



Allotments are good for your health

The benefits of growing your own in Vitoria-Gasteiz.

allotment: a garden used for growing vegetables to put name forward: to sign up and participate. to be green-fingered: to be good at gardening. turnip: a root vegetable, a staple food in Britain. plot: a small piece of land - as in 'plot of land.' leek: a long vegetable from the onion family. AKA: acronym 'also known as.' rhubarb: an essential ingredient of delicious UK dessert

One project which has almost survived the cuts in Vitoria-Gasteiz has been the municipal Ecological allotments in Olárizu and Abetxuko. Any citizen over eighteen can **put their name forward** to take part in a lottery and if you are lucky enough to have your name pulled out of the hat you are invited to take part in a course in which you learn basic gardening and allotment skills. In keeping with Vitoria's cherished Green image the allotments are strictly ecological and the use of chemicals and pesticides is completely prohibited.

My own experience on my allotment in Olárizu has been marvellous. I have spent four years in the open air in all weathers growing my vegetables and enjoying the fruits of nature. I started off with little horticultural knowledge but I now consider myself to be quite **green-fingered**.

My family, friends and work colleagues have enjoyed my tomatoes, **turnips** and my chilli peppers. At home we have learned to do 101 different dishes with pumpkins and customers in my favourite bar, the Rey Louis in Judizmendi, take the challenge with my extremely hot sauces on 'Pintxo Pote' night.

Each allotment user has a limit of four years on their **plot** due to the long waiting list to join the project. As I come

to the end of my time I reflect on the many benefits of working on the land.

The wonderful feeling of growing your own is hard to put into words. One Christmas every thing we ate on December 25th was from the allotment (apart from the meat).

I have met some interesting people and made new friends chatting about the best way to encourage our **leeks** to grow fat. I have noticed some amusing cultural differences as well when people from Alava have asked me why I was growing 'pig food' aka turnips. They remain unconvinced about this wonderful vegetable. Similarly they do not really get why British people love **rhubarb** and our eyes nostalgically mist over when we lick our lips at the thought of rhubarb crumble.

I have also enjoyed the health benefits of being out in the open air. A regular hour on the allotment can get you as fit as expensive sessions in the gym.

I can also feel smug with the environmental benefits of growing my own food.

By growing locally, I have reduced my carbon footprint and by buying less inefficiently packaged food in supermarkets I have less household waste to fill the bins with.

I am going to miss my allotment. Time to put my name down for the next lottery in February!

John Hird is ECP's resident gardening expert. If you have any questions about growing your own vegetables, just ask our green-fingered coach!

"Let's chat about that!"

- Do you or have you ever 'grown your own'?
- Have you got 'green fingers'?
- What is your favourite vegetable?
- How can VG council extend the municipal Allotments project? Any ideas?

Weekly English Practice

22nd October 2015

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John's Secret Rhubarb Crumble Recipe

Crumbles originated in the UK during World War II. As there was strict rationing, the ingredients needed to create the bases of a normal pie were not available. Traditional pies required too much flour, sugar and fat to make the pastry. So people got creative and made a simple mixture of flour, margarine and sugar and used this to make the top of the crumble. The dish is also popular due to its simplicity. This recipe was handed down to me by my Grandmother.



INGREDIENTS

- 500 G RHUBARB*, CUT IN 3CM PIECES
- 60 ML WATER
- 100 G CASTER SUGAR**
- 200 G PLAIN FLOUR
- 100 G BUTTER (OR MARGARINE).
- 125 G DEMERARA SUGAR**

*OTHER FRUITS SUCH AS APPLES CAN BE USED.

**ORDINARY SUGAR CAN SUBSTITUTE.

1. PREHEAT OVEN TO 180 DEGREES CENTIGRADE - GAS 4.
2. PUT THE RHUBARB IN A 1.2 LITRE OVENPROOF DISH. SPRINKLE OVER THE WATER AND CASTER SUGAR.
3. SIFT THE FLOUR INTO A BOWL, ADD BUTTER AND RUB WITH FINGERS UNTIL THE MIXTURE RESEMBLES BREADCRUMBS - OR WIZZ IN A BLENDER! THEN STIR IN THE DEMERARA SUGAR.
4. SPREAD THE CRUMBLE MIXTURE OVER THE RHUBARB BUT DON'T PAT DOWN TOO MUCH!
5. COOK FOR 35-40 MINUTES UNTIL THE TOP IS GOLDEN BROWN AND THE RHUBARB IS BUBBLING AT THE EDGES.
6. SERVE WITH ICE CREAM / CREAM / CUSTARD -- OR WHATEVER YOU LIKE!

For more great recipes using fresh ingredients, check out my sister on the top Newcastle chef's website!

<http://www.jillweatherburn.co.uk/>

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Here are a couple of idioms related to gardens

to beat around the bush

This expression is used to tell someone to say what they have to say, clearly and directly, even if it is unpleasant.

Stop beating around the bush. Just tell me what has been decided!

to be (as) fresh as a daisy

Someone who is (as) fresh as a daisy is lively and attractive, in a clean and fresh way.

I met Molly the other day. She looked as fresh as a daisy.