

# Health Benefits of Rhubarb



Rhubarb is originally from Asia, where it was used for centuries in traditional Chinese medicine as a cure for stomach aches and fevers. It was brought to Europe and the Americas in the 1600's and soon became popular for its edible properties. Rhubarb is a perennial, meaning you do not have to plant from year to year, although it can only be harvested after the second growing season. Rhubarb is rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals, offering an array of potential health benefits.

Rhubarb has a long, colorful stalk, similar to that of celery, which can be eaten raw, or cooked to mellow its tartness. Although classified as a vegetable, rhubarb is often used like fruit in jams or pies. The strong tart taste pairs well with sweet fruits. Rhubarb also works in savory foods such as marinades or sauces.

## WHAT MAKES RHUBARB GREAT?

### Nutrition

1 cup of raw diced rhubarb provides 26 calories, 1 gm protein, 2 gm fiber, no fat and no cholesterol.

### Vitamins

Half of a cup rhubarb contains more than a third of the recommended dietary intake for Vitamin K. This is essential for blood clotting and bone, muscle, and cartilage health. It plays a vital role in the prevention of osteoporosis and coronary heart disease. Rhubarb also contains vitamin C, which boosts collagen, promotes wound healing, improves the absorption of iron, and supports immune function.

### Minerals

There is a significant amount of calcium in rhubarb, which supports bone density. It plays an important role in nerve signaling, circulation, and hormone release throughout the body.

### Antioxidants

Rhubarb is saturated with antioxidants, particularly anthocyanins, which gives it the bright red color. These anthocyanins help balance the intestinal gut flora and also have antibacterial and antitumor activities.

## BUYING & USING RHUBARB

When buying rhubarb, look for firm, crisp stalks and avoid those that are limp and blemished.

**CAUTION:** It is crucial to know that only the stalk of rhubarb is safe to consume. The leaves contain high levels of *oxalic acid* and *anthrone glycosides* which are toxic. Take caution to keep the leaves away from pets, as they can have a more potent poisonous effects than they do for humans.

It is important to note that the high levels of vitamin K can interfere with and decrease the effectiveness of blood thinning medications. Talk to your doctor before adding rhubarb to your diet if you are taking blood thinners.

To prepare, wash and cut the stalks, and remove any discolored areas. Although it can be eaten raw, rhubarb is commonly cooked with sugar, and added to desserts. Rhubarb pairs well with strawberries and vanilla which balance out the tartness. However, it is extremely versatile! For savory options, try pickling it and adding it to fresh salads, slaws, or sandwiches. You can also incorporate it into sauces and marinades to add a zesty and tangy twist to your proteins.

To store, wrap them in plastic wrap or aluminum foil, or store in tightly covered container and refrigerate for up to two weeks. Rhubarb can also be frozen in plastic bags and kept for up to a year.



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## Pickled Rhubarb blossomtostem.net

### Ingredients:

3 cups rhubarb, sliced about ½ inch thick  
1 cup champagne vinegar, (or any vinegar)  
½ cup granulated sugar  
a few sprigs of fresh tarragon, optional

### Instructions:

1. Place the sliced rhubarb in a heat-safe mixing bowl (glass or stainless steel is preferable to plastic).
2. Heat vinegar and sugar in a small saucepan over medium-high heat until the sugar has dissolved. Add the tarragon (if using). Remove from heat and let cool for about 1 minute.
2. Pour cooled sauce over the rhubarb. Cover with a plate or a pot lid or a piece of parchment paper to keep the rhubarb fully submerged in the liquid. Let cool to room temperature.
3. Transfer to a glass jar and store in the refrigerator. This will keep in the refrigerator for at least a few weeks.

## Savory Rhubarb Sauce recipesfromapantry.com

### Ingredients:

2 tsp olive oil	1/3 cup water
1 red onion finely chopped	1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
2 garlic cloves minced	2-3 Tbsp maple syrup
3 large stalks rhubarb, thinly sliced	6 fresh basil leaves

### Instructions:

1. Heat the olive oil in a pot medium-low and sauté the onions and garlic for 8 minutes or until softened.
2. Stir in the rhubarb, water, vinegar, syrup and basil.
3. Bring to a boil and simmer 10 minutes until the rhubarb is completely falling apart in pieces and the sauce has thickened.
4. Serve over pasta, with grilled vegetables, or as a side dish.

## Healthy Rhubarb Muffins adapted from foodess.com

### Ingredients:

2 cups wheat flour  
¼ cup granulated sugar  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp baking powder  
½ tsp fine sea salt  
1 ½ cups full-fat Greek yogurt  
½ cup oil  
¼ cup non-dairy milk (soy, almond, hemp)  
1 egg (or 1 Tbsp flax meal + 3 Tbsp water)  
½ tsp vanilla extract  
2 cups finely chopped rhubarb

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with muffin liners; set aside. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder and salt.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together yogurt, oil, milk, egg and extract.
3. Add wet ingredients to dry and use your biggest spatula to gently fold together, scraping the bottom, until 80% mixed, with floury streaks remaining.
4. Gently fold in the rhubarb.
5. Spoon batter into prepared muffin tins.
6. Bake for 18-22 minutes, until golden brown and tops spring back when lightly pressed.

## REFERENCES

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