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A Utah State University Extension and Nutrition and Food Sciences Department campaign

The goal of the *How to Nourish With* lesson series is to provide adults and older children with helpful information and demonstrations about selecting, preparing, cooking with, and storing vegetables. This basic knowledge may encourage families to include vegetables more often as a mainstay of family meals and snacks.

Objectives:

1. Adults will explain a health benefit provided by rhubarb.
2. Adults will explain how to select rhubarb.
3. Adults will discuss cost and time effective strategies for incorporating rhubarb into family meals.
4. Adults will discuss preparation and storage techniques of rhubarb, including cleaning, trimming, cooking, and storing
5. Adults will make and taste food that includes rhubarb.

Total Time: ~1 hour

Materials

- Chalkboard/whiteboard with chalk or dry-erase marker.
- Pens or pencils for participants.
- Copies of the handouts.
- 4-5 stalks of rhubarb (at least two different colors and at least one stalk with the leaf still attached).
- Sharp cutting knife.
- Cutting board.
- Plastic sample cups and spoons (enough for each participant to have 1).
- Vanilla yogurt.
- Granola.
- Other ingredients for rhubarb sauce.
- Medium saucepan and access to a stove top range.
- Bowls and utensils for cooking recipe.

Preparation Required

- Review the lesson plan
- Make copies of the handouts
- Wash rhubarb stalks

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USU Dietetics Students
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LESSON PLAN

Introduction: Welcome

Time: 5 minutes

- Welcome everyone to the class and thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to attend.
- Tell participants that we will be discussing how incorporating rhubarb into meals can add variety, flavor, and many beneficial nutrients to their diet. Rhubarb is one of those vegetables that many people may not be taking advantage of simply because they are not sure how to use it.
- **Ask the class:** What comes to your mind when you think of rhubarb?
    - Invite a few people to share their thoughts with the class. After they share, you may include:
        - Tart flavor.
        - Looks like celery with bigger leaves.
        - Unsure what to do with it.
        - May not like the flavor.
        - Makes great pie.
        - Often used like a fruit.
- Distribute the handouts and pens/pencils to the participants.
- Encourage participants to take notes and ask questions freely.

Objective 1: *Adults will explain a health benefit provided by rhubarb.*

Activity: Nutrition discussion

Time: 5 minutes

- Tell the class that not only is rhubarb a good source of vitamins and minerals (such as vitamin C, vitamin K, calcium, and potassium), but it is also a great source of **fiber**. *Because this is a whole foods lesson, fiber is the only component to be discussed. It is not necessary to discuss or explain the other nutrients that may be mentioned. If they would like to learn more about them, encourage them to attend other lessons where other nutrients will be discussed.*
- **Ask the class:** Even though rhubarb is not a vegetable that we use often in main dish recipes, how can we incorporate it into our diet?
- On the board, write down the participants ideas of how to cook with rhubarb.
    - Rhubarb pies
    - Fresh rhubarb sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar
    - Rhubarb sauce
    - Upside-down rhubarb cake
- Discuss with the class that the most common way to eat rhubarb is in baked goods or with something sweet because by itself it is very tart and sour. It usually needs the added sweetness of sugar, honey, or fruit juice to balance out the acidity. Plain rhubarb tastes similar to a green apple sprinkled with salt.

Objective 2: *Adults will understand how to select the best rhubarb.*

Objective 4: Adults will understand preparation and storage techniques of rhubarb, including cleaning, trimming, cooking, and storing.

Activity: Food preparation demonstration

Time: 15 minutes

- Show the class different color options of rhubarb (red, green, or speckled pink). Refer to the pictures at the end of this lesson if a variety cannot be found in stores or from a garden.

- Explain that rhubarb stalks grow in a spectrum of colors varying from red to green. In-between colors are often called pink or speckled. The color of the stalk may not be a good indication of sweetness.
- Show the class the full stalk with leaf attached. Explain that the leaves are the poisonous part of the plant and should not be eaten. They contain a poison that is harmful to the body. Consuming rhubarb leaves can cause weakness, burning in the mouth, difficulty breathing, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and possibly coma. Few deaths have been reported but to be safe, don't eat the leaves. *As you explain the leaves, remove them from the stalk and discard.*
- **Ask the class:** What characteristics should you look for when selecting rhubarb?
    - Crisp, blemish-free stalks
    - About one inch in diameter (typical full growth size)
    - Harvest early in the season for more flavorful stalks (April-June)
- Finish trimming the rhubarb and cutting into manageable pieces. If the stalks are very fibrous, carefully trim off the stringy fibers using a sharp knife.
- While you finish the demonstration, tell the class that they can store rhubarb in plastic bags and refrigerate for about a week or freeze for up to nine months. Freezing makes it cheap and easy to use rhubarb throughout the year.
- Chop one of the stalks into bite-size pieces and pass around on a plate for any class members to sample if they'd like to try it plain.

