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## Perfect Blackberry Crumble

*You'd think a crumble be fairly easy to make, but for years, I was disappointed in my attempts. I always burned the topping. It seemed that in order for the fruit to reach the proper temperature and be slightly bubbling in the pan, the crumble had to be left in the oven just long enough for topping to get too browned. If I covered the crumble with foil half way through the baking process in an attempt to prevent the burning, I didn't get the crunch I wanted. I tried several different topping recipes varying the amounts of sugar, butter, flour, and oatmeal but none seemed to work. One time, as I was adding the fruit to the pan in the hope of making a perfect crumble, something occurred to me. Why not heat the fruit half way through, then add the topping and bake it for the rest of the time? I decided to try this method and when the crumble was done, I had perfection. Bubbly warm fruit covered with a lightly browned, but not burned, topping. As the crumble cooled, the topping be came hard and crunchy. Now why hadn't I thought of this before?*

6 cups fresh or frozen blackberries (if frozen, thaw slightly)  
¼-½ cup granulated sugar (sweeten to taste; use less sugar if the berries are very sweet)  
2 tablespoons cornstarch  
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/2 inch cubes  
¼ cup white flour  
¼ cup whole wheat flour  
½ cup brown sugar, packed  
½ cup uncooked, old fashioned rolled oats  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1 teaspoon vanilla powder (optional)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Place the blackberries in a large mixing bowl.

In a small mixing bowl combine the sugar and cornstarch. Blend thoroughly.

Sprinkle the sugar and cornstarch mixture over the berries and gently combine with a rubber spatula.

Spray an 8x8 inch pan with cooking spray and pour the berry mixture into the pan.

Place the pan in the oven and bake for 20 minutes.

While the fruit is heating in the oven, in a medium sized mixing bowl, add the butter, flours, brown sugar, oats, cinnamon and, if using, the vanilla powder. Use your fingers to blend the ingredients until crumbly.

After 20 minutes, remove the fruit from the oven and evenly sprinkle the crumb topping onto the fruit.

Return the crumble to the oven and bake for an additional 15 minutes.

Serve warm or at room temperature.

*Makes 6 generous servings.*

**NOTES:** Because the fruit mixture in crumbles can sometimes bubble over the sides of the pan and onto your oven racks, cover a baking tray with a layer of foil and place the crumble pan on it before placing it in the oven. The foil lined pan will catch any drips and make clean up easy.

If you have any leftovers, keep the top crunchy by placing a paper towel over the crumble rather than using foil or plastic wrap.

*Victoria Wesseler*