



# COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

# ASPARAGUS



Asparagus is a member of the Asparagaceae family. The asparagus plant likes to grow in sandy soil near seashores and riverbanks. It produces spears that shoot out of the ground from an underground crown. Asparagus is originally from North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. The French brought asparagus to North America in the 1600s and American growers started farming asparagus in the mid 1800s. It can be mildly sweet or bitter with an earthy or nutty flavor. Thin asparagus is good for sautéing, steaming, and stir-frying, while thick asparagus is best for broiling, roasting, and grilling. Asparagus is harvested in late spring and early summer in Michigan.



## ASPARAGUS IS

- An excellent source of vitamin K. Vitamin K is vital for blood clotting and healthy bones.
- A good source of folate. Folate supports the production of healthy red blood cells and is important during periods of rapid growth, like pregnancy.
- A good source of iron. Iron is important for healthy blood and cells.
- A source of fiber. Fiber helps us feel fuller and benefits the digestive and cardiovascular systems.

*\*Foods that are high in vitamin C, calcium and/or iron can help protect you from lead absorption.*

## MICHIGAN MADE

Michigan ranks first in the nation for asparagus production. Over 20 million pounds of asparagus are grown in the state each year. The majority of Michigan asparagus is grown along the Lake Michigan side of the state. Oceana County growers produce the most asparagus. Michigan asparagus is hand snapped above ground where it is most tender and flavorful.

## FUN FACTS

- Asparagus can be green, white, or purple.
- To grow white asparagus, mound dirt up around the shoots as they grow to keep sunlight from turning the plant green.
- Asparagus is fast growing and can grow up to 12 inches in just one day.
- According to The Guinness Book of World Records, the tallest asparagus on record was 138.5 inches or 11½ feet tall.
- Michigan's National Asparagus Festival is the longest running asparagus festival in the country.

## BUYING AND STORING

- Choose firm bright green spears with tightly closed tips.
- Wrap in slightly damp paper towel and store in an open plastic bag in refrigerator crisper drawer up to four days. Or trim woody ends, place in glass with one inch of water, cover loosely with a plastic bag and keep in refrigerator up to ten days.
- To freeze, trim woody ends, blanch for three minutes in boiling water, drain, pat dry, place in a freezer safe bag or container, and freeze up to eight months.

## MORE THAN FRESH

In addition to fresh, asparagus is available frozen and canned. When buying packaged asparagus, be sure to read labels and choose items that are reduced or low sodium (salt), or no salt added and low in saturated fat.

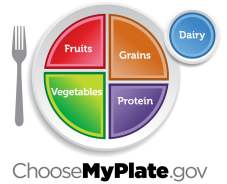




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## EAT WITH MYPLATE

MyPlate focuses on whole grains, lean protein, low-fat dairy, and half the plate being fruits and vegetables. Asparagus is part of the Vegetable Group. Most people need 2–3 cups of vegetables per day. For more information visit: [myplate.gov](https://myplate.gov).



## IT ALL COUNTS

Fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% vegetable and fruit juices count toward your daily MyPlate goals.

## PARMESAN ASPARAGUS FRIES

Time: 30 minutes | Makes: 4 servings | Serving Size: 3–4 spears

Nutrition Information Per Serving: Calories 236, Carbohydrate 31g, Dietary Fiber 4g, Protein 13g, Total Fat 7g, Saturated Fat 3g, Cholesterol 102mg, Sodium 416mg

Always wash hands before preparing food. Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using.



### INGREDIENTS

- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 pound asparagus, trimmed   | ¼ cup all-purpose flour |
| 1 cup breadcrumbs            | 2 large eggs            |
| ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese | Cooking spray or oil    |
| ¼ teaspoon black pepper      |                         |

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425 F. Lightly oil a baking sheet or coat with nonstick spray.
2. Wash asparagus and pat dry. In large zip top bag, add asparagus and flour, shake to coat.
3. In a large bowl, combine breadcrumbs, Parmesan cheese and pepper. Set aside.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk eggs with a fork until fluffy and add to asparagus in large zip top bag, shake to coat.
5. Remove 3–4 asparagus spears at a time from bag, place in breadcrumb mixture, roll and press to coat each spear. Place spears in a single layer on baking sheet. Repeat until all spears are coated.
6. Bake for 10–12 minutes. After 5 minutes, turn over spears and continue baking 5–7 minutes or until golden brown.
7. Remove from oven and serve.

### TRY THIS

- Add shaved fresh asparagus to pizza or flatbread.
- Add sautéed sliced asparagus, bell peppers, and mushrooms to scrambled eggs or omelets.
- Grill asparagus with lemon, olive oil, and a little garlic powder and black pepper on high heat for about 15 minutes.
- Stir-fry chopped asparagus, sliced carrots, celery, and onions with a little fresh ginger and dash of low-sodium soy sauce. Serve over brown rice.

### CHANGE IT UP

- Use panko breadcrumbs for a lighter, crispier coating.
- Add finely chopped fresh parsley and lemon zest to the breadcrumb mixture.
- Add ½ teaspoon garlic powder and finely chopped fresh chives to the breadcrumb mixture.