Objective 3*: *Adults will understand cost- and time-effective strategies for incorporating rhubarb into family meals

Activity: Garden discussion

Time: 15 minutes

- Growing your own rhubarb is cheap and time-effective because it is a very self-sustaining plant. It grows well in most soils, but does best if planted with compost.
- Rhubarb is a great plant to have in your garden because it grows back every season (meaning it is a perennial plant) for 8-12 years and requires very little maintenance. It also makes a beautiful landscaping plant.
- **Ask the class:** How many class members have grown rhubarb in their yard before?
  Ask some of the participants to share their past experience with growing rhubarb.
- Review gardening handout with the class. Discuss each step for growing rhubarb. Things to note while discussing the handout:
    - Rhubarb is a very strong plant and can tolerate a fair amount of neglect, which is why it makes a great plant for those who have little gardening time.
    - Rhubarb tolerates very cold very well; it needs the cold weather to trigger growth in the spring.
    - Rhubarb should be planted in the spring.
    - If you know someone with a big rhubarb plant, maybe they can give you a "start".
    - The stalks should NOT be harvested the first year because food from the leaves is needed to nourish the roots for the next year's growth. The second year the stalks can be lightly harvested and from the third year on the entire plant can be harvested. To harvest, pull the stalks rather than cut.
    - Remove any rhubarb flowers immediately as they grow because they deplete the reserves from the roots to support growth.

- Discuss space issues with the class. Explain that one rhubarb plant will produce enough for a family of 4-6 people. If they do not have a yard, they may want to consider trying a small-space garden.

Objective 5: *Adults will make and taste something that includes rhubarb.*

Activity: Food demonstration
Time: 15 minutes

- Ask for a few volunteers to help you make the rhubarb sauce.
- Using the rhubarb previously cut, prepare the recipe.
- While the sauce is cooking, talk to the class about different variations they can do with the recipe such as adding cinnamon, lemon zest, crushed pineapple, or any kind of citrus juice. This sauce can be very versatile and used over ice cream, yogurt, oatmeal, pancakes, or waffles.
- If time and budget permits, prepare a few different variations of the sauce.
- Serve over yogurt and sprinkle granola on top for participants in sample cups.

Conclusion: Summary and Regroup

Time: 5 minutes

- Ask the class participants if they have any questions.
- What did they learn that encouraged them to go home and plant or cook with rhubarb? How many of them are going to plant rhubarb this spring after today?
- What serving ideas or recipes do they plan on trying?
- Thank them for attending.

Rhubarb Color Variations

Red

Speckled

Green

Growing Rhubarb
Easy as 1,2,3

1.	Select the planting site and dig a large hole that is 3 feet deep and about 3 feet wide. Fill the hole with compost and soil.
2.	Plant the rhubarb crown about 2 inches below the surface of the soil.
3.	Keep soil moist and watch it grow! Harvest after the first year.

Garden information: Rhubarb tolerates most soils but grows best in well-fertilized soil. Rhubarb roots or crowns should be planted in early spring. It comes back every year for 8-12 years without you doing anything except watering it. Rhubarb should not be picked the first year it grows. You can pick some the second year but from the third year on you can pick as much as you want. Rhubarb tolerates very cold very well; it needs cold to trigger growth in the spring.

Growing season: April-September (can usually pick it twice during the season)

Maintenance:

- Keep soil well-moistened during growing season.
- Weed around the plant regularly.
- These plants get flower stalks which should be removed as quickly as you see them. If the flowers grow, the plant won't be as productive.

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Root for Rhubarb in your kitchen!

Rhubarb & Strawberry Crumble

FILLING:
4 C rhubarb, cut into 1/2" pieces
2 C strawberries, quartered
½ C sugar
2 T flour

CRUMBLE TOPPING:
½ C rolled oats
½ C flour
½ C brown sugar
1 T butter, softened
1 T canola oil
1 T fruit juice (any flavor)
¼ C chopped nuts

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

In a large bowl, toss together rhubarb, strawberries, sugar, and flour. Place this mixture in a 9" square baking dish.

In the same bowl, combine oats, flour, brown sugar, butter, and oil. With a fork or your fingers, combine the ingredients until the mixture is crumbly. Stir in the juice and nuts until evenly moistened.

Distribute the topping mixture over the fruit. Bake for 35-40 minutes, or until the fruit is bubbling and the topping is golden.

Kid-approved rhubarb muffins

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup whole wheat flour
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup light brown sugar
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup milk
¼ cup canola oil
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 ½ cups fresh rhubarb, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 375° and spray 18 muffin cups with cooking spray.

In a mixing bowl combine the flours, baking powder, soda, salt, and cinnamon. Set aside.
In a separate bowl, beat together the brown sugar, eggs, milk, oil, and lemon juice until well-combined.

Add the moist ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir until just combined. Fold in the rhubarb. Portion out into muffin cups.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes. Cool for 5 minutes then remove from pan.

Rhubarb Sauce

2 C rhubarb, cut into 1/2" pieces
1/3 C sugar
1 T cornstarch
1 T water
1 t orange zest

In a medium saucepan, heat rhubarb and sugar stirring frequently for about 10 minutes or until the rhubarb breaks down. In a small bowl mix the cornstarch and water. Add the cornstarch mix and orange zest to the rhubarb and mix well. Serve sauce over ice cream, yogurt, oatmeal, or pancakes.

Note: Can add lemon zest, cinnamon, nutmeg, crushed pineapple, or any citrus juice to sauce for different flavor.

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