

Rhubarb-Ginger Crumble

A crumble is a wonderful way to manage an overflowing fruit bowl, and this version is perfect for spring when tangy rhubarb first appears in the markets.

Preheat an oven to 350°F. Lightly butter a shallow 2-quart baking dish.

In a bowl, stir together the flour and brown sugar. Scatter 4 Tbs. of the butter over the top and, using your fingers, 2 knives or a pastry blender, work in the butter until the mixture is crumbly. Add the almonds, crystallized ginger and salt and stir to combine. Set the topping mixture aside.

In a large bowl, combine the rhubarb, fresh ginger and granulated sugar and stir to mix well. Transfer the rhubarb mixture to the prepared baking dish and spread in an even layer. Dot with the remaining 2 Tbs. butter. Sprinkle the topping mixture evenly over the fruit.

Bake until the topping is deep gold and the juices are bubbling, about 1 hour. Serve warm or at room temperature with vanilla ice cream. Serves 6 to 8.

Fresh take: There are no rules when it comes to crumbles, so feel free to vary the flavors and fruit combinations with the seasons. In summer, try nectarines and blueberries or a plum-almond mixture; in fall, combine apples and cherries.

Dress it up: Vanilla ice cream is pretty much a required topping for any crumble or cobbler. Churn up a homemade batch or purchase a top-quality brand at the market.

Make ahead: The crumble topping can be made up to 2 days ahead and stored, tightly covered, in the refrigerator.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Good Food to Share*, by Sara Kate Gillingham-Ryan (Weldon Owen, 2010).

Apricot Clafoutis

Other fruits, such as cherries, plums or pears, may be used in place of the apricots. Use 2 cups fruit. Pit the cherries, halve and pit the plums, or peel, halve and core the pears and cut into chunks.

Preheat an oven to 350°F. Butter four 1-cup ramekins or ovenproof custard cups and place on a rimmed baking sheet.

Place the apricots in the bottom of the dishes, dividing them evenly, and sprinkle with the brandy.

In a blender, combine the eggs, milk, granulated sugar, lemon zest, vanilla, salt and flour. Process until smooth. Pour the batter over the apricots, dividing it evenly among the dishes.

Bake until each clafouti is puffed and golden brown, 23 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool slightly. Dust the tops with confectioners' sugar and serve. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Food Made Fast Series, *Baking*, by Lou Seibert Pappas (Oxmoor House, 2006).

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What's in Season

All fruits and vegetables have a peak season when they flourish and taste best. Here is a list of spring's best:

Apricots	Mustard greens
Artichokes	Pea pods
Asparagus	Peas
Belgian endive	Pineapple
Bitter melon	Purple asparagus
Broccoli	Radicchio
Butter lettuce	Ramps
Cactus	Red leaf lettuce
Chayote squash	Rhubarb
Cherimoya	Snow peas
Cherries	Sorrel
Chives	Spinach
Collard greens	Spring baby lettuce
Fava beans	Strawberries
Fennel	Vidalia and Maui onions
Fiddlehead ferns	Watercress
Green beans	White asparagus
Mango	
Morel mushrooms	

Ingredients for Grilled Asparagus and Endive with Favas, Orange and Mint

3 lb. fava beans, outer pods removed

1 lb. slender asparagus, ends trimmed

2 heads Belgian endive, sliced lengthwise ½ inch thick

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

1 orange

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

½ cup fresh mint leaves

Ingredients for Rhubarb-Ginger Crumble

6 Tbs. (¾ stick) unsalted butter, cut into ¼-inch cubes, plus more for greasing

1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour

¾ cup firmly packed light brown sugar

¾ cup chopped almonds

⅓ cup finely chopped crystallized ginger

¼ tsp. sea salt

2 lb. rhubarb, trimmed and cut into ¾-inch pieces (about 6 cups)

1 Tbs. peeled and minced fresh ginger

¾ cup granulated sugar

Vanilla ice cream for serving (optional)

Ingredients for Apricot Clafoutis

1 lb. apricots, quartered and pitted (about 2 cups)

2 tsp. brandy or cognac (optional)

2 eggs

¾ cup plus 2 Tbs. milk

6 Tbs. granulated sugar

1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest

1 tsp. vanilla extract

Pinch of salt

⅓ cup all-purpose flour

2 Tbs. confectioners' sugar

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Technique Class: What's in Season: Spring Produce

From slender spears of asparagus to tender young fava beans, springtime vegetables are much anticipated at farmers' markets. Here we showcase these vegetables in simple dishes that allow the garden-fresh flavors to shine. The season for delicate spring fruits and vegetables is fleeting, so savor them while you can.

Grilled Asparagus and Endive with Favas, Orange and Mint

Bring a pot three-fourths full of salted water to a boil over high heat. Meanwhile, prepare a large bowl of ice water. Add the shucked fava beans to the boiling water and boil for 1 minute. Drain and transfer to the bowl of ice water. When the beans are cool, use your fingers to peel off the skins. Set aside.

Prepare a hot fire in a grill and oil the grill rack.

Arrange the asparagus and endive on the grill, making sure they are perpendicular to the grate bars and don't fall through the grate. (Alternatively, use a grill screen.) Grill, turning occasionally, until they are evenly charred, 2 to 3 minutes total. Arrange on a serving platter and season well with salt and pepper.

