

St. Charles Cancer Treatment Center
DEFEAT Cancer's May, 2008

HARVEST for HEALTH



It's ASPARAGUS!

Asparagus Facts

- Asparagus is a member of the Lily family and is related to onions, leeks and garlic.
- Asparagus is a perennial. Spears grow from a crown that is planted about one foot deep in sandy soils. Under ideal conditions, a spear can grow 10" in a 24-hour period.
- Each crown will send spears up for about 6-7 weeks during the spring and early summer.
- Asparagus is usually not harvested for the first three years after the crowns are planted allowing the crown to develop a strong, fibrous root system.
- Asparagus reaches its prime after 6-8 years and can yield as much as one to two tons per acre when grown commercially. A well tended asparagus planting will produce for 15 years.

Did You Know?

Asparagus was first cultivated about 2500 years ago in Greece. The Greeks believed asparagus was an herbal medicine which, among other things, would cure toothaches and prevent bee stings.

Nutritional Value

Asparagus is full of important nutrients. One ½ cup serving of green asparagus (5 medium spears) has about 20 calories and provides an excellent source of Vitamin K and a good source of Vitamin C. It is particularly rich in glutathione, rutin and folic acid. Glutathione plays an important role in the

prevention of certain cancers and diseases, regenerates immune cells, and helps regulate DNA and protein synthesis.

Selection

Select long, firm, bright green asparagus with closed, compact tips and uniform diameter so that all spears will cook in the same amount of time. The stalks should be crisp, not wilted. Larger diameter spears are more tender.

Storage

Asparagus is best enjoyed immediately after purchasing. Asparagus may be stored by placing bundled stalks upright in a bowl or dish with an inch of water (enough to keep the stalks moist). Or wrap the cut ends in a moist paper towel, cover the towel with plastic and refrigerate.



How to Prepare

Asparagus can be eaten raw, but most people prefer it lightly cooked. Rinse well under running water to remove any sand caught in the tips. Snap off or trim at least ½ inch from the bottom fibrous ends before cooking. Asparagus tastes best, and is most healthful, when cooked until just tender-crisp.

To boil: Place asparagus in a large skillet with 1" of water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and briskly simmer 3 - 5 minutes.

To steam: With asparagus in a steamer basket or rack above an inch or two of boiling water, cover and steam 5-8 minutes.

To roast: Clean and prepare asparagus then place in single layer in shallow roasting pan. Drizzle with a small amount of olive oil, salt & pepper. Roast in a pre-heated 450 degree oven 10-15 minutes or until tender and browned. Shake the pan once during baking.

To microwave (700 watt oven): Place one pound of prepared fresh asparagus in a microwavable baking dish. If cooking whole spears, arrange with tips in center. Add about ¼ cup water and cover tightly. Microwave at 100% power for 4-7 minutes for spears, 3-5 minutes for cuts and tips. Stir or turn halfway through cooking time.

Add More Asparagus to Your Life

- Try lightly steamed asparagus with a squirt of fresh lemon juice. Or quickly sauté spears or pieces in a small amount of olive oil and garlic.
- Asparagus spears are fun appetizers along with carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes and broccoli tops. Lightly steam the spears, then plunge into cold water to stop the cooking and bring out the bright green color.
- Asparagus makes a great addition to stir-fried veggies, tofu, chicken or shrimp. Cut spears diagonally into 2" pieces, leaving tips whole.
- Toss some leftover cooked asparagus pieces into scrambled eggs or a pasta dish.
- Herbs such as chives, parsley, basil, chervil, or tarragon add flavor and interest to asparagus.
- Frozen and canned asparagus spears can be found at any grocery store. And there's no need to defrost frozen spears before cooking.



Grilled Asparagus

- 1 lb. fresh asparagus
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 1/4 tsp. each kosher salt and black pepper
- cooking spray
- 1 TBL. balsamic vinegar

Pre-heat grill. Toss prepped asparagus with oil, salt & pepper. Place on grill that has been coated with cooking spray. Grill 2 minutes each side or until crisp-tender. Drizzle with vinegar and serve.
Serves 4; 24 cal; 1.2g fat; 1.3g protein; 3g carbs.
Recipe from www.cookinglight.com

Canyon Ranch Asparagus "Guacamole"

- 2 c. (approx. 1 lb.) chopped lightly steamed asparagus (if using frozen asparagus, just thaw and use – no need to steam)
- 2-1/4 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 3 TBL. chopped onion
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- 3/4 tsp. salt (optional)
- 1/2 tsp. chili powder
- 1/4 tsp. each ground cumin & black pepper
- 1 clove garlic, pressed or minced
- dash Tabasco sauce
- 1/3 c. light sour cream

Combine all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Transfer to a bowl, cover tightly and refrigerate.

Serve with fat-free baked tortilla chips or veggie spears for a terrific appetizer or snack.

Serves 12; ¼ c. each; 12 cal; 0g fat; 2.5g carbs.
Recipe from www.whatscookingamerica.net

Asparagus Salad with Beans & Feta

- 3 c. cut asparagus (1" diagonal cut pieces)
- 1 c. canned cannellini or other white beans, rinsed & drained
- 1/2 c. halved grape tomatoes
- 1/2 c. (2 oz.) crumbled feta cheese
- 2 TBL. thinly sliced green onions
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh mint
- 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- salt & pepper to taste

Steam the asparagus until crisp-tender. Rinse with cold water and drain. Combine asparagus and next four ingredients in a large bowl. Whisk juice and remaining ingredients in a small bowl. Pour over asparagus mixture; toss gently to coat.

Serves 4, 1 c. each. 150 cal; 4.7g fat; 9.3g protein; 13mg cholesterol; 132 mg calcium; 531mg sodium; 5.9g fiber; 20g carbs. Recipe from www.cookinglight.com

Resources

Remember to look for low-fat recipes, or substitute high-fat ingredients with low-fat options.

Asparagus Recipes & Tips

- www.asparagus.org
- www.washingtonasparagus.org
- www.cookinglight.com
- www.allrecipes.com
- www.eatingwell.com

Cancer/Nutrition Websites

- www.caring4cancer.com/go/cancer/nutrition
- www.cancerproject.org
- www.aicr.org
- www.cancer.net

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www.bendcancer.org & www.defeatcancer.info

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