



Eat this vegetable to beat the bloat!

It's asparagus season! Enjoy it fresh from local farms and markets— you can likely snag a bunch of fresh asparagus for about a buck this week.

Asparagus, like most veggies, is low in calories (27 per cup) and high in fiber, making it the perfect addition to any healthy diet or weight loss plan. A bonus – it is a natural diuretic, a treasured secret among those of us battling the bloat!

Crispy yet tender, bitter yet sweet, asparagus is high in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals to keep you healthy. It's a superb source of vitamin K (important for bone density and blood clotting), folic acid and other B vitamins, iron, vitamin C, and the minerals zinc and selenium. It's also an impressive source of prebiotics, which serve as a food source for healthy bacteria in our digestive tract. Asparagus has been used for thousands of years as a medicinal food, perhaps because it helps to reduce inflammation in the body, fights high blood pressure, and has detoxifying and anti-cancer properties.

Choose firm, healthy-looking green/purple or white spears with plump, compact buds at the tips. (Old asparagus is yellowed, bendy, and the tips will look dry or wilted.) Stalk thickness is a matter of personal preference; sometimes the fatter ones are tougher, but not necessarily. When the bunch is squeezed, it should squeak.

Store asparagus in the fridge, with the base wrapped in a damp paper towel to extend freshness. Just before using, rinse under cool water to remove dirt, and trim about an inch off the base with kitchen shears. If the stalks seem woody, try peeling a bit off rather than chopping off the whole thing; sometimes just the outside is tough.

Ditch any temptation to boil it — elevate your asparagus to new heights. Try it marinated and grilled; roasted and tossed in a salad; topped with a tangy or spicy sauce; or sautéed with pasta and fresh veggies. Enjoy asparagus in tasty dishes from all over the world — from curries to omelets to pizza to sushi to stir fries.

Here are 3 variations on 3 basic asparagus cooking methods.

You will need:

- 1 pound of asparagus spears
- 1 tbsp good quality olive oil
- sea salt and fresh ground pepper

SAUTÉED: Heat the oil in a large sauté pan. Add in trimmed asparagus and sauté over medium heat for 5-10 minutes (depending on thickness) until it starts to brown. Sprinkle on salt and pepper and serve.

ROASTED: Trim the asparagus and toss with the olive oil and salt and pepper. Roast at 450°F for 8-12 minutes (longer for fatter asparagus) until tender.

GRILLED: Trim the asparagus and toss with the olive oil and salt and pepper. Grill over medium-high heat, turning occasionally, for 4-6 minutes.

Choose one of the above preparation methods for the asparagus, and enjoy as is or use in one of the following recipes:

1: Asparagus-arugula-avocado salad with citrus dill dressing

For the dressing, mix up 1/2 cup **orange juice**, the juice of 2 **lemons**, 4 tbsp **olive oil**, and 1 tbsp **dill**. Slice up cooked asparagus into 2-inch pieces. Place in a big bowl with a 5-ounce bag of **arugula** and one large ripe cubed **avocado**. Gently toss salad with dressing and serve immediately.



2: Asparagus tossed with whole wheat penne, basil, sun-dried tomatoes, and pine nuts

Boil 8 ounces of **penne** according to package directions. Meanwhile, slice up cooked asparagus into 1-inch pieces, roughly chop 1 cup packed **sun-dried tomatoes** (softened in water if dry), and shred up a cup of **basil** leaves. When pasta is done, drain, place back in hot pot, and add the prepared vegetables. Stir and add 1/4 cup **olive oil**, the juice of one **lemon**, and 1/3 cup **pine nuts**. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

3: Asparagus, Onions, and Mushrooms with Miso Glaze

For the miso glaze, combine 3 tbsp **natural sweetener**, 2 tbsp **soy sauce**, 2 tbsp hot **water**, and 2 tbsp **miso**. Slice a large **red onion** into eighths. Slice 8-10 ounces **mushrooms** of your choice. In a large sauté pan or wok, heat 1 tbsp **canola oil**. Stir fry the onion and mushrooms in the oil until cooked, about 8 minutes. Add the sauce. Cook over low heat for several more minutes until the sauce thickens a bit. Add the asparagus and toss to coat.

