

“Harvest for your Health”

April/May Initiative

Asparagus

Spring has finally arrived, which means fresh fruits and veggies! One of the first Spring vegetables is asparagus. Asparagus is one of the easiest perennial vegetables to grow and is in season typically from April to June. One of the best things about asparagus is that it holds many nutrients, but very few calories making it a weight-loss friendly food. Asparagus is full of essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamins A, C, E, & K, potassium, protein, fiber, glutathione, flavonoids and polyphenols, these are just a few examples. These vitamins, minerals and antioxidants can assist with digestive health, can serve as an anti-inflammatory, can lower blood pressure, as well as other beneficial health factors.

While the weight-loss aspect is good, essential vitamins and minerals make this veggie spear worth working into your meal routine. Asparagus can be prepared a number of ways while in season by roasting, sautéing, grilling, or adding to salads. If you choose to harvest this wonderful veggie spear, you can continue to appreciate it during the winter months by adding it to soups, stir-fries, and omelets, while reaping the health benefits during the off season. This veggie has versatility!

Harvesting asparagus can consist of canning, freezing, pickling or drying. Freezing to me is the easiest way for preservation. I enjoy just grabbing a bag out of the freezer and roasting it with olive oil and seasoning along with some root vegetables on a cold winter day.

If you plan on harvesting an abundance of asparagus, try to support a local farmer and look into going to Harvey’s U-Pick in Tekonsha. They take orders for asparagus and will have it ready for you to pick up. For more information, please follow the links.

<http://www.michiganfarmfun.com/place.asp?ait=av&aid=177> or follow their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Harveys-Farm-103412043032862/>.



Asparagus Recipes

Roasted Garlic Parmesan

Ingredients

- 1 bunch asparagus, woody ends trimmed off
- 2 tbsp olive oil, extra virgin
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 cup parmesan , shredded or grated
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp sea salt, celtic
- 1 tsp pepper, fresh cracked



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Trim asparagus to remove tough, woody ends - discard ends.
3. On a baking sheet (line with aluminum foil or parchment paper for easy cleanup), lay down asparagus.
4. Drizzle asparagus with olive oil and lemon juice, mix around with hands to coat evenly.
5. Pour cheese and garlic powder over asparagus, mix with hands to evenly mix and coat asparagus.
6. Generously season with salt and pepper.
7. Bake at 375 for 15 minutes - checking at around 10 minutes to see if tips have started to brown slightly and asparagus has softened a bit.
8. Cook until asparagus is soft and has crunchy browned bits, about 15 minutes total (this is very dependent on your oven and the thickness of the asparagus stalks - watch it to be sure it doesn't overcook.) When asparagus is done, serve immediately.



Quick Skillet Asparagus

Ingredients

- 4 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 pound medium asparagus spears, trimmed
- 1/2 teaspoon grated lemon rind
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon of salt

Instructions

Heat a large cast iron or nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add oil to pan; swirl to coat. Add asparagus to pan, cook for 3 minutes or until asparagus is crisp, tender and browned, stirring frequently. Transfer to a serving platter. Add rind, juice, and salt, tossing to coat. ENJOY!

Harvesting Asparagus

How to freeze step by step

Blanching Asparagus: Boiling Water Method

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add up to 1 pound of asparagus at a time to the boiling water. Let the asparagus blanch for 2 to 5 minutes depending on the thickness of the spears. When the time is up, immediately drain the blanched asparagus and transfer it to the cold water. Leave it in the cold water for the same amount of time that you left it in the boiling water. Drain the asparagus in a colander.

Blanching Asparagus: Steam Method

Bring the water under your steaming basket to a boil. Place the asparagus in the basket and cover. Steam for 3 to 6 minutes depending on the thickness of the spears. When the time is up, immediately transfer the blanched asparagus spears or pieces to the cold water. Leave them in the cold water for the same amount of time that you steamed them. Drain well in a colander.

2 Ways to Freeze Blanched Asparagus

The simplest way is to place the blanched, chilled and drained asparagus spears or pieces in freezer bags or containers, label with the date and freeze.

If you want the asparagus spears or pieces to remain loose and not stick together (so that you can take out just what you need), flash freeze them first. To flash freeze, spread the blanched asparagus in a single layer on baking sheets. Freeze for 1 to 2 hours, then transfer to freezer bags or containers.

If you take the time to preserve some of this healthy Spring vegetable, during the month of April or May, let us know by sending a picture, and you will receive a point towards your Wellness Initiative for the year.

**GIVE IT
A TRY!**



**IT'S SO
WORTH
IT.**