

Strawberry-Rhubarb Crumble

Makes 6 to 8 servings

If you grew up in the country, you're probably fairly familiar with rhubarb. This vegetable (yes, it's not a fruit) thrives in cold winters. In California we start seeing field-grown rhubarb in the markets in spring, but it can come in as late as September. The colors of the stalks vary from green to deep red and are no indication of quality. Hot-house rhubarb is generally bright red, while field-grown rhubarb is more green. Just look for stalks that are neither very thin nor very thick and are sturdy and crisp.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED
2-quart (or 9- by 13-inch) baking dish

Crumble Topping
10 tablespoons (1 1/4 sticks) unsalted butter

2/3 cup unbleached all-purpose flour

1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar

3 tablespoons granulated sugar

Fruit Filling
2 1/2 pints (about 2 1/4 pounds) strawberries

2 large stalks rhubarb (about 12 ounces)

2/3 cup granulated sugar

3 tablespoons cornstarch

Grated zest of 1 lemon

FB: The recipe says to cut the rhubarb into three-quarter-inch pieces. (Long pause.) I've never in my whole life even touched a rhubarb. I know I've eaten it, but I didn't even know what it looked like to tell you the truth. What am I supposed to do? Peel it? Cut off the ends? Wash it?

EL: Sometimes people peel rhubarb if it's really thick, but I usually don't. I do cut off the ends and then wipe the stalks with a towel or run them under water if they're dirty.

FB: What do I do with the leaves on the end of the stalk?

EL: Rhubarb leaves are poisonous eaten in large quantities, so that's why you'll see that the leaves are removed before they get to market. I cut off and toss in the garbage any little pieces of leaves at the end of the stalk.

Crumble Topping

1. Melt the butter and let it cool to room temperature. Put it in a bowl with the flour, brown sugar, and granulated sugar and mix together with your fingers or a fork. You can make the topping ahead of time and keep in a covered container in the fridge for up to 3 days.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Fruit Filling

3. Remove the green stems from the strawberries, cut into 3/4-inch pieces, and transfer to a medium bowl. You should have about 4 cups.
4. Cut the rhubarb into 3/4-inch pieces to measure about 2 1/4 cups. Add to the bowl with the strawberries. Add the sugar, cornstarch, and lemon zest and toss together until everything is evenly combined.
5. Spread the fruit evenly in the baking dish. Distribute the topping evenly over the fruit. Bake the crumble until the filling is thick and bubbly and the topping is golden, 35 to 40 minutes.
6. Let the crumble cool slightly before serving. It can be reheated.