

Asparagus

June Edition - “*Healthy Cooking with Asparagus*” by Gisele & Eddie Gaffney

In Season:

The season runs from April through May, but can extend into July in the East.

When to Harvest:

It takes about 3 years from seed to harvest. When stalks reach 6-8 inch harvest length.



How to Grow:

Chose and prepare your asparagus bed carefully because this perennial vegetable will occupy the same spot for 20-30 years. Planted in early spring once the soil is thawed and can be worked. Eliminate all weeds from the bed, and work in 2-4 inch layer of compost, manure, or soil mix. Dig trenches about 6 inches wide and 6-12 inches deep. Place the “crowns” (1 year old plants) in the trenches about 18 inches apart. Asparagus does not like competition so keep weeds and other plants clear of the designated bed. These plants will produce more and more stalks each year as their roots continue to grow and spread. The key is not over harvest the bed so the yields become large each year.

Fun Facts:

- Out of the estimated 300 varieties of asparagus, only 20 are edible.
- It comes in 3 different colors; green, white, and purple.
- White asparagus are made by covering the stalks as they grow with dirt or black plastic to deprive the stalk from sunlight.
- White asparagus is one of the most labor-intensive vegetables to grow.
- In the 1920's Hadley, Massachusetts was known as the "Asparagus Capital of the World" with more than 200 acres of asparagus, and is home to an Asparagus Festival every June.
- It takes 3 years from seed to harvest.
- Everyone makes "asparagus pee" but not everyone can smell it. Scientist's are still studying why!
- Asparagus's red berries are said to be poisonous.
- It is planted next to tomatoes to naturally repel insects for both plants!
- Very little or no pesticides are used, so you do NOT have to buy organic! It is one of the "Clean 15"!

Nutritional Value:

Asparagus is about 4 calories per stalk, no fat, low in sodium and is a good source of fiber folate, and potassium. It is rich in vitamins A, C, E, K, and chromium (which improves the ability of insulin to transport glucose into cells). It is also high in anti-inflammatory nutrients and filled with antioxidants.

Recipes:

Asparagus does not require peeling, unless the stalks are very thick, and tough. Typically it is grilled, sautéed, steamed, or baked; and used as a side dish to many favorite summertime meals. However, this month's recipe uses raw asparagus in a different way! It is an easy and clever way to incorporate veggies into a family favorite food such as a quesadillas. It is also perfect for busy parents and kids to make during the week while watching a Boston Red Sox baseball game!

Green Monstah Quesadilla

- 4 medium whole-wheat flour tortillas
- 8-10 fresh asparagus spears cut into 1/2 inch pieces
- 1 cup of fresh or frozen peas
- \pm 1-1/2 cups of low-fat shredded cheese
- salsa verde

For Salsa Verde:

- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh mint (spearmint) leaves, chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped
- 1 Tablespoon red wine vinegar or fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 4 Tablespoons olive oil



Instructions

For the Salsa Verde:

1. Chop garlic, mint, and cilantro and place them in a bowl
2. Add the vinegar or lemon juice, salt, red pepper flakes, and olive oil to the mint cilantro mixture and stir until the salt has dissolved.
3. Reserve it.

For the Green Monstah Quesadilla:

1. Wash and cut the fresh asparagus spears into 1/2 inch pieces, and place it in a bowl with the peas.
2. Spread one side of each tortilla with 1/3 cup of cheese.
3. Place 1/4 the asparagus pea mixture on each tortilla
4. Drizzle with some of the reserved Salsa Verde
5. Fold the tortillas in half over contents to form quesadillas.
6. Place the quesadillas on the grille, in the oven, or on a nonstick skillet over medium-low heat, and cook for 3 minutes on each side or until tortillas are lightly browned and crispy.
7. Cut in half and serve it with the remaining Salsa Verde.



Step 2



Step 4



Step 6



Step 7 Eat & Enjoy!!

Information Courtesy of:

www.yankeemagazine.com/article/food/asparagus#_

www.eatingwell.com/blogs/health_blog/5_powerful_health_benefits_of_asparagus_you_probably_didn_t_know

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