



# Asparagus

## Growing and Harvest Information

If grown from bareroot crowns, begin harvesting in the second year of growth; if grown from seed or seedling, begin harvest in the third.

Asparagus shoots, or spears, emerge from the roots in very early spring. The spears thickness decreases as the season gets goes on. Once they are as thin as a pencil the harvest season is over, usually 2-4 weeks the first harvest season and 6-8 weeks following years. If you keep harvesting it will weaken and possibly kill the plant.

You harvest spears when they are 6-8" long. Harvest by snapping the spear off or cutting the spear at a 45 degree angle with a knife at the soil surface. When harvesting be careful to avoid damaging developing spears or the roots of the plant.

## Introduction

Reportedly, Caesar Augustus barked "Velocius quam asparagi conquantur!" (translated to "Faster than cooking asparagus!, an idiom for "Hurry up!"). The emperor, a connoisseur of this perennial vegetable, coordinated elite military units, the Asparagus Fleets, to import it from around the empire. Fresh spears were brought to Rome and stored in the Alps, where they were frozen until used.

## Preparation & Storage

### Vegetable Prep:

- Before use wash the spears and cut off any tough parts at the base of the stem if desired.

### Fresh Storage:

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### Freezing:

- Frozen asparagus retains color and flavor better than canned asparagus.
- Select young, tender stalks with compact tips. Wash thoroughly and sort according to stalk thickness.
- Place in boiling water (blanching) for, 2 minutes for small spears, 3 minutes for medium spears, and 4 minutes for large spears.
- Remove from the boiling water and cool promptly in ice water for the same length of blanching time.
- Pack into airtight freezer containers or bag, leaving no headspace. When packing spears, alternate tips and stem ends.

## Nutritional Benefits

Source	Rating
Vitamins	EXCELLENT
Mineral	MODERATE
Fiber	GOOD

## Use By Guide

Vegetable State	Use by
Raw	4 days
Freezing	1 year
Dried	1 year



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## Fun Fact:

Asparagus is a great source of vitamin E, which strengthens your immune system and protects cells from harmful effects of free radicals.

## Prepare Asparagus Like This:

Baked  
Boiled  
Grilled  
Raw  
Roasted  
Sauteed  
Steamed

## Try Asparagus In:

Omelets  
Pastas  
Rice  
Salads  
Soups  
Stir-frys

## Preparation

### Recipe 1: Asparagus with a Fried Egg and Parmesan

Serves 4

#### Ingredients

- 1 large bunch asparagus (about 1 lb)
- 1/3 cup water
- 1 tbs. butter or olive oil
- 4 extra large eggs
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan (or other cheese)

#### Directions

1. Arrange spears in large skillet set over high heat; add water and salt. Cover and steam spears, occasionally rearranging until crisp-tender and all but 1 tbs. of water has evaporated (5-8 minutes). Add more water if needed.
2. Remove lid and add 1 tsp. butter/oil, toss and coat spears. Turn off heat.
3. Carefully break eggs into bowl without breaking yolks. Heat nonstick skillet over moderate heat and add remaining butter before adding eggs. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
4. Reduce heat, cover, cook until whites are set, but yolks are runny.
5. Arrange spears on plates, sprinkle with cheese, add egg.

### Recipe 2: Marinated Asparagus Salad

Serves 4

#### Ingredients

- 1 lb asparagus
- 1 small onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1-2 tomatoes, chopped
- Italian salad dressing

#### Directions

1. Cook asparagus by boiling, microwaving, steaming or sauteing. Cool.
2. Mix with onion, tomatoes, and enough salad dressing to moisten (2-3 tbs.) Stir gently.
3. Cover and refrigerate several hours or overnight. Stir and enjoy!