

Cleveland County Kitchen

Developed by: Nancy Abasiokong, Extension Agent, Family & Consumer Sciences and Annie Thompson, Extension Admin. Assistant

May 2015



Nutrition Facts Label for Asparagus

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/2 cup (67g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 15	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 3g	1%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 1g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 10%	Vitamin C 6%
Calcium 2%	Iron 8%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
	Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Inside This Issue:

1	<i>A Delicious & Welcomed Sign of Spring</i>	1
2	<i>Selection</i>	
2	<i>Storing Asparagus and Food Safety Tips</i>	2
3	<i>How to Use and Prepare Tasty Asparagus</i>	
3	<i>Recipes</i>	3
4		4



Photo: www.berea.edu

Food of the Month - Asparagus

Asparagus - A Delicious and Welcomed Sign of Spring!



Photo: NC Cooperative Extension, Cleveland County

We know springtime has arrived when we see the beautiful bunches of fresh asparagus at farmers markets and grocery stores. It is great to add this fresh seasonal vegetable to our plates along with other springtime favorites. Asparagus is a member of the lily family, along with garlic, onions, leeks and chives. Asparagus, native to the eastern Mediterranean regions and Eastern Asia, has been cultivated for over 2,000 years. The Greeks & Romans thought it had medicinal qualities that could cure toothaches and other ailments.

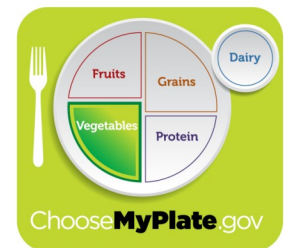
Asparagus is "in-season" in North Carolina from March through mid-May. The most common color for asparagus is green; but did you know it also could be white and purple?



Photo: <http://agbioreserach.msu.edu/>

When it comes to healthy eating - asparagus is at the top of the list. It is a delicious nutritious vegetable that is:

- High in folic acid
- A good source of vitamins A & C, potassium, and iron
- A significant source of fiber (3grams per 5.3oz), thiamine and vitamin B6
- Low in calories and sodium
- Contains no fat or cholesterol
- Asparagus, a non-starchy vegetable, is a healthy Myplate choice. Use the Myplate guide below make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Plan healthy meals with asparagus and other seasonal non-starchy vegetables.



Selection

- Look for straight, bright green stalks, 4 - 6 inches long (not bendable)
 - Stalks should be firm & fresh but tender with tight, closed tips that have a bright green or purple tinge
 - Select spears that are uniform in diameter so all spears will cook in the same amount of time.
 - Stalks can be thin or at least 1/2 inch thick with a more mellow flavor - choose stalk diameter to suit your needs; size does not determine tenderness.
 - Avoid asparagus that:
 - Is blemished or withered
 - Has tips that are yellowish, dried out, or with blooms
 - Has cut ends that look dry, split or woody
- One pound of asparagus yields:
- 2-3 cups fresh, trimmed pieces
 - Approximately 14 average size spears
 - 3-4 cooked, 1/2 - cup servings

Storing Asparagus and Food Safety Tips

Storage:

Asparagus loses quality and flavor quickly - use within one to three days after purchasing. To store, wrap a moist paper towel around the base of the bunch, place in a plastic bag and store in the refrigerator vegetable crisper.



Photo: <http://www.seriousseats.com//images/20120425-spring-risotto-3.jpg>

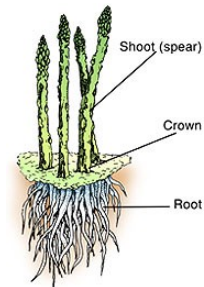
Food Safety Tips:

- Store vegetables away from meat, poultry, or seafood products.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Wash asparagus with a quick rinse in cool running water when ready to use (do not use soap or detergent).
- If tips have sand on them, dip in and out of a container of cool water, then rinse well.
- Trim off tough white ends or bend the bottom of a spear until it breaks naturally (it should be brittle and "crack" naturally). Use this as a guide for trimming the remaining spears.

- Use a separate cutting board for vegetables.

