

Rhubarb sorbet

March is the month when rhubarb begins pushing its way through the earth. If you are a gardener and have covered your rhubarb crown with a tall rhubarb forcing pot, you will no doubt be picking some delicious pink shoots by now.

Because the early shoots are so succulent and such a treat, being the first of the season's fruits, this sorbet recipe is an ideal way of using them.

To serve 6 people you will need:

- 1 1/2 lb (650g) rhubarb stalks
- 1 lb (450g) granulated sugar
- Juice of one orange
- Juice of two lemons
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Dash of grenadine (optional but it does add extra colour if needed).

Method:

- Begin by making the sugar syrup, which needs to be cooled before used for this recipe. Do this by placing the sugar into a saucepan along with 600ml warm water and slowly bring the liquid to the boil.
- Boil for a couple of minutes and allow to cool.
- Prepare the rhubarb by cutting into short strips and simmering them with the orange juice, keeping a lid on the pot as it cooks.
- Allow to cool once it is tender, then zap through a blender along with the sugar syrup to obtain a smooth mix. You can strain it at this point if you want to, but it tastes just as good with little bits in it.
- Add half the lemon juice and the vanilla extract, taste, adjust with more lemon juice to suit your palate - do be cautious with the lemon juice as frozen foods are best if slightly over-sweet. This is the point where you can add a drop of two of grenadine if you want to improve the colour.
- Pour the mix into a plastic container and freeze for a couple of hours, then remove from freezer and beat with a hand mixer until all broken up.
- Place back into the freezer and repeat the process a couple of times more or until you are happy with the texture.
- Keep stored in the freezer until needed, removing it about 20 minutes before required to allow it to soften slightly.
- Looks great if served with a little poached rhubarb on the side and a sprig of mint to garnish.