



ANSON MILLS

Rhubarb Compote

Yield

About 1³/₄ cups

Time

About 30 minutes

Cooking Remarks

Anatomically, rhubarb stalks are much like celery stalks—celery in a ravishing hue. Recipes may call for peeling them, but we hate to lose that tropical-sunset stain. Trim the stalks, then slice each one lengthwise into 1/4-inch thick strips—2 or 3 strips, depending on how thick the rhubarb stalk is—and then crosswise into dice.

In a saucepan on the stove top, rhubarb breaks down pretty quickly. Sometimes a little too quickly. If you overstir while it is cooking or cook it too long, rhubarb will degrade into pink mush. To counter this tendency, we add sugar and lemon juice to the rhubarb and let the mixture macerate before introducing the heat. The sugar and the acid from the citrus “burn” the vegetable fibers, inducing them to give off liquid. Thus, the cooking begins very gently, before the bottom of the pan even touches the burner.

Equipment *Mise en Place*

For this recipe, you will need a rasp-style grater/zester, a medium heavy-bottomed nonreactive saucepan, and a wooden spoon.

Ingredients

1 pound crisp, richly hued rhubarb stalks, washed, trimmed, and cut into dice (about 3¹/₂ cups)
1/2 cup (3.5 ounces) sugar, plus additional as needed
3 tablespoons juice from 1 large, juicy lemon
Pinch of fine sea salt
1¹/₂ tablespoons finely grated lemon or orange zest, or a combination of the two

Directions

1. Turn the rhubarb, sugar, lemon juice, and salt into a medium heavy-bottomed nonreactive saucepan and stir with a wooden spoon to combine. Let stand until the rhubarb exudes some liquid, 15 to 20 minutes.
2. Set the saucepan over medium heat and cook the rhubarb mixture, stirring occasionally, until the liquid begins to simmer gently, 5 to 7 minutes. The rhubarb pieces should be soft but still hang on to some of their shape. Off heat, stir in the citrus zest. Taste for seasoning; if you find the compote too tart, stir in up to 2 tablespoons sugar while it is hot. Transfer the compote to a nonreactive bowl, let cool to room temperature, and then cover and refrigerate until ready to use.