



**THE
MICRO
WAY
LANI
BLOOMER**

Whether you pick your rhubarb out of the garden or off the store shelves, now is the time to look for it. Rhubarb cooks well in a microwave, so use the cooking techniques below to help you adapt your favorite recipes.

When buying rhubarb, choose young (not too thick) crisp stalks. Wilted or soft stalks will not be as flavorful; and very thick stalks may be stringy and tough. Remember, you should not eat the leaf parts of rhubarb, only the stalks.

To prepare fresh rhubarb, cut stalks an inch or two below the leaves. Wash stalks, and cut into about half inch slices, unless a recipe gives other directions.

Rhubarb will keep a week in the refrigerator if well wrapped in a plastic bag. I prefer to store it unwashed and uncut, washing and cutting it just before using it.

To freeze rhubarb for longer storage, wash, cut, and freeze with the slices separated on a cookie sheet or flat pan. Sugar is not necessary for freezing. When frozen, pack in airtight bags or containers. This way, the rhubarb is loose, and you can easily remove just enough for a recipe.

To thaw frozen rhubarb for recipes, microwave on high for 1-1½ minutes per cup. Stir once, halfway through. When thawed, you can use it as fresh rhubarb, adding any liquid to the recipe. For some recipes, like rhubarb sauce, you may not need to defrost the fruit first, just increase the cooking time.

Rhubarb Pies

A two-crust fruit pie won't cook well in the microwave alone, because the bottom crust won't

cook properly. However, you can use your favorite rhubarb (strawberry-rhubarb, etc.) pie recipe, and shorten the cooking time by cooking it part of the time in a microwave and part of the time in your range.

1. Prepare conventional rhubarb pie recipe as you would for the range, using a glass pie plate. Preheat range oven to 425°F. while the pie cooks in the microwave.

2. Microwave the pie on high for 8-10 minutes until the fruit is bubbly near the center. (Rotate the pie ¼ turn after 5 minutes if your

oven cooks unevenly.)

3. When the fruit is bubbling near the center, transfer pie to the range oven, and bake for 15-20 minutes until the crust is browned and the pie done.

A single crust rhubarb pie can be baked in the microwave, if the bottom crust is prebaked. Top the pie with a crumb topping, such as that in the Rhubarb-Orange Crisp recipe below, instead of a top crust.

RAPID RHUBARB (SAUCE)

3 cups rhubarb, cut about ½" thick (about 1 pound)

¼ cup water or fruit juice

¼ cup sugar

1. Combine rhubarb and water or juice in a 2-quart casserole.

2. Cover and cook on high for 5-6 minutes, stirring once after 3 minutes, until the rhubarb is almost tender.

3. Add sugar, stirring well, and cook on high for 1 more minute, covered. Rhubarb will become a little more tender as it stands and cools.

4. Cool slightly or chill before serving. Makes 4 servings.

HINT: Recipe may be doubled, but it's not quite so rapid! Use a 3-quart casserole, and double

ingredients and cooking times.

RHUBARB-ORANGE CRISP

4 cups rhubarb, cut ½" thick (1¼ to 1½ pounds)

¾ cup sugar

2 tablespoons flour

1 teaspoon grated rind

Topping:

3 tablespoons butter or margarine

½ cup flour

½ cup sugar

½ cup quick rolled oats

½ cup chopped walnuts

1. Put rhubarb in an 8" square or 9" round microsafe dish.

2. In a small bowl, combine the ¾ cup sugar, 2 tablespoons flour and orange rind. Stir into the rhubarb, stirring well to coat all the fruit.

4. Prepare topping: Melt butter or margarine on high for 45 seconds. Mix flour, sugar, oats and

nuts together, then stir in melted butter until crumbly.

5. Stir rhubarb again, then sprinkle topping evenly over the fruit. Cook on high, uncovered, for 9-11 minutes, until the rhubarb is bubbly near the center and tender.

