

# The DISH



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I finally got a large cutting from my asparagus patch! For some reason, mine seems to be a week or two behind. My patch is about 20 years old and seems to be slowing down a bit. So, last season I planted some new roots. Hopefully in a year or two I'll be able to harvest them! I absolutely love asparagus and I have two ways I normally make it — either roasted with some salt and pepper, or steamed with some cheese. But I also couldn't be more excited to try a few of these new recipes when time permits.

## Asparagus in Creamy Mushroom Sauce

1 lb. fresh asparagus  
8 oz. mushrooms, sliced  
8 oz. bacon, chopped  
½ red onion, chopped  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
SAUCE:

1 cup heavy whipping cream  
½ cup chicken broth  
2 Tbsp. unsalted butter  
2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour  
1 tsp. hot sauce  
1 cup mozzarella cheese  
1/3 cup Parmesan cheese  
¼ tsp. salt  
1/8 tsp. ground black pepper

Trim the ends of the asparagus. Blanch in boiling water for 4-6 minutes or until desired tenderness is reached. Drain asparagus, cover and set aside.

Cut bacon into bite-sized pieces and saute until fully cooked. Remove from skillet.

Finely chop onions and slice mushrooms. In the same skillet, over medium heat, cook onions and mushrooms in the bacon grease and butter until onions are tender. Once mushrooms are cooked, add bacon back and minced garlic. Saute for a minute. Whisk in the flour until combined.

In a small bowl, combine the chicken broth, heavy whipping cream, hot sauce, Parmesan cheese and season with salt and pepper. Pour into skillet. Bring sauce to a soft boil, simmer 3-4 minutes or until sauce begins to thicken.

Add the cooked asparagus to sauce and mix into the creamy sauce. Sprinkle cheese, close lid on skillet and turn heat down to a medium/low. Cook until cheese melts. Garnish with herbs and fresh ground pepper, if desired.

## Asparagus Casserole

2 lbs. asparagus, trimmed and

cut into 2-inch pieces  
½ cup mayonnaise  
6 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, grated  
½ onion, diced  
2 Tbsp. flour  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 cup milk  
Salt and pepper  
15 Ritz crackers or similar, crushed

Place the asparagus, mayo and cheese together in a large bowl.

In a skillet over medium heat, add the onion with a drizzle of oil. Saute the onion for about 5 minutes until soft and slightly browned. Sprinkle the garlic and flour all over the onion mixture. Stir to create a roux and let the flour cook for a minute or two.

Very slowly pour the milk into the skillet, stirring as you go to incorporate the milk into the flour mixture. Let the milk sauce come to a bubble. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

When the milk sauce is slightly thick, pour it into the bowl with the asparagus and other ingredients. Stir to mix everything together and pour the mixture into a baking dish, 9-by-13 or similar. Sprinkle the crushed crackers over the casserole.

Bake the asparagus casserole at 375 degrees for 40-50 minutes or until the asparagus is just tender and the cheese is bubbly. Broil the top for one minute, if you'd like to brown the crackers.

## Baked Parmesan Asparagus Fries

1 lb. asparagus stalks, trimmed  
2 large eggs, whisked  
1/3 cup all-purpose flour  
Cooking oil spray  
½ cup shredded Parmesan cheese  
2 cups panko bread crumbs  
Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line a three-quarter

baking sheet with parchment paper. Spread panko crumbs evenly across the lined baking sheet, keeping your panko crumbs to a thin layer. Spray panko crumbs surface with cooking oil spray. Bake panko crumbs for about 5 minutes or until golden. Remove from oven and let cool. Turn oven heat to 425 degrees.

Once bread crumbs are cooled, mix in ½ cup Parmesan cheese while panko remains on the pan. Then spread out mixture evenly across baking sheet again. Line a separate three quarter baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a container long enough to fit asparagus, pour in whisked eggs (8-inch loaf pan). In a separate container long enough to fit asparagus, pour in flour.

Coat asparagus lightly in egg. Shake off excess egg and then lightly coat asparagus in flour. Tap asparagus a few times against container to shake off excess flour.

Coat asparagus in egg again and shake off excess egg. Make sure that you thoroughly shake off any excess egg drippings before rolling in panko because the panko will not stick if it gets too moist. Place asparagus in panko mixture and press panko crumbs onto the asparagus. Avoid trying to roll the asparagus across all of the panko crumbs because it will cause many of the crumbs to get too moist and they won't stick to the asparagus. Keeping the panko spread out on the sheet rather than having them in one container should help keep most of them from getting too moist. Set coated asparagus aside on empty lined baking sheet. Repeat until all asparagus is used up.

Bake for 10-12 minutes at 425 degrees, or until asparagus is cooked and the outside coating is crispy.

Serve with your favorite dipping sauce.

## Garlic Roasted Cheesy Asparagus

1 lb. fresh asparagus, ends snapped off  
3 Tbsp. olive oil  
1½ Tbsp. minced garlic  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese  
¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Spread the asparagus, evenly, in a single layer on a large sheet pan.

In a small bowl, whisk

together the oil and garlic until evenly combined. Pour the mixture evenly over the veggies. Using your hands, toss the asparagus just until completely coated. Spread back out into an even, single layer.

Liberally salt and pepper the asparagus. I recommend more freshly ground black pepper than salt. Bake at 425 degrees for 15 minutes or until the asparagus has become tender, but not yet wilted.

Carefully take the pan from the oven, sprinkle the cheeses evenly over the asparagus. Return to the oven, baking an extra 2 minutes, or until the cheese is completely melted.

Turn the broiler on and broil just until the cheese bubbles and begins to turn golden brown.

## Pickled Asparagus

10 lbs. asparagus  
4½ cups white wine vinegar (5%)  
4½ cups water  
10 tsp. dill weed  
10 cloves fresh garlic  
10 tsp. mustard seed  
10 tsp. dried crushed red pepper  
½ cup pickling salt  
10 Tbsp. sugar (opt.)  
1 fresh lemon, cut in rounds

Wash and remove wood end of asparagus. Blanch in boiling water for 30 seconds. Once blanched, dip into cold water to stop the cooking process.

BRINE: Add white wine vinegar, water, sugar and salt to a stock pot. Bring to a raging boil.

FILL JARS: In each 25 oz. wide mouth mason jar add fresh lemon slice, 1 tsp. dill weed, 1 tsp. mustard seed, 1 tsp. crushed red pepper, 1 clove of garlic and asparagus. Fill jars until full, making sure to leave a 1-inch head space.

Add brine, making sure to leave a 1-inch head space and remove air bubbles, adjust brine level if needed.

Wipe rims, add warmed lids and rings (rings should be applied finger tight). Process in hot water bath for 15 minutes.

NOTE: The sugar is an option for this pickled recipe and is not needed. It is added to cut back the tangy flavor of the vinegar.

Blanching speeds up the pickling time. Once canned the jars will need to sit for a minimum of 2 weeks prior to consuming.