



In the Kitchen

with Barb Agee

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Spring Asparagus

With its sweet and grassy flavor, asparagus is a harbinger of spring in the local markets now. Asparagus is available in three colors: the common green variety, a creamy white version and an all purple variety. Look for crisp, straight and firm spears with tightly closed buds. At only 40 calories for a cup serving of these spears, they are packed full of vitamins A, C, K and folate with even a little protein.

Green and White Asparagus Beef Scaloppini Wrap

8 spears each of green and white asparagus, trimmed 8 beef round scaloppini *
2 tablespoons olive oil 1 cup white dry wine
½ cup panko breadcrumbs ⅓ cup fresh squeezed orange
1 cup (approximately 4 ounces) fontina cheese, grated Garlic Sour Cream Dressing (*see recipe below*).
2 teaspoons grated orange zest

Preheat oven to 350°F. Blanch asparagus in a pot of salted boiling water for 2 minutes. Plunge into a large bowl of ice water. Drain and set aside. In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil over medium heat. Add panko crumbs and toast, stirring often until a golden brown. Set panko crumbs aside in a bowl to cool.

Pound beef rounds to a ⅛-inch thickness. Season both sides of each beef round with salt and pepper and place on a work surface. Toss cheese and orange zest with panko crumbs. Divide panko mixture on top of the beef rounds. Place 2 asparagus spears at one end of each round and roll up. Secure each round with a toothpick.

Heat remaining olive oil in the skillet over medium-high heat. Add rolls and brown on all sides. Remove to a baking dish. Deglaze skillet with wine and orange juice. Reserve 1 tablespoon of the glaze for the sauce. Spoon remaining glaze over beef rolls. Cover beef rolls with foil and bake for 15 minutes.

To serve, place two beef rolls on each plate and drizzle with some of the **Garlic Sour Cream Dressing** (*see recipe below*). Place the remaining dressing in a serving dish to pass at the table. *Serves 4*

* ½- inch slices of top round roast

Garlic Sour Cream Dressing

6 large cloves garlic, finely chopped 1 teaspoon honey
1 teaspoon butter 1 tablespoon of the reserved glaze
½ cup sour cream Salt and pepper to taste
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

In a small skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté for 2 minutes. In a bowl stir together sour cream, mustard, honey, reserved glaze. Stir in the garlic.



Asparagus with Pimientos

1 pound fresh asparagus, trimmed
1/3 cup dry bread crumbs or panko
3 tablespoons butter

1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
1/4 cup pimientos, chopped
1/4 cup chives, chopped

In a small skillet melt butter and add bread crumbs and lightly brown; set aside. In a large pot, steam asparagus in salted water for about 4 minutes until verily tender. Mix cheese and bread crumbs together. Drain asparagus and transfer to a warm serving dish. Sprinkle with cheese and crumbs, then pimientos and chives. Serve immediately. *Yield: 4-6 servings*

Asparagus Vinaigrette-Spring Salad

1/2 cup olive oil
1/2 cup white balsamic vinegar
1/4 cup water
2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/8 teaspoon fresh ground pepper
4 radishes, thinly sliced
1/4 cup green pepper, coarsely chopped

3 tablespoons dill pickle relish
1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
1 tablespoon fresh chives, snipped
2 pounds fresh asparagus spears, cooked and drained
1 head butter lettuce, torn in bite size pieces
3 hard-cooked eggs, sliced
2 medium tomatoes, cut into wedges

In in the food processor, blend together the olive oil, vinegar, water, mustard, salt and pepper. Pour into a bowl and add the radishes, green pepper, relish, parsley and chives. Place asparagus in a glass baking dish; pour dressing over asparagus. Cover and chill at least 30 minutes up to 4 hours.

To serve, arrange the lettuce on a serving platter; remove the asparagus from dressing and arrange over lettuce. Garnish with egg slices and tomato wedges. Drizzle with some of the dressing including the radishes and green pepper. *Yield: 8 to 10 servings*

Asparagus and Goat Cheese Dip

10 medium size asparagus spears, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 cup leeks, chopped
One 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup sour cream
1/4 cup dry white wine
2 cups mild white cheddar cheese, grated
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

One 14-ounce package artichoke hearts in water, drained and chopped
1/3 cup fresh peas (or frozen then thawed)
3 tablespoons fresh chives, chopped
3 tablespoons fresh mint, chopped
3 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped
1 teaspoon lemon zest, finely grated
4 ounces goat cheese, divided and crumbled

Preheat oven to 450°F. Cook asparagus in boiling salted water for 2 minutes. Drain; let cool. Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add chopped leeks and cook, stirring often until soft, about 10 minutes.

Beat cream cheese and sour cream together until smooth. Add wine and blend in; fold in cheddar cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Reserving asparagus tips, fold in the remaining asparagus pieces, chopped artichokes, peas, chopped chives, mint, parsley, lemon zest and 2 ounces of the goat cheese. Transfer mixture to a 5 cup baking dish; arrange asparagus tips on top and dot with the remaining 2 ounces of goat cheese. Bake until golden brown and bubbling, 15 to 20 minutes. Let rest for 10 minutes before serving. Serve with crostini, tortilla chips or pita bread. *Makes 8 to 10 servings*

