

Asparagus

Go Aussie Spears!

After this year's especially cold winter it is with much jubilation that we welcome spring and it's bountiful harvest of luscious Aussie spears. At last it's time to go Aussie spears! To celebrate, the Australian Asparagus Council has come up with a range of new recipes and images and have revamped the official Asparagus website recipe library to be bigger and brighter than ever before.

To allow everyone quick and easy access to a host of yummy asparagus recipes on their phones and tablets we have also created a **Go Aussie Spears e-cookbook** bursting with recipes, tips and ideas to get everyone cooking with fresh Aussie spears. Stay tuned for this fabulous little book set to launch on 1 September 2015 to add zing to the first day of spring!



Spear facts

- More than 95% of Australia's asparagus is grown in Victoria.
- Australian asparagus has a reputation for being 100% clean, green and safe. Add to that its luscious eating quality and you have an amazing product that is not only attractive to Aussie home cooks and chefs, but is also highly valued on global markets.
- Most of the Australian asparagus crop (70%) is consumed on the domestic market and 30% of Australian asparagus is exported.
- The growing, harvesting and packing of asparagus are extremely labour intensive processes. Each spear needs to be harvested by hand when it's at just the right length. To maximise freshness, harvesting is done on a daily basis in the early hours of the morning with packing on the same day.

Season availability

- Australian asparagus is available from September to March, however the main production is during September, October and November.
- When Australian asparagus is out of season, or when supplies are limited (such as at the beginning and end of the season) asparagus is imported to supplement local supplies and satisfy consumer demand.

Selecting asparagus

- When selecting asparagus look for firm, bright, smooth, spears of uniform size with closed, compact tips.
- When you snap fresh asparagus, it should be crisp, moist and juicy.

Storing asparagus

- Did you know that freshly harvested asparagus is very similar to cut flowers? It needs to be kept in cool, humid conditions.
- One way to keep asparagus fresher for longer is to wrap it in a damp tea towel, pop it in a plastic bag and store it in the crisper compartment of your refrigerator.
- Another way is to stand the fresh spears upright in a container with 1cm cold water, cover and store it in the refrigerator.

Preparing asparagus

- Simply snap off the woody ends with your forefinger and thumb. Alternatively, run a knife along the stalk until it meets less resistance, and then cut the end off at this point.
- Asparagus can be served both raw and cooked - try it fresh in salads and salsas as well as in an endless variety of cooked dishes.

For more information visit asparagus.com.au



facebook.com/asparaguscouncil



instagram.com/aussieasparagus

Spearheading health

Asparagus has an abundance of nutrition packed into every spear. Glenn Cardwell, an accredited practising dietitian with over 35 years experience working with the food industry and fresh produce, has provided these facts.

- Asparagus is low in kilojoules, and contains no fat or cholesterol, whilst providing fibre. That makes it a must for any diet, including a weight loss diet.
- Why take a supplement when asparagus can provide us with essential nutrients like the essential B group vitamins folate, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, B6 and biotin, along with vitamin C?
- Asparagus is a great source of folate, with one serve providing over 20% of our daily needs. Folate is important for expectant mothers for the healthy development of the baby during pregnancy.
- It's not only fruit that gives us vitamin C. One serve of asparagus provides about 25% of our daily needs of vitamin C. Did you know that vitamin C helps us to absorb adequate iron from our diet?
- Asparagus has a brilliant range of bioactive compounds, such as antioxidants like rutin and beta-carotene, which help keep us healthy, well into old age.



Start the day the Aussie spears way! Tuck into **Asparagus with Spanish Eggs and Chorizo**. These tasty little pots of goodness also make a lovely light meal teamed up with warmed tortilla to mop up the sauce.



Whip up plenty of **Asparagus and Sweet Corn Fritters** for lunch or dinner. Leftovers are perfect for breakfast or to pop into lunchboxes the next day.



Looking for a quick and healthy dip? **Asparagus Hummus** is sure to fit the bill. Asparagus adds a lovely fresh flavour to this ever-popular dip. Enjoy with crackers and fresh veggie sticks. Or dollop into warmed pita pockets with shredded lettuce and cherry tomatoes for a yummy lunch.



Bursting with veggie goodness **Asparagus and Green Pea Soup with Cashews** makes a nutritious light meal served with your favourite bread. Although this recipe is dairy free it has a surprising creamy texture thanks to the cashews blended into the soup at the end of cooking.



Asparagus and Salmon Frittata is delicious served with a simple green salad with a lemon olive oil dressing. It's delicious hot or cold so make plenty to enjoy leftovers for lunch the next day.



Spaghetti is a classic family favourite and **Asparagus Pasta with Spinach and Prosciutto** is a particularly tasty spring special.



Spears make super stir-fries. When whipping up **Asparagus Stir-fry with Marinated Asian-Style Lamb**, the lamb is marinating while you prepare the veggies and cook the rice. Once the wok's fired up you're only minutes away from saying, "Dinner's ready!"



Asparagus, Pumpkin and Tomato Risotto is a great way to include more delicious veggies in family meals. Make a double quantity so you have tasty leftovers to heat up the next day or to make into Asparagus Arancini.



Whip up **Asparagus Mayo with Goujons and Spears** and enjoy dipping crunchy crumbed fish and luscious asparagus spears into this yummy mayo. Fish and spears are the new fish and chips!



Chicken and Asparagus Koftas is a dish with a difference for your next BBQ. Asparagus adds a lovely unique 'herby' flavour to the koftas whilst the Asparagus Tzatziki delivers an extra dose of spring freshness.

*The full versions of these recipes are available on our website listed below.



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