

RHUBARB AND GINGER CRISPY CRUMBLE

This was one of my grandma's favourites which we ate warm with custard. Although not strictly speaking a crumble, it has a beautifully crisp topping, which we all adored. She used to grow rhubarb in her kitchen garden and would always "force" some under upturned buckets to use in the early months of the year. I loved pulling the long bright pink stems from the "crowns". We would make cones of greaseproof paper to hold sugar into which we would dip our slender stems of rhubarb to nibble. If you're not a fan of ginger, try some finely grated orange zest instead. The two flavours work equally well together.

675g forced rhubarb
3 pieces crystallised ginger
115g / 4oz caster sugar
1 split vanilla pod
115g / 4oz brown bread crumbs
85g flaked almonds – toasted until lightly golden
85g / 3oz unsalted butter (6 tbsp.)
55g / 2oz brown sugar
55g / 2oz rolled oats

Pre-heat oven to 200C, gas mark 6
You will need a fairly shallow oven-proof baking dish

Wash rhubarb stems and cut into pieces about 2½cm long
Cut the ginger into thin slices and then cut across into matchstick size pieces
Put rhubarb, ginger, sugar and vanilla pod in a pan and cook over a gentle heat until the juices run from the rhubarb and it starts to soften. Pour into the baking dish.

Make the topping;
Heat the butter gently in a large frying pan and when it is melted, add the breadcrumbs, oats and brown sugar. Turn up the heat and cook briskly, stirring continuously, until the breadcrumbs and oats start to caramelize, brown and separate. Remove from pan
Stir in the toasted almonds – this is now the crumble topping

Sprinkle the topping over the rhubarb, starting at the edges and working towards the middle. Press down firmly
Bake in the hot oven for about 10 minutes until the topping is crisp and golden – the forced rhubarb is very tender and will finish cooking in this time.