



Asparagus

Look for Illinois asparagus May through June.

Asparagus Is Good for You

Asparagus is . . .

- high in vitamin C
- a good source of vitamin A
- a good source of potassium.

How to Buy Asparagus

Look for green stalks at least ½ inch thick with tight closed tips. Do not buy withered, flat, white, split or woody stalks.

1 pound of fresh asparagus equals . . .

- about 14 average size spears
- 3 to 4 cooked, half-cup servings
- 3 cups fresh, trimmed, cut pieces.

How to Store Asparagus

Once picked, asparagus loses quality quickly. Plan to use within one to two days after purchase.

To store, place in a plastic bag and store in the refrigerator.

How to Use Asparagus

To prepare, first wash asparagus in cool running water. If the tips have any sand on them, dunk in and out of water, then rinse well.

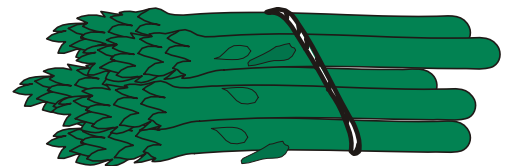
Trim off any tough white ends. The entire remaining green stalk is edible and nutritious. To ensure even cooking some cooks like to peel the outer layer of the end of the spear.

Do not overcook asparagus. Asparagus will retain its bright green color, crisp tenderness and sweetness if you cook just until a fork can pierce the stalk.

Asparagus can be blanched or boiled in a small amount of water, microwaved, steamed or stir-fried (see back of page.) Serve plain, or brush with a small amount of margarine, butter, or lemon juice.

Asparagus spears, blanched for two minutes, can be served with a dip along with other raw veggies. Or, cut the blanched spears at an angle and toss into a salad.

Try adding angle-cut spears to a stir-fry, casserole, soup or omelet.



Asparagus Recipes

To Blanch or Boil . . .

Use a pan in which you can lay the asparagus flat, such as a skillet. Bring about an inch of water (enough to cover asparagus) to a rapid boil. Add the washed and trimmed asparagus. Quickly bring to a second boil and cook, uncovered, 2 to 5 minutes, depending upon whether you are blanching or cooking.

To Steam . . .

Although there are special asparagus steamers on the market, you can use a standard steaming basket by simply cutting the washed and trimmed spears into pieces that fit your basket. In a pan that fits your basket, bring an inch of water to a boil. Add asparagus, and cover. Steam 5 to 8 minutes.

To Microwave . . .

Place 1 pound of washed, trimmed asparagus in a covered dish with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water. Cook at highest power 4 to 8 minutes, rotating halfway through cooking. If desired tenderness has not been reached, let stand a few minutes.

To Stir-Fry . . .

Angle-cut the washed and trimmed spears into 1- to 2-inch pieces. Heat 1 teaspoon of oil for each dozen spears. Stir-fry in hot oil 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat. If desired tenderness has not been reached, cover and let sit for a minute.

Marinated Asparagus Salad

Serves 4

1 pound fresh asparagus
1 small red (or other) onion, halved and thinly sliced
1 or 2 tomatoes, chopped
Italian salad dressing

Calories: 88 per serving
Fat: 9 grams per serving

Directions:

Cook asparagus by any of the methods described above. Cool. Combine with onion and tomatoes and enough salad dressing to moisten (about 2 to 3 Tbsps.) Stir gently. Cover and refrigerate several hours or overnight. Stir again before serving.

Cheesy Asparagus

Serves 4

1 pound fresh asparagus
4 slices American processed cheese
1 to 2 Tbsps. lemon juice
 $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. paprika (optional)

Calories: 129 per serving
Fat: 9 grams per serving

Directions:

Cook asparagus by any of the methods described above. Sprinkle with lemon juice. Top asparagus with slices of processed cheese. Place in ovenproof dish and broil just until cheese melts (watch carefully). If desired, sprinkle with paprika.