

Picking Strawberries

1st July 2020

This week in the garden I caught up with Colin who was filling a punnet with delicious strawberries from the garden. Strawberries are the first berry to ripen in the year, and technically speaking, they are not a part of the berry family!

Berries carry their seeds on the inside, whereas strawberries are in a league of their own, carrying their seeds on the outside. They are technically known as an accessory fruit.



Strawberry plants are perennials, meaning they will come back year after year. To help ensure a good crop, every couple of years, new strawberry plants will be cut from the runners of the current strawberry plants. These will be tended for and in turn grow into larger strawberry plants to help renew the crop.

As strawberries ripen, they need to be picked regularly to stop them spoiling as individuals, but also tainting the other strawberries close to them.

Strawberries are delicious enjoyed on their own, turned into smoothies, or even into jam. They also make a great crumble on their own, or combined with other fruits such as rhubarb, blackberries or apples. Crumble is a really simple dessert, and with my strawberries from Colin, and some Rhubarb provide from Brooke House employee Alison's garden, I made a Rhubarb and Strawberry Crumble. See recipe details below.

Robyn Livingstone, Brooke House Administrator



RHUBARB AND STRAWBERRY CRUMBLE

25TH JUNE 2020

Chop your rhubarb and strawberries up and place in a large oven proof dish, I used around 6/7 stalks of rhubarb and the whole punnet of strawberries (except for a few which escaped as snacks).

Cover in a little bit of granulated sugar and mix well. Rhubarb can be quite sharp, but combined with the sweet strawberries, these two are a good combination.



Make your crumble topping! I do this in the food processor or it can be rubbed through with your hands. A basic crumble topping includes 100g of butter, 150gs of flour, plus some oats (around 80g). I also added muesli and some almonds to mine.



Make your crumble topping! I do this in the food processor or it can be rubbed through with your hands. A basic crumble topping includes 100g of butter, 150gs of flour, plus some oats (around 80g). I also added muesli and some almonds to mine.

Anything similar can be added to your crumble topping including the likes of sunflower seeds, brown sugar, cinnamon or orange zest. It should have a crumbly appearance. If it seems very dry, add some more butter!

Spread thinly over your fruit and sugar, and place into a preheated oven for 40 minutes. I normally place the crumble onto a baking tray and then into the oven, as sometime the fruit within the crumble can boil out the sides during cooking. The crumble will turn golden and the fruit will have softened once cooked. Serve alone, or with custard or cream.



THE ADVENTUROUS RED SQUIRREL

Red squirrels are a common site around Colebrooke Park. There is a squirrel feeder located on one of the tree's up at the Walled Garden and on quieter days a red squirrel or two can be seen. Red squirrels have been under threat for a number of years now, from their invasive cousin the grey squirrel.



Sue Prenter

The grey squirrel came to our shores from North America during the Victorian times. They are more robust than the red squirrel, outcompeting their smaller counterpart for food and shelter. However the grey squirrels transmit a deadly squirrel pox virus to the reds, which has seen the red squirrel population decline to less than an estimate 40,000 on the whole island of Ireland (according to Ulster Wildlife).



The Colebrooke Park squirrels are a brave bunch, as one day last week, one managed to venture into the house at the top of the garden. After a short chase, involving some expert help and guidance, a dash around the kitchen, and posing for a picture in the bathroom, the red squirrel managed to find his way back into the woods again!

To find out more about Red Squirrels why not visit The Fermanagh Red Squirrel Group. This group was formed in the spring of 2011 to assist in the conservation of the red squirrel in County Fermanagh, facilitated by Fermanagh District Council through its Local Biodiversity Action Plan. It was established to assist in the conservation of the red squirrel in the county.

Website:
fermanaghredsquirrelgroup.com

Email:
Contactus@fermanaghredsquirrelgroup.com