



APRIL **ASPARAGUS**



Reasons to eat Asparagus - Asparagus is an excellent source of folate and vitamin K; a good source of vitamin C, vitamin A and Thiamin; a source of vitamin E, fiber, iron, potassium, riboflavin and niacin.

Produce Tips – Look for firm, bright green spears with tightly closed tips. (Avoid limp spears) Stand stems up in a container with about one inch of water. Cover loosely with plastic bag. Store it in the refrigerator until ready to use.

A serving of asparagus is about six asparagus spears (1/2 cup of cooked). It can be served raw, baked, grilled, boiled, steamed, microwaved, or stir fried. Personally I prefer mine raw or lightly cooked. (I don't like it when it gets mushy)

Asparagus is related to onions, leeks and garlic. It is grown from crowns (an underground stem from which the spears shoot). It takes about three years from the time the crowns are planted to establish permanent roots and produce quality spears. If not harvested, the spears will develop into fern-like plants in the warmer weather.

They do require a period of dormancy and our winters provide this for them. I have asparagus in my garden that has been there for about 5 years. (plants usually last 15 to 20 years) It is producing well and does not need a lot of work.

For Classroom Taste Testing: Asparagus Appetizer

Ingredients: 1 pound fresh baby asparagus, washed and trimmed at ends; 1 (15 ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed; 6 tablespoons balsamic vinaigrette

Cut asparagus into one-inch pieces and place in large bowl. Add black beans to the bowl. Toss the asparagus and beans with the vinaigrette until coated. Place 2 tablespoons onto paper tray. Serve immediately. (makes 36 servings at 2 tablespoons each)