



Preserve it Fresh, Preserve it Safe

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Microwave Rhubarb Chutney

Yield: 5 pints

3 cups sliced rhubarb
1 cup cider vinegar (5%)
1 cup dark brown sugar
½ tsp eground ginger
½ tsp allspice
½ tsp dry mustard
1 tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp garlic powder
½ cup chopped dates
½ cup raisins
2 medium apples



In a 2-quart glass bowl, combine rhubarb, vinegar, brown sugar, ginger, allspice, mustard, cinnamon and garlic powder. Microwave on high for 6 minutes or until boiling. Add dates, raisins and apples. Cover with a paper towel. Microwave on high for 5 minutes. Stir and microwave for 5 more minutes or until mixture thickens, while stirring occasionally. Remove from the microwave and let stand until cool. Spoon into jars or refrigerator containers. Keep the finished chutney refrigerated.

Rhubarb season!

Pies and sauces are the most common rhubarb recipes, but it can also be added to muffins or fruit crisps and made into jams or jellies. Alone, the stalks taste extremely tart so are generally combined with sugar or sweet fruits to cut down on the sugar needed.

To Can (hot pack only): Select young, tender, deeply colored stalks from the spring or late fall crops. Trim off leaves. Wash stalks and cut into ½- to 1-inch pieces. In a large saucepan, add ½ cup sugar for each quart of rhubarb. Let stand until juice appears. Heat gently to boiling. Immediately pack mixture into hot jars, leaving ½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims and adjust lids. Process in a boiling water canner for 15 minutes (25 minutes if above 1,000 feet elevation) for pints and quarts. After processing, take canner off heat. Remove lid and wait 5 minutes before removing jars.

To Freeze: Choose firm, tender, well-colored stalks with few fibers. Wash, trim and cut into 1- or 2-inch pieces or in lengths to fit the package. Heating rhubarb in boiling water for 1 minute and cooling promptly in cold water helps retain color and flavor. Drain.

- **Unsweetened pack:** Pack either raw or preheated rhubarb tightly in containers without sugar. Leave headspace, seal and freeze.
- **Syrup pack:** Pack either raw or preheated rhubarb tightly into containers and cover with 40 percent syrup. Leave headspace, seal and freeze.
- **Sugar pack:** Mix either raw or preheated rhubarb with 1/2 cup sugar per quart of prepared fruit. Pack into containers, seal and freeze.

Rhubarb can also be cooked into sauce, cooled and frozen.

To Dry: Wash, trim and slice into 1-inch slices. Steam for 1 to 2 minutes or until slightly tender, but not soft. Dry on dehydrator trays until tough to crisp. Store dried rhubarb in a cool, dry, dark place in airtight containers.



Note: Rhubarb leaves should NEVER be eaten as they contain oxalic acid, which is toxic when consumed.

Sources: MU Extension's GH1455 Fruitful Canning and GH1507 Freezing Unusual Fruits and Vegetables; Oregon State University Extension

Reasons jars don't seal properly

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends two-piece self-sealing lids for home canning. The flat piece, called the flat, has a sealing compound around the rim. The other piece is a screw band, called a ring, that holds the flat in place. During the canning process, air is forced out of the jar creating a partial vacuum. As the jar cools, this vacuum sucks the lid onto the jar. During this process, the heated sealing compound wraps itself around the rim of the jar creating an airtight seal. The jar isn't fully sealed until the compound has cooled, 12 to 24 hours after the jars have been removed from the canner.

Unfortunately, there are many things that can prevent a sturdy airtight seal. Use these tips to prevent having to reprocess your garden's harvest.

1. Make sure your containers are Mason-type jars made for home canning. Non-standard jars may have a mouth that doesn't perfectly fit the two-piece canning lids.
2. Check jars for chips on the rim. The smallest chip or crack in the rim of the jar can prevent it from sealing.
3. Reuse only the screw bands that are unbent and free from rust.
4. Always clean the top edge of the jar before placing the flat. The slightest particle of food can prevent the flat from attaching itself to the jar rim.
5. Follow manufacturer's instructions for the flat. Boiling a flat that wasn't supposed to be can make the sealing compound too soft. When the air is forced from the jar and the flat is suctioned down it results in metal against glass on the rim with no seal.
6. Screwing the ring on too tightly can prevent a good seal. Screw it on until it catches and then turn it a quarter of the way around the jar.
7. Always leave the correct amount of headspace. Too little can result in food being suctioned out leaving food on the jar rim. Too much can mean not enough air escaping so that the flat isn't suctioned onto the rim.

How to re-process jars that don't seal.

Jars of home-canned produce can be re-processed, if you do it within 24 hours. Remove the lid, clean the rim of the jar and check for small cracks or chips. If there are no chips or nicks in the jar, it can be reused. Place a new lid on the jar and process for the same time as before.

When you re-process food, it loses some nutritional value and is softer in texture.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation: <http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/general.html>



Freezing soups and casseroles

Many people love eating hearty, warm dishes such as soups and casseroles. Preparing a large quantity and freezing portions of it to eat later can save a great deal of time. Keeping a few tips in mind will help preserve the safety and quality of these frozen dishes.

- Cooked potatoes can get watery when reheating them after freezing. For best results, keep potatoes out of frozen soups and casseroles.
- If freezing a dish with meat, cover the meat with liquid to maintain its quality.
- After cooking, cool the dishes as quickly as possible by portioning into smaller containers. The amount you need for one meal is ideal. You can place the containers directly in the freezer. Don't pack the containers closely, so that air can circulate around them.
- Be sure to leave a little headspace in the container, since the food will expand as it freezes.
- The food can be reheated without thawing using a microwave or stovetop. Reheat the food to at least 165°F throughout as checked with a thermometer.
- Prepared foods can be stored in the freezer at 0°F or lower for 4 to 6 months.

More information on freezing a variety of prepared foods is available from: <http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/uga/FreezingPreparedFoods.pdf>

Local Contact Information:

University of Missouri Extension

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