

LEVEL: SIMPLE

SERVES 6

# FREEKEH AND ASPARAGUS SALAD

Freekeh is green roasted wheat with a wonderfully smoky taste, harvested in spring by local fellahin before the wheat plant ripens, and roasted in the open field. It is used as a stuffing for vegetables and meats and mixed into salads. Freekeh is sold in Middle Eastern specialty shops, but you can use couscous, which also fluffs up well when cooked, as a suitable replacement.

## INGREDIENTS

11 oz. (300 g) freekeh  
1½ lb. (600 g) thin green asparagus  
1 cup (30 g) finely chopped parsley  
4 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
Juice of 1 lemon  
½ tsp. finely chopped fresh green chili, deseeded  
1 pinch salt  
1 pinch freshly ground black pepper

## DIRECTIONS

Wash freekeh well in a colander under running water. Put freekeh in a bowl, cover with water and let soak for an hour, then drain. Remove the woody, lower part of the asparagus spears and cut them into 1½-in. (3-cm) long pieces. Fill a large bowl with ice water. Bring water plus 1 tbsp. of salt to a boil in a large saucepan. Blanch asparagus in the boiling water for 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer asparagus to the ice water to keep them green. Add freekeh to the still-boiling water and cook for 5 minutes, until al dente. Remove the freekeh, place it in a colander over a bowl, and drain well. Drain asparagus, and squeeze gently to remove cooking water. Mix freekeh and asparagus in a serving bowl, add the rest of the ingredients, toss, and serve.