

K's Kitchen: Asparagus stars in lasagna

By Kathryn Reed

I don't think there has ever been a time that my sister, Pam, has come to visit that she hasn't helped me with a new recipe. It's a good thing she's a good sport. And not all of the dishes have been keepers and some have been rather labor intensive.

I have to say, though, this is one of the best entrees I have made in a while. All of the flavors came together to make for a wonderful dinner.

The only drawback is when I have milk in the kitchen it's nonfat. That's not a great thickening agent. Mix water and flour together to get out lumps and then pour into whatever you need thickened. It just adds to the cooking time, but does the trick. Of course the easier option is to have milk with fat in it.

Don't skip the lemon rind. It adds tremendously to this recipe.

And don't use a 9 x 13 pan like I did when Pam and mom were here. It made the lasagna too thin.

With it being asparagus season, make this recipe now or you will have to wait a year.



Artichoke and Asparagus Lasagna

1 T olive oil

2 C leeks, thinly sliced

1 pound asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces

2 tsp garlic, minced

2 tsp thyme, chopped

7 ounces marinated artichokes

1½ C milk, divided

3 T all-purpose flour

1 C vegetable broth

1½ tsp grated lemon rind

½ tsp kosher salt

½ tsp black pepper

1/8 tsp nutmeg

Dash of ground red pepper

4 oz. part-skim mozzarella cheese, shredded

2 oz. Parmesan cheese, grated

Cooking spray

6 cooked lasagna noodles

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Heat oil in large skillet over medium heat. Add leek; cook 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add asparagus; cook 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add garlic and thyme; cook 1 minute. Stir in artichokes; remove from heat.

Combine half cup milk and flour in a saucepan, stirring with a whisk until smooth. Stir in remaining 1 cup milk and broth. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring frequently. Simmer until thickened.

Add rind and next 4 ingredients (through red pepper).

Combine cheeses in a small bowl.

Spread half cup milk mixture in bottom of an 8-inch square glass or ceramic baking dish coated with cooking spray. Cut bottom third off each noodle to form 6 large and 6 small noodles. In a single layer, arrange 2 large and 2 small noodles over milk mixture to fit pan.

Top with one-third of vegetable mixture, one-third of remaining milk mixture, and one-third of cheese mixture. Repeat layers twice, ending with cheese.

Cover with foil. Bake for 25 minutes. Uncover lasagna; broil on middle rack of oven for 2 minutes or until cheese is browned. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.