



Asparagus

Produced by:



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Fun

Facts:

- Asparagus is related to garlic, onions, and other members of the lily family.
- Varieties include green, purple, and white.
- Water makes up 93% of asparagus' composition.

Nutrition Information:

- Asparagus is low in calories and very low in sodium.
- It is a very good source of dietary fiber, protein, beta-carotene, vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin K, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid, copper, selenium, and chromium (a trace mineral that enhances the ability of insulin to transport glucose from the bloodstream into cells).

Preparation:

- Before cooking asparagus rinse the spears in cold water, dry, then cut or snap off the bottoms of each spear to remove any woody parts.
- Another way to prepare woody asparagus is to use a peeler and peel the woody section, then cook as desired. This technique is typically used on spears that are extremely woody or thick.

Cooking:

Raw: asparagus can be eaten raw (look for younger, thinner spears to avoid toughness) and is delicious chopped and put in salads.

Blanch: place spears in a saucepan and cover with water, add salt, and bring to a boil; simmer for 3-5 minutes, or until tender and bright green. Strain asparagus and submerge in ice-water to halt the cooking process.

Steam: boil 2 inches of salted water in a tall, covered pot; place asparagus upright in water, cover, and steam for 5-10 minutes or until tender (depends on thickness). If pot is too wide, use a steamer basket.

Roast: toss spears with olive oil, salt, and pepper; roast at 425°F in the oven until the skin starts to crisp and spears are tender. Sprinkle with lemon juice and Parmesan cheese before serving. Serve hot or cold.

Sauté: cut into inch long sections and add to stir-fry or sauté with olive oil or butter, salt, and pepper. Add to omelets, pasta, quiche, frittata, or rice dishes.

Storage:

- Refrigerate immediately and use as soon as possible. Asparagus' sugars will rapidly turn to starches, reducing flavor quickly. Store as follows:
 - Wrap asparagus in a damp cloth and store in the crisper drawer, OR
 - Bundle spears with a rubber band and place upright in a container with an inch of water to keep the spears vital.
- Asparagus can also be pickled and stored for several years.