

More about Asparagus

Asparagus is one of the first signs of spring. The name asparagus comes from the Greek language meaning “sprout” or “shoot” and is a member of the lily family. It is a perennial garden vegetable and native to the East Mediterranean area. Asparagus is harvested when the spears are about nine inches long with compact, tight heads.

Asparagus is offered in the traditional green color as well as the purple and white spears. It is important not to overcook asparagus. The thickness of the spear determines the cooking time. Cook asparagus until a knife can just be inserted into the thickest part of the spear.



When choosing asparagus, choose purple-green and tightly closed spears. If you must store asparagus, treat it as you would treat a cut flower. Trim the stems and stand them in a glass with one to two inches of water. Cover with a plastic bag and refrigerate for two to three days or until ready to use.

Tip: Asparagus can be boiled in a large skillet as it is easier to get all the asparagus submerged.



Warm Salad of Asparagus and New Potatoes

Serves 4

Ingredients:

12 ounces new potatoes or fingerlings, about 5 small
Salt
1 Tablespoon butter
½ pound asparagus
2 hard boiled eggs, chopped

Dressing:

Juice of 1 lemon
Pinch of sugar
1 Tablespoon Dijon mustard
4 Tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small chunks
Freshly ground pepper
¼ cup chopped chives

Directions:

1. Wash potatoes and cut into desired size. Simmer the potatoes in lightly salted water. Drain but reserve the cooking liquid.
2. Return potatoes to pan. Add butter and stir. Cover and keep warm.
3. Dressing: Squeeze the lemon juice into an 8 or 10-inch skillet. Add ½ cup of potato cooking water, sugar and mustard. Simmer until mixture is reduced by half. Slowly incorporate butter, one piece at a time, whisking until the mixture is well blended. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Cut asparagus into desired size. Add to a pan of boiling salted water and boil rapidly for 1 to 2 minutes, until just tender. Drain
5. In a large bowl combine potatoes, asparagus and eggs. Add chives and butter sauce. Toss gently until mixture is coated with sauce.



Rhubarb Streusel Cake

Serves 9 to 12

Ingredients:

Topping:

⅔ cup all purpose flour
⅓ cup brown sugar, packed
½ teaspoon cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon salt
4 Tablespoons butter, softened
3 cups sliced rhubarb
3 Tablespoons powdered sugar

Cake:

1¼ cups all purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
6 Tablespoons butter, softened
¾ cup sugar
2 large eggs
½ teaspoon vanilla
½ cup milk

Directions:

1. To make topping, whisk together flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt in a bowl. Blend in butter until mixture forms small clumps.
2. Combine rhubarb and powdered sugar. Set aside.
3. To make cake, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl.
4. In a separate bowl, beat together butter and sugar with an electric mixer at medium speed until blended, about 2 minutes.
5. Add eggs and vanilla and beat until fluffy, about 1 minute. Add flour and milk in two batches, beginning and ending with flour mixture.
6. Pour batter in a greased 9-inch square pan. Top with rhubarb. Spread streusel evenly on top. Bake at 350°F for about 30 to 35 minutes. Cool in pan for about 10 minutes. Remove cake from pan and cool completely on a wire rack.

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Orange Berry Swirl

Serves 4

Ingredients:

1 package (16 ounces) fresh strawberries
1 container (6 ounces) vanilla low-fat yogurt
1 cup orange juice
1 cup fat-free milk



Directions:

Process all ingredients in a blender until smooth, stopping to scrape down the sides.

Serve immediately.

Interesting Strawberry Facts

- ▶ Eight strawberries will provide 140 % of the recommended daily intake of Vitamin C for kids.
- ▶ One cup of strawberries is only 55 calories.
- ▶ Strawberries are the first fruit to ripen in the spring.
- ▶ Strawberries are a member of the rose family.
- ▶ On average, there are 200 seeds in a strawberry.
- ▶ The flavor of a strawberry is influenced by weather, the variety, and stage of ripeness when harvested.

Source: University of Illinois Extension



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Asparagus with Fried Egg

Serves 1

Ingredients:

¼ pound asparagus
Olive oil
Salt
Seasoning, as desired
¼ cup fresh bread crumbs
1 Tablespoon water
1 egg
Freshly ground black pepper



Directions:

1. Cook asparagus as desired.
2. In a small bowl, combine bread crumbs and desired seasoning. Add enough oil to lightly coat bread crumbs.
3. Transfer bread crumbs to a small nonstick skillet and place over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until they begin to darken, about 2-3 minutes. Add water. Crack egg over bread crumbs. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook egg as desired. Place egg on top of asparagus. Serve immediately.

Note: This is a good recipe for leftover asparagus.

This dish can be seasoned as desired: Italian seasoning, chives, basil, or thyme. Be creative.

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