

What's In Season? Asparagus!

Grown all over the world, asparagus, a member of the lily family, originated from the Mediterranean area and Africa. There are over 300 varieties of asparagus, however only 20 are edible. While most asparagus is green or greenish purple, the white variety is grown underground, to inhibit the development of chlorophyll, producing a more delicate flavor.



Nutrition Highlights

Asparagus is a nutrient-dense vegetable providing potassium, vitamin K, folic acid, fiber, B6, vitamin A, vitamin C, thiamin, and fiber in only 20 calories per cup.

How to Select & Store

Choose asparagus that are firm, tips closed, and no flowering. In general, the darker the stalk the fresher the asparagus; if buying white asparagus look for a pale ivory color. Asparagus is best prepared the day it is purchased, but can be kept for up to 5 days in the refrigerator if stored properly. If storing is required, trim the ends and stand the spears in one inch of water; cover with plastic and refrigerate up to 5 days.

How to Prepare

1. Wash asparagus before preparing by running under cool water.
2. Trim the bottom by either cutting or snapping them off. To snap the ends off, bend the asparagus and it will snap where the tough stalk meets the tender spear.
3. Quick Cooking:
 - To Steam: Bring 1 inch of water to a boil in a large skillet with a steamer basket. Add asparagus, cover and cook for 3-5 minutes.
 - Microwave: Place asparagus in a microwave-safe dish, add enough water to cover the bottom of the dish. Cover dish tightly with plastic, leaving one edge open for steam to escape. Microwave on high for 3 minutes.
 - To Roast: Spread asparagus on a baking sheet and toss with 2 teaspoons of olive or canola oil. Roast at 450° for 10-20 minutes. Stir asparagus once while cooking.

*Cooking tips from EatingWell April 2011

Recipe: Easy Delicious Asparagus

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ pound fresh asparagus – whole or cut into 1-2 inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste – optional



Directions:

- Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook and stir the asparagus in the hot oil until tender, about 5 minutes. Pour in lemon juice, and season to taste with salt and pepper as desired. Place asparagus on a serving dish and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese to serve.

Note: Asparagus can also be cooked in the microwave. Follow microwave directions on front of handout and do not use oil. After cooking in microwave add lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste. Place on serving dish; sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and enjoy.

Farmer's Markets

It's that time of year again. Farmer's Markets are opening up all over Snohomish County. Check your local market for market dates and hours. You can also find a list of markets and what's in season at <http://www.pugetsoundfresh.org/>.



Announcing: Everett Farmers Market at the Everett Marina on Sundays, is now accepting Basic Food benefits (previously known as Food Stamps).

