

# On the table...

## Oh, Ruby!

By Laura Kurella

When I was a little girl, the only reason I ever tasted rhubarb was because of a dare, which I have, oddly, come to appreciate because it not only helped me to muster the courage to do so -thank you, God – but also create a special fondness for rhubarb.

Strongly-flavored, somewhat bitter, and resembling a celery stalk that’s been sun-burned red then left to grow rogue, rhubarb is a vegetable that is legally considered to be a fruit - according to a 1947 court ruling!

Originally used in Chinese medicine to help promote healthy skin, improve vision and aid in cancer prevention, rhubarb’s amazing antioxidant content is what appears to be the strength behind this powerful anti-inflammatory food.

In fact, a study from China found that rhubarb is effective at reducing inflammation and improving the prognosis for patients with systemic inflammatory reaction syndrome (SIRS), a serious condition that sometimes occurs in response to trauma or infection.

A study published in the Pakistan Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences notes that rhubarb can also promote incision healing by reducing inflammation and blocking the growth of bacteria, and other researchers are finding that rhubarb protects against oxidative stress, and brain inflammation, which has them looking into rhubarb’s potential for staving off brain disorders like Alzheimer’s, ALS and stroke, among others. High in essential nutrients, including magnesium and potassium, just one cup of rhubarb can help dramatically reduce tension and stress-causing inflammation, along with depression and anxiety.

High in fiber, rhubarb is effective at easing digestion issues. In fact, researchers found that

rhubarb protects intestinal walls, through an increased secretion of gastrointestinal hormones, and assists in the contraction of the muscles that help food move through the gastrointestinal tract, which helps promote regularity. Offering a whopping 32 milligrams of fiber per cup, rhubarb can help reduce your waistline because fiber helps you feel full faster and longer so less calories will be consumed!

Containing Lutein, which is essential for skin and eye health, adding just one cup of rhubarb to your day can dramatically lower your risk of developing certain cancers while also lowering your risk for developing dementia, prevent cartilage from deteriorating, and help prevent painful arthritis.

Caring for us like an old friend, rhubarb offers so many rewarding health benefits that eating it should make you feel like a kid again!

Here now are some rich and delicious ways to go “Ruby,” too. Enjoy!

### Royal Ruby Pudding

Prep Time: 20 minutes; Yield: 6 servings.

1 3/4 cups water  
3/4 cup cane sugar  
1 1/2 pounds fresh rhubarb, cut into 1/2-inch pieces  
1/4 cup cold water  
3 tablespoons cornstarch

1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
1 cup chilled whipping cream  
2 tablespoons cane sugar

Heat 1 3/4 cups water and 3/4 cup sugar to boiling, stirring occasionally. Add rhubarb.

Simmer uncovered until rhubarb is tender, about 10 minutes. Mix 1/4 cup water and the cornstarch; stir into rhubarb. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Boil and stir 1 minute. Stir in vanilla extract. Pour into serving bowl or dessert dishes. Cover and re-



Rewarding in flavor, texture and amazing health benefits, rhubarb offers many rewards – all rolled into every smooth and delicious spoonful of this Royal Ruby Pudding. **Photographer: Laura Kurella**

frigerate. Beat whipping cream and 2 tablespoons sugar in a chilled bowl until stiff. Pipe through a decorator’s tube or simply spoon onto pudding right before serving.

### Reviving Ruby-aid

Prep Time: 10 minutes; Cook Time: 10 minutes; Cool Time: 30 minutes; Total Time: 50 minutes. Yield: 6 servings.

4 cups water  
2 cups frozen rhubarb

1 cup quartered strawberries  
6 tablespoons sugar  
1/2 cup fresh lemon juice  
Ice

In a saucepan, combine water, rhubarb, strawberries, and sugar over medium heat. Once it begins to boil, reduce heat to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and pour mixture into a heatproof bowl then place in freezer for 30 minutes to cool. Meanwhile, in a pitcher, place fresh

lemon juice and set aside. Once 30 minutes has elapsed, strain rhubarb mixture through a fine sieve into the pitcher, pressing solids with the back of wooden spoon, then squeezing with hands to release all the liquid into the pitcher. Compost solids or reserve for another use. Stir well to combine then serve over ice.

Store unused portion in refrigerator.

### Rewarding Ruby-Red Crumble

Prep Time: 15 minutes; Cook Time: 45 minutes; Total Time: 1 hour. Yield: 18servings.

1 cup cane sugar  
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
3 cups sliced fresh strawberries  
3 cups diced rhubarb  
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup packed brown sugar  
1 cup butter  
1 cup rolled oats  
Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large

bowl, mix cane sugar, 3 tablespoons flour, strawberries, and rhubarb. Place the mixture in a 9 x 13 inch baking dish.

Mix 1 1/2 cups flour, brown sugar, butter, and oats until crumbly.

You may want to use a pastry blender for this. Crumble on top of the rhubarb and strawberry mixture.

Bake 45 minutes in the preheated oven, or until crisp and lightly browned.