

**Viva Asparagus:** Asparagus is tastiest and least expensive between March and June. Remember that a change in urine odor is normal and temporary. Enjoy asparagus as often as possible in the spring — it's quick to cook and simple seasonings can really enhance its flavor. The secret is: don't overcook asparagus!

### **General Instructions:**

- Select asparagus with firm, sturdy stalks with tight heads. Cut ends should not be dry or woody.
- Wrap cut ends in a damp paper towel and put in moisture-proof wrapping. Eat fresh asparagus as soon as possible, but it can be refrigerated for 2-3 days.
- Rinse thoroughly with cold water when ready to use.
- To trim, snap off stem ends. Stalks will naturally break where the woody part ends and tender part begins. Or, for fat stalks, peel bottom 1/3 of stalk with vegetable peeler to remove tough skin.
- Steam, microwave, roast, or grill (see below) and use in the recipes that follow.
- Do not overcook! Asparagus should be tender but maintain a crunch. Use the "bite test" to best determine when it's done.
- If you plan to serve asparagus cold or add it to a salad, shock in ice water after cooking to stop cooking process. Drain and chill immediately. Refrigerate for up to two days.



### **Cooking Instructions:**

#### **Steamed Asparagus:**

- Wash and trim asparagus.
- Bring an inch of water to boil in a pan with a steamer insert in the bottom.
- Cover pan. Steam just until the thickest stalks can be pierced with a sharp knife.
- This takes about 2- 5 minutes depending on thickness of the stalks.
- Season (see suggestions below) and serve immediately.

### Microwaved Asparagus:

- Lay asparagus on microwave-proof plate or shallow dish with about 2 Tablespoons water; cover with lid or plate.
- Microwave on high for 2-3 minutes, shake the container, and continue to microwave at 1-minute intervals, or just until the thickest stalks can be pierced with a knife (or use the bite-test).
- Season (see suggestions below) and serve immediately.

### Roasted Asparagus:

- Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees.
- Line baking sheet with foil if desired.
- Lay asparagus in a single layer on baking sheet and sprinkle with olive oil, salt and pepper. Toss with hands until evenly coated.
- Roast for 5-10 minutes, or just until the thickest stalks can be pierced with a knife (or use the bite-test).
- Season (see suggestions below) and serve immediately.

### Grilled Asparagus:

- Best cooking method in the summer since it keeps the heat out of the kitchen and adds a wonderful flavor.
- Arrange asparagus in rows on wooden or metal skewers if desired. Brush with olive oil.
- Grill on hot grill, turning once or twice, just until the thickest stalks can be pierced with a sharp knife (or use the bite-test). This takes about 2-5 minutes, depending on the size of the stalks and the temperature of the grill.

## Recipes

### Asparagus with Tomato Vinaigrette

#### Ingredients:

- 1 pound large asparagus spears, trimmed
- ¼ cup plus 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 small tomato, finely chopped
- ¼ green bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1 green onion, finely chopped
- 1 Tablespoon chopped parsley
- 1 hard-boiled egg, finely chopped



#### Directions:

- Cook asparagus using the method of your choice just until tender.
- Drain. Shock in ice water until cold and drain. Cover and chill.
- Whisk oil and vinegar in small bowl to blend. Add tomato, bell pepper, green onion and parsley. Season with salt and pepper
- Arrange asparagus on a large platter.
- Spoon half of vinaigrette over asparagus.

#### To Serve:

- Garnish with chopped egg. Serve immediately, and pass remaining dressing separately.

## **Pasta Salad with Asparagus**

*This simple spring-time recipe utilizes seasonal vegetables when they are at their peak in flavor, and is a tasty way to use any leftover cooked asparagus.*

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 pound pasta
- 1-2 cups cooked asparagus
- 2-3 cups seasonal chopped raw vegetables (radishes, bell peppers, green onions, tomatoes)
- ¼ cup plus 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 Tablespoon chopped parsley



### **Directions:**

- Cook the pasta according to package direction. Rinse in cold water. Chill.
- Cook the asparagus using the method of your choice just until tender. Shock in cold water and drain. Cut into bite-sized pieces.
- Combine pasta and vegetables in large bowl.
- Whisk oil and vinegar in small bowl to blend.
- Add the dressing to the salad (to taste).

### **To Serve:**

- Sprinkle with chopped parsley.
- Other optional ingredients: cheese cubes, tuna, hard-boiled eggs, olives

## **Seasoning Suggestions**

Asparagus with Soy Sauce and Green Onions

Asparagus with Sesame Oil and Sesame Seeds

Asparagus with Parmesan Cheese

Asparagus with Lemon Juice



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