



Strawberry Rhubarb Soup

This fresh-as-spring soup combines two early-season fruits (although, technically, rhubarb is actually a vegetable).

Tips for Berry Success

1. For recipes calling for fresh whole or sliced strawberries (such as strawberries dipped in chocolate or sliced in a salad), select large, firm, less ripe berries. They'll hold up better and won't produce a lot of juice, leading to a better appearance.
2. For recipes that involve cooking, crushing or pureeing strawberries with sugar to bring out the color and flavor (such as for preserves, sauces and soups), opt for smaller, more tender berries that are red all the way through. No amount of cooking or sugar will soften an underripe strawberry or bring out red color from white flesh.
3. Wash strawberries before hulling them or the fruit will soak up extra water.
4. Use glass, plastic or non-reactive metal utensils when working with strawberries. The acid in the fruit can combine with some metals, turning the berries dark and staining the utensil. If you don't have rhubarb, use all strawberries.

Ingredients

1-1/2 cups fresh strawberries, coarsely chopped
1-1/2 cups prepared rhubarb (see below)
2 cups water
3 T. quick-cooking tapioca
1/2 cup sugar
1-1/2 T. freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 tsp. finely grated lemon rind
1/2 cup sour cream
Cinnamon for garnish

Preparation

To prepare rhubarb, trim and rinse about a half-pound fresh rhubarb and cut into 1-inch pieces, or use 1-1/2 cups frozen, unsweetened rhubarb, thawed and drained. In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine fresh or frozen rhubarb, 1/3 cup sugar, 1/4 cup water and 2 tablespoons lemon juice. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 20 minutes for fresh rhubarb, 10 minutes for frozen, stirring a couple of times. Transfer to a glass bowl and let cool to room temperature before adding to tapioca mixture with strawberries.

In a 3-quart saucepan over medium-high heat, mix water, tapioca, sugar, lemon juice and lemon rind. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat and add fruit. Simmer 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat.

Working in batches, puree soup in blender or food processor. Transfer to a glass bowl and let cool. Cover and chill 4 hours or overnight.

To serve, stir soup well and ladle into bowls. Garnish each serving with a dollop of sour cream and a sprinkling of cinnamon. Serves 4 to 6.