

# Asparagus Fun Facts

- Y Asparagus is a member of the Lily family.
- Y The name asparagus comes from the Persian word *asparag* which means “sprout.”
- Y Under ideal conditions, asparagus spears can grow 10 inches in a 24 hour period.
- Y Check the stalks to be sure that they are rigid and smooth, without too many scales, and the tips are firmly attached. The stalks should be fresh and have a healthy luster. You should be able to press a fingernail gently through the outer skin of the edible part.
- Y If you snap off the end of a stalk, the break should be clean and stalk should not be dry.
- Y Although asparagus can be found all year around, the general growing season for the eastern US is March through June.
- Y White asparagus is traditionally kept covered with soil and harvested while it is still under the soil level. The plants never see sunlight. Due to this process, much of the white asparagus crops tend to develop a woody stalk and it becomes necessary to peel them prior to cooking.
- Y Much of the asparagus available year round is cultivated in Chile.

## Storage

- Y Keep fresh asparagus clean, cold and covered and use within 2-3 days for best quality
- Y Asparagus could be eaten raw, preferably shaved thin and marinated in some sort of acid, vinegar or lemon juice

## Steam

- Y Asparagus is best steamed in an upright position. To do this, tie stalks together with string, making sure size is consistent. Cook until just tender to retain color and texture.

## Boil

- Y Use salted rapidly boiling water. If serving immediately, cook until just tender and serve. If blanching, cook to al dente and immerse into ice water.

## Grill

- Y Asparagus can be grilled directly if they are thin. Thick asparagus should be blanched prior to grilling

## Sauté/Stir Fry

- Y Use hot pan and hot oil for cooking. Keep pieces uniform in size.

# Nutrition Information

- Y Asparagus is one of the most nutritionally well balanced vegetables. It is an excellent source of folic acid – a 5.3 oz serving provides 60% of the recommended daily allowance for folacin which is necessary for blood cell formation, growth, and prevention of liver disease.
- Y Asparagus is low in calories. It has only 20 calories per 5.3 oz serving
- Y Asparagus has zero fat and zero cholesterol and is very low in sodium.
- Y Asparagus is a good source of fiber (3 grams per 5.3 oz serving) and potassium, folacin, thiamin and vitamin B6
- Y Asparagus is a source for Glutathione (GSH) – a potent anticarcinogen and antioxidant