

BUFFALO FARM TO SCHOOL



Asparagus



Varieties Grown in New York State

- Jersey Knight
- Jersey King
- Jersey Giant

Nutrition and Health Benefits

- Asparagus is a great source of antioxidants, like Vitamins A and C!
- High in fiber, asparagus also shines as a source of folate and potassium.
- Asparagus is fat free, cholesterol free, sodium free, and low in calories.
- Asparagus is a great gluten-free veggie!

Selection

- Choose odorless, pencil-thin asparagus.
- Look for stalks with dry, tight tips.
- Avoid limp, or wilted stalks!

How to Grow It

- **Fun Fact!** Asparagus is a long-living perennial, which means it will sprout up year after year!
- **Difficulty:** Medium difficulty
EXPERT TIP! Start asparagus plants from seedlings or tips that are 1-2 years old, instead of seeds!
- **Growing Season:** Mid-summer to early fall
- **Sun & Soil:** Full sun or part shade, in loose, deep, well-draining soil. Can tolerate slightly acidic soil.
EXPERT TIP! Plant in trenches at least 8 inches deep, and cover with 2 inches of soil. Add more soil to cover as plants begin to grow!
- **Size:** Plant seedlings at least 18 inches apart, as plants will spread!
EXPERT TIP! Asparagus will be around a long time, so make sure you leave the plants enough room to grow and spread! Consider this when picking your garde spot!
- **Planting Time:** 4-6 weeks before last frost...or as soon as soil can be dug up for planting
- **Time to Harvest:** Asparagus takes a long time to grow! These spears won't be ready for harvest until early spring after at least one full growing cycle year!

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Preparation & Cooking Tips

- Rinse the asparagus spears under cold, running water. Shake dry!
- Trim the white, woody, thick ends of the asparagus off before eating or cooking.

EXPERT TIP! Save the woody ends of asparagus for asparagus soup! Freeze them in a freezer bag until soup time!

- Asparagus is great raw! Steamed! Roasted! Grilled! On a salad! In a casserole! In soup! There are so many ways to prepare and enjoy asparagus!

EXPERT TIP! Add steamed asparagus tips to an omelet for a veggie-packed breakfast!

Storage Tips

- Store asparagus in the refrigerator for up to 4 days by wrapping the ends in a wet paper towel and placing them in a plastic bag.

EXPERT TIP! Homegrown asparagus has the best taste, especially when freshly picked!

- Freeze it! Blanch asparagus spears for 3 minutes, and then freeze in zip lock bags.

Kid-Friendly Eating Tips

- Shake & Bake! Place asparagus in a zip-lock bag and drizzle with a little olive oil, a dash of salt, a pinch of pepper, and any other spices you like! Have kids shake it up, and then bake on a cookie sheet in a 400 degree oven until crispy!

EXPERT TIP! Use some asparagus cooked this way as an original pizza topper!

- Easy app! Serve asparagus spears with a fun dipping sauce as a healthy appetizer or snack! Make your own healthy dip with Greek yogurt, lemon juice, minced garlic, roasted red bell pepper...be creative! Let kids pick a veggie to add to the dip!
- Stack it! Stack a whole wheat cracker with low-fat cheese, a bell pepper ring, and an asparagus tip! Let kids create their own stack!
- Grill it! Grill asparagus spears and other veggies coated with olive oil spray on a medium-heat grill for 5-8 minutes, turning occasionally. Makes a great seasonal side dish with lean, grilled chicken or fish!

RECIPES

FARM FRESH ROASTED ASPARAGUS

Yield: 4 - ½ cup servings

Ingredients:

- 1 pound Asparagus
- 1 tablespoon Olive Oil
- 1 tablespoon Parmesan Cheese
- 1 teaspoon roasted garlic & red pepper seasoning

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 400°
- Rinse asparagus, trim ends off and discard or save for stock.
- Line roasting pan with foil. Arrange asparagus in a single layer and coat with olive oil. Sprinkle with seasonings & cheese, rub over spears to distribute evenly. Lightly spray with olive oil cooking spray, if desired.
- Roast 10-12 minutes or until lightly browned. Enjoy!

STEAMED ASPARAGUS WITH LIGHT ALFREDO SAUCE

Yield: 4 - ½ cup servings

Ingredients:

- 1 pound of Asparagus
- Light Alfredo Sauce
- 1 tablespoon butter
- ¼ cup flour
- ¾ cup grated parmesan cheese
- 2 cups low-fat milk
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt

Directions:

- Rinse asparagus, trim ends off and discard or save for stock.
- Steam asparagus until tender, about 6-8 minutes. Drain.
- Melt butter in saucepan over medium heat on stovetop. Add flour and cook for 1 minute. Whisk in low-fat milk and seasonings. Bring mixture to a boil, and continue to whisk until sauce thickens. Mix in parmesan cheese.
- Pour a small amount of Alfredo sauce over cooked asparagus for a delightful side dish!

COOK'S NOTE! Prepare asparagus any way you wish (roast, grill), and then add sauce! Can even use a tomato sauce instead!



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