Other Tips:

- If asparagus stalks are stringy, use a vegetable peeler to lightly trim away outer layer.
- White asparagus may need to have the outer woody stem peeled off. (Vendors may also sell white asparagus ready-peeled and ready-to-cook; ask if available)



How to Use and Prepare Tasty Asparagus

Asparagus can be prepared in many ways – blanched or boiled in a small amount of water, microwaved, steamed, stir-fried or roasted. Be careful not to overcook asparagus. Retain its bright green color and crisp tenderness by cooking it just until fork-tender. Asparagus can also be frozen or canned to preserve it. Use within 1 year.

Here are a few quick ways to prepare asparagus:

Blanch asparagus spears for 2 minutes – serve on a tray with dip and other vegetables.

Blanched asparagus spears can be angle-cut and added to salads, stir-fries, casseroles, soups or omelets.

To Steam: use a standard steaming basket or special asparagus steamer. Cut washed asparagus to fit basket, bring 1 inch of water to a boil. Add asparagus, cover, steam 5 – 8 minutes.

To Microwave: Use a microwavable dish with lid; place washed and trimmed asparagus in dish, add ¼ cup water and cover. Cook on High 4 – 8 minutes, rotating dish halfway through cooking time. Check for tenderness, if not yet tender enough, let stand a few minutes.

To Stir-Fry: Wash and trim asparagus, angle-cut into 1 – 2 inch pieces. Heat 1 - teaspoon of oil for each dozen spears. Stir-fry pieces in hot oil 3 – 5 minutes. Cover and let stand for a minute, if desired tenderness has not been reached.

To Roast: Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Place asparagus spears in a single layer on a large rimmed-baking sheet. Lightly drizzle asparagus with oil, turn to coat. Season with salt and pepper (or other seasonings). Roast (uncovered) turning occasionally, until lightly browned and fork-tender, about 18-20 minutes. [263 words]

To Freeze: Wash thoroughly, sort by size. Cut in 2-inch lengths or leave in spears. Blanch, cool and drain. Package, seal and freeze. Blanching Times: (in boiling water):

Small stalks - 2 minutes

Medium stalks - 3 minutes

Large stalks - 4 minutes

For more information on the *Top 10 Ways to Enjoy Asparagus*, see the Fruits & Veggies More Matters website - <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/top-10-ways-to-enjoy-asparagus>

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Marinated Asparagus Salad

Source: Fruits & Veggies More Matters

- 1 pound fresh asparagus
- 1 small red (or other) onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 or 2 tomatoes, chopped
- Italian salad dressing

Directions:

Cook asparagus by any of the methods described on previous page. Cool. Combine with onion and tomatoes and enough salad dressing to moisten (about 2-3 Tbs.) Stir gently. Cover and refrigerate several hours or overnight. Stir again before serving. Serves 4



Photo: web.extension.illinois.edu

Asparagus Tomato Salad

- 1 pound fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1 inch pieces
- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/4 tsp honey mustard
- 1/4 cup sliced green onions
- 1/4 cup minced, fresh parsley
- 1 small zucchini, halved and cut into 1/4 inch slices
- 2 Tbs. red wine vinegar
- 1/4 tsp seasoned salt
- 1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes halved
- 1/4 cup shredded fresh mozzarella cheese

Place asparagus and zucchini in a steamer basket. Place in a saucepan over 1 inch of boiling water. Cover and steam for 2 minutes. Rinse in cold water. In large bowl, whisk together olive oil, red wine vinegar, garlic, seasoned salt and honey mustard. Pour over asparagus mixture; toss to coat. Toss in tomatoes and green onions. Sprinkle with mozzarella cheese and parsley. Source: UK-Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service

Asparagus Frittata

- 1-1/2 cups egg substitute
- 2 scallions, chopped
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese
- 24 asparagus spears, trimmed
- 1 tsp. dried mint (optional)



Photo: extension.illinois.edu

Slice asparagus into 1 inch diagonal slices. Heat oil in a 10 inch non-stick skillet and sauté asparagus and scallions for 5 minutes.

Blend egg substitute, cheese, and mint. Pour over asparagus and scallions in skillet and cook on medium heat, gently pulling sides from skillet to cook eggs throughout.

