



Rhubarb

SPECIAL INTEREST:

Rhubarb is technically a vegetable, but is usually served in desserts as a fruit. Rhubarb blends well with other fruits such as strawberries. The leaves of rhubarb contain poisonous oxalic acid salts and should not be eaten.

NUTRITION:

Rhubarb provides a fair amount of vitamin A and C, as well as potassium. Cooked with sugar, it provides 140 calories per 3-1/2 ounce serving. Without sugar, the same serving provides a mere 16 calories.

HOW TO SELECT:

Field-grown rhubarb is rich, dark red in color, with course green foliage and a very tart flavor. It can be purchased with leaves attached or removed. The leaves are not edible but, if attached, they are a good guide to freshness. Stalks should be firm, crisp, and cherry red or pink in color. Pink color is indicative of hothouse-grown rhubarb.

STORAGE:

Rhubarb stalks can be washed then stored for two to four weeks at 32 degrees F in a moisture proof container or wrapped in plastic wrap.

DRYING:

Preparation:

- Wash and trim. Discard leaves.
- Slice diagonally into one inch slices.

Pretreatment:

- Steam for 1 to 2 minutes or until slightly tender, but not soft.

Drying Procedure

- Spread on a single layer on trays.
- Dry at 150° F. for 2 to 3 hours then at 130°F. until crisp.

FRUIT LEATHER

- Select ripe or overripe fruit. Cut away blemishes. Remove stones or pits from fruit. Seeds from berries or grapes need not be removed. Peel or not, depending upon individual preference.
- Heat fruit before you puree, if you want a smoother texture. Leather will also dry faster.
- Cut fruit into chunks and place it in a food chopper or mechanical blender.
- To yellow or light-color fruit, add 1 tablespoon of lemon juice for each quart of fruit.
- Chop, grind, or blend until a thick puree is formed.
- Add sweetener if desired. Average sweetener added is 1 to 1-1/2 tablespoons of sugar or honey per cup of pureed fruit. Combining rhubarb with applesauce can also serve as a sweetener.

Cover the rack, cookie sheet or similar tray with plastic wrap. Secure the edges with masking tape. If the plastic wrap curls over the pureed food, it will not dry completely. Pour puree onto rack or sheet about 1/8" to 1/4" thick. A cookie sheet holds about 3 to 4 cups of puree.

Continued→

Racks will vary. Distribute evenly by tilting the trays. Do not use a spatula or knife. If you dry more than one tray, rotate the trays. Check often.

Oven Drying: Set oven at lowest setting (140°F.) Use an oven thermometer for accurate reading.

Place sheets or trays in the oven and leave oven door cracked open 2 to 6 inches, depending on the oven door. The fruit leather will be dried in 4 to 8 hours.

FREEZING:

Select firm, well-colored stalks. Wash, trim and cut into 1 to 2 inch pieces. Pack in syrup OR pack without sugar. Freeze in moisture proof freezer containers.

CANNING:

WATER BATH CAN

Rhubarb: Wash, cut into 1/2 to 1 inch pieces. Add 1/2 cup sugar per quart; let stand to draw out juice. Bring to a boil. Pack hot rhubarb and extracted juice leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Process pints and quarts for 15 minutes in a boiling water bath.

Fruit Juice: Wash; remove pits or seeds, crush fruit. Heat to simmering; stir to prevent sticking. Strain through cloth bag. Add 1 cup sugar to 1 gallon juice if desired. Reheat to simmering (185-210° F.) Pour hot juice into jars leaving 1/2 inch headspace; process. (Or use juicer; pour simmering juice into jars; process.) Process pints and quarts for 5 minutes and 1/2 gallons for 10 minutes in a boiling water bath.

**JAM/JELLIES/
PRESERVES:**

RHUBARB-STRAWBERRY JAM with liquid pectin

1 cup cooked red-stalked rhubarb (about 1 pound rhubarb and 1/4 cup water)	2-1/2 cups crushed strawberries (about 1-1/2 quart boxes)
1/2 bottle liquid pectin	6-1/2 cups sugar

To Prepare Fruit: Wash rhubarb and slice thin or chip; do not peel. Add water, cover, and simmer until rhubarb is tender (about 1 minute). Sort and wash fully ripe strawberries; remove stems and caps. Crush berries.

To Make Jam: measure prepared rhubarb and strawberries into a kettle. Add sugar and stir well. Place on high heat and, stirring constantly, bring quickly to a full boil with bubbles over the entire surface. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in pectin. Skim. Fill sterile jars leaving 1/4 inch headspace and seal. Process 5 minutes in boiling water bath. Makes 7 or 8 half-pint jars.

For more information call WSU Skagit County Extension:

360-428-4270

Or visit:

<http://skagit.wsu.edu/FAM/MFP.htm>

**HANDOUT DEVELOPED BY: WSU Master Food Preservers
Under the direction of
Joanne Austin, Skagit County Extension Faculty
WSU Skagit County Extension**