

Asparagus stars in spring vegetable roundup

Spring has sprung early this year and so have my cravings for fresh veggies and salads. That is why the monthly "Spotlight" for May on our webpage www.thomas.ksu.edu is Spring Salad Recipes. Go check out the recipes for Seven-Layer Salad Made Over, Shrimp and Pea Salad, Primavera Pasta Toss, Bacon Spinach Salad and Farmer's Market Pasta Salad.



Diann Gerstner

• Knowledge for Life

On the veggie side, one of the first spring veggies that comes to mind is asparagus.

What should you look for when selecting asparagus? Look for firm, fresh, spears with closed, compact tips and uniform diameter, so that all spears will cook in the same amount of time. Larger diameter spears are more tender. Avoid limp or wilted stalks.

Asparagus should be stored in the refrigerator in a moisture-proof

wrapping. To maintain freshness, you can wrap a moist paper towel around the stem ends, or stand upright in two inches of cold water. Use within two or three days for best quality.

Rinse spears well under cold running water. Bend the cut end of each spear until you find a place where it snaps off easily; break off and discard the tough end. If there doesn't seem to be a tough portion, simply trim half an inch or so off the cut end with a knife. You can leave the spears whole

or cut diagonally into 1-inch lengths.

Asparagus is a nutrient-dense food which is high in folic acid and is a good source of potassium, fiber, vitamin B6, vitamins A and C and thiamin. It has no fat, contains no cholesterol and is low in sodium. Asparagus is low in calories, only 20 calories per 5.3 oz. serving, less than 4 calories per spear.

Asparagus is the leading supplier among vegetables of folic acid. A 5.3 ounce serving provides 60 percent of the recommended daily allowance for folacin which is necessary for blood cell formation, growth and prevention of liver disease. Its wealth of nutrients, fiber and low sodium and calorie content make asparagus a nutri-

tionally wise choice. There are many ways to prepare asparagus:

Saucepan or steamer: Cook fresh asparagus in a small amount of boiling water until tender. Fresh asparagus will be crisp-tender in five to eight minutes.

Stir-fry: Cut spears diagonally in 1/2 inch pieces, leaving tips whole. Stir-fry pieces in butter or hot oil in a skillet or wok at medium high heat. Stir constantly until tender-crisp, three to five minutes.

Microwave: Place one pound fresh asparagus in a microwavable baking dish or serving bowl. If cooking whole spears, arrange with tips in center. Add about 1/4

cup water and cover tightly. Microwave at 100 percent power for four to seven minutes for spears, three to five minutes for cuts and tips. Stir or turn halfway through cooking time.

Canned asparagus: Can be simply placed in a sauce pan and heated. To heat in the microwave, drain all but one tablespoon of liquid, and microwave at 100 percent power for two to four minutes, stirring once halfway through cooking time. Canned asparagus has a much softer texture than fresh asparagus.

A really fast and easy way to prepare asparagus is to sprinkle the asparagus with olive oil, garlic powder and mozzarella cheese,

then bake at 400F for 10 to 15 minutes. Another great way to prepare asparagus for an appetizer or as a side dish for supper is wrapped in bacon. It tastes great and is easy to prepare. Wash and trim one pound of asparagus spears. Cut eight to 10 strips of bacon in half crosswise. Wrap one-half strip bacon around each asparagus spear, leaving tip and end exposed. Lay on a cookie sheet with sides. Bake in a preheated 400 degree oven for 20 to 25 minutes, or until bacon is cooked. Serve warm or at room temperature. Enjoy!

Diann Gerstner is the family and consumer sciences agent for the Thomas County Extension office.

On the Beat

COLBY POLICE

Thursday

4:50 a.m. – Several 911 calls of a fight. Report filed for battery.

5:19 a.m. – Helped Sheriff's Office with accident.

5:42 a.m. – Caller reported his vehicle missing. Report filed; vehicle entered in National Crime Information Center.

10:09 a.m. – Provided tour at Law Enforcement Center for fifth grade Career Day.

11:29 a.m. – Caller found missing pickup reported at 5:42 a.m. with items missing from vehicle.

2:02 p.m. – Caller reported hitchhiker in the 2100 block of U.S. 24. Deputy was on another

call. Not found.

5:44 p.m. – Caller reported juveniles fighting at Fike Park. Spoke with subjects.

8:28 p.m. – Caller reported hit and run accident at Sonic.

THOMAS COUNTY SHERIFF

Thursday

Midnight – Released James K. Lovvorn.

12:15 a.m. – Booked Shanelle R. Sharp.

12:18 a.m. – Released Dylon M. Braun.

12:25 a.m. – Released Sharp.

1:30 a.m. – Booked Cesar J. Carrillo.

3:47 a.m. – Lucas T. Ruth arrested on warrant, by Goodland

Police Department.

4:03 a.m. – Booked Jeremy A. Inderlied.

4:21 a.m. – Released Inderlied.

5:19 a.m. – Numerous 911 calls of a bull hauler rollover at milepost 60 on westbound I-70. Turned over to Highway Patrol.

5:33 a.m. – Booked James Ross Harris.

5:34 a.m. – Released Harris.

10:57 a.m. – Two 911 disconnects. Child on phone.

1:08 p.m. – Insufficient funds checks report filed on Gregory Thomas Mead.

1:10 p.m. – Insufficient funds checks report filed on Laura Murphy.

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