

Rhubarb-- Messenger Of Spring

By ELLY

Back in the days when the first fresh produce of the year came from the family garden, that first batch of rhubarb sauce was greeted as a spring tonic.

First of the vegetables to appear in the garden (and it is a vegetable), it must have been a real taste treat after a long winter of dried apples and root cellar carrots, potatoes and turnips.

And they may have been right about its medicinal qualities for some types of rhubarb are grown for the pharmaceutical industry.

THE GARDEN variety is a native of Siberia and is also called "pieplant" and "wine plant."

Whatever the name, a rhubarb pie or pudding is a fine dessert. For breakfast, rhubarb sauce with hot buttered toast is a good way to start the day.

RHUBARB FLUFF PUDDING

1 1/2 c. milk
1 1/2 c. light brown sugar
3 eggs, separated
1 vanilla extract
8 slices enriched white bread, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1 pound fresh rhubarb, cut into 1/2-inch slices (about 4 c.)
Whipped topping

Blend together milk, brown sugar, egg yolks and vanilla in a large mixing bowl. Mix in bread cubes until thoroughly moistened. Stir in rhubarb. Beat egg whites until stiff but not until dry peaks form; mix into bread mixture. Pour into greased 1 1/2-quart baking dish. Bake in preheated 350 degree oven 50 to 55 minutes, or until rhubarb is cooked. Serve warm with whipped topping.

RHUBARB CUSTARD PIE

1 c. sugar
3 T. flour
1 T. butter
Salt
3 eggs, separated
3 c. diced rhubarb

Combine sugar, flour, butter, salt to taste, egg yolks and rhubarb. Put in pastry-lined pan and bake at 450 degrees for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 degrees and bake for 30 minutes longer. Make meringue with egg whites. Put on hot pie and bake until meringue is golden, 10 to 15 minutes.

FRESH RHUBARB PIE

4 c. diced rhubarb
1 1/2 c. sugar
3 T. flour
Salt
2 T. butter
Pastry for 2-crust pie

Combine sugar, flour and salt. Spread half this mixture over pastry-lined pan. Add rhubarb and sprinkle remainder of mixture over the rhubarb. Dot with butter. Roll, fit and seal the upper crust. Bake on lower shelf of 425 degree (hot) oven for 30 to 40 minutes.

RHUBARB CONSERVE

6 c. finely diced rhubarb
3 pounds sugar
1 c. shredded pineapple (fresh or canned, drained)
1 c. orange juice
1 T. grated orange rind
1 T. grated lemon rind
1 c. lemon juice
1 c. coarsely broken nuts.

Combine all ingredients except nuts in a heavy kettle. Bring to boil, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Boil rapidly, stirring frequently, until thickened. Add nuts five minutes before removing from heat. Pour immediately into hot sterilized jars and seal at once. Makes about eight six-ounce glasses.

Spice Cabinet

PARTY CELERY DIP

1 pound cream-style cottage cheese
1 teaspoon seasoned salt
1/2 cup finely chopped celery
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh chives
1/2 cup minced green pepper
1/2 cup finely grated carrot
Celery sticks

Combine cottage cheese and seasoned salt; beat well with electric mixer. Stir chopped celery, chives, green pepper and carrot into cottage cheese. Chill. Serve as a dip with celery sticks. Makes about 2 1/2 cups dip.

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