

### Did you know?

Rhubarb is a fruit! But not botanically speaking. A New York court ruling in 1947 made it an official fruit in the United States.

And you can actually SEE asparagus grow! Asparagus can grow up to seven-inches daily.

Let us know if there is something you would like us to put in our column, or if you have a recipe to share, please submit to [ads@thedrummer.com](mailto:ads@thedrummer.com).

## Almond Rhubarb Coffee Cake

*Prep Time: 15 mins*

*Cook Time: 30 mins*

*Total Time: 45 mins*

*Servings: 20*

*Yield: 2 9-inch round coffee cakes*

### Cake Batter:

2-1/2 c. all-purpose flour  
1 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1-1/2 c. packed brown sugar  
2/3 c. vegetable oil  
1 lg egg  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
1 c. milk  
1-1/2 c. rhubarb, chopped  
1/2 c. sliced almonds

### Streusel Topping:

1/3 c. white sugar  
1 T. butter, melted  
1/4 c. sliced almonds

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Grease two 9-inch round pans.

**Make the batter:** Combine flour, salt, and baking soda in a medium bowl.

Beat brown sugar, oil, egg, and vanilla in a large bowl with an electric mixer until smooth. Gradually mix in dry ingredients alternating with milk until well combined. Stir in rhubarb and almonds until incorporated. Pour into the prepared pans.

**Make the topping:** Mix melted butter and sugar together in a small bowl with a fork, then stir in almonds. Sprinkle over batter.

Bake in the preheated oven until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes.

## Creamy Penne Pasta Primavera

*Prep Time: 15 mins*

*Cook Time: 20 mins*

*Total Time: 35 mins*

*Servings: 6*

2 c. penne pasta  
2 tsp. olive oil  
1 pound fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces  
3 carrots, cut into strips  
2 c. cherry tomatoes, halved  
1 clove garlic, minced, or more to taste  
1 c. grated Parmesan cheese  
1 c. heavy whipping cream  
1/4 tsp. ground black pepper

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil; add penne and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender yet firm to the bite, about 11 minutes. Drain.

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat-high heat; sauté asparagus and carrots until tender yet firm to the bite, about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and garlic; sauté until garlic is fragrant, about 1 minute.

Stir Parmesan cheese, cream, and black pepper into vegetable mixture until cheese melts and sauce is smooth, 2 to 3 minutes. Add pasta to sauce and toss to coat.

**NOTE:** This is a great base recipe. Try using green beans instead of asparagus, canned sun-dried tomatoes instead of cherry tomatoes, or add some fresh pesto to the cream sauce to mix up the flavor.

## Bacon-Wrapped Stuffed Chicken Breasts in the Air Fryer

*Prep Time: 15 mins*

*Cook Time: 30 mins*

*Total Time: 45 mins*

*Servings: 3*

3 skinless, boneless chicken breasts  
1 tsp. lemon-pepper seasoning, or to taste  
3 slices Monterey Jack cheese

6 spears fresh asparagus  
9 slices bacon  
12 wooden toothpicks

Preheat the air fryer to 350° F according to manufacturer's instructions.

Pat chicken pieces dry with paper towels. To butterfly, slice breasts horizontally through the middle using a sharp knife, beginning at the thickest part, being careful not to cut all the way through to the other side. Open the two sides and spread them out like an open book.

Season both sides with lemon-pepper seasoning. Place 1 slice cheese on each chicken breast. Cut asparagus spears in half and place 4 halves on top of cheese. Roll chicken up and over the cheese and asparagus, keeping the stuffing inside each roll. Wrap each chicken breast with 3 pieces of bacon, using wooden toothpicks to secure the bacon, where it overlaps.

Place each bacon-wrapped breast in the air fryer basket and air-fry for 15 minutes. Turn and cook for 15 minutes more. Test chicken for doneness; an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center should reach 165° F.

## Grilled Asparagus

*Prep Time: 10 mins*

*Cook Time: 5 mins*

*Total Time: 15 mins*

*Servings: 4*

1 lb fresh asparagus spears, trimmed  
1 T. olive oil  
salt and pepper to taste

Preheat an outdoor grill for high heat and lightly oil the grate.

Lightly coat the asparagus spears with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Cook asparagus on the preheated grill, turning often until lightly charred and fork-tender about 3 to 5 minutes.

