

Roasted asparagus

BY BRIAN MEDFORD

I'm on the horns of a dilemma. There's a large, flatish space in my yard that is ripe for a project. I've wrestled with various options and it's come down to two choices. The first is an outdoor patio with a fire pit that I'd probably use four times a year, and the other is a raised bed garden protected by a deer-proof fence.

I lean toward the garden idea, because the prospect of seasonal veggies sparks joy. Growing up, my grandparents had an ample garden and the memories of wandering through a corn field is something I'd love to create once again. Only in a scaled down form, though, I'm only one person after all.

Eating with the seasons is a romantic idea that I try to adhere to as much as I can. At the same time, I understand that we eat what we have, or what we have a hankering for right at that moment. I've been there too, and I refuse to be sanctimonious about seasonal eating.

There is one exception to this, and that is asparagus. I only want to eat asparagus at its peak in late spring and early summer and then I'm done until the next year. This asparagus intransigence even once resulted in a lunchtime incident.

When I worked in Seattle, I'd often drag my co-workers to a downtown restaurant that featured a "Meatloaf Wednesday" lunch special. Meatloaf is thankfully seasonless, but not when it's served with a side of asparagus in October. I asked the server if they could replace my side of asparagus with broccoli or some potatoes. Both my lunch mates and the server looked aghast.

It's now that time of year when I'm ready to savor asparagus. I serve it simply roasted with some salty components and a citrus zing. The meatloaf is optional, but always encouraged.

As for the raised beds, perhaps one day I'll harvest asparagus from my own garden. Until then, if you see me buying asparagus out of season, feel free to ask, "shouldn't you be buying broccoli

or potatoes instead?" I deserve it.

Roasted Asparagus with Bacon and Parmesan

Adapted from Nigel Slater; serves two to four as a side

- One bunch asparagus, trimmed
- One small pat of butter
- Four slices bacon, diced
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan
- 1/2 lemon
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. In a large pot, boil a bundle of asparagus until tender. Lay the spears in a shallow baking dish and set aside. In a shallow frying pan, melt the butter and add the diced bacon. Cook until the bacon is crispy and the fat is golden brown.

Spoon the butter and bacon over the asparagus and sprinkle with the parmesan. Bake for 7 to 9 minutes, until the cheese has melted. Remove from the oven and finish with a spritz of lemon juice, salt and pepper to taste.

Brian Medford is the owner of Idlewild Biscuits and Bakes in Astoria and delights in Southern cooking. He is a staff instructor at The Pantry in Seattle. Contact him at blmedford@gmail.com.



Brian Medford

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