



Brought to you by Viva Vegetables

A Utah State University Extension and Nutrition and Food Sciences Department campaign

The goal of the *How to Nourish With* lesson series is to provide adults and older children with helpful information and demonstrations about selecting, preparing, cooking with, and storing vegetables. This basic knowledge may encourage families to include vegetables more often as a mainstay of family meals and snacks

Objectives:

1. Adults will explain a health benefit provided by asparagus
2. Adults will explain how to select asparagus
3. Adults will discuss cost- and time-effective strategies for incorporating asparagus into family meals
4. Adults will discuss preparation and storage techniques of asparagus, including cleaning, trimming, cooking, and storing
5. Adults will make and taste food that includes asparagus

Total Time: ~1 hour

Materials

- Enough fresh asparagus for each participant to be able to try two samples
- Steamer
- Knife and cutting board
- Pan for roasting
- Appropriate seasonings depending on what you choose
- Olive oil
- Salt

Preparation Required

- Wrap asparagus ends in damp paper towel and put in moisture-proof wrapping, like saran wrap or a plastic bag, to demonstrate how to store asparagus.
- Preheat the oven to 400F.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction: Welcome

Time: 5 minutes

- Welcome the class and thank them for making time to come.
- Briefly introduce yourself and the program.
- Explain that today you will be teaching them about asparagus and ways they can incorporate it into what they already eat. Explain that eating vegetables doesn't always mean a huge change, it involves incorporating them into what the family already enjoys eating.
- **Ask the class:** Do you use asparagus at home? What are some barriers you have found trying to incorporate it into meals? Some answers may include:
 - I have never tried asparagus.
 - I don't like it or my family doesn't like it.
 - I am not sure how to prepare it.
 - I don't know what to serve it with.

Objective 1: *Adults will explain a health benefit provided by asparagus.*

Activity: Nutrition discussion

Time: 2-3 minutes

- Ask the class if they have ever heard of glutathione (glue-tuh-thigh-own).
- Explain that glutathione is an important antioxidant. An antioxidant helps to fight things that cause damage within our bodies. Many other vegetables do the same thing. Glutathione enhances the immune system as well.
- Asparagus has more glutathione than any other vegetable
- Glutathione is mostly destroyed by cooking but the cooking methods and short duration of cooking for asparagus help to make it one of the best sources for this nutrient.

Objective 2: *Adults will understand how to select the best asparagus*

Activity: Discussion

Time: 2-3 minutes

- Tell the class that asparagus can come in green, white or purple (pictures attached).
 - White asparagus is usually more effort to prepare as the woody outer stem needs to be peeled off; however, some stores sell white asparagus ready-peeled and ready-to-cook.
- Ask the class: Does anyone have any tips on how to pick out a good bunch of asparagus?
 - Look for asparagus spears that are brightly colored and firm with tightly closed tips.
 - If the asparagus gives off a smell, it is not fresh.
 - Look at the bottom portion of the stems where the asparagus has been harvested. If the asparagus has been in the store for a while, the cut stem ends will be dry.
 - Choose a bundle of asparagus with straight stems.
 - Avoid stems that are wrinkled.
 - Asparagus is best if you use it the day you buy it.

Objective 3: Adults will understand cost- and time-effective strategies for incorporating asparagus into family meals

Activity: Discussion**Time: 3-5 minutes**

- Asparagus is least expensive from April to June
- Frozen asparagus is often cheaper than fresh asparagus in the off season (July-March)
- Asparagus can be easily incorporated into other dishes like stir-frys, casseroles, or salads
- It is a very quick vegetable to prepare because the key with serving asparagus is to not overcook it
 - Steam, microwave, roast or grill. Each method takes less than 10 minutes. Each method will be discussed in greater detail.

Objective 4,5: Adults will understand preparation and storage techniques of asparagus, including cleaning, trimming, cooking, and storing. They will prepare and taste a dish that includes asparagus.

Activity: Preparation and discussion**Time: 30 minutes**

- Tell the class that today you will be preparing two recipes using steamed and roasted asparagus but that other methods are microwaving, grilling or eating it raw in salads.
- Show the class how you wrapped the cut ends in a damp paper towel and put in a moisture proof wrapping to store it until ready for use.
 - Explain that fresh asparagus should be used within two to three days but for those few days this is a good method of storage.
- Demonstrate how to wash and cut
 - Rinse thoroughly with cold water.
 - To trim, snap off stem ends. Stalks will naturally break where the woody part ends and tender part begins. Larger stalks may need bottom third (the portion of the asparagus at the bottom, not where the head or “flower” part is) to be peeled to remove tough skin.
- Demonstrate steaming and roasting and explain other methods
 - *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 easily or stalk is tender but still has a crunch when you bite it, this is called the bite test.
 - Season it with any of the options described at the bottom.
 - *Steamed 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 or use bite test as described above.
 - This takes about 2- 5 minutes depending on thickness of the stalks.
 - Season 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 for one minute intervals until stalks can be easily pierced with a knife.
 - Season and serve immediately.
 - *Grilled Asparagus*
 - Arrange asparagus in rows on wooden or metal skewers.

- Brush with olive oil and grill on high turning once or twice until easily pierced, or bite test. Usually takes about 2-5 minutes.
- **Seasoning Options:** Soy sauce and green onions, sesame oil and sesame seeds, parmesan cheese, or salt and lemon juice. Another great seasoning is minced garlic or even garlic powder.

Conclusion: Summary and Regroup

Time: 5 minutes

- Ask class members if they have any questions.
- What did they learn today that encourages them to use asparagus in their homes?
- What serving ideas do they plan on using?
- Thank them for attending.

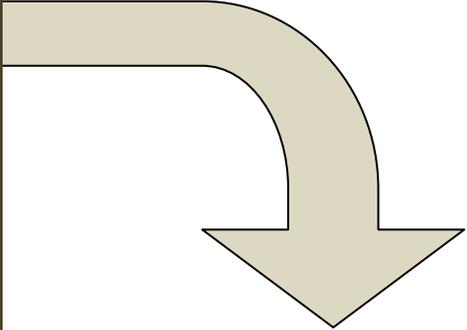


ASPARAGUS



TYPES	CHOOSE IT	CUT IT	USE IT

NOTES:



Asparagus seasoning suggestions:

- *Soy sauce and green onions*
- *Sesame oil and sesame seeds*
- *Parmesan cheese*
- *Lemon juice*

Pasta Salad with Asparagus

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

Cook the pasta according to package directions. 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 a large bowl. Whisk oil and vinegar in small bowl to blend. Add the dressing to the salad (to taste). Sprinkle with chopped parsley.

Other optional ingredients: Cheese cubes, tuna, hard-boiled eggs, olives.

[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

Cook asparagus using the method of your choice just until tender. Drain. Shock in ice water until cold and drain. Cover and chill. Whisk in 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. Garnish with chopped egg. Serve immediately and pass remaining dressing separately.



