

# Preserving Asparagus



## Asparagus Fast Facts

- Green asparagus is most common, but purple and white varieties also exist. Purple asparagus will lose color when cooked, therefore is usually served raw on vegetable trays or in salads. White asparagus is grown underground, which prevents the development of chlorophyll and the green color.
- Asparagus is a vegetable stalk with a small head of many tightly closed buds. The older asparagus gets, the more the buds open.
- Healthful asparagus is high in antioxidants, has anti-inflammatory properties, and is well-known to be good for digestion.
- Preserve asparagus by canning, pickling, freezing, or drying.
- One pound of asparagus is equivalent to 16 medium spears, 3 cups trimmed and cut, or 1½ cups purée.
- **To prepare asparagus:** Snap or cut off and discard or peel the woody stem end. The small triangular leaves may be trimmed away, especially if there is sand underneath. Wash thoroughly before serving raw or cooking asparagus.

**Canned asparagus:** Use 3½ pounds asparagus per quart. If desired, add 1 tablespoon salt to each quart jar before filling with asparagus. For hot pack, add asparagus to boiling water, cook 3 minutes, and keep hot while filling jars. For raw pack, pack spears tightly or 1-inch pieces to just below the threaded neck. Add hot cooking liquid or boiling water to 1-inch headspace. Process asparagus in a dial gauge pressure canner at 11 pounds or weighted gauge at 10 pounds; pints for 30 minutes and quarts for 40 minutes (at 0 to 1,000 feet).

**Pickled asparagus:** Prepare one pound asparagus spears or 1-inch pieces, or enough to fill a sterilized pint jar. Wide-mouth or tall pints (narrow 12-ounce jars) are ideal for asparagus spears. If desired, add 1 clove garlic and ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper or a few black peppercorns to each jar before filling with asparagus. For pickling syrup, bring to a boil 1/3 cup water, 1/3 cup white vinegar, and 2¼ teaspoons pickling salt. Cover asparagus with hot pickling liquid. Cool, cover, and refrigerate. Pickled vegetables may be served within 1 to 2 hours, but are best after at least 3 days. Use within 1 month. For longer storage, this recipe may be canned. Add pickling liquid to ½-inch headspace. Process pints of pickled asparagus in a boiling water canner for 10 minutes (at 0 to 1,000 feet).

**Miso pickled asparagus (Misozuke):** Blanch one pound prepared asparagus in boiling salted water for 1-2 minutes, or until tender but still firm in the center. Drain and pat dry. Place in a glass or ceramic dish and cover with white miso (fermented soy bean paste).

Refrigerate up to 1 month, although best served within 24 hours.

**Frozen asparagus:** Blanch whole spears or cut asparagus in boiling salted water for 1-2 minutes, or until tender but still firm in the center. Without salt, the flavor of asparagus can be improved by tossing each pound of asparagus with 1 to 2 tablespoons lemon or orange juice after blanching. Spread blanched asparagus on a tray and place in the freezer 30 minutes, or until solid. Pack into freezer-safe containers.

**Frozen asparagus soup:** Cook one pound prepared asparagus in ½ cup boiling water with 1 teaspoon salt for 5-8 minutes, or until tender. Cool, purée in a blender or food processor, and package in freezer-safe containers. Reheat purée, season to taste with salt and pepper. If desired, stir in 2 to 3 tablespoons cream or yogurt. Garnish soup with grated Parmesan cheese or lemon zest.

**Dried asparagus:** Drying is not a common method for preserving asparagus but is an easy way to store it for later use. Prepare asparagus as for frozen by blanching, using salted water or tossing with citrus juice. Preheat an oven or food dehydrator to 130°F to 140°F. Dry until brittle. Cool until no longer warm and then store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for about 2 months. Freeze for longer storage. Use dried asparagus for soups and stews, or rehydrate and use in stir-frys and casseroles. To rehydrate, place dried asparagus in a bowl, cover with boiling water, and soak 20 to 30 minutes, or until plumped.