

Garden-Fresh ASPARAGUS

A protein powerhouse

Few vegetable seasons draw as much excitement as that of the **ASPARAGUS**. From February to June (with a peak in April), restaurants and foodies clamor to make the most of this delicious spring vegetable, low in calories and sodium and packed with a variety of nutrients, including an impressive 5 grams of protein per cup. Eaten fresh, grilled, sautéed, baked, pickled and more, the asparagus is both versatile and beneficial to the body.

Nutrition Breakdown

per 1 cup of cooked asparagus

- * 32 calories
- * 5 grams of protein
- * 180% daily value of vitamin K
- * 73% daily value of vitamin C
- * 60% daily value of folate
- * 29% daily value of vitamin A

COOKING TIP:

Use waterless cooking methods (roasting, grilling, or stir-frying) to get the most out of the nutrients and antioxidants in asparagus.

Asparagus Spring Rolls with Sweet Red Chili Dipping Sauce

Serves 18

Store-bought chili sauce adds a dash of spiciness to these sweet and simple spring rolls.

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. **asparagus**
- 3/4 cup fresh mint leaves
- 3/4 cup cilantro leaves
- 1 mango or papaya
- fresh ginger, 2-inch piece
- 1/2 red bell pepper
- 1/2 cup dry roasted, salted peanuts, chopped
- 2 cups fresh bean sprouts
- 8-inch Vietnamese dried rice paper spring roll wrappers, 6 to 8 sheets
- dipping sauce: 1/4 cup store-bought sweet chili sauce
- juice of 1 lime

Directions:

For filling: Blanche asparagus in boiling salted water until tender to the bite (about 5 minutes).

Peel and julienne mango or papaya and ginger, then julienne bell pepper. Set aside with remaining ingredients. To assemble, fill a large bowl with hot water. Working with one wrapper at a time, slip rice paper wrapper into water until pliable (about 1 minute). Place wrapper on cutting board. In the center, put 3 to 4 asparagus spears, 3 to 4 mango or papaya slices, 3 to 4 pepper slices, a few tablespoons of sprouts, 2 tablespoons herbs (mint and cilantro), and a sprinkling of ginger and peanuts. Roll the paper tightly from the bottom up, leaving the ends open. Set aside and cover with a damp towel. Finish with remaining wrappers. When ready to serve, slice wrappers into 3 segments each and stand upright on a serving platter. For sauce: Mix chili sauce and lime juice together. Serve alongside the rolls as a dipping sauce.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):

Calories—59	Carbohydrate—6g
Total Fat—3g	Dietary Fiber—2g
Saturated Fat—0g	Sugar—3g
Sodium—56mg	Protein—3g

From Nutrition World
nutritionw.com



Creamy Spring Asparagus Soup

Serves 4

Serve this delightful spring soup with crusty bread or top with homemade croutons.

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 large leek, white and light green parts only, cleaned and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 medium Yukon gold potato, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 lb. **asparagus**, woody stems snapped off and discarded, spears cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1/3 cup low-fat sour cream
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- ground black pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons chopped chives

Directions:

Melt butter in a medium pot over medium-low heat. Add leeks and cook, stirring often, until tender (about 10 minutes). Add broth and potatoes and bring to a boil. Reduce to medium-low heat, add asparagus, and simmer gently until potatoes and asparagus are tender (about 10 to 15 minutes). Remove pot from heat and set aside to let cool. Carefully transfer soup to blender in batches and purée until smooth. Return soup to pot and bring to a boil. Remove from heat, whisk in sour cream, and season with salt and pepper. Ladle soup into bowls, garnish with chives, and serve.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):

Calories—140	Carbohydrate—19g
Total Fat—5g	Dietary Fiber—4g
Saturated Fat—2.5g	Sugar—6g
Sodium—480mg	Protein—5g

From Whole Foods
wholefoodsmarket.com





Asparagus with Blue Cheese and Pine Nuts

Serves 6

This simple yet elegant side dish blends asparagus with blue cheese to wow your palate.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ tablespoons red or white wine vinegar
- 1 ½ teaspoons finely chopped shallot
- salt as needed
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 ½ lbs. **asparagus**, trimmed
- 3 oz. firm blue cheese, chilled
- 3 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted

Directions:

To make vinaigrette, mix vinegar, shallot, 1/8 teaspoon salt, and pepper. Whisk in oil and

set aside. Blanche asparagus in a frying pan large enough to hold asparagus in one layer. Bring approximately 3 inches of water to a boil. Stir in 1 tablespoon salt, then add asparagus. Cook at a medium boil until fork tender (about 3 minutes). Drain on paper towel and cool. To assemble, arrange asparagus on a platter, then drizzle with vinaigrette. Roll spears to coat with vinaigrette. Shred cheese onto a piece of wax paper using the small holes of a shredder. Evenly sprinkle shredded cheese over asparagus, then scatter pine nuts over cheese.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):

Calories—130	Carbohydrate—5g
Total Fat—11g	Dietary Fiber—1g
Saturated Fat—4g	Sugar—0g
Sodium—240mg	Protein—5g