Using a zester, zest the orange over a bowl. Peel and segment the orange, allowing the segments and any juices to fall into the bowl. Add the olive oil and, using a fork, break up the orange segments into bite-size pieces. Season with salt and pepper.

Scatter the fava beans and mint on top of the grilled vegetables. Drizzle with the orange dressing and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Variations: You can substitute English peas for the fava beans, or grilled fennel for the endive. You can also use a broiler instead of a grill to cook the vegetables; just keep a close watch to avoid overcooking them.

Serving Suggestion: This dish would make a great side for grilled fish or meat. Pair it with a crisp white wine, such as Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Cooking for Friends*, by Alison Attenborough and Jamie Kimm (Oxmoor House, 2008).

Ingredients for Spring Pea Soup with Bacon Bread Crumbs
4 oz. bacon
2 slices white sandwich bread, processed into fine crumbs
2 Tbs. chopped fresh mint
2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup finely chopped shallots
2 lb. shelled fresh or frozen English peas
4 cups chicken broth
¼ cup heavy cream

Ingredients for Spring Vegetable Ragout
4 Tbs. (½ stick) unsalted butter
1 red onion, diced
1 tsp. minced garlic
1 lb. asparagus, ends trimmed, spears cut on the bias into 1-inch pieces
6 oz. sugar snap peas, strings removed
6 oz. yellow summer squash, cut into ¼-inch dice
6 oz. zucchini, cut into ¼-inch dice
6 oz. cherry tomatoes, halved
1 can (15 oz.) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Spring Pea Soup with Bacon Bread Crumbs

Showcasing the garden-fresh flavors of spring, this pea soup gets a flavor boost from a crispy garnish of bread crumbs and bits of bacon.

Heat a cast-iron fry pan over medium-high heat. Arrange the bacon in the pan and cook, turning once, until crisp, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a paper towel–lined plate.

Discard all but 1 Tbs. of the fat from the pan and reduce the heat to medium. Add the bread crumbs and cook, stirring occasionally, until toasted and golden, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer to a bowl.

In a mini food processor, process the bacon into fine bits. Stir the bacon, mint, parsley, salt and pepper into the bread crumbs. Set aside.

In a 5½-quart Dutch oven over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil. Add the shallots and sauté until softened, 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in the peas, broth, salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the peas are tender, 12 to 20 minutes. Stir in the cream. Working in batches, puree the soup in a food processor until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

Ladle the soup into warmed bowls and garnish with the bacon bread crumbs. Serve immediately. Serves 6.

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Spring Vegetable Ragout

This medley of spring vegetables is excellent alongside grilled salmon or chicken.

In a 2¾-quart Dutch oven over medium-high heat, melt 2 Tbs. of the butter. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 8 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Transfer to a large bowl.

In the same pot over medium-high heat, melt 1 Tbs. of the butter. Add the asparagus and snap peas and cook, stirring occasionally, until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Transfer to the bowl with the onion mixture.

In the same pot over medium-high heat, melt the remaining 1 Tbs. butter. Add the summer squash and zucchini and cook, stirring occasionally, until just tender, about 6 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cannellini beans and cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes have just softened, 5 to 6 minutes.

Return all the vegetables to the pot and cook, stirring occasionally, until just warmed through, 1 to 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, sprinkle with the parsley and serve immediately. Serves 4.

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New Potatoes with Spring Peas

New potatoes, the first ones dug in spring and early summer, taste earthy and satisfying but nothing like the heftier mature potatoes found in markets the rest of the year. These young potatoes are low in starch, with thin, tender skins and delicate flesh. Small round red or white potatoes (also called creamers), fingerlings and Yellow Finns are among the most common varieties available as new potatoes. Unlike mature potatoes, new potatoes should be stored no more than 2 or 3 days before cooking and eating.

Put the potatoes in a large saucepan and add water to cover by 2 inches. Add large pinches of salt and sugar. (The sugar brings out the natural flavor of the potatoes yet does not contribute any sweetness to the final dish.) Bring the potatoes to a boil over high heat, reduce the heat to medium and cook, uncovered, at a bubbling simmer until the potatoes are just tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Test with a fork; the fork should meet a bit of resistance but pierce the potatoes easily. (Do not let the potatoes overcook or they will become watery and fall apart.)

Drain the potatoes. They may be peeled or left unpeeled. If you are peeling them, rinse them in cold water and let cool for a few minutes, then peel.

Meanwhile, bring a saucepan three-fourths full of water to a rapid boil over high heat. Add pinches of salt and sugar and the peas, and blanch until they turn bright green, about 30 seconds. Drain and rinse under cold running water to stop the cooking and set the color.

In a heavy fry pan over medium-low heat, melt the butter with the olive oil. Add the green onions and let them wilt, about 3 minutes. Add the potatoes and peas and toss together until heated through, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Variation: Try substituting 2 cups sugar snap peas or 2 cups trimmed snow peas for the English peas in this recipe.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, Vegetable, by Marlena Spieler (Simon & Schuster, 2002).

Ingredients for New Potatoes with Spring Peas
2 lb. small new potatoes, such as fingerlings or red or white potatoes, of uniform size
Salt, to taste
Pinch of sugar
2 cups shelled young English peas
2 Tbs. unsalted butter
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
5 or 6 green onions, white and light green portions, thinly sliced
Freshly ground pepper, to taste