Cover skillet with lid once egg mixture is cooked halfway through. Use a spatula to divide it into thirds. Turn each piece once. Serve Immediately.

Source: Fruits & Veggies More Matters

Fettuccine with Fresh Vegetables

- 8oz. Uncooked fettuccine
- 2-1/2 Tbs. olive oil
- 2 Tbs. Mrs. Dash® Garlic & Herb Seasoning Blend
- 1 medium red bell pepper, cored and seeded, cut into thin strips
- 2 cups chopped asparagus
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 3/4 cup shredded Provolone/Mozzarella cheese blend

Prepare pasta according to package directions.

Meanwhile, heat oil in large skillet over medium heat; add vegetables and Mrs. Dash® Garlic & Herb Seasoning Blend.

Cook and stir until tender (about 8 minutes.)

Toss together hot pasta, vegetables and lemon juice. Mix in cheese and serve!

Source: Fruits & Veggies More Matters

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New Potato & Asparagus Soup

Source: UK-Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service

2 Tbs. olive oil	2 medium size, boneless, skinless chicken breasts	1 medium diced onion
1 tsp. salt	1/2 tsp. garlic powder	zest and juice of 1 lemon
2 cups new potatoes	3 cups vegetable broth	1 cup low fat milk
1 pound fresh asparagus	1/2 cup reduced fat sour cream	Fresh ground black pepper

- Pour oil into a large saucepan over medium heat.
- Remove fat from chicken breasts and cut chicken into 1/2 inch pieces.
- Cook chicken and diced onion in the oil for about 5 minutes or until chicken is done and onions are golden.
- Stir in salt, garlic powder, lemon zest, and 1/2 of the lemon juice.
- Cut potatoes into 1/2 inch chunks, leaving the skin on.
- Add potatoes and vegetable broth then simmer, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are tender.
- Stir in milk.
- Trim and cut asparagus into 1 inch pieces and add to mixture.
- Simmer over medium heat, partially covered and cook until the asparagus is tender, about 15 minutes.
- Stir in 1/2 cup sour cream and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Asparagus Ham Quiche

1 pound fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1/2 inch pieces
 1 cup finely chopped ham
 1 small finely chopped onion
 2 (8 inch) unbaked pie shells
 1 egg white, slightly beaten
 2 cups shredded reduced fat cheddar cheese
 4 large eggs
 1 container (5.3 ounces) plain Greek yogurt
 1/3 cup milk (1%)
 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
 1/4 tsp. salt
 1/4 tsp. pepper



Photo: Cornell University Extension

Preheat oven to 400°F. Place asparagus in a steamer over 1 inch of boiling water and cover. Cook until tender but still firm, about 4-6 minutes. Drain and cool. Place ham and onion in a non-stick skillet and cook over medium heat until lightly browned. Brush pie shells with beaten egg white. Spoon the ham, onion and asparagus into pie shells, dividing evenly between the 2 shells. Sprinkle 1 cup shredded cheese over the mixture in each shell. In a separate bowl, beat together eggs, yogurt, milk, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Pour the egg mixture over the top of the cheese, dividing evenly between the 2 shells.

Bake uncovered in a preheated oven until firm 25-30 minutes. Allow to cool approximately 20 minutes before cutting.
 Yield: 16 slices

Source: UK-Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service

Spring Vegetable Sauté

Source: USDA What's Cooking?

1 tsp. olive oil	1/2 cup sweet onion (sliced)	1 garlic clove (finely chopped)
3-4 tiny quartered new potatoes	3/4 cup carrot (sliced)	3/4 cup asparagus pieces
1/2 cup radishes (quartered)	1/4 tsp. salt	1/4 tsp. black pepper
1/2 tsp dill (dried)	3/4 cup sugar snap peas or green beans	

- Heat the oil in a skillet. Cook the onion 2 minutes, add the garlic and cook another minute.
- Stir in the potatoes and carrots. Cover, turn the heat to low, and cook until almost tender, about 4 minutes.
- If the vegetables start to brown, add a Tablespoon or 2 of water.
- Now add the asparagus, peas, radishes, salt, pepper, and dill. Cook, stirring often, until just tender - about 4 minutes more.
- Serve immediately.