

## ASPARAGUS

### *Selection Info*

Look for bright green asparagus. The stems should be crisp and firm and should snap (not bend) when bend them. Look for dark green spear tips that have a hint of purple, which shows freshness. Avoid asparagus with yellow or dry tips (these indicate old asparagus).

### *Preparation*

Rinse asparagus under a stream of cool water and snap off the bottoms at their natural breaking point. Discard the bottoms or use them in vegetable stock. Most edible portions are 7-9 inches long. You can microwave, boil, steam, sauté, roast, or grill asparagus. Do not overcook; asparagus is best when still crisp.

**Microwave:** Cut spears into bite-size pieces and place in a microwave safe bowl with ½ cup water. Cover and cook on high at 1 minute intervals until bright green and just tender.

**Steam:** Fill a saucepan with about 1 inch of water and insert steamer basket. Bring water to a boil, and put asparagus into the steamer. Steam for about 5-7 minutes until bright green and crisp.

**Boil:** Bring a large pot of water to a boil with 2 teaspoons of salt. Immerse the asparagus in the water and blanch for 2 ½-3 minutes. The asparagus should

be crisp and bright green. Serve hot or plunge into cold water to stop the cooking process.

**Sauté:** Heat 1 tablespoon of oil or butter in a saucepan on medium to high heat. Add the cut asparagus or whole spears to the pan. Sauté until bright green.

**Roast:** Heat oven to 400°F. Lay asparagus flat on an oven safe baking sheet or pan and drizzle with olive oil (about 2 tablespoons). Season with salt and pepper or your favorite seasoning to taste. Roast for 12 minutes.

**Grill:** Cut asparagus as desired and place in large bowl. Add 1-2 tablespoons of olive oil, and toss to coat each piece. Add seasoning to taste. Place on a hot grill for about 90 seconds on each side.

### *Storage*

**Short-Term Storage:** Store asparagus in an upright container filled with water or in the refrigerator in a plastic bag with a damp paper towel. Asparagus will last up to about 5 days in the refrigerator. Do not use asparagus if the tips are slimy, yellow, soft, or rotten.

**Long-Term Storage:** Asparagus can be frozen or pickled. To freeze, blanch or steam asparagus for 30 seconds in boiling water then plunge into cold water for 5 minutes. Dry the asparagus with a lint-free towel. Put into freezer bags and store up to 3-4 months in a freezer.



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