

# ASPARAGUS



Tender asparagus is a springtime favorite and tender stems of white and green asparagus are usually found at farmers' markets in late spring. Green and white asparagus are essentially the same plant. The only difference is that white asparagus is grown underground and never exposed to light—which turns the crop green. Green asparagus, on the other hand, is grown above ground. White asparagus grows at a slower rate and develops a thicker, stronger skin than green asparagus, so it always needs to be peeled. The skins also produce a slightly bitter substance that can permeate the stems. When peeled, white asparagus is mild, while the abundant light exposure gives green asparagus its strong, grassy flavor.

Both white and green asparagus can be eaten raw. Cut off the woody parts of the stems. Peel the asparagus and cut it into very thin strips lengthwise, preferably with a mandolin slicer. Be careful when peeling and avoid leaving threads hanging loose that might be annoying when eating. Save the peel from green asparagus and use it as a base for soup. Asparagus can be cooked in a special steamer which allows the stems to stand upright, so that the thick base cooks in the water while the delicate tips are steamed. A tall, thin saucepan can also be used when cooking stems of different diameters; place the thicker ones in the water a few minutes before thinner ones.

Asparagus can be served tender or still with some “bite”—white asparagus generally needs to be cooked longer than the green.

## STORING

Store asparagus in the fridge, preferably wrapped in a damp towel. To freeze, cook asparagus for 2–4 minutes in salted water, let cool, and drain. You don't need to thaw asparagus before cooking it.

## SEASON

Asparagus is a perennial and planted in early spring for spring or early summer harvest. It is available year-round in stores.

## GOES WELL WITH

Both green and white asparagus go well with, for example, lemon, garlic, vinegar, oil, Parmesan cheese, butter, egg, cold cuts, seafood, and smoked salmon. White asparagus goes particularly well with fish, and green asparagus with meat.



Asparagus with garlic, Parmesan, and basil. >