

P-i-i-i-i-eplant

Pieplant? What's a pieplant? Well, I'll tell ya. Pieplant is an old fashioned name for rhubarb. Rhubarb is in season now at lower elevations in El Dorado County. I live a bit higher, but mine will be ready to pick in a week or so. I can't wait!

Rhubarb has always been a favorite of mine. One of my comfort foods. My mom made stewed rhubarb for dessert, and also made rhubarb pie. She never mixed it with other fruit. I was well into adulthood before I heard of strawberry-rhubarb pie. Another popular combination is blueberry-rhubarb. I like it anyway it comes.

Although rhubarb has a flavor of its own, it is fairly mild. It is good to mix into expensive fruits like blueberries and strawberries. The bolder flavor of the berries dominates so rhubarb is a good "filler" to stretch those more expensive fruits.

Rhubarb on its own is quite tart. It needs to be sweetened. Mixing it with sweet strawberries reduces the amount of sugar needed.

Rhubarb Strawberry Pie Filling

- 7 cups of rhubarb, cut into approx 1 inch slices
- 4 cups of hulled halved strawberries
- 3 granny smith apples, peeled and chopped finely
- 2 cups of granulated sugar
- 1 tbs orange zest
- 1/4 cup fresh squeezed orange juice.



In a large non-reactive (stainless or enamel) pot, combine apples, orange zest and orange juice. Stir to coat apples thoroughly. Stir in rhubarb and sugar. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat and boil gently, stirring frequently, until rhubarb is tender, about 12 minutes. Add strawberries and return to a boil. Remove from heat.

Ladle hot pie filling into hot jars, leaving 1 inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace, if necessary, by adding more hot filling. Wipes rims clean. Center lid on jar. Screw band down finger-tight or just until resistance is met.

Place jars in canner, insuring they are completely covered with at least 1 inch of water. Bring to a boil and process for 15 minutes. Adjust for elevation, if necessary.

Yield: about 5 pints

Source: *Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving*

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