



Eating Local and Seasonal: Asparagus

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE REGISTERED DIETITIAN
AT GEORGINA NURSE PRACTITIONER LED CLINIC

Asparagus is one of the first seasonal vegetables available once spring arrives. However, it is only available for a short period of time. Make the most of the short asparagus season and learn how to buy, store, and prepare this delicious vegetable!

Buying - Green asparagus is the most common type available, but you may be lucky to find some white and purple varieties as well. Look for asparagus spears that are straight and firm. The tips should be closed and compact. The ends should be moist and green. (Stores will usually have them sitting in water and you can do this once you bring it home as well.) Avoid asparagus spears that look soggy or wilted.

Pro Tip: Look for asparagus spears that are uniform in size to make it easier to time your cooking.

Storing - Asparagus needs to be refrigerated. As mentioned earlier, the ends of the spears need to be kept moist during storage. You can do this by sitting the ends in a container with water and covering it with a plastic bag. Another option is to wrap the ends with damp paper towel or cloth before covering. This will help to keep your asparagus fresh for longer. Asparagus can be stored for up to three days in the fridge.

Preparing - Run the asparagus under cold running water to remove any sand. Bend the asparagus near the ends and snap off the woody bottom to be discarded.

Cooking - Asparagus can be boiled, roasted, grilled, microwaved or stir-fried. For boiling, cook the asparagus, uncovered, for about 3-5 minutes depending on the thickness of the spears and the level of softness desired. For stir-frying, start with a quick 3-minute blanch following the above boiling instructions before stir-frying with other ingredients. Roasting can be done at 400°F for 6-15 minutes, again depending on thickness of the asparagus spears. Drizzle some olive oil, and add lemon juice or balsamic vinegar for additional seasoning before roasting. Additional seasoning ingredients can be added after such as feta or parmesan cheese. Grilled asparagus is fairly straight forward - grill until desired softness and simply season with salt and pepper afterwards.

Asparagus can be served as a side dish, in a salad, soups or entrees. See the next page for a breakfast recipe of asparagus frittata.



Asparagus Frittata with Red Bell Pepper and Feta

Recipe from Half Your Plate (halfyourplate.ca)

Photo by Aphiwat chuangchoem from Pexels

Ingredients:

- 1lb Fresh asparagus, trimmed
- 2 tbsp Italian parsley, chopped
- 2 tbsp Water
- 1/4 tsp Salt and pepper
- 10 Eggs, beaten
- 1 cup Feta cheese, crumbled
- 1/2 Red bell pepper, julienned
- 2 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Margarine
- 1/2 cup Chopped onion
- Lemon wedges for garnish
- Italian parsley for garnish

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. To blanch asparagus, in a large frying pan, bring approximately 3 inches of water to a boil. Stir in 1 tbsp of salt. Add asparagus, arranging in a single layer. Cook at a medium boil until slightly underdone, about 3 minutes, depending on thickness. Drain on paper towel and let cool.
3. Whisk parsley, water, 1/4 tsp salt and pepper into beaten eggs. Stir in cheese.
4. Set aside 6 whole asparagus spears for garnish. Cut remaining asparagus on the angle, into 1 inch pieces and set aside.
5. In a heavy (or non-stick) oven proof 12-inch skillet (with a cover), sauté red pepper in 2 tbsp olive oil until barely tender-crisp, about 5 minutes. Stir margarine into pan. Add onion and 1-inch asparagus pieces and sauté for one minute.
6. Pour egg mixture into pan and stir gently to distribute vegetables without scraping the bottom of the pan. Bake for 10 minutes, covered on the middle rack in pre-heated oven. Remove cover and bake until the edges are browned, eggs are set and centre is just firm to the touch. Let rest for 5 minutes.
7. Cut into 6 wedges and garnish with reserved asparagus spears, lemon wedges and sprigs of parsley.