

K's Kitchen: Asparagus will make you feel like you're royalty

By Kathryn Reed

Oh, if only I were royalty, then I could eat fresh asparagus year-round.



“In the 16th century, asparagus gained popularity in France and England, and early colonists brought it to America. King Louis XIV of France so enjoyed this delicacy that he ordered special greenhouses built for a year-round supply. Hence the reference to asparagus as ‘Food of the Kings’,” according to the California Asparagus Commission website.

We common folk are relegated to eating these nutritious green spears seasonally – which means now – and for the next couple months. Seventy-five percent of the asparagus grown in the U.S. comes from California soil.

Here are some facts about asparagus:

Serving Size	93 grams/5 spears
Calories	25
Calories from fat	0
Fat	0 grams
Saturated Fat	0 grams
Cholesterol	0 milligrams
Sodium	0 milligrams

Potassium	230 mg
Carbohydrates	4 grams
Dietary Fiber	2 grams
Protein	2 grams
	% of USRDA
Vitamin C	15%
Vitamin A	10%
Calcium	2%
Iron	*

Source: *California Asparagus Commission*

There are so many wonderful ways to cook asparagus. One of my favorites is to steam them and then drizzle balsamic vinegar over them, sometimes adding a squeeze of fresh lemon.

For a snack, I will steam the spears, then let them cool to room temperature. I spread either cream cheese or a light ranch dressing on a flour tortilla. I place a few spears on the tortilla – depends how thick the spears are – then roll up the tortilla. I cut them into about 1-inch segments, put them on a plate, cover them with plastic wrap, refrigerate them, and snack on them like candy.

Wanting a side dish of more than just asparagus, I came up with the following recipe last weekend. You could use oil instead of butter to make it vegan. The butter added a little more richness, plus some salt. I don't often cook with salt, so having it added other places works for me.

Asparagus, Mushroom, Spinach Medley (serves 3)

1½ C asparagus, chopped into bite size pieces or smaller

1½ C mushrooms, rough chop

2½ ounces fresh spinach

1½ T butter

2 tsp garlic, minced

¼ C Madeira

Pepper, to taste

Melt butter over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms, stir so they are coated with butter and begin to slightly change color. Then add asparagus. Cook for a couple minutes. Add spinach. As spinach is halfway wilted, add garlic and Madeira. Once spinach is cooked, add pepper, stir and serve.