6. Let stand to cool a few minutes before serving. Top with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream if desired.

HINTS: This is a fairly tart dessert. If you like it sweeter, use 1 cup of sugar instead of ¾ cup with the fruit.

Substitute 1 cup strawberries for 1 cup rhubarb if desired. Add 1 tablespoon more flour in Step 2 if using strawberries.

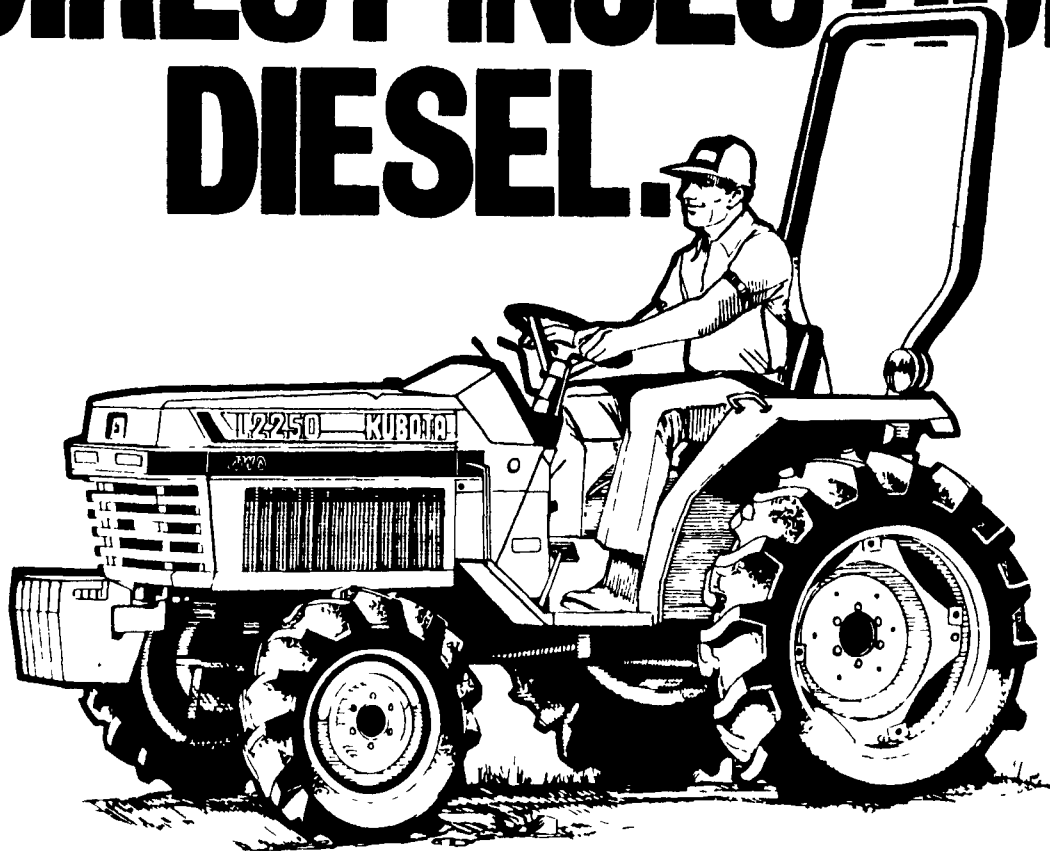
NOTE: The times above are for microwaves with 600-700 watts of cooking power. For 500-600 W, add 10 seconds to each minute; for 400-500 W, add 20 seconds.

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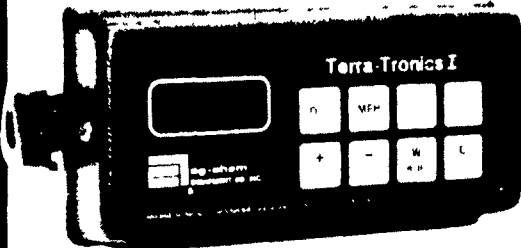
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