

Asparagus two ways!

Recipes by Hester Guy, Photographed by Pippa Marffy
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Spring brings with it fresh asparagus and there are many ways to serve this delicious vegetable. The recipes below give the general idea of either using boiled or roasted asparagus. The amounts are flexible.

Salad of Asparagus with Goats Cheese and Chilli

Ingredients:

- About 500g asparagus, trimmed
- 60g goats cheese (I use Nieuwenhuis Cloud Goats Cheese,bought from Hastings Market but use any
- goats cheese you like. Sometimes i use feta cheese)
- 1 chilli, finely chopped
- A handful of micro greens (I bought a tray from Hastings Market as I find them a useful addition to
- salads)
- A good slug of olive oil
- New Zealand sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Optional extra: fresh chopped herbs

Method:

1. Blanch asparagus in boiling salted water for a few moments...do not overcook!
2. Drain, refresh with a cup of cold water, drain again, and lay on a tea towel to absorb excess moisture. This means the olive oil flavour is not diluted by water draining from the asparagus.
3. Arrange asparagus on a large platter. Top with crumbled cheese, and a dusting of finely chopped chilli.
4. Season well and liberally sprinkle with olive oil.
5. Finally top with micro greens.
6. Serve immediately.

Accompany with whole meal toast rubbed with a cut clove of garlic and a spreading of softened unsalted butter.

Roasted Asparagus Salad with Roasted Red pepper and Rocket

Ingredients:

- About 500g asparagus
- 1 red pepper, halved, seeds removed and cut into strips
- About 4 tbsp olive oil
- New Zealand sea salt and freshly ground black pepper Rocket or roughly chopped leaves of mint
- A few chopped pistachio nuts to garnish Optional extra
- Juice half a lemon.

Method:

1. Preheat oven 200degrees Celsius fan bake.
2. Trim or break asparagus and wash well in cold water. (The water collected on the asparagus helps to steam the vegetable while roasting).
3. Lay asparagus out in a single layer on a low sided oven tray asparagus. Place red pepper strips at one end of the tray. Drizzle generously with olive oil and season well.
4. Oven roast or bbq asparagus and until just tender, approx 10-15 minutes. Remove. Roast red peppers a further 10 mins or so, until lightly grilled looking.
5. Layer asparagus on a flat platter with strips of roasted red pepper. Add a squeeze of lemon juice.

Garnish salad with fresh rocket and roughly chopped pistachio nuts or lightly toasted slithered almonds.

Hester's Asparagus Hints:

- If not eaten straight away after purchase, asparagus likes to be kept in the fridge standing in about 2 cm of water - it keeps much fresher this way!
- The stems will always break at a point to give the most tender asparagus. I also cut the ends sometimes, to give a more uniform effect and keep the trimmings to make asparagus soup.
- Asparagus marries well with Hollandaise sauce or melted butter sharpened with a little lemon juice. Or use spears as a soldier to dip into a soft boiled egg.
- Try a salad made with blanched asparagus, cooked, sliced chicken breast, thinly sliced fennel, sliced oranges and a generous handful roughly chopped mint. Dress with olive oil, lemon juice and a touch of diced chilli. Season well.
- Asparagus rolls are delicious made with white crustless bread and lightly blanched asparagus.... Remove the crusts with an electric knife and at H G Catering we always rolled the bread out with a rolling pin before buttering! Butter well. Drizzle a line of mayonnaise diagonally across the bread and place a small piece of frilly lettuce at either end. Top with either mustard or freshly grated Parmesan cheese before placing 2 asparagus spears "nose to tail" on top of the seasoning. Roll up firmly and place on a tray, cover with plastic wrap for at least two hours before plating. Cut carefully in half crossways and stand up on a flat platter, cut side down.