

FOOD FEATURE



KITCHEN DIVA PHOTO

Asparagus is a versatile vegetable that works well as a room-temperature appetizer, blended into a soup, as a flavorful side dish, the main ingredient in a colorful salad or as part of a main course.

Asparagus is perfect for spring recipes

BY ANGELA SHELF MEDEARIS AND GINA HARLOW
KITCHEN DIVA

Nothing says spring is here like a beautiful bunch of crisp asparagus. While asparagus is available year-round, it's much better when purchased locally.

Asparagus is easy to select and prepare, and comes in a variety of vibrant colors, including green, violet, purple and white. It is commercially available fresh, frozen and canned. The stalks range in size from colossal to small. Different types and colors of asparagus can be used without any noticeable difference in taste, so mix and match colors and sizes for visual interest.

Asparagus should be crisp and firm, not limp or wrinkled, with tightly closed tips. Dull colors and ridges in the stems are an indication of a lack of freshness. The stalks should not be limp or dry at the cut and be of uniform thickness.

If you're planning to use the asparagus on the same day, rinse the stalks under cool water and pat dry with a paper towel. Smaller stalks can be broken or cut at the point where the stem naturally snaps. Peeling the end of thicker stalks with a paring knife or a vegetable peeler removes any woody stems and can be done up to two hours before cooking. Place the prepared asparagus in a plastic bag in the refrigerator to stay crisp until ready to cook.

Never wash or soak fresh asparagus before storing. If the asparagus is bound with a rubber band, remove it, as

it will pinch and bruise the stalks. Asparagus can be stored for up to two days if the stalks are trimmed and placed upright in a jar with about an inch of water in the bottom. Cover the asparagus with a plastic bag and store in the refrigerator.

Asparagus cooks in minutes and can be prepared steamed or boiled in the microwave or oven. It tastes delicious hot or cold, and it also freezes well if blanched first in hot water.

Asparagus is a nutritional powerhouse. One-half cup of cooked asparagus contains significant amounts of folic acid, vitamin C, potassium and beta-carotene. It's also a heart-healthy food, and a natural diuretic.

This versatile vegetable works well as a room-temperature appetizer, blended into a soup, as a flavorful side dish, the main ingredient in a colorful salad or as part of a main course like my recipe for Lemon Chicken With Asparagus. Preparing asparagus is a delicious and nutritious way to celebrate spring.

— Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is www.divapro.com. To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Read Gina Harlow's blog about food and gardening at www.peachesandprosciutto.com. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis

LEMON CHICKEN WITH ASPARAGUS

4 chicken breasts, about 3 pounds, washed and fat trimmed and removed

1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon pepper

1 1/2 teaspoons poultry seasoning

4 garlic cloves, chopped

1 red bell pepper, chopped

1/2 pound asparagus, stalks trimmed and cut into 1 inch pieces

1 teaspoon lemon zest

1/2 cup chicken stock

3 cups cooked rice

side up, and cook until golden brown and done, about 5 minutes.

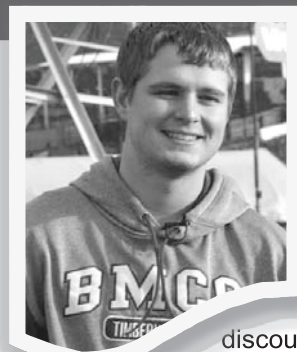
2. Stir in garlic and

red bell pepper. Add asparagus and cook for 1 minute. Stir in zest and chicken stock and

bring to a simmer. Cover and cook for 3 minutes. Serve immediately over hot rice.

Blue Mountain Community College

Student Spotlight: Did You Know?



Kevin Hawman
Hermiston
BMCC Precision Irrigated Ag Student

Kevin grew up on his family's farm in Hermiston, and when he got to BMCC, he wanted the precision irrigated agriculture program to have its own pivot. Ever the go-getter, Kevin was able to raise more than \$60,000 in donations towards a new pivot. He then worked with Valley Irrigation to obtain a \$30,000 discount on the pivot's price. Valley Irrigation was so impressed with Kevin's tenacity that its leadership invited Kevin to Omaha, Nebraska, to see Valley's headquarters in person earlier this month. BMCC is proud to call Kevin one of its outstanding students!

Have you heard about the BMCC bond?

BMCC wants to continue to provide a high-quality education for students so they can succeed like our many distinguished alumni! Check out the bond page on our website to learn more about how BMCC could continue to provide an affordable education for family-wage jobs, a safe and secure learning environment and protect the community's investment. Look for the bond on the May 19, 2015, ballot!

www.blueecc.edu/about-bmcc/bond-measure

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