspberry Rhubarb Jam

*Makes about 5 cups,
or 5 - 250 ml. size jars.*

1-1/2 pkgs. (85 gr. size) raspberry flavored gelatin

1 can (approx. 540 ml. size) raspberry pie filling

4 C. granulated sugar

6 C. fresh or frozen rhubarb, chopped into 1/2 - 1" pieces

In a large pan, combine the rhubarb and the sugar, and allow the mixture to stand overnight.

On the following day, heat on medium low, and simmer, uncovered, until rhubarb is tender, about 20 - 25 min., stirring often.

Stir in the raspberry flavored gelatin crystals and the raspberry pie filling.

Bring the above mixture to a boil, allowing to boil hard for 1 min., stirring almost constantly to avoid sticking and burning.

Remove from heat, and allow to cool slightly.
Using a ladle, transfer the raspberry rhubarb jam into jars or containers.
This jam can be stored in the fridge, or store it in the freezer until ready to use.
Freeze for up to 1 year.

Strawberry Rhubarb Pie Filling Preserve

Makes about 5 - 500ml. jars.

7 C. (about 2 lbs.) chopped fresh rhubarb. About 1" size pieces.
3 lg. peeled and cored, finely chopped apples
2 C. granulated sugar
1/4 C. orange juice
1 T. grated orange peel
4 C. washed, hulled and halved fresh strawberries

In a large Dutch oven size pan, combine the prepared rhubarb, apples, sugar, orange juice and orange peel.
Bring the mixture to a boil, and boil gently for about 15 min., or until the rhubarb is soft.
Add the strawberries to the rhubarb mixture, and bring to a boil.
Remove mixture from heat.
Ladle the hot strawberry-rhubarb mixture into clean, hot jars, allowing for a 1 inch headspace.
Wipe rim, adjust lid, and add screw band until "fingertip tight".
Process filled jars in a boiling water bath for 15 minutes.
Allow filled jars to cool, then label and store rhubarb strawberry pie filling in a cool, dark place.

Stewed Rhubarb Sauce

Yield: approximately 8 cups

8 C. rhubarb, fresh or frozen rhubarb
1/2 C. water
1 C. granulated sugar
1 pkg. (85 gr) flavored raspberry or strawberry gelatin

Cook the rhubarb in a pan, covered, over medium heat till it comes to a boil.
Turn heat down to low, and allow rhubarb to simmer for about 20 min., or until rhubarb is tender, stirring occasionally.
Remove rhubarb from heat, and add the sugar, stirring until the sugar is completely dissolved.
Add the package of flavored gelatin, and stir until completely dissolved.
Allow to cool and then keep in refrigerator.
Refrigerated, stewed rhubarb will keep for at least a week!
You can also freeze it for up to one year.

Rhubarbsicle

stewed rhubarb sauce (see above)

Prepare the rhubarb sauce as directed, and fill the popsicle molds
Place the filled molds in the freezer until frozen.
Enjoy this tasty, healthy popsicle made with a vegetable!

Storing Rhubarb

To store rhubarb for several days, you can keep the rhubarb in the refrigerator.
You can preserve your rhubarb by canning, freezing or it is also possible by dehydrating (drying) rhubarb.
Of these options, the best for most households is freezing rhubarb, as there is not a lot of extra tools and equipment needed. And you can store **Frozen Rhubarb** in the freezer for as long as 12 months.
If you are planning to stew your frozen rhubarb, or make a rhubarb sauce, you can use your rhubarb as it is, frozen. When you begin to stew it, heat it on low heat at first, until it is thawed.
If you are planning on baking with your frozen rhubarb, thaw it first. Since rhubarb tends to "shrink" after thawing it, be sure to start off with enough frozen rhubarb.
When you are harvesting your rhubarb, choose stalks that are firm, crisp, and blemish free. If the leaves are a bit blemished, but the stalks are fine, you can include those stalks as well.
If you are planning to freeze the rhubarb immediately after harvesting it, remove the whole leaf, if you are not going to freeze the rhubarb the same day, then leave about 2 - 3 inches of leaf on (to help keep the moisture in the stalk so it will stay fresh and crisp longer).
It is preferable to freeze your rhubarb the day you harvest it, however, if you cannot freeze the rhubarb the same day you harvest it, keep it in the refrigerator for up to 3 days, wrapped tightly in a plastic bag.

3 options for freezing rhubarb:

Option 1 - cut and wash rhubarb and chop into small pieces. Blanch for 1-1/2 min. in steam or boiling water and pack into freezer containers or plastic bags.
Freeze.

Option 2 - cut and wash rhubarb and chop into small pieces. Prepare a syrup mixing one part sugar with two parts water, bringing the mixture to a boil to dissolve the sugar, then refrigerate the mixture until chilled. Add 1/3 - 1/2 C. of cold sugar syrup to a 2-cup container packed with rhubarb, allowing 1/2 inch of head-space. Freeze.

Option 3 - cut and wash rhubarb and chop into small pieces. Wash the rhubarb with water and place the rhubarb in a colander to dry (for approximately 20 min.). The rhubarb does not have to be totally dry ... just not dripping wet. Transfer the chopped rhubarb to freezer containers or freezer bags.

Quote of the Week:

“All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

~ J.R.R. Tolkien, “The Lord of the Rings”