

ASPARAGUS IS THE HARBINGER OF SPRING

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My dearest asparagus, how do I love thee, let me count the ways

Too numerous to mention, the seasons are too short as are the spears that sate my hunger

The way to enjoy asparagus in the beginning of the season is to fill your soul with just the green gold with little adultery. As we find it in more abundance into the season we begin to play with the sensations a bit but always remembering to uphold the reverence for this short lived delicacy. Here are a few variations on the basic theme, you should use these as guidelines and play with your food to your heart's content.

When buying native asparagus the ideal thing is to go directly home and cook it, if not, trim off the bottom ½ "and stand it up on a wet paper towel till needed.

I keep away from butter because I really do not think it is needed, but if you like it.....

I love grilled asparagus, and use that as my preferred method; you can also blanch it for 5 minutes in salted water, icing it if not used immediately.

Grilled Asparagus au Natural

You would start this dish when grilling your main dish, this would be an accompaniment put on grill about 7 minutes before main dish is done

1 bunch freshly cut asparagus

2 T olive oil, not extra virgin, too strong

Pinch salt and pepper

- Trim bottom 1 or so inches off spears
 - Toss in bowl with oil salt and pepper
 - place on grill for 3 minutes per side till done
 - serve warm off the grill
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Asparagus with Hazelnut and Faux Béarnaise

1 bunch asparagus

¼ c chopped hazelnuts

1 t chopped shallots

½ t Dijon mustard

2 t fresh lemon juice

1/8 t chopped fresh tarragon

¼ c olive oil

- blanch asparagus in 2 qts. boiling salted water
- plunge into an ice bath to stop cooking, remove immediately
- dry on a paper towel
- make vinaigrette without using nuts
- place asparagus on oven safe dish top with nuts
- bake 3-5 minutes till warm
- top with room temperature vinaigrette and serve

Asparagus on Toast Points with Proscuitto Balsamic Vinaigrette

This is a very simple dish with a great presentation

1 bunch asparagus

4 pieces home baked bread, sliced ½ "thick and cut diagonal in 2 triangles each

2-3 slices very thin Proscuitto; it is not a lot so buy the best you can

1 clove garlic, smashed and finely minced

Pinch Italian blend herbes

2 T good balsamic vinegar

1 t sugar

¼ C olive oil

Shredded Parmesan cheese to garnish

- Either grill or blanch asparagus to cook, blanching is fine due to the flavors involved with this dish
 - Bake the bread till nicely toasted, warm the asparagus at the same time
 - Make the vinaigrette, whisking well
 - Add the Proscuitto t the end
 - Place 2 bread diamond slices overlapping on side of plate
 - Place ¼ of the asparagus on top
 - Top with the Proscuitto vinaigrette, sprinkle with Parmesan, and serve immediately
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Smoked Salmon Wrapped Asparagus

1 bunch asparagus

1/2 c goat's cheese with fresh herbes, usually able to find at farmers markets pre made by the farmer or from the local farm of your choice

2 t fresh squeezed lemon juice

1 lb smoked salmon, presliced

¼ bunch chives finely chopped if desired

- Blanch asparagus in 2 qts. boiling salted water
 - plunge into an ice bath to stop cooking, remove immediately
 - dry on a paper towel
 - in a food processor, whip goat's cheese and lemon juice till spreadable
 - spread on the spears of asparagus ½ way up
 - roll each spear in a salmon slice blanket,
 - sprinkle with chives
 - serve chilled and fanned out on a platter with lemon slices
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