## Tangy Rhubarb Salsa

*Prep Time: 30 mins*

*Cook Time: 5 mins*

*Additional Time: 3 hrs*

*Total Time: 3 hrs 35 mins*

*Servings: 12*

2 c. thinly sliced rhubarb  
1 sm. red onion, coarsely chopped  
1 lg green bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped  
1 lg red bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped  
1 lg yellow bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped  
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped - or to taste  
1/2 c. chopped fresh cilantro  
3 Roma (plum) tomatoes, finely diced  
2 tsp. brown sugar  
5 T. Key lime juice  
2 tsp. coarse salt  
1 pinch garlic powder, or to taste  
ground black pepper to taste

Stir rhubarb into a large pot of boiling water and cook for 10 seconds. Quickly drain rhubarb and rinse with cold water until cool; transfer rhubarb to a large bowl.

Place red onion, green, red, and yellow bell peppers, jalapeno pepper, and cilantro into a food processor and pulse 3 or 4 times to finely chop; transfer pepper mixture to bowl with rhubarb. Stir in Roma tomatoes.

Dissolve brown sugar in Key lime juice in a bowl; lightly stir lime juice mixture into rhubarb mixture. Sprinkle salsa with salt, garlic powder, and black pepper and stir salsa again. Refrigerate at least 3 hours to blend flavors.

## Strawberry Rhubarb Crisp

*Prep Time: 15 mins*

*Cook Time: 45 mins*

*Total Time: 1 hrs*

*Servings: 18*

### **Fruit Layer:**

3 c. sliced fresh strawberries  
3 c. diced rhubarb  
1 c. white sugar  
3 T. all-purpose flour

### **Crunch Topping:**

1-1/2 c. all-purpose flour  
1 c. packed brown sugar

1 c. rolled oats  
1 c. butter

Preheat the oven to 375° F

Make the fruit layer: Mix strawberries, rhubarb, white sugar, and flour together in a large bowl. Place the mixture in a 9x13-inch baking dish.

Make the topping: Combine 1-1/2 c. flour, brown sugar, oats, and butter and mix until crumbly. Sprinkle on top of the rhubarb and strawberry layer. Bake in the preheated oven until crisp and lightly browned, about 45 minutes.

Yes! You can freeze strawberry rhubarb crisp for up to two months, whether it's baked or unbaked. If you freeze it unbaked, simply thaw in the refrigerator and bake it according to the recipe. To thaw a baked strawberry rhubarb crisp, reheat in the oven at 350°F until the juices are bubbling.

## Here are a few tips on growing and storing rhubarb:

### Growing Rhubarb:

Rhubarb is one of the first plants we see after a cold long winter and a tough plant at that! It is really difficult to kill once it becomes established making for a great beginner gardener plant. Harvest by twisting the stalks and pulling.

### Storing Rhubarb:

Store the trimmed stalks in a mesh bag or loose plastic in the crisper drawer. Wash only before using it. To freeze, cut the rhubarb stalks into 1-inch chunks and seal in an airtight bag. Frozen rhubarb will keep for up to a year.

## How to Store Asparagus so it Stays Fresh and Crisp

### How to Store Asparagus Short-Term

If you're planning to cook the asparagus you just bought tonight or tomorrow, you can store the asparagus in the fridge with a damp wrap for moisture.

Wet a paper towel or tea towel, and wring it mostly dry. It should still be damp but not dripping.

Wrap the asparagus in the wet towel, and place it inside a zip-top plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Store the bag with asparagus in the fridge's vegetable or crisper drawer. Use within 24 hours.

### Store Asparagus and keep It fresh

If you're not planning to use it right away, store the asparagus the same way you would fresh flowers: in a jar with water. This way, the stalks can absorb moisture all the way to their crowns, keeping the entire length of the asparagus spear crisp and vibrant. Trim one inch off the asparagus bottoms. Discard the ends.

**Tip:** To make trimming easier, keep the asparagus secured in the rubber bands they come in from the market. They'll hold the spears tight so you can cut through the woody ends in one swift motion.

Add about one inch of water to a large jar. Place the spears in the water. You can remove the rubber band here.

Cover the standing asparagus spears with a large plastic bag. (You do not want it to be tight fitting over the asparagus.) Refrigerate about to three to five days

Change the water in the jar when it turns cloudy. The key to fresh asparagus is clean, fresh water. Murky water won't be helpful for the spears.

## Quote of the Week:

*"The whole world is a series of miracles, but we're so used to them we call them ordinary things."*

~ Hans Christian Andersen