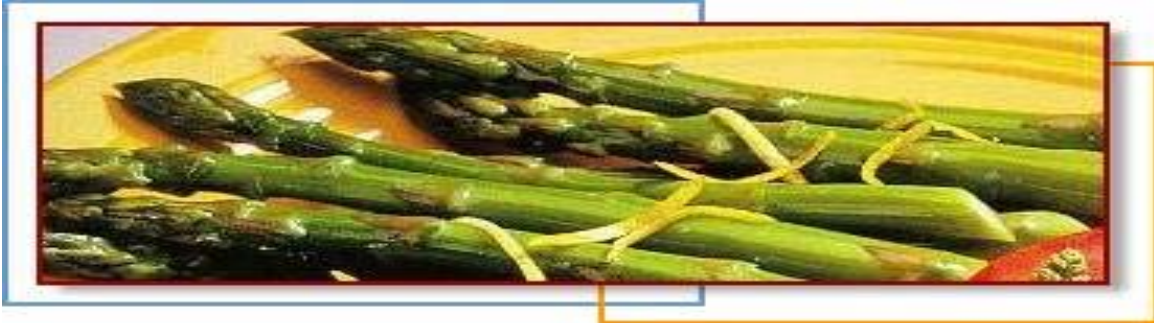


# Vegetable of the Month

## Asparagus



This vegetable is sometimes referred to as the aristocrat of vegetables. Many Greeks and Romans not only appreciate asparagus for its taste but also believe it possesses medicinal properties from alleviating toothaches to preventing bee stings. Such things are mythical, but asparagus does contain a good supply of vitamins and minerals. Asparagus appears in markets as early as February, but the peak of this crop's season is in April and May.

### Varieties

Asparagus can be found in green and white varieties. Green asparagus is the most common in the United States, while the white is more popular in Europe. White asparagus is grown under the soil. This does not allow the sun's rays to penetrate the plant, and therefore it does not produce the chlorophyll necessary to produce the green color. When eaten raw, white asparagus has a sweet, nutty taste.

### Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (93g)  
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving

Calories 20      Calories from Fat 0

% Daily Value\*

**Total Fat** 0g      **0%**

Saturated Fat 0g      **0%**

**Cholesterol** 0mg      **0%**

**Sodium** 0mg      **0%**

**Total Carbohydrate** 4g      **1%**

Dietary Fiber 2g      **8%**

Sugars 2g

**Protein** 2g

Vitamin A 10%      • Vitamin C 20%

Calcium 2%      • Iron 4%

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Total Fat      Less than      65g      80g

Saturated Fat      Less than      20g      25g

Cholesterol      Less than      300mg      300mg

Sodium      Less than      2,400mg      2,400mg

Total Carbohydrate      300g      375g

Dietary Fiber      25g      30g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

## How to Select

Choose firm yet tender stalks. For the green variety, choose stalks with deep green or purplish tips that are closed and compact. Avoid excessively sandy spears. Stalks with a narrow diameter are more tender than thick ones.

## Storage

Store stalks, with bottoms wrapped in a damp paper towel, in the crisper section of the refrigerator; if you don't have a crisper, put them in plastic bags and place them in the coldest part of the refrigerator. It is best to eat asparagus the day it is purchased, because the flavor lessens with each passing day.

## Preparation and Cooking

Wash asparagus in cool running water. Snap off tough ends at their natural breaking point. Before cooking white asparagus, it first must be peeled so that no skin remains. This can be done using a potato peeler. White asparagus needs to be cooked until completely tender, while the green variety can be stir-fried, lightly steamed or cooked in the microwave.

## Make Asparagus Part of Your 5 A Day Plan



It is easy to include asparagus in your 5 A Day Plan. Asparagus can be served cold with your favorite low-fat dressing or can be added to any salad. It can also be served as a tasty treat with fresh lemon juice. Steamed asparagus is always a nice addition to any meal, and any leftovers can be used to create delicious soup.

# Recipes

## **No Guilt Asparagus Guacamole**

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: The Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board

10 1/2 ozs asparagus, trimmed fresh or cut frozen

1/4 tsp garlic powder

2 tsp lime or lemon juice

2 Tbsp canned green chili peppers, drained and chopped

1 Tbsp onion, chopped

2 tsp tomato paste

1/8 tsp salt

1/4 tsp ground cumin

1/8 tsp white pepper

Cook asparagus. Drain well, pat dry with paper towels and place in blender. Add remaining ingredients. Blend until smooth. Dip will become less thick upon standing and will need to be stirred.

Nutrient analysis per serving: calories 23, protein 2g, fat 0 g, percent calories from fat 8%, cholesterol, 0 mg, carbohydrates 5g, fiber, 2 g, sodium, 142 mg

## **Spaghetti with Spring Vegetables**

Makes 6 servings

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

5 medium tomatoes  
1/4 lb small asparagus  
1 medium zucchini  
1/4 lb small white mushrooms  
1 large red or green sweet pepper  
5 Tbsp olive oil  
1 medium onion, thinly sliced  
pepper to taste  
3 Tbsp chopped parsley  
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 lb spaghetti

Peel, seed and dice tomatoes. Wash asparagus and cut tips off stalks. Wash and dry zucchini and mushrooms and cut into thin slices. Wash pepper and cut into short thin strips. Heat oil in a large skillet. Add pepper strips and saute over medium heat 5 - 6 minutes. Add onion, zucchini, asparagus tips, and mushrooms. Sauté 4 - 5 minutes. Add diced tomatoes and pepper. Cook uncovered over medium heat 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Stir in parsley and garlic. Taste and adjust for seasoning. Cook spaghetti; drain and place in a warm deep dish or bowl. Pour sauce over spaghetti. Serve immediately.

Nutrient analysis per serving: calories 233, protein 7g, fat 8g, percent calories from fat 30%, cholesterol 0 mg, carbohydrates 35g, fiber 5 g, sodium 16 mg

## **Spicy Grape Pasta Salad (Spicy Asian Dressing recipe below)**

Makes 6 servings

Each serving equals one and one-half 5 A Day servings

8 ozs angel hair pasta  
2 cups cooked white meat chicken, julienned  
1 1/2 cups seedless grapes  
1 cup cut asparagus  
1 cup sweet red peppers, julienned  
1/2 cup celery, sliced diagonally  
1/4 cup green onion, sliced  
2 Tbsp chopped cilantro

### **Spicy Asian Dressing**

Makes 6 servings

Source: California Table Grape Commission

1/4 cup rice vinegar  
2 Tbsp vegetable oil  
2 Tbsp lite soy sauce  
1/2 tsp grated fresh ginger root  
1/4 tsp crushed red chilies  
1/4 tsp sesame oil  
1 clove garlic

Cook pasta according to package directions; drain. Toss pasta with 1/4 cup Spicy Oriental Dressing. Cool to room temperature. Add remaining ingredients; toss and serve. To make dressing combine ingredients and let stand at least 30 minutes. Remove garlic before serving.

Nutrient analysis per serving: calories 276, protein 18g, fat 7g, percent calories from fat 23%, cholesterol 69 mg, carbohydrate 38g, fiber 3 g, sodium 253 mg