From Nutrition World
nutritionw.com

Quinoa Primavera with Chicken, Spring Peas, and Asparagus

Serves 4

Rotisserie chicken works perfectly in this recipe. Any leftover quinoa primavera can be chilled and tossed with vinaigrette to make a lively salad.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup quinoa
- 2 cups water
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup finely chopped red onion
- 1/2 lb. **asparagus**, woody ends snapped off and discarded, spears cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 cup fresh peas or frozen petite peas, thawed
- 1 cup shredded cooked chicken
- 1 cup thinly sliced baby spinach leaves
- sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Directions:

Rinse quinoa under cold running water and drain. Combine water and quinoa in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, then cover and cook until quinoa is tender and all the water is absorbed (about 15 to 20 minutes). Meanwhile, heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and asparagus. Cook, stirring often, until asparagus is tender and bright green (about 5 to 7 minutes). Add garlic and peas and continue cooking for another minute. Stir in chicken and cooked quinoa. Add the spinach and stir until it wilts (about 3 to 5 minutes). Season with salt and pepper and serve immediately.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):

Calories—310	Carbohydrate—39g
Total Fat—9g	Dietary Fiber—7g
Saturated Fat—1.5g	Sugar—4g
Sodium—370mg	Protein—20g

From Whole Foods
wholefoodsmarket.com

Buying Asparagus Locally

Here in Chattanooga, asparagus is in season during the months of April and May. Get it truly “garden-fresh” from one of these area markets:

Chattanooga Market at the First Tennessee Pavilion

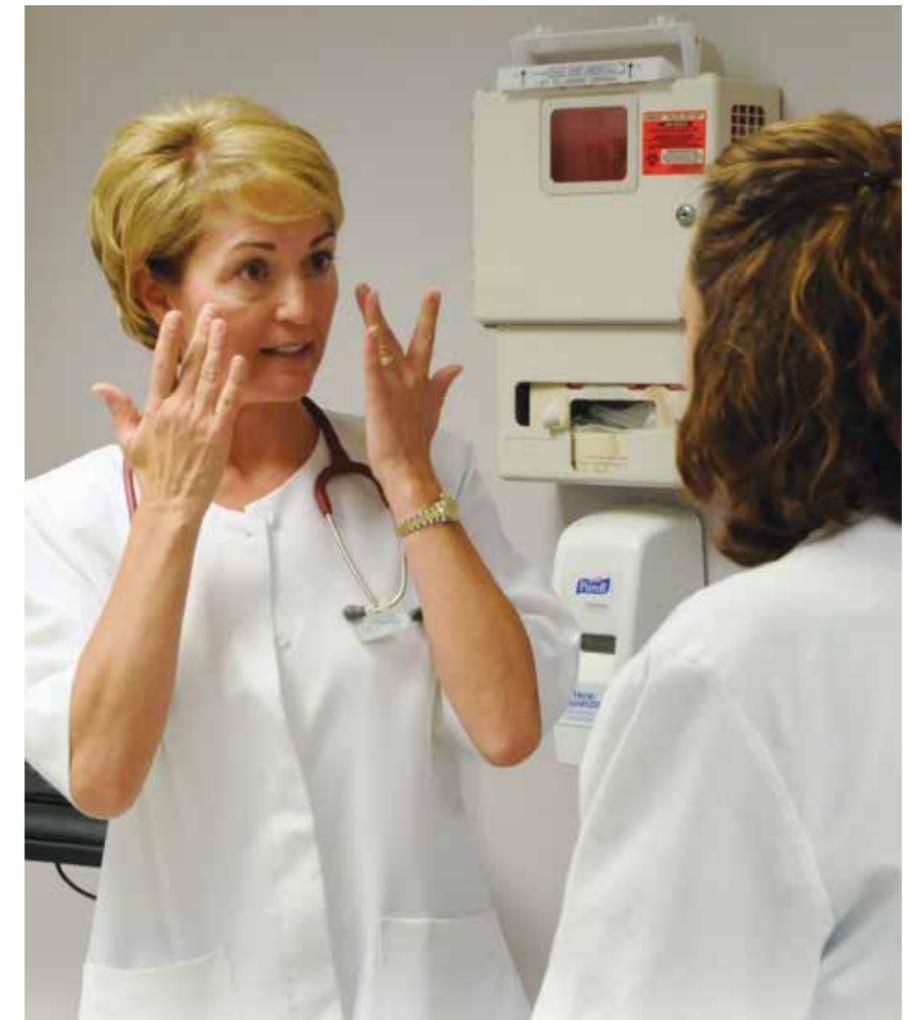
- Sundays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Wednesdays, 4 p.m.-7 p.m.

Main Street Farmer’s Market at 325 East Main Street

- Wednesdays, 4 p.m.-6 p.m.

Some tips for consumers:

- Look for straight, firm spears with plump, tightly closed tips
- Look for a consistent, vibrant color from top to bottom
- Eat as soon as possible (refrigerate 3-4 days max with ends wrapped in a damp paper towel)



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