

# Perfect Asparagus

Kia ora koutou,

Asparagus is a member of the lily family and is related to garlic, onions and leeks. It takes about 3 years to grow asparagus before you can harvest it, but once grown, asparagus plants will keep producing for 15 to 20 years! Asparagus starts becoming available in September, with the main supplies coming in October/November, so it's just about to be the best time to enjoy it at its best.

These power-stalks are packed with vitamin C and folate, and contain lots of other important vitamins and minerals. Their texture and colour make them a delightful addition to salads, risotto, roasts and any other meal!

To take care of your asparagus, keep it refrigerated with butt ends either wrapped in wet paper towels, or stand stalks up in a jar with 1-2 cm of water (like flowers in a vase), or alternatively wash, then refrigerate in a plastic bag.

## Delicious ways to enjoy asparagus

- Drop into boiling water, remove when it gets back to the boil. Drain and drizzle over a dressing made of 2 parts olive oil, 1 part balsamic vinegar (lemon or orange juice works too).
- Raw or blanched in an asparagus, avocado and strawberry salad.
- Roasted with other vegetables such as olives, carrots and tomatoes.
- Steamed, with black pepper and butter.
- Baked in a quiche or frittata.
- Baked and served with white sauce and cheese.
- Stir-fried with other vegetables such as beansprouts or capsicum. To add flavour, you can include garlic and some sesame seeds.
- Brushed with olive oil and cooked on BBQ.
- Wrapped with lean bacon and baked in the oven.
- Steamed or boiled and served with poached eggs.
- Asparagus rolls: boil until just tender and rapidly cool the asparagus. Spread fresh wholegrain bread with cream cheese, place cooked asparagus spear on top and roll up.
- Chopped and added to savoury muffins with mushroom and cheese.
- Chicken and asparagus risotto.
- Asparagus casserole – layer cheese sauce, sliced new potatoes, hard-boiled egg and boiled asparagus (lots) in casserole dish. Top with more cheese sauce, grated cheese, and breadcrumbs. Bake in the oven at 200°C until asparagus is tender, about 12-15 minutes.
- Hot asparagus and whole-grain mustard sandwiches.
- Asparagus omelette.
- Make a warm salad with cooked asparagus and fresh salad greens tossed with vinaigrette.
- Roasted with olive oil, garlic, lemon juice and ground pepper.

